

## **Homework Policy**

First Read for 6/8/17 SC meeting

**File: IKB**

The purpose of homework, when assigned, is to support student engagement in the classroom. The term "homework" refers to an assignment/activity that supplements and/or supports class instruction. Homework should increase in complexity with the maturity of the student. This can be established through activities and assignments that encourage students to investigate for themselves and to work independently as well as with others.

The District also recognizes and supports the need for students and families to have playtime, downtime and family time (PDF). These three "periods of time" promote wellness and balance in our students' lives as well as opportunities to engage in activities that they choose.

One such activity, which abundant research supports, is independent "choice" reading. This kind of reading has been shown to improve student academic and social and emotional learning. Independent reading of student-chosen text, coupled with hearing stories and conversations, are powerful activities students can engage in that foster their growth and well-being. Independent choice reading is highly encouraged and will not be assigned.

To ensure all students have equitable access to programs and curricula, the information for any homework assignment should be clear and specific so that the student can complete the assignment independently. Homework assignments should take into consideration individual student differences, needs and available resources. Furthermore, homework should not require the use of materials not readily available in all homes.

**Frequency of homework** (Specific implementation can be found in individual school handbooks and/or websites)

**Grades K-2:** Students will have no homework except for an occasional activity that may include other people.

**Grades 3-4:** Students will occasionally have an assigned activity.

**Grades 5-6:** Students may expect homework more frequently, Monday through Thursday.

**Grades 7-12:** Students should expect homework in one or more subjects nightly.

### **Vacations K-12**

Homework will not be assigned with the expectation that it be worked on and/or completed during any school vacations. Long-term projects assigned before a vacation can not have a due date earlier than the Thursday after a vacation.

### **Long Weekends K-12**

Homework will not be assigned over long weekends, including all holiday and religious long weekends, and those marked by a district-wide closing. When there is no school on Monday, in-class assessments will not be scheduled earlier than the following Wednesday.

### **Mid-years - high school only**

Mid-years - No assessments given or homework during mid-year week, except for homework directly related to exam preparation.

### **MCAS**

**Grades 3-8:** Nights prior to MCAS testing are homework-free.

**High School:** Limit homework to twenty minutes per night per course

### **Religious Holidays**

For practices related to religious holidays, please refer to District policy IMD-R located on the district website:

<http://www.abschools.org/school-committee/policies/section-i>

*Acton-Boxborough Regional School District*

## Homework Policy - Feedback from the Community

6/12/17 - 6/19/17

6/12/17 1:09pm

I like the proposed homework policy. I have not enjoyed the no homework policy of 6th grade at Douglas because what happens is that occasionally she has some and we aren't prepared. I also don't think she is going to be well prepared to get nightly homework next year in 7th grade and it's going to be a painful transition. I truly agree with the vacation and long weekend policy because I believe those should be family time and I very much appreciate being able to go away without trying to schedule homework time.

Thank you for the common sense proposal

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6/12/17 1:03pm

I have read and support this homework policy.

I particularly like its attention to promoting wellness.

Thank you to all who worked on this policy.

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6/12/17 1:25pm

Hi – thanks for sending out the policy. I'm in agreement. I think it would be beneficial to include the expected time limit on the homework when it is assigned. For example:

**Grades 5-6:** Students may expect homework more frequently, Monday through Thursday, with completion of such homework estimated to take [30-60 minutes/hour] a night."

Obviously each child will vary in terms of exactly how long it takes them to complete each assignment, but having a generally adopted time-frame across the board would ensure equality among schools -- and each teacher can take into consideration the needs of certain students when doing the assigning.

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6/12/17 1:39pm

I agree with the new homework policy.

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6/12/17 2:06pm

Does this new policy apply to Douglas students ? Currently there is no homework for all students at Douglas. but I think students should have some homework, it helps students build a good study habit and it also makes transition easier when students get to the middle school and have homework every day!

Amy Krishnamurthy's reply: Thank you for your email. Yes, the homework policy would apply to every school in the district.

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6/12/17 1:29pm

Proposed homework policy is very vague.  
Unfortunately, my son up until this past year not only had homework assigned nightly for more than 1 subject, often assigned 4+ subjects/night.  
No coordination amongst teachers. I think the policy for upper grades should not permit nightly homework assignments for more than 2 subjects.  
This would be on top of longer term project assignments.  
Studies I have read do not support significant homework and recommend <3 hours /night.  
I realize Acton has many talented students and families that seek education excellence. I also know we are susceptible to celebrating school rankings but should not be at the expense of our students.  
We need to encourage well roundedness which includes diversity and helping our pairs and communities. While I appreciate competitiveness; I know from experience if we help each other we strengthen our community and world.

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6/12/17 2:45pm

I agree with the proposal to introduce homework after grade 2 and to increase the amount with increasing grades. I feel the "no homework policy" implemented at Douglas this year has failed to make any positive changes.

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6/12/17 2:48pm

I would like to add the following topic for discussion:  
-Homework should be posted online in all subjects so that children who have missed school or parents who need to monitor their children can have access to the assignments.

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6/12/17 2:48pm

Thank you for circulating the proposed homework policy.

Will you also be including a suggested amount of homework time for grades 3-12? My understanding is 10 minutes per evening for each grade level (i.e., 6th grade = 60 minutes). Does this amount of time seem reasonable for lower grades and doable for higher grades?

For lower grades (up to 6) I feel that the homework time in addition to independent reading time can take more than the suggested timeframe, unless there is strong coordination among teachers and planning by the student. We have been fortunate this year, but not other years. For upper grades, I wonder if students are well over that time most evenings, but would love to see an expectation set to keep in control.

