

In the spring of 2019, Shrewsbury Public Schools engaged their community and students in a conversation about how to refine district homework policies. Participants were invited to share thoughts, rate the thoughts of others and discover the results of the exchange. Read on to learn about the Differences and Top themes that emerged in across these exchanges.



## ADULT EXCHANGE

 **1,378**  
Participants

 **1,418**  
Thoughts

 **30,182**  
Ratings

Q: What are some things you would like us to consider as we review our existing district homework policy?

## STUDENT EXCHANGE

 **3,774**  
Participants

 **7,588**  
Thoughts

 **101,830**  
Ratings

Q: How can we make your homework experience better?

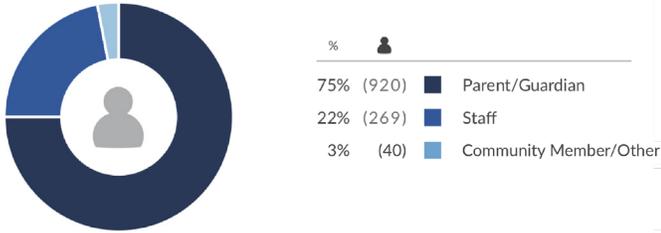


# ADULT EXCHANGE

The following charts show the breakdown of the exchange participants.

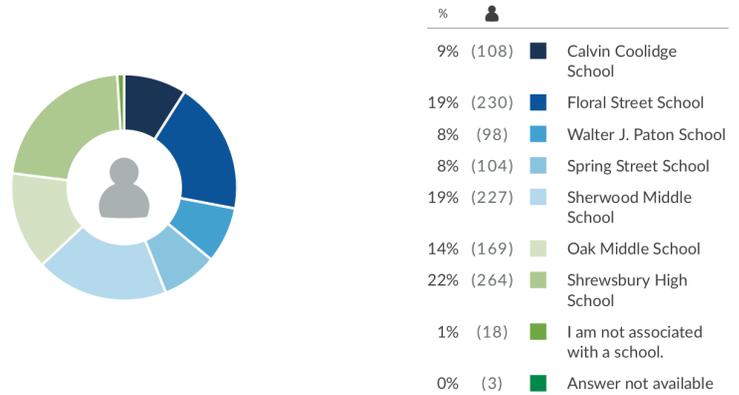
## PARTICIPATION BY ROLE

Please select the one that you feel best describes your involvement with our schools.



## PARTICIPATION BY SCHOOL

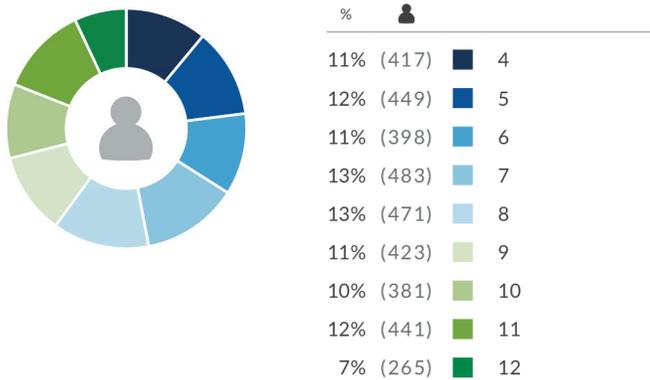
What school are you most closely associated with? If you have children at more than one school, please select the school of your younger child.



