

Homework at Estabrook

A Mid-Cycle Update to the Lexington School Committee

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Overview

- What we **know**
- What we **wanted to do**
- **Why** we wanted to do it
- **How** we did it
- What we **learned**
- What we want to do **next**

What We Know

Reading

- “As students become engaged readers, they provide themselves with self-generated learning opportunities that are equivalent to several years of education.” *(Handbook of Reading Research)*

Play

- “[Play] is a crucial element for building resilience in children, an attribute they’ll need in order to become happy, productive adults.” *(NPR, 8/6/14)*

Mental Health

- 39% of LPS middle schoolers report homework causing them “a lot of stress.”
(LPS YRBS, 2015)

Homework

- “Homework in primary school has an effect of around zero.”
(John Hattie, 2009)

Theory of Action


If we...

- support independent and shared reading
- provide ample time for free play and creative choice
- remove barriers to family time
- provide resources to extend learning

Then we...

- support a culture of learners
- strengthen students' pro-social skills
- cultivate a love of learning and stronger sense of self
- maintain a community in which all students achieve at high levels

2016-2017 School Improvement Plan



Focus on decreasing homework and stress, while increasing wellness

Pilot evening reading as core homework plan, with ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the pilot.

Develop and provide a family calendar of optional, reteaching and enriching, cross-content homework choices, that also include art, music, physical activity, wellness and play (monthly).

Partner with parents on providing unstructured/play time at home and increasing peer friendships outside of school.

Integrate mindfulness practices at school, and provide parent education on mindfulness strategies for home.

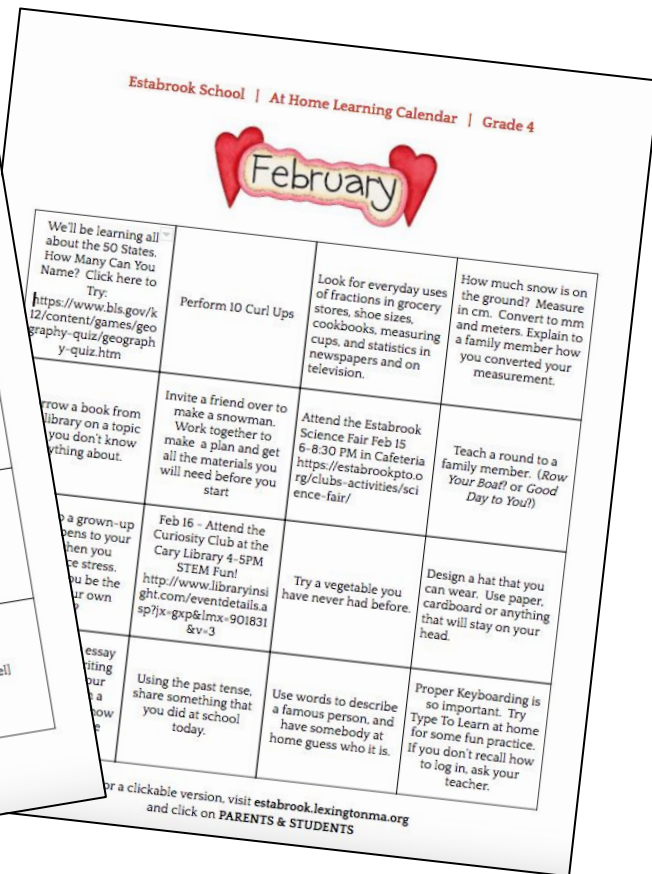
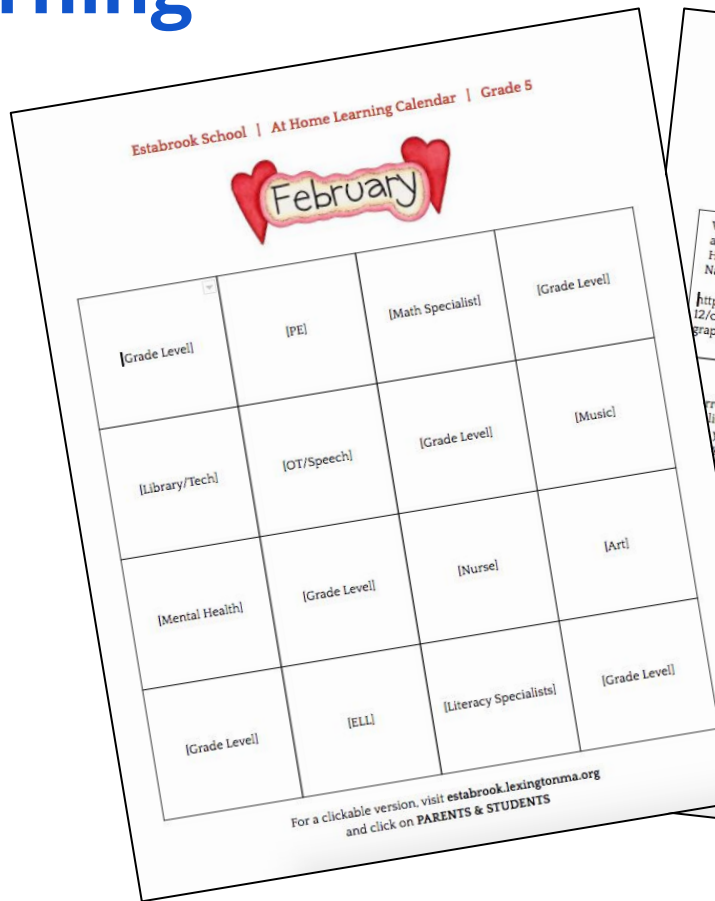
Hold two Principal/Parent Roundtables to discuss Coalition/Youth Risk Survey results and foster home/school dialogue.

