

# **HOMEWORK HELPING YOUTH**

## **Quality Programming**

Part of a high-quality program is helping children and youth complete homework assignments—on time and accurately. This eBook shares information on how to support youth not only with today's homework but how to complete homework on their own in the future.



**Homework  
Overview**

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**Tips for  
Homework**

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**Performance  
Rubrics**

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**Inquiry-Help  
Through  
Questions**

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**Putting It All  
Together**

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# Assisting Youth With Homework

## Key Points

When you complete this e-Book you will have an overview of the importance of supporting youth when completing homework, practical tips, how to create a rubric to act as a blueprint for continued improvement, and the importance of asking questions to support student learning.

## Terms/Glossary

Look for these terms as you read.

**Inquiry:** Inquiry means asking questions that are open-handed to probe for understanding

**Peer-to-peer:** This term refers to youth helping other youth that are in the same grade or are the same age

**Cross-age:** This term refers to youth helping youth who are younger than they are, usually by at least two years

**Rubric:** A tool that acts as a blueprint to guide program and people from a beginning level to an integrating skills level, into the way a person or program operates at all times



## Prior Knowledge

Other than being a person who used to complete homework when you were in public school, what do you know about the best ways to help a student complete his/her homework? Think back to your own experience. What was the most helpful? Was it as a person telling you what to do? Was it a person asking you questions? Was it learning about a process rather than finding a correct answer? It is important when we help young people with homework that we incorporate best practices so we are really promoting learning not just the completion of the assignment or a correct answer that can never be found again.

## Brain Power

Merlin Olsen, a pro football player, puts an adult spin on homework when he states, "One of life's most painful moments comes when we must admit that we didn't do our homework, that we are not prepared." But if you think about it, this applies to youth as well as those whose primary job is getting an education. Think about how you can be a positive role model for "getting your homework done."



### Introduction

All of us who have ever attended school understand, at least from our own perspective, what homework really is. We remember that what was expected of us varied from teacher to teacher. Some of us were able to get help with homework from older brothers and sisters (while some of us were the helper), our parents, or if we went to some sort of child care, we had an opportunity to complete the assignment there. When homework was challenging or boring we had to force ourselves to stay focused. When it was relevant and we were interested in the topic, the time seemed to zip by. When homework was either too hard or too easy we weren't nearly as interested. It is important that we understand young people do not look at homework in the same way. For some, the homework is so challenging that all they experience is frustration. For others the homework is so easy that they are able to complete it quickly and correctly in an independent fashion. For others, the homework is just right, challenging enough to be meaningful and doable enough to build their confidence.

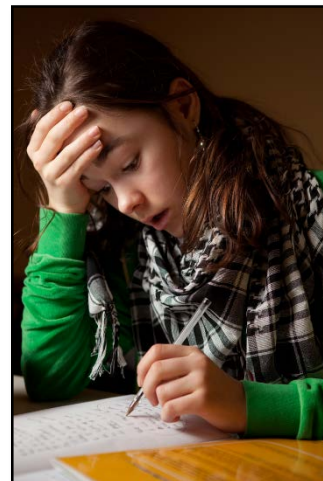
### Debrief

Think about what has been written above. What three things did you find interesting? Think about each one and how you will use this knowledge when you are working with youth during homework.



## Homework Overview

In 2004, Janine Bempechat reviewed the literature regarding homework and found “homework assignments provide children with the time and experience they need to develop beliefs about achievement and study habits that are helpful for learning, including the value of effort and the ability to cope with mistakes and difficulty. Skills such as these develop neither overnight, nor in a vacuum. Rather, they are fostered over years through daily interactions with parents and teachers, whose own beliefs and attitudes about learning and education have a profound influence on children's developing beliefs about their intellectual abilities (Sigel McGillicuddy-DeLisi, & Goodnow, 1992).” She also cited research that found, “If our goal is to prepare children for the demands of secondary schooling and beyond we need to pay as much attention to the development of skills that help children take initiative in their learning and maintain or regain their motivation when it wanes.” She also found that research indicated that “homework provides children with time and experience to develop positive beliefs about achievement, as well as strategies for coping with mistakes, difficulties, and setbacks.” In March of 2007, educator Da Costa stated, “The value and importance of giving homework as a tool to educate a student is an important practice. Just like there are various benefits to practicing in regards to sports or music, when we practice math or when we practice language, it is to our advantage.”



An after-school program provides the perfect opportunity for children to work on their homework as it provides monitored practice time for the students each day. During this scheduled homework time, students may work cooperatively with peers as well as receive assistance and support from a program leader who can help students stay focused on their assignments, ask probing questions that will guide the student to solving his/her homework dilemmas, and check over completed work.

Homework helps children:

- practice skills learned in school
- follow directions
- learn to start and complete work on time
- learn to become responsible.

There are several kinds of homework:

- Reading books, handouts, other materials, and even newspapers
- Writing reports
- Practicing spelling lists and completing spelling contracts
- Solving math problems
- Working on science, social studies and other projects
- Finishing classroom work that was not completed

There are usually School Board Policies regarding homework. A sample policy follows:

Grades K-1: 10-15 minutes, 2 nights per week

Grades 3-4: 20-30 minutes, 3 nights per week

Grades 5-6: 20-30 minutes, 4 nights per week



Grades 7-8: 45-60 minutes, 4 nights per week  
All grades, read 30 minutes each night

Everyone is interested in homework being completed:

- Youth so the task is complete and they can raise a hand during class the next day;
- Teachers so youth have opportunities to practice the lessons they've been working on;
- Parents so that the evening can be spent enjoying the family;
- Program staff for the feeling of satisfaction in a job well done.

