



Secondary School Homework Policy

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I. AIM

Keystone Academy believes that the correlation between homework and improved student learning can be based on recent research, teaching experiences and a solid understanding of the Academy's unique context. The homework policy aims to provide the school community with specific guidelines, so that a common approach is used by all stakeholders to meet student outcomes. The following shared understandings provide the foundation of the Academy's homework policy.

Shared Understandings

- A. Cooper et al (2006) are persuaded by the US literature that homework is positively related to academic achievement with **larger benefits at the secondary level** than at the primary level.
- B. For those opposed to homework, many feel that it **creates unnecessary pressure** on students for limited or disputed academic benefit, robs children of time to develop other life skills, through recreational and artistic activities and social interaction, and places pressure on family life (Walker, 2013).
- C. **Homework quality has been found to predict homework effort**, as measured by the percentage of homework assignment attempted and homework compliance (Trautwein & Ludtke, 2009).
- D. The **quality of the homework assigned is likely to be more important than the quantity** (Canadian Education Association, & Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 2010).
- E. **Effort spent on homework is a stronger** correlate of academic achievement **than time spent on homework** (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).
- F. The 'more homework the better' view has **no research support** (Cooper, H, 2001). Homework for All – In Moderation, Educational Leadership, 58(7), cited in Queensland Government Department of Education and the Arts, 2004).

- G. The amount of homework and **time spent on it should accord with the student's age and developmental level** (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009).
- H. Students are **more likely to complete homework if they know teachers are keeping track of their progress and giving feedback** on errors and areas for improvement (Cooper, 2007).
- I. Providing every student with targeted feedback about their homework **is very difficult for teachers**, so it often falls between the cracks (Walker, 2013).
- J. **Parental involvement in homework may improve students' homework completion** rates and parents' attitudes toward their children's schools (Queensland Government Department of Education and the Arts, 2004).
- K. A school's **homework policy addresses questions parents often have about homework**, Marzano, Gaddy, and Dean (2000). For example, the homework policy could specify some responsibilities of teachers, parents, and students (Cooper, 1994).
- L. It is likely that **homework is more effective in mathematics**. A multilevel analysis of US 7th grade mathematics students indicated that completing frequent homework assignments in mathematics is positively associated with achievement gains at the class level, but that lengthy assignments do not show positive effects (Trautwein, U., Köller, O., Schmitz, B., & Baumert, J. (2002).
- M. **Homework should be differentiated**, for example students should hold a time limit (30 minutes) or the end of an activity, whatever comes first (Dettmers, 2009).
- N. Homework should not be assigned simply as a matter of routine, but instead only when there is a **clear purpose in regard to student learning**. In essence, good homework practices are consistent with good teaching (Marzano and Pickering, 2007a).
- O. Teachers should make sure **the purpose of homework assignments is clear**. Students should leave the classroom with no confusion about either what they are being asked to do or how to do it (Marzano, Gaddy, and Dean, 2000).
- P. The research is especially clear about one point in relation to homework: **It should not be used to teach new material** (Cooper, 2001).
- Q. **Teachers should never give homework as punishment**. It implies you think schoolwork is aversive. Kids will pick up this message (Cooper in Silvis, 2002).
- R. Efficiency is the second hallmark of effective homework. Homework should not take an inordinate amount of time and should require thinking. **Students who spend too much time on homework (more than 90 minutes at the middle school level) actually perform worse than students who spend less time** (Cooper et al., 2006; Shumow, 2011).
- S. One of the most important benefits of homework is **the acquisition of self regulation**. Two studies by Xu (2008a, 2008b) linked homework management to homework completion. In a 2009 study, Xu found that student achievement appeared to be related to all five subscales of homework management (setting an appropriate work environment, managing time, handling distraction, monitoring motivation, and controlling negative emotion).
- T. **A high degree of self-efficacy is associated with high academic performance** and the use of self-regulatory strategies. Highly self-efficacious learners are characterized by sustained effort despite distractions and long-term waiting periods. They learn to plan their actions and set specific academic goals in order to achieve them (Zimmerman, 1998, 2000).

U. **Homework must be purposeful and relevant to student needs** and should not jeopardise the right of children to enjoy a balanced lifestyle (Dixon, 2007).

