

Comments from Open House Chalk Talk

Thank you to all parents/guardians who attended our Open House. At Open House this year, we posted two topics on the board and asked parents to write comments, questions, concerns, or thoughts based on the topic. We then presented the comments to our 8th grade students and had them write responses for parents. Finally, as a team we discussed the comments brought up by parents and responded to many of the topics. The information below summarizes all of the work. We hope this will serve as a springboard for future conversations with both parents and students.

(The parents' thoughts and comments from Open House are in red; 8th grade student responses are in black; Team teachers' responses are in blue)

Homework

Concerned with homework time exceeding reasonable amount and how saying my child has done enough will affect my child's homework grade

Homework should take ten minutes per grade, meaning if your child is in 7th grade, they should have 70 minutes of homework. If your child is in 8th grade, they should have 80 minutes of homework. Students have 40 minutes every day in school to complete their homework. If your child is struggling with homework completion, check out the helpful homework hints that we posted on our webpage and sent home as a hand-out. If you have followed these hints and worked with your child to complete their homework and they are still struggling, send in a note to the teacher explaining the steps you and your student took. If there is obvious effort put forth, the grade won't be impacted.

One of my concerns is the feelings of inadequacy that show up when trying to complete homework.

"Just keep going on the homework. Take a break from it and go to bed early, so you can wake up early to get a fresh start."

I have lots of homework. If I will be up late, do I have to do it?

"Yes, they should because we don't get that much homework. Also, we have 45 minutes to do homework at school. If they are on task during study hall, they should not have much homework when they get home."

Homework information has not been enough to know what he needs to do

Homework assignments are written on the board every day/week. Teachers then explain exactly what the assignment is and asks if there are questions. At home, check the assignment notebook to see that your child has written down the assignment or written None if nothing is assigned. If they do not understand what to do based on what is in the book, have them at least attempt the assignment in the way they think is correct. Write a note to the teacher explaining what they thought they were supposed to do. This will help us see where the misunderstanding occurred.

I'm hoping he will be more in tune to his school work

"If you want to see your son get better grades than last year, you need to have him spend more time on school work and focus more. Set clear guidelines."

I want to make sure if my child is falling behind or missing work or having trouble that I will be contacted to fix the problem before it gets too late/ To see my daughter get better grades than last year/No Fs this year – let me know about them sooner

In addition to progress reports, we generally provide students with a summary of assignments and grades one to two times per quarter. We usually ask students to get these signed for a homework grade. Please let us know if you are not receiving them from your student. Also, we strongly encourage parents to communicate with us when there is a concern around school work.

"Usually the teachers will give a paper to kids who are missing work."

"If you want your kid to get his homework done than you have to make them do it every day. Help them but don't do it for them. If he doesn't want to do it, do it with them. Make consequences."

"We get progress reports every four weeks. It tells us our grade and what we are missing."

"You can check their assignment notebook each night and make sure all their homework is done, and then you will always know what they did and didn't do."

Does each class have a place on the website for homework?

Currently our website is not set-up in a way that makes it easy for us to provide nightly homework assignments online. Language Arts assignments are usually available at <http://lamoille.ywpschools.net>

Time-outs no longer work for 13 year olds, what to do with procrastination?

"Time-outs don't work, but if you take away privileges then your kids won't have a choice."

"Come up with a time you and your child can agree upon for homework. Stick to it so that procrastination won't be a problem."

"Time-outs don't work for 13 year-olds, so a new solution is to take their phone or TV or any privileges that they like to do."

“Ground them. Take away phones, iPods, important things to them.”

Is math homework due the next day?

“Math homework is always due the next day except when there is a big portion of it. Students usually have time in each class to do their homework.”

Hopes, Goals, Expectations, Concerns

My child is challenged in his academics /Ability to be challenged academically/ I want my student to be challenged and I want/expect teachers to have high standards in academics

For the past two years, the middle school as a whole has been working on implementing Differentiated Instruction into many of their practices. This process allows teachers to individualize instruction by meeting students where they are and designing curriculum that challenges them. In addition, the middle school has focused on understanding different learning styles to help students excel in all academic areas.

