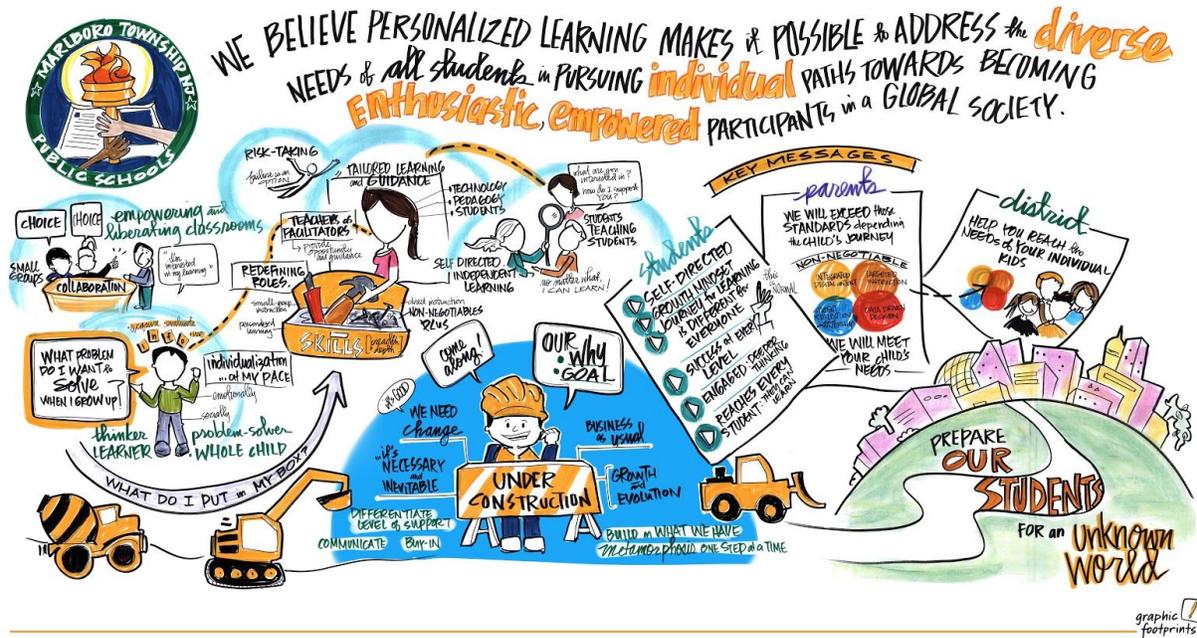# MTPS 2019-20 District Initiatives:
Homework
Student Choice
Time Management/Study Skills

Acknowledgments

MTPS would like to thank the various constituency groups who helped shape the homework, student choice, and homework/time management committees. These three areas of focus began as concepts and are now tangible ways to implement change at MTPS for the 2019-20 academic year and beyond.

Thank you to the parent community for taking the time to respond to the community survey at the conclusion of the 2017-18 academic year which helped guide the district in identifying these areas on which to focus. Thank you also to those who worked tirelessly on the committees during the 2018-19 academic year to discuss, plan, and deliver a product that has cleared the path to continuous improvement for MTPS. Thank you to the students of MTPS. They answered a survey as well as held conversations with administrators and teachers to offer valuable insight into how these initiatives affect them on a regular basis. Thank you to those who have contributed informally with conversations, emails, and the like. Finally, we would like to thank Dr. Hibbs and the Board of Education for their unwavering support as we strive for continued excellence.

Background

In order to live up to its promise for constant improvement, Marlboro Township Public Schools (MTPS) surveyed the community during the 2017-18 academic year to hear feedback on topics such as, but not limited to, communication, technology, and overall satisfaction with the district. While more than 85% of the respondents were overall satisfied with MTPS, the survey informed three district areas on which to focus for the 2018-19 academic year:

1. Homework
2. Student Choice
3. Study Skills/Time Management

Committees were formed for each area of focus in the early months of the 2018-19 academic year. While each committee had autonomy to explore its topic independently, there was constant articulation of progress and direction throughout the year. As a culmination of the work completed, the Chairperson from each committee met to compile resources, communication, and support for students, staff, and the greater school community.