# STUDENT EXCHANGE

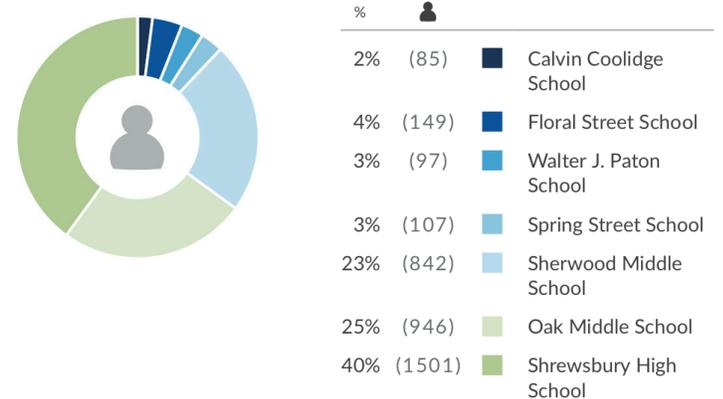
## PARTICIPATION BY GRADE

What grade are you in?



## PARTICIPATION BY SCHOOL

What school do you go to?



# DIFFERENCES

Differences are thoughts considered interesting or highly engaging to groups of participants but may not be reflected in the top themes. They consist of **Different ratings** and **Common ratings**. Different ratings are thoughts that were rated high by one group of participants and rated low by another group, indicating areas of disagreement. Common ratings are thoughts that were rated high by both groups of participants, indicating areas of agreement. Differences in the demographic breakdowns of Group A and Group B are noted where significant.

## ADULT EXCHANGE

### ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Group A

103 (35%)



Group B

91 (31%)

### DIFFERENT RATINGS

Group A ↑ Group B ↓

**Homework is not necessary, especially in the early elementary years.** Children are over scheduled/exhausted. With the high level of working parents combined with activities, families have little time to enjoy each other.

4.8 ★

1.4 ★

**Homework isn't effective.** We should provide options for families who want it, but many children either receive no help or too much.

4.5 ★

1.3 ★

**An opportunity, if available, to have kids do and finish their homework in school.** It's tough when kids have a heavy sport schedule to start homework at 8pm.

4.7 ★

1.4 ★

**From my point of view, I consider it right the homework that kids do at home.** 1.9 ★ 5.0 ★

It is important because it makes kids more responsible and pushes them to study and learn more.

**The importance of reading and math skills.** I think it's absolutely imperative for 2.2 ★ 4.5 ★

students to practice their math facts and reading skills daily outside of the school setting with their parents.

**I think the current homework policy is reasonable, or can even allow for 1.8 ★ 4.1 ★**

**slightly more homework.** I believe homework helps to reinforce what students have learned in school, and allows parents to get an idea of how their child is doing on a subject.

COMMON RATINGS

**Daily homework is too much for elementary kids, one of my kid's teachers gives 4.8 ★ 4.2 ★**

**the full weeks worth of assignments on Monday.** That's great. It allows me flexibility on homework - if I have to work late, or if we are outside playing or if we are just busy, we can't manage the weekly assignment.

**Ensure the homework is correlated with what they are being taught in 5.0 ★ 5.0 ★**

**the classroom.**

**Personal reading is essential outside the classroom.** Interest-based reading in a 4.5 ★ 4.8 ★

variety of genre allows for a great deal of growth in vocabulary and schema.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL



Group A

91 (39%)



Group B

59 (25%)

### DIFFERENT RATINGS

Group A ↑ Group B ↓

**Research does not support hours of homework as being beneficial.**

4.8 ★ 1.8 ★

**Discontinue homework in the elementary/middle school levels.** The way our children are being taught subjects like math is quite different than the way we were taught. I feel that as parents, we can do more harm.

4.2 ★ 1.1 ★

**Decreasing or possibly eliminating all homework.** It is important because I feel the amount of pressure that is put on kids is unreal. There are many other districts that have already moved to no homework.

4.3 ★ 1.6 ★

Group A ↓ Group B ↑

**Some homework every night.** My fifth grader often doesn't have homework. Having homework sets the expectation correctly for high school and college where workload is significant.

2.0 ★ 4.2 ★

**Need to have more homework and more importantly time allotted for each of the homework topics.** This way the students as well as parents can do time management.

1.8 ★ 4.3 ★

**Homework is an important part of school.** I find the more difficult the challenge the more my child rises to that challenge. The assignment given at this level prepare students for what is at the next level. Without preparation they will not be prepared and not succeed.