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6/12/17 2:49pm

It would be ideal if the proposed policy had the changes, relative to current policy, marked.  
And/or, the current policy was also included in the email.

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6/12/17 2:52pm

I am saddened to see that the district is further limiting the frequency of homework assignments. My children have been in Acton Boxborough from 2nd to 8th grade and from K to 4th grade, at this point. Neither has ever had any homework stress or undue work. I have consistently been dismayed at the lack of homework assigned. I do not see

how we can be competitive globally with the limited educational experience that we have, given the few total school days and high number of field trips, parties, and assemblies that occur. I do not see how our children can learn good homework habits, that will translate into success in high school and college and then the work force. Practicing lessons at home that reiterate the lessons and learning at school is a good exercise that I totally support. My sense is that the district feels forced to limit learning to accommodate other extracurricular activities. If this is true, then it is an inappropriate solution.

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6/12/17 3:08pm

Thank you for attending to this matter. The policy looks fine. I can see it is open to interpretation!

I'd like to offer a suggestion. The transition between 8th and 9th grade was difficult for my daughter. Looking back, she realizes that she did not know how to handle the homework load. She could not see then what she understands now, that she "overdid" her assignments. Her teachers offered after school help and this was fantastic for homework, test review, and, above all, building a connection. Building connections was the most beneficial aspect. Through after school help, my daughter learned to manage her idea of what a completed assignment at the high school level should look like.

My suggestion is that teachers use advisory time to facilitate student discussion of homework. Perhaps an activity like sharing a weekly schedule with built in time for sleep and school, then filling in the blanks with activities and homework. This coloring and sharing activity might help students concretely develop a sense of balance and alert advisors to students who are over doing it.

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6/12/17 3:23pm

As a teacher in the district and as a parent, I have followed the process of creating a framework for a district homework policy and I support the overall idea very much.

From my perspective as a teacher of 10th grade students, I would like to give feedback on the high school portion of the guidelines which allows teachers of sophomores to give 20 minutes of homework during MCAS exams. I teach sophomores and they bear the brunt of testing and it is completely exhausting for them. In our current schedule during MCAS test days, sophomores come in early, test for 3 hours, then have to follow a regular school day with shortened classes, but it is still 8 periods long. I think this is a lot, especially if we want them to focus on the testing and put their best foot forward. The youngest of my three children is currently a sophomore so he just finished his MCAS testing and this will no longer affect me as a parent, but I strongly recommend that sophomore students should have NO HOMEWORK during the time they are taking MCAS exams. If we are really talking about looking at assessment and stress, I think this is one area where it really makes sense. I never give my sophomores homework during MCAS testing, but as a parent my own kids have had homework and I think it is a lot to ask of these kids.

I appreciate your consideration of this feedback; if I can help in any way please feel free to contact me!

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6/12/17 3:43pm

I agree with the proposed homework policy as far as quantity per grades, etc...

Homework should be an extension of what has been learned in class, to practice/review, not to learn something new that has not been explained by a teacher first.

So far, for us, the homework load has been appropriate (7th and 10th grade students).

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6/12/17 4:03pm

I do not understand the following under the "Vacation K-12"

"Homework will not be assigned with the expectation that it be worked on and/or completed during any school vacations. Long-term projects assigned before a vacation can not have a due date earlier than the Thursday after a vacation."

It says homework will not be assigned but it is expected to be worked on during the vacation. That makes NO SENSE!!!! If a teacher is going to assign homework during vacation it will be due when they get off vacation. That might be your policy but in reality the teacher follows another set of rules.

This proposal makes no sense. More often than not is that homework is given during the week by multiple teachers. And collectively it consumes a lot of time. My son spends a least 4 hours on homework every night. I make him go to bed at 10:30 or he will keep doing homework. I am a parent that never believed in homework as I believed in practical and hands on...life does not allow you to work on anything at home. You have are to complete your work immediately.

So I know my input means nothing and I am quite sure you don't even care, so we are at the mercy of the school system.

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6/12/17 4:06pm

This is Yang, mother of two daughters who grow up in Acton. As a long time Acton resident (over 18 years), I really appreciate the fine education that AB school district has been offering to the students. And highly admire all the hard work by the diligent educators, staff and members of School Committee. Hats off to all of you!

I've just read the drafted school district homework policy and would like to provide one feedback:

Since reading is an incredible life long beneficial habit for a person. It is essential to help a kid to build up such a good habit starting at young age. Therefore, I would suggest to add "**For K - 5, recommend 15 minutes minimum reading daily at students choice of text**"

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6/12/17 9:17pm

Thank you for putting together the homework proposal.

I very much agree with the information you have provided on independent reading and have one suggestion (which we found to work well in another school district): For students in 1-6 grade, M-Th, keep a weekly one-page reading log provided by the teacher (returned on Friday), where the students note how

many minutes (or pages) they have read a day, together with the author and the title of the book/s. Optionally, the student can share their favorite moment from a story (or a fact from a non-fiction book) with 1-3 sentences at the bottom of the page.

I am not sure if the teachers occasionally used those logs for sharing/discussions in class, but this approach was a great motivator for my kids to read. The suggested time in second grade was 20 minutes and my daughter gladly read over an hour. The strategy just gave her a reason to open a book and this "homework" was never graded, so there was no extra load for the teachers.

On another note, you may be aware that, although there is no direct connection between homework and student success, there is lots of research showing connection between math skills and student success. In this regard, the way we want to predispose our kids to reading, we can, and it will be to the kids' advantage, to incline them towards solving daily problems outside of the school environment. This sends the message that, like reading, math is a life skill and not something that is done at school only. And daily math homework is a great tool. Some researchers claim that 10 minutes practice a day is enough to master fluency in math facts, but even only one word problem a day will keep them engaged and not intimidated by math. Please, consider discussing this approach with the district/curriculum leaders.

