

Healthy Homework Balance

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Purpose

What are our current homework practices at the elementary and middle school levels? What does the research say about best practices in homework at different grade levels? What is the most effective use of homework? What does homework look like at different grade levels? What are reasonable expectations for homework? How can parents best support student learning at home? How do Madeira practices compare with neighboring districts?

Methodology

- Current homework practices were analyzed by surveying MES and MMS teachers. Questions included:
 - Do you regularly assign homework? (yes or no)
 - What is the primary goal of the homework you are assigning?(multiple choice)
 - My students are benefitting from their assigned homework. (scaled response)
 - My students are spending an appropriate amount of time on homework. (scaled response)
 - Do you have any additional feedback regarding homework? (short answer)
 - Describe the homework that you expect your students to complete for your subject area on a nightly basis. Examples: nightly reading for 30 minutes, vocabulary review, 10-practice problems, study guide completion, etc. (short answer)
 - What is a reasonable amount of time you expect your students to spend on assigned nightly homework? (multiple choice)
- MES and MMS parents were surveyed to gauge opinions on current homework practices. Survey questions included:
 - On average, how much time does your child spend on homework each day? (multiple choice)
 - My child is assigned a reasonable amount of homework. (scaled response)
 - The homework my child receives is relevant and reinforces concepts taught. (scaled response)

- The amount of homework support you as a parent need to provide your child is reasonable. (scaled response)
- Do you have any additional feedback regarding homework? (short answer)
- We spoke with teachers from neighboring districts including Mariemont, Indian Hill, and Wyoming to see how their homework practices compare with those at MES and MMS.
- We reviewed current homework data and trends that described best practices in homework at the elementary and middle school levels.

Background - What we currently do at Madeira

Madeira Elementary School Policy (according to 2019-2020 Handbook)

Home study is a necessary and important part of each student's educational progress. Some assignments are long range while others are nightly. Parents can assist their children by providing a suitable study area and showing an interest in what the children are doing without actually doing the work for them. It is important to talk to them daily about school and what is happening there. Homework expectations for the grade levels are as follows:

Preschool and Kindergarten • 15 minutes reading nightly Parents should read to their children daily and encourage an interest in books.

1st Grade • 20 minutes reading nightly • Review of sight words nightly • Other work as assigned • Sharing as assigned Parents should review and correct the child's daily papers with their child. A child should also read to his/her parents. As the year progresses, parents can help the child master number facts, sight words, spelling words, and writing skills.

2nd Grade • 20 minutes reading nightly • 10 minutes of math nightly (Mon. - Thurs.) • Tests and special projects as assigned Students should read for at least 15-20 minutes each night. They should learn weekly spelling words and learn addition and subtraction facts. Parents should supervise the correction of papers if required by the teacher. (Homework time is 30-40 minutes.)

3rd Grade • 20-30 minutes reading nightly • 5-10 minutes math fact practice nightly • Review spelling words nightly • Written language arts and math practice assigned weekly • Test preparation and other work as assigned Student plan books are used by the students to manage their assignments and record nightly reading. Parents should check these nightly to ensure assignments are being completed. The average time for homework should be 30-45 minutes.

4th Grade • 30 minutes reading nightly • Review spelling words nightly • Review math facts nightly • Written language arts and math practice assigned weekly • Science and Social Studies test preparation Student plan books are used by the students to manage their assignments. Students and parents should check these nightly to ensure that assignments are being completed. The average time for homework should be 30-45 minutes

Current Practices at MES

Homework is assigned based on grade level and teacher choice.

- *Kindergarteners* are encouraged to read for twenty minutes and practice snap words.
- *First grade* students are encouraged to read nightly and practice math facts.

- *Second grade* students are encouraged to read nightly and practice math facts.
- *Third grade* students have a reading comprehension sheet and 16 review math problems each week. They are also encouraged to read, practice math facts and study for spelling tests weekly.
- *Fourth grade* students have a math spiral review, a spelling list and a reading log with a reflection due each week.

Madeira Middle School Homework Policy (according to 2019-2020 Handbook)

Home study is a necessary and important part of each pupil's educational program. Good planning is necessary as some assignments are long range in nature and require planned study time for completion. Other assignments are made on a nightly basis. Parents should make it a habit to check the student's Schoology account each day to see that their student is completing assignments on time. Madeira Middle School students can expect an average of one to two hours of homework each night. This will vary from throughout certain times of the school year and will increase, as students get older. If your child is spending more than the suggested time doing homework on a consistent basis, please call the teachers to see if they can help reduce the time being spent on homework.

