



Out-of-School Time System

Homework Protocol



Introduction

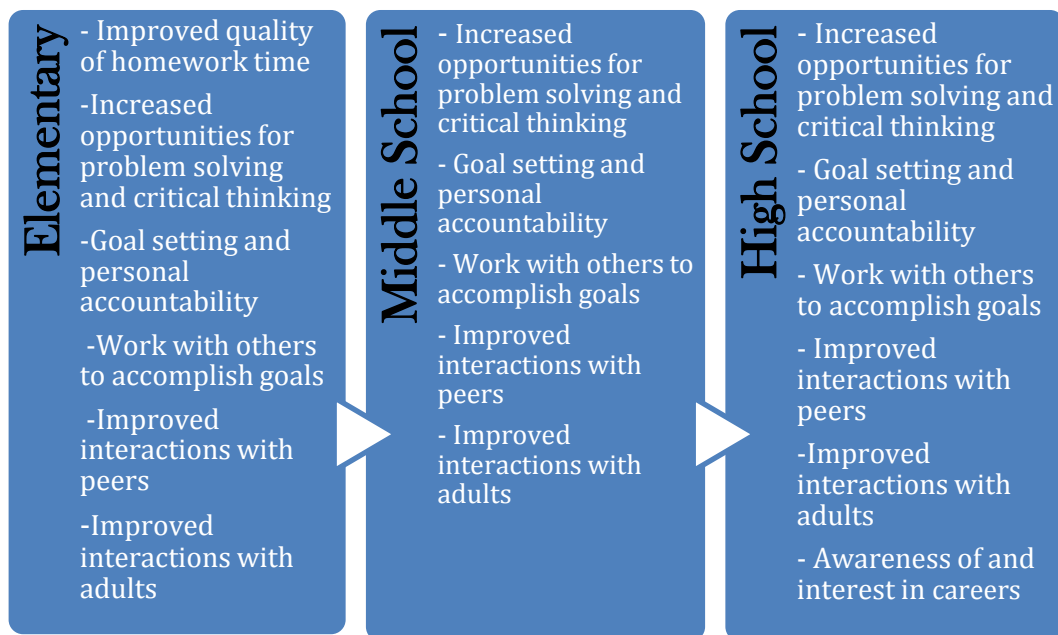
Research shows that students are more successful when they devote regular, set amounts of time to homework, and when they are able to work on their homework in a structured space. When the homework environment is organized and managed effectively, students know what to expect, begin working promptly in their designated space, and are less prone to distraction. Routines, clear expectations, and well thought-out space configurations reduce behavior problems and disruptions, leading to more productive use of homework time and increased achievement.

The Role of Homework Support in OST

Homework time is a structured time that allows students in your program to achieve the necessary tools and skills to succeed academically. Your program should strive to provide quality homework time that meets the needs of your students, as well as contributes to DHS positive program outcomes:

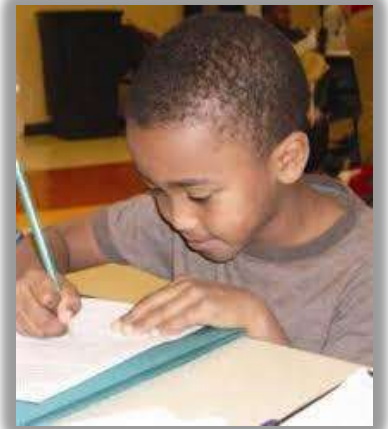
- Increased engagement in learning
- Increased engagement in school
- Aspire to educational excellence
- Improved life skills
- Preparation for higher education and employment

While homework time is only required for elementary programs, middle and high school programs can benefit from providing a structured homework time and academic assistance in order to meet DHS OST goals and outcomes through the following indicators:



Support vs. Completion

Homework time provides academic and developmental objectives to merge in a more relaxed environment than school time. Students can complete homework, study for tests independently or with classmates, conduct research, and work collaboratively to support each other during designated homework time. Most parents have the expectation that homework should be completed during program time, providing children with opportunities to engage in family activities, chores, and other activities after your program. While homework completion is desirable, it should not be the only goal of the program's designated homework time.