II. DEFINITIONS

Homework Types

Type	Definition	Intended Outcome	Application	Assessment
Completion	Any work assigned during the school day not completed in class.	Helps students keep up to date with the classroom program.	The classroom program should be differentiated if a student has completed homework on a regular basis.	(Assessment for learning) Viewed by teacher, understanding checked as a priority. Self-management tracked, time required for completion.
Practice	Any work that reviews and reinforces skills and concepts taught in class.	Helps students practice newly acquired skills to develop fluency.	To be effective, practice homework requires students to already be able to independently perform the skills required.	(Assessment of Learning) Viewed by teacher, to check for understanding, self-management tracked. Individual feedback is given (can be verbal).
Preparation	Any work that prepares students for upcoming lessons or classes.	Encourages students to acquire background information or to bring their prior knowledge and experiences to upcoming units of study.	Short preliminary readings or topic specific vocabulary practice in preparation for new material, review of ideas from previous lessons needed for upcoming work.	(Assessment for Learning) Progress/completion tracked by teacher and feedback is provided if required.
Extension	Any work that explores and refines learning in new contexts or integrates and expands on classroom learning.	Encourages students to problem solve, think creatively and think critically.	To be effective, extension homework does not require a student to learn curriculum content independently. Instead, students deepen understanding and relate learning to the real world.	(Assessment for Learning) Work reviewed and corrected by teacher. It is tracked and feedback is provided.

These definitions are borrowed from the Toronto School Board District Homework Policy: P036, 2008

III. DIFFERENTIATION

Homework should not be given for students to learn new material. Homework must adhere to one of the four categories given above. In an effort to help students to develop self-efficacy and self-management skills, teachers of all grades should indicate how long a homework task should take to complete.

Grade 6 - 10

To ensure that students do not spend too much time on one task or one subject, **subject can allocate no more than 30 minutes of homework any given night.** For homework tasks, this means that students will work for thirty minutes, or until the task is complete, whichever occurs first.

Grades 11 - 12

For students studying in the IB diploma programme, the expectations of workloads and homework loads are increased in both intensity and duration. Students are expected to have developed sufficient organisation and self management skills to effectively structure their homework and study time. IBDP teachers should give an accurate indication of the amount of time a homework task should take as a way to help students effectively manage their time.

IV. TIME ALLOCATION

To balance the time pressures facing students, the amount of homework students can be allocated is proportional to the amount of face to face class time for each subject. Maximum homework time for each subject, each week is allocated according to how many 40 minute periods of the subject a student does each week.

Grade	Minutes per block	Minutes of homework per block	Maximum minutes of homework per school day	Max minutes of homework per weekend day
6-7	40 min	10-15 min	80 minutes (all subjects combined)	80 minutes (all subjects combined)
	80 min	20-25 min		
8-9	40 min	15 min	100 minutes (all subjects combined)	100 minutes (all subjects combined)
	80 min	30 min		

10	40 min	20 min	120 minutes (all subjects combined)	120 minutes (all subjects combined)
	80 min	35 min		
11-12	Students in the IBDP course should be expected to efficiently manage their time. This includes completing tasks and homework over the weekends and during some holiday time as a way of maximising their usage of time, and minimising stress. Students in the DP program should be expected to complete 120 - 150 minutes of homework each day.			

V. USE OF PLANNERS

All students from grades 6-10 will be provided with a Keystone Planner on a yearly basis. Students are expected to use the planner on a daily basis to track their homework, and to show parents or dorm parents so their work may be monitored for guidance. Each grade or student may have slightly different expectations based on developmentally appropriate needs.

Students in grades 11 and 12 will be allowed to use a planning system of their choice if they show success in using their planner in grade 10. This will be decided in conjunction with teachers and advisors.

Teachers will post homework clearly in the classroom and ensure that students write the homework in planner as an exit ticket. Teachers should list the homework to be copied in the same format as students would see in their planner according to the chart below.

Subject	Task	Type	Time
IB group discipline	Should be specific so students understand task and expectations.	List the type: - Completion - Practice - Preparation - Extension See chart II.i for definitions (this may be differentiated based on student needs)	Approximate time to be spent on task
<i>English Language Acquisition</i>	<i>Review vocabulary by creating new sentences with each word.</i>	<i>Practice</i>	<i>30 minutes</i>

Grade 6

Students will have their planner signed by their parents every evening for first semester. If students are successful in completing this task, and do not have a problem completing their homework, then for semester 2, students need only have

their planner signed twice per week. This decision is made based on the discretion of the teachers involved.

Grades 7-12

Students will have their planner reviewed by the teacher prior to leaving class to ensure all columns are appropriately completed. Tasks should be described in sufficient detail that parents or dorm parents are able to understand the expectations of the task, type of homework, and the approximate time in which the work should be completed. Level of parent, teacher, or dorm parent involvement in use of the planner will be adjusted based on a student's ability to use their planner effectively and complete homework according to expectations.

VI. ROLES and ADVICE

For Students

- Keep an organized planner with subjects written clearly and any further instructions for homework on the date the homework is given and a second entry on the date that the homework is due;
- Refer to the planner at the beginning of the homework period to prioritize the homework tasks (the homework due earliest should be completed first);
- Refer to the planner when packing a school bag to ensure all the work is ready for class;
- Communicate early with teachers if there are difficulties with the homework and write a note in the planner as a reminder of what was difficult (such as at the beginning of class or via email);
- Make sure your study environment is free of noise and other distractions to maximise time effectively;
- Make sure that they are regularly completing homework in the timeframes given in class;
- Maintain a good balance – sports, music, drama and other interests are important to your life too.

