



LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICY BULLETIN

TITLE: The Purpose of Homework and its Weighting
in Student Academic Grades

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ISSUER: Judy Elliott
Chief Academic Officer

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ROUTING

All Offices
Local District Superintendents
Administrators of Instruction
Local District Principal Leaders
Principals
All Teachers

PURPOSE This new bulletin defines District policy relating to the weighting of homework in a student's academic grade.

POLICY: As the District has implemented standards-based curriculum and standards-based assessments, it is critical that our students' academic grade reflects the knowledge they have learned rather than behavioral compliance.

Beginning July 1, 2011, homework assignments will comprise no more than 10% of a student's academic achievement grade. Studies have shown that by limiting the weight of homework towards a student's academic grade, a truer picture of the student's knowledge will be reflected in the achievement grade. Homework is a formative tool for practice toward mastery.

This bulletin is to clearly define the purpose of homework and its weight towards a student's academic grade in a standards-based system. Academic grades are to be aligned to student performance on California state content standards.

MAJOR CHANGES: This is a new policy bulletin.

BACKGROUND: The purpose of homework is fourfold:

- It is meant to be an opportunity for independent *practice*, to reinforce learning and to help students master specific skills.
- It can be used to be a *preparation* by introducing material to be presented in future lessons.
- It is an opportunity for students to *extend* their current skills into new situations.
- It is a means by which students may *integrate* many different skills to a larger task, such as book reports, projects, or other creative avenues (Vatterott, 2009).



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Homework is formative and an opportunity for students to experiment with new learning and skills. Students apply what they have learned so they may see what they fully understand and where they may still have questions. This is part of the formative learning process. Homework is not a punitive or compliance-driven tool. (Vatterott, 2009).

Varying degrees of access to academic support at home, for whatever reason, should not penalize a student so severely that it prevents the student from passing a class nor should it inflate the grade. Because of the formative or practice nature of homework, it is now LAUSD's policy to limit its weighting in a student's academic grade. No more than 10% can count towards a student's academic grade. Research has shown that a truer picture of a student's content knowledge is reflected in the academic achievement grade when that grade is based on actual learning rather than compliance (O'Connor, 2009).

A more appropriate placement for the grading of homework is in conjunction with cooperation and work habits, completely separate from the academic grade. The academic grade is to be a clear and accurate indicator of what a student knows and is able to do based only on the requirements of the standards. The non-academic grade for homework, cooperation, and work habits is a clear and accurate indicator of a student's behavior, attitude, effort, or attendance (O'Connor, 2009).

GUIDELINES: The following guidelines apply.

A. WHAT AN ACADEMIC GRADE MEANS

In a standards-based system of teaching and learning, academic grades reflect multiple measures of performance and a variety of assignments that demonstrate progress toward and mastery of standards in a particular content area. Academic grades are aligned to what a student was actually taught. The academic grade accurately represents what a student knows and is able to do. Academic grades are not to be based on the routes which students take towards mastery, nor their behavior, attitude, effort, or attendance (O'Connor, 2009).

B. WHAT A NON-ACADEMIC GRADE MEANS

In a standards-based system of teaching and learning, non-academic grades reflect students' initiative, social behaviors, and work habits. These grades are determined through levels of performance, such as "Consistent", "Inconsistent", and "Minimal." By distinguishing between academic achievement and personal effort and behavior, a student's report card or transcript becomes a more robust document as well as a comprehensive profile (Guskey, 2009).



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C. EFFECTIVE HOMEWORK PRACTICES

It is unfair to penalize or reward students for their home academic environment. While some students do not have the opportunity to do homework while away from school thus failing to return assignments, for others, it is difficult to be sure that it was the student who actually did the work. Effort on homework alone should not equate to a higher grade, especially if the student is not able to demonstrate the same level of understanding in the classroom. Rewarding homework compliance through a higher academic grade does not reflect learning. Nor does lowering the academic grade due to missing homework assignments.

Effective homework practices focus on academic success for all students. Questions to be addressed when assigning and giving credit for homework include: What is the purpose of the homework task/assignment? How will this enhance the student's understanding and learning? What support systems are in place for students to complete this work outside of the classroom?

To reach our district goal of *All Youth Achieving* it is necessary to create a homework policy that focuses on academic success for every student. Academic grades represent learning. Non-academic grades represent a student's attitudes and behaviors toward learning. Homework is intended to support classroom learning as well as develop a sense of competence for the learner. As a non-academic part of the learning process, homework will no longer heavily influence a student's academic achievement grade.

AUTHORITY: This is a policy of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

RELATED RESOURCES: Guskey, T. R., (2009). *Practical Solutions for Serious Problems in Standards-Based Grading*. Corwin Press. Thousand Oaks, CA.

O'Connor, K., (2009). *How to Grade for Learning, K-12*. Corwin Press. Thousand Oaks, CA.

Vatterott, C., (2009). *Rethinking Homework: Best Practices that Support Diverse Needs*. ASCD. Alexandria, VA.

ASSISTANCE: For assistance or further information, please contact Caroline Piangerelli, Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and School Support at 213-241-6444.