

## HOMEWORK AT HARRISBURG ACADEMY

We, at the Academy, believe that homework has four intended purposes: *practice*, *repetition*, *preparation*, and *independence*. Let me clarify these purposes. *Practice* is easily understood. It is the opportunity for a student to utilize knowledge or a skill over and over so that it becomes easier to use that knowledge or skill when needed. Some examples are: in spelling, sounding out words to determine which letters are involved; in math, adding numbers in column form to help in understanding place value; in language arts, making up sentences to determine what nouns and verbs are. *Repetition*, though similar to practice, addresses memory. Brain research shows that when learning first occurs, the information is stored in our short-term or working memory. Repeated usage aids in moving learned information from short-term memory to long-term memory. Repetition of previously acquired learning aids in keeping information available and retrievable. Some examples are: in spelling, using and reusing words in sentences and in context; in math, math facts such as addition and multiplication repeated consistently allowing for their usage in higher functions of math concepts. Repetition is also a key factor in enhancing fluency both in reading and in math. *Preparation* is also easily understood. Much of our learning is based on previously acquired knowledge. To aid in preparation, teachers assign work on previously learned material that they will build on in the next set of class lessons. Some examples are: in spelling, making words plural as a basis for looking at other suffixes that could be added; in math, doing two column addition before introducing three column addition; in social studies, talking about home as a type of community before introducing school as a community. *Independence* is, in my belief, the truest purpose for *homework*. Homework should be designed to allow students to demonstrate what they can do independent of others. Homework should be the time when a student uses acquired skills and knowledge to perform what is expected. Homework is an opportunity for students to demonstrate to themselves as well as to the teacher what they have learned as well as what skills they are learning or have mastered. The only example of independence that matters is the student doing homework on his or her own.

As educators, it is our responsibility to design and assess homework assignments to meet these purposes. As parents, your role is to support your children by providing appropriate guidance, space and materials and, most important, assisting the teachers by communicating any concerns or issues that may arise concerning homework. It is important to observe your child working independently. Are they organized, able to maintain focus, willing to ask for clarification or, if unable to perform the task, willing to try? Please let the teacher know both the positive and negative aspects of these experiences. It is important to remember that students work at different paces; communicating issues of the time it takes for your child to finish assignments is helpful in determining the best way to address a homework issue. Homework can be a key to bridging home and school in a positive and productive manner. Let's work together to make that happen. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me or your child's teacher.