The Main Idea's PD Suggestions for Improving Homework Practices

⇒⇒⇒ *Facilitator's Agenda*

I. Opening Discussion Questions

To get teachers thinking about their homework practices, have them discuss the following in a large group or small groups. There are also questions for school leaders to discuss:

- What are some of your biggest concerns when it comes to homework?
- What has informed what you know and what you do in your homework practices (teacher ed class, your own experiences, expectations from your school or district)?
- Have you changed your homework practices over time?
- In your ideal situation, how would homework be viewed and used in your class?

For administrators or leadership teams

- What are the school's policies and practices concerning homework?
- What homework practices are consistent throughout the school, departments/grade level teams, and the district? What is left for each teacher to decide?
- How much do you think homework is contributing to students' overall level of achievement/learning?

II. Self-Evaluation of Homework Practices
12 Practices that Influence the Impact of Homework on Student Learning

Give teachers time to read through the descriptions below and have them rate how frequently or how well they accomplish each practice on a scale of 1 (Never) to 5 (Always).

		Chapter	Description of High-Impact HW Practice	Self-Rating
The HW Assignment	1. Purpose	Chapter 1	I identify the purpose of the HW (diagnostic, introductory, formative, or summative) and clearly communicate it to the students.	
	2. Relevance	Chapter 2	HW is connected to standards, next steps in the curriculum, the real world, or future success in college and career.	
	3. Doability	Chapter 2	I make sure the students have enough background knowledge, time, and resources to complete the HW.	
	4. Quantity	Chapter 2	I take into account the amount of HW assigned (about 10 min per grade, e.g., 50 minutes for a 5th grader).	
	5. Rigor	Chapter 3	I ensure homework challenges students with different levels of thinking (Bloom's Taxonomy, Webb's Depth of Knowledge).	
	6. Options	Chapter 3	I provide students with options without compromising standards.	
Responding to Homework	7. Grading	Chapter 5	I only grade homework that is summative, not formative.	
	8. Late HW	Chapter 5	I address late homework with behavioral consequences, *not* by lowering a grade. My grades are purely reflective of student learning, not behavior.	
	9. Feedback	Chapter 5	If my HW is worth giving, then it is worth providing feedback for, so students receive feedback on *all* homework (either from me, themselves, or a peer).	
	10. Record Keeping	Chapter 5	I keep records of student performance on HW to help me adjust instruction and this is separate from my grades.	
Assigning HW	11. Student Capacity	Chapter 4	In assigning HW, I take into account student jobs, family commitments, extra-curriculars, availability of HW help, and resources (computer, Internet).	
	12. Teacher Capacity	Chapter 4	In assigning HW, I take into account the time needed to provide feedback, do the necessary grading, and record student progress.	

III. Discussion of Self-Evaluation Results

Discussion questions for teachers:

- Highlight which of the 12 practices above you gave yourself the highest ratings for (4-5). In small groups, share your effective homework practices so colleagues can learn from you and you can learn from them.
- The book (as well as a lot of other research) highlights two issues: the importance of **feedback** *and* the importance of **not including behavioral issues** in academic grades. These approaches to homework may be new to you, so discuss them. With colleagues, discuss what you think of the following points from the book:
  - ⇒ "If an assignment is worth giving, it must be worth evaluating." (p. 46)
  - ⇒ "When teachers just check homework in without correcting it, neither the teacher nor the student has an understanding of its accuracy." (p.56)
  - ⇒ "Some reasons for not completing homework are the result of a behavior [like procrastination]… Behaviors should result in behavioral consequences, not academic consequences. Do not lower the grade or reduce assignment points." (p.76)

• Now look at the 12 areas in the chart above that you gave yourself the lowest self-ratings for (1-3). With a partner, discuss these areas and choose the ones you would like to improve.

For administrators or leadership teams

• Does the school have school-wide practices and policies concerning homework for the issues below, and if not, discuss these questions as a team and decide if there *should* be a policy for the following:

⇒ Should late homework impact an academic grade?

⇒ How much homework should students receive overall at each grade level?

⇒ How and how frequently should teachers communicate with families about homework?

⇒ Are there expectations for teachers concerning checking homework for completion, giving feedback on homework, giving grades for homework, and keeping records for mastery of learning targets in homework?

• In listening to teachers discuss their strengths, weaknesses, and concerns about homework, what commonalities do you notice? Are there certain homework practices you might need to address with professional development?

IV. Implementing Best HW Practices

After teachers have identified which of the 12 practices they would like to address to increase the impact of homework, have them follow the implementation process outlined in the book by completing the chart below:

Step 1: Identify the desired state – Make sure teachers understand the reason why the HW practice they wish to implement is beneficial *and* what the ideal homework practice should look like. You may need to copy a chapter from the book or help to clarify any misconceptions.

Step 2: Evaluate current practices – This is what teachers did with their ratings in the self-evaluation earlier.

Step 3: Implement practices – Teachers begin to implement the new practices or approaches.

Step 4: Evaluate the effectiveness of new practices – Teachers should fill in the chart below for evaluation.

New Homework Practice(s) I Plan to Implement:		
What I plan to do:	When:	Support and/or resources needed:
Evaluation of New Practices		
How fully am I implementing the new practices (Rate from 1-5)?	Rating and Notes:	
Am I seeing improvement in any of the following areas (if yes, cite examples or evidence):		
A. Student learning/achievement	A. Evidence and notes about improvement:	
B. HW completion rates	B. Evidence and notes about improvement:	
C. Student attitudes about and engagement with HW	C. Evidence and notes about improvement:	
D. Teacher use of HW results to inform instruction	D. Evidence and notes about improvement:	
E. Student use of feedback on HW	E. Evidence and notes about improvement:	
Which HW practices do I still need to improve?	HW practices to continue to improve:	

*** Extra – The *Flipped Teaching* Challenge

The book introduced one of the most up-to-date HW practices to help increase the impact of homework – flipped teaching. Invite teachers to a meeting who have never tried flipped teaching, but would like to try.

A. Introduce the concept of "flipped teaching" (see Chapter 1 or p.1 of the summary) and discuss it.

B. Introduce a tool to help teachers plan a video for students to watch at home. Have teachers watch this 6-minute video from eduCanon – a free service that lets teachers build flipped lessons by compiling videos from TeacherTube, Vimeo, etc. and creating questions for them: http://bit.ly/1I38cId

C. Then have teachers create 1 flipped lesson by: 1) choosing a video for their students to watch at home, 2) writing questions students will answer while watching, 3) outlining a lesson for the next day based on the video and the questions. Consider having teachers work in pairs since this is their first time.

D. For their own "HW," have teachers plan more thoroughly for a flipped lesson with the book's template:

FLIPPED TEACHING PLANNING TEMPLATE (Sample already filled out)
Topic: Understanding and calculating area and perimeter of triangles and rectangles
Standards addressed: Geometry strand of CCSS
As a result of the video, students will know and be able to do the following: Know the difference between area and perimeter and be able to calculate area and perimeter of rectangles and triangles.
How will students be assessed on this content? In class they will need to calculate area and perimeter for 3 triangles and 3 rectangles and will need to apply this to a real-world task.
In addition to watching the video, students will be asked the following question to process what they have learned: Where in real life is it important to know how to determine the area and perimeter of various shapes?
Length of time student needs to watch the video and complete any related assignment: 18-20 minutes