



## A Note to Parents Regarding the Elementary Homework Statement

During the course of the 2008-2009 school year, the District #204 elementary school principals conducted an in-depth study on the topic of homework in order to guarantee that the district was current with best practices.

Several interesting results were found. They included:

- The focus on the purpose of homework should be student learning not compliance. Teachers know that certain learning skills require practice to perfect, and often homework is used for practice. Research confirms that mastering a skill requires focused practice (Marzano et. al, 2001.)
- Research does seem to verify that a small amount of homework may be good for learning, but too much homework may be bad for learning. Up to a point, homework appears positive, but past the optimal amount, achievement either remains flat or declines. Curiously, the research about the appropriate amount of homework for different grade levels is already consistent with an informal guideline that many teachers already practice – the “ten minute” rule (Cooper, 2007.)
- All homework can be used to check for understanding if we convince students not to be threatened by grades. Grades are not necessary for learning to take place. Grades on homework often get in the way of learning, demotivate students, and create power struggles between students and teachers and between students and parents (Guskey, 2003).
- The goal of assessment of learning should be to keep failure at a minimum and to maintain learner’s confidence – the opposite occurs when homework is graded. The most important question to ask about grading homework is “What is the effect on future learning?” (Stiggins, 2007.) Priority must be given to tasks that do not cause students to give up.
- All homework should receive feedback. Moving from grading to feedback encourages student ownership of learning. Allowing students to take control of their learning makes learning personal (Guskey and Anderson, 2008.)

As a result of these findings, the principals with input from the teachers revised the District #204 homework statement in order to confirm that reasonable time-limited homework, which provides feedback to our students, is still important to the learning process. Although homework will not be graded, reinforcement of learned skills is an essential part of the learning process. Generally, most students will not receive good grades if they do not practice. Finally, in order to ensure school-parent communication and accountability regarding, homework completion to parents, the effort designations of S (Satisfactory) and U (Unsatisfactory) will be used on the quarterly report cards.

## **Homework Tips for Parents**

Facilitating the learning of your child is the primary focus of the District #204 elementary staff. As a result, we understand the importance of an on-going partnership with our parents and students as they attempt school work at home. The following guidelines and tips are offered to assist you and your child to be successful:

### **Parents are encouraged to .....**

Ask your child what they are studying in school.

Ask your child to show and explain to you their homework assignments.

Assist your child in organizing homework materials.

Help your child formulate a plan for completing homework.

Provide an appropriate space for your child to do homework.

### **Parents may if they wish.....**

Help your child interpret assignment directions.

Proof read your child's work, pointing out errors.

Read aloud required reading to your child.

Give practice quizzes to your child to help prepare for tests.

Help your child brainstorm ideas for papers or projects.

Praise your child for completing homework.

### **Parents should not.....**

Attempt to teach your child concepts or skills the child is unfamiliar with.

Complete assignments for your child.

Allow your child to sacrifice sleep to complete homework.

### **Contact the teacher if.....**

- Your child refuses to do their assignment
- Instructions are unclear
- Your child can't seem to get organized to finish assignments
- You can't provide the needed supplies or materials
- Neither you nor your child understand the purpose of the assignments

(Vatterot, 2009) (Pandur, 2005)