Even though after-school is not a homework completion program, completing homework is often a priority. It is important to make that very clear to parents and the instructional day staff from the very beginning. The role of the after-school program is to provide monitored practice time and space, including the supplies and materials that youth will need to complete the homework assignment. To ensure that students are effectively monitored and supported, staff development is essential. Building both the competency and capacity of after-school staff to support young people during homework time is critical.

### Bullet Point

- Homework helps children:
  - practice skills learned in school
  - follow directions
  - learn to start and complete work on time
  - learn to become responsible.
- The amount of time youth should spend on homework varies by age and grade level.
- After-school is not a homework completion program, but programs should create a space to provide students with monitored practice time, assisting them whenever they struggle.



### C4K Minute—Making It Real

In your mind see yourself helping youth with homework. What things will you do to support them while they are doing the homework without taking on the responsibility for the homework yourself?

### Debrief

Does it make sense to you that youth have different homework requirements based on their age and grade? Whether you respond with a "yes" or a "no," what makes you respond in that way?

## Tips for Effective Homework

Being an effective program leader requires you to have a certain mindset that keeps the following information and the 15 homework tips in mind.

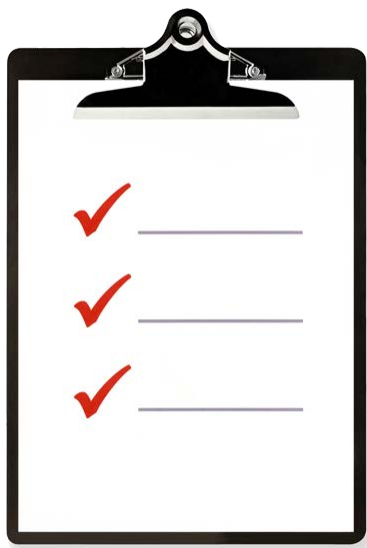
**Tip #1: Let the student know how important homework is.** Your tone of voice will go along way in emphasizing the importance that you place on education in general and how homework completion supports education. Be prepared for students to argue about doing homework. Students will say things like:

"I'm too tired!"

"I don't have to get it done today. It's not due until next week."

"I can't do my homework now because I need to ...."

Do not argue with students. Stay calm and speak firmly. Say, "I understand. But the rule in the after-school program is that you do your homework. If you have no homework to do, you should read for at least 30 minutes every day. At the end of the 30 minutes, I have some other things for you to do."



It is important that there is no advantage to the child for not letting you know that they have homework. If they have none, or they finish early, then they need to do alternative educational activities (read, educational games, computer practice if you have computers) rather than art, P.E. or doing nothing at all.

Choose the right time in the program for homework. Students have been in classrooms all day, sitting at a desk. Be sure that they have had a chance to wiggle and exercise and get the blood pumping again so that they are energized to work on their homework.

Try to avoid conflicts like scheduling homework right in the middle of an important activity. Be flexible. The students' homework will suffer if they are missing something that other students are getting to participate in while they are doing homework.

Sometimes music in the background can be helpful when working on homework. It should be classical music or something without words. Play the music at low volume. Avoid having prolonged conversations with other adults during the scheduled homework time. When you are "visiting" it gives students permission to visit as well. Move around so you can answer questions.

Set up the room so it is conducive to working on homework. There should be, if at all possible, areas for independent work, small group collaboration, reading, and space to work on educational activities after homework is completed.

Remind students that **"Homework is FUN! After it's DONE!"**

**Tip #2: Organize your supplies and materials so you are ready to help students with homework.**

- You need to have a portable file of some sort. This can be a crate or a plastic file box that has a lid with a handle. The organizer should have several file folders in it.

- File folders should contain a student roster, including the name of the child's teacher and room number.
- A variety of supplies (things that are consumable like pencils, glue sticks, crayons and paper) as well as materials (things that can be used over and over like dictionaries, scissors, and calculators), should also be included. Supplies should be appropriate to the age of the child, for example, you would want a beginning Picture Dictionary for 3<sup>rd</sup> graders and perhaps a map of the United States and/or the world especially for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades.
- Have name tags for all students during the first two or three weeks of the program and also for new students as they enter the program.
- A homework log should be completed daily and copied on Friday and given to the students' teachers on Friday. This log will be a general accounting of each child's homework activity during the week.
- Have students complete and sign a "I have no homework" form when they say they have no homework. Put this form in the child's teacher's box so that the teacher knows what the child stated.
- Have some academic work for children to do when homework is completed. This may include books to read, vocabulary and math games, laminated activity sheets, and other things that support the student's academic growth. This work, while academic, should be engaging so that students will want to complete their homework so that they can do this "extra" work.
- This organizer can be with you throughout the program each day and turned in each evening at the end of program. Be sure that your supplies are always in good order. Homework time should be focused on homework rather than sharpening pencils, searching for paste or glue, or trying to locate a full set of markers. Respect the homework materials and do not rob from them for other activities unless you are **SURE** you will have time to replace the item **BEFORE** the next homework session. Having the right homework supplies will help students do their best work.



### Tip #3: Your essential role during homework.

- Move among the students, checking what they are doing.
- If you stop to work with one student, be certain that you are at the youth's eye level (you will need to get a chair to sit on or get down on one knee, whichever is more comfortable for you). Also position yourself so you are facing the majority of the students when you stop to work with just one.



- Assist students when they need help by asking questions to help them discover the answer rather than telling them the answer.
- Redirect students to the homework task when they need to be refocused.
- Communicate with the classroom teacher and the parent about the child's homework, letting them know if the child is struggling, not bringing homework to the after-school program, or completing the homework that is assigned with ease.

