

Dear Families,

Homework is an important issue. The needs and wants of families and schools in regards to homework are very diverse – not all children or families want or need the same thing. Some parents choose to do homework with their children at home, but others prefer most of their child's homework gets completed during the program. We can accommodate diverse needs. We believe the best way to support the diverse needs of families is to get to know what each INDIVIDUAL family needs and to support the expectations of the family.

Occasionally we receive a request to force ALL children to sit down and work on homework for a set block of time. We can do much better than that. There is NO LIMIT on homework time at CC. During all possible hours of operation there is a designated area in the quietest area of our available program space for children to do homework.

We know that children are often mentally fatigued afterschool and that mental breaks are essential to learning. So we give all children some time to eat a snack and relax before beginning any homework.

We enforce INDIVIDUAL parent expectations in regards to homework. We use homework contracts to document the parent expectations. When a parent and child sign a homework contract, the CC staff agrees to do two things: 1 – we remind the child of YOUR agreement (and if necessary YOUR consequences for failing to live up to the agreement); and 2 – we keep you informed about your child's choices. The CC staff does NOT have the power to FORCE a child to do homework.

We can do better than forcing all the kids to sit down and be quiet. As expressed in our name, Children's Choice offers children the opportunity to choose how they would like to spend their time out of school. By giving them choices we help them exercise their decision-making skills. We teach children to make responsible choices in all aspects of their lives – including their homework. By holding children and not staff responsible for doing children's homework, we help them to develop discipline, decision-making, and time management skills.

We do a lot more than support parent expectations in terms of homework support. There is always a paid staff member on hand to assist children with their homework. We provide materials like pencils, paper, and can arrange to get additional copies of books from teachers when necessary. We provide comfortable conversation and reading areas with books of varying reading levels for children to read to self or read to others. We provide resources like maps, globes, science and math books and materials. We provide enriching activities and classes specifically aligned to meet academic standards.

We believe great learning opportunities would be lost if out-of-school-time was simply “more school after school.” We believe that activities that are fun, engaging, and active and also give kids the opportunities to practice academic skills are powerful and unique opportunities that afterschool programs can provide, that if properly done can be even better than homework. So, the activities, clubs, and classes that we offer are not meant as a distraction to your child's academics, but rather as a supplement – an enrichment.

We believe children need active play, conversation, skill building, social belonging, autonomy, and choice to develop positively. Through our curriculum, we aim to teach children independence, responsibility, cooperation, self-sufficiency, socialization, and other life skills. We believe that these are important to your child's success in life and strongly encourage you to allow your child to participate and lead these types of activities. Play can be a powerful teacher.

Mike Ashcraft, Executive Director



Homework Contract

I _____ (parent) instruct and expect my child to do homework...

- ___ Monday
- ___ Tuesday
- ___ Wednesday
- ___ Thursday
- ___ Friday

After about _____ minutes (time to eat snack and take a mental break).

My child is expected to work on homework or practice reading for _____ minutes per day. Note: The National Education Association and the PTA have long recommended the 10-minute rule per grade; a first grader does 10 minutes, third grader - 30 minutes, 5th grader - 50 minutes (all subjects combined).

More detailed expectations:

My child may participate in the following activity or enrichment class before beginning homework.

I _____ (child) agree that my homework is my responsibility. In addition, I know that the CC staff will be available to help me with any homework questions I may have. Finally the CC staff will remind me of this agreement and of any consequences of my choices if necessary.

Parent Signature

Date

Child Signature

Date

Homework Philosophy, Practice & Vision

Research: What we know.

- We know that there is no evidence that any amount of homework improves the academic performance of elementary school students.
- We know that at older grade levels there appears to be a little bit of correlation up to a certain amount of homework after which achievement remains flat or declines. Because of this, both the National Education Association and the Parent Teacher Association have long endorsed what is called the “10-minute rule” – 10 minutes of homework per grade. So a 4th grader should do no more than 40 minutes of homework and a sixth grader should be about an hour per night – all subjects combined.
- We know that research consistently shows a correlation between participation in afterschool programs (that feature positive relationships, enriched environments, and fun, novel, challenging activities) and both improved academic achievement and increased commitment to learning.
- We also know that there are limits to this type of research, to view it with a critical lens, and to consider the wants and needs of our parents and schools when making decisions about our practices.
- When talking about INDIVIDUAL children, we don’t really know how much better kids do on tests because of homework or what they would have scored if they didn’t do homework.
- We know there is no “one best way” for the masses to help children learn. Best practices are based on INDIVIDUAL strengths, challenges and needs.

Philosophy: What we believe.

- Common sense tells us that time spent reading and writing will improve those skills and time spent practicing math facts will help improve math skills. Common sense tells us that if a second grader enjoys reading for 30 minutes a day or 60 minutes a day, this is a good thing.
- We believe that everyone has a limit to how much mental work can be accomplished in a day and that time spent away from academics is good for achievement and commitment to learning.
- We believe that more seat time does not mean more learning time and more school after school is not the best use of out-of-school time. We believe that more time spent doing the same thing they do in class is not necessarily the best for learning.
- We believe that too much focus on homework misses unique learning opportunities that great afterschool programs can provide.
- We believe that activities that are fun, engaging, and active and also give kids the opportunities to practice academic skills are powerful and unique opportunities that afterschool programs can provide, that if properly done can be even better than homework.
- We believe children need active play, conversation, skill building, social belonging, autonomy, and choice to develop positively.
- We believe the best way to support the diverse needs of families is to get to know what each INDIVIDUAL family needs and to support the expectations of the family and teacher.

Practice: What that looks like now.

- We enforce INDIVIDUAL parent expectations in regards to homework completion and utilize individualized homework contracts to document the parent expectations.
- There is no LIMITED BLOCK of homework. During ALL possible hours of operation there is a designated area in the quietest area of our program space for children to do homework.
- We provide materials like pencils, paper, and can arrange to get additional copies of books from teachers when necessary.
- When logistically possible, based on the size of the program, the number of staff, and the space approved for our use by the school, we offer homework clubs led by a staff person.
- We provide staff who can assist children with homework.

- We provide comfortable conversation and reading areas with books of varying reading levels for children to read to self or read to others.
- We provide resources like maps, globes, science and math books and materials.
- We provide enriching activities and classes specifically aligned to meet academic standards.

Vision: What we want it to look like.

- CC Environments, relationships, and experiences that are even better than homework.
- CC staff who are trained and supported by school faculty and given access to resources to help us help children with homework understanding and completion.
- Daily enrichment clubs and classes specifically designed and professionally delivered to support academics through fun, engaging, brain-compatible practices.
- Broad use of school space such as the library, computer lab, teacher’s lounge, and classrooms to extend learning afterschool.
- Quiet designated space for homework and tutoring during all program hours at every school as an activity choice.
- Activities planned in collaboration with the school and aligned to common core and APS standards.
- Events hosted by CC to showcase and our academic support programs – like family science nights, math nights.
- Engaging, novel, playful, hands-on, active learning activities and lessons that are SO good schools ask us to bring them into the school day, media highlight them in news stories, and teachers and parents replicate these lessons in the classroom and at home.

Bibliography: Where we get our information.

Dr. Harris Cooper of Duke University is widely regarded as the nation’s leading researcher on homework. The subdirectory of the research that his findings embody it would be so long it would be ridiculous to include it here.

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