

□ Communicate any concerns involving class/homework with your child's teacher as soon as possible. Parents are able to offer valuable insight into student learning and your observations can help teachers with interventions and adjustments that will benefit your child.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much homework should I expect my middle school student to have?

Middle school students should have between one and a half to two hours of homework each night (15-20 minutes per class). Students who have missing work will be assigned to ZAP (Zeros Aren't Permitted) by their teacher.

What if my student struggles with an assignment?

Ask your child which concepts are understood and which are causing difficulty. After reviewing the steps of the skill to determine where the difficulty exists, make a note for yourself, and remind your child to ask for clarification from their teacher. In some cases, a fellow student may be able to help explain a missed step or concept. Be sure to review the feedback from the teacher on this assignment with your student to ensure that they have grasped the concept/skill.

If your student consistently struggles with assignments, contact the teacher and express your concerns. How can I check my student's progress?

Parent Access is an excellent tool to monitor your child's progress. Parents and students can check attendance, completion of assignments and grades through this Internet based program. Of course, each of our faculty members is the single best source of information about their individual class.



THE BMS ZAP PROGRAM

Zeros Aren't Permitted (ZAP) is a philosophy concerning student work and its completion. It is based on the belief that the work given to students is worthwhile and necessary for their academic development. BMS teachers expect that all students will complete and turn in every assignment given them. Students who do not meet these expectations are required to participate in interventions designed to assist them with this issue. These supports, that provide teacher or tutoring assistance, may occur before or after the school day as assigned by the teacher. ZAP is scheduled for 30 minutes before school (8:00 AM -8:30 AM) or after school (3:30 PM – 4:00 PM) by each teacher to assist students in completing homework assignments. Failure to attend ZAP will result in Saturday school.

ZAP is a tremendous support to those students who have difficulty learning, completing assignments, as well as reluctant learners. The success of the ZAP program depends heavily on the structures and interventions established at school and the support of student families.

Parents should expect that their child will not fail a course due to missing assignments. You are encouraged to use the Parent Access monitoring system to track your child's progress. Teachers update grades frequently, therefore zeros should not be left outstanding for longer than one week after work has been turned in. If you have questions about ZAP or any part of the Homework Plan at BMS, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are looking forward to a great year with you and your child!

Questions/Comments: Please call

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BASTROP MIDDLE SCHOOL
HOMEWORK POLICY & ZAP
(Zeros Aren't Permitted)

Program 2008-2009

The information included in this brochure was compiled after intensive study, research and evaluation concerning the purposes, amount and effectiveness of homework. Using research and information gathered in that process, Bastrop Middle School developed a homework plan to address the academic needs of our students. The homework plan for Bastrop Middle School was prepared after careful study and consultation with our faculty. Throughout this pamphlet, we have used the work of Robert Marzano, a noted educational researcher. This brochure includes key components of the homework plan, as well as suggestions for students and parents.

Opinions vary about the exact amount of homework that should be assigned to middle school students. BMS has agreed that it should be approximately 20 minutes per night, per class. Studies indicate that completion of homework and/or additional study translates into higher grade point averages and elevated achievement test scores. Reviewing notes, completing assignments and working on projects are all considered study. At Bastrop Middle School we believe that homework is vital to the academic success of each student.

Bastrop Middle School Homework Philosophy

Homework is a valuable tool in the learning process; it is a natural extension of the work students complete in class. Homework provides opportunities to apply learning and to experience necessary practice. It promotes student responsibility and accountability by developing work habits essential for succeeding in life. Homework offers teachers, parents and students the opportunity to be involved in and support the learning process outside of school. Research shows that homework increases student achievement. To move our students forward in the learning process, they will be assigned consistent, appropriate and meaningful homework.



Purpose

Our faculty strives to make each homework assignment meaningful. Homework gives students the opportunity to practice skills/concepts, prepare for a new topic, or elaborate on material already

introduced. Teachers will share with students the purpose of each homework assignment. Robert Marzano, a leader in the field of educational research, identifies several major purposes of homework.

- ❑ **Practice**—Students must reach a level of self-sufficiency in performing a learned skill. This kind of homework typically increases speed and accuracy.
- ❑ **Preparation**—Students must access prior knowledge about a topic to be learned. This type of assignment might ask a student to reflect on previous learning or challenge them to think about what they want to learn.
- ❑ **Elaboration/Extension/Enrichment**—Students might conduct research, compare items, support a position or develop a graphic organizer. These challenging assignments allow students to demonstrate their knowledge in creative and varied ways.
- ❑ **Reading**—Students must spend time reading to increase fluency and comprehension. By practicing this key skill students improve their reading comprehension and vocabulary development.
- ❑ **Study**—Students may be asked to review key information contained in notes and assignments. This process allows information to enter long-term memory and enhances understanding of a subject.

Parental Involvement Expectations

At BMS we understand that parents are our students' first teachers. We value the partnership that exists between BMS and each home. Just as we have expectations for our teachers in the assignment of meaningful, purposeful assignments and high expectations for the completion of the assignments by our students, we have high expectations of our parents as well. Parents can assist us greatly by helping their child with the following items.

- ❑ Help your child set up an organized place to complete homework. This space should be clutter-free and relatively quiet during homework time. It should also be visible to the parent to ensure the student remains "on task." While music is sometimes helpful for students, television during work time is usually distracting.
- ❑ Help your child develop a schedule for finishing homework and projects or tasks. A scheduled homework time each afternoon is extremely helpful to

adolescents. Reading is an excellent activity to fill this time if homework is completed early. Each student has a computer to keep track of assignments, projects and tasks. Use the syllabus from each course to help your child chart out assignments and work that should be completed in advance. Putting social and family events in the planner will help students with prioritizing and managing their time effectively.

- ❑ Encourage, motivate and prompt your child to complete homework, but DO NOT do it for them. Ask your child to see his/her laptop calendar and discuss what projects, tasks, or tests are scheduled for the upcoming week.
- ❑ Discuss with your child what portions of homework are easy or difficult and why. Communicate with teachers about issues that come up during those discussions. If work is consistently too easy or too difficult, please let teachers know so they can make appropriate adjustments. Ask your child what knowledge he/she is applying when completing projects or performance tasks. If he/she cannot tell you consistently, communicate this with your child's teacher.
- ❑ Review teacher feedback on assignments with your student. It gives you a place to start conversations about the work he/she is doing in school.
- ❑ Help your child connect their homework to the real world. Our teachers strive to make assignments purposeful and relevant to students. Your support can make the difference in the completion of key assignments. In addition to providing important practice or preparation with regards to skills and content of classes, homework also promotes responsibility and important work habits essential for future success.
- ❑ Expect your child to have about 20 minutes of homework a night per class-around two hours for a middle school student.
- ❑ Monitor your student's progress using Parent Access. It gives real-time data about your student's attendance, completion of assignments, and grades. Teachers update grades and assignments frequently.