#### Tip #4: Implement "10 Minutes to SUCCESS!"

Often times, students will raise their hand for assistance immediately after beginning homework. It is important for the student to learn that he/she can be responsible for listening closely when the homework is assigned in class, reading the directions and trying to complete the homework based on his/her understanding of the directions, and relying on themselves for completing the homework. When the program leader implements the strategy of "10 Minutes to SUCCESS," for the first 10 minutes of homework assistance, the children work on homework without the assistance of the after-school program leader. During this time the program leader can take roll if necessary, check with students who were struggling yesterday, assist students who tell them they do not have homework, select something to do, organize students into same-teacher peer groups if necessary to work on their homework, and other things to facilitate homework success. This is **NOT** down time for the program leader. It is time to set up homework time so that students can be successful.



When it comes to completing homework, youth generally fall into one of three categories. The first is the **Independent Level**. This represents 5%-20% of the students who truly need no assistance from the after-school staff at all, except praise for a "job well done." The second category is the **Instructional Level**. 10% to 30% of students will be in this category. This group of students can complete the homework but will need some minimal support. These young people often work well together. Form a cluster group for a quick "mini lesson" on any part of the homework that confuses the students. The third group is the **Frustration Level**. 50%-85% of the students can be in this category. They struggle with homework, need continuous help, and will find ways to avoid homework at all cost.

#### Tip #5: Organize students so they can help and support one-another.

After the first two weeks of homework assistance, program leaders should have a good idea about who needs more help and who struggles to understand the homework on a regular basis. The program leader should also be aware of which students have the same teacher, and as a result the same homework. Consider having the students with the same homework sitting together.

This is called **Peer-Peer Support**. Designate one student (usually the one who is able to complete the homework with ease) to be responsible to answer the questions of his/her classmates when at all possible.



For younger students, you might want to consider having older students come in to help students with their homework. This type of assistance is called **Cross-Age Tutoring**. Helpers can be found in grades two or more advanced than the group of students you are working with (3<sup>rd</sup> can help 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> can help 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> could help 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, and so on.) It is also a good idea to have a strategy to help students for whom English is a second language (EL's). Students who are just learning English may need some support in their first language. Program leaders can have another student work with them who speaks the language. You can also organize a Cross-Age Tutoring strategy with the added dimension of being bilingual to help EL students.

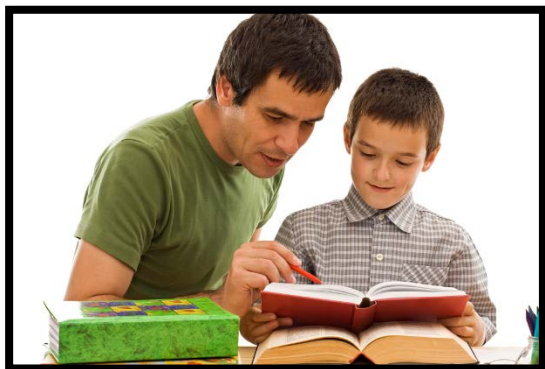


**Tip #6: Check on each student during his or her homework time.**

Even if students look like they are working on homework, it may be that they are simply appearing focused. After students have had a chance to get started, check in on them. Take a quick look at what they are doing. Are they working on the assignment? Is the work being done neatly? Are they on track to complete in the allotted time? Did they review the "agenda" so they are fully aware of what has been assigned? If so, praise them. If not, redirect their efforts. Check in students who are diligently working on homework as well. This is one of the ways that you let them know that the work they are doing is both noticed and appreciated.

**Tip #7: Be careful to not do homework for the child.**

Answer questions about the homework. Help the child to think about the homework and what he or she is studying. Help by making comparisons, talking about new ideas, and raising questions. Point out resources to the child that he/she may use if they get stuck. Such resources might be a dictionary, an atlas, another classmate, or a thesaurus.



Many times we believe that if we just tell students how to do one or two problems we will help them "get over the hump" and then they will be on their way. The fact of the matter is this: the person who does the work is the one who is learning. If, as the leader, you are the one "thinking through the homework" then you are the one

who is learning. The student is simply writing and recording your thinking.

**Tip #8: Remember that homework assistance is about helping the child be able to do the work on their own, independent of you.**

Help the child understand the process of doing the homework rather than on a right answer to a question or a problem. Remember children are capable of doing homework at different levels (review Tip # 4) and so

you want to support the child develop the next level of independence. If the child is struggling with homework legitimately, talk with the teacher and parent about the child doing a portion of the homework so you can focus on helping them understand the process of “how to complete the homework”, rather than completing a specific number of programs. Be sure you ask questions and facilitate the completion of homework rather than directing and telling children and youth what to do. Your task is to help youth think.

**Tip #9: Consistently praise young people for good homework effort.**



Don't wait for youth to complete the assignment before you let them know that you appreciate their hard work. Provide specific praise rather than general statements. For example, instead of saying something general like, “Nice job,” the compliment should be replaced with, “You have brought your homework to after-school three times this week, Congratulations!” Other things you might say to praise the child would include:

- “You started your homework right on time today. I’m proud of you.”
- “I’m proud of how responsible you’ve become about taking your work back to class this week.”
- “I’m glad you let me know we need ...”
- “You’ve been bringing your books to after-school this week without reminders.”
- “I’m so impressed by how well you’ve planned your (homework tasks ...). You should be proud of yourself.”
- “I can see that you’re making good use of your homework time. Your \_\_\_\_\_ has really improved.”

