

Homework and the Hilldale Student

By Sasha Clayton

It is our goal to graduate the best and brightest students in the Bay area. How do we get there? Obviously, we hire teachers with knowledge and the ability to convey that knowledge to their students. But our teachers go beyond the simple transference of knowledge; they *inspire* our students to *enjoy* the process of learning. It is truly marvelous to watch our talented teachers in action.

We use superb curricula and a multitude of teaching styles to educate our students. During the week, students are exposed to lecture, large group discussion, individual practice, small group work, and hands-on application. It is this *mélange* of techniques that feeds the individual needs of the students. The teachers present a new concept, promote discussion so that students can relate this to previously-learned knowledge, present the information in another format, assign homework for application and synthesis, and then assess students' comprehension.

It is on the homework portion of the learning experience that I would like to focus my thoughts. Some parents have expressed to me that they truly value homework, as it provides not only ownership of the concepts being taught, but discipline. There are even students who profess a love for homework, and why not? They get to overcome obstacles designed for their skill level. What is more satisfying?

Homework is intended to serve both as reinforcement and also as a challenge. If the students don't have to sometimes struggle with parts of it, mastering it will not be nearly as satisfying. If we think of mastering each concept like learning to play a song on an instrument, this idea of practicing seems quite reasonable. It is understood that one has to practice in order to play the piece. Homework is the same. One has to practice the concepts in a way that is just hard enough to be successful.

Please check out your handbook for guidelines on the completion of nightly homework. This time frame does not include reading, which is also a daily requirement of Hilldale Students. If your child is not ever struggling with homework, please let us know so that we can find ways to challenge him or her. If your child is taking significantly longer to complete his or her homework than the time listed, we also want to know. Perhaps we have discovered an area where your child needs tutoring, or perhaps it is a larger problem with the school assigning too much work for a particular class. With your help, we can make sure that all the students are getting their needs met.

We are approaching progress reports in a couple of weeks, and the semester is over on January 25. At that time, we will have a good idea where your child stands, and will continue to provide the support necessary for academic success. Take a look at your child's homework situation, grades, and progress reports. Does he or she need a tutor? Sometimes temporary, one-on-one help can make all the difference in getting caught up. The trick is to help our students rise to the challenge while teaching them that the challenge is worth overcoming! Together, we're on the right track.