



“Taming the Homework Monster”

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This handout can be accessed as a Word doc at boyfriendlyschoools.com > Resources

I. Homework as a hot topic in schools:

- a. What concerns do you have about homework?
- b. What concerns do your teachers and/or parents have about homework?
- c. Have you explored changes in homework policy? If so, what kinds of changes? What fears exist (for you or others) in considering such a change?

II. Case Study: SDJA

- a. Identifying the problem
 - i. Parent concerns
 - ii. Homework as a reflection of learning at your school
 - iii. Research challenging the status quo
- b. Analyzing the Data
 - i. Parent perception data (Appendix A)
 - ii. Scholarly and popular articles on homework (Appendix B)
 - iii. Process of collective efficacy
- c. Implementation
 - i. Defining the new policy – “Home Learning”
 - 1. 15-20 minutes per night of independent reading
 - 2. 5 minutes per night vocabulary practice
 - 3. Special projects and long-term projects as assigned
 - 4. Some children may receive individualized assignments
 - ii. Communications (Appendix C)
 - 1. Letters to parents
 - 2. Back to School Night presentations
 - 3. Weekly classroom emails
 - iii. Early questions/concerns
 - 1. Planning and organizational skills
 - 2. Not knowing what students are learning

3. Isolated cases of philosophical differences for some parents
- iv. Strategies for addressing concerns
 1. Follow-up / clarifying communications
 2. Coffee Talks
 3. 1-on-1 conversations
 4. Refine messaging, clarifying, discussing with teachers
 5. Mid-year survey to check-in with teachers (Appendix D)
 6. Recommend doing initial and follow-up SWOT assessment
- d. Anecdotal / observational lessons learned in Year One:
 - i. Get tight on messaging to parents
 - ii. Students interpreted it as “No Homework”
 - iii. Use of planners
 - iv. Parents saw less at home – felt unsure what kids were learning
- e. End-of-Year Survey Data (Appendix E):
 - i. Survey questions
 - ii. Findings
- f. Implementation of Home Learning in Year Two:
 - i. Use of planners from day one in grades 3-5
 - ii. Clarification of homework expectations in grade 5
 - iii. Add monthly “special project” homework at each grade
 - iv. Discuss pros/cons of reading logs
 - v. Improve messaging. Home Learning does not mean No Homework
 - vi. Improve/standardize weekly class emails with more detailed information for parents on what students are learning, upcoming dates, pictures, test reviews attached, etc.
 - vii. Send work home after each unit (ie. Math workbook pages)
 - viii. Improve web resources - good example:
<http://escondido.pausd.org/homework/english-homework-resources>
 - ix. Continue to individualize homework as needed to meet student needs / parent preferences
 - x. Hold the wheel steady on the approach and make improvements where needed.

Appendix A:
Pre-Implementation Parent Survey Results- May 2016

Survey Questions:

1. Child's name (if you prefer not to provide name, please indicate current grade level):
2. On average, how much time does your child spend on homework on weekday evenings?
0-15 minutes
15-30 minutes
30-60 minutes
60 minutes or more
3. On average, how much time does your child spend on homework on weekends?
0-15 minutes
15-30 minutes
30-60 minutes
60 minutes or more
4. On a school night, what do you feel is an appropriate amount of homework for your child's grade level?
No homework at all
Under 15 minutes
15-30 minutes
30-60 minutes
60 minutes or more
5. On the weekend, how much homework do you feel is appropriate for your child's grade level?
No homework at all
0-15 minutes
15-30 minutes
30-60 minutes
60 minutes or more
6. How often do you understand the value of the homework assignment to your child's learning?
Always understand the value
Usually understand the value
Rarely understand the value
Never understand the value
7. What circumstances affect your child's ability to complete their homework? Check all that apply.
My child needs a lot of down time after school to relax
My child has many after-school activities
My child is too tired or unfocused after school
We have a lot of family activities
Other (please specify)

8. What organizational issues affect your child's homework completion? Check all that apply.

My child doesn't realize there is a homework assignment

My child forgets to bring home the books or materials that he/she needs

My child completes homework, but forgets to turn it in

My child procrastinates

Other (please specify)

9. What would you like the school to do about homework for your child's grade? Check all that apply.

Stop giving homework entirely

Give less homework

Assign only reading as homework

Keep homework the same

Give more homework

Other (please specify)

10. What other comments or suggestions would you like to share?

Select Survey Results:

How much homework should students receive on weeknights?

- 60% believe that there should be 0 to 15 minutes of homework on weeknights.
- 96% believe it should be under 30 minutes on weeknights, regardless of the grade level.
- 48% (almost half of respondents) wish we would stop giving homework entirely and assign only reading.