For Teachers

- Provide homework that is curriculum-based and meets the developmental and individual needs of the student through differentiation and modification;
- Ensure the homework assigned is directly related to classroom instruction and consists of clear, purposeful and engaging activities;
- Check homework (refer to homework types and definitions);
- Ensure homework needs no additional teaching outside the classroom;
- Ensure homework is understood by the student before leaving the class;
- Ensure that homework does not need additional resources or technology to which students may not have access;
- Teach the skills necessary for the student to complete the homework and become successful independent learners.

For Parents

These guidelines are issued to enable parents to monitor and support your child's homework. The encouragement and support of parents and homework clubs are welcome in the completion of homework, however please do not do the homework for them.

- Provide a quiet area for children to complete their tasks and minimize distractions and interruptions;
- Do not let your child study in their room with a closed door. Also stop your child from continuing to complete homework at bedtime even if your child is not done;
- Check that the work is recorded in the planner and check that it is completed; This will help you understand the curriculum;
- Write a note in the planner or contact the teacher if there are any perceived problems, the workload is unbalanced or other interruptions have prevented the homework from being completed;
- Discuss the task and guide your children but avoid the doing it for them; instead encourage them with questions and strategies for overcoming difficulties;
- Contact the classroom teacher if they do not consistently complete the homework or questions arise from the homework;
- School homework is takes priority over work set by external tutors.

For Dormitory Parents

- Ensure a quiet study time and regulate distractions such as noise, eating and drinking, and visiting/talking with other students without purpose;
- Check that the work recorded in the planner at the beginning of the evening is prioritized;
- Sign the planner every night on duty after a discussion about the homework or at the end of the duty ;
- Contact the teacher via email if there are any perceived problems, the workload is unbalanced or other interruptions have prevented the homework from being completed and copy the Dormitory Head;
- If students ask for help discuss the task and guide the students when appropriate or call upon faculty members to work directly with students if available, or organize timetabled help in discussion with the Dormitory Head where appropriate.

For External Tutors (not endorsed by Keystone Academy)

- Check that the homework that is recorded in the planner at the beginning of the session and check that it is completed at the end;
- Discuss the task and guide the student without attempting to do the work for the student; instead encourage them with questions and strategies for overcoming difficulties;

- Write a note in the planner if there are any perceived problems, the workload is unbalanced, the time it took to complete the task was longer than expected or other interruptions prevented the homework from being completed;
- Do not overload the student with extra work on similar topics or extended lessons, as it is not conducive to learning if there is no time to digest the information in smaller pieces before starting a new task. If there is time, review the homework completed so that the student experiences success and the learning is enforced;
- School homework is takes priority over work set by external tutors.

VII. CONSEQUENCES/REWARDS

Stage	Description	Action	Communication/ Documentation
1	Homework dependably completed to the required and on time.	Praise from teacher	Face to face.
2	Homework is late or incomplete on 2 or less occasions in your subject.	Managed by the teacher at their discretion. A note is made.	Conversation, Managebac and a note in the planner.
3	Deadlines missed on 3 or more occasions or work incomplete across multiple subjects.	Advisor and Grade Level Leader informed. Teacher informs parents.	Email and Managebac.
4	Deadlines consistently not met or the work is rarely complete across multiple subjects for a quarter.	Grade Level Leader arranges meeting with student and parents are informed.	Phone call, email, Managebac or letter
5	Homework is not handed in at all or incomplete for all submissions for a semester.	Grade Level Leader, Head of School and parents meet.	Email, Managebac[AT1]

VIII. HOLIDAYS and EXTENDED LEAVE

Keystone Academy believes that our students need to live balanced lives which includes sufficient time for rest, reflection, and family time. It is the school's policy that teachers *do not give* homework assignments over major school holidays (National Day holiday, Winter break, Chinese New Year holidays, Spring break and summer holidays). Additionally, no substantial assignments may be due for two days after students return from such holidays.

Reading should be a regular habit among our students and this should continue at all times. Teachers may recommend reading over these holiday periods but should not be assessing it in any way or link it to homework.

As students get older, however, there are some exceptions. For IB Diploma students, holiday periods are an effective time to consolidate, reflect, revise and complete internal or external assessments. As DP students are aware of significant due dates in advance, they may choose to complete assessments during holiday time and teachers may set some formative tasks to help prepare them for major assessments. They will also have to revise and study for mock and official examinations which fall after holiday periods.

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