Current Homework Practices at MMS:

Teachers are utilizing homework for additional reading opportunities, guided practice, and spiral review.

- Guided practice reinforces learning that is currently taking place in the classroom.
- Spiral review reinforces learning that has already taken place to make sure students are retaining the knowledge of concepts that have been previously taught throughout the course of the semester/year.

Findings

Research on Best Homework Practices

The National PTA offers guidelines in line with research by Harris Cooper: 10-20 minutes of homework per night for first grade students and an additional 10 minutes per grade level thereafter.

The research on homework, and especially the correlation between homework and student achievement, is mixed at best. It's difficult to control for the many variables that ultimately impact achievement such as student motivation, family support, quality of homework, etc... Generally, the correlation between homework and student achievement is more significant in grades 7-12 than in grades K-6 (Cooper, Robinson and Patall, 2006; Marzano and Pickering 2007). Ultimately the main benefits of homework appear to be long-term academic benefits such as better study habits and skills, non-academic benefits such as organization, time management, self-discipline, and connection between home and school (parent connection with schooling). Because the research is inconclusive when addressing the link between

homework and achievement, it may be beneficial to focus on the practices which increase the positives and decrease potential negatives. The research (synthesized by Marzano, Pickering and Pollock, 2001) is clear on some of these practices.

- 1.) Homework should be assigned with a **purpose**, not as a matter of routine and should also have **meaning**, in contrast to low-level rote tasks. For example, asking students to create their own method to practice spelling words instead of writing each word three times. (The purpose is to learn the words, not write the words).
- 2.) Homework should be **efficient**. Assignments and projects that require nonacademic skills (cutting, gluing, drawing) are very time consuming for parents and students and don't clearly demonstrate students' content knowledge.
- 3.) Homework should promote **ownership**. For example, instead of assigning 20 minutes a night of reading and recording the title, author and number of pages in a log, ask students to read an average of 20-30 minutes a night and then write a short paragraph about what they read (magazines, books, etc...)
- 4.) Students should feel a sense of **competence** when completing homework. Homework should not be used to introduce material. Students should already have the skills and understand the concepts needed to complete the assignment. This can be accomplished by assigning homework toward the beginning of class, providing examples, allowing students to start homework and/or work together in class on assignments.
- 5.) Homework should be **reviewed**, commented upon and discussed.

In addition, it should be noted that homework disproportionately causes students who are already academically and/or situationally challenged to fail and may increase achievement gaps. Assignments that are brief, consistently scheduled, communicated clearly, and involve materials commonly found around the home may help with this. Teachers should clearly communicate homework expectations including how much time should homework take, how much support should caregivers provide, what materials will be needed. Parents should also be encouraged to ask questions and provide feedback on homework difficulty and length of time to complete assignments to the teacher.

Sources:

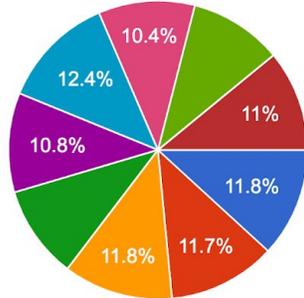
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Parent Survey Results (k-8)

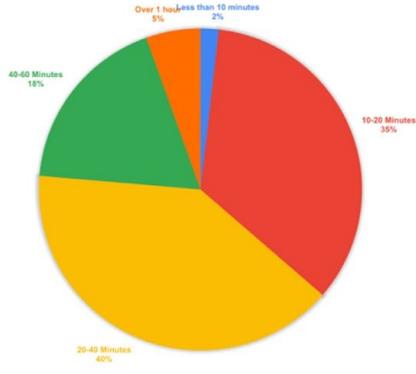
Student grade level

566 responses

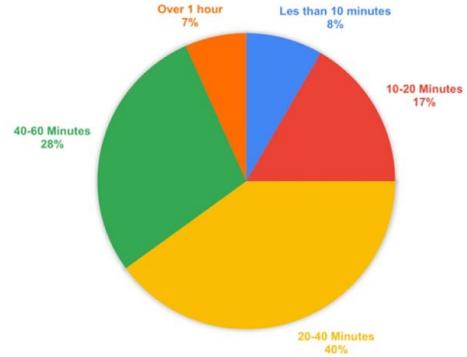


- Kindergarten
- First Grade
- Second Grade
- Third Grade
- Fourth Grade
- Fifth Grade
- Sixth Grade
- Seventh Grade
- Eighth Grade