I find that many families realize how important math is but unfortunately cannot rely on the school curriculum to develop interest in the kids towards the subject, so they opt for the local Russian School of Math. As someone who has worked in educational software and educational consulting for a number of years, I know this is not needed. There are many options to engage the kids with math, including differentiated elementary curriculum and targeted homework. I am not going to mention anything in particular, as my intention is not to sell or endorse products. As a parent, I just want my third grader to go back to being excited by math and not share statements like "my teacher and my friends say math is hard and I do not want to be weird" [by contradicting].

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6/13/17 7:55am

I am a very concerned parent of two children that attend Blanchard in boxborough. when my oldest (now 10 yrs old) started school there was homework on a consistent basis and my wife and I could help her, show her different tricks to complete and understand her homework and she excelled at school and was excited to go to school. But this past school year she has had little to no homework and doesn't seem to like going to school.... why you ask? She is struggling with math and the sad part about this is the fact that I her father have asked the school to give her homework and little to nothing was done. In a very recent meeting that my wife was a part of the teachers came out and said that my oldest needs homework on the struggling Subject because she just doesn't understand it,  
Does this sound like a study that's working?  
Does this sound like teachers willing to help a child that's struggling ?  
I'm not seeing that at all

I also have a soon to be eight yr old that has been struggling all year long with numerous things. But when asked about homework I'm told flat out that homework is not allowed because of a study done by teachers. I personally don't care about a study I've had learning disabilities my whole life and when I see my children struggle because teachers don't want to help her to be successful I see that as a huge problem and a failure of the school. My wife and I were told that she needs to stay back because she just doesn't understand what going on in class, so why doesn't she have homework to help her? Does this make sense? Does this fit into your study? As I see it the teachers are being lazy. I would like to see homework given to all students it helps them develop work ethic, and also shows hard work pays off.

a half hour a day for homework is not a lot it can be beneficial to everyone but most of all the students.

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6/13/17 8:03am

Is there a way to make the following available, for the edification of the public, so that we may provide feedback that is appropriately balanced against our personal past experiences, instincts and perceptions of the conventional wisdom?

1) A list of references to published outcomes research on the impact homework assignments has on academic and social development

2) A specific history of homework policy changes, including any personal discretion teachers have been allowed, over the last 10 years, by elementary school (see #3)

3) My child was given homework in Kindergarten at Gates last year but was given no homework in Merriam this year as a 1st grader. Given our personal experience with disparity in homework assignments across elementary schools, could you also provide a correlation plot of test scores across elementary schools for the last 5 years? (I understand that there is a risk of intrinsic covariates within this dataset from many factors; however, the data is still of interest).

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6/13/17 8:58am

Can you please advise the major changes in policy from the prior version.

In the future, it would be worthwhile to include in the draft for parent's to review.

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6/13/17 9:23am

Thank you for your work on the homework policy. As a mother of two elementary school age children, I think it is appropriate and well thought out for the elementary school level. At the high school level, aside from observing the no homework on vacations and long weekends, I think it may be hard to determine if the high school teachers are assigning too much. I would hope that as part of this - the high school teachers will get together and discuss their expectations and how much homework they intend to assign, so they can determine if they need to scale back. Thanks again for tackling this!

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6/13/17 9:49am

I am unable to attend the meeting and support the new homework policy as I have just had brain surgery. Please include this email in support of the proposed policy. Thank you.

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6/13/17 9:49am

I love this! Thanks so much!

I'm concerned that the amount of homework be appropriate -- and that the quantity be the minimum needed to show mastery.

For example, once a student has shown mastery in a type of math problem, they need not continue doing problem sets that seem inordinately long. This can kill the joy of learning and consume time that could be better used pursuing other learning or recharging with down time.

Thanks for making progress on this important issue. This family thanks you!

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6/13/17 9:53am

First of all, thank you for soliciting this feedback. We think this is an excellent way for SC to hear many voices within the district, including many who will not feel comfortable speaking at an open meeting.

We have a few comments about the homework policy draft.

First of all, we appreciate the overall sense of balance that the policy seeks to achieve.

For the independent reading, we would like to see this as an "expectation" instead of an "independent choice that will not be assigned." It is very helpful for some of our more reluctant readers to have the teacher announce this expectation. This will reinforce parents and help us to achieve this goal. We strongly agree that this should not be checked by teachers in the form of reading logs or similar.

For grades 7-8, we would like to see stronger coordination between teachers within teams. Some of the teams assigned much more homework than others, and many teachers did not seem cognizant of work that their colleagues had assigned.

For grades 9-12, we support more intermediate term assignments (giving 2-3 days to complete work) to allow students some flexibility, with the recognition that each student's schedule has some busier days than others.

Not addressed in the homework policy, but in our estimation related and important, is the volume of homework assigned in some honors classes. We believe that honors classes should be conceptually challenging but not suffocating in homework. The decision to take an honors class should focus on the ability and desire to delve more deeply and think more critically. At AB, a student is limited by volume if wellness is to be maintained. This means that a bright, motivated student has to take some lower level classes, with less stimulating classroom discussion and decreased depth of analysis, in order to get a full night's sleep. We propose that the focus of these classes should be quality, not quantity.

Again, our many thanks for soliciting opinions on this important issue.

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6/13/17 10:15am

This is a great policy! Thank you for all of the hard work that went into putting it together.