**Tip #10: Take action when homework is not being done.**

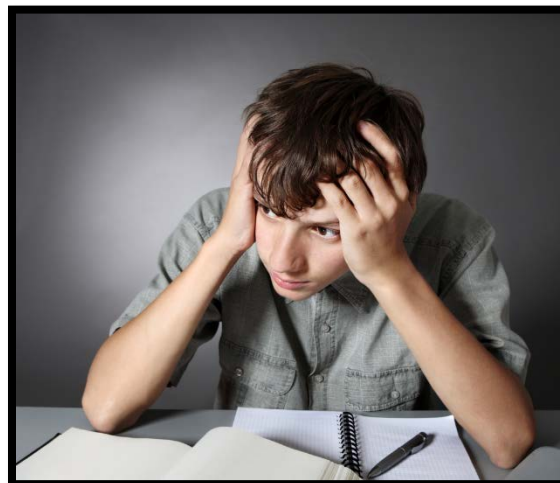
When the child drifts off and is no longer focused on homework, redirect the child to the homework assignments. Check to be sure they have the supplies and materials they need to complete the assignment. Check to be sure that they understand the assignment and that they have the skills they need to complete the work. If these things are in place and the child is still not working on his/her homework, you do not need to be reactionary, but you need to let the student know that they are to work on their homework. Sit down and calmly tell the student that he or she has a choice; either do the homework or lose a privilege (such as the first 15 minutes of the art project). Say something like:

“You know that the after-school program has set aside this time for you to work on your homework. You haven’t been working on yours. You have a choice to make. Either choose to do your homework or choose to lose the first 15 minutes of the art project to work on your homework.”

**Tip #11: It is important when a child challenges you about working on homework that you:**

- Stay calm.
- Be firm.
- Be consistent.
- Remind students that they are to work on their homework.

It is important that you take emotion out of working with a student who challenges you during homework. It is easy to say, "Don't take it personally," but it absolutely feels personal when the child refuses to work on homework when other students are around. If you react to the child's ploy, you will see it escalate. When training parrots it is essential that the trainer not respond when the parrots nips at them. If the trainer does react, the bird quickly learns that to avoid doing something it doesn't want to do, a nip to the hand will serve as a distraction. Youth understand this as well. Usually the child challenging you is the student who is at the frustration level with his/her homework and is looking for a way out. Redirecting them to the homework is essential. Work with them by asking questions to help them understand the task at hand.



**Tip #12: Work with the child's teacher if the child:**

- consistently has difficulty doing homework assignments;
- consistently does not bring assigned homework to the after-school program;
- consistently tells you the he/she never has homework;
- consistently says he or she always finishing the homework in class.

It is important that you and the student's teacher are communicating regularly. Share information about the child's performance and any concerns that you have. Ask the teacher to share strategies that are effective with the student. If you and the teacher are on the same page you will discover that children will be more productive.

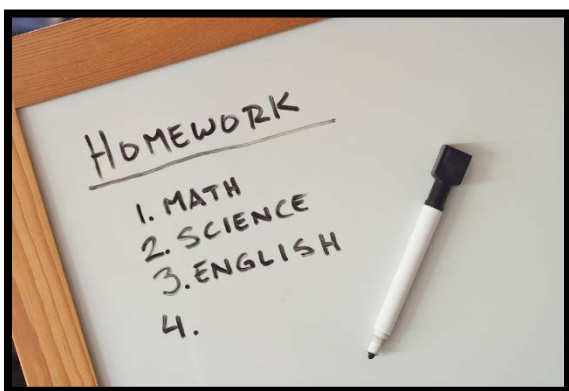
**Tip #13: Be armed with information about what each teacher expects in the area of homework.**

Some questions you might want to ask the teacher are:

- Is homework given every single night?
- What should I do if the child clearly does not understand how to do the work?
- How much should I help this child?
- Should I have the student correct mistakes from the previous homework?

Every teacher has different thoughts about how they want homework to be completed. As an after-school professional you need to be aware of how each of the teachers you work with likes to have homework completed. You need to understand how the homework is assigned, what the teacher does to explain homework to the students and so on. Make it your business to find this out.

**Tip #14: Use the Homework Log and the “I Have No Homework” forms to communicate with the classroom teacher.**



It is important that you have ways to communicate formally with teachers. Formal communication is usually written. You can complete a Homework Log that will let teachers know how each of the students in his/her classroom is doing during the after-school program. You may also want to use “I Have No Homework” forms that youth sign to share with the teacher what the student is saying about homework assignments. If a teacher has another suggestion to encourage communication [writing on the student’s agenda, stopping by in the afternoon, and so on] try to make it work. Full communication is serious.

**Tip #15: It is important to understand that the after-school program is not a homework completion program.**

After-school programs should not guarantee that all homework will be completed with 100% accuracy. However, it is important that time is structured in such a way that students work on their homework and get the help and support they need so that if they do not finish in the time allowed, they will be able to complete the assignment during the evening. For older youth you might want to schedule additional homework time during minimum days or several days per week.

### Bullet Point Recap

- Tip #1: Let the student know how important homework is.
- Tip #2: Organize your supplies and materials so you are ready to help students with homework.
- Tip #3: Your essential role during homework.
- Tip #4: Implement “10 Minutes to SUCCESS!”
- Tip #5: Organize students so they can help and support one-another.
- Tip #6: Check on each student during his or her homework time.
- Tip #7: Be careful not to do homework for the child.
- Tip #8: Remember that homework assistance is about helping the child be able to do the work on their own, independent of you.
- Tip #9: Consistently praise young people for good homework effort.



- Tip #10: Take action when homework is not being done.
- Tip #11: It is important when a child challenges you about working on homework that you: Stay calm, be firm, be consistent, and remind students they are to work on their homework.
- Tip #12: Work with the child's teacher if the child consistently has difficulty doing the homework, does not bring homework to the after-school program, tells you he/she never has homework, and says he/she is finishing homework in class.
- Tip #13: Be armed with information about what each teacher expects in the area of homework.
- Tip #14: Use the Homework Log and the "I Have No Homework" forms to communicate with the classroom teacher.
- Tip #15: It is important to understand that the after-school program is not a homework completion program.

