

# BOUND BROOK SCHOOL DISTRICT

Bound Brook Board Offices. 130 West Maple Avenue. Bound Brook, NJ 08805

tel: 732-652-7925 fax: 732-271-9097

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

September 12, 2019

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Over the past few year, the district has used our grading data when making academic improvements for our students, it was noted that in many cases most of our students' grades are negatively affected by the grading practices on homework. An assessment of the district homework policy, attached for your review, please find number 7 states: "**Homework** should always serve a valid learning purpose; it should never be used as a punitive measure." The district understands and values the importance of homework as a tool to reinforce concepts as well as learning beyond the classroom. We also need to ensure that the district policy has been met and enforced for the benefit of all children.

At the Board of Education meeting on September 10, 2019 a discussion with the public was held regarding the new guidelines for homework. We would like to explain the process the district used for gathering feedback and concerns related to our creation of homework guidelines. On December 3, 2018 the district sent out a Thought Exchange information gathering email to all stakeholders in the district. This included parents and teachers' thoughts concerning homework and we have included the results in the attachment.

Last spring, the district assembled two committees to review and create homework guidelines. One committee was made up of High School and Middle School Teachers and Supervisors. The second committee was made up of Elementary Teachers and Supervisors. Each committee was charged with developing homework guidelines as a supplement to our district homework policy. These guidelines in no way change the homework policy or eliminate homework.

## 7-12 Committee

Alexandra Darwin  
Mark Ruggieri  
Paul McDonnell  
Shaun Cleary  
Andrew Heiser  
Susan T. Lishman  
Bethany Wagner  
Stacy Young  
Matthew Cann  
Mahon Ryan-Hannaway  
Matt Hueston

## K-6 Committee

Kristine Kaye  
Robyn Griffin  
Amanda Zabel  
Jessica Stover  
Emily Ianniello  
Jill Goldan  
Jamie Bell  
Stacy Young  
Matthew Cann  
Erika Clarke

Through the information gathered from committees and Thought Exchange discussions, a few points were brought to light repeatedly that guided our focus. While homework should be optional, it should not be abolished completely. Even though it has its downsides, some students do need additional practice outside of school. Giving students optional homework, lets them decide what they need. Some students might need a lot of help in a certain class, while others might need none at all. This can also teach students how to manage themselves and figure out how to know if they need more or less practice for each subject. Several teachers at our elementary classes have already made homework optional. This is because they already have realized that it is not actually helping students. In addition, abolishing forced homework is favorable for teachers as well. The main benefit for teachers who implement optional homework is grading. Teachers spend hours upon hours grading homework and giving feedback. With optional homework, the need for this is eradicated and teachers can devote more time to working on lessons that will best meet the needs of our diverse student population.

Attached to this letter are the guidelines developed by both committees that will be used this school year. These new guidelines will be reviewed at all back to school nights held in the district. I encourage you to ask questions at back to school night regarding the guidelines with the building principals. They will explain and answer any questions that you may have regarding the guidelines. At any time, if you feel that the homework guidelines are not meeting your children's needs; I encourage you to schedule an appointment with your child's teacher and/or building principal.

Truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Gallagher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Daniel Gallagher, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools

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Office of the Superintendent of Schools

12 de septiembre de 2019

Estimados Padres y Guardianes:

Durante los últimos años, el distrito ha utilizado nuestros datos de calificación al realizar mejoras académicas para nuestros estudiantes, se observó que en muchos casos la mayoría de las calificaciones de nuestros estudiantes fueron afectadas negativamente por las prácticas de calificación en la tarea. Una evaluación de la política de tareas del distrito, adjunta para su repaso, encuentre el número 7 dice: "La tarea siempre debe servir un propósito de aprendizaje válido; nunca debe usarse como una medida punitiva". El distrito comprende y valora la importancia de la tarea como herramienta para reforzar los conceptos y el aprendizaje más allá del aula. También debemos asegurarnos de que la política del distrito se cumpla y se aplique para el beneficio de todos los niños.