In order to support youth during homework time, they must feel as though they are provided opportunities to find the answers to their questions, make mistakes and learn the steps to correcting them. This process teaches youth resilience and confidence to overcome their frustrations with difficult tasks. Remember that homework time is more than youth sitting at tables and completing their checklist, it is an opportunity for the program to teach necessary 21st Century Skills that youth will need throughout their lives.

Support

- Encourages independent learning
- Promotes time and task management
- Teaches research and study skills
- Develops problem solving skills and teamwork
- Reinforces reading and writing strategies
- Provides opportunities to seek help and communicate misunderstandings appropriately

Completion

- Homework has been completed
- Often homework is checked for accuracy
- Satisfies all tasks required of the teacher
- Focuses on various tasks that must be completed that are required by the teacher
- Shows competency of course material

Homework support provides opportunities for students to practice independent learning skills that are needed in order to successfully complete not only homework, but promote practice of 21st Century learning skills such as persistence, work ethic, communication and critical thinking. It also provides opportunities for youth to seek extra help and obtain support in challenging subject areas.

Homework Time/Help Framework

Homework help and support is a fundamental aspect of youth development. This section will focus on how to create an impactful homework time in your OST program.

Scheduling

- Keep a regular time that students can expect to begin homework
- Communicate the schedule to parents
- Keep a consistent start time with an end time that is flexible depending on your program schedule – some students may want to complete homework assignments before participating in enrichment/club activities
- Depending on the school, some students may not have homework on Fridays. Schedules can vary, but organized learning can provide additional academic enhanced activities such as, Math Relays, Spelling Bee, Reading Clubs, open computer time on approved websites, etc.

Timing

- A child should do 10 minutes of homework for each grade level, i.e. first grade should be expected to do 10 minutes, 2nd grade 20 minutes, third grade 30 minutes, etc.
- 6th grade should last 60 minutes, 12th grade should be no longer than 2 hours.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
3:09	Sign in and Snack	Sign in and Snack	Sign in and Snack	Sign in and Snack	Sign in and Snack
3:45	Homework Time	Homework Time	Homework Time	Homework Time	Organized Playtime
4:30	Greenhouse	Flying Art	Greenhouse	Flying Art	Greenhouse
5:30	Soccer Practice	Site Playhouse	Soccer Practice	Site Playhouse	Soccer Games
6:00	Dismiss	Dismiss	Dismiss	Dismiss	Dismiss

Staffing (using existing staff, volunteers, parents, etc.)



- Recruit college/university student volunteers to provide tutoring, mentoring, and support. College students majoring in math, science, English, etc. may have a better handle than Site Directors or support staff with limited knowledge on content areas.
 - Identify staff needs for homework and tutoring support. Provide resources for staff to better assist youth such as textbooks, reference sheets, etc.
 - Provide staff with an opportunity to receive training on specific topics that are linked to academic standards such as STEM and literacy.

