

POLICY FAMILY	EDUCATION PROGRAMS	500
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Policy 523: Homework Policy

Adopted 06/19/02 (Grades 1-8)
Amended 04/26/23 (Grades 1-12)

Guiding Principles

Learning is a responsibility shared between school and home, and completing school-assigned work independently enables students to both practice and demonstrate their skills. The completion of assigned tasks over time strengthens a student’s ability to successfully pursue a goal. Shrewsbury’s homework policy is designed to support and empower children, educators and families as they work together to further student learning.

The school district recognizes and affirms that co-curricular activities and other commitments are important aspects of students’ lives that can significantly improve their physical and mental health and well-being. It is a shared responsibility between home and school to ensure that students have balance in their lives while pursuing educational excellence. This policy is intended to help our students achieve that. Further, the district recognizes that vacations, long weekends, and holidays are opportunities to enjoy family time and fun. In order to protect this time for students and staff, the district will implement a “no homework” calendar that specifies times when homework will not be assigned. In addition to promoting family time and recreation, “no homework” periods can provide a respite from new assignments that allows for a focus on other responsibilities or needs, such as religious observances for students with their families, performing community service, or completing college applications.

The assignment of extra academic tasks for homework shall not be used as a behavior management tool or as a form of punishment. However, students are expected to submit high quality work on time, and may be required to make up for late or missed work in addition to their regular homework assignments. Educators and families are encouraged to communicate in a timely manner when homework completion or quality is not meeting expectations in order to support the student’s improvement.

This homework policy will apply to students in grades 1 through 12. Students in preschool and kindergarten will not have formal homework assigned to them. Educators at the preschool and kindergarten level will provide parents and caregivers with suggestions regarding how to

provide support and enrichment for their child’s learning at home, including reading aloud and reading together frequently with their child to foster language and literacy skills.

Definition

Homework is defined as tasks that are assigned by teachers to be completed by students outside of class time, including work done using pencil and paper and/or digital tools. These tasks include, but are not limited to: skills practice; reading; viewing of video content; studying or preparation for quizzes or tests; creating written, audio, or visual content; and completion of reports or projects.

Purposes of Homework

Research affirms the importance of independent reading, skills practice, and the development of learning routines for young children, and the value of regular homework assignments for older students. The purposes of homework in the Shrewsbury Schools are to practice newly taught skills, review previously mastered skills, develop independent study habits, and motivate students to pursue personal goals.

Homework is most effective when it provides students opportunities to prepare, study, or extend their learning. Homework will reflect Massachusetts and Shrewsbury Public Schools curriculum standards and related instructional practices, and where appropriate will promote an understanding of the importance of life-long learning by helping students develop independent and self-directed learning skills, executive functioning skills, and work habits.

Every learner is different, and variability among students should be expected. Homework should encourage personal reflection. Educators are empowered with the flexibility to match assignments to meet a child’s individual needs.

Homework Policy Components

1. Frequency of Homework Assignments

All students in Grades 1-12 are expected to spend time on homework on weeknights (Monday through Thursday). Due dates assigned by teachers may vary according to the nature of the assignment; for example, assignments could be due the next day, by the end of the week, or could be part of a longer-term project.

All students in Grades 5-12 may also have homework assigned over the weekend at the discretion of the teacher. Weekend assignments are considered as one night of homework per the time guidelines below. Students in Grades 1-4 will not have weekend assignments. Long-term projects must be assigned so that there are at least two weekends, not including “no homework” dates, before a project is due.

Educators are expected to consider the overall homework load for students when assigning due dates and to collaborate with colleagues to avoid situations where students have multiple projects due or are required to study for multiple tests due in close proximity (such as near the end of grading periods or right before school vacations). Educators will provide advance notice of assignments and due dates to the extent possible in order to assist students and families with planning for homework completion. School administrators will issue specific guidance to teachers regarding the coordination of homework load with consideration for different subjects, departments, etc. at their grade span.

Administrators and educators at each grade span will provide guidance regarding how students can communicate requests for extensions of homework due dates. Reasonable accommodations will be provided through extensions for due dates with regard to absences related to student illness, family obligations, religious observances, etc. Flexibility to respond to other student-specific situations will be provided as appropriate, with the goal of promoting student academic progress in light of personal circumstances. Schools and educators will communicate what supports are available for students who need assistance with completing homework, as well as consequences for students who do not meet homework expectations.

2. Time Guidelines By Grade Level

The guidelines below provide for the approximate maximum amount of focused time that homework assignments should take each night. It is understood that different students will require different amounts of time based on a variety of factors. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to speak with their child’s teacher(s) if homework is routinely taking much more or much less time than called for in the guidelines.