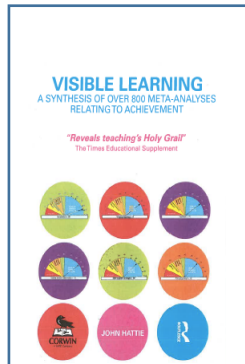
How much homework should students receive on weekends?

- 80% of parents believe that students should have no homework on weekends.
- Another 8% say that it should be less than 15 minutes total.

What circumstances interfere with your child's ability to complete homework?

- 73% - My child needs a lot of down time after school to relax
- 82% - My child has many after-school activities
- 73% - My child is too tired or unfocused after school
- 32% - We have a lot of family activities

Appendix B: Scholarly and Popular Articles



Hattie, pages 234-235

The question of homework's effect on student achievement has been studied for years. Most recently, John Hattie (who has compiled the largest body of educational research in existence today), presents the findings, as follows: The smallest effect on student achievement is in math. Also, the positive effects of homework are negatively related to the length of time spent on homework (in other words, shorter is better). Homework has a more positive effect on student achievement at the middle and high school levels. In the elementary grades, however, there is an estimated correlation between homework and achievement of near zero ($d = 0.15$).

End Homework Now

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/apr01/vol58/num07/End-Homework-Now.aspx>

Educational Myth #2: More Homework = More Learning

<http://www.focus2achieve.com/blog/2015/11/19/educational-myth-2-more-homework-more-learning>

What do you mean my child doesn't have homework?

<http://www.edweek.org/tm/articles/2016/12/06/what-do-you-mean-my-kid-doesnt.html>

Homework for young children - <http://www.parentingscience.com/homework-for-young-children.html>

Why Homework Should Be Balanced - <http://www.edutopia.org/blog/research-trends-is-homework-effective-youki-terada>

Homework in Elementary Divides Educators -

http://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/teaching_now/2014/09/homework_in_elementary_school_divides_educators.html

Why Homework Isn't Necessary for Grammar School Kids....Sometimes

<https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20150306/new-york-city/heres-why-homework-isnt-necessary-for-grammar-school-kids-sometimes>

Thirty-one things your kid should be doing instead of homework:

<https://www.parent.co/31-things-your-kids-should-be-doing-instead-of-homework/>

Escondido Union School District Parent Handbook

<http://escondido.pausd.org/sites/default/files/assets/document/files/escondidohandbook1617.pdf>

Appendix C: Communications

First email to parents (August 26, 2016):

Dear Parents,

We are making a change in our homework practices at GMLS based on a review of the educational research and listening to your preferences as parents.

The Findings:

While homework helps in middle and high school, there is no evidence that homework helps elementary-aged students have greater academic success. In fact, some studies show a negative effect if students lose interest in learning or when it hurts the parent-child relationship.

The response from parents last spring was overwhelming: Ninety-six percent of parents who responded to our survey told us that homework causes stress and cuts into family time, sleep, and extra-curriculars. The majority of parents prefer extremely minimal or no homework at all, other than reading.

A Change in Practice:

This year, teachers will not be assigning homework that needs to be completed and turned back in for a grade. Could there be an exception? Sure. If your child does not finish his/her work at school, then he/she may need to bring it home to finish. In older grades, students may need to review for a test or do something that can only be done at home (like interview a parent, for example). Reading at home will continue to be a daily expectation.

A Shift from “Home Work” to “Home Learning:”

In addition to nightly reading, we encourage learning activities at home that make a positive difference in your child’s learning: Learn to play an instrument. Try a new sport. Explore a new interest. Talk about current events. Prepare a meal together. Get more sleep!

The nightly commitment we ask from all children is to read and practice vocabulary (in English and Hebrew).

On a case-by-case basis, we may recommend extra learning activities, such as math facts, Lexia reading, a special interest project, or practice tying shoes. If these kinds of activities are recommended by your child’s teacher, we ask that they be limited to no more than 10 minutes for kindergarten, 20 minutes for grades 1-2 and 30 minutes for grades 3-5. For those parents who want more ideas for learning at home, teachers are happy to provide them.

In conclusion, with all that we do at SDJA, we want to meet the needs of your child and your family. More detailed information is coming soon from your child’s teachers. Should you have any questions, concerns or requests specific to your child, do not hesitate to contact us.

Here’s to a happy and healthy school year!
Kelley King

Back to School Night presentation (August 31, 2016):

Home Learning

"Wonder what it's like to have a peaceful life,"
Ron sighed, as evening after evening they
struggled through all the extra homework they
were getting."