En la reunión de la Junta de Educación el 10 de septiembre de 2019, se sostuvo una discusión con el público sobre las nuevas pautas de la tarea. Nos gustaría explicar el proceso que utiliza el distrito para recopilar comentarios y preocupaciones relacionadas con nuestra creación de pautas de tarea. El 3 de diciembre de 2018, el distrito envió un correo electrónico de recopilación de información "Thought Exchange" (intercambio de ideas) a todos los interesados del distrito. Esto incluyó las ideas de los padres y maestros con respecto a la tarea y hemos incluido los resultados en el archivo adjunto.

La primavera pasada, el distrito congregó dos comités para revisar y crear pautas de tarea. Un comité está formado por maestros y supervisores de la escuela intermedia y la secundaria. El segundo comité está compuesto por maestros y supervisores de primaria. A cada comité se le encargó el desarrollo de pautas de tarea para añadir a nuestra política de tareas del distrito. Estas pautas de ninguna manera cambian la política de tarea o eliminan la tarea.

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A través de la información recopilada de los comités y las discusiones de "Thought Exchange", algunos puntos sobresalientes repetidamente guiaron nuestro enfoque. Si bien la tarea debe ser opcional, no debe abolirse por completo. Aunque tiene sus desventajas, algunos estudiantes necesitan práctica adicional fuera de la escuela. Darles a los estudiantes tareas opcionales, les permite decidir lo que necesitan. Algunos estudiantes podrían necesitar mucha ayuda en una clase determinada, mientras que otros podrían no necesitarla. Esto también puede enseñarles a los estudiantes cómo manejarse y descubrir si necesitan más o menos práctica en cada materia. Varios maestros en nuestras clases de primaria ya han hecho la tarea opcional. Esto se debe a que ya se han dado cuenta de que en realidad no está ayudando a los estudiantes. Además, abolir la tarea forzada también es favorable para los

maestros. El principal beneficio para los maestros que implementan tareas opcionales es la calificación. Los maestros pasan horas y horas calificando la tarea y haciendo comentarios. Con la tarea opcional, la necesidad de esto se erradica y los maestros pueden dedicar más tiempo a trabajar en lecciones que satisfagan mejor las necesidades de nuestra diversa población estudiantil.

Se adjuntan a esta carta las pautas desarrolladas por ambos comités que se utilizarán este año escolar. Estas nuevas pautas serán revisadas en todas las noches de regreso a clases en el distrito. Te animo a que hagas preguntas en la noche de regreso a clases con respecto a las pautas con los directores de los edificios. Explicarán y responderán cualquier pregunta que pueda tener sobre las pautas. En cualquier momento, que usted piense que las pautas de la tarea no satisfacen las necesidades de sus hijos; Le animo a programar una cita con el maestro de su hijo y / o el director del edificio.

Sinceramente,



Daniel Gallagher, Ed.D.  
Superintendente de los Colegios

## **Bound Brook School District Homework Policy Grades 7-12**

### **Context:**

The homework policy of the Bound Brook School District derives from the work of a study committee over one year (2018-2019). During that period, the committee reviewed the literature on homework, surveyed teachers, parents, and students, and engaged faculty and parent groups in discussions on the topic. During the course of the study, it became apparent that teachers and parents supported homework as an important part of the educational process. It was also clear that there was insufficient consensus on the purposes and implementation of homework in the district.

There are many learning activities in the life of a student in addition to homework. School activities, athletic and cultural events, and other personal interests are all important in the growth and development of children. The homework policy of the Bound Brook School District is provided as a guide to balance homework with the realities of family life in the 21st century.

The most effective implementation of the homework policy will occur when teachers, parents, and students appreciate the importance of good communication among those involved. The mission of the Bound Brook School District urges that schools work in partnership with the community. Such a partnership is particularly important in the area of homework.

This homework policy deals solely with grades 7-12. Information about homework at the elementary level can be accessed through the elementary school websites.

### **Rationale for Policy Changes - Grades 7-12:**

Our high school students deserve a childhood, and they need to be active and engaged. Many other high schools throughout the area and the country are making the switch to *optional homework*. It is our hope that revising our homework policy and strategy will increase excitement and passion for learning. It is also our hope that revising our homework policy will change the homework conversation from quantity and achievement to *quality* and *engagement*.

- Homework limits students' time to follow their own passions;
- Doing homework may have an impact on the quality of life for families. There is extensive anecdotal information about how families become stressed about homework completion;
- Students are already in school for a work-day (six and a half hours), we do not believe in the need for adding a second shift;
- Homework could actually inhibit students from becoming active learners; it can diminish a student's interest in education.

