

HOMEWORK POLICY

Definition and Purpose

The Somerville School Committee recognizes that homework can be an integral component of the learning process when it is developmentally appropriate. The Somerville School Committee defines homework as any task “assigned to students by school teachers that is meant to be carried out during the non-school hours.” The Somerville School Committee views the purpose of homework as a way to improve the learning process, to aid in the mastery of skills, to create and stimulate interest on the part of the student.

Background

Current academic research suggests that the association between achievement and homework grows progressively stronger for older groups of students. The Somerville School Committee therefore believes that homework should have a different purpose at different grade levels:

- For students in the earliest grades (K-2), educators should encourage reading nightly and when assigned, homework should increase gradually from grade to grade, and should foster a positive home to school connection and a love for learning.
- For students in the upper elementary grades (3-5), homework should play a gradual and supportive role in building academic skills, time management, organization and persistence. Nightly reading is expected.
- In grades 6 through grade 12, homework should play an important role in building academic skills, time management, executive functioning, and persistence.

Guidelines for Homework

The School Committee recognizes the importance for educators, families and students to promote a healthy lifestyle by balancing academic and non-academic activities, including, but not limited to clubs, extra-curriculars, and private family time. In our commitment to developing all learners’ capacities to approach learning with persistence, resiliency, reflection, and adaptability, homework assignments shall be crafted in accordance with the following principles:

- Meaningful and valuable to the learning goals of the curriculum
- Necessary and relevant to classroom learning and/or real-life experiences
- Manageable for students to complete with reasonable time and effort
- Developmentally appropriate for students in terms of time, scope and expectations

In addition, homework should:

- Have a clear purpose, which is communicated to students
- Allow students and educators to gain a sense of a student's understanding and provide opportunity for constructive feedback
- Be accessible to all students

When assigning homework, all district staff are asked not to make assumptions about resources available in the home, including access to technology.

With those points in mind, when assigning homework, educators will...

- Assign Purposeful Homework: Legitimate purposes for homework include practicing a skill or process that students can do independently but not fluently, elaborating on information that has been addressed in class, and provide opportunities for students to explore their own interests.
- Design Homework to Maximize the Chances that Students Will Complete It: Students should be able to complete homework assignments independently with relatively high success rates, but still find it challenging.
- Involve Parents or Guardians in Appropriate Ways: Parents or guardians should be involved in homework and keep communication with school open but should not feel responsible for teaching any of the concepts covered.
- Carefully Monitor the Amount of Homework assigned: Homework that is assigned should be appropriate to students' age levels and should be manageable for students to complete with reasonable time and effort.

Time Recommendations for Homework

The time recommendations will increase gradually from grade to grade. The guidelines below should remain flexible and individual differences among children should be taken into consideration. These specific time parameters for homework are recommendations/guidelines *for the amount of time a student should be spending on homework*. Additionally, for students in grades K-8, no homework shall be assigned over weekends, holidays listed on the district academic calendar, or school vacation weeks. However, homework may be assigned over a longer timeframe that may include the weekend but excluding all holidays and vacations. For all grades, assignments will not be due on the day of or the day after holidays listed on the district's official academic calendar. If a student observes other holidays, their teacher will adjust assignment due dates accordingly for that individual or for the entire class at their discretion. When students receive homework assignments from more than one teacher, all staff should be mindful of the cumulative amount and collective impact on students.

- Kindergarten students should not be assigned homework. Nightly reading is strongly encouraged.
- Grades 1-2: If assigned, homework should not exceed 20 minutes each day inclusive of nightly reading, no more than 2 days per week. In grades 1-2, homework shall not be a factor that is tied to a grade and is generally not recommended. When homework is not assigned, nightly reading is highly encouraged.
- Grades 3-5: 30 minutes (2-3 nights per week); In addition, nightly reading is expected.
- Grades 6-8: 60 minutes (2-3 nights per week per subject and teachers are encouraged to coordinate assignments); In addition, nightly reading is expected.
- Grades 9-12: the amount of homework will vary by subject.

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