

NICASIO SCHOOL DISTRICT

Administrative Regulations

Series 6000: Instruction

AR 6154

HOMework & MAKEUP WORK

OVERVIEW

Nicasio School's homework policy is designed to support student learning in accordance with the most current research of best practices. Homework will provide students with opportunities to develop skills and habits that prepare them for life-long learning.

All students will receive nightly reading assignments to develop fluency and comprehension. Additionally, all students will receive nightly math homework to target specific facts, reinforce concepts introduced in class, and build skill level.

Information contained within this document and other information provided by the classroom teacher is intended to provide guidance to the parent and student. All homework should be completed independently by the student in order for the student to receive the greatest benefit. However, parents are encouraged to monitor and provide assistance when needed.

Occasionally, project-based assignments may be given which are intended to be completed over a longer period of time. Such projects should require students to accomplish several smaller tasks within the large project, which provides students with opportunities to manage their time. In the case of project-based assignments, students should be able to complete the smaller tasks independently; parental support should only be necessary in the areas of assisting students with time management and clarification of instructions.

CURRENT RESEARCH

For students of all ages, research supports a direct link between reading and academic achievement. Students who read regularly tend to experience higher overall academic success. Research suggests that homework completion has different benefits depending on the age of the student.

For elementary students, research indicates that regularly assigned reading increases overall academic achievement. On the other hand, elementary students who complete homework in other subject areas tend not to show any significant increase in achievement compared to those students who do not, with a few exceptions. Homework that is designed to target specific tasks, such as practicing math skills, learning math facts, and studying spelling (tasks requiring basic memorization) does benefit the learning process. Many researchers also support the idea that homework for elementary students builds a sense of responsibility and routine, which prepares students with the foundations needed to develop important life skills.

Among middle school students, however, research indicates that students who complete homework (across subject areas) do significantly outperform their peers who do not. Additionally, middle school achievement has been shown to increase as time spent on homework increases for a period up to two hours. There does not appear to be any academic benefit beyond two hours of study.

RESPONSIBILITIES – EVERYONE HAS A ROLE

Teacher

- Provide students with clear instructions about homework assignments and due dates.
- Assign homework that students can successfully complete independently; differentiate as needed.
- Ensure that homework assignments are meaningful; do not assign busy work.
- Assign homework that provides students with opportunities to practice concepts already learned; do not assign new concepts as homework.
- Provide feedback to the students in a timely manner.

Student

- Come prepared to school with necessary supplies (paper, pencil, book, notebook, etc.)
- Take home necessary supplies to complete homework.
- Complete homework assignments independently.
- Complete homework assignments on time.
- Complete assignments thoughtfully and neatly; don't rush.
- Keep a positive attitude about homework; this will result in getting more done with better quality more quickly.
- Ask for clarification when confused (ask the teacher, parent or a friend).
- Demonstrate an increased level of responsibility each year for managing your own homework assignments and their due dates; don't rely on your parents or teachers to do this for you.
- Take ownership of your own education; balance your student responsibilities with the choices you make regarding extracurricular activities.

Parent/Guardian

- Monitor student progress in completing homework assignments (example: help students budget and manage their time successfully; ensure that students have a quiet work area).
- Provide assistance to the student when needed (Example: clarify directions. Explain how to arrive at an answer using a sample problem. Don't solve the problem for them!).
- Encourage students to call a friend/classmate if they have questions or need help.
- Model a positive attitude about homework; this will result in your child getting more done with better quality more quickly.
- Contact the teacher if the student consistently has trouble completing homework independently.
- Ensure students have all the materials and supplies they need *before* they leave the house in the morning and *before* they leave school at the end of the day.
- Remind students of their responsibilities as a student.
- Hold students accountable for their own responsibilities; don't do things for them that they are capable of doing themselves.
- Help students learn to make responsible choices to balance their homework responsibilities with their choices regarding extracurricular activities.

HOMWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Primary Grades (K-2)

Homework will be assigned Monday nights through Thursday nights. Homework will not be assigned over the weekend.

- Reading practice nightly (10-20 minutes)
- Math practice nightly (10-20 minutes)
- Spelling practice weekly beginning in the mid-year of grade 1
- Unfinished classroom work *may* be sent home for completion

Elementary Grades (3-5)

Homework will be assigned Monday nights through Thursday nights. With the exception of reading, homework will not be assigned over the weekend.

- Reading practice nightly including weekends (30 minutes)
- Math practice nightly (10-15 minutes)
- Spelling practice weekly
- Social Studies and Science review for tests as needed
- Unfinished classroom work *may* be sent home for completion
- Occasional long-term projects will be assigned throughout the course of the year

Middle Grades (6-8)

Homework will be assigned Monday nights through Thursday nights. Students can expect to spend between 1.5 and 2.0 hours per night on homework. With the exception of reading and occasional long-term projects, homework will not be assigned over the weekend.

- Reading practice nightly – core literature (30 minutes), **plus** additional evening or weekend reading of “choice” literature (Accelerated Reader) budgeted to meet a long-term due date
- Math practice nightly (30 minutes)
- Spanish practice nightly (20 minutes)
- Additional homework in Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies that reinforces skills identified to increase student achievement, including critical thinking activities and summarizing/note-taking
- Test and quiz review*
- Unfinished classroom work will be sent home for completion (*this will require time **in addition to regular homework assignments***)
- Several long-term projects will be assigned throughout the course of the year (example: Literacy Portfolio, research projects, etc.)

