

Saklan Valley School Homework Policy

Adopted by the Faculty and Administration, Spring, 2007

Saklan Valley School believes that homework offers positive value for students beginning in Kindergarten and continuing through 8th grade, and we are committed to providing students homework in a way that is thoughtful, purposeful, and developmentally appropriate.

Foundation

We, the Saklan faculty and administration, have had lengthy conversations about homework and carefully reviewed our homework practice. We have surveyed other schools, middle school parents, middle school students, recent Saklan alumni, and alumni parents; we are pleased to find that our alumni report feeling well prepared for high school, and independent, academic high schools report our graduates to be especially well prepared. We base our homework policies on our insights gained from many years as educational practitioners, our surveys, and upon our review of contemporary research and best practices. (For more, see footnote, bottom of page 2).

Saklan's Homework Philosophy

We believe homework offers the following values:

- 1) Instilling in students a sense of personal responsibility and “ownership” of their own education, and developing their autonomy and independent problem-solving.
- 2) Developing students' organizational skills, time management, and research skills.
- 3) Encouraging students to extend their learning beyond the classroom environment.
- 4) Facilitating conversations among children and parents about the skills and content that children understand of their child's specific learning characteristics.
- 5) Facilitating greater student learning and mastery of academic material, with examples ranging from first grade math to eighth grade writing skills development.
- 6) Generating among our students better confidence in their skills and comprehension during school-day lessons.
- 7) Preparing students better for success in high school.

Homework Design

Homework is intended to instill in students confidence, develop mastery of material, strengthen in a perfunctory manner. Homework is never employed as a punishment or in a punitive manner. It is not intended to introduce new concepts to students, nor to require of them to learn new skills; it is rather intended to reinforce skills being learned in class, and to have students apply those skills in different ways and to tackle challenging problems.

Homework Amount

Saklan Homework Amount Policy. Saklan will assign and ask of students to complete ten to fifteen minutes of homework, per night, per grade*; First Graders will be assigned to ten to fifteen minutes per night; 8th graders 80 to 120 minutes per night. The 10-15 minute rule is intended to be inclusive of all homework assignments, including long term assignments. In upper grades, Saklan teachers collaborate in their planning for homework assignments to ensure that the sum-total of homework assigned is within our guidelines.

This rule is intended to be a weeknight norm for all homework assigned, with the exception of required reading (below). Although there will be occasions where less homework is assigned,

those occasions will be the exception and not the norm, and will be “intentional”--for a particular reason. Note that grades K-2 use weekly homework packets, and so the rule is employed as an average for each night of assigned homework.

**The National Education Association (NEA) and the national parent Teacher Association (PTA) have jointly developed a recommended homework policy known as the “ten minute rule:” ten minutes of homework, per night, per grade level. In other words, a first grader would have assigned ten minutes of homework a night, an eighth grader 80 minutes. The Saklan faculty has reviewed and considered this ten minute rule and also our own experiences and practices in preparing our policy, and in accordance with our homework philosophy (above) and our school's mission to provide rigorous intellectual development, have adjusted this slightly upward.*

Reading: many grade levels also ask students to read, read aloud, or be read to 15-30 minutes a night; that is in addition to, not a part of, our 10-15 minute rule assignment.

Weekends and holidays: In grades K-5, no homework is assigned over a weekend, but long term assignments may be assigned over a one or two week period which may include weekends. Grades 6-8 do usually assign a single night's homework over weekends and summer reading.

Guidelines

Occasionally individual students may be distracted in class or find it challenging to complete their class-work within the time allotted, and this work may need to be sent home for completion in addition to the regular homework; this will be a rare exception to the normal homework guidelines. parents of students who may experience this more frequently than on rare occasions will be asked to conference with teachers to plan accordingly a manageable load of homework and unfinished school-day work for their child.

Teachers also employ various vehicles to check with students and parents about the length of time it takes to students to do work at home, and use that feedback for their planning. parents should report to teachers if they find that their child is spending more time on homework than the 10-15 minute rule would dictate, with the caveat that that time be measured by fully focused on time on task. parents should be sensitive to the fact that students vary widely in the time they take to complete work, and that homework assignment is not an exact science. It is hard to implement a uniform standard for diverse students and we expect parents to approach these guidelines with this in mind.

Communication

Saklan prides itself on the quality of school-family collaboration, communication, and mutual respect. This policy is meant to clarify our approach and to foster continued communications between teachers and parents. Parents with questions or concerns about homework are asked to please direct them to the teacher, and solicit advice and counsel from the teacher.

Research Footnote

** We have placed the most emphasis on the research of Duke University's Program in Education center, and the meta-analysis they have conducted on more than 60 research studies, published in the (Spring 2006 Review of Educational Research). That report tells us that homework can improve student scores on classroom tests and that it should be*

developmentally appropriate. "All kids should be doing homework, but the amount and type should vary according to their developmental level," the report author Harris Cooper writes. "With only rare exception, the relationship between the amount of homework students do and their achievement outcomes was found to be positive and statistically significant." But the report notes, there are diminishing returns for time invested in homework, beginning at 90 minutes for middle school students. <http://www.dukenews.duke.edu/2006/03/homework.html>