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6/13/17 10:56am

A very nice policy (especially the long-weekend and vacation policies), but something's missing - a hard ceiling on hours/night of homework overall.

I see that during MCAS homework is limited to 20 minutes per night per course- but if a high schooler is taking 6 courses, that's two hours a night, every night, which is IMHO enough to discourage any student but the most dedicated (or those with the most dedicated parents). We should not be preparing our children for careers ending in karoshi.

I would like to see a hard ceiling of not more than 1 hour or 1 hour 20 minutes of homework per night total, basically summing with the seven-hour on-site school day to be eight hours overall per day. As has been measured in engineering and software development, more hours often translates to worse outcomes, and eight hours seems to be a sweet spot for many people.



6/13/17 11:25am

I think the proposed homework policy is very balanced and thoughtful for all kinds of learners and their families. Thank you for your work on this important topic.

As a district parent for eight years, I've seen a substantial and steady decrease in the amount of homework at the K-6 level at Blanchard. I'm very pleased that there will be some consistent homework at the 5-6 grade level. I think this has many benefits, and will also help a lot students with the transition to junior high school.

That said, the homework at the 7<sup>th</sup> grade level has been much less than expected and very manageable even with many extracurricular activities. I do think many parents would benefit from additional family learning sessions on executive function, time management, setting priorities, organization, finding balance, too much screen time, and coping strategies. I would also encourage the district to disseminate information on these topics with tips via email to try to reach more parents. Unfortunately the parents who often need the most guidance/support, do not attend the family learning sessions. Many parents seem overwhelmed by homework, which has been surprising to me since that's not my experience with two very different learners in my home. Homework should be done by students, not parents, so teachers can better understand where students are struggling. Parents have a key supportive role in creating time and space for their children to do homework and help to clarify any basic questions.

I'm not a supporter of specific time amounts of homework, as others are, since children with varying academic skills and attentional issues will differ in how long assignments take. If children are taking an excessive amount of time to complete assignments, I believe parents should be in direct communication with teachers about this. There should not be a district wide policy on the amount of time, especially since student absences for illness or vacation during normal school days, school snow days, etc. would impact this. Overall there should be balance, not a daily regimen.

Thanks again for your thoughtful work!

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6/13/17 10:15am

This is a great policy! Thank you for all of the hard work that went into putting it together.

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6/13/17 10:39am

I have some question about the following in the document. Does the sentence about High school only apply to a few nights before MCAS, or for throughout the academic year?

MCAS

Grades 3-8: Nights prior to MCAS testing are homework-free.

High School: Limit homework to twenty minutes per night per course

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6/14/17 8:40am

Just wanted to share a few thoughts/questions on the proposed homework policy.

1. Will this policy apply to the entire district? I know that historically each elementary school has had their own program. I just want to make sure that all 6th grade students are properly prepared for the transition to 7th grade.

2. I am very concerned that my Douglas 5th grader has no homework. I believe that in 5th and 6th grade there should be a small amount of homework(20-30 minutes), mainly for accountability and time planning purposes.

3. Homework is a way for parents to connect with what their child is doing in school. This is the first year without homework at Douglas and I feel completely disconnected. The teacher sends home talking points at the end of the week, so in lieu of homework, that is helpful.

4. Some sort of semi regular pattern/coordination between teachers of homework for JH and High School students would be helpful. Some nights my 7th grader has 20 minutes of homework, some nights it's two hours...this makes it very difficult/stressful to plan family time, sports etc.

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6/14/17 10:03am

I like this approach.

As a parent of two graduates of AB (Class of 2015 and 2017) and of a current Freshman, I wanted to share their inputs about the stress of AB work and tests on them. Their comment was that although there are many tests all the time (which is true) what they believed would help is a simple process used at the college level - allow the student to drop the lowest test grade in each subject per quarter and then use the rest of the tests and other criteria to create the grade. They strongly believe the 'have to be perfect in every test' mentality exists and creates a lot of stress for students. By allowing the low grade to be dropped would be, in their opinion, a simple and effective way to help drop the unhealthy stress.

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6/14/17 10:42am

I am a Blanchard parent, with children who will be entering 1st and 3rd grades. I would like to thank you for your work on the homework policy. I am in support of the policy you have created.

As a psychologist, I have been following the research supporting elimination of homework in the early school years, and limits in the later years, to create breaks from school stress and promote more balanced living for our young people. Thank you for eliminating reading logs ("assigned choice reading"), and understanding how reading logs destroy the joy of reading.

In your description of homework, you state that assignments should take into account student differences, needs and resources. I wonder if there might be a little more clarity, such as that students may discuss homework assignments with their teachers, and modifications can be made based on individual student needs. I am sure that some students benefit from practice, others from expanding on a topic, others from something different. When students are encouraged to help modify their homework to make it meaningful for them, there would be more engaged learning. I think culturally, some students would naturally approach a teacher with an idea to make their assignment more meaningful for them, but other students might not know that could be done unless encouraged to do so.

Thank you for all of your hard work, for creating policy based on evidence, and also for responding to student needs. With less homework, there is room for non-academic learning, and living.

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6/14/17 11:30am

Thank you for soliciting our input into the homework policy. This is the second year that our son (6th grade, entering Junior High in the Fall) has been subject to that policy. (Our older child is in 11th grade and has excessive homework, in our opinion). In our family's experience, the "no homework" policy may have gone to the extreme; we do not like the daily homework and busywork of the past, but we would like some meaningful

homework that could also form the basis for discussion with parents and family members. This would not be assigned every day, but could be part of a long-term project, or an ongoing discussion.