—
J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's
Stone*

What the research says....

While homework has a significant benefit at the high school level, the benefit drops off for middle school students and "there's no benefit at the elementary school level."

H Cooper, JC Robinson and EA Patali. 2006. Does homework improve academic achievement? A synthesis of research, 1987-2003. Review of Educational Research 76: 1-62.

Homework can hurt when...

- o Children develop a negative attitude;
- o It causes stress on the parent-child relationship;
- o There is less time for kids to be kids;
- o There is less down time together as a family;
- o There is less time for sleep.

Things that improve academic success:

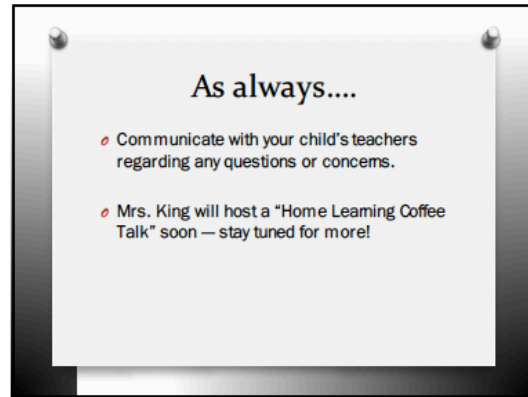
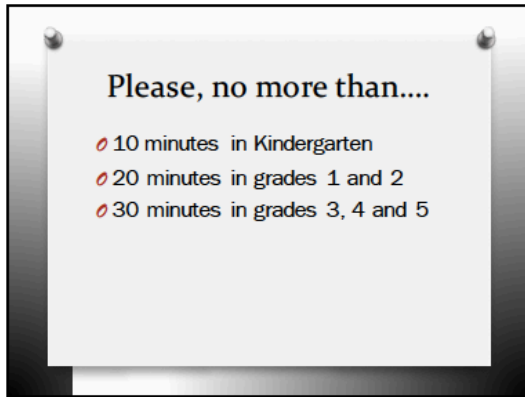
- o Daily reading (silent-reading, read-alouds)
- o Physical exercise (60 minutes per day is recommended for children)
- o Proper sleep (10-11 hours a night)
- o Shared family meals (3 or more per week)
- o Exploring talents, interests and passions

The GMLS Approach:

- o Required:
 - o Read in English & Hebrew
 - o Practice new Hebrew vocab
 - o Special projects or long-term projects on occasion
- o Recommended:
 - o Sometimes there will be something additional, such as "study for the math test."
- o Optional:
 - o We will provide a list of optional activities on class websites for kids & parents who want more

Other possibilities....

- o Class work that didn't get finished in class (perhaps the child didn't use his/her time well).
- o Child-specific practice such as learning to tie their shoe or extra typing practice.
- o If a parent requests some traditional homework, we can help with that.



Follow-up letter to parents (September 5, 2016):

Dear Parents,

The response to the change in our homework protocol has been overwhelmingly positive. In fact, here are just a few of the email comments that have filled my inbox:

- *Thank you for letting our kids be kids a little longer!*
- *You have literally given our family our evenings back.*
- *At 8-9 years old, having dinner with your family seems to be a far better use of time for a child's development than worksheets.*
- *Amazing initiative and very inspiring...thank you*
- *I love being able to spend so much time reading with my child.*
- *Love it!!! Congratulations!!*

We have also had some excellent questions, and a few concerns, raised about this new policy, and a few misperceptions have arisen. I will clarify here:

Have you instituted a “No Homework” Policy?

No, we have not. In a nutshell, here is what has changed:

- 1) Students still have nightly expectations from school, but *what* we require has changed.
- 2) We are calling these nightly expectations “Home Learning” instead of “Homework.”

Now for greater detail:

We are not continuing the default practice of sending home nightly (or weekly) packets of worksheets for students to complete, just for the sake of having homework. We are requiring every child in every grade to read (or be read to) daily in English and (in applicable grades) Hebrew. Additionally, students are expected to practice Hebrew vocabulary daily.

For some students and/or in some instances, we may need to assign more. Examples could include finishing classwork if a child did not use his/her time well in school, learning a life skill (such as tying a shoe), practicing typing skills, playing a word sort game, conducting a science experiment, or doing other things that can only be done at home (like collecting family photos or interviewing a relative).

For families who want more learning ideas, those are currently in development by your child's teachers. They will complement your child's school curricula and will be posted on the class websites.

