

Planned Math (Problem Exercises) Homework Procedures

I'm currently in the process of updating my homework policies and procedures. I am a math teacher, and I've had 90+ students a day some years. Grading 20-30 problems of homework per student every night--in addition to grading daily classwork, weekly bellringer pages, and periodic quizzes, tests, and projects--has been a challenge . . . especially in light of the after-school math tutoring math teachers were asked to provide, all of the professional development we were required to attend, after-school meetings and phone calls with parents, photocopying, lesson planning, etc., etc.

A teacher suggested that I read award-winning, veteran teacher David R. Johnson's booklets on managing a math classroom (I purchased them from the Pearson Education website.) They were phenomenal in regards to just about every area related to conducting a math class, not just math homework. I was also blessed to be able to attend the NCTM national conference in Atlanta. There, I was surprised to hear from several veteran teachers who presented in one particular session that they do not collect math homework at all! I did an informal survey of my fellow teacher session attendees, and they concurred. The session presenters proceeded to clarify how they conduct homework correction sessions and teach error-correction procedures to students so that the LEARNING aspect during math homework does not equate to a penalty to the students' grades.

After attending the NCTM national conference, reading David R. Johnson's books, collaborating with other teachers, and adapting and consolidating all the tips from all of these sources, the process below is what I'm planning to try homework-wise in the future.

NOTE: The procedure below is not a suggestion of or reflection on David R. Johnson or any one particular teacher. It's simply the procedure I plan to try as I work to improve my math homework policies, given the particular challenges I've had in the past in regards to managing math homework, student attitudes towards math homework, parents' concerns about math homework, etc. Once in the classroom, I'll adjust any steps as I learn what works and what does not.

My current plan for managing math homework exercises/problems:

(NOTE: Other math homework may include math activities on the Internet, work in students' Math Interactive Student Notebooks, etc.)

1. Assign 5-15 math homework problems each night. Include 10-20 additional practice problems for students and/or parents who want more at-home practice problems. Make sure students and parents are clear that the 10-20 problems are extra. Make sure that students have access to the answers to the 10-20 extra practice problems. Require that the 10-20 additional practice problems NOT BE COMPLETED ON THE SAME PAGE AS THE REQUIRED 5-15 HW problems. Inform parents and students that if students have questions about the extra practice problems, those questions can be addressed during "office hours," or math tutoring times in the mornings before school, or *as the teacher is able* during class.
2. Require students to submit their math homework to a box on my desk upon entering the room, or if this ends up creating a line of students at my desk, I'll ask students to pass their HW forward at a specific time.
3. Have a bellringer for students to do while I complete the HW stamping procedure described in steps below. Work to complete the following steps in 3-4 minutes (or less if possible).
4. Have a self-inking, date stamper. (I think there's one available at www.callowayhouse.com, but perhaps office supply stores carry them as well). Also, have a clipboard with a GRADING SLIP and a few PINK SLIPS (aka RESPONSIBILITY CARDS).
5. **Date stamp each student's HW just below the last line he or she wrote.** Record HW completion grades on the grading slip (for example, check+ = 100 = complete, check = 70 = most of the HW is done, check- = 50 = less than half done, 0 = no HW available to be graded . . . or something of the like) and LET THE GRADING SLIP DOUBLE AS MY INFORMAL ATTENDANCE RECORD (for my usage only). NOTE: Since I'm also using the grading slip to take note of absent students, for absent students I can now easily set aside a copy of the rest of the day's handouts/sheets. I can write their names

atop these sheets and place these papers in the makeup work manila envelopes.

6. Prepare pink slips (aka responsibility cards) from the clipboard for those students without HW. Note: If a student has only done one problem or so, I've decided not to "pink slip" these students. I plan to reserve the pink slips as just a place holder for "no-paper-at-all-havers." I will use the incomplete papers as evidence of themselves. (NOTE: Some teachers have added "incomplete work" sections to their pink slips.)
7. Discuss/deal with bellringer. Move on from the bellringer. Otherwise, it might distract students from the upcoming homework correction session.
8. Pass back the homework papers and pass out any pink slips.

Homework Correction Session:

David Johnson has a system for this that sounds phenomenal. It is very interactive. As I grow more and more as a teacher, I hope to be able to incorporate his ideas into the plan I've written below. **NOTE: Some educational leaders frown upon the usage of significant class time for reviewing homework.** In my experience, homework can be a place of connection between the teacher and parents (most parents can relate to homework), and reviewing it can be a great learning tool for students. (Students tend to be more invested in recently completed work, I've found.) I did work for an administration one year that really, really frowned upon spending class time to discuss homework, even in math class.

My current homework correction session plan:

1. NO PENCILS ALLOWED RIGHT NOW. Desks should be cleared at this point except for students' HW paper and a correction pen. I may have to pass out green or purple or red pens, depending on my chosen classroom procedures based on the maturity of the students. Encourage pink slipped students to take out a sheet of paper and do as much of the homework as they can from the homework correction session, since the HW quiz on Friday is looming.

2. Conduct the homework correction session: Go over any HW problems in detail as prudent. Have students make any corrections in colorful pen. Depending on the maturity level of the classroom, I may decide to have these passed out each period, perhaps as I stamp the homework. (As I stated, David R. Johnson does some neat activities at this stage to really engage the students. I'm not sure if I'll always have time for this, so I'm playing that by ear.) Factoring in the level of teacher direction each class typically requires, turn the correction session over to students as much as prudent. Let them speak and ask questions. Discuss alternative solutions. Extend certain problems if prudent and time permits, and utilize the makeshift whiteboards (white cardstock within a heavy duty sheet protector) if prudent and time permits. **Hopefully, if the number of total HW problems is limited to 5-15, then detailed questions and answers can be discussed so that there is more time for the gaining of understanding.**
3. Finally, I plan to take up the HW, just for a day. I will photocopy problematic pages (barely started pages, etc.) for my records, and file the *COPY* in my big student binder of sheet protectors (one sheet protector per student) for display at parent conferences if need be. I will look over the homework and take note of problems that have lots of inked-in corrections. This will guide my review the next morning, if necessary. I will carefully file PINK SLIPS in the huge student binder in the appropriate student's sheet protector.
4. I will pass back the homework the next morning because students need to save and file their homework to use on the homework quiz on Friday.

NOTE: Some people don't like the hassle of taking up the homework at all. I need to take up the homework for my review, for photocopying of very incomplete homework for my records, to retrieve any file pink slips, etc. Plus, I'm hoping that by collecting the homework, students who otherwise wouldn't will put (a little) more stock into the homework (smile).

And this is my current plan. I shall see how well this works. I hope this inspires ideas. Please feel free to email me at mathwithsanderson@gmail.com with your kind suggestions on how to improve this plan or with questions about the plan. Also, I would love to hear what works for you!