

Our Approach to Homework

We believe that making thinking and learning visible is a critical element in developing student understanding. Homework is one of many tools that inform teachers about student learning and progress.

At TBS we know that balance is a key aspect of healthy intellectual, social, and emotional development. Consequently, we have a different -- and refreshing -- perspective on homework.

At every age level, we believe that students' fundamental homework is "the work of the home": engaging with family members and family life in ways that are meaningful, practical, and deepen connection. Playing games, doing chores, outings, sharing food -- these are undertakings that all children should experience regularly with their families. Therefore, homework is never a simple default.

In the early grades, we expect that children are reading 20 minutes a night, either independently or with family members. They might also work on a class project at home. In Third through Fifth Grade, we believe that well-constructed homework can help students organize and assimilate information, solidify concepts and skills, and set the stage for more exploration and learning. When teachers at TBS assign homework, it is designed to be intentional, engaging, and manageable. Teachers continually reflect on their goals for the homework they assign by asking themselves some of the following questions:

Is It Intentional?

What is the specific benefit of doing the assignment at home?
Are the specific learning goals of the assignment clear?
How does the homework allow for differentiation – in all directions?

Is It Engaging?

Does the assignment reflect student interests?
Does the assignment ask the student to apply, expand upon, or prepare for school work?
Can options be included to allow for student choice?

Is It Manageable?

Are students clear on the process for completing the assignment?
Do students have the materials and capabilities to accomplish the assignment independently?
Is the homework assigned with sensitivity to other subjects, the school calendar, and/or home life?

Rather than evaluating homework solely on binary right or wrong answers, teachers look for what the nature of the responses indicate about student learning. Additionally, the perceived quality of a student's homework assignment is not assumed to be the sole indicator of that student's level of effort, engagement, or motivation. Instead, fluctuations in quality provide opportunities for further conversation and understanding about a student's academic strengths and challenges.

