Recognising the Role of the Family
Providing choice to encourage learning at home

Case Study – Coldstream Primary School

Background
Coldstream Primary School has approximately 135 students with a majority of female staff. The school wanted to improve the involvement of parents in their children’s learning, but not necessarily just their academic learning.

Situation
Coldstream Primary School was concerned that the boys in the school were disengaging and ‘switching off’ fairly early in their primary years. As the school was also keen to have parents develop a greater understanding of what is taught and to promote family activity and communication, they decided to use homework as a conduit for improving engagement.

What did you do?
The school started by examining research around boys’ education, homework and the concept of ‘choice’. Investigations about what other schools were doing identified a homework ‘grid’ that allowed for the school to design their own template and content for how homework could be completed (please see the grid below).

Parents were invited to give feedback on a draft homework grid and policy. This included inviting parents to attend focus groups (over afternoon tea) and to give feedback and ideas. At one of these sessions, feedback was sought over the school’s homework policy and concepts. As a result the policy was updated and a commitment made to the new concept.

The grid concept features a number of activity boxes - some compulsory, some optional - to be completed over a week or a fortnight. The boxes were designed to give an element of choice and to attach greater value to non-traditional homework pursuits, such as family and physical activity, the arts and forms of relaxation.

A common ‘family’ box was incorporated which included a range of activities that involved the whole family, or children contributing to the family, such as helping with the dishes, dinner, or other household tasks, was included to encourage family communication as well as to provide an activity the whole family could be involved in, regardless of the grade levels of the children. The grid also contains some compulsory academic components of reading, spelling, and/or mathematics.

Results
Mostly anecdotal outcomes so far which include:
- Boys appear to be more actively engaged in completing homework activities.
- The homework push involving families has helped many parents to appreciate their role in their children’s learning and to be more actively involved. Some parents have also reported being pleasantly surprised by increasingly positive attitudes of their children to homework and to making a positive contribution to the family dynamic.
- There are more parents feeling comfortable to be in and around the school during the day and involved in the school’s activities. These parents have also indicated a greater understanding of how and what their children are taught.
**5/6 HOMEWORK GRID**

**Date given:** Friday 6th March  
**Date Due:** Friday 20th March

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>READ</strong></th>
<th><strong>FAMILY</strong></th>
<th><strong>YOUR IDEAS</strong></th>
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| Read a variety of books such as take-home books, magazines, novels and information text. Fill this into your diary. | Write and draw a picture about what you did with your family over the Labour Day weekend.  
Or  
Get an adult family member to share their favourite children’s book with the family. | Go shopping for groceries, clothes, hardware etc.  
Or  
Watch a movie and make some popcorn. |

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<tr>
<th><strong>PHYSICAL ACTIVITY</strong></th>
<th><strong>MATHS</strong></th>
<th><strong>PUZZLE</strong></th>
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| Take part in a physical activity: cricket, basketball, dancing, swimming, walking, bike riding, walking the dog. | 1. Calculate the perimeter of each of the following shapes:  
Square | The scale will be 1cm=10cm  
1. Table  
2. Bed  
3. Table 4. Poster  
5. Television |
|                        | 2. In your homework book draw the items to scale. Label each item:  
The scale will be 1cm=10cm | How many smaller words can you make from PUBLIC HOLIDAY? |
|                        | 3. Table 4. Poster  
5. Television | You can use each letter in any order but only once. Write the words in your Homework book. |

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<tr>
<th><strong>SPELLING</strong></th>
<th><strong>INVESTIGATE</strong></th>
<th><strong>ACROSTIC POEM</strong></th>
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| Practise your spelling words using Look, Cover, Write, Check and spelling the words aloud to an adult. | Investigate the significance of Labour Day and why we celebrate it with a public holiday. Write a paragraph in your book to show your findings. Make sure you check your work for spelling, punctuation and meaning. | In your homework book write an acrostic poem that defines or describes:  
A COMMUNITY  
Or  
A LEARNER |

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<tr>
<th><strong>MATHS</strong></th>
<th><strong>INTEGRATED AUTO SHAPES</strong></th>
<th><strong>CATCH UP</strong></th>
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<td>Practise your times tables and number facts e.g.: addition and subtraction to 30. (e.g: 19+8= 27)</td>
<td>Print off your Auto Shapes with your 3 strengths, 3 achievements and 3 facts about you. You should end up with 9 shapes altogether either printed in colour or coloured in. Carefully cut them out ready for laminating and displaying in class.</td>
<td>Finish off any unfinished classroom work including class community logos and mottos. Paste worksheets into their correct book. Check you work is presented neatly.</td>
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