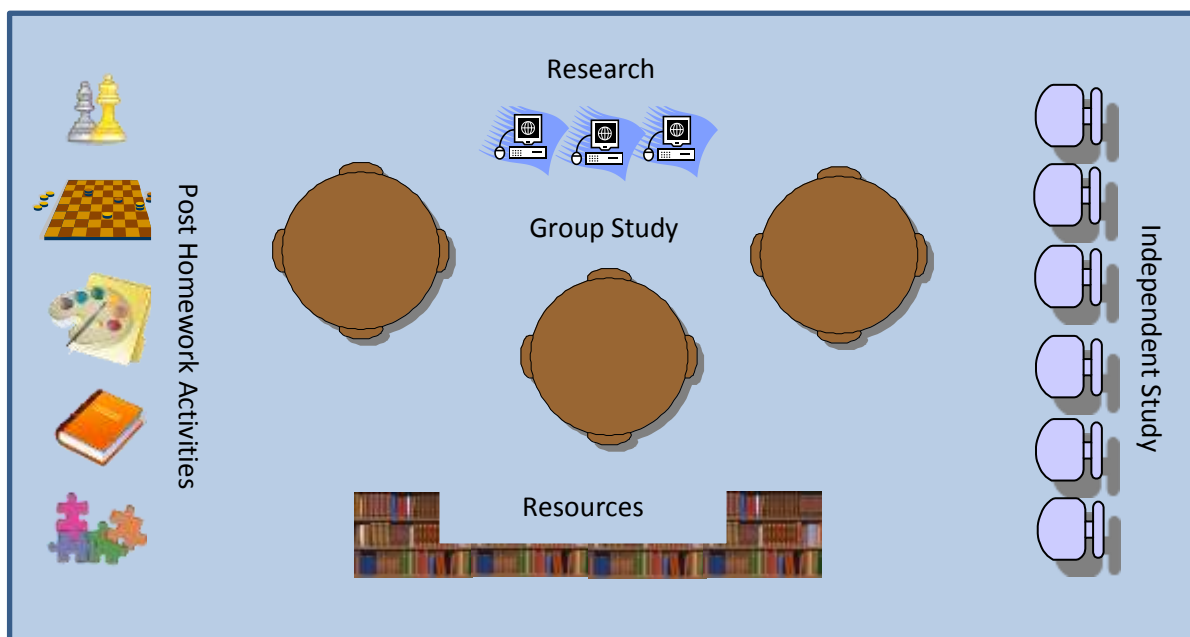
Space Planning

Think about the space that your program has acquired for homework time. Determine its ability to foster a homework space that is quiet, well lit, and provide substantial materials and resources for homework completion.

Create a physical environment that encourages homework completion—including quiet space with individual desks for assignments that require deep concentration, bigger tables for study groups to gather, couches for catching up on reading, and a resource area with reference materials.

Provide a variety of learning spaces to allow for different learning environments. For example:

- Independent study
- Small group study
- Research area
- Available homework resources
- Post homework/no homework location



If the homework space is a shared space in the entire program, provide designated locations in the shared space that allow various ways of completing homework. Make sure students understand the purpose of each location and are held accountable to the rules and routines of the space.

Provide youth with ways to seclude themselves from distractions such as using trifold poster boards to create a private study area that youth place in front of them.

***It is ok if students need an environmental change in their homework space.
For example, move homework outside if the weather permits.**

Homework Materials

- Provide various supplies for homework time.
 - A “Homework Tool Kit” can be provided for different age groups that includes age appropriate post-homework activities including word puzzles, brain teasers, 24 Math Game cards, as well as age appropriate supplies such as calculators, protractors, counting cubes, etc.
 - Provide additional resources with diverse materials that can include audiobooks, headphones, dictionaries, magazines, pamphlets, encyclopedias, geography texts, electronic devices connected to the internet, etc.

Homework Tool Kit

Word Puzzles
Brain Teasers
Math Cards
Pens and Pencils
Scratch paper
Erasers
Markers
Glue and Tape



- Keep homework time active, even when all the assignments are done, with education based activities such as book clubs, test/study groups, test practice teams, educational games, writing center, and cyber study.
- Offer short, self-directed activities such as brainteasers, board games, or activity centers that students can enjoy while still reinforcing some academic and 21st Century Skills . . . not just worksheets.
- If your program does not have storage in the OST space, purchase or obtain donated bins to hold the various materials for homework time.

Communication with School Personnel

Teachers can provide insight on students as well as expectations for homework. Communicate with school personnel to understand what is necessary for successful homework completion. Provide opportunities for after school staff to communicate with daytime teachers regarding homework expectations.

- Develop a homework completion sheet for afterschool staff to share with teachers regarding student’s progress. An example of a homework completion sheet is available in the Appendix.
- Invite teachers to volunteer during homework time.
- Communicate any successes or struggles that youth are having with material to daytime instructors.
- When possible, obtain permission for after school staff to attend school meetings.
- Set up systems for communication between afterschool instructors and school-day teachers that keep everyone up to date.