--On the positive side, we are happy that we do not have to fill out reading logs or do busywork like color shapes, etc. My children are both avid readers but found filling up reading logs boring and counterproductive. When my son was reading thick chapter books in grade 2, the reading assistant wrote a note on his log asking why he was reading the same thing every day. A chapter book takes time to read! He was discouraged by this then (but kept on reading).

--On the negative side, we feel that our son is more stressed out during the school day because all the material has to be learned and finished in school. Teachers have to cram all the instruction and exercises into the school day, leaving little time for kids to play and socialize. School is also a social activity (being with friends is one of the high points of my son's day). This is not an isolated case—other parents have also expressed this.

-- Although the time freed up by the no homework policy is supposed to go to “playtime, down time, and family time”, this neglects the opportunity provided by meaningful homework for family time. Our family likes to discuss things learned in school over the dinner table with both kids. We learn to listen to each other, for the older sibling to explain in simple terms to the younger sibling, for the younger one to learn to discuss and hold his own with older people.

--We also felt a deterioration in the level of discipline and attention to school work. Note that we do not miss the daily drudgery of rote homework, but a little light and meaningful homework, assigned early in the week and due during the week, was a routine that our family liked.

--We are not so concerned with test scores given the evidence that assigning homework does not have a significant correlation with test scores, but are more concerned about the development of good routines and habits, that will serve the child later in life. Our older child may have had excessive homework, but I am more convinced of her readiness for college and for life beyond than for our son. We know that assigned work will increase in junior high and the high school, and hope that this will be transitioned well so as not to be a shock to the student and discourage learning.

Finally, we as parents believe that learning takes place everywhere: in school and at home. Introducing a false dichotomy puts too much burden on teachers, and misses the opportunity of truly involving parents in their child's learning. We would like to urge the school committee to err on the side of moderation rather than the extreme with respect to the homework policy.

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**6/14/17 5:57pm**

Respected Superintendent and school authority,

Please pardon me for my long mail..  
And please do not ignore this long mail..

Sharing some genuine feelings, hoping that it would help you in taking good decision for kids better future .

What Kids can do for 5+ hrs after school ??

1. After school, It's not practical to have a casual get together or playing time with fellow kids in the back yard daily due to many personal or neighborhood or social and climate constraints .
2. It may not be feasible for all parents to take out kids for other costly facilities to engage them on daily basis.
3. Can't ask them to eat food and sleep after school. They hardly play alone or with ordinary toys ( not video games) for more than few minutes.
4. Finally what kids will end up doing is making parents to allow them to watching TV , pokemon / Minecraft, playing video games and, you tube, Facebook, WhatsApp chatting and other internet addictions.

As we all know expert opinion that a TV - video driven culture has bad effects on kids and may prevent kids from being smart. It even numbs kids mind from being intellectually challenged , thinking analytically, behavioral /conduct /emotional / concentration problems, negative influence like violence, drugs, ...etc...and count goes on.

Being a mother of a second grader , I genuinely feel , kids doing some homework is healthier than them watching TV all the time and getting addicted to bad internet and social media influences..

And it's also generally true that kids won't study when their parents ask them, unless they get the instruction from teacher or they feel the need of study due to examination.

Homeworks need not to be heavy .

For smaller grade , It could be just reading a book or writing summary of what read , make up some imaginary stories, learn 10 new words from the book they read , make your handwriting better , exploring on a subject or finding some facts , some math, or some imagination or write some ' what do you think about that ? " - " write about what's your favorite things ? " kind of assignments.... etc.

And get a SIGN from PARENTS to know if kids did the same at home . (so that teachers not required to check that every day. They could randomly pick one kid and ask about what they did on previous day. Kids will be waiting for their chance to tell the class about what they did).

For higher classes, Kids could do the verification by themselves or by having a sub group of kids verifying for the other subgroup etc to ease teachers overload to check the homework.

Appropriate Homework and assignments :-

1. will definitely help kids to have healthier and better future.
2. It's an engagement to save them from unwanted distractions
3. It will make both parents and kids responsible and interested about studies.
4. It will help them to train themselves in an earlier age, on how to cop up the higher grade curriculum pressure and will surely help them to hold on with out dropping off from the school or having depression .

These are my genuine thoughts as a parent.

Let me know if I am wrong at any point..

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6/14/17 8:38pm

I think this homework policy is terrific. I love how staggers homework and makes the amount and type tailored to the grade of the student. I love how the purpose of the hw needs to be clear. I love the lack of homework on

vacations. And I love the time limit per subject. Students still get the benefit of reinforced learning from class, without the burden of excess homework.

I am both a high school teacher and a parent, so I have seen students deal with the homework burden for years. My district is also considering a new homework policy, and i have tried to implement similar ideas into my classroom.

This is a policy that will really help students academically and social/emotionally, and I fully support the proposed policies.

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6/14/17 8:45pm

As a parent of two students who have matriculated through A-B, I think this policy is taking student coddling to a ridiculous degree. School should focus on learning and homework is a critical element of that.

At the local level, I hear all the time from teachers in the A-B system about the declining capability of students and how they are passed along from grade to grade with no one being allowed to fail a grade due to lack of achievement. Often basic communication skills or simple lifeskills like being able to tell time are absent even in the upper grades.