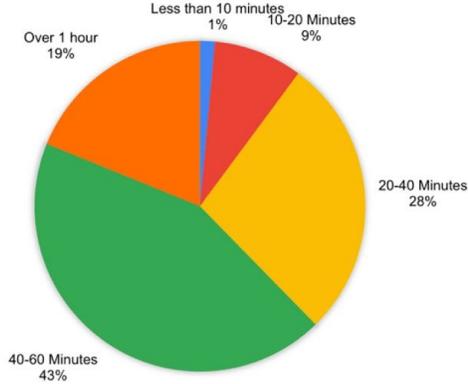
ON AVERAGE, HOW MUCH TIME DOES YOUR CHILD SPEND ON HOMEWORK EACH DAY? 3RD GRADE



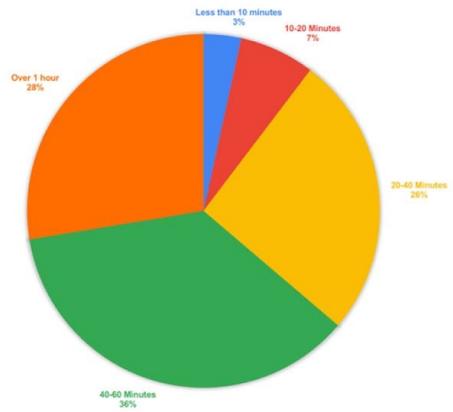
ON AVERAGE, HOW MUCH TIME DOES YOUR CHILD SPEND ON HOMEWORK EACH DAY? 4TH GRADE



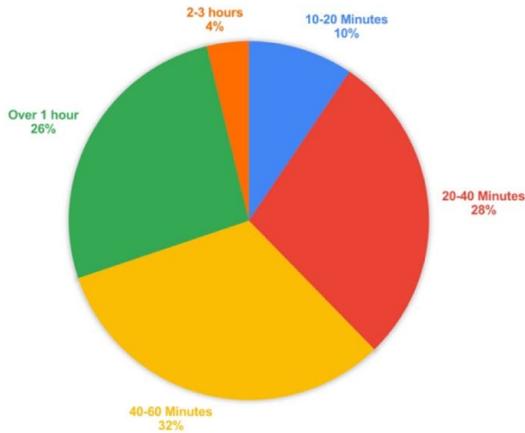
ON AVERAGE, HOW MUCH TIME DOES YOUR CHILD SPEND ON HOMEWORK EACH DAY? 5TH GRADE - 69 TOTAL



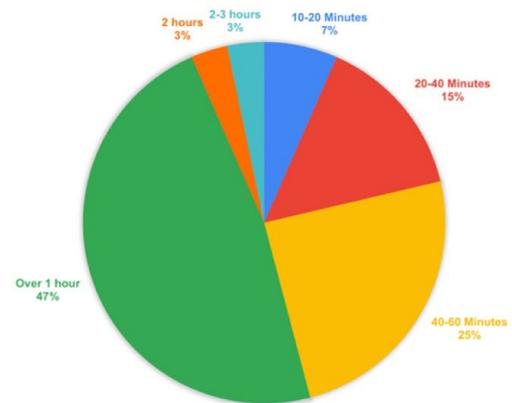
ON AVERAGE, HOW MUCH TIME DOES YOUR CHILD SPEND ON HOMEWORK EACH DAY? 6TH GRADE - 58 TOTAL



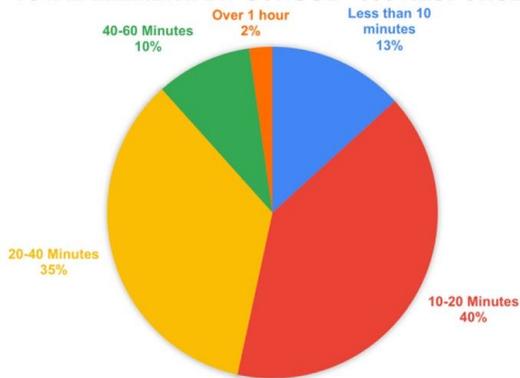
ON AVERAGE, HOW MUCH TIME DOES YOUR CHILD SPEND ON HOMEWORK EACH DAY?
7TH GRADE - 53 TOTAL



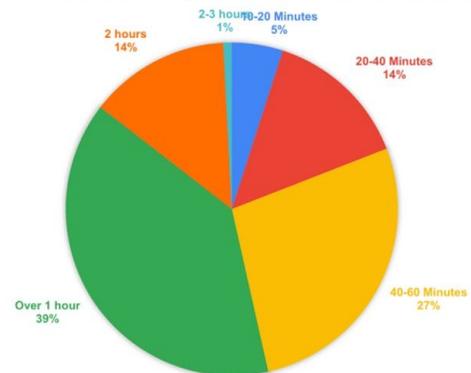
ON AVERAGE, HOW MUCH TIME DOES YOUR CHILD SPEND ON HOMEWORK EACH DAY?
8TH GRADE - 61