1.8 ★ 4.1 ★

**Make homework time consistent among teams.** It's not OK for some teams to be "homework heavy" and some to be "homework light."

4.6 ★

4.3 ★

**The current policy is not consistent.** Over 6 different teams that I have experienced, homework assigned has varied widely, relative to time expected to take to complete.

5.0 ★

5.0 ★

**Consistency between teams and classes/subjects.** The depth and breadth of homework can impact how well prepared - or not - a student is for high school. Students should be equally prepared.

4.2 ★

4.5 ★



## HIGH SCHOOL



Group A

80 (47%)



Group B

42 (25%)

Notable demographic breakdowns are as follows:

- 84% of participants in **Group A** are Parents/Guardians compared to 33% of participants in **Group B**.
- 67% of participants in **Group B** are Staff compared to 16% of participants in **Group A**.

## DIFFERENT RATINGS

Group A ↑ Group B ↓

**I'd like to see a limit set on the amount of homework each class can assign.**

4.8 ★

1.4 ★

If students have 6-7 classes and each teacher assigns 30 minutes of homework each night, that is 3+ hours every night.

**Cut back on the over leading with multiple classes assigning large amounts at the same time so that my daughter after volunteering or participating in a sport doesn't have to stay up until midnight to get the work done.**

4.7 ★

1.7 ★

**There is excessive homework per night and half of it is busy work.** A balance of homework that is quality reinforcement is important for kids mental health and energy level and focus at school, rather than too much work.

4.4 ★

2.3 ★

**Overprotecting Educational Bubble.** These students will be shocked when they have to face the real world and its expectations without special accommodations and support.

1.3 ★ 4.8 ★

**Colleges are not changing their expectations regarding work to be completed outside of class.** Our students need to be disciplined and prepared in terms of completing daily and long-term assignments.

2.4 ★ 4.8 ★

**The other extensive activities students participate in.** Is this what is making homework stressful for them?

2.0 ★ 4.5 ★

COMMON RATINGS

**School vacation weeks.** I would like to see no homework over school breaks. It's important because the kids need a break too. It's also time that families travel together on vacation.

4.9 ★ 4.0 ★

**Students get too much homework on the weekends and breaks.** They don't get a chance to recharge their batteries. My daughter is spending way too much time always doing homework.

4.5 ★ 4.4 ★

**I am unsure if the amount of homework students have has gone up over the years, but the amount of time they spend on activities outside of school has.** Homework is one piece of the puzzle when it comes to determining students' overall level of stress.

4.2 ★ 4.6 ★



# SHARED/STUDENT EXCHANGE

## ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Group A

140 (36%)



Group B

123 (32%)

Notable demographic breakdowns are as follows:

- 40% of participants in **Group B** are affiliated with Walter J. Paton School compared to 12% of participants in **Group A**.

### DIFFERENT RATINGS

Group A ↑ Group B ↓

**Less homework.** So we call can do more stuff with our free time.

4.8 ★ 1.2 ★

**No homework.** Some students could get stressed and might be home alone, so they might need help with a math or reading problem, something that they can't read.

4.5 ★ 2.0 ★

**Do the subjects that you don't do often.** Because you will expand your knowledge over various subjects.

4.8 ★ 1.8 ★

Group A ↓ Group B ↑

**Reading.** What I think we should do with reading is we have an article to read, then just answer some multiple choice. And maybe one short answer question.

1.3 ★ 4.7 ★

**I also think there should be one subject per night.** If people were used to the rest of the subjects except math they would just do math. This is still optional.

2.0 ★ 4.6 ★

**Have more math homework on the subject we're working on.** Because it's hard if you're working on one thing for the entire day and then another at night.

1.5 ★ 4.1 ★

**I think that our homework should be all in one packet that we will take home on Monday and return on Friday.** I think this will help because we won't have to take home a new page everyday, because we might forget it, or lose it.