### C4K Minute—Making It Real

When you are helping youth with homework next time, select 2-3 of the tips above and implement them in your program. At the end of the session, ask the youth if those strategies were helpful to them.

### Debrief

What was the key learning you had as you reviewed the fifteen "Tips"? Which one resonated with you?



## Performance Rubric

When you hire people to work in the after-school program you are not assured that they will have the skills needed to assist students with homework in the most effective way. Also, you will have some staff that knows how to implement some strategies when assisting one on one, but may not be as comfortable applying those strategies with a group of 20 students. In order to ensure that staff is successful in supporting students as they do their homework, it is helpful to provide them with a roadmap of the skills and strategies they will be accountable to implement.



A Performance Rubric is a roadmap for staff so they know what skills and strategies they need to learn and implement to provide exemplary homework support for students. The Performance Rubric allows the staff member and the supervisor to determine where he/she is, and create a plan for change. In a Performance Rubric there are four categories:

Beginning	Emerging	Applying	Integrating
Skills and/or strategies to be demonstrated at this level are entered here.			

The "Beginning" column is for new staff. These are the most basic skills and strategies needed in order for the staff member to be successful. For example, it is important that from the very beginning, the staff member knows that he/she should walk around the homework room. This is important for classroom management as well as being more available to the students. It is also important that the staff member is welcoming to the students, so a smile is important. Finally, as a beginner, staff should know how important it is to bring supplies and materials to the homework room so that students can stay on track. So, supplies and materials would be appropriate to include under the Beginning column. When developing the "Beginning" column it is also important to realize that there is little time for training prior to working with students. Therefore, this column should have "easy to demonstrate" basic strategies listed. The Beginning column might look like this.

Beginning
Welcome students with a smile Take supplies and materials with you (supplies include paper, pencils, erasers, crayons, etc. ) See the supplies list. Once homework has started, walk around the room, making yourself available for student questions.

Staff members should perform in the "Beginning" column for no more than 3 weeks. Usually staff begins to acquire skills and strategies immediately, however, it may take several days before the Site Director or Academic Liaison (a teacher who offers support to the after-school program) can meet with the staff member to discuss next steps.

Staff that moves to the “Emerging” column, is demonstrating skills that may take some simple training or more in depth conversations than those strategies listed in the beginning column. One such strategy is **10 Minutes to Success**, described earlier in this document. This strategy has two important benefits: development of student responsibility and institutionalizing time for the program leader to address particular students (follow-up from the day before) or take care of required paperwork.

Another strategy that could be implemented by the “Emerging” staff member is **Ask Three Before Me**. This strategy encourages students to ask their peers for help with homework. Very often when students ask another child who is in their classroom about an assignment, they find just the information they need to complete their own homework.

In the “Emerging” stage, staff will also begin developing an understanding with students of what the agreements, “Be responsible” and “Be respectful” mean in the homework setting. Program leaders will review this with students at the beginning of each homework session, asking students about what they will see and hear if these two agreements are being followed during the homework rotation.

Additional items that might be included in this column could be grouping students by classroom teacher. This could be a successful strategy in that you are creating peer groups, making it easier for students to communicate with one another and certainly easier to implement **Ask Three Before Me**. However, this strategy could also backfire if the students from a particular teacher have a history of competing, arguing, or over-socializing with one another. It would be important to talk with the program leader about the make-up of his/her class when suggesting this strategy.



At the “Emerging” level it is also important that the program leader become familiar with and utilize the homework log and the student’s declaration of “no homework,” to communicate with both teachers and parents about the child’s homework experience.

At this time point, the staff member is also collecting and organizing things for the child to do **AFTER** homework is complete. These activities need to accomplish several things. First, these activities need to be academic in origin. Drawing and/or coloring is not one of these activities. Secondly, these activities need to be interesting enough that students will see them as a reward for completing their homework. Third, these activities need to be quiet enough so that the attention of the other students is not diverted from homework to watching what students who have finished homework are doing. Appropriate activities could include card or dice games (be sure to have a mat to roll the dice on) that support math skills, or folder games that reinforce reading skills.

It would also be important that the program leader begin to develop the skill of giving positive, specific praise at this time. It is important that they learn the importance of praise that clearly names what you are thanking or praising the child for doing.

It would also be appropriate to instruct the program leader on classroom management strategies such as positioning yourself in the classroom so you can always see the majority of the class, constantly “running” visual and auditory scans on the room to determine if students are on track; communicating with a student at eye level (either sit down or bend down when having a conversation); and asking questions that begin with “what” or “how” to help students help themselves with homework. The “Emerging” column might look like this:

Emerging
<p>Implement 10 Minutes To Success</p> <p>Implement Ask Three Before Me</p> <p>Establish and review “Be responsible” and “Be respectful” agreements for homework time</p> <p>When you are walking around, check with students to see if they need help (especially those who do not seem to be focused on the task)</p> <p>Group students by teacher</p> <p>Offer specific praise to students who are on task</p> <p>Complete Homework Logs, and No Homework declarations, share regularly with the classroom teacher and the parent</p> <p>Implement classroom management strategies (eye level, scanning, positioning)</p> <p>Have work for students to do when they have completed homework</p> <p>Ask questions that begin with the words “what” or “how” when talking with students about homework. (What was your understanding of how to do this? What do you think makes sense to do here? What do the directions tell you? How did the teacher ask you to complete this section?)</p>

Items that are listed under the “Emerging” column would be those you would expect a staff member to demonstrate during the first six months of working with students. Some staff members will master each of these skills more quickly, and when they do, it is important to move them into the “Applying” column.



