

Homework Policy

Cornerstone Learning Community

Middle Years Program

In the transition from elementary to high school, the middle school experience bridges the gap in expectations and responsibility. As such, Cornerstone's teachers assign work that is to be completed outside of the regular school day. Our goals are supporting students in learning in a variety of contexts and also continuing to build homework skills that they can carry forward as they face new challenges when they take the next step to high school and beyond.

I. Purpose and Types of Homework

There are many, varied goals for having students complete homework. Homework deepens student understanding and can build essential skills. Some of these goals include: practicing, pre-thinking, developing self-discipline, checking for understanding, transferring skills to a new context, connecting school topics to home/community, and developing independence.

In order to meet the goals of homework, teachers strive to engage students in activities that are meaningful. Examples of tasks that students might be asked to complete outside of school include pre-labs, math practice, readings, research, studying, or completion of a single step of a longer-term assignment or project.

II. Time Expectations

Students should expect, on average, no more than 15-20 minutes of homework per class session in middle school. This means that a class which meets four times per week might have one hour of homework assigned during that week (not necessarily four separate 15 minute tasks).

Middle school students enrolled in high school credit math courses (algebra 1 or geometry) should expect homework to require a bit more time. These courses require a specific set of skills to be mastered before the End of Course exam in the spring. Additionally, students who want to have competitive projects that go on to the county or state history fair should expect to need more homework time in the week or two prior to history fair competitions.

It is not unusual for students occasionally to get stuck and spend more time than expected on an assignment. When this occurs, teachers would appreciate a note or email from home about what happened and any concerns or questions. In this way, we are able to meet the needs of every student by modifying expectations or providing additional support in the classroom.

Students who miss class due to an absence are expected to complete make-up classwork and homework in a timely manner. When classwork is missed and becomes homework, then the above stated time expectations will be exceeded.

III. Communication

Homework is announced by teachers during class time. Students are expected to log this information in their planners. Students should be sure to note due dates and details about what is expected. Planners and Google Classroom are the primary tools for students to refer to regarding homework.

Middle school teachers use Google Classroom as a back-up location for information about assignments. Assignment handouts will be linked or attached to these announcements whenever possible. Teachers are mindful of the need of students and parents to have full details and due dates on the day an assignment is made during class. Please communicate with teachers via email if anything is unclear. These online tools are also places to share notes, give links to student work, and provide enrichment videos/readings about topics.

All the teachers have designated locations in their classrooms to post a brief, written reminder about assignments and due dates. These notes stay posted all day long so a student can come back to update her/his planner when necessary.

When it becomes problematic for a student to complete homework due to extra-curricular activities, illness, or special circumstances, teachers would like to know about it as soon as possible.

Parents and students are both encouraged to communicate directly with a teacher about homework issues via email. Likewise, teachers seeing patterns of homework difficulty will communicate via email and set up parent conferences as necessary.

IV. Completion/Due Dates

All homework assignments should be completed and ready to hand in before school begins, on the due date. We are glad to allow students to step into the computer lab before 8:30 if they need to print something, but do not have workspace for students to complete their homework on campus prior to school.

Work turned in after the due date but within one week will be penalized 25%. After one week beyond the due date, work will no longer be accepted for credit. Certain assignments that are prerequisites for participation in that day's classroom lesson may not be accepted late. Appropriate accommodations will be made for exceptional circumstances. Please be sure to communicate with teachers when difficulties arise.

CLC's teachers develop units based on the framework of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program and let student mastery and interest dictate dates for summative assessments like tests or projects. Teachers can give a general idea when an end of unit test or project will happen, but specific dates, out of necessity, are not announced at the beginning of the year or at each trimester. Exceptions

are National History Day competitions and End of Course Exams in high school credit courses, both of which are scheduled by outside entities.

Students are responsible for requesting make-up work the day they return from an absence. They should conference with each teacher and establish appropriate deadlines for make-up classwork and homework. Teachers can supply a form to help students organize these assignments and deadlines.

V. Enrichment and Parental Support

Each of the subject areas has a different appeal to students. For those who would like enriching activities beyond in-class lessons and outside of school assignments, teachers are more than willing to provide ideas to extend each student's learning. Please let the teachers know when a student would like more challenge or to dive deeper into a particular topic. CLC's teachers are passionate about their subject areas and will be thrilled to offer ideas for at-home exploration.

Parents can support students by setting up a homework-friendly workspace at home. This should include all the necessary supplies, sufficient lighting, proper seating and desk height, uncluttered space, and minimal distractions (*e.g.*, TV, loud music, unnecessary internet access, social media). Adolescents sometimes push away from parental involvement, but parents are encouraged to be motivators, help students make plans, and encourage students to communicate with teachers when they have difficulties. Remember that teachers also would like to hear from parents about unresolved or repeated struggles.

CLC provides a daily Study Hall during recess time after lunch. Some students choose to use this time to begin homework or confer with a teachers. CLC also provides an afterschool Homework Room each day (except Wednesday) from 3:30-4:30. Students attending Homework Room have supervision and support for assignments, as needed. The Homework Room may be a good option for students who have extracurriculars later in the evening, families who face a nightly "battle of the homework," or students taking enrichment classes via Florida Virtual School (FLVS). Regular afterschool fees apply for using the Homework Room service.

VI. Accommodations

In order to meet the needs of each learner, Student Services staff will work with families of students with 504 Plans and Individualized Education Plans. Appropriate accommodations and strategies will be shared with teachers and used to develop appropriate expectations for students. Teachers work continually with Student Services as they see students who struggle with academic activities and involve families as issues affect the school day.