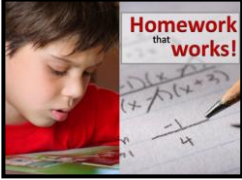
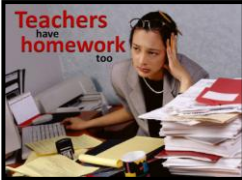
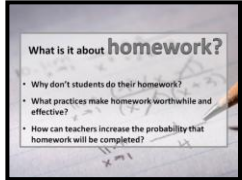
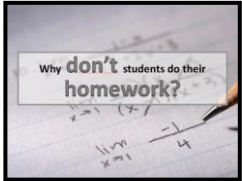





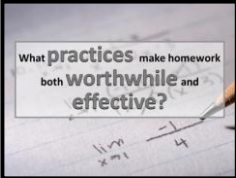



## Homework that Works!

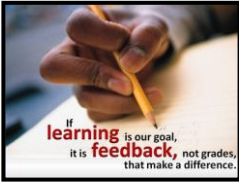
**Objective:** The following leader notes and corresponding PowerPoint are provided by the Curriculum and Instruction Department to school leaders as a support in training faculty members on timely and important subjects. Please feel free to use as is, or revise to best fit the needs of your faculty/staff.

<p>1</p> 	<p>Today we are going to talk about homework. We will be discussing how homework impacts us, as teachers, as well as how it affects our students. We'll look at homework completion and strategies to implement "homework that works".</p>
<p>2</p> 	<p>Mrs. Devlin feels it is important to give lots of homework in her 9<sup>th</sup> grade U.S. History class, usually consisting of worksheets related to the book chapters. She feels she has so much content to cover that she cannot afford to take time in class to discuss the homework with students. She spends hours each night grading the worksheets and returns them to students without comment. She assumes it is their responsibility to learn from the textbook on their own, and her lectures cover material that is not covered in the textbook. Several students are failing because they cannot complete the large amount of homework required (Vatterott, 2009, p. 78).</p>
<p>3</p> 	<p>We will be looking at three main ideas about homework in our discussion today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why don't students do their homework?</li> <li>• What practices make homework worthwhile and effective?</li> <li>• How can teachers increase the probability that homework will be completed?</li> </ul>
<p>4</p> 	<p>Let's take a closer look at the first point, "Why don't students do their homework?"</p>
<p>5</p> 	<p>Here is a little information about two students who don't do their homework. Think about your own students. . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The advanced learner: Patrick was a very bright 10th grader taking chemistry, biology, and the highest-level math courses his school offered. He learned math quite easily, never did homework, and still made A's on all the tests. Luckily, his science teacher, Mr. Richardson, did not count homework in Patrick's grade. Other teachers believed that Mr. Richardson was wrong not to require Patrick to do the homework (Vatterott, 2009, p. 80).</li> <li>• The overwhelmed student: Luis was failing social studies because he was missing 11 assignments. When the teacher's aide tried to find out why, Luis said, "I'm lazy." In fact, Luis felt hopelessly buried in work. The teacher's aide volunteered to stay after school to help Luis catch up. It was hard convincing Luis to stay after school, but after several work sessions, he was caught up and no longer called himself lazy (Vatterott, 2009, p. 93).</li> </ul>

<p>6</p> 	<p>There are a variety of reasons students may not be doing homework - the homework may not be at their level, they lack motivation, or they feel overwhelmed. If we look closely at “why” students may not be completing their homework we’ll be better able to find strategies to increase the chance they actually do it.</p>
<p>7</p> 	<p>When teachers diagnose homework completion problems they can think about the following challenges students may experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Intellectual</u>—task too hard or too lengthy for the student’s working speed</li> <li>• <u>Organizational</u>—getting it home, getting it done, getting it back</li> <li>• <u>Motivational</u>—burnout, overload, too much failure, frustration with tasks</li> <li>• <u>Personal/Situational</u>—unable to work at home, no materials available at home for the assignment; depression, anxiety, family problems, or other personal issues such as involvement in outside activities. . .</li> </ul>
<p>8</p> 	<p>Let’s take a few minutes to think about our students’ responsibilities and valuable activities beyond the school day.</p> <p><i>Have teachers take two minutes to brainstorm a list of the many things, besides homework, that students are involved in outside of school and have them share ideas with the rest of the faculty.</i></p>
<p>9</p> 	<p>In review, students are involved in sports, music, dance, and jobs. They also have family activities, chores, snack and mealtime. Think about how much after school time those activities could take. Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What assumptions do we hold about what our students do after school? Do we view intellectual activities as more important than nonintellectual activities (i.e., homework over sports, music, family)?</li> <li>• Are we considering the outside commitments of our students (often those commitments are out of the control of the student him/herself) as we determine which school work may be done during the school day and which may be done after school?</li> </ul> <p>If our students are busily involved in many good activities outside of school the time they have available to do homework is impacted. So, it is very important that our homework assignments are valuable, worthwhile, and support learning in the classroom.</p>
<p>10</p> 	<p>The next important question we need to ask ourselves is, “What practices make homework both worthwhile and effective?”</p>
<p>11</p> 	<p><i>Depending on the length of discussion you would like your faculty/staff to have, you may go into additional detail for each element that ensures quality homework assignments.</i></p> <p>Teachers can design quality homework assignments by focusing on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Prelearning</u>: Homework may be used to provide an introduction to a topic or background for a more in-depth lesson. Prelearning may be as simple as finding out what students already</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;">(continued)</p>