ON AVERAGE, HOW MUCH TIME DOES YOUR CHILD SPEND ON HOMEWORK EACH DAY?
TOTAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - 305 RESPONSES



ON AVERAGE, HOW MUCH TIME DOES YOUR CHILD SPEND ON HOMEWORK EACH DAY?
TOTAL MIDDLE SCHOOL - 241 RESPONSES



Madeira Teacher Survey Results (k-8)

We surveyed Madeira Elementary and Madeira Middle School teachers regarding student homework.

- All MES teachers who responded to the survey believe their students are benefitting from their assigned homework.
- All MES teachers who responded to the survey believe their students are spending an appropriate amount of time on homework.
- Madeira Middle School teachers believe that If teachers assign homework, it is an extension of the learning taking place in the classroom.
- The homework that is assigned is worthwhile and students are spending an appropriate amount of time completing the work expectations.
- Students using time effectively can be one reason why there is a discrepancy between what teachers are expecting and what parents are seeing at home.

Current Homework Practices in Neighboring Districts (Indian Hill, Mariemont, Wyoming)

Indian Hill Primary and Elementary Schools

- Indian Hill Primary (K-2) encourages twenty minutes of reading each night with no written homework or reading logs.
- Indian Hill Elementary School (3-5) Teachers give four math pages a week. They are given on a Friday and collected the following Friday. All math is review. In fifth grade, some of the math teachers substitute 20 minutes of Kahn instead of the four math pages.

Indian Hill Middle School

Homework will be assigned. Student grades will reflect the completion of all work, including outside assignments. Homework is also part of the student's preparation for the assessment tests.

Mariemont Elementary Schools

Kindergarten

Encourages students and parents to talk about what they are learning in school. We encourage reading either with or to your child on a nightly basis. Nightly reading is encouraged, but is not a requirement, nor is it graded. Game playing as a family is also a great way to practice math and social skills.

Grade Level Guiding Principles:

- Reading or listening to reading daily helps to develop good habits for the future.
 - a. Reading daily improves reading ability, memory, concentration, spelling, writing, math, analytic ability, verbal communication, and comprehension.
 - b. Children that read at home are more likely to be lifelong readers.
- Providing students with books allows them to read books that are on their reading level, which are not easily found at the library or in home book collections.
- Playing board games supports healthy brain development of logical and reasoning skills, boosts critical thinking and communication skills.

First Grade

In replacement of homework, the first grade asks that you spend evenings doing things that have been proven to increase student success rates, such as eating dinner as a family, reading a book together, playing outside, and getting to bed at a reasonable hour.

Mariemont Middle School

Grade Level Guiding Principles:

- Reading daily develops good habits for the future.

- a. Reading daily improves reading ability, memory, concentration, spelling, writing, math, analytic ability, verbal communication, and comprehension.
- b. Children that read at home are more likely to be lifelong readers.

Second Grade

The Mariemont City School District second grade teachers believe that homework contributes toward building responsibility, self-discipline, connecting home and school, and positive lifelong learning habits. It is the intention of the team to assign relevant, and purposeful homework assignments that reinforce second grade learning standards. Homework should provide students with the opportunity to apply, reinforce and extend the information they have learned and develop independence.

- Nightly reading (20 minutes) to encourage a love of reading.
- Math fact fluency
- If parents ask for supplemental assignments, teachers will supply materials.

Third Grade

- We believe that homework should be meaningful reinforcement of skills taught in class.
Guidelines:
 - Daily Reading and word work practice recommended (no logs)
 - a. Words Sent Home
 - b. Ideas for practice sent home
 - No Grades for homework
 - No Weekend Homework
 - Math homework will be given based on each lesson (~2 times a week)
 - Math Fact Fluency (recommended - apps/sites suggested)

Projects: Be mindful of homework outside of project
No more than 2 outside of school projects in a year
Optional homework provided

Fourth Grade

Grade Level Homework Philosophy:

We believe that home study is an important opportunity for students to extend their learning from school to home. It will help increase their knowledge and understanding of various content areas and helps develop regular study habits and responsibility. Home study provides additional communication between the teacher and family.

The goal is for students to read nightly, because they live a readerly life, and to be fluent in their math facts to be successful mathematicians. We want work completed outside of the school day to be meaningful, authentic, and engaging.