Information from each committee will be shared via the MTPS website www.mtps.org, communication newsletters, conversations, and the like. MTPS looks forward to the 2019-20 academic year as a year with realized change for the betterment of the school community.

HOMEWORK

Homework Vision Statement:

In order to support the development of the whole child, we seek to promote homework that is purposeful, engaging, and geared toward student success.

Homework Goal Statements:

- **K-2 GOALS STATEMENTS**
    - Communicate vision and purpose of homework to parents
    - Ensure that homework assignments reinforce a learned/mastered skill
    - Ensure that homework assignments build schema and develop real world connections and/or applications
    - Provide feedback opportunities

- **3-5 GOAL STATEMENTS**
    - Design tasks that are relevant to each student's needs; cover important concepts in the content area; and may be completed independently by students.
    - Differentiate assignments to promote engagement by addressing student interests, ability levels, and/or real world applicability.
    - Develop practices that create responsible, empowered lifelong learners

- **6-8 GOAL STATEMENTS:**
    - Provide an opportunity for students to complete tasks independently
    - Afford the opportunity for feedback from teachers, students, or self-analysis
    - Differentiate with purpose
    - Design to connect, explore or create by using an appropriate medium to support learning

Best Practices in Homework

An introduction to modifying old homework practices into new ones.
- Create/manage effective homework practices
- Avoiding pitfalls/misconceptions; homework is not for teaching responsibility or compliance.
- Working with grade-level colleagues/teams to adhere to district regulation re: minutes of homework allotted per night
- Grade-level band specific examples of homework assignments/activities
- Create awareness among staff to assess homework assignment as effective or ineffective.
- Things to consider when assigning daily homework

Homework Policy and Regulation

- Kindergarten
  - Each student will not receive more than 15 minutes/night.
  - Homework will be assigned at teacher's discretion.
- Grades 1-2
  - Each student will not receive more than 30 minutes/night.
  - Homework will be assigned at teacher's discretion.
- Grades 3-5
  - Each student will not receive more than 45 minutes/night.
  - Homework will be assigned at teacher's discretion.
  - Parents have the ability to stop homework and contact the teacher if the child is frustrated or unable to proceed.
- Grades 6-8
  - Each student should not receive more than 60 minutes/night.
    - Longer assignments may be distributed over multiple nights (for example: Assign on Monday to be turned in by Friday).
  - Amount of nights per week is at teacher's discretion.

STUDENT CHOICE

Overview:

There were quite a few questions about what it looks like to implement opportunities for students and to *stretch* for our overarching vision and for our goal statements.
To that end, we created an **FAQ Document.** [Click here to review](#).

Striving for more student choice offered to our students can occur through "small" opportunities like a choice board or in "big" ways like 20% Time (or Genius Hour).

Vision:

Student choice creates an environment where students take ownership of their learning which fosters intrinsic motivation and self-reflection.

Goals:

1. To create an environment which promotes educational risks, trial and error learning, and reflection upon failures as future learning opportunities.

2. To reduce academic stress and anxiety by allowing students to influence learning expectations.

3. To foster personal learning opportunities by utilizing students' interest, natural curiosity, and creativity.

4. To provide opportunities to connect learning to authentic and/or real-world experiences.

5. To support students of all abilities in making purposeful, appropriate decisions about their learning, which might include process, product, content, readiness/development, and personal interest.

TIME MANAGEMENT/STUDY SKILLS

Overview

The Committee met several times over the course of the 2018-19 academic year to discuss the current practices used by grade level teachers to support students in their quest to learn, use, and internalize lifelong skills in study habits and managing their time.

