

Update of Current AUSD Homework Policies and Practices

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Teaching and Learning
Educational Services**

Purpose

- Review current AUSD Board Policy and Administrative Regulation for Homework (HW)
- Review elements of current AUSD Site Plans for Homework
- Review stance of National Education Organizations
- Offer potential next steps for process

A Definition of Homework

“tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are meant to be carried out during noninstructional time”

(Harris Cooper, Duke University Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience and leading researcher on the role of homework in supporting student achievement)

Alameda Unified Board Policy

AUSD BP 6154: Homework/Makeup Work States:

- The Board of Education recognizes that HW contributes toward building responsibility, self-discipline and life-long learning habits, and time spent on HW directly influences students' ability to meet the district's academic standards. The Board expects students, parents/guardians, and staff to view homework as a routine and important part of students' daily lives.

AUSD Board Policy 6154 (Continued)

- Each site shall have a Homework Plan.
- The Board expects teachers at all grade levels to use parents/guardians as a contributing resource.
- When students repeatedly fail to do their HW, parents/guardians shall be notified and asked to contact teacher.

AUSD Administrative Regulation

AR 6154: Homework/Makeup Work

School-site HW Plan shall include guidelines for the assignment of HW and describe responsibilities of students, staff, and parents/guardians. The plan shall identify:

1. For each grade level, the amount of time that students shall be expected to spend on HW.
2. For each grade level, the extent to which HW assignments shall systematically involve participation by parents/guardians.

AUSD Administrative Regulation 6154 (Continued)

School-site HW plan shall identify:

3. The means by which parents/guardians shall be informed about:
 - HW expectations
 - How HW relates to the student's grades
 - How best to help their children
4. Techniques that will be taught to help students allocate their time wisely, meet their deadlines, and develop good personal study habits.

Administrative Regulation 6154 (Continued)

School-site HW plan shall identify:

5. The access that students shall have to obtain:
 - Resource materials from the library/media center
 - Assistance and/or tutoring through telephone help lines and/or after-school centers
6. The means by which teachers shall coordinate assignments so that students do not receive an overload of HW one day and very little the next.
7. For each grade level, the extent to which HW assignments shall emphasize independent research, reports, special reading, and problem-solving activities.

School-Site HW Plans

Seven of 10 elementary schools have the following amounts of time per grade level established:

- Kindergarten: 50 minutes/week
- First Grade: 100 minutes/week
- Second Grade: 125 minutes/week
- Third Grade: 160 minutes/week
- Fourth Grade: 180 minutes/week
- Fifth Grade: 200 minutes/week

These amounts are generally consistent with the maximum amounts recommended by Cooper and supported by a number of national education organizations.

School-Site HW Plans (Continued)

- Most elementary site plans state the site's purpose for assigning HW. Some include additional details to support parents/guardians.
- There is a need for increased alignment across secondary schools.
- Some school sites will need to update/redevelop their School-site HW Plan.

Examples of Site Practices

Examples of current AUSD elementary HW practices:

- Weekly ‘packets’ of worksheets and other assignments to be completed
- Monthly family project focused on a thematic topics
- ‘Menu’ of options that a student can choose from each week/month
- Nightly reading w/log for accountability

Stance of National Education Organizations

Experts advise schools or districts to include teachers, parents, and students in any effort to set HW policies. Policies should address purposes of HW, amount and frequency, school and teacher responsibilities, student responsibilities, and the role of parents or others who assist students with HW.

Benefits of HW include: development of study skills and habits, keeping families informed about learning, and tapping into students' existing skills or interest to motivate them.

<http://www.nea.org/tools/16938.htm>

Stance of National Education Organizations (continued)

National PTA and National Education Association (NEA) align with Harris Cooper's guidelines – 10-20 minutes/night in the first grade and an additional 10 minutes per grade level thereafter. High school students may sometimes do more, depending on what classes they take. At secondary level, HW is associated with greater academic achievement.

Over the past few decades, HW has increased primarily in the lower grade levels, and this increase is associated with neutral (and sometimes negative) effects on student achievement.

<http://www.nea.org/tools/16938.htm>

Stance of National Education Organizations (continued)

In addition to NEA and the National PTA, the ‘10 minutes per grade level’ guideline is also supported by the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA).

ACSA also highlights the importance of purposeful assignments that clarify what students are expected to do and how the work relates to the outcome of what they are expected to learn.

<http://www.leadership4asp.org/files/resources/homework%20talking%20pointsFINAL.pdf>

Next Steps

- Continue discussions within LCAP Parent/Guardian Advisory Committee (PAC)
- Outline process for gathering input from diverse group of stakeholders - staff, students, and parents/guardians - to develop comprehensive overview of homework practices in the district
- Determine what, if any, policy and practice changes are needed to align with best practices and district values
- **Reference:** Davis Joint Unified School District engaged in a similar process across multiple stakeholder groups that concluded in May 2010 with the adoption of significant board policy and administrative regulation revisions (http://www.djUSD.net/cms/page_view?d=x&piid=&vpid=1368084171184)

Q & A