- Ask the principal and/or teachers if there are any workbooks that can be used as reference materials in your Homework Toolkit.

Talking with Parents and Families

Keep open communication with parents and families on the student's experience completing homework. It is also important to communicate with parents the program's expectation of homework time.



- Provide face-to-face updates if parents pick up their child, or make calls home to parents who are not regularly at the program.
- Communicate with parents the content of homework and any specific homework needs.
- Include parents in homework time as volunteers.
- Be aware of families' homework preferences. Some families want their students to complete as much homework as possible in the afterschool program; others may want to work with their children on some assignments at home, too.
- Set up systems for communication between afterschool instructors and school-day teachers that keep everyone up to date. Do the same with families.
- Homework contracts and logs provide programs an opportunity to set expectations of homework time, as well as keep parents informed about their child's academics. A homework contract sample is provided in the Appendix.

Youth Logistics

Now that you have a framework of what you will need to do, these points focus on how to run homework time effectively.

Getting Youth Started

Some skills that youth need in order to engage with homework effectively are not taught in the school curriculum. These skills, such as time management, can be integrated into homework time routines.

- Establish a homework routine that students practice at the start of homework time such as walking in to the homework space quietly, or a homework assignment check in with the group leader.
- Be consistent with homework routines, as this will help develop the program norm for homework time.
- Use time effectively and prioritize assignments by giving students a chance to create a homework plan for the afternoon that is followed. A sample of the Homework Plan is available in the Appendix.
- Provide "brain breaks" during long periods of concentration and homework activity.
- Develop a homework log for students to track their homework completion during program. A sample of the homework log is available in the Appendix.

- Provide homework contracts to students and families to set the expectation and agreement of program homework time. This can also provide a way to communicate with parents on their child's homework habits and specific support their child needs. A sample of a homework contract is provided in the Appendix.
- Develop an incentive system that encourages youth to work towards accomplishing a homework goal.
- Know youth needs by keeping track of subjects youth receive tutoring on by using a Tutoring Receipt. A sample of the Tutoring Receipt is available in the Appendix.

Grouping Youth during Homework Time



- Keep groups fluid, not static, depending on the students, the assignments, and the day. Change grouping arrangements frequently.
 - Arrange students in groups where they will be most productive.
 - Give an opportunity for advanced students to assist students who are struggling through tutoring, or teaching a concept. Make sure to monitor their interaction to maintain a safe and respectful environment.
 - Offer struggling students help by working one-on-one

with them. Many students may want this specific attention, therefore, it may be best to schedule specific one-on-one sessions with youth throughout the week. This offers the youth the opportunity to prepare for and prioritize their needs.

Asking and Answering Questions

- Before answering a question, consider if your response would help the teacher understand what the student does or does not know.
- Do not give students answers when completing difficult homework. Work with students by becoming an advocate for their learning and guiding them through the homework problem.
- Do an example problem together and walk them through the steps to complete the task.
- Ask probing questions such as, what would make sense, or how do you understand it?
- Trigger memories from class and have them recall questions that were asked during class.
- Teach strategies to use various resources for finding their own answers i.e. using a dictionary or thesaurus for learning how to spell a word. Too much re-teaching is not an effective use of homework time.
- Help youth combine prior knowledge to new information in the homework to develop an answer to their questions



- Use visual illustrations or familiar objects to explain confusing concepts.

Supporting Youth Who Struggle

Students struggle in various ways and for many reasons. Some students may have trouble understanding concepts because they did not pay attention in class, but it is incorrect to assume that this is the situation for all youth. Youth can also struggle due to language barriers, learning disabilities, or have different learning styles.