The items listed in the “Applying” column will require some additional training and coaching follow-up if the staff member is to be successful in creating a positive homework environment. Many of the items in the “Applying” column cause the staff member to refine the skills in the “Emerging” section. While there will be some necessary lap-over, the degree of sophistication or skill needed to implement the refined skill will require additional training and experience.

During the “Applying” phase, the program leader is holding students accountable for coming to the after-school program fully prepared to complete the assigned homework. This means that students understand they should have the necessary assignments, materials, and supplies they need, and should come into homework and get right to work. Homework sessions would be orderly and focused on completing homework

assignments.

For example, in the “Applying” column, the work that students do when they finish with homework should be refined. These activities also need to be supporting the instructional day scope and sequence of instruction. For example, if the fourth grade teachers are focusing on equivalent fractions, then it would make sense to have an activity (maybe utilizing dominoes) that would reinforce that skill while engaging the



student. This requires the program leader to talk with the teacher or at least to review the grade level Scope and Sequence plan for the year.

The program leader also needs to develop stronger questioning strategies. At the “Emerging” level, simple what and how questions are appropriate. At the “Applying” level, it is important that the program leader begins to focus on the process, the thinking required of the student, in order to complete the homework, rather than simply getting a correct answer. So, the question moves from, “What was your understanding of how to do this,” to “What are you thinking when you attempt to complete this problem?” and “Explain how this makes sense to you.” It makes sense for the program leader to have training on Bloom’s Taxonomy of Critical Thinking and the kinds of questions that are appropriate to ask at each level of the taxonomy.

In the “Emerging” phase, program leaders grouped students by teacher. In the “Applying” stage, the program leader would begin to organize students by need or the targeted assistance that can be given rather than simply by teacher. They might also group students for intentional peer-to-peer support and also cross-age support by having older students available during homework to tutor and support.



During the “Applying” stage, the program leader also begins to take advantage of the “teachable moment.” It is this moment when helping students collectively by calling them together to discuss or demonstrate something, simply makes sense. As an example, if the same question about a homework assignment is asked by several students, or if it apparent that several students have the same misunderstanding about how to complete the homework, the program leader could bring all of the students together and re-explain and/or re-teach the concept, taking advantage of the “teachable” moment.

The “Applying” section of the performance rubric might look like this:

Applying
<p>Hold students accountable for honoring the Agreements of “be respectful” and “be responsible” as it pertains to homework</p> <p>Group students by need rather than by teacher to provide more targeted assistance and support, including intentional peer-to-peer and cross-age support</p> <p>Activities for students to do when homework is completed are in line with the instructional day scope and sequence</p> <p>Refine questioning skills to guide student learning and focusing on the process rather than just the right answer</p> <p>Take advantage of the “teachable moment” when it occurs</p>

Items listed in the “Applying” section should be demonstrated by the program leader by end of the first year. Needless to say, some program leaders will demonstrate effectiveness at this level before the first year, but staff members would be on track if, during the first year, they were able to demonstrate these skills and strategies.

The “Integrating” stage of the rubric helps staff to more completely integrate homework assistance with the instructional day and also within the after-school day, as well as integrate the strategies utilized during

homework assistance into the way they work with students (accountability, group projects, questioning, and the “teachable moment”).

In the “Integrating” columns, conversations with parents and/or teachers are not simply about reporting



what the child is or is not doing during homework. It is a discussion of your observations about “how” the child is struggling, “what” concepts the child is unclear about, and any other pertinent information. For example, if you are working with a fifth grader on long division problems in math homework and you discover that not only do they not know their multiplication tables, but that they are struggling trying to estimate as well, having a conversation with the teacher about strategies you may utilize to help with this lack of understanding will only help the child to develop the skills he/she needs to complete the problems in the future.

Sometimes after-school programs offer specific tutoring for students who are struggling with multiplication tables and ask teachers to allow the student to attend the tutoring for 4-6 weeks in lieu of homework.

In the “Integrating” column after-school staff will also be able to offer students opportunities to work on homework while other after-school activities are going on. Sometimes, for instance when a child is working on the science fair, completing a history project, or practicing a speech for the Oral Language Festival, it is in the “Best Interest of the Child” (BIC) for the homework time to be extended. When this is the case, the program leader will need to make accommodations or modifications for the child so that extra time can be spent on homework. This should be an exception, not a rule and should be decided on a child by child basis.

In the “Integrating” column it is also a good idea to have the program leader get direct input from the teachers and/or the Academic Liaison on specific help that students need with homework. At this point in time the program leader is equipped to support students individually as they have a homework time routine clearly established.

Staff is performing in the “Integrating” column when the effort they expend in helping students complete homework is effortless. It seems like they have a “6<sup>th</sup> sense” about what to do. Rather than consciously applying strategies, the strategies and skills have become part of their make-up and represent “how” they interact with students in a positive manner. The “Integrating” column might look something like this:

Integrating
<p>Communicate homework issues with teachers, parents</p> <p>Make arrangements to offer additional homework time to students who struggle</p> <p>Talk with the Academic Liaison and/or the classroom teacher to find out if there is specific homework help that you can give to identified students</p>

As your staff develops skills and strategies of their own, you may want to acknowledge the work they have done, any innovating strategies they have implemented, celebrating the successes for several weeks, and then incorporate the strategy into one of the other columns of the rubric.

