



Tips and Tactics for Better Tests and Homework

Category: Assessment

Workshop Overview

Following is a general overview of this workshop, including desired participant outcomes, an explanation of the workshop’s alignment with the Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning, and resources that are included in print and electronic form.

Category: Assessment

Duration: Full workshop – 3 hours

Desired Outcomes:

Participants will...

- Learn what to consider when testing or giving homework.
- Know how to prepare tests that improve student performance.
- Learn to give assignments that increase student achievement.

Learning Forward Standards for Professional Learning:

- **Learning Communities:** Occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
- **Learning Designs:** Integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.
- **Implementation:** Applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long term change.
- **Outcomes:** Aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards.

Resources in This Binder:

- Handouts
 - Handout 1: Help Students Improve Their Written Responses
 - Handout 2: Making Homework Work
 - Handout 3: Checklist for Homework
 - Workshop Agenda
 - Attendee Notes
 - 3-2-1 Evaluation Form
 - Certificate of Completion
- “Think About It” Exercise
- Ready, Set, Go Planning Activity





Topic Outline

Understanding the general flow of topics to be covered is an important part of giving a strong presentation. This allows the presenter(s) to lead effective group discussions and speak extemporaneously. Following are the main topics covered in this PowerPoint presentation. As you prepare to give the workshop, you may want to refer to this page often.



Main Topics:

1. Considerations for Giving Tests
2. Considerations for Giving Assignments

Subtopics:

1. Considerations for Giving Tests

- a. Tests That Boost Student Scores
- b. Student Skills That Improve Test Results
- c. Pre-Test Tips

2. Considerations for Giving Assignments

- a. Homework History
- b. Homework That Makes a Difference
- c. Best Practices for Assigning Homework
- d. Educators' Three-Fold Purpose

Presentation Outline



This outline is designed for you to see the PowerPoint presentation at a glance. Note that slide numbers and the approximate amount of time needed per slide are shown in the right two columns. **The times in bold print show the approximate total time needed for that topic, which includes the approximate times for the activities, shown in parentheses.** You might consider keeping this page within reach during the presentation.

Section of Presentation	Slide #	Timing (mins)
Getting Started		
Introduce self, co-teacher, participants	1-2	
Explain materials issued to participants		
Cover objectives (from Workshop Overview)	2	5
Topic 1 – Considerations for Giving Tests		
	3-17	70
Activity – Think, Pair, Share	4	(10)
Activity – The Top Three – Part I	5	(5)
Break		
Topic 2 – Considerations for Giving Assignments		
	18-27	70
Discussion Point – How much homework should students be assigned on a typical day?	19	(5)
Activity – The Top Three – Part II	27	(20)
Closing Remarks		
	28	5
Total of 2 hours and 30 minutes (not including break)		

Helpful tip!

This workshop can be broken up into shorter sessions so that you can adapt the presentation according to your time constraints.



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CONSIDERATIONS FOR GIVING ASSIGNMENTS

PDXPERT

Think About This...

The National Education Association recommends these homework assignment guidelines:

- Grades K–2: 10 to 20 minutes each day.
- Grades 3–6: 30 to 60 minutes each day.
- Grades 7–12: varies by subject.

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These recommendations come from “Help Your Student Get the Most Out of Homework,” a joint publication of the NEA and the National PTA.

Distribute **Handout 2: Making Homework Work** and ask a volunteer or several volunteers to read the first excerpt, Balancing the Tilt. (The excerpts on this handout are taken from the article “The Homework Seesaw” by Suzette Lovely and found in NorthStar for Principals, 2(8), published by The MASTER Teacher.)

Discuss how this excerpt relates to the guidelines on this slide. Ask participants whether these guidelines seem appropriate and realistic. Also ask what factors they think determine the time allotted for homework. A further question might be: *What should guide homework assignments—the time or the task?*

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PDXPERT CONSIDERATIONS FOR GIVING ASSIGNMENTS

- Review your top three concerns about giving tests and homework assignments.
- Name a tip or specific strategy that can help solve each problem.

ACTIVITY: The Top Three - Part II

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Activity: The Top Three - Part II
Allow 20 minutes for this activity.

Have participants form groups of 4 to 5 people. Ask them to share with their group the top three concerns they wrote down earlier. Then group members can suggest a strategy or tip that could help solve each problem.

Have each group share one or two of its problems and solutions with the whole group.

“Think About It” Exercise



Have staff complete this exercise to begin implementing what they learned during the workshop. Distribute this document to staff by attaching the file to the Next Day Follow-Up Email, or make copies for the staff.

1. Circle the testing and grading techniques in the list below that you have used in your classroom.

Give bonus questions at the ends of tests.

Give open book tests.

Give students options for the type of exam, whether objective or essay.

Allow students quiet time before a test.

Teach students how to write answers to questions.

Tell students the type of questions you are likely to ask in an exam.

2. Are there any effective strategies for helping students with tests or homework that the session did not cover? What are they and how do you propose implementing them? If you are not sure of how to apply them, how could you find the answer?

3. What important skills do students acquire from learning how to answer test questions? What test-taking and homework-completing skills can be carried over to other aspects of learning?
