



Elm Dale School's PBIS Parent Newsletter: Homework & Study Routines

Having clear routines is very important in our efforts to help students learn to make good choices. Routines are predictable (so students know what to expect), they give students clear cues about what to do, and they enhance adult consistency (so students get the same message from everyone). Here at Elm Dale, we are working hard to develop clear and consistent routines that will help students be successful in both their learning and with their behavior. At home, having a clear and consistent routine for homework and studying will have a big impact on your child's academic success!

Helping Your Child Develop a Homework Routine

Homework (HW) time can be a struggle in some households. It can be hard to transition from watching TV or playing outside to doing math or writing a history report. It is important to know that homework is carefully planned to help students practice what they are learning. Practice makes permanent and that is the goal of homework! Here are some tips for setting up a homework routine:

- **Dedicate a consistent daily time for HW:** When is the best time in your household for a HW routine to occur? What works for you? What is your child's preference? Some kids like to do HW first thing to get it out of the way. Others would rather play first do their HW after dinner. Talk with your child about their preference and then settle on a consistent time.
- **Dedicate a place for the routine to occur:** Decide on a consistent place (e.g., the kitchen table) where HW will be done. It is helpful for HW to occur in a place that is visible to you. Being able to supervise what is happening will help your child stick to the task.
- **Eliminate distractions:** One benefit of having a consistent HW time is that it makes it easier to plan for eliminating distractions. All children can work on their HW at one time while parents provide assistance and encouragement.. Turning off the TV, radio, and putting cell phones away are really important to quality HW time.
- **Have a clutter free workspace:** Clearing off the table eliminates distractions and makes work easier to manage.
- **Pre-plan breaks:** When work is tough (or not a student's favorite subject), attempts to avoid work may come in the forms of "I'm tired", "I have to go to the bathroom", or "I'm hungry". Plan ahead: have your child go to the bathroom before they start, have some snacks on the table, and build in a 'half-way' break. These simple steps will help your child stick to the routine.
- **Be involved:** The best way to keep a HW routine productive is to be present. Checking in, offering help, and sometimes sitting with your child will make a big difference in their attentiveness to work.

Work is Hard! Provide Lots of Encouragement

Let's face it—work is hard! Providing praise, encouragement, cheerleading, and even incentives really help students to 'stick with' doing their homework. Throughout the routine, provide your child with some pick me ups like 'Way to go!', 'I'm so proud of you', or 'You're going to do well on that test!'. As corny as it may sound—these words of encouragement will resonate with your child and give them the boost they need. Some also parents find it helpful to set a HW goal with a special treat at the end (i.e., "After HW we can have dessert or watch a movie!"). www.njpbs.org p.1

Avoiding (or Getting Out of) the Homework Battle:

Setting up a consistent homework routine and providing lots of help, praise and encouragement will go a long way in avoiding the “Homework Battle”. But from time to time you might observe your child putting up some resistance to or having a hard time sticking with completing homework. Oftentimes, distractibility, resistance and reluctance to do work may be signs that your child is having a hard time with the assignment. Here are some strategies to help get them back on track:

- **Ask your child to explain the assignment.** This will give you an idea if they understand the directions. If they cannot explain the assignment, review the directions (or tasks to do) and then stay with them as they do the first problem or step.
- **Offer help.** One of the best ways to support doing HW is to help them get started. Have them show you how to do the first problem. If your child is not sure how to start, try **modeling the first one**, and then have them do the next one with you. Some subjects like math and science rely heavily on skills learned in the beginning of year. Staying current in what your child is learning right from the start will make it easier for you to help later in the year. Older siblings probably had to do a similar assignment, so you may want to ask them to help out as well.
- **Offer a short break** if your child starts to look frustrated. Suggest they take a stretch or just sit back for a moment. Avoid long breaks and breaks with highly motivating activities. Watching TV or playing a computer game may make it difficult to transition back to the HW routine after the break.
- **Stick with the routine.** The more consistent you are with following the routine, the more likely it will be that your child will develop the habit of following it on their own in the future. Anticipate and plan ahead for variations in your family’s schedule to ensure that the HW routine is factored into scheduling.
- **Ask your child’s teacher for help.** Contact your child’s teacher to determine if extra help is available or if they can explain to you the details of how to complete an assignment. If your child needed a lot of help to complete an assignment, send a note or call the teacher to make them aware that your child may need extra help with that topic.
- **Plan ahead to avoid the cram.** In order to avoid your child’s cramming at the last minute to study for a test or to complete a project, help your child anticipate upcoming due dates. Many students avoid studying or big projects because they do not know where to begin. The best support a parent can give is to help the child break the assignment into smaller tasks. On a weekly basis, review what ‘big’ projects (or tests) are coming up. Have your child tell you what is due, or look at their assignment notebook with them. Once you have a list of projects and due dates, go through them one by one and talk with your child about his or her plan to complete the assignments.
For example:
 - *“I see that your Science test is next Monday. What chapters is the test going to cover? What chapter will you study tonight? How about tomorrow night?”*
 - *“Your book report is due next Wednesday. What do you need to do to complete the report? [outline, first draft, second draft, final] Let’s work backwards; if the report is due on Wednesday, when should you have your final draft completed? How about your second draft? Your first draft? Your outline?”*