We do ask, however, that you limit these school-type activities to no more than 10 minutes per night for kindergarten, 20 minutes per night for first grade, and 30 minutes per night for second-fifth grades. If your child begs you to read one more story, however, we would never want to get in the way of that! ☺

Why do you call it Home Learning instead of Homework?

Language is powerful and the change in terminology helps to communicate a shift in the underlying philosophy of what we ask children to do at home and, more importantly, *why*. Learning should be at the heart of everything we do, yet the term "homework" makes no reference to learning at all. Home Learning, on the other hand, inspires us to think with intentionality towards promoting student learning in thoughtful, research-based, and developmentally-appropriate ways.

What prompted this change?

Through day-to-day conversations with a large number of parents over the past two years, the message was loud and clear: Homework has been causing a lot of stress in the home and has been cutting into valuable extracurricular and family time. This anecdotal data, along with data from an online parent survey conducted last spring, quantified it. But we don't make important educational decisions based on the popular vote. Therefore, this summer, I did a close review of the educational research on the effect sizes of homework on children's academic success, specifically in grades K-5. As a faculty, we reviewed the findings together and crafted a policy change, which increases students' time doing activities that increase academic success and that decreases the time on activities that do not increase academic success.

What research supports this change in policy?

"There is no evidence that any amount of homework improves the academic performance of elementary students" (Harris Cooper, 2006). Cooper is the nation's most prominent homework researcher and his findings are based on an exhaustive meta-analysis of the research. John Hattie (2008), in the most extensive meta-analysis of educational research to date, places the net effect of homework on academic success in the upper elementary years at near zero ($d = .15$).

Other studies indicate that homework has a positive effect on student achievement. These studies, however, are based on an analysis of students in grades 6-12 ($d = .64$), with the lowest effect sizes for grade 6 and the highest effect sizes for grade 12 (Hattie, 2008).

But doesn't homework teach my child time management? Will they be prepared for 6th grade?

Our Home Learning policy does not eliminate the need for children to learn to manage their time and set priorities in the evening. As children go through the grades in the Lower School, the time spent on reading and vocabulary practice (and potentially additional assignments, as needed) will increase from approximately 10 minutes to 30 minutes each night. While this may not seem like a lot of time, students will still need to plan around after-school activities, make decisions about how, where and when it will happen, and develop the skills of self-direction and sustained focus. These skills provide the key elements of preparation that your child needs to enter middle school.

What will my child do with his/her free time in the evenings?

There are many activities that develop your child's mind in ways that directly nurture his/her love of learning, curiosity, and physical and mental well-being: Play a board game, start a diary, build a robot, ride a bike, walk the dog, help make dinner, start a collection, play an imaginary game, put on a play, learn a new craft, research a family vacation, go on a bug hunt, plant a garden, discuss current events, build something out of recycled materials.

What do I do if my child is bored? Yes, I've heard this one too! Diane Barth's (2011) advice: "You want them to learn to engage in that empty space that we call boredom. Those are often moments when their mind is resting, before it starts on a new adventure" (from *When Is Boredom A Good Thing?*). Bottom-line: Children need time in their day that is unstructured and self-directed.

How will the teacher know if my child understands the work?

Your child's teacher uses a variety of ongoing assessments during the school year (both formal testing and daily classroom observation) to evaluate your child's mastery of the learning standards. These assessments are far more accurate in getting a clear picture of what students know and are able to do on their own.

Finally, should you ever have a concern or request specific to your child, our doors are always open. We are committed to doing our professional best to enhance your child's educational experience and overall development. We always welcome your voice.

Best Regards,

Kelley

Please join me for a Coffee Talk on the topic of Home Learning.
Friday, September 9th at 8:00-9:00am in the Moadan

