

Good Homework Practices

The school year is under way and so are the homework assignments. All kids need homework support from their parents and teachers. Many children with disabilities, however, require additional assistance. Here is some advice from the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to ensure that students and their parents are appropriately challenged and not too overwhelmed.

Students say teachers can make homework easier by:

- Assigning homework toward the beginning of class.
- Explaining how to do the homework, including providing examples and writing directions on the chalkboard.
- Giving students time to begin the homework in class and checking for understanding and/or providing assistance at that time.
- Assigning homework in small amounts.
- Relating homework to classwork and/or informing students how they will use the content of the homework in real life.
- Checking homework and giving feedback on it to students.
- Establishing a routine at the beginning of the year for how homework will be assigned.
- Allowing students to work together on homework.

Parents – An Important Component in Homework Success

What support do families need if they are to ensure a positive homework experience? All families need support with homework; however, the needs are often more intensive when the child has a disability. Here are some suggestions for teachers:

- Remember that children need time to enjoy the non-academic aspects of life. Too much homework or homework that is too difficult can take its toll on children and their families, especially since it often takes children with disabilities longer than their peers to complete assignments.
- Make homework assignments useful. Children need ways to practice their new learning in the home setting. They do not need busy work.
- Send home required texts. It makes it very difficult for families to help their child when they do not have access to the information.
- Provide all materials needed for the assignment. Do not expect families to purchase or locate materials.
- Offer ways for parents to check on homework after hours. Also, provide a way for families to get help with homework.
- Establish consistent routines for students to use in bringing homework home and returning it. Teach the routine to the children and inform families of it.
- Send home assistive technology devices used at school. Tell families about strategies and accommodations that work in the classroom.
- Share resources for helping children with homework (e.g., tutoring, after school homework programs).

Some recommended tips for family members:

- At the beginning of the school year, parents need to make sure they have a clear understanding of the entire scope and sequence of curriculum for the year and of the homework requirements.

- Parents need to ask about things like weekly spelling tests or semester term papers so that they can plan in advance to provide family time that incorporates time for homework.
- It also is a good idea to include goals and objectives about homework completion in the child's IEP. Make sure that if the child needs assistive technology, supplementary supports, accommodations, etc., they are written into the IEP. When teachers know which accommodations and adaptations are most useful, they can better identify appropriate practices to implement, thereby increasing students' involvement, understanding, and motivation to learn.

Teachers identified some useful adaptations:

- Provide additional one-on-one assistance to students.
- Monitor students' homework more closely.
- Allow alternative response formats (e.g., audiotaping rather than writing assignment).
- Adjust the length of the assignment.
- Provide a peer tutor or assign the student to a study group.
- Provide learning tools (e.g., calculators).
- Adjust evaluation standards.
- Give fewer assignments.

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