

Date of Hearing: April 24, 2024

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
Al Muratsuchi, Chair
AB 2999 (Schiavo) – As Amended March 21, 2024

SUBJECT: Student instruction: homework policy

SUMMARY: Requires each local educational agency (LEA) to develop, adopt, and update at least once every five years, a homework policy to create guidelines for clearer practices on assigning homework in transitional kindergarten (TK) through 12th grade. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) Requires, on or before August 1, 2026, each LEA to develop, adopt, and update at least once every five years, a homework policy to create guidelines for clearer practices on assigning homework in TK through 12th grade.
- 2) Requires the governing boards of LEAs, in developing the homework policy, to:
 - a) Consider recent research on homework’s impact on each of the following:
 - i) Student mental health;
 - ii) Student physical health;
 - iii) Equity in education; and
 - iv) Appropriate uses of homework at each grade level that allow for experimentation or preparation, along with being beneficial to students, and that enhance the educational program.
 - b) Consider all of the following:
 - i) The meaningful input with shared leadership of teachers, educators, administrators, parents, school counselors and social workers, and students;
 - ii) The reasonable amount of time spent on homework per student that should not be exceeded;
 - iii) The lack of universal access to the internet, computers, and learning tools;
 - iv) Language barriers;
 - v) Students with learning disabilities;
 - vi) The significant investment of staff time on homework;
 - vii) Using homework strategically when it is most impactful;

- viii) Whether homework should be assigned or required in transitional kindergarten, kindergarten, or in any elementary school grade, inclusive, with appropriate exceptions;
 - ix) Whether homework should be optional and not graded; and
 - x) Appropriate accommodations, if needed, to address the mental health impacts of homework.
- 3) Requires the homework policy to be publicly discussed, with public comment, and considered for adoption at a minimum of two separate regularly scheduled public meetings.
 - 4) Requires LEAs to annually distribute the adopted homework policy at the beginning of the school year to all certificated staff and administrators, to all students and parents or legal guardians as part of the annual parent notification or upon enrollment, and by publication on the LEA's website and on the websites of the individual schools.
 - 5) Encourages each private school to adopt a homework policy with guidelines consistent with this measure.
 - 6) Defines LEA, for purposes of the measure, to mean a school district, county office of education (COE), or charter school.
 - 7) Makes findings and declarations about the harms of homework.

EXISTING LAW:

- 1) Requires each governing board of a school district to develop jointly with parents and guardians. and to adopt, a policy that outlines the manner in which parents or guardians of pupils, school staff, and pupils may share the responsibility for continuing the intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development and well-being of pupils at each schoolsite. Requires that this policy include the manner in which the parents and guardians of pupils may support the learning environment of their children, including ensuring that homework is completed and turned in on a timely basis. (Education Code (EC) 51101)
- 2) Requires, upon the request of a parent, a legal guardian, or other person holding the right to make educational decisions for the pupil, or the affected pupil, a teacher to provide to a student who has been suspended from school for two or more schooldays the homework that the pupil would otherwise have been assigned. (EC 48913.5)
- 3) Establishes the After School Education and Safety Program to serve pupils in kindergarten through grade 9, and requires programs to include educational and literacy elements in which tutoring or homework assistance is provided. (EC 8482.3)

FISCAL EFFECT: This bill has been keyed as a possible state-mandated local program by the Office of Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

Need for the bill. The author states, “Students have chosen ‘overall workload and homework’ as a top stressor. With the mental health crisis in schools only getting bigger, we need to do something to help give out pupils some breathing room. Studies suggests that all students need play time, down time, and family time in order to have a healthy mind and a healthy body. However, current homework practices are inconsistent, wide ranging, and can lead to hours of homework per night for already strained student schedules. One in five teens cannot regularly complete their homework due to a lack of internet access. The problem is even greater in lower income areas. Some students who act as caregivers, who work to help with family finances, or who experience housing insecurity face unique challenges in completing homework. Giving students less homework or not grading it can give pupils that support and opportunity to unwind after school. AB 2999 seeks to begin the conversation at the local level to develop homework policies based on what research is saying is equitable and beneficial to the academic success of students.”