Required reading assignments are included within the time allotments at each grade level. Because reading is crucial to academic success, voluntary reading beyond homework time guidelines is encouraged.

Time Guidelines for Homework by Grade Level:

- Grade 1: 15 minutes Monday-Thursday
- Grade 2: 20 minutes Monday-Thursday
- Grade 3: 30 minutes Monday-Thursday
- Grade 4: 40 minutes Monday-Thursday
- Grade 5: 50 minutes Monday-Friday
- Grades 6-8: 60-90 minutes Monday-Friday
- Grades 9-10: 20 minutes per course Monday-Friday
- Grades 11-12: 25 minutes per course Monday-Friday

At the High School level, Advanced Placement (AP) Courses follow a national curriculum that includes a final exam. In order to provide opportunities for students taking AP courses to learn, practice, and reinforce concepts and to stay on pace, homework that requires greater amounts of time than found in the guidelines above may be assigned in AP courses.

3. Accommodating Religious Observances by Students

Per School Committee Policy #291, students who miss school or cannot complete homework due to any religious observance will be provided with the opportunity to make up work without penalty. Families are encouraged to communicate with educators regarding any situation where religious observances may impact their student's attendance or homework completion.

4. "No Homework" Dates

To meet the guiding principle regarding "no homework" periods throughout the school year, the superintendent will annually present a recommended calendar of "no homework" dates for the following school year for the approval of the School Committee. The superintendent will base this recommendation on evolving educational practices and needs of the school community. Once the "no homework" calendar is approved, the district administration and school principals

will communicate the specific dates and expectations for “no homework” periods to students, families, and educators, both in advance of each school year and periodically throughout the year.

For “no homework” periods, homework shall not be assigned on the school day prior to the “no homework” date(s), and no assignments will be due and no tests or other assessments that require studying will occur on the school day following the “no homework” date(s).

5. Shared Responsibilities

The mission of the Shrewsbury Public Schools urges that the schools work “in partnership with the community.” Such a partnership includes not only students, teachers and families, but also coaches, advisors, and counselors. The spirit of collaboration and collective responsibility to support students is particularly important in the area of homework.

The availability of devices and software enables educators to differentiate homework efficiently. Increased access to learning tools means that all stakeholders share responsibility for maintaining good communication using both traditional and digital means.

Maintaining a strong partnership requires good communication as well as flexibility, because students in different grade spans may need different levels of support in managing their workload and/or schedules.

Responsibilities of Students

Students are expected to check their planner, device, and/or learning management system (e.g., Schoology, Seesaw, etc.) for assignments, and to reach out to educators if they are unsure about how to access or submit assignments, complete work online, or if they need help managing their assigned workload. Students at the middle and high school levels are expected to use their device, a paper planner and/or the calendar function in the learning management system to manage due dates for major assignments, exams and projects.

On receiving homework, students are expected to work independently to complete it. This means students will, in a manner appropriate for their grade level:

- Ask for help if the assignment is not clear to them.
- Copy all assignments into their planner and/or device, carefully recording due dates and important information.

- Set a time each day to do homework.
- Check work and, if necessary, explain it to an adult.
- Maintain high quality work on homework assignments.
- Take home all necessary resources, such as electronic devices, packets, textbooks, notes and study guides to accurately complete homework.
- Bring the completed homework back to school or submit it electronically as directed when it is due.
- Be responsible for getting assignments when absent from school.
- If experiencing a challenge that is interfering with managing their workload and completing their homework in a quality manner, communicate with the teacher to seek assistance or to request an extension of a homework deadline.
- Be responsible for taking care of, and returning, any borrowed resource materials.
- Demonstrate academic integrity when completing assignments. Students are expected to use technology tools, including artificial intelligence, only in ways that are authorized by the teacher to complete assignments.

Responsibilities of Parents/Caregivers

Homework should not be done by parents and caregivers. However, support at home is critical to student success. For that reason, parents and caregivers have responsibilities, including to:

- Promote a positive attitude toward homework as part of the learning process.
- Understand and reinforce expectations for the quality of student work.
- Provide structure, space, and tools needed to help the child organize for the completion of homework.
- Be available to provide supervision, but do not do the assignment for the child.
- Have an understanding of the amount of assistance appropriate for homework assignments.
- Communicate often with the student about their homework and as necessary with teachers, giving feedback to the teacher when there is a homework concern.