4.0 4.6 

**I also think that homework should be more fun and exciting for the student.** I think so because everybody should enjoy homework and maybe while they're doing their homework, they might not focus and won't be able to finish.

4.3 4.3 

**If some people have activities like sports, soccer and more but homework stops them from doing activities or being on time to go to their activities.** Because I want others and me to have time to do things like sports and other things to do other than school homework.

4.3 4.2 

## MIDDLE SCHOOL



Group A

114 (11%)



Group B

34 (3%)

### DIFFERENT RATINGS

Group A ↑

Group B ↓

**Less homework.** People are busy with activities.

4.9 ★

1.2 ★

**Essays should not be given for homework.** When you give essays for homework, that one essay will affect the person's life by cutting through their daily routine and goals they want to meet.

4.5 ★

1.3 ★

**Less HW for all subjects.** Because so the students can focus more and get things done quicker. This way no one has to stress out.

4.7 ★

1.4 ★

Group A ↓

Group B ↑

**I think that the homework I'm given is a good amount.** I think it's fine because I'm not given too much homework but I'm given too little homework. I also think that the homework isn't too complicated.

1.4 ★

4.0 ★

**They don't give us too much homework.** This is good for me because I have time to do my physical activities.

1.6 ★

3.7 ★

## COMMON RATINGS

Group A ↑ Group B ↑

**No homework on vacations.** Vacations are meant for fun, not homework and that homework will bore students lives and make it not an enjoyable vacation.

4.8 ★

5.0 ★

**Give time to get to do homework at school.** If the kids needs any help with anything they can just directly ask the teacher or somebody for help.

4.9 ★

4.5 ★

**Don't give homework on MCAS.** Giving homework on MCAS days will make students very stressed since they have had such a long rough day doing a huge test.

4.9 ★

4.7 ★



# TOP THEMES

Using an algorithm, thoughts are grouped together by topic to form themes. The theme names reflect the key words for each topic as generated by the algorithm.

## ADULT EXCHANGE

### PURPOSE OF WORK

- Participants emphasized that homework should have a clear educational purpose and not be assigned just to give students work to do.
- Parents/Guardians, Staff and participants affiliated with Sherwood Middle School and Shrewsbury High School rated this theme highly.

**Homework should not be assigned just to assign homework.** It should have some meaning. 4.3 ★ 26 

**I would like you to consider the quality of the homework that is required at each grade level.** Is it important or is it just busy work. What benefit does it have for the student to complete this work. 4.2 ★ 26 

### ASSIGNMENT POSTING AND DUE DATES

- Participants emphasized that homework assignments should be posted on Schoology consistently and with more notice.
- Parents/Guardians and participants affiliated with Calvin Cooledge School, Spring Street School, and Shrewsbury High School rated this theme highly.

**Consistency of posting homework on Schoology.** Most teachers use this tool; however, there are some who do not. This should be a consistent way of posting homework throughout the building. 4.5 ★ 21 

**Teachers should be required to post HW assignments by 3pm.** Posting HW assignments at 8pm is not fair, especially to younger students. 4.2 ★ 10 

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Participants expressed concern that too much homework may have a detrimental effect on students' mental health.
- Parents/Guardians and participants affiliated with Floral Street School, Walter J. Paton School and Sherwood Middle School rated this theme highly.

**In school children should learn cooperation, empathy, kindness, and how to resolve conflicts constructively.** The social skills children learn at a very young age can set the tone for learning ability far into adulthood.

4.5 ★ 27 

**I would like there to be less homework.** Kids need to recharge their minds and have some downtime every day. Too much homework is bad for kids. Kids who spend too much time on homework experience more stress, physical health problems, a lack of balance in their lives

4.2 ★ 26 

## BREAKS AND FAMILY TIME

- Participants emphasized the importance of family time after school and on vacation.
- Parents/Guardians, Staff and participants affiliated with Walter J. Paton School, Sherwood Middle School, and Shrewsbury High School rated this theme highly.

