

Action Civics Commission (ACC)

Preliminary New Homework Policy

Rationale:

The Action Civics Commission (ACC) was formed to raise student voice in our school, Framingham High School (FHS). The topic chosen for the first year of the ACC by Dr. Tremblay was homework. Our goal was to review the current homework policy that is in place and to make improvements that are reasonable and logical for all parties involved.

Over the course of our eight meetings, we have been researching many sources in order to support a new homework policy. We gathered data for this policy in several ways: analyzing the past "*The Metrowest Health Survey*," reviewing policies in place at other high schools, interviewing current teachers, students, and departments at FHS. During student and teacher interviews, we found that most faculty, staff, or students were not aware of the current homework policy. Students reported feeling overwhelmed and stressed by homework and it impacting their sleep, family time, extracurriculars, and mental health. The Metrowest Health survey results from 2016 showed high levels of student stress, and, most notably, 3 out of every 5 of students reported feeling worried and/or stressed about being able to finish school work and studying enough.

As a committee, we discussed both the benefits and drawbacks of homework with staff and students. The benefits include, but are not limited to: reinforcement of what was learned in class, keeping students' memories refreshed during long spans of time between classes, increasing student engagement in their schoolwork, and positively impacting students' grades. Drawbacks include, but are not limited to: hindrance of students ability to be involved in afterschool programs, limiting time with family and friends, and increasing stress which could lead to mental health issues. We researched other homework policies at neighboring high schools and found their policies to limit homework more than our current policy at FHS. For example, Natick's policy reads "limit assigning homework over school vacations." Based on this information, we as a committee wrote a new homework policy that we would like the Framingham School Committee to consider.

Homework (HW) Policy:

- The amount of homework assigned on a weekend should not exceed that of a weeknight.
- With the exception of AP level courses, the amount of homework that is assigned over December, February, and April breaks should not exceed that of a weeknight.
- Homework cannot be assigned during MCAS testing for those testing.
- Increased consideration and exemptions should be given for religious holidays and observances.
- Students can ask for an extension on an assignment with appropriate reasoning. Giving an extension is up to the teacher's discretion.
- Attention should be paid to the expected time commitment for homework assignments. (For example, if a student has 30 minutes of homework for each class per night, and 6 classes, they will be spending around 3 hours on homework per night.)

Responsibilities:

Teachers/Administrators:

- Have administration review HW policy with current teachers and new hires.
- Have teachers or administrators review HW policy with students.
- Plan the homework assignments out for students to avoid overload and make assignment dates accessible.
- Assign homework that is meaningful and useful to students' understanding of the subject matter.
- Continuously remind and encourage students to work on long term assignments, so that they are not completed at the last minute.
- Encourage students to record their homework assignments and due dates.
- Comment upon, grade, or acknowledge in some way each assignment.
- State student responsibilities relating to homework time commitments and instructions for accessing missed work in course expectations/syllabus.

Students:

- Complete the homework that the teacher assigns by the required deadline.
- Do not copy the homework of others.
- Communicate with the teacher directly or through email if there is an issue regarding the completion of homework.

- The student is responsible for remembering, recording, and planning adequate time for their homework.
- Gather materials necessary for the completion of the assignment.
- Ask for clarification or help if an assignment is not understood.
- Plan adequate time for long term assignments.
- Take accountability for work missed when absent from class.