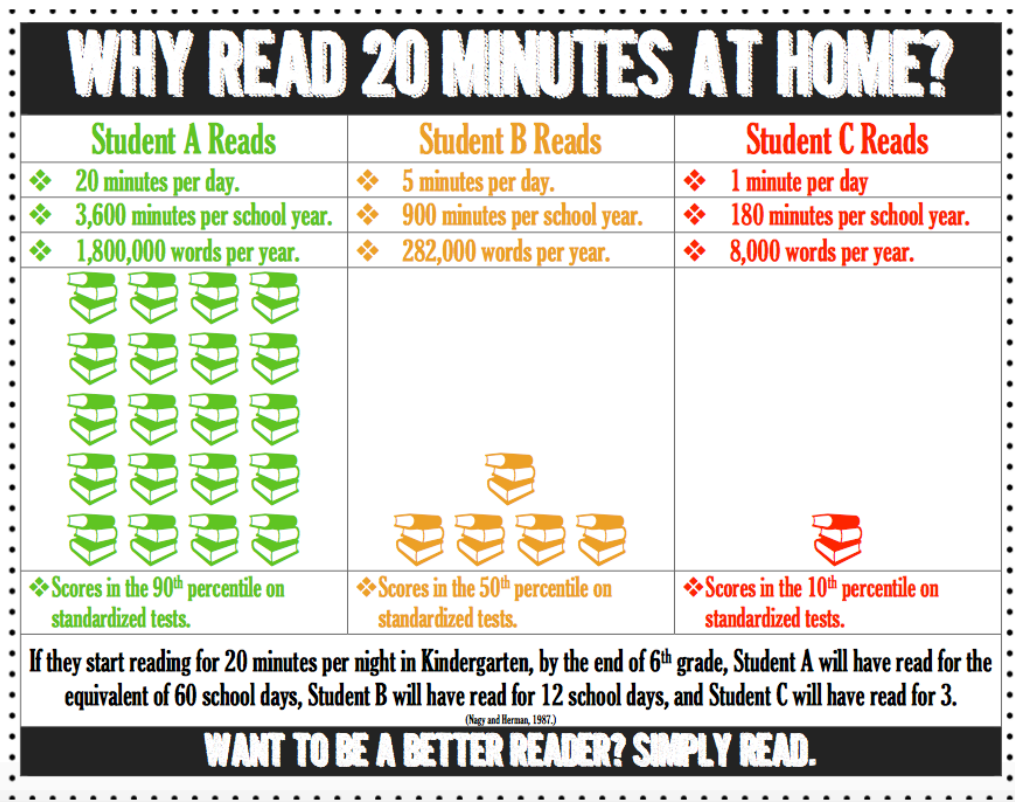
Letter to parents about value of independent reading (February, 2017)

Dear Parents,

Research shows that the amount of daily reading a child does is linked to the attainment of higher-order literacy skills and long-term academic success. In fact, the amount of independent reading time is the single best predictor of reading achievement from second to fifth grade! Think about that – the single best predictor is not aptitude; it's not the school's reading program. *It's the time your child spends reading at home.*

Check out the compelling graphic below to see what 20 minutes per night translates into by the time your child reaches 6th grade.

At GMLS, every child is required to read at home every night. We don't consider this optional and we hope you don't either. Of course, children need your help carving out and protecting reading time in their schedule. Read to your child, listen to your child read, take turns reading, or curl up next to your child and read your own book. However you do it is fine – just read!



With Respect,
Kelley King

Letter to Parents reviewing Home Learning (October 4, 2017)

This school year ushers in our second year of implementation of our new approach to homework. For those of you who are new to SDJA this fall, allow me to provide a little background.

In conversations with parents, we were hearing many stories about the difficulties and stress caused by homework. Homework was causing conflict in the home and eroding time for other developmentally important activities such as reading, outdoor play, family dinner, extracurricular activities, and sleep. Educational research shows that, while homework helps in middle and high school, there is no evidence that homework increases academic achievement for elementary-aged students. In fact, some studies show a negative effect if students lose interest in learning or when it hurts the parent-child relationship.

In response, we changed our approach to homework last fall. We decided that we were going to be much more thoughtful about what is required of students in the evenings and on weekends. We know that the #1 thing that children can do to boost their long-term academic success is to read, read, read. So we made reading a nightly requirement. To that, we added nightly Hebrew reading and vocabulary practice. Additional assignments are also sometimes given, but we do not operate on “auto-pilot” with homework; rather, we are much more intentional and personalized in our approach.

Sometimes, children receive assignments that are specific to them. Examples include multiplication facts, typing, spelling games, sight word practice, or to practice tying a shoe. Sometimes there are special, long-term projects for the whole class such as the vinegar and egg project, Shorashim, the 100 Day Project, the Me Book and others. In the older grades, students

will be studying for a variety of tests. If parents or students want more schoolwork to do at home, teachers post several resources on Canvas, including web-based activities and downloadable worksheets that reinforce, review and enrich what is being taught at school.

As you can see, unlike most schools, homework at GMLS is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. Indeed, overall, the evening workload for students has gone down, but it has not disappeared. We feel that, through our home learning approach, we have created a more balanced, manageable, developmentally-appropriate and research-based solution to the age-old dilemma of homework.

