

Homework-Free December Vacation Pilot

By: Joyce Edwards, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent for Teaching & Learning

As part of our ongoing study of homework across the district, the Franklin Public Schools piloted a Homework-Free December Vacation for our K-8 students. High School teachers were encouraged to eliminate homework for the week “to the extent possible” with the understanding that the pacing and the rigorous, complex content in certain courses (i.e. Advanced Placement) may make this more difficult for students in the long run.



During the weeks after the vacation we surveyed K-12 families and staff as well as students at the high school and middle schools. Many thanks to all who participated in the survey. We are pleased to share some of the data we collected from these surveys. The overall comments from families, students, and faculty showed strong support for the homework-free approach to the December vacation. Common themes from families included: less stress and more downtime for all, being able to have quality family time without the pressure of homework, and an appreciation for providing the homework-free opportunity. The table below shows the response rates to the surveys.

Response Rate

Who?	How Many Responses?
K-8 Families	568
K-8 Teachers and Staff	136
Middle School Students	1066
FHS Families	268
FHS Teachers and Staff	69
FHS Students	447

The survey also asked the question, “Would you recommend that the district continue with the practice of Homework Free vacations in February and April?” and was answered by the K-8 respondents as noted in the table below. The overall comments from families, students, and faculty showed strong support for this approach to the upcoming vacations.

K-8 Response about Homework-Free February and April

Who?	% of Respondents Yes	% of Respondents Maybe	% of Respondents No
K-8 Families	89%	5.3%	5.7%
K-8 Teachers and Staff	88%	12%	0
Middle School Students	94%	4%	2%

This same question, “Would you recommend that the district continue with the practice of Homework Free vacations in February and April?” was answered by the FHS respondents as noted below.

FHS Response about Homework-Free February and April

Who?	% of Respondents Yes	% of Respondents Maybe	% of Respondents No
FHS Families	88	7	5
FHS Teachers and Staff	67	28	5
FHS Students	97	3	0

The overall comments from families, students, and faculty showed support for this approach to the other upcoming vacations. While there was overall support for this homework-free approach by teachers, some comments indicated concern about the pacing and complex content in some courses, especially Advanced Placement courses. This is why the phrase “to the extent possible” was used. Teachers need the flexibility to pace the curriculum for

student success, but the goal of the district was to achieve a vacation for high school students that was homework-free wherever and whenever possible.

The strong support for homework-free vacations from the survey data as well as the thousands of comments made by survey participants have been carefully considered by the district. As a result of the data collected, we will also pilot homework-free vacations for K-8 students for both the February and April breaks. Again, for Franklin High School students we will pilot homework-free breaks “to the extent possible.” The course demands and the timing of the Advanced Placement exams may make this difficult in some cases, although we encourage our FHS teachers to consider homework-free breaks as feasible. We will again conduct similar surveys after each vacation period to inform our thinking on this topic for the future. We are grateful to all who participated in the surveys and provided thoughtful and thorough input.