The committee created three surveys for students (grades 3-8), teachers, and parents to use to assess the district's current practices and determine areas in need of improvement.

The committee believes that there is a need to create a list of skills that should be met at each grade level. Members met by grade level bands and then as a whole to ensure that the goals would be sequential and grade level appropriate.

Vision Statement:

In Marlboro Township Public Schools, we believe it is important to model and explicitly teach students developmentally appropriate study habits, organizational skills, and time management strategies to ensure our students have the necessary tools to become successful and independent thinkers and learners.

Goal Statements:
A. FOR TEACHERS:
   a. Teach students about the learning styles and ways to study for the different types of learning styles
   b. Set the foundation with the explicit teaching of various study skills (in a particular subject--for example, teaching outlines in S.S.) to eventually promote student choice based on preference and student self-assessment
   c. Teach students how to self-assess their understanding/mastery
   d. Create flex time for additional help from teachers, catching up, etc.
   e. Teach students specific strategies to meet grade-level goals
   f. Take time in class to help students learn to use an agenda
   g. Scaffold guided notes to help students become efficient note-takers

B. FOR PARENTS:
   a. Create a study space at home
   b. Create an accountability sheet to reinforce this behavior at home
   c. Consider adding a reward or incentive when the student meets the goal
   d. Monitor the student's assignments and task completion
   e. Monitor and practice grade-level goals with students

C. FOR STUDENTS TO MEET BY THE END OF 8TH GRADE:
  a. Study Skills:
      i. Set Academic Goals
      ii. Understand their learning styles and ways to study to meet their style
      iii. Become independent--being responsible for their own resources, homework, etc.
      iv. Read independently--building stamina
      v. Perseverance
      vi. Self-monitor checklist for studying (including tools used, how long they will study nightly, where to study, who to study with, etc.)
      vii. Become autonomous note takers. Take effective notes and organize notes
      viii. Become able to make their own flashcards and note cards
      ix. Create their own study guides (smaller units)
      x. Choose and use their own appropriate graphic organizers
      xi. Be able to apply vocabulary words
      xii. Use study skills choice boards (flash cards, dice, moby max, etc.)
      xiii. Use online tools to study
      xiv. Use memory techniques for the retention of knowledge and skills

  b. Task Management:
      i. Develop a "To Do List" (ex: Google Keep, Google Tasks, etc.)
      ii. Prioritize tasks/skills
      iii. Plan for long-term projects; break down or chunk assignments
      iv. Use SQ3R (survey, question, read, recite, review)
      v. Prioritize homework, activities, and family time

  c. Organizational Skills:
      i. The consistency of homework agendas--starting in first grade
      ii. Packing up, placing items in the right section, etc. Use a visual model of how to pack up/steps. Organizing their materials
      iii. Use graphic organizers
      iv. Develop note-taking strategies (ex: Cornell note-taking method, outlining, annotation of texts, KWL charts, etc.)
      v. Timeline for studying--use online tools to assist in this task (ex: Google Calendar, chore pad, ChoreMonster app, etc.)

Time Management Strategies

Kindergarten
1. Students will place all assignments, notices, and/or completed work in their folder led by a teacher (School/Home)
2. Students will organize a checklist for activities with picture prompts

Grade 1
1. Students will place all assignments, notices, and/or completed work in their folder modeled by the teacher
2. Students will be able to record assignments (e.g., in assignment pad) with teacher support
3. Organizational checklist for activities with words

Grade 2
1. Students will copy HW assignments (e.g., in assignment pad) correctly and organize take home folder independently (School/Home)
2. Students will follow a given plan for long term assignments (i.e., based on a teacher-provided timeline; no longer than one week)

Grade 3
1. Students will copy HW assignments (e.g., in assignment pad) correctly and independently
2. Students will follow a teacher-provided plan for long-term assignments (e.g., checklist, timeline, or calendar)
3. Students will use color coding to organize their materials as directed by the teacher.

