

Homework for High School Students

1. Amount

The amount of homework assigned at the high school level has the greatest effect size on academic achievement compared with elementary and middle schools, with a gain of approximately 24 percentile points (Marzano, 2001). The St. Johns School District Office for Instructional Services recommends that students in grades 9-12 receive 10 minutes of homework per grade level for a standard level class. A standard ninth grade student should have no more than a total of 90 minutes of homework, a tenth grade student 100 minutes, etc. Honors and advanced classes will require an additional time commitment as they prepare students for reading, writing and research at the college level. The amount of homework assigned should be non-negotiable and monitored by teachers, parents and administration.

Because high school students have several teachers, there is no way that each teacher should assign 90-120 minutes of homework each day. The high school teachers should collaborate and develop a homework plan. Homework should be short and targeted (1/7 of 90-120 minutes), or an integrated approach (two classes could assign homework together, for example, math and science, or a writing assignment in social studies, etc.).

2. Purpose

Homework should have a specific purpose, be familiar and connected to the standards being studied, and be relevant. The purpose could be for students to (1) *practice or rehearse*, to begin (2) *preparation for the introduction of new content*, or to (3) *deepen knowledge and understanding* (Marzano, 2001). Homework assignments can be differentiated; that is, teachers could assign some high cognitive level work for the students who understand and can apply new concepts readily. This helps students to think more critically and creatively on a broader and deeper scale.

3. Grading

According to the research, homework must be commented on to be of value. When the teacher provides specific feedback on student work in writing, it enhances their achievement by 30 percentile points (Marzano, 2001). When it is checked by the teacher, even if checked through whole group discussion and participation, there is a gain of 28 percentile points in learning. A homework check takes little time if the guidelines for the amount given are closely followed. It is important for teachers to check and discuss homework to gather data and reteach as necessary.

Grades should not be given to high school students for completion of homework; or if a grade is given, it should be no more than 5 percent of the student's overall grade (There are no grades for completing homework in college.). Procedures for checking homework should be communicated to students and parents at the beginning of the school year. School homework policy could be posted on the website, and included in the parent handbook and/or newsletters.