

Homework Policy for Middle Schools

1. Amount

The amount of homework assigned in middle school has a larger effect size on student achievement than in elementary school, with a gain of about 12 percentile points (Marzano, 2001). The St. Johns School District Office for Instructional Services recommends that students in grades 6, 7 and 8 receive 10 minutes of homework per grade level. A sixth grade student should have no more than a total of 60 minutes of homework, a seventh grade student 70 minutes and an eighth grade student 80 minutes. The amount of homework assigned should be non-negotiable and monitored by teachers, parents and administration.

Because middle school students have several teachers, it is not advisable for each teacher to assign 70-90 minutes of homework daily. The team of middle school teachers should collaborate and develop a homework plan. Possibilities include but are not limited to: a scheduled day of the week for each content area, short targeted homework from each teacher (1/6 of 70-90 minutes each), 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 much broader and deeper scale. Assigned homework for an elementary student could typically be reading each night and 3-5 math problems *differentiated* (Marzano, [The Art and Science of Teaching](#), "Chunking Content into Digestible Bites", 2007).

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. 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.

There must be time to celebrate success and effort even in middle school (Marzano, 2001). Middle school students should not be given a grade for homework; or if a grade is given, it should be a no more than 5 percent of the student's overall grade. 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.