



ROUND TABLE

NEWS AND VIEWS FOR AND FROM KNIGHTS

MCS Reinforces Strong Ties with Japan



Jonelle Toskas (first left, middle row), Erika Mendiola (center, back row), and Taliyah Bocago (center, middle row) have a group photo taken with some of their counterparts on a recent cultural exchange trip to Japan.

Despite the announced withdrawal of the only direct flight between Saipan and Japan, Mount Carmel School is reinforcing its historic links with Japan with a number of cultural exchange programs.

Earlier this year, Japanese teacher Akemi Ishikawa met with representatives from the Japan Consulate to discuss the Japanese Exchange and Teaching program, also known as JET. With JET, the school has hosted several teachers from Japan over the years who complete a teaching practicum alongside Mount Carmel School teachers.

According to school president, Galvin Deleon Guerrero, the program has been huge success. "It's been great to have our teachers guide and mentor our friends from Japan, but our teachers and students have also learned a lot about Japanese culture and history in the process."

As part of the JET program, the Japan Consulate and the school are also encouraging students to consider applying to colleges in Japan. Ishikawa looks forward to helping students with the process. As she put it, "If any student is interested in studying in Japan, they can come see me; I would love to help them."

Some students who may take her up on the offer are seniors Jonelle Toskas and Erika

Mendiola and 8th grade student Taliyah Bocago. The three recently returned from a cultural exchange trip to Japan.

Toskas thoroughly enjoyed the trip. "I really liked learning more about their culture and lifestyle. Eating their food and joining for their daily lives was very insightful."

Mendiola, who is also the school's Student Council president, agreed. "I liked that we got to learn more about the history of the places that we visited and we also learned more about the connection between Saipan and Japan."

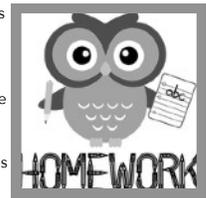
That connection is rooted in the island's history before World War II when the Northern Marianas Islands were placed under the jurisdiction of Japan. During the Japanese Era, Saipan's economy was developed as the sugar hub of the Pacific and many on island studied at Japanese schools. This connection continued after the war as many Japanese families and tourists visited the islands, at one point making the Japan market the largest source of tourism for the islands.

For Mount Carmel School, the connection to Japan stems all the way back to the school's opening in 1952, when the first classes were held in the administration building of the old sugar mill.

What is the Right Amount of Homework?

by Youki Terada for edutopia

Many teachers and parents believe that homework helps students build study skills and review concepts learned in class. Others see homework as disruptive and unnecessary, leading to burnout and turning kids off to school. Decades of research show that the issue is more nuanced and complex than most people think: Homework is beneficial, but only to a degree. Students in high school gain the most, while younger kids benefit much less.



The National PTA and the National Education Association support the "10-minute homework guideline"—a nightly 10 minutes of homework per grade level. But many teachers and parents are quick to point out that what matters is the quality of the homework assigned and how well it meets students' needs, not the amount of time spent on it.

The guideline doesn't account for students who may need to spend more—or less—time on assignments. In class, teachers can make adjustments to support struggling students, but at home, an assignment that takes one student 30 minutes to complete may take another twice as much time—often for reasons beyond their control. And homework can widen the achievement gap, putting students from low-income households and students with learning disabilities at a disadvantage.

However, the 10-minute guideline is useful in setting a limit: When kids spend too much time on homework, there are real consequences to consider.

SMALL BENEFITS FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

As young children begin school, the focus should be on cultivating a love of learning, and assigning too much homework can undermine that goal. And young students often don't have the study skills to benefit fully from homework, so it may be a poor use of time (Cooper, 1989; Cooper et al., 2006; Marzano & Pickering, 2007). A more effective activity may be nightly reading, especially if parents are involved. The benefits of reading are clear: If students aren't proficient readers by the end of third grade, they're less likely to succeed academically and graduate from high school (Fiestler, 2013).

For second-grade teacher Jacqueline Fiorentino, the minor benefits of homework did not outweigh the potential drawback of turning young children against school at an early age, so she experimented with dropping mandatory homework. "Something surprising happened: They started doing more work at home," Fiorentino writes. "This inspiring group of 8-year-olds used their newfound free time to explore subjects and topics of interest to them." She encouraged her students to read at home and offered optional homework to extend classroom lessons and help them review material.

Continued on back

Announcements

2018 Ninth Circuit Civics Contest

The US Ninth Circuit Court invites all high school students to participate in its annual essay and video contest for students in the western United States and Pacific Islands. This year's theme is the 14th Amendment and what its equal protection clause means to students. For more information, visit <http://www.ca9.uscourts.gov/civicscontest>.

Parent Subs Needed

Are you or anyone you know willing to serve as a substitute teacher for the school and get paid? We're trying to put together a list of parents to serve as substitute teachers as needed. Please contact Parent Council President, Luis Camacho, at 287-9753.

