

# Orchard School is going Homework Free

We have found that the issues/challenges with homework far outweigh possible benefits. There is growing literature discussing the myths and misunderstandings of homework which questions why homework has historically been part of schools without considering the rationale, especially at the elementary level.

## Here is some of the rationale for our decision:

- There is little or no research that homework supports academic achievement;
- Children are already in school for a work-day (six and a half hours) and we question the need for adding a second shift. Adults hate taking work home, why require students to do this?
- Homework can actually inhibit students from becoming active learners; it can diminish a student's interest in education.
- Homework limits students time to follow their own passions.
- Doing homework threatens the quality of life for families. There is extensive anecdotal evidence about how families become stressed about homework completion.
- Finally, we just think it's the right thing to do. Our students deserve a childhood and they need to be active and engaged. It appears that many schools throughout the area and the country are making the switch as well!

~ We will be providing more information on all of these points ~

Though we are homework-free school, we are still giving your child (and you!) assignments each and every night.

## Here are the assignments:

1. **Read every night!** Reading books of interest is a highly motivational activity and makes students be more active readers.
  - a. Teachers will be sharing "just right books" all the time. Please take time every day to have your children reading.
  - b. We decided to do away with reading logs (since much of the time students are not writing down the accurate amounts they are reading) but we encourage all families to read, read, read!
  - c. Additionally, don't forget the value of reading aloud. Even older students get a great deal from being read to from a parent. It can develop strong comprehension skills and be a strong family-building activity. You should check out *The Read-Aloud Handbook* by Jim Trelease, it's an oldie but a real goodie.
2. **Get outside and play** – it's the healthiest thing! All of our students have the right to be able to grow up as children and play outdoors, get in touch with nature and enjoy the benefits of play.
  - \* Remember we are not endorsing screen time. Our children will have their lifetimes to watch television and play online games. Let's give them the gift of the natural world.
3. **We want all of us to have family dinners.** Eating together and connecting with each other about our school/work day is highly beneficial.
4. **Get a good night's sleep**—it's essential for all of us, kids and adults. Getting a good night's sleep increases our energy and our productivity and one of the basics for a very healthy lifestyle.

*These are our assignments for every day, we hope families will jump on board with all of these.*

### **Preliminary FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions):**

#### *1. What about preparation for middle school?*

First of all, their first year *after* Orchard School is sixth grade, in many ways it is an extension of elementary school. We believe the role of school is to educate students and give them preparatory skills for this year's standards not a future year. Upon saying this, we want to teach our students organizational habits and executive functioning skills while they are at school to develop a stronger sense of discipline. Working at home on this can help too.

#### *2. What about the rest of the South Burlington School District?*

It was truly a transformational event when our entire faculty voted to end homework. We can only hope and work towards making changes in all our schools. There are a number of schools in the area already making the switch and the Orchard faculty is excited to be part of this revolution.

#### *3. What about our own family's interest in homework?*

Of course this is a parent's right and we encourage students to follow their own passion in learning. Whether it is dinosaurs, engineering, the outdoors or art, we want all students to work toward mastery in the areas they want to focus upon.

*We also want to provide math games and activities for families to play at home and strengthen math, problem solving and spatial awareness activities.*

Here are some resources that guide our reading:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2012/11/26/homework-an-unnecessary-evil-surprising-findings-from-new-research/>

Bazelon, E. (2006). Forget homework. *It's a waste of time for elementary-school students.* Slate.

Kohn, A. (2007). *The homework myth: Why our kids get too much of a bad thing.* Da Capo Press.