Bound Brook School District considers homework to be a reinforcement of student learning. If assigned, it must be relevant, significant, and challenging. It needs to be varied, age appropriate, and engaging. Homework should provide students with the opportunity to progress in a well-balanced and holistic way.

**With these ideas in mind, we practice the following approach to homework:**

The Board of Education acknowledges the educational validity of **optional homework** assigned to students for completion outside the classroom as an adjunct to and extension of the instructional program of the schools. Students will have the option to complete homework for 1 point per assignment to be added to the next major assessment scheduled. While homework is an expectation and participation in homework is strongly encouraged, there are no consequences imposed on a student who does not complete homework.

<b>Grading Profile</b>
Major Assessments - 50% Minor Assessments - 30% Classwork - 20%
<b>Major Assessments:</b> Tests, Projects, Presentations, Essays, Research Papers, etc.
<b>Minor Assessments:</b> Quizzes, Smaller Projects, Short Written Pieces, Reflections, etc
<b>Classwork:</b> Formative Assessment, Group Work, etc

**Additionally:**

Administrators and Teachers shall:

- Work collaboratively by grade level and department to provide professional development that promotes best practices related to homework.
- Base assignments upon the teacher's knowledge of each student's readiness and the teacher's judgment as to the appropriateness, time to complete, and frequency of assignments. Long-term assignments shall include checkpoints to ensure student progress and understanding.
- Not assign homework on Friday's, over any school holidays (including Thanksgiving, Winter, and Spring breaks), on nights of major school events

(including Back to School Night, parent/teacher conferences, etc), or during any standardized testing period.

- Be mindful that homework supports student learning.
- Create homework that reflects the importance of differentiation and student choice as much as possible.
- Provide extension activities for families; teachers will not give feedback or grades for these assignments.
- Recognize that all students can benefit from meaningful homework.

#### Shared Communication:

- It is the shared responsibility of students, parents, and teachers to communicate if a student is having difficulty or requiring excessive time to complete homework. This communication will provide opportunities to support individual student needs.
- Teachers will communicate expectations that include a description of how homework will be assessed to provide feedback for students.
- The purpose and structure for homework shall be clear, so that students will have the opportunity to proceed independently.
- Teachers shall be mindful that not all students have the same resources at home to complete homework. Accordingly, schools will work with families to make necessary accommodations.
- The school shall communicate to parents the resources available to help children successfully complete assignments, including assistance, and/or tutoring that is available to children during and/or after school.
- Homework should be able to be completed by the student independently.

Learning occurs in a variety of ways outside of school. We encourage students and their families to explore opportunities to foster growth and responsibility in many ways including participating in completing household chores, discussing current and world events, and through participation in local community activities.

## **Bound Brook School District Homework Policy Grades K-6**

### **Context:**

The homework policy of the Bound Brook School District derives from the work of a study committee over one year (2018-2019). During that period, the committee reviewed the literature on homework, surveyed teachers, parents, and students, and engaged faculty and parent groups in discussions on the topic. During the course of the study, it became apparent that teachers and parents supported homework as an important part of the educational process. It was also clear that there was insufficient consensus on the purposes and implementation of homework in the district.

There are many learning activities in the life of a student in addition to homework. School activities, athletic and cultural events, and other personal interests are all important in the growth and development of children. The homework policy of the Bound Brook School District is provided as a guide to balance homework with the realities of family life in the 21st century.

The most effective implementation of the homework policy will occur when teachers, parents, and students appreciate the importance of good communication among those involved. The mission of the Bound Brook School District urges that schools work in partnership with the community. Such a partnership is particularly important in the area of homework.

This homework policy deals solely with grades K-6. Information about homework at the middle and high school level can be accessed through the high school website.

In Kindergarten, homework is sometimes offered as enrichment. While there is no formal kindergarten homework, families should read daily with their child to foster language and literacy skills.

### **Rationale for Policy Changes - Grades K-6:**

Our elementary students deserve a childhood, and they need to be active and engaged. Many other elementary schools throughout the area and the country are making the switch to limited homework. It is our hope that removing routine homework will increase excitement and passion for learning.