What does research say about homework? A 2020 literature review and other publications by Challenge Success, a nonprofit organization affiliated with the Stanford University Graduate School of Education, found:

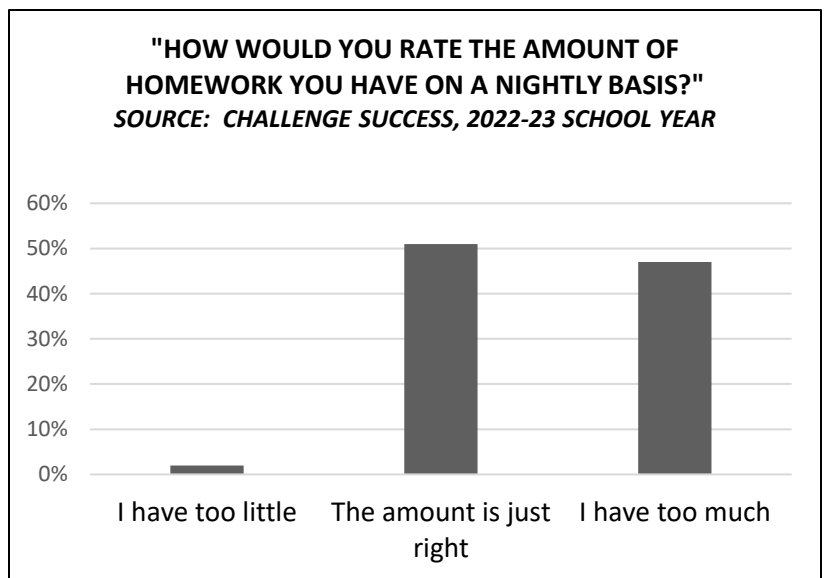
- The impact of the quantity of homework on achievement varies by grade span. “The relationship between time spent on homework and academic achievement is nuanced and complex. In elementary school, there is very little, if any, evidence that time spent on homework in most subject areas has a positive effect on achievement. (A notable exception is reading for pleasure, which is associated with achievement. One 2013 study found that the influence of reading for pleasure is powerful for children's cognitive development, especially in terms of vocabulary (Sullivan & Brown, 2013)). In middle and high school, there is a slight positive relationship between time spent on homework and grades and test scores in the recent research. However, those benefits are complicated by various factors and limitations, including whether the homework was interesting to the students, how much effort they put into it, and the level of difficulty and purpose of the assignment. Furthermore, several studies found diminishing returns on the value of homework once a student exceeds a certain amount of time spent on it (Cooper, 1989, 2007).”
- Quality is more important than quantity. “When students find homework interesting, relevant, and valuable, they are more likely to engage in and complete it. Indeed, general studies on student engagement (not necessarily looking at homework) confirm that higher rates of engagement often correlate with higher achievement (Fredericks, Blumenfeld & Paris, 2004; Marks, 2000).”
- Students report a lack of effective homework. “It is worth noting that students often find their homework to be anything but interesting and valuable. On our own Challenge Success survey, we ask students to judge the homework they are assigned (e.g. ‘In how many of your classes does the assigned homework help you learn the material?’ ‘How many of your classes assign meaningless homework (busywork)?’). Among the 50,000 high school students that completed the survey since 2018, only 33% say that most or all of their classes assign homework they deem to contribute to their learning.”
- Greater quantities of homework is associated with more student stress and less sleep. “When asked about major sources of stress, 67% of the 50,000 high school students that

completed the Challenge Success Student Survey cited their homework load. Among those students doing 3 hours or more of homework, that percentage spiked to 80%. Middle school and high school students who self-reported higher workloads in school tended to also report more symptoms of exhaustion and lower rates of sleep (Galloway, Conner, & Pope, 2013; Galloway & Pope, 2007; Conner, Pope, & Galloway, 2009). Middle school students who averaged 3 or more hours of nightly weekday homework reported sleeping 60 fewer minutes each night than their peers. For high school students, those averaging more than 3 hours of homework lost an extra 30 minutes of sleep. Our studies, however, did not investigate whether or not a causal relationship existed between hours spent on homework and student health; that is, did doing more homework lead to higher rates of exhaustion and sleep deprivation or were there other factors at play?"