<p>(continued)</p>	<p>know about a topic or what they are interested in learning about. Prelearning may also be used to stimulate interest in the concept.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Practice</u>: The traditional use of homework has been for the practice of rote skills. Although practice is necessary for many rote skills, there are three mistakes that teachers sometimes make with the use of practice homework.</li> <li>• <u>Processing homework</u> is used when we want students to reflect on concepts that were discussed in class, think of new questions to ask, apply skills or knowledge learned, synthesize information, or show that they see the big picture.</li> <li>• <u>Checking for understanding</u> is the most valuable way for teachers to gain insight into student learning.</li> </ul>
<p>12</p>	<p>Homework should increase or enhance the learning that took place during the school day. Most teachers would agree that new learning is best done under the supervision of the professional teacher, not left to the student on his/her own at home where there may or may not be a knowledgeable adult who has both the time and expertise to teach new concepts, skills, or information.</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>Another thing to consider is if the assignment is something that should be done during class so that you, the teacher, can monitor the progress and the direction of the learning? In other words,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are all students ready and able to complete the assignment on their own?</li> <li>• Do I need to reteach some concepts to ensure adequate understanding prior to assigning homework?</li> <li>• Have I corrected any misconceptions students may have about topics, concepts, or skills needed to complete the homework assignment prior to sending them home with it?</li> </ul>
<p>14</p>	<p>In addition, homework should be interesting. Ask yourself, “Does the assignment pique students’ interest?” 21st Century learners <i>do</i> learn differently. The assignments that may have been interesting or stimulating to our students just ten years ago may need to be revised and updated to address the needs of today’s students.</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Recognizing that the completion of homework <i>for increased or enhanced learning</i> is the ultimate goal, we can increase the probability that our students will complete their homework.</p>
<p>16</p>	<p>There are several things we can do. . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think about how we can help students be successful <i>in class</i> before we assign them to do work <i>outside of class</i>. Often we require students who do not complete in class assignments take them home as homework. But students who struggle completing assignments in class are also likely to struggle completing assignments at home (now independently).</li> <li>• Diagnose why students aren’t completing homework (intellectual, personal/situation, organization, motivational) and implement strategies.</li> <li>• Evaluate the format, interest level, skill level, or time needed for our students to complete homework (and, for secondary students, we need to consider the number of classes in which each student is enrolled and how homework from all classes may impact their time.)</li> </ul>

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In addition, students are more likely to complete homework when the focus is on learning and feedback. Homework can provide excellent feedback to the teacher on what and how students are learning and homework should provide students with feedback as well.

- Should all homework be graded? No, not necessarily.
- Should all homework receive feedback? Yes. (Vatterott, 2009)

Checking (providing feedback) is a great diagnostic—the teacher who provides feedback is working as an advocate for the student in ensuring they understand concepts and can perform skills.

18



How can we ensure that we give both specific and timely feedback to our students on all homework? If we struggle with providing feedback to our students, perhaps the amount of homework is too great for both us and our students. Feedback *is* the key to increased student learning so homework has to be doable for both the student *and the teacher*.

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The issue of homework completion is multidimensional. Looking at our own homework policies and procedures and making adjustments where necessary may provide us with additional information about when and how we assign homework as well as how much homework we assign. By reviewing the district homework guidelines, we can take a close look at our practices and use the research to guide us in creating great places of learning for our students—both in and outside of the school day.

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*Hand out a copy of the Davis School District Homework Guidelines to your faculty/staff and discuss.*

21



Extended Learning



*This section provides additional learning activities to use with your faculty as needed.*

- *Extend learning through discussion of the guidelines in this staff meeting or at another time.*
- *Ask your faculty/staff to bring a homework assignment to staff meeting they would like to revise to better meet the needs of today's students. Have teachers break into small (3-4) groups to share "old" homework assignments and brainstorm ways to make them "new" and interesting for today's students.*
- *Have grade level, content area, or SLC teams discuss homework policies and how they can better meet the needs of students.*