Do not self-diagnose youth who are struggling with material. Instead, ask questions such as *what part are you struggling with? Is there any part of the question you already understand? What part are you stuck on?*

- Speak gently and think of yourself as the voice in the student's head.
- If the student stops, provide them some time to think.
- Provide scaffolding opportunities that demonstrate concepts correctly for example a read aloud can demonstrate fluency in reading, or an example problem to provide steps of a concept.
- Keep asking questions so that the youth explains their struggles clearly.
- Determine what the youth is struggling in specifically in order to effectively meet their needs.
- Have short 15- 20 minute lesson plans on specific skills that students can use such as reading strategies, math skills study skills, and test taking skills.
- Provide various resources of print and non-print materials that students' may not have in their homes.
- Help make homework content more interesting by identifying real life connections and other student interests in the material.
- Use various strategies to reach youth understanding of subjects.
- Sometimes the best homework help is just directing students to the right resources they can employ to answer a tricky question. Refrain from giving them the answer; instead, empower them to find it on their own.
- Remind youth that it is OK to struggle, but make sure to provide them with the tools necessary to improve.

Strategies to Increase Youth Understanding

Draw Pictures to provide visuals

Create the problem into a game

Use graphic organizers such as word webs, maps, etc.

Act out a text or math problem

Provide metaphors, analogies, and similes

Use music (where appropriate) to learn content through singing, rap, rhyme, etc.

Include mnemonic devices

Have youth reteach concepts

Use technology

Provide visuals



Supporting English Language Learners

English Language Learners are youth who speak little to no English. It is important to support these youth holistically to provide them with opportunities for success and to limit their frustrations.

- Determine the student's Reading Level in English. For example, if the third grade student reads English at a first grade level, then reading material for should be provided that is on his or her level.
- Invest in bilingual reading material such as picture books and word sight books.
- Communicate with daytime teachers and school principals if possible to determine ways OST can connect activities to day time instruction.
- Support the various cultures that are represented by youth who are ELL. Engage in structured activities that include references to youth culture and encourage youth to flourish in representing their prior knowledge in English.
- Develop relationships with parents, and communicate often to provide support for the child.
- Recruit staff who are familiar with the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of ELL youth.
- Engage youth in activities that bridge their first language to English in an encouraging way to help them practice English.
- Make sure to write down spoken instructions, rules and expectations and provide them to youth and families.



Supporting Special Education Students

Special education students are youth who require necessary accommodations in the classroom in order to effectively learn in the classroom. It is important to know the various needs of a youth who receives special education services, as there are many different modifications that the youth may need.

- If possible, obtain information on the necessary accommodations that the youth will need from parents, guardians, or school personnel (such as the principal and/or special education teacher).
- Assess if your program is able to adequately provide the support that the youth needs. It is important to be honest with the family about the program's ability to provide the support that the child needs. It would be a disservice to the child if individual needs are not provided.



- When it is not possible to obtain information on the any special education needs, ask the youth what they are able to accomplish during homework and the best way for them to complete it. For example, some youth need to be separated from all other distractions; others may need to have assignments read out loud to them, etc.
- Offer various modes of assistance such as verbally explaining math concepts, drawing concepts, and even acting out concepts. It is important to provide the youth with various avenues of explanations in order to adequately meet their need.
- Teach youth study skills such as time management, planning, prioritization, SQ3R, etc.
- Monitor youth closely to ensure that they are practicing proper study skills.
- Allow youth to work with others, but monitor the grouping to ensure that the youth is not copying homework.

SQ3R

With the youth...

Survey the material

Question anything that is unfamiliar

Read for answers to questions

Recite what was read

Review understanding of material

Checking Homework

- Avoid correcting homework for 100% accuracy if the student is struggling, as the teacher or parent may misinterpret that the student knows the information rather than you having helped.
- Provide a homework card that informs the parent and teacher of the difficulties that the student is experiencing while doing homework.
- Reward students for appropriate homework behavior with positive reinforcement or special opportunities.

Post-Homework Activities

- Make sure to provide age-appropriate resources for youth who have completed their homework.
- Provide each group with an abundance of reading material ranging from picture books, chapter books, magazines, brochures, etc. that are appropriate for their grade group.
- Educational websites can be a great tool for reinforcing content areas. Websites and additional resources are available in the Appendix.

