

Homework Policy

Barrett Middle School Mathematics Department

Formally adopted 5/5/03

Background and Philosophies: (Adapted from the “Mathematics Framework for California Public Schools”).

- The step from elementary mathematics to algebra is one of the largest in the curriculum. Currently, the requirement is that algebra be taught in the 8th grade rather than the traditional 9th or 10th grade. This has led to more rigorous programs in the middle school level than may have been previously experienced.
- Algebra is the gateway or foundation course for all advanced mathematics courses. Without it, students will not succeed in upper level mathematics courses that are necessary to enter college and pursue many high-tech / high-paying jobs after graduation.
- Mathematics instruction is unique in that new skills are dependent on previously learned skills. Since each level of mathematics growth requires mastery of the preceding level, homework plays a vital role in achieving mathematical competency. Students must commit to attending class, completing homework assignments and seeking help in resolving problems and difficulties.
- Homework should increase in complexity and duration with the higher level mathematics courses.

“Gaining competency in mathematics does not require inherent mathematical talent, but it does require sustained effort and hard work.”

Mathematics Framework for
California Public Schools, p. 212.

Goal:

- Our goal is for all students to obtain and retain the cumulative knowledge necessary to succeed in the next level math class. Placement into an appropriate level math class is made with a student’s best interest in mind to ensure that he/she can succeed in mathematics as well as be challenged.

Policy:

Homework criteria and requirements have been set to ensure uniformity within the department and are set according to mathematics course level as the objectives for each of these courses varies.

- As mentioned above, homework is an essential component in mathematics instruction to ensure competency and mastery of skills since learning new skills depends on the previous skills obtained through practice. Therefore, homework will be assigned nightly regardless of the level of math course. (This includes weekends and possibly breaks).
- Homework practice in the form of review provides for the long-term retention of the material. Review work may be assigned daily and/or as needed and should not be ignored or considered less important.
- Students are required to show all work to receive credit for homework. This includes copying down the original problem and showing the solution process used to achieve an answer. All teachers have requirements on how to show that a problem was attempted and not incomplete.
- Homework should begin in class if time permits. Students should utilize this time effectively to begin practicing the new skills(s) and to clarify the lesson utilizing teacher assistance.
- The math department sponsors and supports after school study halls to help students requiring extra assistance in math.

Math Department Homework Policy, *continued*

Homework time frames listed below are approximate and may vary considerably due to students prior knowledge of related skills, preparedness for the current day's lesson (homework completion), and a student's attention and participation during class. Students that experience difficulty with recalling information, may spend considerably longer on homework due to time spent reviewing examples in their notes and text.

Connecting Math Concepts

Homework will be most nights and may include practice to reinforce the day's lesson in addition to problems used to maintain skills. Homework should usually be completed within 30 minutes of sustained effort*.

Pre-Algebra A / Pre-Algebra B (formerly Math 7 and Math 8)

Homework will be most nights and may include practice to reinforce the day's lesson in addition to problems used to maintain skills. Homework should usually be completed within 45 minutes of sustained effort*.

Pre-Algebra (formerly Algebra 1A)

Homework will be most nights and may include practice to reinforce the day's lesson in addition to problems used to maintain skills. Homework should usually be completed within 50 minutes of sustained effort*.

Algebra 1B / Algebra 1 / Geometry

Homework will be every night and may include practice to reinforce the day's lesson in addition to problems used to maintain skills. More homework is required of these courses as the lessons are more complex and often require practice of multiple concepts. Homework should usually be completed within 1 hour of sustained effort*. As a reminder, these courses have traditionally been taught in high school and therefore, have high school level expectations and requirements.

* "Sustained effort" means working in an environment conducive to studying that is free from distractions and disruptions. (TV, phone, computer, friends, stereo, etc.).

- During the first quarter of the school year, if students are consistently spending a substantially longer time on homework, it may be an indication that the student is improperly placed in his/her math course &/or lacks basic arithmetic skills.
- Through the remainder of the school year, frequent absences, long term absences (more than 2 days), and missed homework practice all create gaps in prior knowledge needed to proceed with the current lesson. Under these circumstances, homework times may increase until remediation and mastery of missed work is completed.
- Homework times listed above do not include additional time necessary to prepare for tests and quizzes.
- Word problems, proofs & challenge problems may require more time for some students.