We wish for our students to spend time outside the school day on activities, extracurriculars, and play with their friends and families.

Grade Level Guiding Principles:

- No homework assigned on Friday or over the holidays
- No assessments given on Mondays
- Math homework is an opportunity to practice and prepare questions for the next class
- Reading for enjoyment is expected
- Practice opportunities are provided for students to prepare for tests
- All homework is posted on Blackboard
- Students should complete the assignments to the best of *their ability*

Fifth Grade

Grade Level Homework Philosophy

Math homework is an opportunity to solidify learning and prepare questions for the next class.

Reading for enjoyment is expected

Unfinished classwork may be expected to be completed at home.

Mariemont Middle School

- Purpose of HW: review of a skill
- HW is an extension of classroom learning. No HW policy in student handbook.
- “CP students are spending limited amount of time/Honors spending reasonable amount of time.”

Wyoming Elementary Schools

Quality homework assignments are an extension of the classroom. The amount and consistency of homework depends on the subject or unit being studied, and of course, the grade level. Promptness is important and expected in completing homework assignments. Homework assignments at the primary level vary at each grade level. Generally, first, second, and third graders have thirty minutes (or less) per day. 21 Fourth graders may have approximately thirty to forty-five to sixty minutes depending upon individual assignments and class projects.

Wyoming Middle School

Student & Parent Handbook:

HOMEWORK AND TESTS Homework is an extension of the classroom. The amount and consistency of homework depends on the unit and subject being studied. Promptness is important and is expected in completing homework assignments. Each child should keep a record of his/her assignments in their assignment notebook. If a parent feels that their student is consistently spending excessive amounts of time on homework, please contact the teacher. In the case of absence from school, please check Blackboard (bb.wyomingcityschools.org), Office 365 and/or email the teacher for homework assignments. 11 Major tests are defined as

tests covering a unit of instruction. Every attempt is made to avoid having more than two major tests scheduled on the same day. Students should advise teachers in advance if this limit is exceeded.

While Wyoming Middle School's general homework policies are very similar to those of MMS, they would love to have an updated school-wide homework policy that could be shared with parents.

Recommendations

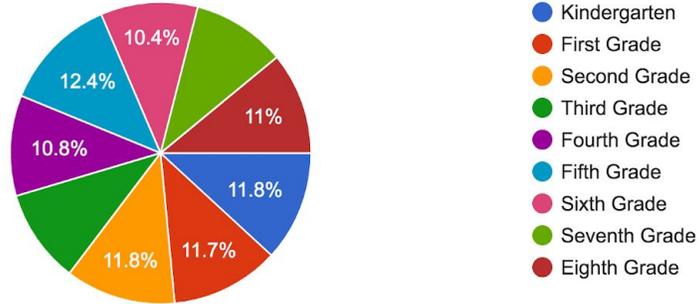
1. The quality of homework matters just as much as quantity. Homework should be meaningful, relevant, and authentic. It should be an extension of the curriculum and extend meaning.
2. When setting homework policies, our schools should include parents, teachers, and students. Homework policies should address the purpose of the homework, as well as student, teacher, and parent responsibilities. In addition, policies should include the amount/frequency of homework. These policies should be communicated at the beginning of the school year.
3. Students in grades 4-8 should be offered specific study skills training. Study skills training could include, but not be limited to helping students learn how to study and how to find a quiet place to complete work.
4. Homework in grades 4-8 must be posted in Schoology and assigned during instructional time, so that students are able to ask any clarifying questions.
5. Madeira City Schools should re-evaluate the use of reading logs.
6. Teachers in grades K-4 should collaborate to develop a consistent homework policy for their grade level. This grade wide policy should be presented to parents at the beginning of the school year.
7. Homework Policies in Madeira Elementary and Madeira Middle School handbooks should be revised to reflect current best practices.
8. Language in handbook to be revised to be more inclusive of diverse family structures.