## Creating A Performance Rubric

In order to determine what skills and strategies should be included on the Performance Rubric, a brainstorming session should first occur. This session is for experienced staff or site directors who know what excellent homework support should look and sound like. For this brainstorming session ask the participants to imagine that they have gone into a classroom where homework is being supported in a truly exemplary way. In fact, it is so outstanding that you wish everyone interested in after-school programs would be there with you to celebrate how wonderful it is. Make a list of all of the skills and strategies that are being utilized in this “exemplary” homework environment. After making the list, the group then begins to sort out the skills and strategies, ordering them from most basic to more sophisticated. There will not be any specific skills listed under innovative, because if you list something as innovative, it is not. A sample of a completed Performance Rubric on homework can be found at the end of this document. This is not the “perfect” rubric, simply a sample. Other items could be added to this rubric and they could certainly be rearranged into other categories.

When you have staff help create the rubric there will be more buy-in from the beginning. Remember that when you are brainstorming, if an item that you believe is critical for the rubric has not been mentioned, you can certainly bring it to the attention of the group for discussion.

Homework Rubric			
Beginning	Emerging	Applying	Integrating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome students with a smile</li> <li>Walk around</li> <li>Take supply box:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>erasers</li> <li>sharpened pencils</li> <li>paper</li> <li>dictionaries</li> <li>other</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask students if they need help</li> <li>Implement 10 Minutes To SUCCESS. Implement “Ask Three Before Me”</li> <li>Group students by teacher</li> <li>Offer specific praise to students who are on task</li> <li>Complete Homework Logs, and No Homework declarations. Share regularly with the classroom teacher and the parent</li> <li>Have work for students to do when they have completed homework</li> <li>Ask questions that begin with the words “what” or “how” when talking with students about homework. (What was your understanding of how to do this? What do you think makes sense to do here? What do the directions tell you? How did the teacher ask you to complete this section?)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hold students accountable for honoring the Agreements of “Be Respectful” and “Be Responsible” as it pertains to homework</li> <li>Group students by need rather than by teacher to provide assistance and support, including peer-to-peer and cross-age support</li> <li>Activities for students to do when homework is completed are in line with the instructional day scope and sequence</li> <li>Refine questioning skills to guide student learning and focus on the process rather than just the right answer</li> <li>Take advantage of the “teachable moment” when it occurs</li> <li>Have signal for needing help other than raising the hand</li> <li>Understands frustration, instructional, independent levels</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communicate homework issues with teachers, parents</li> <li>Offer additional homework time to students who struggle</li> <li>Have principal or academic liaison walk with you through your homework session to be apprised of assigned homework and support for homework</li> </ul>

## Bullet Point

- A rubric allows you to have a plan for strengthening performance.
- Rubric categories—beginning, emerging, applying, and integrating refer to how long a program or person has been in after-school. Although there is no “set” amount of time in each category, it is a trajectory that propels things forward.
- Developing your own rubric begins with determining what something would look like if it were “exemplary,” and making a list of all of those attributes. Then you simply divide them into the four categories.

## C4K Minute—Making It Real

Look at the Homework Rubric. Consider where you are on each of the indicators. If you believe you have “mastered” the indicator, highlight it. Determine what you will work on to strengthen your performance, and then go to work on it.

## Debrief

What is important about having a rubric to act as a blueprint for strengthening program and performance?





## Inquiry—Asking Questions to Strengthen Critical Thinking

When working with youth during homework and there are many hands raised for help, it is easy to be inclined to look at the homework, read the directions, and then tell the child what he/she is to do, and then move on to the next young person with his/her hand raised. While this practice may be efficient, it is seldom effective. What you find is the child was able to complete one or two problems and then the hand is raised again for additional help and support. So how do you help youth with homework if you don't read the directions and tell them what to do? The best way to do this is by asking questions. The questions you ask should be open-ended and when at all possible begin with the word "what." Below are some samples of questions you can ask at the beginning of homework, while students are working on homework, and if youth get stuck.

### Beginning of homework:

- What do the directions say?
- What did the teacher tell you in class?
- What do you think you are supposed to do in this assignment?
- Who in here might you check with that heard the assignment when you did?

### After students get started:

- Which part of the assignment can you do?
- What is confusing to you?
- What skills do you need to have to do this work?
- What (reading, math, and writing) do you need to be able to do?
- What strategies will you use to help you figure out the answer?
- What are the steps you need to take to find the answer?
- What will you do to check the correctness of your work?



### If students get stuck:

- What do you think will happen if you try...?

Your goal is to ask questions which will guide the youth to finding a strategy for solving the problem and completing the homework. They may have an idea that doesn't work out, and that's okay. You want them to think through possible solutions, try them out, and then determine what strategies are effective for them. For example, if a child had a math problem,  $347 + 296 =$  they can always draw 347 circles, 296 squares and then count them altogether to come up with the answer. The answer will be correct, but it is not an effective or efficient way to complete the problem. So when asking the questions of this child, your purpose would be to help them determine a more efficient way to complete the problem (base 10, slash marks, etc.) Your inquiry—questions—are asked to help the child think critically about how to solve the problem posed in homework.

Chances are you are used to efficiently telling youth how to do things and it will take effort on your part to ask questions that help youth to think, but when giving high-quality homework assistance, it is essential. One of the guidelines you might want to consider is staying at least 7 feet from the homework so the child is "forced" to tell you about the assignment. Remember, the child may not complete the homework when they are with you, so your best option is to help them understand how to do the homework so they can work on it when you aren't around.

## Bullet Point

- Ask questions that are open-ended and when at all possible begin with the word “what”
- Facilitate the child’s learning by helping him/her think through the strategy he/she will use to solve the problem or complete the homework assignment.
- The goal of asking questions is to promote critical thinking in youth.

## C4K Minute—Making It Real

When homework is first assigned (or if you can access it from the teacher prior to the assignment) review the assignment, think about it and how you might tackle the problem, and then formulate questions you can ask youth so in the moment you already have thought through what questions you might want to ask.

## Debrief

What will you do to ensure you ask questions during homework rather than telling youth how to solve the problem or complete the assignment?



