Planning and Managing Effective Homework Help Sessions
Why is Homework Important?

- It is assigned by teachers to help students master basic concepts.
- It can have positive impacts on student achievement.
- It can help students develop good study habits.
- It helps students recognize that learning can occur beyond school.
- It gives parents an opportunity to see what’s going on in school.

(Johnson & McComb, 2008)
• Students who complete homework assignments have higher grades than students who do not complete homework 
  (Cooper, Robinson, & Patall, 2006)

• The importance of homework increases as students get older

  • In upper grade levels, homework is assigned to prepare for and enrich class lessons

  • In lower grade levels, homework is assigned to help develop students’ management of time and review class material

  (Cooper, Valentine, Lindsay, & Nye, 1999)
What can after school programs do to support homework?

1) Reinforce the work students do during regular school day by...

- Becoming familiar with state standards
- Having an understanding of each student’s academic progress
- Offering tutoring programs that help students with academic work
- Involving school day staff in programming
  - Meet regularly with school staff
  - Develop formal ways to communicate with teachers about homework assignments

(Diedrich, McElvain, & Kaufman, 2007; Johnson & McComb, 2008)
What can after school programs do to support homework?

2) Involve community partners in homework time by...

- Requesting volunteers, tutors, or mentors
- Obtaining homework supplies and educational materials
- Asking for incentives for students who complete homework

(Johnson & McComb, 2008)
3) Promote family involvement during homework time by...

- Encouraging parents to check homework after programming
- Providing constant communication to parents
- Helping parents to converse with teachers
- Providing opportunities for parents to supply input
- Making resources in multiple languages

(Diedrich et al., 2007)
What can after school programs do to support homework?

4) Manage and organize homework environment by...

- Developing a consistent schedule for homework help

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Amount of Homework Assigned</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 3</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 6</td>
<td>20 – 40 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 – 9</td>
<td>1 – 2 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 – 12</td>
<td>1 ½ - 2 ½ hours</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Ensuring space is adequate for learning
- Providing necessary materials needed for homework completion

(Johnson & McComb, 2008)
What can after school programs do to support homework?

5) Monitor student progress on assigned tasks by...

- Assessing content areas in which students need assistance
- Encouraging students to do their best
- Reiterating directions of assignments and showing effective methods for completing assignments
- Being actively involved in helping students learn to evaluate their own progress

(Johnson & McComb, 2008)
What can after school programs do to support homework?

6) Make homework help different than the regular school day

- Although homework help links the program to the school day, homework help doesn’t have to look like more school after school.

**EXAMPLES:**

- Allow children to work collaboratively or talk.
- Give students the opportunity to choose which homework to complete/when to complete it/where to complete it.
- Play appropriate background music.
- Create unique areas for homework to occur.
Discussion/Brainstorming

Instructions:
In groups, use the questions provided to guide a discussion regarding the topic that the presenters have provided you. Talk about strategies that you have used in your programs or have seen others do.

Afterwards, we will share ideas with the entire group.
Communication with Teachers

1. How do program staff communicate with teachers about homework and student performance?

2. Are there things that you and/or your staff do to strengthen the communication between teachers and after school program staff?

3. Do all program staff have access to student-level data (test grades, local assessment scores) on an ongoing basis?

4. What barriers are there be in communicating with teachers about homework? How can those barriers be addressed?
Ideas for Communication with Teachers

- Use multiple methods when communicating with teachers about homework (hallway conversations, email, mailboxes)

- Use a formal method of ongoing communication about homework and student performance (communication logs, student performance worksheets)

- Request extra copies of upcoming assignments

- Have program staff check in with teachers prior to programming and write down homework assignments. Then have program staff write down these assignments on the blackboard.
Encouragement to Bring and Complete Homework

1. How do program staff encourage students to bring homework to the program?
2. What do program staff do if students forget homework in their classrooms?
3. How do program staff motivate students to complete homework?
4. Are incentives be used? If so, what?
5. Are there any community organizations that could donate incentives?
Ideas for Encouragement of Homework

• Consider implementing an incentive program to encourage students to complete homework. Program staff could give points that could be used to purchase prizes, or allow students to attend a special field trip or party.

• Require homework completion before students are permitted to attend other aspects of programming.

• Only allow students to retrieve homework from classrooms a set number of times.
## Environment

1. Where does homework help occur?

2. What time is homework help offered? What days is it offered?

3. How long do students have to complete homework?

4. Is participation in homework help required or voluntary?

5. Are students split into groups? If so, how (grade level, skill level, subject, etc.)?

6. What supplies does the program have to ensure students have access to needed materials for homework completion?
Ideas for Environment

• Offer homework help in numerous areas of the school

• If only one area of the school is available, group students in different sections

• Offer homework help on most days of the week (e.g., at least four days a week)

• Offer homework help near the beginning of programming

• Require that students attend homework help before attending other aspects of programming
Lack of/Completion of Homework

**Lack of Homework**
1. What do students do if they do not have homework?
2. How do program staff check to ensure students really do not have homework?

**Completion of Homework**
3. What do students do if they finish their homework before the end of the session?
4. How do program staff check to ensure homework was accurately and completely finished?
Ideas for Lack of/Completion of Homework

• Require students who do not have homework to work on an appropriate academic alternative (reading a book, tutoring a peer, worksheets, lessons by program staff)

• Allowing students who have finished early or who didn’t have homework to move on to other aspects of programming may make some children rush through homework. Therefore, do not move to other fun aspects of programming until the homework session is completed

• Require students to have homework checked by program staff before moving on to other activities
Family Involvement

1. How do program staff involve families in homework help?

2. How do program staff communicate regularly with parents about assignments?

3. How does the program encourage parents to check completed assignments after programming?

4. What barriers are there to involving families in homework? How can those barriers be addressed?
Ideas for Family Involvement

• Remind parents of the importance of checking homework during family events, in newsletters, and as they pick up children

• Request parent volunteers during homework help on an ongoing basis

• Have a formal system for communicating with parents about homework (communication log, stamps)

• Ensure that all communication sent home is in the family’s primary language
Useful Resources

www.homeworklady.com

http://www.sedl.org/afterschool/toolkits/homework/pr_homework_environment.html