- The type of homework assigned is correlated with more or less student stress. “It’s not just the amount of homework that may provoke student stress; it’s also the type of homework assigned. When students perceive homework to be tedious or boring, for example, or they find it too advanced or confusing, they are likely to be more stressed and less engaged, regardless of how long the assignment takes. Conversely, as some studies suggest, when students find their work purposeful, meaningful, or interesting, they may derive more benefits from completing it.”

How much homework do California students do? Survey data from Challenge Success, based on responses from 15,000 high school students in California, found:

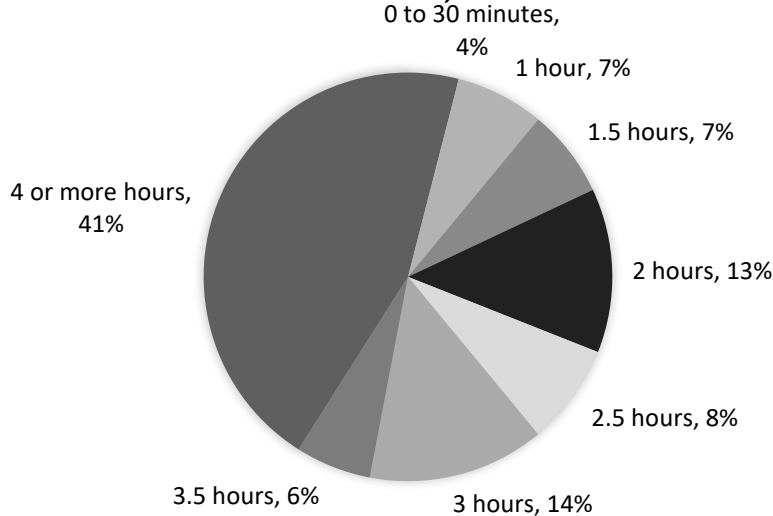
- More than half of the students reported that the longest time they had spent on homework in the past week was 3 or more hours.
- Students were roughly split between reporting that they had the right amount of homework (51%) and too much homework (47%).



- Nearly all students reported doing something else while doing homework, with over half reporting that they were either texting (25%) or using social media (27%).
- 45% of students reported that overall workload and homework is a major source of stress in their lives.
- Nearly two-thirds of students (64%) said that in some or many of their classes the assigned homework helped them learn the material. A little over half (52%) reported that some or many of their classes assigned busywork for homework.

"IN THE PAST WEEK, WHAT WAS THE LONGEST AMOUNT OF TIME YOU SPENT ON SCHOOL-ASSIGNED HOMEWORK IN A SINGLE DAY/NIGHT?"

SOURCE: CHALLENGE SUCCESS, 2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR



California PTA statement on homework. In 2014, the California State PTA passed a resolution titled “Homework: Quality Over Quantity,” which states that “when appropriately utilized, homework has the potential to be a valuable aid to help students maximize their learning

experience.” The policy notes:

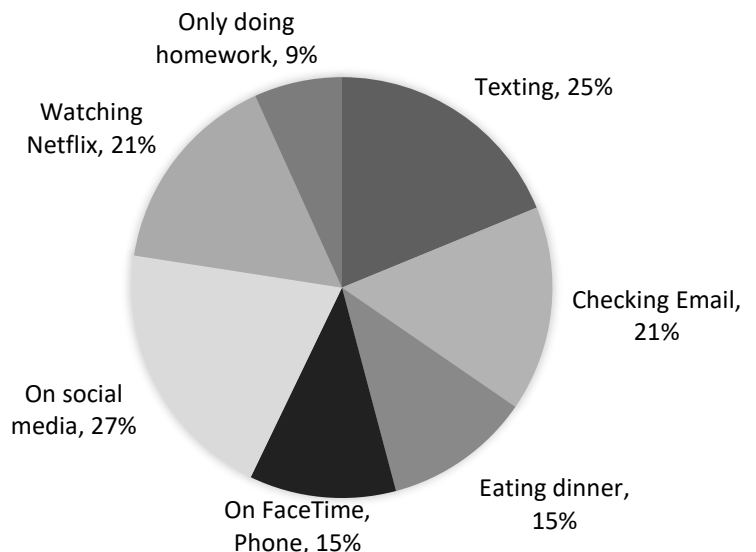
Homework has an educational value when the assignments are reasonable, relevant and reinforcing. A body of research indicates that setting time limits based on grade and ability, and encouraging open communication between teachers, parents and students is beneficial to learning outcomes. The quantity of homework assigned should align with consideration for a healthy, balanced life for students. While homework with a clear purpose has been shown to improve achievement, such work must be meaningful and should require minimal parental involvement. Low-income families often lack the resources to adequately support learning at home, and therefore their children are set up for potential failure in regard to homework completion, comprehension and grades.

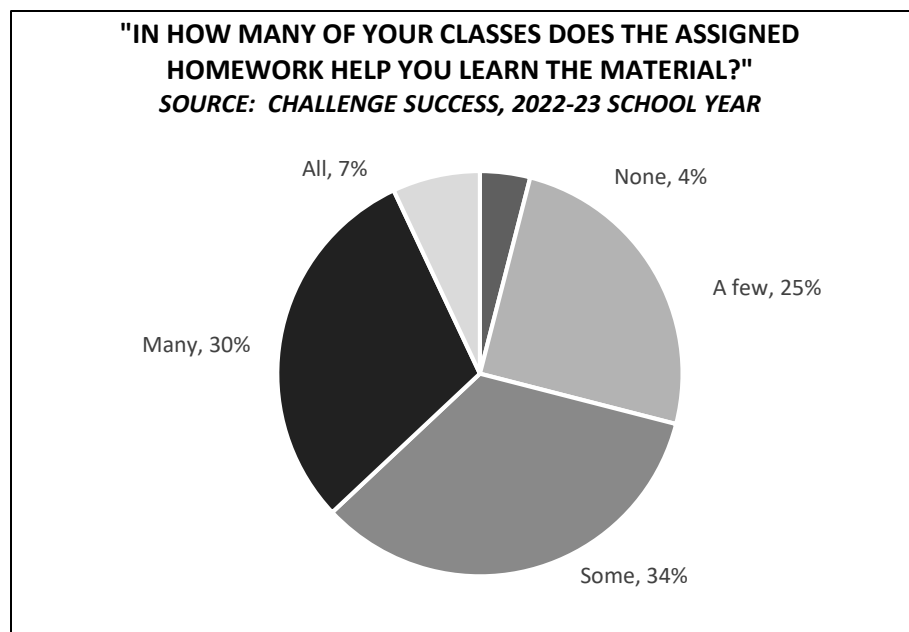
The PTA endorses the following guidelines on homework time by grade:

- For children in grades K-2, homework is more effective when it does not exceed 20 minutes each school day;
- Older children, in grades 3-6, can handle 30-60 minutes a day;
- For kids in middle and high school, 2 hours of homework may be assigned;
- However, homework time and strategies can vary from teacher to teacher and school to school.

"WHAT ELSE ARE YOU DOING WHEN YOU ARE DOING HOMEWORK?"

SOURCE: CHALLENGE SUCCESS, 2022-23 SCHOOL YEAR





The “homework gap.”

Lack of access to technology to complete homework is sometimes known as the “homework gap.” A 2018 analysis of United States Census Bureau data by the Pew Research Center found that 17% of teens say they are often or sometimes unable to complete homework assignments because they do not have reliable access to a

computer or internet connection. 25% of black teens say they are at least sometimes unable to complete their homework due to a lack of digital access, including 13% who say this happens to them often. 4% of white teens and 6% of Hispanic teens say this often happens to them.

