



Principals' Training Center
PTCnet Survey

Topic Homework policies in international schools Survey

Query How does separating homework from grading affect learning and reporting

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Query Submitted and collated by Tony Mobbs, Curriculum Coordinator, International School of Prague

Total number of responses 12

Individual responses

We are looking to totally remove homework from any kind of grading system but have some teachers who are concerned that students may not do homework if they know that it doesn't count as part of their main grade. It is the Upper school where this is an issue. We want the reporting to parents to show the students growth in learning dispositions reported separately. We do have an idea of a way forward but I was curious to see how different schools have tackled this, especially with parents

Schools	Policy
AISJ South Africa	In our middle school, the teachers report on 'dispositions' including homework habits separately in a "approaches to Learning" rubric
The American School of Doha Middle School	We worked on this issue this past year in our middle school. This is what we did: 1. organized a committee to examine learning dispositions that we want to have in place. 2. present list (of 5) to faculty for approval. These five dispositions included descriptions and rubrics to refer to. We also had a 4 point assessment scale (for example, 3-student consistently exhibits this habit/value without being asked or reminded.) 3. Began an awareness campaign, which involved presenting the list of dispositions to our students and parent community (multiple venues: PTA meetings, newsletters, email communications, open house, etc.). 4. Putting it into practice (we use Powerschool, so we include our dispositions as comments for the quarters, and updated them regularly). 5. Introduced discussions about homework with faculty:





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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Asked that teachers do not grade homework – consider it formative.○ Came up with a procedure to deal with students who 'don't do their homework'. We struggled with our earlier attempts on how to deal with incomplete homework. It was argued that because it did not impact their grade, students/parents felt no desire to change the behavior. Although it was reported separately as a learning disposition, teachers saw little change in this student behavior when reporting about it in their Powerschool grade books. We had students who did not intrinsically value doing their homework, and were not motivated to complete it for that feeling of mastery (what would Daniel Pink say?). We also had teachers who felt that an email home regarding late work should be sufficient notification. However, this proved not to be the case. In many cases where homework was incomplete after an email was sent home, parents did talk to their child about it, but were told either that it was already handed in, they didn't know what the teacher was asking for, or that they would do it the next day (but still forgot). This led to a change for us, where if a homework assignment was late, and an email was sent home, the next step was a follow-up conversation (phone home). If after this homework was still an issue, we asked families to come in to meet with teachers to brainstorm a plan for getting work in on time. This did not solve our problems however, as I discovered that many teachers do not like to call home if they can avoid it, but it did improve. Our consequence for not doing homework, is to do the homework. <p>There were issues too with projects and pieces of writing being late where a grade was being assigned. If this occurred too close to the end of a grading period, we assigned an 'incomplete' for this grading period, and may also have included a message that said we had insufficient data to render an assessment as to whether or not their son/daughter has met the standard. This allowed us to be able to go in later and change the grade when the work was submitted. Again, this was not for homework, but large multi-class assignments.</p> <p>Here's the good news: Earlier this year I began mapping out student achievement. I looked at</p>
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	<p>students' MAP (measures of academic progress) scores during admission, again in the fall and winter, their semester 1 grades, and their learning dispositions as recorded during that first semester. What I found was that when a student who scored well on MAPs but didn't perform as well during the semester, there was almost always at least one poor work habit. In cases where a student who scored poorly on MAPs during admission, but then does well in the semester, he/she almost always has top learning disposition scores. What's more is that his/her next MAP scores actually improve.</p>
International School of Kenya High School	<p>We have moved to precisely this structure this year and this is the third school I have done this in. I've never found the parents to be the problem (of course, there is always one), but parents tend to like and understand the idea that, in a standards-based system, the only factor used in determining a student's academic grade is the student's achievement against the standard. Teachers have been more resistant to this than parents and if you present the rationale and the thinking behind it (Guskey, Marzano, O'Connor) it is a pretty easy sell for parents and teachers really lose steam after a while because it is logical and certainly more defensible than assigning students 10% for "effort" or "participation."</p> <p>As far as homework goes, this is a bit trickier, because you do have to offer a structure that imposes some consequences for students who do not do their homework (and students catch on to this very quickly). Unless there is a commitment by the teachers and administrators that a student who does not do homework will still be compelled to complete it because, after all, we think it is important or we would not have assigned it, you will have students failing to do their HW en masse. To address this, we have begun to implement homework tutorials and after school sessions where a teacher can assign a student to homework detention for not completing work. This has met with limited success and, like so many things, depends largely on the diligence and seriousness of the teacher in following through on these consequences.</p> <p>Again, while the rationale behind separating out</p>



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	<p>formative and summative assessments in grade determination is sound, it is never as easy a sell as separating out academic and non-academic behaviors. That is a no-brainer, but the accountability challenge of homework can hinder efforts to put homework in its proper context. My experience has been that teachers like this in theory, but the minute they feel that students are blowing off HW because they feel like it does not count, the teachers start to cave and yearn for the old ways of giving students zeros or heavy penalties for the late or uncompleted work. Never mind how much this flies in the face of good assessment and grading practices. The default is always to go back to what is familiar rather than to figure out how what is right will work best.</p> <p>Another thing that we do is to give students second chances at summative assessments. Some teachers do more of that than others, but in a conversation with a teacher just today about it, I said, look, you are not compelled to give a re-take on the summative if the student is not demonstrating that he or she is putting in the effort. Why not consider tying the possibility of re-takes to homework completion? Then, if a student is doing all of his work for the unit, you'll let him have a re-take on the summative, and if he doesn't, then he is stuck with his initial summative grade.</p> <p>I'm not sure how helpful this is and at 8:30 at night I am sure that this is rambling, but I guess my message would be that the theory, research, and education rationale behind the two approaches you are considering is very sound and, properly executed, is not only great for kids (and teachers), but it will have the strong support of parents. I've done several regional workshops on this now and have had countless meetings with parents and teachers in many different contexts. I am convinced that what you are considering is the right way forward for assessment and reporting in education, but it takes some serious laying of groundwork.</p>
<p>American International School of Bucharest</p>	<p>One of the best things we ever did was to adopt an assessment policy that separated academic grades from dispositions grades.</p> <p>One of the key issues, of course, is to define homework which we only did this year when we</p>