- Communicate with the teacher(s) if there is an individual situation or need regarding the child's homework, in order to partner with the teacher(s) regarding a plan for quality homework completion. This includes providing information about the need for accommodations for religious observations or family obligations; seeking flexibility in order to manage their child's workload so that the student can complete their assignments in a quality way; or other specific circumstances that could affect homework. As a student becomes older and more mature, the parent/caregiver is encouraged to have their child communicate with their teacher about their situation.
- Learn strategies/techniques for helping the student with homework, through sources such as school and teacher communications, parenting workshops, community forums, and PTO presentations.
- Help your child to balance homework with other responsibilities and activities.
- In the interest of maintaining good communication, check the student's planner and/or digital learning management system dashboard regularly.

Responsibilities of Educators

Educators will familiarize parents with the digital tools they use to assign and evaluate homework with the goal of ensuring that all families know how to view student assignments. Educators will use the digital learning management system as required by the district at their grade span to post due dates for major assignments, exams, and projects.

Teachers may assign homework during class time or outside of class time using the district's learning management system, within the guidelines set by their school administration regarding when homework completion can be expected based on the time of day that an assignment is posted.

As they consider options for homework, educators will:

- Communicate expectations to students for how the assignment should be completed and the learning goal(s) being addressed (e.g., practicing a new skill, preparing for an assessment, etc.)
- Consider the amount of time an assignment will require in order to align with the targets for time spent each night on homework, including special projects.
- Establish objectives and guidelines for special projects, including any expectations for

parent/caregiver participation.

- Be clear about the appropriate use of technology tools, including artificial intelligence, so that students and parents/caregivers understand what is expected regarding academic integrity.
- With as much advance notice as possible, communicate all assignments and due dates to students and post them as required, and provide time for students to record them where students use a paper planning tool.
- Model homework strategies and provide exemplars to clarify expectations as appropriate throughout the school year.
- Establish a system for recording and monitoring homework completion and quality, including reading assignments.
- Review homework and provide feedback in a timely manner. Feedback does not require grading or responding in writing to every homework assignment; educators are expected to communicate frequently enough to signal whether the quality of the homework is meeting expectations and whether there are concerns about missing assignments or late submissions, so that the student has an opportunity to improve.
- Ensure that resources and materials required for homework projects are easily obtained by the student, and work with families and school administration as needed to ensure that no student will be unable to complete an assignment due to lack of financial resources.
- Provide ways for parents and caregivers to communicate with teachers about homework, using translation tools where appropriate.
- Notify parents/caregivers when poor homework quality or missing assignments are cause for concern, using translation tools where appropriate.
- Assign long term projects so that the completion time includes more than one weekend (not including “no homework” dates), and is not limited to a school vacation period.
- Discuss homework practices with colleagues and align them with these policy guidelines; while it is not expected that homework assignments are the same in different classes, the volume and types of homework assigned to students in the same grade level or course should be consistent across different teachers and teacher teams.
- Work with students to provide flexibility in order to promote quality completion of assignments while responding to student needs. This may include extending deadlines

where warranted and using strategies to accommodate individual situations.

- Follow the guidelines in the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan (DCAP) and meet all legal requirements of a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 Accommodation Plan that may be related to homework.

Student voice is important. For this reason, educators are strongly encouraged to periodically consider student feedback regarding the homework they assign and to include options where students have opportunities for self-direction where appropriate.

Having choice develops motivation and purpose. Where appropriate, give students responsibility for setting and monitoring progress toward personal learning goals and provide choice of topics, methods, tools, etc. to demonstrate understanding and empower students.

Responsibilities of Leadership

District and school leaders, including the superintendent and assistant superintendents, principals, assistant principals, directors, and curriculum coordinators/instructional coaches are responsible for supporting the implementation of this policy; monitoring how effectively students, educators, and families are in meeting their roles and responsibilities listed above; and ensuring that district practices are aligned with this policy and implemented with fidelity.

Leaders will:

- Communicate the following information annually to students, families, and staff and provide reminders at appropriate times throughout the school year: the guidance and expectations found in this homework policy; the “no homework” calendar; and the information in School Committee Policy 291 regarding accommodations to make up work when students miss school for a religious observance.
- Ensure that homework is consistent with the educational goals of the Shrewsbury Public Schools.
- Facilitate communication between general education, English language education, special education, and subject specialist teachers concerning homework.
- Support educators in the implementation of the homework guidelines in this policy and best educational practices regarding homework.
- Consider the impact of homework on students’ overall educational program in the context of evolving research on best practices.

- Support the need for balance among the many learning activities in the life of a student.
- Facilitate the communication process between the school and home and help maintain the home/school partnership regarding homework.

This policy will be reviewed within five years of its effective date.