

REGIONAL SCHOOL UNIT No. 67

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE AND PREPARATION

The R.S.U. No. 67 Board of Directors believes that “homework” is a natural extension of the classroom and is more appropriately referred to as “independent practice and preparation” since it provides needed independent practice and review to ensure student understanding and eventual mastery of concepts and skills already taught and may also prepare students for new learning. Independent practice and preparation is necessary for helping students fulfill their potential as lifelong learners and responsible, contributing citizens in an ever-changing global society.

The purpose of independent practice and preparation and its relation to what is being taught must be clearly understood by the student. Teachers, therefore, are expected to provide assignments with clear and appropriate purposes that supplement, complement, or reinforce concepts and skills already taught or that prepare students for lessons that will soon be taught.

The objectives of independent practice and preparation are to

- A. Emphasize the partnership between home and school in support of education;
- B. Communicate the high academic expectations that R.S.U. No. 67 has for its students;
- C. Provide students with reinforcement and supplemental learning opportunities that cannot be scheduled during the instructional day;
- D. Help students develop self-discipline, including goal setting and achievement, and organizational skills, including time management;
- E. Give students experience in working on long-term projects; and
- F. Help students develop confidence in their own abilities.

Students of all ages need time to interact with their peers and family members and to participate in various after-school, school, and community functions. For this reason, guidelines are established for the amount of time, as well as the type of independent practice and preparation expected of students in various grade spans:

- Independent practice and preparation for K-2 students should consist of practicing literacy and mathematics skills already taught at school, collecting items to bring for class sharing, and developing or extending strengths and interests. Practice activities should be purposeful, promote positive parent-child interactions, and utilize concrete materials and "real world" applications.

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Independent practice and preparation at these levels should not exceed 20 minutes per evening.

- ❑ Independent practice and preparation for students in Grades 3-5 should consist of practicing what has been learned and establishing a routine for completing assignments. Assignments should be based on clear learning goals and coordinated across content areas so that no more than 60 minutes per evening is needed to complete them.
- ❑ Independent practice and preparation for students in Grades 6-8 and 9-12 should continue to focus on practicing what has been learned and preparing for new learning (e.g., reading text that will be discussed in class the next day). Assignments should be based on clear learning goals and coordinated across content areas so that no more than 90 minutes per evening is needed in Grades 6-8 and no more than 120 minutes per evening is needed in Grades 9-12 to complete them. Students in Grades 9-12 who elect to carry more than 6 courses or who enroll in honors and/or AP courses may need to spend more than 120 minutes. Major tests and long-term projects or reports should be coordinated and scheduled in advance so that students can learn time management and effective study habits.

Independent practice and preparation should be grade-level appropriate and based on clearly identified learning needs. It should never be punitive or given as busywork. It may be completed in class if time permits, during study halls or other supervised study environments (e.g., After School Club or Learning Lab), or outside of school. Students may complete some assignments during study periods and will not need to spend as many minutes every evening working on independent practice and preparation as indicated in this policy. Some students may need more time than recommended because of an identified disability. These students' needs are addressed in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

Teachers are encouraged to coordinate independent practice and preparation assignments so that appropriate consideration is given to the overall, cumulative amount of independent practice and preparation given daily, weekly, and yearly. Work assigned over weekends and vacations should be kept to a minimum since such times provide opportunities for rest and relaxation. Parents should encourage their children to explore topics of personal interest and to read for pleasure during these times. If a student elects to postpone his/her work until weekends or vacation time, he/she is accountable for such action.

All independent practice and preparation should be checked promptly by the teacher and feedback given as soon as possible so that each student knows what was done well and what still needs to be improved. The type of feedback given (e.g., oral,

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written, audio, whole-group, individual, etc.) may vary based on the purpose of the assignment, but should be specific in terms of what students did well and what they need to continue to practice in order to achieve the learning goals.

Students must be held responsible for their assigned independent practice and preparation and should expect consequences for work not completed, unless there are extenuating circumstances. Students are responsible for obtaining and completing assignments missed because of an absence.

Adopted: Prior to 1987

Revised: July 11, 2007