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PARTNERING WITH PARENTS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL Math

A GUIDE FOR
TEACHERS AND
LEADERS



CORWIN Mathematics

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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Partnering with Parents in Elementary School Math* by Hilary Kreisberg and Matthew L. Beyranevand.

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Communicating Expectations for Parent Involvement

As discussed previously, for parents to be most successful as a partner, they need to understand the role they play in all aspects of their child's mathematics learning—including homework if your school or district assigns it. If the district or school puts out guidelines stating how long homework should take, what is the expectation for what the parent should do if the child takes longer (e.g., the recommendation is 40 minutes but the child regularly spends 60 minutes)? Or what if a child does not remember how they solved a particular problem that they have been assigned? How should a parent proceed to support their youngster? What is the student's role? Does everyone know their role?

In the situation where the suggested maximum time spent on a high-quality assignment is exceeded, we suggest parents should be encouraged to sign off on the homework or send a note to the teacher confirming that the child attempted the work in good faith. Depending on the grade level, we also suggest having the student write a note to the teacher. This will provide the teacher with formative feedback on what parts were most approachable (and often easiest) for the student versus what they did not get to or avoided. If the parent steps in and shows their child what to do, the teacher will likely receive inaccurate information. Establishing this guideline early on can help to build positive relationships between the teacher, student, and parent and reinforce particular school norms, such as fostering a growth mindset. In addition, it will limit the temptation for parents to show their child how to solve it “their way,” which often leads to more confusion and frustration, especially in the upper grades.

For all of this to work, a clear and concise policy, along with communication of those roles and responsibilities, needs to be provided from the start of school. Take a look at Figure 3.1 to see an example of a simple chart that can be provided to all stakeholders at the beginning of the year so they understand each and every role, including their own. This chart can easily be added to a student–parent and faculty handbook. In Chapter 5, we discuss at a more granular level what to communicate with parents when, and we show how this chart can be adapted specifically for communicating with parents about their role.

Figure 3.1 – Roles and Responsibilities With Math Homework

Student, Parent, Teacher, and Administrator Roles With Homework			
Students	Parents	Teachers	Administrators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know what the assignments are Complete assignments on time Put forth best effort Let the teacher know if they do not understand an assignment or will have difficulty completing it on time 	<p>As best as they can . . .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Know what the assignments are Provide the child a safe and quiet workspace Convey a positive attitude in front of their child about math and school Establish clear homework routines Provide guidance, not answers Watch for signs of frustration and provide breaks Allow their child to hand in an incomplete assignment Help the child write a note to the teacher letting them know exactly what the child does not understand or asking for more time to complete it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assign high-quality assignments that fall within the school’s policy, differentiating as needed Ensure homework is written in agenda notebooks and/or on the class website State the purpose of the assignment for parents and students Provide clear directions and exemplars, where applicable Clarify what students need to do to demonstrate that the assignment has been completed Review homework in a timely manner and provide feedback Contact parents if homework is not received 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate clear and concise norms and expectations for all stakeholders at the beginning of year Monitor the implementation of school policy Survey families to determine if the amount of time spent on homework is too much, too little, or just right and their perceived quality of assignments Work with school staff to identify students at risk who may need additional supports or resources to complete homework

Source: Based on Bembunty, H. (2011). The last word: An interview with Harris Cooper—research, policies, tips, and current perspectives on homework. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, 22(2), 340–349.

Overall, ensuring there is a consistent schoolwide policy regarding homework assignments and a clear understanding of the roles will help prevent parent frustration. At a minimum, teachers in a school that has yet to reach schoolwide consensus should be as transparent with parents as possible about what to expect as far as homework assignments. To see example correspondence about homework and the policies, be sure to read Chapter 5 where we dive deeper into communication with parents.