- Research does not support a correlation between homework and academic achievement (at the elementary level);
- Homework limits students' time to follow their own passions;
- Doing homework may have an impact on the quality of life for families. There is extensive anecdotal information about how families become stressed about homework completion;
- Children are already in school for a work-day (six and a half hours), we do not believe in the need for adding a second shift;
- Homework could actually inhibit students from becoming active learners; it can diminish a student's interest in education.
- Reading is the only aspect of "homework" that is supported by research to increase academic skills, so this policy heavily focuses on asking parents to have structured reading time at home in the evening.

#### **Kindergarten & Grade 1:**

- Reading with a "Just Right" book will be expected each evening.
- No other homework will be required.

#### **Grades 2 & 3:**

- Reading with a "Just Right" book will be expected each evening.
- Homework will be optional, focusing on personalized learning and not on weekly routine work.

#### **Grades 4, 5 & 6:**

- Reading with a "Just Right" book will be expected each evening.
- Homework assignments will focus on personalized learning, and not on weekly routine work.
- If assigned, homework will focus on project-based learning, independent and collaborative projects, or to foster independence.

#### **Additional Points:**

- There may be times when a student would benefit from reinforcement of a basic skill at home (i.e., letter identification, multiplication facts, etc). In these incidents, the teacher will collaborate with parents on possible assignments.
- All elementary schools will communicate with parents on what is covered in various curricula as well as their child's academic progress.
- The elementary schools will provide resources for families who want to have assignments at home. Math games will be emphasized for understanding math concepts.

\*A "Just Right" book refers to a book at the student's reading level. Teachers can give input into best choices. Additionally, reading aloud to children (of all ages) is beneficial to increase vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. It is also an excellent activity for enriching family time.

**With these ideas in mind, we practice the following approach to homework:**

- Homework should be able to be completed by the student independently.
- While homework is an expectation and participation in homework is strongly encouraged, there are no consequences imposed on a student who does not complete homework.
- Families may choose to modify assignments by adding to or decreasing the amount of homework assigned.
- Homework will not be assigned with the expectation that it be worked on and/or completed during any school vacations. Homework will not be assigned over long weekends, including all holiday and religious long weekends, and those marked by a district-wide closing. No homework will be assigned on nights of major school events (including Back to School Night, parent/teacher conferences, etc), or during any standardized testing period.
- Learning occurs in a variety of ways outside of school. We encourage students and their families to explore opportunities to foster growth and responsibility in many ways including participating in completing household chores, discussing current and world events, and through participation in local community activities.

## Bound Brook Board of Education

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## District Policy

**2330- HOMEWORK**

Section: Program  
Date Created: May, 2002  
Date Edited: May, 2002

The Board of Education acknowledges the educational validity of work assigned to pupils for completion outside the classroom as an adjunct to and extension of the instructional program of the schools.

The Superintendent shall develop regulations for the assignment of **homework** according to these guidelines:

1. **Homework** should be a properly planned part of the curriculum, extending and reinforcing the learning experience of the school;
2. **Homework** should help children learn by providing practice in the mastery of skills, experience in data gathering and integration of knowledge, and an opportunity to remediate learning problems;
3. **Homework** should help develop the pupil's responsibility and provide an opportunity for the exercise of independent work and judgment;
4. The number, frequency, and degree of difficulty of **homework** assignments should be based on the ability and needs of the pupil and take into account other activities that make a legitimate claim on the pupil's time;
5. As a valid educational tool, **homework** should be clearly assigned and its product carefully evaluated and that evaluation should be reported to the pupil;
6. The schools should recognize the role of parent(s) or legal guardian(s) by suggesting ways in which parent(s) or legal guardian(s) may assist the school in helping a child carry out assigned responsibilities;
7. **Homework** should always serve a valid learning purpose; it should never be used as a punitive measure.

Adopted: 20 May 2002

## Here are 20 thoughts that received the highest star ratings

**To reinforce learning that occurred in the classroom.**

In order for students to learn something new, not memorize at a later day, it is important to revise the material within 8 hours of learning it.

