WEST
CHESTER
AREA
SCHOOL
DISTRICT

829 Paoli Pike, West Chester, PA 19380-4567 • Phone: 484-266-1000 • Fax: 484-266-1175 • Web: www.wcasd.net

Summary of Information Presented at
West Chester Area School District Homework Policy Meeting – January, 2017

Introduction

Parents, students, and teachers have expressed similar concerns about the purpose of homework, the amount and type of homework that's given at each level. The West Chester Area School District regularly updates and revises its policies and procedures, but its homework policy hasn't been updated in 40 years. Our goal is to form a committee of staff, parents, and students that will study the issue, and work to develop a policy setting district-wide standards and consistency. Once the policy is approved by the school board, administrators will work with teachers on supporting the new policy's implementation, as well as evaluating its progress and efficacy.

Guiding Questions

The committee will work to answer these questions:
- What is the purpose of homework and how can we make it meaningful?
- How much time is appropriate for students to spend completing homework?
- How does homework impact your family?

Research shows homework should:
- Complement classroom instruction
- Provide practice and reinforcement of skills
- Encourage parent and child interaction
- Expand learning to deepen understanding

Research regarding the benefits of homework:
- Students completing homework at all grade levels tend to have higher test scores than those who do not complete homework.
- The absence of homework may cause students to fall behind.
- Students who perceive homework assignments to be meaningful demonstrate greater academic achievement.
- Correlation between homework and student achievement at the elementary level is inconclusive, but other research shows that it fosters independence, time management skills, responsibility
- Positive relationship between homework and academic achievement at secondary level
- For the average high school student planning to attend college, there is a correlation to high school homework and college graduation rate. Less than one hour of homework a week equates to a 79% graduation rate. Greater than 13 hours a week equates to a 92% graduation rate.

Research regarding the concerns about homework:

- There is no research available to support the "10 minute rule" and many schools are flying blind.
- There is not enough research on homework time at the elementary level.
- Without home supports, many students will struggle and be marginalized, grades may fall as points are taken away, etc.

Other Concerns about Homework:

Without enough homework:

- Student achievement will suffer
- Students won't be competitive and won't be prepared for the next grade level or school
- Students won't be prepared to handle the homework/workload of college

Too much homework:

- Stresses students and families
- Makes students sour on school and dislike writing, reading, and math
- Interferes with family time, extra-curricular activities, etc.

District surveyed cross-section of our students regarding hours spent on homework each week

- At elementary, kindergarteners spent one hour while fifth graders reported spending four hours per week
- In middle school, sixth and seventh graders each spent about 4 hours/week on homework while eighth graders spent about seven
- In high school, freshman and seniors both reported spending about six hours, sophomores spent nearly 8 hours and juniors spent nearly 10

2016 Parent Survey on Homework – About 25% of parents (2,000) responded

- 1,200 written comments speak to inconsistency and other concerns; Some parents feel more homework is needed while others want less or different homework
- 35% of parents want 0-30 minutes/night; 43% want 30 – 60 minutes/night; 18% want 60 – 90; 4% want 90+/night
- 38% want no homework on weekends (primarily for elementary)
- 34% think homework is often busy work

Next Steps

- Develop larger committee of staff, parents, students to study at a deeper level
- Draft a policy with some guidelines on homework
- Implementation