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	<p>formed a homework policy. I assume that you aren't counting research essays or take-home creative writing assignments which will be assessed as "homework" even though they are done at home. I assume you mean things like routine practice exercises which are not intended to be assessed.</p> <p>Since we are an MYP and DP school, we simply decided that we would employ only the IB criteria to determine a 1--7 achievement grade--no homework completion, class participation, no deductions for lateness (though teachers may refuse to accept late work), etc. We report the MYP criteria grades directly and openly on the report card. We report on dispositions as a separate (1--4) grade and provide a rubric of which homework completion is one of the criteria.</p>
<p>Atlanta International School</p>	<p>Here at AIS we too are embarking on this conversation as we are headed towards the goal of having every grade composed solely of criterion based assessment. For us I think the core of this conversation will be around two points:</p> <p>These will likely drive the should we or shouldn't we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Is it possible to achieve the goal of the assignment in class time alone with the resources at the student's disposal during the school day (to include time). · A balance of formative and summative assignments negates the oversimplified idea of does it count or not. It may not count now but may give a picture of the student's progress to develop their learning in pursuit of summative assessment later. If it doesn't it is busy work period and should probably not be occurring.
<p>Zurich International School</p>	<p>We have spent a lot of time over the past 3 years working towards a more consistent, clear and accurate system for assessment and reporting. A key shift has been separating academic achievement and learning dispositions (therefore 'effort' etc no longer used in grade calculations), plus assessing and reporting against criteria rather than a simple %. Use of academic rubrics has increased dramatically, originally in MS and now also in US.</p> <p>Last year the MS used a separate 'behavioral'</p>



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	<p>rubric for dispositions, which was well received by parents (and students) who appreciated the extra clarity this gave them. This was shown and discussed at the initial parent teacher conferences at the start of the year, and then proved to be very helpful in framing discussions at later conferences. This rubric has also been used in the US this year (attached). Based on feedback from both divisions we are looking to 'tweak' the wording of this a little for next year.</p> <p>I've attached our assessment overview..... the 'guidelines' section speaks to 'late policy'. Not completing work is not an option (a zero cannot be given for this).</p> <p>Re grading homework.... we have moved away from this and looked to change the mindset of kids and faculty that everything must be graded (still a work in progress for some!!). This has led to even more important discussions on the appropriateness of homework for different age groups, what homework should and shouldn't be ie something that is relevant and supports the learning process rather than 'busy work' given just for the sake of it.</p>
<p>Thai-Chinese (American) International School</p>	<p>We are 40% Taiwanese, 40% Thai and 20% western students. Taiwanese parents often extend their child's day by 2-4 hours after they leave us with English Language Acquisition courses (off campus) PLUS the homework (graded) and many of our parents expect 1-2 hours of home work on top of these classes.</p>
<p>American School of Doha</p>	<p>The teachers are right. The saying: "What gets measured gets done." comes to mind. If we want to prepare our students for their future, and if homework is an important learning and organizational skill that students will be expected to do in the future, then of course it should be assessed – graded. To assign and assess how well they learn to organize their time and complete the homework assignment is a vital skill to develop for future learning and for work. It's an important grade, but it does take time away from the computer games in both middle and upper schools</p>
<p>Escola Americana de Campinas</p>	<p>We have an assessment committee composed of admin team, teachers, students and parents that is discussing this topic this school year. We will probably not grade homework nest year and will</p>



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	<p>adopt a minimum and maximum percentage of formative and summative assessments. We have not defined the percentage, nor the minimum number of summative assessments yet but it looks like it will be: formative 15% and summative 85%. Homework completion would not be graded but it will be reported to parents.</p>
<p>Anglo-American School of Sofia</p>	<p>I've had the conversation with several teachers as well and the question is "What is homework?". For example, I teach science and I will tell students "Your homework is to finish your lab report by Friday." A lab report is not the same as "vocabulary definition assignment " or review questions. I think classifying assignments similar to MYP works well. Although AAS is not an MYP school, I have taught MYP in the past. Assignment that did not meet the MYP criteria-did not go into the overall score.</p>
<p>American School of Warsaw US</p>	<p>We are much the same as you here at ASW with regards to HW and we are looking to revisit our practice and purpose of HW. Our school will be looking to retool it's report card reporting for all 3 divisions in the next two years</p>
<p>Riffa Views International School Bahrain</p>	<p>We have separated our grading into to equally important documents. The first is the academic report card. This measures student achievement based on our academic standards. The second is the Learner Profile. This measures student engagement, responsibility and skill. It is behavioral vs the academic which is more achievement. By separating the two sides of assessment, it allows us to give credit for those students who may not have academic strength but are really hard workers, prepared for class and engage in all activities. It also allows us to more accurately report on those students who may have good skills but do not do homework, poor behavior or attitude and need to work on being more responsible. We based this on the grading and assessing work of Ken O'Connor. This way, we do not have to link one grade to two different types of achievement. I am attaching a copy of our middle school learner profile. We also do this for our ES.</p>