Implementation & Communication

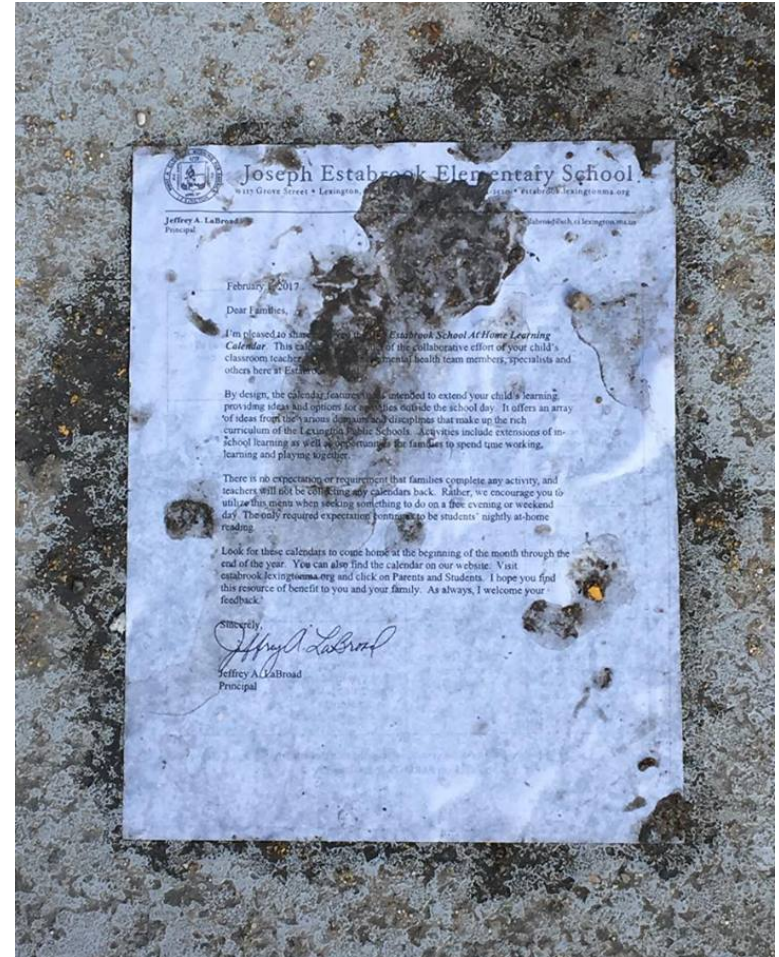
- Reading
- At Home Learning Calendars
- Reinforcing Practice
- Fostering Discussions
- Parent Education
- Faculty Discussions

At Home Learning Calendars

- Monthly
- Grade-specific
- Created collaboratively
- Multi-disciplinary
- Paper and online
- Optional



At Home Learning Calendars



Monitoring & Evaluation: Guiding Questions

1. What are the self-reported and observed impacts on **family and student life outside of school**?
2. What are the self-reported and observed impacts on **students' social and emotional-well being**?
3. How do **academic outcomes** compare with other LPS elementary schools (where written homework was assigned)? How do academic outcomes for Estabrook students compare with their previous academic achievement?
4. What impact, if any, did this change have on **students' reading behaviors and interest in reading**?
5. How might this approach to elementary homework impact **student preparation for middle school**?

Monitoring & Evaluation: Data Collection To Date

- Estabrook Parent Coffee: Listening Session on Homework (March 8)
- Parent Focus Groups (March 28)
- Parent Survey (April 26 - May 13)
- Staff Survey (May 10 - May 15)
- Student Survey (May 5 - May 16)

Findings To Date: Highlights

Regarding Self-Reported Impacts on Family and Student Life Outside of Schools (Question 1):

- **52.7%** of parents indicated that the amount of time available for family activities during the week is now **“better”** or **“a lot better.”**
- **56%** of parents indicated that the amount of time available for unstructured play during the week is now **“better”** or **“a lot better.”**

Regarding Self-Reported Impacts on Students' Social and Emotional-Well Being (Question 2):

- Based on student survey results, most 4th and 5th grade elementary students indicated that homework had not been a significant source of stress in previous years.
- However, when parents were asked about changes in student stress, **42.4%** indicated their student's level of stress was **“better”** or **“a lot better”** compared to previous years.
- Approximately **35%** indicated their student's level of engagement and interest was **“better”** or **“a lot better”** compared to previous years.

Findings To Date: Highlights

Additional Concerns and Challenges

- Communicating with families about what is going on in the classroom and what their student knows and can do
- Homework perceived as a tool for developing work habits
- Transition to middle school

Next Steps

- Share information with parents and staff
- Use findings to inform future school improvement goals:

“During year two of a two-year pilot study on homework, focus on independent reading as the core homework plan in conjunction with grade-specific At Home Learning Calendars. Continue ongoing monitoring and evaluation, collaborating with the Director of Planning and Assessment.”

“Examine the effectiveness of home/school communication in the digital age, with a focus on strategic content and frequency of communication from teachers, teams, departments and administration.”

- Continue evaluation:
 - Analyze student performance data at the conclusion of the 2016-17 school year to examine possible academic impacts.
 - Review self-reported impacts on students’ at home reading behavior and the perceived value of homework as reported on staff, student and parent surveys.
 - Partner with Diamond Middle School, following rising 5th graders to explore possible impacts on middle school transition.

Questions

