

MEMORANDUM

February 14, 2017

TO: The Honorable Chair and Members of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida

FROM: Alberto M. Carvalho, Superintendent of Schools *Amc/mfb*

SUBJECT: STAFF FOLLOW-UP: BOARD MEETING OF NOVEMBER 23, 2016, AGENDA ITEM H-3, HOMEWORK

At the School Board meeting of November 23, 2016, the School Board approved Agenda Item H-3, proffered by School Board Member Susie Castillo and co-sponsored by School Board Member Mari Tere Rojas. This item requested that the Superintendent explore measures and best practices and garner input from parent and education stakeholders to launch an awareness campaign regarding the existing School Board homework policy to improve adherence to its guidelines.

District staff from the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Grants Administration, and Community Engagement, the Office of Academic Transformation, the Office of Communications, the Office of Human Capital Management, and School Operations collaborated on the development of an action plan.

A homework "Frequently Asked Questions" (FAQ) document was drafted and presented to the Family and Community Involvement Advisory Committee (FCIAC) for feedback on Monday, January 30, 2017. The committee includes parents, community stakeholders, and representation from United Teachers of Dade. Valuable input regarding the contents of the FAQ document was gathered and incorporated accordingly. The finalized FAQ document is attached for your review. It will be distributed in three languages to parents and educators through "Connections," the M-DCPS' parent newsletter, as well as The Parent Academy. The FAQ will also be posted on the student, parent, and community portals and made available at open house events in the fall. Social media, radio programming, and other modalities will be used to promote the homework policies as well.

In addition, School Operations established a task force comprised of principals and teachers that met on Friday, January 27, 2017, to identify best practices and protocols for a school-wide approach to implementing and managing the District's current homework policies. The established protocols will enable schools to develop tailored home learning plans. The Office of Professional Development and Evaluation will provide teachers and school-site administrators relevant and useful information regarding the implementation of the District's Homework Policy via weekly briefings and webinars to be viewed on various dates and times. Live webinars will also be hosted for beginning teachers and their mentors.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Mrs. Valtena G. Brown, Deputy Superintendent/Chief Operating Officer, School Operations, at 305 995-2938; Ms. Iraida R. Mendez-Cartaya, Associate Superintendent, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Grants Administration, and Community Engagement, at 305 995-1497; or Ms. Daisy Gonzalez-Diego, Chief Communications Officer, Office of Communications, at 305 995-2060.

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Attachment

cc: School Board Attorney
Superintendent's Cabinet



Frequently Asked Questions About Homework

Miami-Dade County Public Schools



What is Miami-Dade County Public Schools' approach to homework?

There has been much local and national discussion regarding the effectiveness and appropriateness of homework. Three years ago, the school district diligently worked with educators, administrators, parents and the Family and Community Involvement Advisory Committee to formulate an updated homework policy. It is both manageable and meaningful with an emphasis on quality over quantity and depth over length and repetition. The new policy addresses the whole child and provides students with ample time for their physical, cultural, social and emotional growth.



Why is homework necessary?

Successful homework assignments engage students in purposeful, relevant learning that meets their academic needs. Homework learning activities help students understand concepts, develop thinking skills, and focus on applying their new knowledge.



How much homework is necessary?

Educators have differing opinions on the amount of homework that is necessary for children. School Board policy recommends the following minutes that include assignments for all subject areas and teachers collectively per school day:

[Grades K-1, 30 Minutes](#) • **[Grades 2-3, 45 Minutes](#) • **[Grades 4-5, 60 Minutes](#)****

[Grades 6-8, 75 Minutes](#) • **[Grades 9-12, 120 Minutes](#)**

Guidelines suggest that students should also read for 30 minutes in addition to homework assignments.

Additionally, specialized programs such as performing arts, gifted, and/or International Diploma Pathways (i.e., International Baccalaureate (IB), Cambridge or Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone) may receive increased levels of homework due to rigorous course work or performing arts demand.

While our District believes in the importance of extended academic opportunities through meaningful and relevant homework, we should also be mindful that our ultimate goal is to educate and nurture the whole child. As such, we should provide students with ample time for the physical, social, emotional and cultural activities that are associated with this goal. Time with family and extra-curricular activities often provide students with these opportunities. During the spring and winter breaks, schools may assign home learning for students who would benefit from continuity.



Do teachers take into consideration the individual needs of students when assigning homework?

Homework assignments are aligned to standards and expectations for the grade/course of the students as well as their academic needs. Homework provides opportunities for students to reinforce what is taught in the classroom, teachers make the assignments based on learning outcomes that build students' conceptual understanding, develop thinking skills, and focus on the application of knowledge. Homework assignments engage students in purposeful, relevant learning that meets their academic needs, with assignments emphasizing quality and depth over length and repetition. Additionally, teachers will make homework instructions clear to ensure that students understand the assignment. Homework may vary depending on the grade level and specific programs such as SPED, Gifted, or International Diploma programs (IB, Cambridge, AP). Access to technology are taken into consideration. Assignments may be modified to accommodate students who do not have access.



Should parents assist students in completing their homework?

It is not the responsibility of parents to give significant assistance to students in completing homework. But they should encourage and support children in completing assigned homework in an environment that is conducive to studying. Additionally, parents or other family members should make every effort to read to students who cannot read on their own.



Why are changes made to the homework policy?

The homework policy is adjusted from time to time to accommodate changes in instructional methods and trends in education. The growth of "flipped" classrooms, where students learn independently outside the classroom and teachers use in-class time for active learning experiences, has brought changes to homework. Instead of spending their out-of-school time completing traditional homework assignments, students watch lectures and presentations via online videos and podcasts.



What should parents do if they feel their child's homework is excessive, too difficult or insufficiently challenging?

Parents should keep in touch with their child's teacher regarding homework assignments. If the assignments seem excessive, too difficult or insufficiently challenging, parents should communicate with the school leadership.