



THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS

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Dear ARPS Community:

Thank you for the high participation rate in the recent homework survey. Both the quantitative and qualitative responses were helpful as we consider issues related to homework and achievement. The staff survey results [can be found here](#) and family results [can be found here](#).

At the elementary level, the responses of family and staff were overwhelmingly positive about the impact of not having homework over the winter break. Additionally, 81% of family responses and 86% of staff responses indicated support for eliminating homework over the February and April breaks. Given this feedback and the current research base on homework at the elementary grade levels, our elementary schools will not be assigning homework over these breaks. However, independent reading is encouraged for all students.

At the secondary level, the responses of family and staff were also overwhelmingly positive about the impact of not having homework over the winter break. However, the responses concerning having homework over February and April break were more complex. 88% of family responses indicated support for eliminating homework over these breaks, while 68% of staff members felt similarly. Some of the qualitative comments expressed concern about the impact such a change would have on the curriculum. Given this response, as well as differences in the findings of research on homework at the secondary level (as compared to the elementary level), I am asking secondary faculty members to assign no more than minimal homework over these two vacation periods. At the Middle School, minimal homework can be defined as continuing students' independent reading and logging it as students have done all year. At the High School, minimal homework can be defined as reading assignments accompanied by meaning-making strategies, such as annotation, concept maps, two column notes, or topic webs. Other assignments, such as essays, problem sets, and major projects, should not be due until the **Thursday** after each break period.

The other notable theme in the surveys' text responses was the broad impact that homework has on the lives of students and families routinely, not exclusively during break periods. At a recent Amherst School Committee meeting ([which can be viewed here](#) with the presentation starting at the 2:30:30 mark), I presented some research findings and issues around the topic of homework. In the near future, I will be convening a group of stakeholders including educators, families, and students to begin a deeper discussion into this topic in our district. I will also be asking this group to develop more permanent recommendations about homework. I will share more about this group in coming weeks, including an invitation to participate.

Sincerely,

Dr. Michael Morris, Interim Superintendent