With that said, through the course of the first year, we identified some areas where we could improve our implementation of our approach and we gathered feedback from parents. Armed with this data, we made some important and impactful adjustments. I'd like to share those improvements here and I hope that you have noticed a positive difference:

- Communication:
 - We have clarified that home learning does not mean “no homework.”
 - The Canvas calendar, in addition to weekly classroom emails, contains information about all home learning assignments.
 - Teachers will be clear about which home learning assignments are *required* and which are *optional*.
- Planners:
 - All students and parents can go to Canvas to view events and assignments.
 - Students in grades 3-5 also maintain hard-copy assignment notebooks and teachers instruct students in time management, organization and long-term planning strategies.
- Accountability: To ensure that all students are faithfully fulfilling their nightly reading requirement, teachers have implemented accountability measures (reading logs, book talks, etc).
- Class Work: Since fewer worksheets are coming home to parents, teachers are sending home more of the children's class work. We hope this will help parents to see what students are learning and how their child is doing.

Finally, remember to make time for independent or shared reading at home. It can be a true game change in your child's educational career!

Warmly,
Kelley King

Appendix D: Mid-Year Teacher Survey Questions & Responses

1. Your name

2. Beyond required reading, how often do you assign other tasks to students to do at home?

K: Finish important work not finished at school and 100th day project.

K: So far we've only assigned 2 home learning assignments. They were related to special events: 100th day of school and showcase.

K/1: Small questionnaire once a year.

1: 4-5 times a month. Usually it is individual work to help review material they are struggling with. There has been one optional social studies project.

1: Aside from daily reading, students will take home their word sort on Fridays and play a game with their words. They are also math worksheets, learning apps, and projects that are assigned for optional home learning activities.

1: About once a month or two, we give a special projects; some of them are optional.

1: Once a month (HJ)

2: Every other month special project, math extra practice with each unit.

2: Just special projects like book reports (2x/year), weekly spelling practice, sharing with parents what they learned about (every other week maybe). If parents ask for something in particular, ie. extra math practice, I send it home.

2 HJ: Very infrequent.

$\frac{3}{4}$: Spelling test every week, unfinished work (but not often), optional activities on weebly or digiplus

4: Complete and study for WTW test. Math extra practice packets. Incomplete class work.

4: WTW activities at home each week.

5: Study for tests at home. Weekly, students are required to read/watch news so they can share. Larger projects have some home component (this is few and far between).

5: Math homework is only if they didn't complete their math journal pages in class or if they need to study for a test.

3-5: Once a week, they have a quiz so they need to study their words daily. Otherwise, for Judaics, maybe once every 6-9 weeks there is a test they need to prepare for.

Sci: I assigned 1 or 2 homework assignments per month in 4/5 grades. They are usually review sheets or anatomy maps.

3. From a teacher perspective, what is going well?

K: It's the same as it has always been.

K: I think it's the most developmentally appropriate expectation for K students

K/1: Students more time in the afternoon.

1: I LOVE IT! Kids need time to decompress after school. This is a VERY rigorous program that is demanding of their time and energy all day.

1: The emphasis is on meaningful learning opportunities instead of on busy work.

1: Students love coming to school; they are more eager to learn.

1: Not sure. They are "released" from HW and don't seem committed to the very little reading.

2: Kids have time to play.

2: I think it is great! Less pressure on the teacher, students and parents. I haven't had any complaints so far.

2: The HL facilitates the process of learning by reducing undue pressure.

¾: Students are encouraged to be more responsible and independent-the onus is on them.
4: Kids and parents understand that HL is assigned “as needed” and for work that is individualized. Parents like having the math packets sent home to reinforce increasingly difficult concepts for both the kids and themselves.
4/5: Students take assignments more seriously since they are few and far between.
5: The children are needing to be more accountable for their studies.
3-5: The kids are working hard at school.
Sci: I did not change my assignments based on the switch.

4. From a teacher perspective, what needs to be improved?

K: nothing
K/1: More parents now do not practice reading or vocabulary with their kids.
1: I would like to include more optional projects for extension next year.
1: HL does not mean that no homework should be done. It just means learning may take a different form than completing a worksheet.
1: Depends on the student. Some of them need to practice twice a week on areas where they need improvement.
1: Parent involvement?
2: I need to do a better job of making sure the reading is getting done.
2: I can’t think of any at this time.
2: The process is working well.
¾: Students need to understand (even more than they currently do) that they should be doing some form of Home Learning.
4: There needs to be a better understanding of the difference between Home Learning and assigned homework. Parents still have to be contacted individually to be sure they understand what their child needs to complete at home.
4/5: Students need to be taught specifically how to study. With less requirements at home, we need to ensure that they are giving them study skills in school so they can be successful when they do need to work/study independently.
5: I don’t think the children are doing the reading portion of the HL.
3-5: The kids still need to review their work.
Sci: I believe in using HW to reinforce the concepts learned in class.

