

Brentwood Elementary Believes in Homework That Works

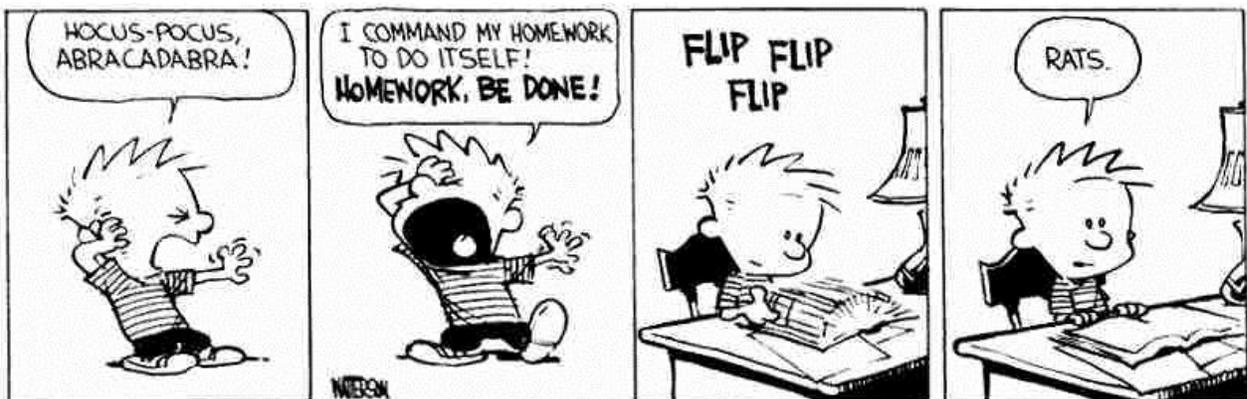
After carefully considering current educational research and best practices regarding homework for elementary students, we have developed a homework philosophy that we feel will meet the needs of our students, teachers, and parents.

Homework will be assigned to meet the following purposes:

1. Pre-learning
 - To find out what students already know or are interested in
 - To stimulate interest in the concept
2. To check for understanding
3. To provide extra practice
4. To solidify understanding ie after learning about Haiku, students compose an original one

“Best Practices” that can improve academic success when implemented as a package:

1. Designing quality homework tasks helps encourage student ownership
 - Allow for choices
 - Offer students an opportunity to personalize their work
 - Allow students to share info about themselves or their lives
 - Tap emotions, feelings or opinions about a subject
 - Allow students to create products or presentations
2. Differentiating homework tasks
 - by difficulty or amount of work
 - by the amount of structure or scaffolding provided
 - by learning style or interest
3. Moving from grading to checking
 - Focus on feedback
 - It is assessment for learning, not of learning so homework will rarely be graded. (Football coaches don't keep score during practice)
4. Decriminalizing the grading of homework
 - If the goal is mastery of a standard, it doesn't matter how long it takes to get the desired result
5. Using completion strategies
 - Diagnosing the problem- academic, organizational, motivational, situational personal
6. Establishing homework support programs



What can parents expect?

Parents will not notice a lot of change because we started implementing some of our new practices last year. Parents have commented that their children were receiving less homework, that their children didn't mind doing homework as much, and that they didn't have to spend as much time assisting their children with their homework. Student needs vary therefore some students may need extra practice at home, or more time to finish assignments, while others will not. If your child is sick occasionally and cannot attend school, the teacher will ensure that their learning needs will be met once they are well.

Can I get homework for my child beforehand if we are going on a holiday?

The short answer to this is no. The teacher may suggest doing some casual holiday-related reading, writing, or math if time permits. In the past our experience was that after a teacher spent considerable extra time and effort to gather work together, it was rarely done, marked, or returned. The majority of what your child is learning each day is done with a very interactive, multi-instructional approach and it is difficult to replicate that in the form of homework. One of the reasons it is so important that your child attend school each day is that the current instructional techniques teachers use are meant to be delivered in a classroom setting where the students have the tools (computers, books, activboard, library etc.) and the opportunities to learn collaboratively with others. When your child returns from being away the teacher will decide how to catch your child up. That might mean some homework tasks, extra one to one attention in the classroom, or working together with them during break times.

What can I do to help my child with their homework?

Show an interest in what they are doing. Set up a convenient time and appropriate place for your child to work. If your child requires assistance and you are having trouble figuring out how to help- no problem- that's our job- write a short note in the daytimer and we will help your child back at school. Sometimes parents do struggle with how a teacher is presenting a concept (especially in math) and want to show their child the "easy way". This may help them get the right answer but it does not build the deep understanding that we are aiming for. It's better to let the teacher spend more time at school building that understanding with them.

How long should my child spend doing homework each night?

The answer to this question will vary from child to child depending on a number of variables. A general rule of thumb is that ten minutes of homework x the grade level is reasonable (ten minutes for gr. 1, 20 minutes for gr. 2 etc.) That said, circumstances may dictate that a child is simply too tired or too frustrated to finish their homework, or, they are so highly motivated, they want to do more than the recommended time. A parent is the best judge of how much productive work can be done by their child outside of school hours. Homework issues should be discussed with the teacher involved if you have any questions or concerns.