**A balance must be found between preparing students for high school/developing study skills and providing them time to spend with family and friends and recharge from the school day.**

4.4 ★ 27 

**School vacation weeks.** I would like to see no homework over school breaks. It's important because the kids need a break too. Its also times that families travel together on vacation.

4.3 ★ 21 

## CONSISTENCY

- Participants expressed concern that there is an inconsistent amount of homework assigned across teams.
- Parents/Guardians and participants affiliated with Calvin Coolidge School and Sherwood Middle School rated this theme highly.

**Consistency across teams at the middle school level is something that needs to**

4.5 ★

18 

**be addressed.** It is important because the expectations and requirements are not consistent for all students. It depends on what team you are assigned to.

**Homework varies greatly from team to team, year to year.** Sometimes

4.2 ★

24 

homework can exceed 2 hours a night in 6th grade. Children do have extracurricular activities. They work very hard during the school day, with no recess to speak of at all. Enough with homework!

## DAILY READING

- Participants expressed a need to encourage more reading outside of class time, including both assigned and personal reading.
- Parents/Guardians, Staff and participants affiliated with Spring Street School and Shrewsbury High School rated this theme highly.

**Personal reading is essential outside the classroom.** Interest-based reading in a variety of genre allows for a great deal of growth in vocabulary and schema.

4.2 ★

26 

**Reading should always be done at night and discussion and review should be done during class time.** HS class time should not be spent reading the assigned novel. It should be spent discussing what was already read.

3.9 ★

26 

## IMPACT ON EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- Participants expressed concern about how homework cuts into extracurricular activities.
- Parents/Guardians and participants affiliated with Walter J. Paton School and Sherwood Middle School rated this theme highly.

**I am unsure if the amount of homework students have has gone up over the years, but the amount of time they spend on activities outside of school has.**

4.3



21



Homework is one piece of the puzzle when it comes to determining students' overall level of stress.

**Times have changed and we work the children very rigorously during the school day.** They need other activities after school. Children need to be encouraged to play outside, do exercises, enjoy sports, etc.

4.1



28



## INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

- Participants emphasized the importance of considering individual courses and student abilities when developing homework assignments.
- Parents/Guardians, Staff and participants affiliated with Walter J. Paton School and Shrewsbury High School rated this theme highly.

**Please consider the differences of each course and please don't issue a "one size fits all" policy.** Each teacher has a specific way of teaching and forcing us all to do the same won't be helpful for the students.

4.0



22



**Homework can absolutely be differentiated to accommodate a variety of learners.** Parents should let teachers know when homework is at a frustration level for their kids so assignments can be tailored.

3.9



26



## USE OF TECHNOLOGY

- Participants expressed concern about iPad homework adding to a student's screen time.
- Parents/Guardians and participants affiliated with Calvin Coolidge School, Floral Street School and Sherwood Middle School rated this theme highly.

**Consider paper only homework.** iPads would stay and be charged at school. Kids get too much screen time. 4.1 ★ 26 

**Less homework on apps - more paper assignments and old fashioned books.** 3.9 ★ 25   
Hard for parents to be engaged and we struggle to limit screens already. Also, not every child has their own tablet, making it difficult for parents to manage security on their own devices.

## TIME MANAGEMENT

- Participants expressed concern about the amount of time homework takes students to complete.
- Parents/Guardians rated this theme highly.

**Amount of time homework takes.** Between enrichment programs (e.g. Lego robotics, music, etc.) and homework, my kids have very little "unwind" time to just be a kid. 4.1 ★ 7 

**Homework could be improved if it was not as long and as much.** I think that is important because people like to play outside and spend time with their family. 4.0 ★ 27 

# STUDENT EXCHANGE

## ALEKS

- Participants expressed concern about the amount of time Aleks takes to complete, and the relevance of the topics to classwork.
- Participants affiliated with Grades 9-11 and Shrewsbury High School rated this theme highly.