Examples of local homework policies. This bill requires each LEA to develop a homework policy that meets specified requirements. Some LEAs have adopted their own homework policies. These range from simple guidelines on the number of minutes which may be assigned per day, to comprehensive policies addressing many aspects of homework practices. The California School Boards Association has a sample board policy that addresses topics including the purpose of homework, use of technology, makeup work, and teachers’ communication of homework responsibilities.

One comprehensive policy, adopted by the Davis Joint Unified School District (DJUSD) in 2010 and revised in 2013, took approximately 2 years to develop and involved significant stakeholder and community input. The policy starts with a statement of “philosophy,” which emphasizes that “the purpose of homework shall be to promote high quality student learning and achievement, and to nurture a desire for students to extend their learning.”

The DJUSD policy identifies four types of homework:

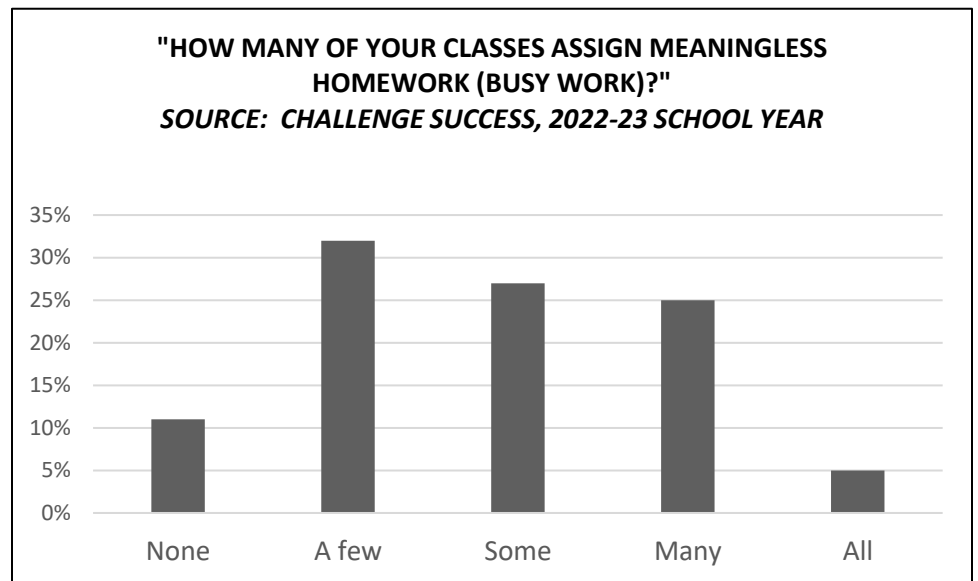
- Practice: Work that reviews and reinforces skills and concepts taught in class;
- Completion: Work assigned during the school day not completed in class;
- Preparation: Work that prepares students for upcoming lessons or units; and
- Extension: Work that explores and refines learning in new contexts or integrates and expands on classroom learning.

The policy addresses numerous issues specific to both educational placements and programs, and individual students. It addresses:

- Individual Education Programs (IEPs);
- Advanced Placement (AP), Honors courses, and accelerated pathways;

- Music practice;
- Continuation schools;
- Independent study programs;
- Technology access;
- Makeup work and credit for excused absences and suspensions;
- Loss of recess for non-completion of homework; and
- Long term assignments.