US students are increasingly uncompetitive in the global marketplace. I work in a global company and have many foreign colleagues who have remained in the US with their families because their kids dont want to go back to their home countries for the reason that the schools in the US are so much easier. Below is an example from the 2015 Pew report exemplifying the sorry state of US education based on 15-year old students:

*"How do U.S. students compare with their peers around the world? Recently released data from international math and science assessments indicate that U.S. students continue to rank around the middle of the pack, and behind many other advanced industrial nations.*

*One of the biggest cross-national tests is the [Programme for International Student Assessment \(PISA\)](#), which every three years measures reading ability, math and science literacy and other key skills among 15-year-olds in dozens of developed and developing countries. The most recent PISA results, from 2015, placed the U.S. an [unimpressive 38th](#) out of 71 countries in math and 24th in science. Among the 35 members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which sponsors the PISA initiative, the U.S. ranked 30th in math and 19th in science."*

This performance should be an embarrassment to US educators everywhere, who should be seeking ways to challenge both themselves as well as students **more**, not less - not for the sake of statistics but for the sake of the students themselves and their ability to survive and compete effectively in a shrinking world.

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6/15/17 9:17am

During the Special Education Parent Advisory Council Meeting on June 14 parents expressed concern over the revised homework policy.

Students with disabilities often require individualized homework loads. Staff have occasionally been unaware or ignored homework accommodations. For instance, students at the secondary level have at times been assigned homework when their IEPs state they should have no or reduced homework. Others in younger grades may require additional practice or opportunities to generalize skills and should have homework in contradiction with the policy.

To provide clarity to families as well as staff, we please request a line be inserted into the policy stating that IEP/Individualized Education Program provisions around homework supersede the policy.

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6/16/17 7:23pm

I have read the attached homework proposed policy with interest and have a few comments that simply are not addressed in the policy. I appreciate your consideration for the additional thoughts:

1. I support all of the proposed policy elements in the attached document

2. Items not covered in the policy that should be addressed:

a. My daughter will be a senior next year. EVERY year of HS, she has received readings/homework she is expected to complete before classes begin the following autumn. This year she has two classes with this expectation. I believe that there is SO very much homework given during the year, there should be NO expectations of homework over the summer time. Courses should be designed to cover work during the actual school year. The policy itself says, "The purpose of homework, when assigned, is to support student engagement in the classroom." There is NO student engagement in a classroom during the summer.

b. The amount of homework is radically different between the College Prep 1, College Prep 2, A&E, and honors classes. My son took largely College prep 2 courses during his 4 years and had roughly 1 hour of homework a night. My daughter is in nearly all honors, and has 4+ hour a night and another 7-10 hours of homework most weekends. This seems to be an excessive difference and hurts both ends of the spectrum. The policy states that "Homework should increase in complexity with the maturity of the student. This can be established through activities and assignments that encourage students to investigate for themselves and to work independently as well as with others." I fully agree with that statement, but "increasing in complexity" can certainly happen without this great disparity in time required.

c. Many times, we have felt like some (not all) teachers are not following the "spirit" of the homework policy. There have been multiple occasions that our children were assigned homework on a Thursday before a long weekend and told it was due on the Tues following the holiday weekend. However, the amount was so great in aggregate that there simply was NO WAY it could be completed without working on it throughout the 3-day holiday weekend.

d. Our children are largely thriving and going on to lives of great success, significance, and service after their time at ABRHS. I don't think that a more reasonable look at overall homework loads threatens that outcome, but could move to significantly reduce the stress on our students.

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6/15/17

As parents of a junior at ABRHS, we fully support the new proposed homework policy. We hope that it can be implemented as soon as next year. Thank you for all of the work that went in to making this proposal, and for prioritizing the well-being of our children.

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6/16/17

I am a parent of a fourth grader and an educator myself. Homework is an important part of learning. Homework gives students opportunity to practice, learn and retain the knowledge. It is the same reason why musicians and athletes have to practice. Amount of homework and quality of the homework need to be modified but students have to have homework. Homework need to be meaningful. Types of homework like word search or coloring after finding answer for math questions have to be eliminated or students are to given the choices not to do those kind of homework. Not giving students homework is not a responsible behavior from the educators. The reason that many people live in our district is the excellence of our school system. We are heading to the wrong direction in the past year by not giving students homework or thinking that homework is the reason for high stress and suicide. There are many reasons for depression but homework is not the one. There are many ways to release stress for our kids such as spending time to talk to our kids, not always relying on medication to solve problems.

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6/17/17

My son xxxx is a sophomore and I can't begin to tell you how the homework load has completely changed his life. He used to be a voracious reader, was a happy go lucky child, and used to have a friend circle. Now he has no time to read except what is assigned at school, is always tired and fatigued due to lack of sleep and rest and he has no social life- has stopped going out with his friends because of lack of time. In short he has no life.

I have never understood the need for so much homework. He has worth 3-4 hours of homework everyday and not to forget the tests he has so frequently every other day- sometimes two at a time. Recently he has been getting so many review assignments to do for his finals, that he has not got any time to breath or do any reviewing on his own. He has had so much work that he fell sick and could not take his chemistry finals yesterday.

As per the proposed homework policy, high schoolers should expect homework in one or more subjects. Does it not mean that they can get homework in as many as 5 subjects per day? How is it going to be different than what it is now?

I would suggest reducing the amount of homework they get everyday. Homework is given to supplement what is taught in school therefore emphasis should be laid on quality of work assigned versus the quantity. For example instead of giving 20 questions for homework in mathematics just give 10 maybe or less. If the 10 questions assigned sum up what is done in school effectively then why give 20. Also, reduce the amount of tests or projects given - that way every student will have more time to prepare for each test and will do a better job. This will definitely reduce the work load in half and will definitely help the kids to strike the right balance between work and play/free time/ activities.

I would really appreciate if you could include this suggestion in the proposal. A balanced lifestyle is very important for a healthy and happy mind- it fosters learning and a strong personality in kids.