3.9 ★★★★★ (9)

Ranked #1 of 20



**Homework should be 15-20 minutes per class**  
Math: we give about 5-10 problems 3 times a week

3.8 ★★★★★ (11)

Ranked #2 of 20



**Homework should be no more than 10-30 minutes. It shouldn't take longer than a class lesson would take.**

3.8 ★★★★★ (7)

Ranked #3 of 20



**Homework should not take hours for students to complete.**

Students are involved in other activities outside of school, adding to their stress.

3.8 ★★★★★ (7)

Ranked #4 of 20



**Our students may not have the supports after school to complete homework correctly or have the resources to look up how to complete homework correctly**

If students are not completing the homework correctly, it is allowing them to reinforce incorrect practices which could interfere in the classroom

3.8 ★★★★★ (7)

Ranked #5 of 20



**Homework should be a review of skills that the student is able to do accurately independently. Homework should never be a new skill or something that**

the student is unable to do independently. In our district homework should be something that is brief in nature but something to keep them up.

3.8 ★★★★★ (6)

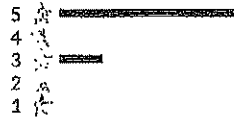
Ranked #6 of 20



**Homework should not be more than 4-5 problems or questions.**

Homework should not be just busywork. We should be using it to see if the students are understanding the concept.

3.8 ★★★★★ (5 reviews)  
Ranked #7 of 20



**Homework should not be overwhelming to the students.**

Homework should be leveled beginning with the easy concept ending with the hardest concept.

3.8 ★★★★★ (5 reviews)  
Ranked #8 of 20



**Homework is to reinforce skills learned during the schoolday**

3.7 ★★★★★ (10 reviews)  
Ranked #9 of 20



**The purpose of homework should be to practice what is being learned in school**  
Students need to practice what is being taught in class. This includes improving reading skills, learn study skills, review vocab

3.7 ★★★★★ (8 reviews)  
Ranked #10 of 20



**The purpose of homework should be to review the skills that are being taught.**

It can be important if it has a specific purpose and makes an authentic connection to the learning that is happening in the classroom.

3.7 ★★★★★ (8 reviews)  
Ranked #11 of 20



**HW should reinforce what is being taught in the classroom**

Homework teaches students responsibility and helps them understand important information that is being taught

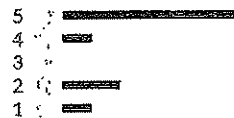
3.6 ★★★★★ (10 reviews)  
Ranked #12 of 20



**Homework is to give students an opportunity for independent practice of the concepts and skills learned in class.**

This is especially important in Math class where practice is necessary to master skills.

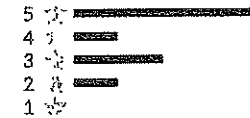
3.6 ★★★★★ (10 reviews)  
Ranked #13 of 20



**Part of homework should be learning good habits**

Teaching students how to manage time and better study skills can help them prepare for college, and life skills

3.6 ★★★★★ (8 reviews)  
Ranked #14 of 20



Grading homework leads to an unfair advantage for students who have difficulty completing the HW for whatever reason.

3.6 ★★★★★ (7/8)  
Ranked #15 of 20



The purpose of homework is to reinforce what the students are learning in the classroom. It allows teachers to see what students understand and what needs to be retaught.

3.6 ★★★★★ (7/8)  
Ranked #16 of 20



To provide additional practice for students experiencing difficulty with topic, concept, or problem.

It allows struggling students to gain more experience with the topic, concept, or problem. For strong students, it strengthens their understanding.

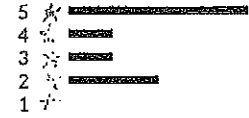
3.5 ★★★★★ (10/11)  
Ranked #17 of 20



Students should be spending their evenings doing things that are proven to correlate with student success.

Examples include eating dinner as a family, reading together, playing outside, etc.

3.5 ★★★★★ (8/11)  
Ranked #18 of 20



Homework should not be graded because we have no way to control what is happening at home. This can give some students an unfair advantage.

3.5 ★★★★★ (7/11)  
Ranked #19 of 20



The purpose of homework is to reinforce the lesson from the day and to practice that concept.

It is important to provide feedback to the teacher about the day's lesson. To determine what needs to be retaught or reexplained.

3.5 ★★★★★ (5/11)  
Ranked #20 of 20