Appendix

Appendix A: MES and MMS Parent Survey - Questions and Results

Student grade level

566 responses



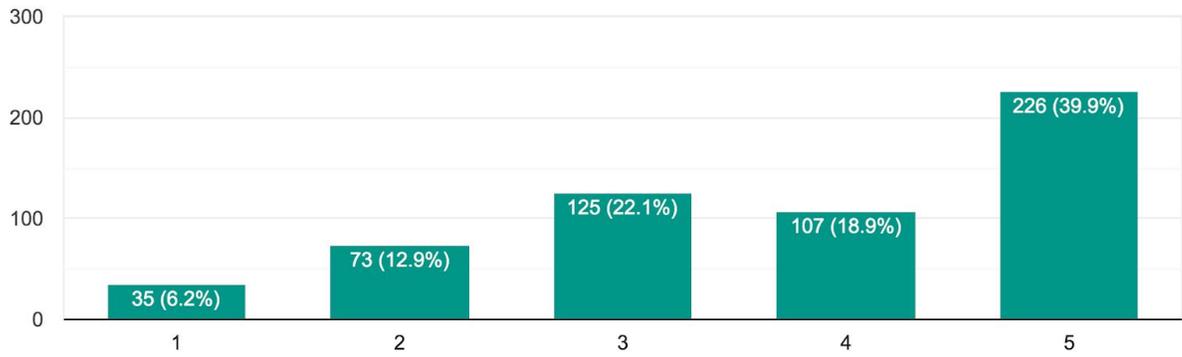
On average, how much time does your child spend on homework each day?

566 responses



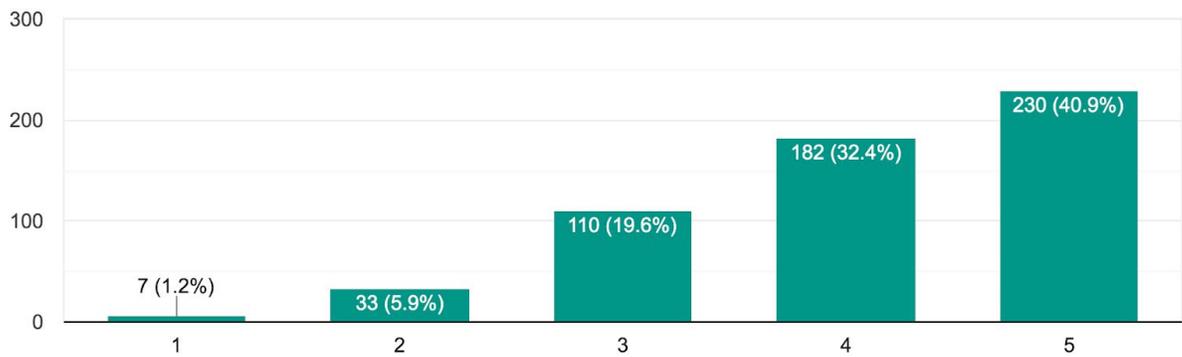
My child is assigned a reasonable amount of homework.

566 responses



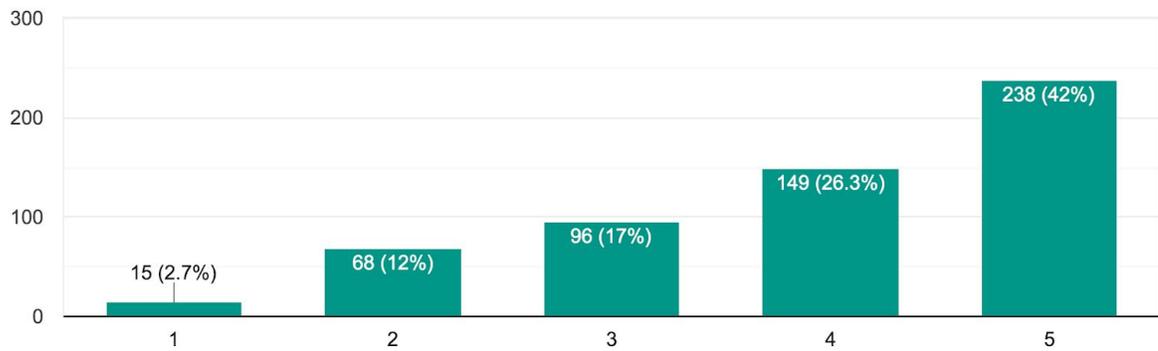
The homework my child receives is relevant and reinforces concepts taught.

562 responses



The amount of homework support you as a parent need to provide your child is reasonable.

566 responses



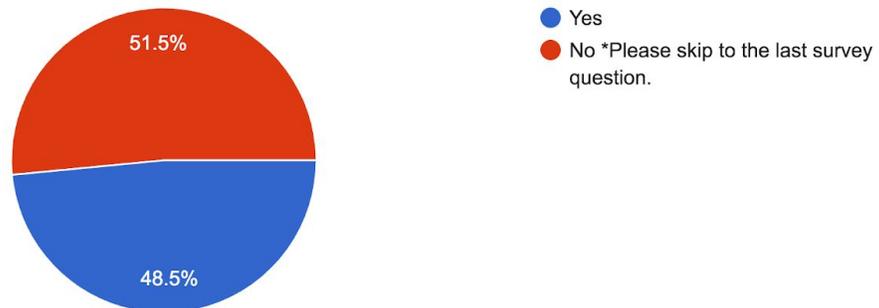
Additional comments from this survey are available upon request.