In the Future

8th Grade Halo Halo and Shaved Ice Stand

Monday, March 5

Senior French Fries Stand

Tuesday, March 6

Cheer Squad Mini-Carnival Senior Shaved Ice Stand

Wednesday, March 7

Senior Movie Night

Friday, March 8

Junior Campus Clean-Up Teacher/Staff Hot Lunch

Saturday, March 10

Sports Calendar

CCOPSSA Middle School Volleyball Playoffs

Monday, March 5
MCS1 v SDA @MCS
MCS2 v GCA2 @GCA

Wednesday, March 7
TBA

Friday, March 9
Championship Games (TBA)

ESLR of the Week

#4. Show leadership by being active participants within the community.

Homework

continued from front

MODERATE BENEFITS FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

As students mature and develop the study skills necessary to delve deeply into a topic—and to retain what they learn—they also benefit more from homework. Nightly assignments can help prepare them for scholarly work, and research shows that homework can have moderate benefits for middle school students (Cooper et al., 2006). Recent research also shows that online math homework, which can be designed to adapt to students' levels of understanding, can significantly boost test scores (Roschelle et al., 2016).

There are risks to assigning too much, however: A 2015 study found that when middle school students were assigned more than 90 to 100 minutes of daily homework, their math and science test scores began to decline (Fernández-Alonso, Suárez-Álvarez, & Muñiz, 2015). Crossing that upper limit can drain student motivation and focus. The researchers recommend that "homework should present a certain level of challenge or difficulty, without being so challenging that it discourages effort." Teachers should avoid low-effort, repetitive assignments, and assign homework "with the aim of instilling work habits and promoting autonomous, self-directed learning."

In other words, it's the quality of homework that matters, not the quantity. Brian Sztabnik, a veteran middle and high school English teacher, suggests that teachers take a step back and ask themselves these five questions:

- How long will it take to complete?
- Have all learners been considered?
- Will an assignment encourage future success?
- Will an assignment place material in a context the classroom cannot?
- Does an assignment offer support when a teacher is not there?

CONGRATULATIONS



Mount Carmel School congratulates her MathCourt Knights for their impressive performance in the recent competition:

- 2nd Grade: Room B106, 3rd place – Julius Sheu, Room B202, 1st place – Layla Palacios, 2nd place – Remiegem Melchor
- 4th -6th grade Individual Results
- 4th grade: 4th place – William Matthew Cano, 5th grade, 1st place – Nathaniel Clark, 6th grade, 4th place – Eunkyung Hong
- State Round Qualifiers from all regular meets: K-3, Julius Sheu, Layla Palacios, Remiegem Melchor; 4th – 6th, Oscar Bien Buenafior, Gavril Myles Santiago, William Matthew Can, Nathaniel Clark, Valerie Anne Estella, Eunkyung Hong, & Minki Jung

MORE BENEFITS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, BUT RISKS AS WELL

By the time they reach high school, students should be well on their way to becoming independent learners, so homework does provide a boost to learning at this age, as long as it isn't overwhelming (Cooper et al., 2006; Marzano & Pickering, 2007). When students spend too much time on homework—more than two hours each night—it takes up valuable time to rest and spend time with family and friends. A 2013 study found that high school students can experience serious mental and physical health problems, from higher stress levels to sleep deprivation, when assigned too much homework (Galloway, Conner, & Pope, 2013).

Homework in high school should always relate to the lesson and be doable without any assistance, and feedback should be clear and explicit.

Teachers should also keep in mind that not all students have equal opportunities to finish their homework at home, so incomplete homework may not be a true reflection of their learning—it may be more a result of issues they face outside of school. They may be hindered by issues such as lack of a quiet space at home, resources such as a computer or broadband connectivity, or parental support (OECD, 2014). In such cases, giving low homework scores may be unfair.

Since the quantities of time discussed here are totals, teachers in middle and high school should be aware of how much homework other teachers are assigning. It may seem reasonable to assign 30 minutes of daily homework, but across six subjects, that's three hours—far above a reasonable amount even for a high school senior. Psychologist Maurice Elias sees this as a common mistake: Individual teachers create homework policies that in aggregate can overwhelm students. He suggests that teachers work together to develop a school-wide homework policy and make it a key topic of back-to-school night and the first parent-teacher conferences of the school year.

PARENTS PLAY A KEY ROLE

Homework can be a powerful tool to help parents become more involved in their child's learning (Walker et al., 2004). It can provide insights into a child's strengths and interests, and can also encourage conversations about a child's life at school. If a parent has positive attitudes toward homework, their children are more likely to share those same values, promoting academic success.

But it's also possible for parents to be overbearing, putting too much emphasis on test scores or grades, which can be disruptive for children (Madjar, Shklar, & Moshe, 2015). Parents should avoid being overly intrusive or controlling—students report feeling less motivated to learn when they don't have enough space and autonomy to do their homework (Orkin, May, & Wolf, 2017; Patall, Cooper, & Robinson, 2008; Silinskas & Kikas, 2017). So while homework can encourage parents to be more involved with their kids, it's important to not make it a source of conflict.

Parent Council Corner

EASTER EGG HUNT

**Monday
April 9**