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We have two daughters in the district one is a freshman and the other one is in 5th grade at McCarthy-Towne

We moved to Acton last year after high reviews of the school system, they both attended Lesley Ellis School a private school in Arlington, since they were in Pre-school, we were very impressed with the High School and we think moving to Acton was a very good decision we took, we all are happy with the High School.

In the case of my youngest daughter who attends McCarthy-Towne was different, we like the school, the staff, the teachers are great but the only reason we are not happy with the school is "homework" my

daughter used to have homework every day between 45 minutes to one hour an half of homework, last year in 4th grade and we really miss that part, for us it is very important we believe kids needs to practice at home what they learn during the day, many times my daughter has question and she feels more comfortable asking me than asking the teacher and if they have homework every day then I could see what they learned during the day.

When they come home after school they do homework for one hour and half and then there is still time to spend with family, we were even thinking about moving her to another school where they have more homework.I tried to give her that extra homework at home but it was not the same.

My oldest daughter who is in High School heard comments from some of her classmates saying that it was hard for them the transition from McCarthy-Towne to Jr High.

It would be great if my daughter could have homework every day! Below I copied and paste "14 reasons why Homework is important" which we are totally agree with.

Thanks again for this opportunity!

Here are the top 14 reasons why Homework is important:

1. It improves your child's thinking and memory
2. It helps your child develop positive study skills and habits that will serve him or her well throughout life
3. Homework encourages your child to use time wisely
4. It teaches your child to work independently
5. Homework teaches your child to take responsibility for his or her work
6. It allows your child to review and practice what has been covered in class
7. It helps your child to get ready for the next day's class
8. Homework helps your child learn to use resources, such as libraries, reference materials, and computer Web sites to find information
9. It encourages your child to explores subjects more fully than classroom time permits
10. It allows your child to extend learning by applying skills to new situations
11. It helps your child integrate learning by applying many different skills to a single task, such as book reports or science projects
12. Homework helps parents learn more about what your child is learning in school
13. It allows parents to communicate about what he or she is learning
14. It encourages parents to spark your child's enthusiasm

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6/19/17 8:32am



First, thank you for taking on the task of creating/revising a homework policy for our school community. I believe that this is needed, and will hopefully help improve the stress that many students experience in our school system.

The homework policy as written focuses on timing and frequency of homework assignments, but does not address homework quantity which is particularly an issue at the high school level. This policy would be much improved if it included those guidelines. My eldest child will attend the high school this fall for the first time and he is planning to take a mix of Honors and AE level classes next year. The time planning guide provided by the counseling office said he could expect 4.5 hours of homework daily for his course schedule. I was very surprised to learn of this estimated homework time. My expectation for the mix of courses he selected would have been in the 2.5-3.5 hour range for average daily homework. Homework is necessary and useful, but should be an appropriate amount of quality assignments.

Understandably time guidelines cannot be set without an open, thoughtful dialogue with the teachers, administrative staff and parents, so perhaps there should be acknowledgement in this version of the homework policy that this element needs to be addressed, and include a call to initiate a collaborative conversation around this element.

There is no discussion of limiting the number of tests that high schoolers can have on any given day. This should be included in a discussion of homework, and would be appropriate to add to the Homework Policy statement. At a recent school committee meeting, ABRHS students presented a request to limit the number of tests a student can have on any given day. I propose that it should not be more than two (2) tests on any given day. Further, a reasonable accommodation must be provided for test rescheduling.

I support homework at the elementary level for grades 4 and above. Some homework is needed among these older elementary students to help them learn time management and prepare for homework in junior high. During the elementary years, my children typically had/have a homework packet which is distributed on Friday and not due until the following Friday. I find this model to be very successful. It helps students plan out their week and manage their time such that the homework can be completed by the due date. A weekly planner is distributed with the homework packet, which is a key piece to learning how to complete the assigned work in a timely manner. Apart from a few special assignments, I would estimate that my fifth grader spent about 20 minutes per day on homework this past school year; that amount of time seemed very manageable.

Time spent on independent reading of a book of choice was also part of these homework packets. Encouraging reading at home among younger grades (1-3), either with or without a parent as needed by each child, without it being a requirement would be beneficial "homework" for this level.

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6/19/17 9:40am

I am writing to share our family's personal experience regarding a change in homework policy. My husband and I have two children, both at Douglas School, in 1st and 5th grade.

Our family has very much benefited from the "homework only when necessary" policy that was put in place this year, led by the school's principal, Dr. Whitbeck. I had my hesitations at first, but decided to trust the research, and the principal and the teachers, and see how it went. We have seen so much creative play happen after school. Both kids work on creative projects together, which has been wonderful for building their relationship. My son has started reading independently this year, and it's been simply for pleasure and he gets to choose the books he reads. One day after school my daughter taught him how to use Google to create a slideshow presentation, which he entitled "All About Elliott."

As for my daughter, she decided to participate in Open Door Theater from Oct-Feb, and that experience in theater, working with adults and children of all ages and abilities, really opened up her world. She learned American Sign Language, and most of all learned how to build relationships with people from all sorts of backgrounds and experiences. I think a heavy homework load would have prevented her from joining Open Door. This spring she tried softball for the first time - again, she stepped out of her comfort zone and tried something new, and in the process also made new friends.

We are kept up to date by our children's teachers as to what they are learning and how they are progressing. Each teacher sends weekly emails and/or notes, and often includes an activity/game ideas that we can do at home to reinforce what is being taught at school. These activities are optional.

I am very grateful that the policy changed at our school this year and do hope to see more changes at the 7-12 grades as well, as is appropriate for each grade.