225 responses

Appendix B: MES and MMS Teacher Survey - Questions and Results

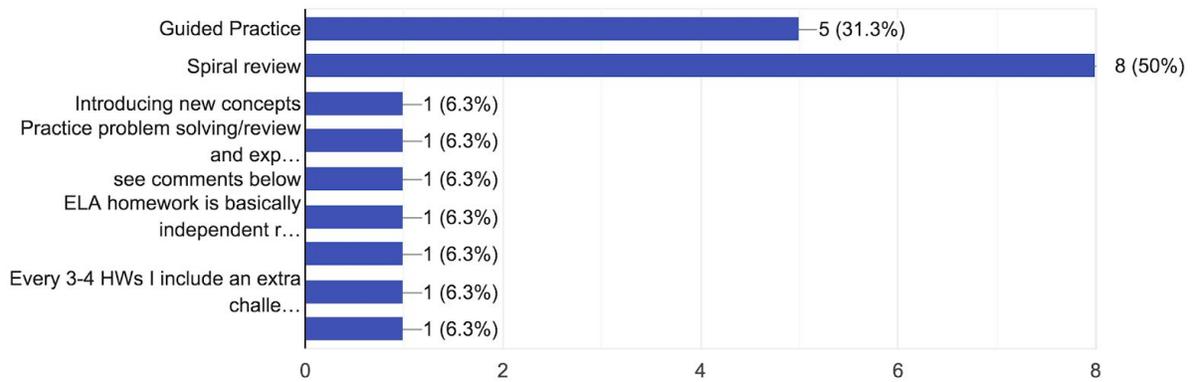
I regularly assign homework.

33 responses



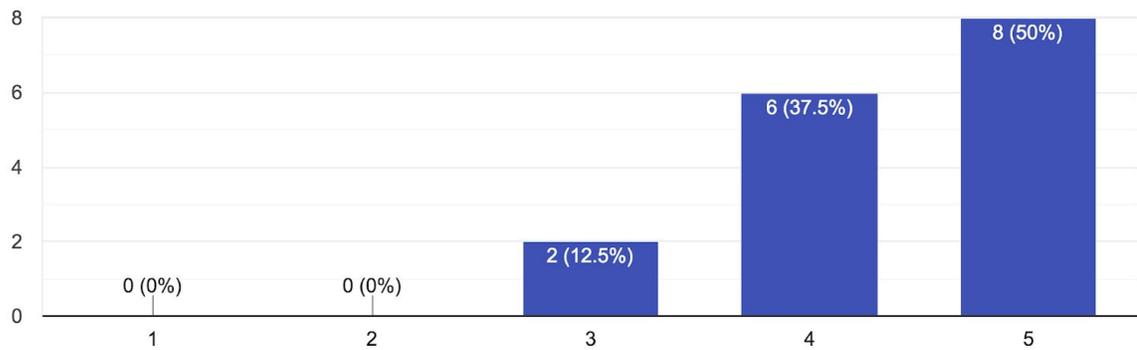
What is the primary goal of the homework you are assigning?

16 responses



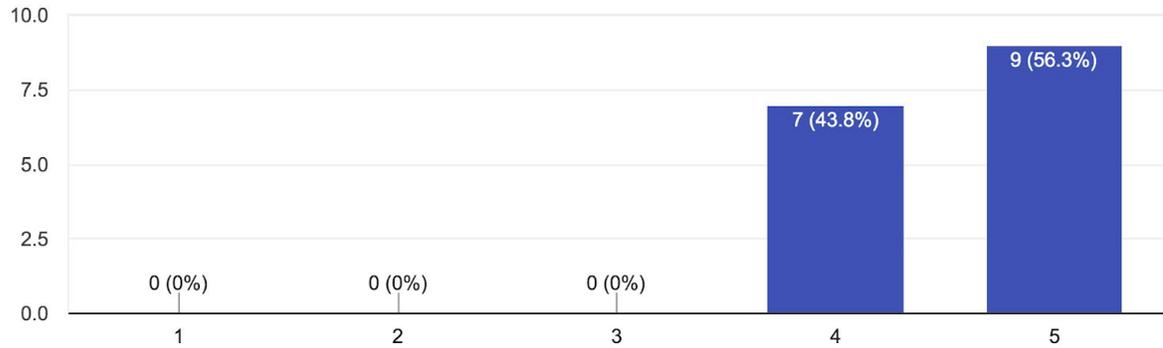
My students are benefitting from the assigned homework.