Grade 4
1. Students will copy HW assignment (e.g., in assignment pad) to be prepared to complete HW and to bring materials when switching classes
2. Students will switch classes with success (i.e., be prepared with all supplies needed without having to go back to previous class)
3. Students will follow a teacher-guided plan for long-term assignments (e.g., checklist, timeline, or calendar)
4. Students will use an organizational system for their folders; i.e., color coding or label system developed across the grade level

Grade 5
1. Students will self-check homework assignments (e.g., calendar, Google Classroom, or assignment pad) and bring materials when switching classes
2. Students will follow a teacher-monitored plan for longer-term assignments such as marking period assignments (e.g., checklist, timeline, or calendar)
3. Students will use an organizational system for their folders; i.e., color coding or label system developed across the grade level

Grade 6
1. Students will be able to chunk long-term assignments as directed by the teacher
2. Students will be able to maintain the organization of their binders and folders with regular teacher coaching/guiding

Grade 7
1. Students will be able to chunk long-term assignments with teacher scaffolding toward independence
2. Students will be able to maintain the organization of their binders and folders with occasional teacher suggestions

Grade 8
1. Students will be able to chunk long-term assignments independently
2. Students will be able to maintain the organization of their binders and folders independently

Study Skills Strategies

Kindergarten
1. Students will identify and explain their homework space
2. Students will be introduced to use a checklist to identify supplies needed at home to complete assignments (e.g., pencils, glue sticks, or scissors)
3. Students will be introduced to flashcards to reinforce basic skills

Grade 1
1. Students will identify study space and participate in making an organized space in the classroom (e.g., desk or table)
2. Students will use a checklist to identify the supplies needed at home to complete assignments (e.g., pencils, glue sticks, or scissors)
3. Students will use flashcards to reinforce basic skills

Grade 2
1. Students will maintain an effective study space at home with appropriate supplies
2. Students will use supplies independently to complete their assignments
3. Students will independently use flashcards to reinforce basic skills
4. Students will begin to use the skill of highlighting important information with teacher support

Grade 3
1. Students should be able to organize notes by topic with teacher support by putting the title and date on top
2. Students should be able to highlight important information with teacher support
3. Students will make flashcards independently and use appropriately

Grade 4
1. Students will take guided notes through teacher modeling with an example on the board
2. Students will create study materials for assessments (e.g., study cards, outline, written/typed notes, digital tools, or other strategies with teacher support)
3. Students will create a quiet study space with appropriate resources (ie. pencils, highlighters, textbooks, or Chromebooks) with teacher models/recommendations for a "space"

Grade 5
1. Students will complete guided notes independently
2. Students will create study materials for assessments (i.e., study cards, outline, creating their own questions, digital tools, or other strategies independently)
3. Students will create and maintain a quiet study space with appropriate resources (i.e., pencils, highlighters, textbooks, or Chromebooks) independently

Grade 6
1. Students will be able to practice the teacher-directed model of reading directions (e.g., tests, quizzes, etc.)
2. Students will be able to extract relevant information from class notes, handouts, assignments, and textbook readings to complete a teacher-created study tool with topics
3. Students will be able to apply teacher-directed strategies for seeking help

Grade 7
1. Students will be able to practice and apply the teacher-suggested model of reading directions (e.g., tests, quizzes, etc.)
2. Students will be able to extract relevant information from class notes, handouts, assignments, and textbook readings to complete a teacher created a study tool or topic list
3. Students will be able to apply teacher-suggested strategies for seeking help
4. Students will use supplies independently to complete their assignments

Grade 8
1. Students will be able to practice and apply attention to reading directions independently (e.g., tests, quizzes, etc.)
2. Students will be able to extract relevant information from class notes, handouts, assignments, the teacher-provided list of topics, and textbook readings to synthesize information to create an independent study tool
3. Students will be able to apply strategies for seeking help independently