The policy sets specific maximum time limits per grade and day of the week, and specifies the kind of homework that may be assigned. It permits homework to be assigned four nights per week, Monday through Thursday, and prohibits weekend and holiday homework from being assigned with the expectation that it be completed during those times. For each grade and grade span it sets the following limits:



- Kindergarten through Second Grade: Twenty minutes per day may be assigned to accommodate both the adopted mathematics curriculum as well as daily reading.
- Third Grade: Thirty minutes per day may be assigned.
- Fourth Grade: Forty minutes per day may be assigned. Music practice may also be assigned up to 80 additional minutes per week.
- Fifth Grade: Forty-five minutes per day may be assigned. This includes social studies and science homework. Music practice may also be assigned up to 80 additional minutes per week.
- Sixth Grade: Fifty-five minutes per day may be assigned. This includes social studies and science homework. Music practice may also be assigned 80 additional minutes per week.
- Seventh and Eighth Grade: English and mathematics classes may each assign twenty minutes per day. Other academic classes, including foreign language and science, may assign fifteen minutes per day. For example, a schedule with English, mathematics, and three other academic classes, this would result in no more than 85 minutes of homework per day. Music practice may be assigned 80 additional minutes per week.
- Ninth through Twelfth Grade: English and mathematics classes may each assign thirty minutes per day. Other academic classes, including foreign language, music or science, that do not carry the designation Honors or AP may assign twenty minutes per day. For a schedule with English, mathematics, and three other academic classes, this would result in two hours of homework per day. High school Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes may require more.

The policy addresses the roles and responsibilities of students, parents, teacher, and administrators, and notes that collaboration time may be used to coordinate assignments among teachers. The policy requires, on an annual basis, the Superintendent to initiate an evaluation of the policy and its regulations and provide recommendations for revision as needed.

Homework policies a require high degree of coordination, especially at secondary schools. In order to stay within the maximum time permitted for homework at different grade levels, especially when students are receiving homework from multiple teachers, requires significant coordination. The DJUSD policy sets daily limits on homework and also addresses teacher collaboration, stating that “monthly site collaboration time as well as other staff meeting times may be used to create accessible common school-wide posted calendars, coordinate assignments to minimize overlapping tests and projects, and for discussion of best practices related to homework assignments.”

Recommended Committee amendments. Staff recommends that this bill be amended as follows:

- 1) Revise the findings and declarations.
- 2) Change the date by which LEAs would be required to adopt a homework policy to the start of the 2027-28 school year.
- 3) State that the goal of the policies is to promote evidence-based homework practices to support pupil learning and well-being, and to ensure clarity and consistency in the assigning of homework. Require that the development of these policies involve significant stakeholder participation in order to ensure that the policies are responsive to the unique needs and desires of pupils, parents, and educators in each community.
- 4) Require LEAs to convene stakeholders, as specified, to examine and reflect on current homework practices, and solicit feedback. State that LEAs may pilot a policy before adopting a final policy.
- 5) Revise the topics which LEAs would be required to consider when developing a homework policy, including:
 - Research on effective homework practices, as specified.
 - Elements of a homework policy which ensure the use of effective homework practices, as specified.
 - Equity in homework practices, as specified.
 - Different types of homework, as specified.
 - Different educational placements and programs in which pupils are enrolled, as specified.
 - Individual pupils’ needs, as specified.

- Developmental appropriateness of homework assigned, as specified.
 - Grading practices for homework, including whether homework should be optional and whether it should be graded, and opportunities to complete makeup work for missed assignments
 - The need for professional development and collaboration time for teachers to coordinate and implement effective homework practices.
 - The roles and responsibilities of all pupils, parents, teacher, and administrators in implementing the homework policy.
- 6) Delete the statement encouraging private schools to adopt homework policies consistent with this measure.
- 7) Requires the CDE, by January 1, 2026, to develop and post on its website guidelines for LEAs to use in developing a local homework policy, and require that these guidelines align to the process and content described in this bill.

Related legislation. SB 411 (Escutia) of the 1999-2000 Session would have established the Homework Hotline and Communication Technology Grant Pilot Program to improve home-to-school communication and student performance through a grant program to establish homework hotlines in schools with a high percentage of low-performing pupils. This bill was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 982 (Holden), Chapter 779, Statutes of 2019, requires a teacher, upon the request of a parent or pupil, to provide homework that would otherwise have been assigned, to a pupil who has been suspended for two or more schooldays.

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file

Opposition

None on file

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