5. From parent perspective, what are you hearing that’s good?

K: I’ve only heard positives.
K/1: Have not heard any comments
1: I’ve heard nothing positive or negative.
1: There is less stress/anxiety in completing HW with students when they are over-scheduled with activities after school.
1: The children have more time to do other activities. We have to remember that they spent most of their time on learning at school. It is important to have the balance. After all, they are still children.
1: “No HW! Yay!”
2: They aren’t stressed about homework and have better play/family time.
There have been some parents that have thanked me for the change. They all seem pretty happy with it!
2: My experience is positive from parents.
2: The process is working well.
¾: Children feel less pressure, but most parents appreciate it even more. No struggles at home.

4: I think that parents see that HL meets their child's individualized needs.
4/5: I've heard split reviews. Some parents are happy with the freedom while others ask consistently for homework, extra practice, reading logs, etc.
5: Some parents like it. Parents are happy deciding what, when and how they want their child to do their HL. They are loving the weekly email updates!
3-5: Mixed. They love that there is no responsibility on them like before, but would like the kids to have something to do.
Sci: No complaints.

6. From parent perspective, what are you hearing that is not good?

K: nothing
K/1: Have not heard any comments.
1: I've heard nothing positive or negative.
1: Home Learning means "no homework."
1: I haven't heard any negative comments about this change.
1: 1 or 2 parents saying that they think that there should be HW to reinforce what was taught in class.
2: Haven't heard anything that isn't positive.
2: I haven't heard anything negative, so far.
2: My experience is positive feedback from parents.
¾: Parents have no way of knowing what their child knows. While some say they don't know what is being learned, they aren't looking at Weebly.
4: Some parents want regular homework assigned and other parents love not having mandatory HW assignments.
4/5: Fear that students will have no study skills.
5: some parents are asking for extra math work pages and resources.
Sci: As a parent, I loved to see my child held accountable for her own learning. I also loved that she was learning to manage her time and plan a week worth of assignments. Now she comes home and hangs out unless I get on her case.

7. What ideas do you have for improving any aspect of HL?

K/1: I think that a 3-minute writing assignment will help to reinforce skills and will help the parents take it more seriously.
1: I love it as is.
1: Creating a menu of subjects and listing various home learning activities that students can do to reinforce skills at home.
1: We need to continue to provide the parents our weekly update as well as enrichment in different areas that will be available for parents that want to practice different subjects with their kids.
1: Closer communication with parents to their email once a week?
2: I was actually thinking about this today and feel that there is nothing to improve. The weekly news, via email, has been a wonderful way of communicating with parents this year. I also always send home the parent letter that goes along with the Singapore Math for each unit. It has some home-learning activities on it. And of course, sending home extra work if parents ask for it.
¾: Can't do much more than I am currently doing. At B2S Night, show parents in more detail what HL is and should be.
4: I think that we should not have to post HL assignments in multiple places. Yes, the kids, with teacher reinforcement, are responsible for writing their HL in their planners. Parents need to be

encouraged even more to work with their child to make him/her responsible for looking at the planner every day. If there is a special need, teacher do contact parents to give them a heads-up. 4/5: Planners are a must in 4th and 5th grades. We need to implement a plan with each grade/class that is consistent and that parents are aware of from Day One. I think having each class website outfitted with resources to practice at home independently will help those families that do want extra practice. This will also help the teacher instead of having to run off packets and what not.

5: I don't think the website is visited much by parents or students at the 5th grade level. I think it is nice to have the resources somewhere to access but the weekly communication is the one they rely on. I am thinking that next year, I would like to use Google Docs like I did a while back, as their daily plan so when someone is absent, they won't miss anything and could possibly participate from home or wherever they are.

3-5: The weekly emails are a good way to give them information.

Sci: I believe that practice makes perfect in math. Understanding a concept is not enough. To achieve mastery, the kids must practice math at home either in a packet format or using a website with teacher pre-set goals, such as Brain Genie.

Appendix E: Post-Implementation Parent Survey Results

Survey Questions:

1. How many children do you have attending GMLS? 1, 2, 3
2. For which grade are you completing the survey? K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5
3. Overall, how satisfied were you with the Home Learning approach? Very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, not at all satisfied
4. If you marked somewhat or not at all satisfied, what could we do to improve?
5. What did you see as the benefits of Home Learning? Click all that apply (see chart below)
6. What concerns did you have about Home Learning? Check all that apply (see chart below)
7. In an effort to keep parents more informed, teachers wrote weekly class emails telling and showing parents what students were learning in class. Did you find these emails to be informative?
8. Teachers posted home learning resources and suggestions on their class websites, including extra practice worksheets, challenge activities, study guides and learning game websites. Did you find these resources to be helpful?
9. Do you have anything else that you would like to share with the faculty and administration of GMLS on this topic?