Teaching Homework Routines

- Build in opportunities for youth choice. Do some students study better when they can listen to music through headphones? Can students seek help from peers or adults? Can they choose which assignment they want to work on first?

- Implement the use of homework logs, homework tool kits, and designated learning spaces on a consistent basis.

Conclusion

Managing and organizing homework time involves supporting homework completion by setting an anticipated schedule for homework, establishing consistent routines, creating a productive space with necessary materials, and a safe place for making mistakes. While homework time is often completed in OST programming, this does not keep parents from holding responsibility of being involved with their child's homework. It is important to keep communication open with parents regarding homework expectations, as well as encouraging parents to invest time in their child's homework assignments.

Expand your own view of homework as a positive element of expanded learning. Remember that you are a role model, and students may adopt your attitude toward homework. Include staff in aspects of homework implementation, and encourage them to brush up on any subject areas that they may feel weak in. With intentionality and practice, homework time can be a positive experience for everyone in the program.

Appendix

Online Resources

Khan Academy

- Khan Academy offers materials and resources free of charge. Students can make use of the library of content, including interactive challenges, assessments, and videos.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.khanacademy.org>

Ted Talks

- Ted Talks provides carefully curated educational videos, many of which represent collaborations between talented educators and animators nominated through the TED-Ed platform. This platform also allows users to take any useful educational video, not just TED's, and easily create a customized lesson around the video. Users can distribute the lessons, publicly or privately, and track their impact on the world, a class, or an individual student.

For more information, please visit: <http://ed.ted.com/lessons>

Free Library of Philadelphia

- From simple skill building to help with tough chemistry problems, the Free Library of Philadelphia's new Homework Help Online tutoring service caters to every student's needs. The program allows students to choose between homework help and skill building, as well as writing assistance with an online tutor. Boasting professional teachers as tutors, the free service is customizable—users can navigate between grade levels (3 – 12) and subject areas. Featuring a range of subjects, including varying levels of reading comprehension, mathematics, sciences, and social studies, the interactive service has helped more than 1,000 students at the Free Library of Philadelphia.

After-school LEAP staff are available to assist students in accessing the program from Free Library computers, and students may access Homework Help Online from their home computers from 2:00 to 11:00 p.m., seven days a week (major holidays excluded). The protected site, which is also available in Spanish, is safe for students to explore on their own, and students can receive feedback on essays and written homework assignments through email correspondence with tutors.

For more information, please visit: <http://libwww.freelibrary.org/kids/kids.cfm>

Funbrain

- Funbrain has free educational games, online books, and comics. Funbrain is for kids ages preschool through grade 8, and offers more than 100 fun, interactive games that develop

skills in math, reading, and literacy. In addition, kids can read a variety of popular books and comics on the site, including Diary of a Wimpy Kid, Amelia Writes Again, and Brewster Rocket.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.funbrain.com>

Internet 4 Classrooms

- Internet 4 Classrooms is a free web portal designed to assist anyone who wants to find high-quality, free Internet resources to use in classroom instruction, developing project ideas, reinforcing specific subject matter areas both in the class and at home and even for online technology tutorials.

For more information, please visit:

http://www.internet4classrooms.com/grade_level_help.htm

National Geographic Kids

- National Geographic Kids provides kid-centric National Geographic information to kids of all ages.

For more information, please visit: <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids>

PBS Kids

- PBS Kids provide fun interactive activities for youth using characters from popular shows on the PBS Kids network.

For more information, please visit: www.pbskids.org

Coursea

- Coursera is a free online learning community that is connected to various colleges and universities to provide courses in various subjects for free. These subjects can be helpful for staff who may need to refresh themselves on various topics that youth may be struggling with.

For more information, please visit <https://www.coursera.org>

Starfall

- Starfall is a free public service and has been teaching children to read with phonics since 2002. Their systematic approach, in conjunction with phonemic awareness practice, is perfect for preschool, kindergarten, first grade, second grade, special education, homeschool, and English language development (ELD, ELL, ESL).

For more information, please visit <http://www.starfall.com/>