

**Stratford Board of Education
Stratford Public Schools**

Instruction

Homework Policy

Purpose of Homework:

- Homework should be a meaningful review of what has been learned, an opportunity to apply new learning to a real world experience, an extension of learning, or a reflection of skills/strategies/concepts that have already been taught to determine standard or learning objective mastery (Jackson, 2009).
- Homework should be self-evaluative, if possible, using rubrics that provide guidance for mastery (Andrade, 2007-2008).
- Homework should not be used as an assessment of punishment. It should not be busy work, supplant instruction, or be a method to teach responsibility (Vatterott, 2009; Kohn, 2006).

Amount of Homework:

- Homework should not be busy work, and assignments should not be given to merely address the amount of time indicated for homework assignments, but should be purposeful and tied directly to the curriculum. It should help to determine mastery of the objectives needed per grade level based on the Stratford Public Schools' curricula and the Connecticut State Standards.
- In the elementary schools, homework will be assigned on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Occasionally, it may be necessary to assign work over a weekend to enhance learning.
- In the middle and high schools, work assigned may take, at times, more than the recommended schedule. Discretion should be used in making weekend assignments.
- With the exception of summer vacation assignments, teachers may not use scheduled vacation time during the school year to assign homework and projects. Homework should not be due immediately following a long-weekend or vacation with the exception of summer assignments.
- All students are encouraged to read either with family support or independently for at least 20 minutes per day in addition to the required homework. Students may be asked to keep a reading log and have it signed by the parent/guardian.

The following homework assignment schedule necessitates a teacher recognizing each individual student's ability, needs and interests:

Kindergarten – Assignments will be flexible, determined by need.

Grade 1 – Fifteen minutes per night.

Grade 2 – Twenty minutes per night.

Grade 3 – Thirty minutes per night.

Grade 4 – Forty-five minutes per night.

Grade 5 – Fifty minutes per night.

Grade 6 – One hour per night.

Grades 7-8 – One and one-half hours per night.

Grades 9-12 – Two hours per night (Honors and Advanced Placement classes may require from 45 minutes to one hour per night to complete homework assignments).

In addition:

- Projects, essays, and other long-term assignments should have progress checkpoints. Gradual release should occur as students advance to prepare them for independence by senior year.
- Whenever possible, teachers (elementary grade level teams, middle school teams) should collaboratively plan for homework assignments, including long-term projects, to avoid conflicts with tests and quizzes and to prevent excessive amounts of homework across subject areas.
- If a student is absent, either because of illness or bereavement, the school must provide additional time for homework completion. Parents of secondary teachers should contact the school counselor to coordinate assignment completions.
- In the case of unexcused absences, make-up work is not permitted for credit. The student, however, should make up such assignments to help him/her with later school assignments. Excused absences are defined as:
 1. Illness
 2. Death in the family
 3. Observance of a religious holiday
 4. Family emergencies or other circumstances beyond the student's control
 5. School sponsored field trip
 6. Other reasons, such as medical appointments
 7. While the district does not condone students missing school due to vacations, it does recognize that there are rare instances when a student must be absent due to parental vacation or travel requirements. In these cases the student must notify the school administrator in advance of the absence(s).

- Teachers should provide feedback when returning homework assignments whenever possible to give instructional guidance to achieve mastery of skills and objectives.

Grading Policy:

- Homework should not be counted as more than 15% of a marking period's grade (unless it is a requirement of a UCONN Early College Experiences class to count homework more than 15%).
- Late policy for long-term projects: Students should be given the opportunity to make up long-term projects if late and should receive an incremental deduction of 20% of the homework grade each day that the assignment is late up to five school days, whereupon the student will receive a zero for non-completion (Guskey & Anderson, 2008).
- Homework participation should be reflected in the work habits or the comment section of the student report card.
- Summer Reading/Math Packets are due the first day of school; therefore, the late policy does not apply to summer work due the first day of school.

Homework Design:

- Homework, whenever necessary, should be differentiated and provide opportunities for higher order thinking skills – Bloom's Taxonomy (Tomlinson, 1999).
- Homework should be part of the unit of study for each curriculum. A "common core" of embedded tasks and assignments should allow for homework completion to be unique to each student and prevent duplication of answers whenever possible.
- Homework assignments should be written in daily plan books. Access to daily assignments should also be available, whenever possible, by using course syllabi or teacher websites.