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6/19/17 10:08am

Our family is deeply concerned about the Homework Policy for the 4th grade.

We believe, that regular (not occasionally) homework provides many benefits for the students. It supports learning and develops healthy habits.

We absolutely agree that families need to have playtime, downtime and family time, though, 10-15 minutes of homework would not make a significant impact on these three "periods of time"

The homework gets parents involved also. Signing the homework and checking off the math assignments allows us to stay informed of our children's progress and react if there is a gap. And most importantly, it lets our children know we value their education and their achievements.

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6/19/17 2:31pm

I hope this is not too late - sorry but I was traveling.

First I'd like to thank SC's effort for trying to compromise between completely eliminating homework and over-loading homework. Also appreciate SC taking time to seek feedback from parents.

A few points for consideration:

1) Is it good thing for SC to have such a detailed guidance for the whole district? Particularly elementary school? The homework is an integral part of overall curriculum. Each of our elementary schools has a quite different curriculum system. How can we define a simple standard for the volume of homework for each? For example, Conant's curriculum may require more writing homework than McCarthy-Towne's. Shouldn't this be principal's job for this level of details?

2) SC's main goal, to my opinion, shall be defining the end goal. For example, at this case for academic performance, we shall achieve top ranking in MCAS, SAT, graduation rate, etc. and let each school to decide on how.

3) However, I do appreciate the advisory statement regarding the better coordinated timing of tests and homework. This is wellness part and I do think SC has a say in it.

4) I understand this homework debate is rooted from the wellness issue. However, is it really addressing the root cause by reducing or eliminating homework? I know when kids say they feel stressful about the homework, the true reasons for the stress may not be the homework. In the other words, the stress with homework may be the result but not the reasons. It has always been easy target for people to complain about homework when we talk about stress.

5) do we have enough solid research to suggest we shall reduce homework volume, which has been working well for AB? Last year Times Magazine published an article summarizing the researches well. Basically the most comprehensive research done so far was by Prof. Cooper at Duke University back in 2006. His idea with gradual level of homework was endorsed by National PTA and National Education Association. Most recent years, there have been some researches advocating no homework policy, but they were not that comprehensive and have been regarded as inconclusive at most. As a result, neither two professional associates endorsed any. Also most of the no homework research was looking for extreme case that young elementary school kids may have up to 2hrs homework, which is not the case in AB. In AB, we have 10-30min for young elementary school kids. In addition, any change for no homework is complimented by others in school, for example, one MA school district extended school by two hours. It is irresponsible to put our kids into guinea pigs based upon some inconclusive researches. Without other complimentary change, we are lowering our academic standard by just eliminating or significant reducing homework.

6) Given AB's academic achievement, we have to acknowledge our curriculums have been successful. We should try to change something working well. The part related to recent wellness issue may not relate to our curriculum system. We need to look for other areas to improve before we touch our most successful element in our district.

7) What are potential root causes for wellness issues? Last year we had three (or four) cases of suicide. For the two cases I heard, the poor kids had depression issues at very young ages. One was with Macarthy-Towne that has the least homework assignment. For these two cases, reducing homework won't help.

8) Most of the time we human has anxiety because we set up unrealistic expectation to start with. I believe every kid has some kind of gift - either in the form of academics, or sports, arts, music, team leadership, kindness, etc. I believe the goal for schools should be identifying each student's passion and talents and help them to achieve the full potential along that direction. Our kids need to be told that it is unrealistic to assume a student shall be the sports star and community leader and at the same time a straight A student taking all Honors classes -there is only very limited few can do that but most of us can not. Then the schools and parents need to show (not just tell) the students it is ok for them to follow single track without being an all around star, as the society will need all of us. Also we need to help them to get into right colleges that best suit niches (where the passion and talent meet).

9) As in a good company, we have technical track, management track, sales, manufacturing, engineering, etc. Every track can reach to the level if CEO or COO. In the case of schools, we need to create multiple tracks of success into the future. This may mean AB needs to hire more specialists such as career coaches in a company. Right now our counselor to student ratio is just not workable. This even directly impacts our college application consultation process and the results.

10) After managing individual expectation, we also need to train kids to be more productive and more responsible with good habit (or study ethics) so they can be more capable of dealing with challenges such as teen time emotions and college applications. I am glad SC takes serious steps toward late school start to get older kids more sleep. In addition to that, we need to have students to have a good habit to do homework before video game time - this can only be trained before pre-teen time when the rebellion starts. I have seen or heard so many cases that a high school students only remember to do homework when it is normal bed time - so the bed time delays to mid night or later. In the following day, that student is tired so takes nap at classes. After finishing the school and after school activities, the student feels need to take a break. So after dinner the student starts video game. As the time elapses the student forgets time. When the student starts to do homework close to mid night, the student is already exhausted probably not remembering what teachers said in classes either. It goes on like this as bad cycle, which just eats away the student's health and creativity and develops more resentment for school and homework. It is crucial to get a student to have the habit to complete homework before game time. We can only start early. Some parents may argue that individual parent can assign extra homework to their kids. But we all know most kids wouldn't listen to parents as well as to teachers.

Sorry for the length. I am more than happy to have further discussions. Thanks for your hoard work serving the community.

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6/19/17 1:24pm

I am writing to ask that week-ends also be considered as a no homework period. At a minimum having no homework every other week-end would be preferable to the current situation. I also strongly believe that students should not be spending 3 hours + every day on homework. I work full-time and could not imagine having to come home and work for 3 more hours every evening so why do we think this is acceptable for our children? Looking to other successful Western countries, research has proven that high volumes of homework do not equate to more success so I hope AB is looking more widely at research and best practice recommendations.