## Putting It All Together

### Review

#### Tricks of the Trade

Practice asking questions that begin with the words “what” and “how.” The more you practice this the easier it will be.

#### Gem of the Day

Youth will work on homework at one of three levels: independent, instructional, or frustration. It is the students at the frustration level that will need the most support.



#### Important Take-Aways

Being good at helping youth with homework is based on remembering that youth, not you, “own” the homework and completing it is a job that falls to them.

#### Troubleshooting

You may ask, what do I do when the students just can’t understand what to do?

When you are working with youth who are struggling with homework, it is hard to stick with questions. When all else fails, try asking, “What do you think will happen if you...” and then show them a possible solution. If you do this, you are encouraging students to think about what they are doing.

#### Best Practices

- ✓ Be sure to have the supplies that students will need to complete homework.
- ✓ Circulate, offer support where needed, remembering to focus on asking questions.
- ✓ Organize students to support one another.

#### FAQ's

What do I do when a parent is angry with me because homework is not finished or it's not correct?

This is always a challenge. The parent wants the homework finished in the after-school program so that he/she does not have to focus on that during the evening. Let parents know that you understand that. However, remind them that your program offers a balanced schedule and while you can let youth choose additional time for homework, you are also concerned about their physical health, their ability to work well in a group, and that they experience new things. Ask parents how you might work together to support the student.

## Universal

It is important that youth understand that school is the “job” of students and that homework is one of the work products of the “job.” Throughout their work life, they will be expected to get results. Doing this with homework is building good work habits.

## After-School

After-school is a place where youth can get help with homework and practice the skills they are learning with the support of an adult who is eager to help them. Remember that you are that adult.

## Positional

As a role model for youth you have an opportunity to share what you’ve learned about getting homework done, and how to make the most of this learning opportunity.

## Review

In your journal, write about the information you are taking away from this content. Highlight your key learnings.

## Key Learning

Since you have reviewed the material, ask yourself how you can translate the information into a learning for you, and then how will you practice that learning by implementing it or executing on a specific action. Think in terms of your personal and professional life. For example:



**Personal:** I have learned that you do not have to know how to do everything perfectly from the beginning. You can take your time to learn skills one at a time, really working a cycle of improvement.

**Professional:** It is important to use the skill of inquiry so that youth will be doing the learning instead of me.

## Journal Entry

I did this well and celebrated by \_\_\_\_\_.

I did not do so well at \_\_\_\_\_, and I will strengthen my performance in the future by doing \_\_\_\_\_.

## Debrief



What have you learned about yourself and how you might help youth with homework? How will you apply this learning as you move forward?

## Walk Through the Day

### The Openings

**Pre-Pre-Opening:** On your way to work think about each of the things you will do during program. Consider the homework rotation. How will you make this a successful experience for you and the students?

**Practical Application:** Make a list of the things you need to do prior to homework so you will have what you need for the students.

**Pre-Opening:** Once you arrive on campus you will have a few minutes to collect your supplies and materials. You will also want to check out any information that pertains to the students you will be working with today.

**Practical Application:** If you have a student who often forgets his/her homework, consider meeting them by the classroom. If you set it up the day before (letting them know that you will be there to act as a reminder for them to get the homework), seeing you should remind them to go back and get the homework. Remember you are building habits and soon you won't need to be there as a reminder.

**Opening:** During the Opening you are building relationships with youth by checking in with them. Remember to ask about the day and also ask if they are ready to focus on getting the homework completed today.

**Practical Application:** Like you, young people need to have a positive mind set about what needs to happen in the after-school program. When you help them get ready for homework during opening in a caring, relational way, you are supporting a positive mind set.

### Rotation:

During the homework rotation, stay focused on being sure that the student understands how to complete the homework. Be careful to focus on process rather than correct answers. That way if they don't finish during the program they can easily complete the assignment at home.

**Practical Application:** Group students so they are with others who are working on the same assignment. Teach them how to ask a peer for help.

## Closing

During this period of time youth are either doing something as they wait for parents to pick them up, or they are being signed-out so they can go home. Take the time to share with the parent (if the student is signed out) the student's homework progress.

**Practical Application:** At the end of the day youth can work on unfinished homework. Praise the student whenever they make the choice to work on homework when it is not finished. Share this excellent choice with the parent.



## Connections to C4K's Online Instruction

### ➤ **KEY INDICATOR: Supporting Student Learning**

- **Supplies to Support Student Work (Text Books, Rulers, etc.)**

Mini #8	Transitions
Mini #9	Homework Basics
Class #4	Homework
Class #21	Who Owns Homework?

- **Frontline Staff Focuses Students on Homework Completion**

Mini #5	Check for Understanding
Mini #20	Teaching Moments
Class #10	Homework

- **10 Minutes to Success or 5 Minutes of Prep**

Mini #23	10 Minutes to Success
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- **Strategies to Ask for Help**

Mini #39	Asking for Help
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- **Frontline Staff Asks Questions Rather Than Telling Students What To Do**

Mini #16	Questioning Techniques
Mini #47	Questioning Strategies 2

- **Grouping Strategies Utilized (Class,**

**Teacher, Cross-Age, Peer)**

Mini #49	Grouping Homework
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- **Activities for Students to Do When Homework is Finished**

Mini #12	Serendipities
Mini #43	Serendipities 2
Mini #48	Activities after Homework
Mini #71	Homework Activities
Mini #122	So Your Homework's Finished

- **Strategy for Communicating with Parent and Teacher**

Mini #41	Talking with Parents
Mini #69	Communication with Teachers
Mini #74	Communication Logs

Lesson #24 Maintaining Confidentiality

- **Additional Support for Middle Schools**  
Class #24 Hear A Peer