16 responses



My students are spending an appropriate amount of time on homework.

16 responses



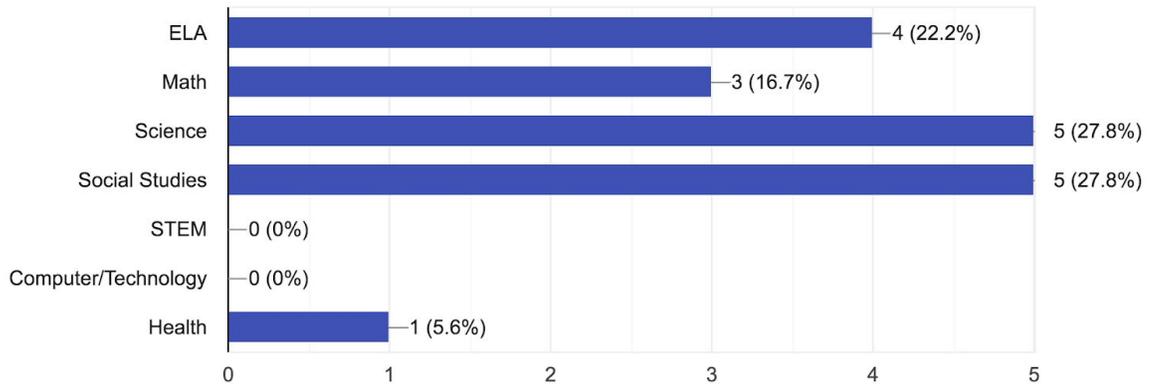
Do you have any additional feedback regarding homework? 21 responses

**Teacher extended responses available upon request.*

Follow-up Survey - MMS Teachers

What subject do you teach?

18 responses

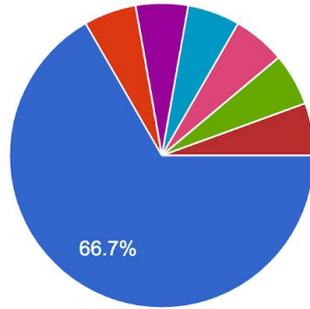


Describe the homework that you expect your students to complete for your subject area on a nightly basis. Examples: nightly reading for 30 minutes, vocabulary review, 10-practice problems, study guide completion, etc.

- *One night a week, students read, annotate, and answer a variety of questions that reinforce and enhance the content we are learning in class. One night a week students should spend 5-10 minutes reviewing key vocabulary words for a weekly quiz of 6 words.*
- *Homework due usually each Friday*
- *There is nothing every night. Weeklet students complete a word problem, spiral review and take notes.*
- *No nightly homework*
- *There are only two types of assignments given each week. One is a nonfiction reading with questions related to the content being studied. The other is a paragraph writing describing their understanding of the content studied. Both of these are begun in class and many finish then.*
- *I expect that students read nightly because I do not have time for independent reading during my ELA Block. I also need them to complete work leftover from class since I only have 60 minutes. I would say AT MOST 20 minutes approximately 3x a week outside of nightly reading.*
- *My homework is typically reading and answering questions as mainly pre-learning material that will be taught in class. Occasionally, it is finishing up an in-class assignment that wasn't completed.*
- *10 Minutes of Guided Questions from Content Reading*
- *problems not finished in class, Flipped classroom video, less than 10 problems*
- *Students complete background reading in their Fusion Books*
- *Vocab or Grammar review and maybe some reading... nothing assigned by minute... 2 times a year when we read a more extensive novel, certain chapters are done at home*
- *No homework.*
- *My students complete approximately 20 minutes of homework a night. They also complete a POW once a week.*
- *None*
- *20 minutes reading per night, vocab review 3x/week every other week, reading comp once a week*
- *Reading some nights. Students set schedule based on personal activities. Some nights - a short activity to prepare for the next day's lesson*
- *None- Students will have class time to complete assignments. If they do not finish in class, then it becomes homework.*
- *My homework is typically reading and answering questions as mainly pre-learning material that will be taught in class. Occasionally, it is finishing up an in-class assignment that wasn't completed.*

What is a reasonable amount of time you expect your students to spend on assigned nightly homework?

18 responses



- Less than 30 minutes
- 30-60 minutes
- 60-90 minutes
- 90-120 minutes
- It would depend on how well they utilize their class time and iET. If they use th...
- I do not give homework.
- None of the assignments should take...
- I try to limit out of school work other th...
- 10 Minutes