**Aleks questions are NOT balanced at all.** Some questions take minutes to complete and some hours. Really some questions will take hours. Since the teacher does not teach everything on Aleks, we have to figure out how to do questions using the internet which takes too much time.

4.5 ★ 15 

**Less Aleks every week.** Sometimes Aleks topics can get really hard and people have different topics to do so having a lot of Aleks when you have hard topics can be hard.

4.5 ★ 15 

## PURPOSE OF WORK

- Participants emphasized that homework should have a clear educational purpose and not be assigned just to give students work to do.
- Participants affiliated with Grades 9-12 and Shrewsbury High School rated this theme highly.

**Homework should not be busy work.** This is important, because students are more likely to actually do the work if they feel it is beneficial to them, otherwise they don't do it

4.5 ★ 17 

**I feel that some homework helps, but other times its just to keep us busy.** Sometimes teachers just give us homework to give us homework. I feel that half the time our homework doesn't even relate to what we're learning about.

4.5 ★ 15 

## TESTING AND APPLICATION TIME

- Participants expressed concern about assigning homework during testing or college application times.
- Participants affiliated with Grades 7, 9, 10 and 12 and Oak Middle School and Shrewsbury High School rated this theme highly.

**Don't give homework during MCAS or AP Exams.** Students want to do well on those exams and it's difficult to do that when there are so many other assignments we need to complete.

4.5 ★

16 

**Reduce homework for seniors in the first semester.** It is important here because we are already stressed with college applications, so this adds on to the stress and causes anxiety.

4.5 ★

16 

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- Participants expressed concern about how homework impacts students' mental and physical health.
- Participants affiliated with Grades 8-11 and Oak Middle School and Shrewsbury High School rated this theme highly.

**Health.** We get so packed with homework that we don't sleep right anymore, our mental health goes down the drain from stress. It's hard.

4.5 ★

17 

**It's effecting mental health.** Mental health in students is dropping because its so just overpowering being stressed out all the time, you have no free time without staying up late

4.4 ★

17 

## HOMEWORK GRADING AND EXTRA CREDIT

- Participants emphasized that homework should be considered practice, and not graded for accuracy.
- Participants affiliated with Grades 7, 9, 10 and 11 and Oak Middle School and Shrewsbury High School rated this theme highly.

**Homework should not be graded on how many you got correct.** There can be homework quizzes, but homework should be graded on completion and worth more. Homework is just to refresh our minds, we do not need to be graded on something we have access to the internet for there is no point.

4.5 ★ 16 

**Homework should be graded on completion because it is practice.** Homework is for practice, and it doesn't matter if a student gets something wrong if s/he understands how to do it by the end of the assignment.

4.4 ★ 12 

## TIME MANAGEMENT

- Participants emphasized that teachers should take time management and workload into consideration when assigning homework.
- Participants affiliated with Grades 7, 8 and 10 and Sherwood Middle School, Oak Middle School and Shrewsbury High School rated this theme highly.

**Less long homework assignments and more short assignments.** Students commonly stay up until midnight finishing one assignment, leading to only 6 hours of sleep, causing many students to be sleep-deprived.

4.5 ★ 15 

**It's hard to manage your time when your teachers don't.** When a physics teacher assigns 50 problems, but you also have to type out a script for a project, but you also have an hour of math, you just can't.

4.4 ★ 16 

## BREAKS AND FAMILY TIME

- Participants expressed the importance of family time after school and on vacation.
- Participants affiliated with Grades 5-12 and Sherwood Middle School, Oak Middle School and Shrewsbury High School rated this theme highly.

**There should not be any homework over breaks.** Students deserve a break when one is meant.

4.5 ★

17 

**Homework on breaks should not be allowed.** We have break for a reason...to have a break. We need time to relax. We should not have to worry about work due the Monday we get back.

4.4 ★

17 

