

POLICY
RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

HOMEWORK

Guiding Belief & Purpose

Rhode Island School for the Deaf recognizes the importance of assigning meaningful and quality homework to students. Years of research indicates that schools in which homework is routinely assigned and assessed tend to have higher achieving students. Homework fosters student achievement, independence, and teaches responsibility. Meaningful homework can also serve as a vital link and communication tool between school and home.

The true function of homework is not to introduce new learning. It is intended to encourage students to become self-directed and independent learners and to help support and promote learning in the following ways:

Prepare: provides opportunities to gather/organize information in preparation for active and new learning experiences

Check for Understanding: provides students and teachers the opportunity to formatively assess students' grasp of newly acquired learning

Practice: provides opportunities to apply newly learned knowledge, and/or to review, revise, and reinforce newly acquired knowledge and skills

Extend Learning: provides students with opportunities to expand upon and extend topics taught in class in order to cultivate creative thinking skills, develop a deeper understanding of concepts and ideas, and employ higher level cognitive applications related to their learning.

The accepted guideline in the US, recommended by both the National Education Association (NEA) and the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA), is the 10-minute rule: Children should average no more than 10 minutes of homework each day for each grade reached. (i.e., Grade 4 = 40 minutes maximum time.)

Policy

Meaningful and quality homework shall be assigned regularly (at least 3x/ week, starting in Grade 1) in accordance with students' development and ages. It shall provide opportunities for student choice, when appropriate.

All homework assigned shall be of a quality level. Quality homework is relevant, useful, and driven by the learning goals/objectives of the lesson. Quality homework also elicits teacher attention, response and feedback. Homework shall have a clear purpose that is understood by students and provides clear expectations for completion.

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Homework should be differentiated based on student learning style and ability and home support available. Recognizing that learning is a developmental process, this policy reflects a scaffold approach for homework expectations at each level.

Homework shall not be used as a punishment or as an excuse not to teach a concept thoroughly.

The benefits of well designed homework outweigh simply having a lot of homework. More does not necessarily mean better quality or more rigorous expectations. Assignments should be able to be completed in a reasonable amount of time. Reasonable shall be defined in terms of a student's age, developmental and educational levels. RISDeaf will implement the following time guidelines:

1. **Kindergarten** shall be assigned homework at least once/ week and due to their young age and reliance on parents, students shall be allowed several days to complete the homework assignment. (Not to exceed 45 minutes/ week)

2. Elementary

At the elementary level, homework is not graded. Homework is not included in the student's assessment of academic achievement. The goal for all stakeholders (i.e. students, parents, teachers, and administrators) is to work together to develop each child's lifelong learning habits and to help every child achieve academic success through opportunities for practice. The suggested time assigned for homework shall be no more than 30 minutes per night for ages 7-9 years and 45-50 minutes per night for ages 9-11 years. As a general rule, the amount of homework should be 10-minutes times the student's grade level. (For example: grade 2 should have about 20 minutes of homework, grade 3 about 30 minutes of homework per evening, etc.) The amount of homework should be differentiated to accommodate learning styles and developmental levels as appropriate to the learner when possible.

3. Middle School

At this level, homework is generally graded as a learner quality and is not included in the student's assessment of academic achievement. Homework that is considered an extension of learning or project-based assignment may be considered a process or product grade. Students must be informed before-hand if an extension of learning assignment is to be graded as a product grade. At the middle school level, students may receive homework assignments from several classes on the same evening not to exceed 60 minutes per evening in total. Homework will not be counted for more than 10% of the student's quarterly average.

English Language Arts instruction typically consists of a combination of reading, writing (composition), speaking/signing, and receptive language. The more students read, the more fluent they will become which can lead to higher proficiency in writing. Students should be encouraged to read nightly as part of their homework mindset.

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Mathematics and Science homework, when assigned, will reinforce concepts taught in class. Practice examples, reviewing science concepts, drills with multiplication facts, solving simple equations, and solving story problems are examples of homework that might be given..

Middle School students will be provided with a planner and guided in the strategy of writing down each nightly assignment and due date. Teachers will ensure clear understanding of the assignment and will help students reflect on what they need to take home; listing all necessary materials to complete the assignment. This age student will be provided an additional opportunity to submit delayed homework, when reasonable and appropriate.

4. High School Grades

- a) Teachers will assign quality homework as defined above that will not exceed 15% of a student's academic grade.
- b) Students must complete homework by the date required by the teacher.
- c) Students must obtain assignments when absent by utilizing electronic communication, peers, or meetings with teacher(s).
- d) Individual teachers can determine if additional delays will be honored.
- e) Teachers must be aware of other obligations and/or heavy assignments from other teachers to ensure that no high school student has more than 2 hours of total assignments per night.

One of the primary goals of homework is to help students learn accountability. Accountability is having students finish the work to the best of their ability. Specially designed supports or accommodations for individual students shall be provided as needed.

Teacher Responsibilities for Homework

- a) Assign homework that is relevant, meaningful, and reinforces classroom learning and that is appropriate to students' learning needs. Assign work that allows students to feel competent.
- b) Allocate appropriate time daily for students to record homework and to explain the homework assignment clearly and address questions to clarify any misunderstanding.
- c) Provide a timeline and/or due dates in which homework must be completed.
- d) Provide timely and constructive feedback utilizing strategies that will monitor the accuracy and understanding of concepts.
- e) Adhere to and communicate the district homework policy to students and parents.
- f) Involve parents and contact them if a pattern of late, inaccurate or incomplete homework develops.
- g) Advise students at the beginning of each semester of the percentage of the student's final grade which homework will represent.
- h) Work with student-athletes or those who have other extra-curricular activities after school or in the evenings, in order to offer flexible but firm alternatives.

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Parent Responsibilities for Homework

- a) Promote a positive attitude towards homework and assist the student in prioritizing activities and managing time by making school and assignments a top priority.
- b) Support the student by providing a reasonable time and quiet place to work.
- c) Encourage the use of school resources/materials.
- d) Support students to complete homework on time and encourage them to prepare clarifying questions for class if they seem confused.
- e) Help out when necessary while encouraging independent completion of assignments.
- f) Initiate communication with teachers when necessary.
- g) Parents should feel no compulsion to “fix” their child’s homework. Teachers will use this information for assessment and reteaching purposes.

School Administrative Team Responsibilities

- a) Establish and communicate the district homework policy clearly to the school community.
- b) Support and ensure district homework policy is implemented by all teachers with fidelity as part of instructional practice of teachers.
- c) Ensure that the homework policy is honored.
- d) Support teacher’s attempts to provide additional time for students to complete their work before, during or after school.

While homework has the potential for increasing the student’s competence and responsibility, as well as to provide a good school-to-home connection, RISDeaf also believes that young people need play time, family time, and sufficient sleep. Balancing these factors is important. Students should be encouraged to discuss their concerns with teachers or their guidance counselor.