“The way to do this is to do homework at school, pay attention, and do all of your homework. “

Organizational skills

Creating a system at the start of the year to organize backpacks will help students as the year progresses and more work is assigned. You can help your child become more organized by going through their backpack with them once a week. In addition, students should have separate folders, notebooks, and binders for each class; make sure papers are organized by subject. Use folders for incoming and outgoing homework, and use dividers to help them organize within a specific class.

“Kids should have binders and dividers. Check them to make sure they’re neat, and eventually the kid will learn.”

“Organize their stuff for them. Make them watch you do it.”

“Use folders and dividers.”

“You need a separate binder for every class and dividers for every class. Every Friday during study hall, I organize my book bag and throw stuff away.”

I am concerned about the drug and alcohol usage at this level – also the lack of acknowledgement of the problem

If you have concerns about your child being pressured, please contact us. Students can also talk to our SAP counselor.

“About the drug and alcohol thing, I think people make it sound a lot worse than it is. Like I don’t hear about people that get into a situation where someone is pressuring them to do it. And I’ve never been offered or heard anyone talk about it.”

Ability to grow

“Let them experiment with who they are, whether it be clothes, music, or personality. Let them do it on their own time or it won’t be who they really are.”

How can I be more involved in helping my child decide on extracurricular activities?/ Get involved in something (subject or activity) that he is passionate about/ Develops good, solid friendships/Make more friends

There are many ways for your child to meet new people during middle school. Almost every afternoon there is an extra-curricular activity occurring here. We offer three seasons of sports, two drama productions (using people for acting and behind the scenes), 21st Century Grant activities (8 week sessions ranging from TV production to Math Counts), student council and homework club. Have a discussion with your child about what they might be interested in and require them to talk with a teacher about the program. Encourage them to get involved!

“Most of the time they either don’t want to do one or know exactly what they want to do. If they come to you and ask, you can suggest things that would involve their hobbies.”

“Develop good friendships by going up and talking to someone you don’t know and just ask them a question. Hang out.”

“It isn’t very hard to make new friends. Sometimes you can just walk up to people and start talking. It isn’t that hard, like I thought that sounded hard, but it is actually very easy.”

Get information at home about sports sign-ups, ahead of time

“They give your kids the form a week ahead of time. If you’re not getting it, it’s your kids fault. Ask your kid each day about it.”

As a parent, I would like to be more involved in school and connected to teachers and students, etc.

Throughout the year, there are opportunities for parents to be involved in school activities. The team will take field trips throughout the year which require parent chaperones. If you have traveled or served in the armed services, contact Mrs. Rockwood to come in as a guest speaker.

More exposure to classic literature

Book choices are often made based on the child’s reading ability and grade level. During middle school, students may encounter Greek mythology, Romeo and Juliet, and the Canterbury Tales as well as a number of fiction and non-fiction texts and choice reads. The entire Language Arts book collection is posted on the main school website.

Less of TV, radio, I-pod, etc. until proper time management is practiced.

“Same in my house. We can only have one hour of TV or computer during the school week, and we can only listen to our iPods if we are being active while doing it, and only if our homework is done.”

Would like more opportunities to socialize with other parents and teachers.

Let us know if you are interested in joining us for a Breakfast Talk!

To get better at reading/Better reading comprehension

“Read more!”

“To get better at reading practice by reading a couple of pages/chapters then mentally summarize it. If you have trouble, read the section again.”

To get better at math

Practice number facts (both addition and multiplication) without counting on your fingers.

Positive peer connection/Make more friends/Better Social Skills

“Be open-minded”

“If you want your child to make more friends, you should encourage them to do a sport.”

Try new things

Encourage them to try new things in an effort to broaden their abilities. Let them know it is okay to make mistakes, and work with them to understand how they might have done things.

Better social skills/Positive self concept

We work every day on getting kids to better at making friends, introducing themselves to others, and using manners at all times. We also encourage students to sit with someone different at lunch, work on projects with someone they wouldn't normally work with, or read books that can give them tips on getting to know others.