

# McAuliffe Middle School

## Homework Policy

### Statement of Problem

McAuliffe administration and staff recognize that homework is a necessary part of a student's educational experience. Teachers must be able to assess, through homework, a student's understanding of information presented in class. Further, we believe that consistent completion of homework assignments enhances a student's learning experience and helps to build and support executive functioning skills required for success at both the middle and high school levels and beyond.

At the same time, we recognize that homework may be a source of significant stress for some students and their families. We also recognize that the amount of homework a school gives is often used as a misplaced measure of academic rigor. And we know that students and parents may be viewed negatively when homework assignments are not completed, without regard for the unique challenges middle school students may face when learning the range of executive functioning skills required to complete, organize and return homework to school on time, each and every day.

### Bridging the Gap – McAuliffe's Response

The faculty and administration of McAuliffe Middle School recognize that a different approach to the homework dilemma is required. Beginning in the fall of the 2014-2015 school year, our team leaders and members of the school administration met to discuss and create an action plan designed to review issues related to homework. Our goal was to create a set of procedures that respect the needs of the students and families we serve, while honoring the effectiveness of homework in guiding instruction, and building executive functioning skills.

Our process was thorough and involved an exhaustive review of current studies regarding homework, surveys of students, parents and teachers, as well as a review of homework policies from schools across the United States. From this process, we learned that the issue of homework plagues schools across the country. We found that many schools may have had homework policies, but most had no formal procedure for managing homework, aside from penalizing students for lack of completion. We believe that addressing this issue will help us better meet the needs of our students and families, and may also serve as a model that other schools may choose to emulate.

Please review this document carefully, as the policies and procedures outlined reflect our beliefs and honor our school community. We welcome your questions and comments!

### WHAT WE BELIEVE

#### *Purpose of Homework*

The purpose of homework at McAuliffe Middle School is to:

- Reinforce critical concepts taught in the classroom through independent practice
- Allow the teacher to have an increased level of awareness of student strengths and weaknesses, thereby guiding instruction
- Improve executive functioning skills – The ability to organize, to plan and to manage time
- Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate application of knowledge and skills in a meaningful and purposeful manner
- Honor the needs of students who require accommodations per a 504 plan or IEP

## Student's Role in Homework

As a result of our Homework Policy, students should be able to effectively:

- Apply and expand knowledge in different settings
- Gain a desire for continued learning and growth
- Transfer skills to future life experience
- Become more self-sufficient and accountable
- Own their academic and social strengths and challenges
- Practice self-advocacy by asking questions and learning from mistakes
- Master effective study techniques, and organizational time management skills
- Use class time provided for completing classwork and/or starting homework

## Teachers Role in Homework

As a result of the Homework Policy teachers will:

- Assess students' strength and challenges
- Obtain a better perspective of how each student learns
- Adjust curriculum and methods to students' needs
- Provide constructive feedback regarding student progress
- Clearly indicate the purpose of each homework assignment (pre-learning, checking for understanding, practice, processing)
- Ensure that students know how to complete homework before they leave the classroom
- Regularly update (minimum every 2 weeks) progress in the online grading program

## Parents Role in Homework

As a result of the Homework Policy, parents should be able to:

- Celebrate their child's strengths and accomplishments
- Feel empowered to taper their level of involvement based on their child's developmental needs, independence, and level of ability
- Gain a better understanding of their child's learning style
- Receive consistent feedback regarding what the student is learning and how he or she is progressing toward the goal of content mastery

We ask that parents:

- Provide a quiet space and basic materials for homework completion
- Allow technology to be used only as a tool for work completion
- Support their student in allocating time wisely, meeting deadlines and developing good personal study habits
- Monitor time management and productivity
- Review school provided materials (minder binder, teacher websites, Aeries gradebook, etc.)
- Communicate with teachers at the earliest opportunity once your student has demonstrated consistent inability to complete homework.
- Contact the counselor, assistant principal, and then the principal if a solution cannot be reached with a teacher regarding homework

## Scheduling Time and Parameters

Both the PTA and the NEA endorse the “10-minute rule” – that the maximum amount of homework should not exceed ten minutes per grade level per night (Vatterott, 2005), all subjects combined. The 10-minute rule is consistent with current research and the Los Alamitos Unified School District Board Policy.

Middle school homework may be given Monday through Thursday. Weekends and holidays are primarily reserved for family time. Students may elect to use the weekends to review materials, make up work, complete projects, and enjoy recreational reading. Assignments will be designed so that the typical student can complete all homework, including time for preparing for exams, in the average minutes shown.

Grade 6 - 60 minutes daily

Grade 7 - 70 minutes daily

Grade 8 - 80 minutes daily

Students enrolled in an accelerated class designed to be equivalent to a high course should expect homework for that class to be consistent with the time expectation for the higher grade level.

## Assistance for Homework

It is recommended that students seeking assistance with homework speak and work directly with their teachers as they will be able to recommend strategies to improve student success with homework. More than 90% of our teachers regularly hold study halls, before school, during lunch, or after school. If your student has a part-time teacher, he or she should speak with that teacher to arrange a time to receive assistance. In addition, students may participate in the support programs listed below.

Teacher Study Halls	Monday-Thursday	Before school, lunch, after school	check with teacher
Homework Club	Mon.-Tues.-Thurs. Wednesday	3:10-3:55 2:15-3:00	Media Center
Eagles Outpost (Daycare)	Mon.-Tues.-Thurs. Wednesday	3:10-3:55 2:15-3:00	Room 82
Math Study Hall	Monday-Thurs.	3:10-3:55	check with teacher
PAL Program (Positive Assistance at Lunch)	Tuesday, Wed. Thursday	1 <sup>st</sup> lunch	Room 84
PASS Program (Positive Assistance on Saturday)	Saturday	9am-12pm	Room 9