



Homework at The Conservatory School Middle School

Homework is an opportunity for students to practice the skills and strategies that they have learned during the school day. Research (Cooper, 2006) shows that homework can have a modest benefit for middle school students, helping them to prepare for the scholarly work that awaits them in the future. At the same time, providing students with too much homework can decrease student motivation, focus, and performance (Fernández-Alonso, Suárez-Álvarez, & Muñiz, 2015).

At TCSMS, we believe that for homework, what matters is its quality rather than the quantity.

Here are the types of homework that you may see coming home:

English Language Arts

- At least 30 minutes of reading from either fiction or non-fiction texts students selected in class or the library
- Annotation for articles, videos, or other texts in preparation for Harkness discussions in class
- Completion of formal writing assignments started in class

Mathematics

- Practice questions to build student comprehension, computation, and fluency
- Topic and question review on Google Classroom
- Videos to review math concepts
- Math projects
- Activities from Algebra Nation

Social Studies

- Annotation for articles or other texts in preparation for Harkness discussions in class
- Completion of formal writing assignments started in class

Science

- Quizlet activities to review science concepts
- Science Notebook - to review science concepts taught in class



Celebration of Learning at The Conservatory School Middle School

Dear TCSMS Families,

As we strive to develop our middle school students as leaders of their own learning, we consider our practices and the ways in which to create a learning environment that engages students. Our classroom lessons reflect a shared effort between teacher and student, with each taking responsibility for their part in academic growth and success. Guided by our own observations and research, our use of educational practices such as Harkness and project-based learning helps students to learn and think deeply because they are compelled to, not just because they 'have' to or because there is a grade at the end. When considering the question "Do rewards motivate students? The answer is, absolutely: they motivate students to get rewards. Unfortunately, that sort of motivation often comes at the expense of interest in, and excellence at, whatever they are doing (Kohn, 1993)."

As we have seen among our middle school students, ***they work because they are passionate about their learning.*** To acknowledge student growth and learning throughout the school year, we consider how we can honor student learning authentically and personally--***developing opportunities for them to take ownership of their learning, celebrate their learning, and share those proud moments with you.***

Through our work over the last several years, our key celebration of student learning has emerged as our project-based learning Exhibitions that take place each semester. During these Exhibitions, students demonstrate their growth and achievement by:

- ❖ *sharing their learning to a diverse community of guests;*
- ❖ *demonstrating their proficiency in writing, technology, and the arts;*
- ❖ *sharing their successes and failures throughout the course of a project;*
- ❖ *reflecting about their participation and experience during Exhibition;*
- ❖ *and importantly, activating and using their voices for issues and causes they believe in.*

In 8th grade, at the culmination of a student's journey at TCSMS, we formally honor student achievement over the course of their 3 years in middle school. Similar to high school graduations, we provide students with cords to acknowledge student academic achievements and participation in community service opportunities, athletics, and music. This graduation ceremony excites them for what is to come at the end of their high school careers and beyond.

We hope that you enjoy these celebrations of personal learning as much as we do.

Your partners in education,

TCSMS Administration and Faculty