*Students will know several days in advance when they will be expected to take a quiz, test or other form of assessment. Reviewing for such assessments should be an ongoing practice and habit. In particular, on evenings when there is a light homework load, students should use the extra time available to prepare for upcoming quizzes, tests and long-term projects.

Middle School teachers will work together to coordinate assignment and test schedules as much as possible to strive for a balance throughout the school week.

RETAKEING TESTS, QUIZZES & OTHER ASSESSMENTS

In some cases, teachers may choose to provide students with the option to retake a quiz, test, or other form of assessment. The purpose of retakes is to give students another opportunity to study and learn essential skills and concepts. Retake versions, when made available to students, will not be a duplicate of the original assessment. Instead, retakes will be given in an alternate format and with alternate questions, when possible, designed to assess a student's understanding of the same essential skills and concepts as presented on the original version. This will help ensure that a retake score reflects an accurate level of the student's understanding rather than the student's ability to memorize the original test's answers. Since the results of the retake represent the most current level of a student's understanding, the retake score will replace the original score in the teacher's grade-book (scores of the original and retake versions will not be weighed or averaged).

MAKEUP WORK & MAKEUP TESTS

Whenever a student misses school, parents/guardians are encouraged to pick up the student's classwork and homework at the end of the school day. If the student is well enough to complete some or all of the assignments at home prior to returning to school, this will help ensure that the student does not fall behind his/her classmates.

Teachers of grades K-5 will leave a completed "Makeup Classwork" form (E 6154A) on the student's desk at the end of each school day the student is absent. This form will include a simple outline of the main in-class activities missed that day. For homework, students in grades K-5 are expected to refer to the weekly homework guide provided to them by their teachers. Similarly, middle school teachers will complete a "Makeup Classwork & Homework" form (E 6154B), which will be left on the student's desk in the middle school homeroom.

After students are dismissed from class at the end of the school day, parents/guardians may enter their child's classroom to pick up the makeup work form. At that time, the parents/guardians are encouraged to look through their child's desk to collect any books or other materials that will be needed to complete the assignments listed. If parents/guardians do not come by the school at the end of the day to collect makeup work and homework, the form(s) will remain on the absent student's desk for him/her to collect upon returning to school.

If a student is absent from school on the day of a quiz, test or other form of assessment, the student is expected to make up the quiz, test or other form of assessment on the day he/she returns to school *unless* the student did not have knowledge about the scheduled assessment date prior to his/her absence.

GRADING & ASSESSMENT

Student report cards have two distinct grading categories: Academic Grade and Effort Grade.

Academic Grade

The academic grade reflects the level of understanding the student has achieved in that particular subject area, which is based on specific state learning standards. The academic grade, therefore, is driven directly by the results (scores) of assessments (tests and other projects) *after* students have had appropriate opportunities to practice related concepts. Assessments related to the academic grade *must* be completed on campus by the student independently in order to reflect a true assessment of the student's understanding of the specific state learning standards being assessed.

Effort Grade

The effort grade reflects the amount of effort the student has put into his/her responsibilities as a student. A primary factor of the effort grade is student homework. Homework provides students with opportunities to practice new concepts. It is a time when students should feel safe to put forth their best effort and try to complete the assignment as well as they know how. This is the place where it is safe for students to make mistakes because mistakes are an inherent part of the learning process. Incorrect answers do not reduce the student's effort grade on a particular assignment **unless** these errors are a result of rushed or hasty work. Incomplete homework, homework that does not follow the directions, and homework that does not represent a student's personal best effort will result in a reduced effort grade. Other factors such as behavior and in-class participation will impact the student's effort grade as well.

GRADE LEVEL PROMOTION & RETENTION

In order for students to become confident learners, they need to have successful experiences within the classroom. Students are more likely to experience success when they are placed in classroom situations that are compatible with their level of learning and understanding.

Grading and assessments provide important information to teachers, students, and parents/guardians about the students' level of understanding in relation to grade-level and subject area curriculum. In grades K-5, students are typically promoted to the next grade level upon completion of the school year even if they are not meeting the learning standards in one or two subject areas. In such cases, the multi-graded classrooms provide an ideal setting for differentiated instruction and individualized learning goals as are appropriate. However, if a student is not meeting the learning standards in most or all subject areas, the student may be retained in his/her current grade level so that he/she has the opportunity the following school year to develop a solid foundation of the learning standards before being promoted to the next grade.

Decisions are made for middle school students regarding promotion and retention in a similar manner as they are for students in grades K-5. However, in middle school there are specific requirements for promotion and retention in the areas of Mathematics and Foreign Language, both of which build on the prior year's concepts. In order to be promoted to the next level of Mathematics or Foreign Language, students must demonstrate proficiency/ meet standards (minimum of 80% or B-) by the end of the school year in their current course. Without this level of mastery, students do not have the skills needed to be successful at the next level of study. In the event that a student chooses to complete summer study independently to improve his/her skills, he/she may take a placement test at the start of the next school year to determine eligibility for promotion. Similarly, a student new to the District in middle school will take a placement test in these two areas.

1st Reading: September 16, 2009
2nd Reading: October 14, 2009
Board Approved: October 14, 2009