Select Survey Results:

“What are the benefits of Home Learning?”

Answer Choices	Responses
More family time	71.19% 42
More relaxed dinner time or bed time	84.75% 50
More sleep for my child	52.54% 31
More time spent on other areas of interest (sports, hobbies, unstructured playtime)	88.14% 52
More time spent on reading (independent reading or you reading to your child)	55.93% 33
Less stress at home (battles) over homework	79.66% 47
Improved attitude about school (mine or my child's)	44.07% 26
It is a better fit for my personal philosophy about how children should spend their time outside of school hours.	49.15% 29

Comments:

This year that my son didn't have homework he improved tremendously at school. He would arrive focused and ready to learn every day. I definitely think it's connected. A child cannot be "on" all day and be successful. Having a little break in the afternoon is a huge benefit.

Our children spend over 7 hours at school every day. We have a dual curriculum. My kids personally only have about 3 hours left after school to do an extracurricular activity, a doctor's appointment, a play date, dinner, a bath, etc. before it is time to start getting ready for bed because they wake up very early to go to school. At some point, we need to weigh what is important for a child and I think having a little free time in the afternoon hugely outweighs having homework. Whoever wants homework can get homework but don't do this to the rest of us. The pressure that is put on kids these days is enormous. These kids are little. Let them have a bit of free time for themselves. They deserve it. And so do we the parents! We are also overworked!!

Not having structured homework has been great! Please don't bring it back. It's been proven over and over again that it has no benefit at this stage. For the parents who do want homework, give it to THEIR children, don't punish everyone for it.

It's been great! Please don't bring homework back!!!!

It really fostered a love of reading. My child now reads voraciously as a result of the daily habit of reading before bedtime.

This would be the benefits I would imagine could occur

None. Homework and home learning in the younger grades are extremely similar.

It's been great not having the burden of homework. My child actually improved enormously during this school year. Please don't bring homework back. The kids already spend 7 hours a day at school, not counting the time it takes to get there and back. They are little. How much more can they do?

All of the above were positive benefits of Home Learning. It was a very helpful change for our family. Much more reading time and play time for the kids, and less stress for all of us.

Less stress and no tears. Amazing.

It was the best year. Instead of doing traditional homework, she could concentrate on areas where more practice was needed.

The homework policy was one of the reasons we chose the school - especially because my son often stays for aftercare, it makes the little time we do get to spend together after school much happier.

What concerns do you have about Home Learning?

Answer Choices	Responses
I want my child to do more traditional schoolwork, like math worksheets, at home	32.56% 14
My child had too much free time after school	6.98% 3
My child doesn't want to listen to me if I tell him/her to do schoolwork at home	27.91% 12
I saw less of my child's school work, so I was less clear on what they were learning	60.47% 26
I wondered if my child was developing his/her planning and organizational skills	62.79% 27
My child felt that "Home Learning" meant "No Homework" and argued about doing the nightly reading assignment	41.86% 18
I didn't know how to get information about upcoming tests and how students should prepare	46.51% 20
Home Learning does not fit my personal philosophy	9.30% 4
Total Respondents: 43	

Comments:

Our now high school daughter developed a better set of homework skills & organizational skills as a result of more traditional homework. I feel like we are missing an opportunity to teach kids a responsibility that is key for success in middle school. Love to see meaningful homework with a rubric grading system. Love to see study skills taught.

I believe that, at the age of elementary school, homework assignment teaches the kids organization skills and responsibility.

I don't think homework has to be worksheets but I would like my child to have structured work that is practice and relates to the subject he is studying and the ability to have work that will give him the ability to succeed in the tests.

No concern

I think it's important for the kids to have homework. They do it in every school. They need that kind of discipline. My kids go to kumon so they still had homework but still.

We did not always use the extra time for reading or exercise. Increased electronic usage was the greater battle.

Need to find a "balance" between traditional homework and NO homework ? does this make sense?

No concerns. It was wonderful last year and I whole heartedly believe in the home learning philosophy.

My daughter actually likes homework so it is not an issue. As it turned out she worked on her math packets anyway and loved having work at home to show me. I'm fine with homework being sent home.

Lot of free time which is great-but twenty minutes of having to practice spelling words or 5 problems to reinforce math facts would have been welcome

I would like more updates from the school about what the kids are working on. Perhaps they could spend a few minutes at the end of each week writing a few sentences on "here's what I learned this week"?