

# **Homework Workgroup Update**

**April 9, 2019**

**Educational Services**

# Presentation Goals

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- Provide a brief review of context for group and timeline of work to date
- Review key elements of current AUSD Homework Policy
- Provide an update of recent steps taken by the workgroup including stakeholder input and proposed policy revisions
- Outline next steps

# Homework Workgroup Context

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- Formed in spring 2017 following stakeholder interest in reviewing district policies, particularly with regard to quantity of total homework and consistency across classrooms and school sites
- Has met regularly beginning in April 2017
- Includes students, parents/guardians, and staff
- Reviewed research, current policies, and model policies. Has utilized surveys, focus groups, and direct input from staff

# Current AUSD Policy (BP/AR 6154)

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AUSD has a ‘decentralized’ policy in which the district’s Board Policy sets parameters for site policies/plans that are to be locally determined. Key elements of site policies are to include:

- Amount of time students are expected to spend on HW
- Extent to which HW assignments shall involve parents/guardians
- How parents/guardians will be informed about HW expectations, relation to grades, and how to help students
- Techniques that will be taught to help students allocate their time wisely, meet deadlines, and develop good study habits
- Student access to resource materials and assistance
- Means by which teachers will coordinate assignments to avoid overload of HW on one day and very little the next
- Extent to which HW assignments shall emphasize independent research, reports, reading, and problem-solving activities

# Timeline of Work to Date

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- 3.22.16: BOE Presentation
- 9.27.16: BOE Presentation
- 3.28.17: BOE Presentation
- March 2017: Recruitment of workgroup members
- April 2017: Convened group and began regular meetings
- Fall 2017: Stakeholder surveys
- Spring 2018: Focus groups, development of draft policy
- June 2018: Presentation to Board Policy Subcommittee
- June 2018: Presentation of draft policy to full Board
- Fall 2018: Sharing of draft with site staff, prioritization input
- Spring 2019: Redrafting of policy language based on input
- Spring 2019: Additional input gathering from site staff
- April 2019: BOE Presentation

# Key Policy Revisions Proposed in June 2018

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- Maximum time parameters
- ‘Help not hurt’ grading
- Additional guidelines for late/makeup work
- Weekend/Extended break limitations
- Communication of homework purpose/parameters

# Foundational Values of Workgroup and Draft

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1. Homework shall have a positive impact on learning and achievement.
2. Homework shall have a positive impact on student attitude, self-esteem, and healthy development of the whole student.
3. Parents/guardians and teachers shall be mindful of the need for students to live balanced lives so they may achieve optimal health, development, and learning.
4. Homework shall be the work of the student.
5. Teachers shall not be required to assign homework.

# Staff Input

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Site staff provided input indicating ‘concern,’ ‘questioning,’ or ‘support’ for various draft policy elements. Major trends included:

- Concern about ‘help not hurt’ policy language across secondary (6-12)
- Support for proposed late/make-up work (related to absence draft language at all grade levels and concern about late/make-up work (not related to absence) from secondary (6-12))
- General concern/questioning across all grade levels for proposed maximum weekly time limit language and policy elements pertaining to communication between school and home



# Staff Input

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In reviewing specific narrative input provided by site staff and through discussion with workgroup members, several themes emerged that helped the workgroup to reframe their approach. These included:

- Policy language should represent best practices and easily translate to effective professional development
- Policy language should allow for logistically effective implementation of systems and structures by staff
- Policy language should not inappropriately restrict teachers from making effective decisions as professionals
- Policy language should hold all stakeholders accountable

# Looking Back

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The workgroup found it useful to go back and review policy language from 1965. The 1965 Policy consisted of seven (7) basic concepts and provided some context for language that, while minimal, touched upon many of the same core values.

Homework shall be governed by the following:

- a) The concepts to be practiced at home shall have been previously introduced in the classroom
- b) Each assignment shall be purposeful in relation to the classroom work
- c) Adequate direction and understanding of the assignment on the part of each child shall be a precedent for assigning homework
- d) The difficulty of the assignment should be such that each pupil could be expected to complete the work successfully
- e) Assignments shall be ‘reasonable’ in length permitting the pupil to engage in normal childhood activities
- f) There must be an evaluation of each assignment. Such evaluation shall be made known to the student
- g) No assignment shall be made which is punitive in nature

# Working Draft Language: Spring 2019 Revisions

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Based upon the input received, reframing through the identified themes, and using historical examples as a guide, the workgroup has developed a revised set of core policy elements that would govern homework practices.

The workgroup's intention is to continue representing the core values expressed by stakeholders in launching this process while also acknowledging and responding to the input from educators regarding feasibility of implementation.

Note: the language included in the following 4 slides is part of a working draft and further input is being sought.

# **Working Draft Language: Spring 2019 Revisions**

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Homework shall be governed by the following:

1. The concepts to be practiced at home shall have been previously introduced in the classroom.
2. The purpose(s) and expected outcome(s) shall be clearly articulated in advance.
3. Students shall be provided adequate direction and understanding of the assignment as a precedent for assigning homework. Where appropriate, classroom instructional time shall be given at the onset to assist students in effectively understanding and starting the assignment.

# Working Draft Language: Spring 2019 Revisions

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Homework shall be governed by the following:

4. When assigned, homework must include a clear articulation of the following:
  - a) How it will be assessed and what, if any, specific assessment tools (e.g. rubric) will be used. If specific assessment tools are to be used, they shall be provided in advance.
  - b) Whether it will be part of the student's grade and, if so, the value of the assignment.
5. For a homework assignment to count toward a student's grade or required to be turned in, it must be assessed based on the course content/objectives and the student must receive feedback that supports their progress toward mastery.
6. Assignments shall be reasonable in length, permitting the student to engage in a variety of outside school activities.

# Working Draft Language: Spring 2019 Revisions

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Homework shall be governed by the following:

7. Students shall have a reasonable amount of time to complete an assignment. Such reasonableness shall take into account the total quantity of work expected as well as any requirement that students collaborate with each other to achieve the stated purpose and outcomes.
8. Homework assigned over standard (2-3 day) weekends shall not exceed what is typical for a single night during the regular school week.
9. Students shall not be expected to complete homework over extended breaks (Fall, Winter, Spring, and any other breaks of one week or more). Students may choose to make-up existing assignments, work ahead on future assignments, or complete aspects of assignments that span both ends of an extended break. No homework shall be assigned that requires specific completion over an extended break.

# Working Draft Language: Spring 2019 Revisions

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Homework shall be governed by the following:

10. No summer homework shall be assigned with the exception of Advanced Placement/Honors courses. In the case of Advanced Placement/Honors courses, summer homework should be limited to only the tasks that are most critical to supporting a student's success in the course.
11. Assignments shall be communicated with an adequate amount of advance notice. Assignment communicated after the end of the class period shall not be due the next school day.
12. Parents/guardians shall be provided access to the following information:
  - What homework has been assigned and whether it will be included in a student's grade
  - The date of assignment and due date

It is recommended that such access be through direct provision of the information via an online medium.

# **Working Draft Language: Spring 2019 Revisions**

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Homework shall be governed by the following:

13. All supplies, materials, and equipment needed to complete the assigned homework shall be provided to pupils free of charge.
14. No assignment shall be made which is punitive in nature.
15. Loss of recess shall not be a consequence for lack of homework completion.



# Next Steps

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In preparation for presentation of a final draft to the Board Policy Subcommittee in late spring 2019, the workgroup will:

- Solicit and review additional input from site teaching staff
- Review draft language with administrators
- Convene as a group to revise policy language

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# Questions?