Homework Support:

The Stratford Public Schools acknowledges that not all students have opportunities to complete homework because of work and family responsibilities. Students need resources, quiet learning environments, and materials to successfully complete homework. The school system will make every attempt to provide learning opportunities when it can (Perkins-Gough, 2006) such as:

- Homework Study Groups
- After-school Support (specially designed to teach students how to take notes, organize binders, and how to successfully use assignment notebooks/calendars).

- In-school Homework Help Classrooms.
- Student/Teacher Arrangements (cooperatively determined and at the teacher's availability).
- Peer-mentoring (Smart Buddies for K-5 students. Sterling House recruits 8-12 grade students as mentors).
- Stratford Public Library "Homework Desk", call the Library's Teen Services Department at 203-385-4167 or for Library hours go to: <http://www.stratfordlib.ct.us/>

Parent Engagement:

All schools should provide the information concerning the homework policy in their handbook and on their website. Assignments should not require parents to have any special skills, knowledge, or materials for their students to successfully complete homework (Payne, 2008). Parents should have access to their students' homework participation/completion via:

- Parent Portal access.
- Parent conferences.
- E-mail requests.
- Electronic textbook (textbooks that are part of the Stratford Public School's curriculum resources and are available on-line).
- Parent resource websites to enhance at home learning (see appendix).

Appendix 1
Parent Resource Websites

Language Arts

1. <http://kids.nypl.org> (On-line books to read from the New York Public Library).
2. <http://handwritingworksheets.com> (Handwriting).
3. <http://www.scholastic.com/tbwwidget/> (Find books at your child's level).
4. <http://www.bookadventure.com> (To find books and tests on books).
5. <http://www.StarFalls.com> (Resources to build reading skills).
6. <http://www.studyisland.com> (Stratford Public Schools' has purchased this web-based tool at each elementary building. Students will need their login and password to access it from home. Each school can distribute this access information for the students upon request).

Math Support

7. <http://www.ixl.com> (Math tests based on Connecticut Standards).
8. http://school.discoveryeducation.com/homeworkhelp/math/math_homework_help.html (Math homework help using video clips).
9. <http://www.coolmath-games.com/> (Different types of skills in math).
10. <http://www.coolmath4kids.com/> (Variety of games with math skills).
11. <http://www.omsinfo.org/visit/featured/moneyvill/activities.cfm> (Plan on how to budget or start your own business).
12. <http://www.funbrain.com/math> (Math games and activities).
13. <http://www.pbs.org/parents/cyberchase> (Math ideas).
14. <http://www.arcademicskillbuilders.com/> (Arcade games using math skills).
15. <http://www.aplusmath.com> (Different math games).
16. <http://www.mathplayground.com> (Variety of logic games).

Enrichment

17. <http://www.renssuillilearning.com> (Enrichment).
18. <http://www.kidzone.com> (Enrichment).

Reference Materials

19. <http://boe-destiny.stratfordk12.org> (Stratford Public Schools' internet based card catalog).
20. <http://www.knowhow2go.org> (Preparing for college).
21. <http://www.ipl.org/div/kidspace> (Internet public library site for children that is user friendly with picture icons and descriptions of subjects and websites on many different topics).
22. <http://www.school.cb.com> (Encyclopedia Britannica on-line service for K-12 Username: stratford07 Password: books).

Appendix 2
21st Century Skills

Today's students must learn to locate, analyze, collaborate, interpret, and communicate information and solve problems logically. To succeed in the 21st century, everyone will need to be proficient in all of these skills and will have to use technology to demonstrate proficiency. Colleges, universities, and the business community are clear that these skills are truly "essential" to the success of all students as they pursue post-secondary education and careers. The 21st Century skills are defined as the following:

1. Use real-world digital and other research tools to access, evaluate, and effectively apply information appropriate for authentic tasks.
2. Work independently and collaboratively to solve problems and accomplish goals.
3. Communicate information clearly and effectively using a variety of tools/media in varied contexts for a variety of purposes.
4. Demonstrate innovation, flexibility, and adaptability in thinking patterns, work habits, and working/learning conditions.
5. Effectively apply the analysis, synthesis, and evaluative processes that enable productive problem solving.
6. Value and demonstrate personal responsibility, character, cultural understanding and ethical behavior.

Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
 10-221 Boards of Education to prescribe rules, policies and procedures.