Interactive Homework Summary\*



* **Roles and Responsibilities in Interactive Homework**
* **Sample Interactive Homework Assignment**
* **Interactive Homework Checklist**
* **Key Components in Interactive Homework**

\* *Interactive homework* is a term used for the practice of students intentionally involving family partners in explicitly designed homework assignments. It was developed from the TIPS (Teachers Involving Parents in Schoolwork) research of Joyce Epstein and colleagues at Johns Hopkins University. Other terms for *interactive* mightinclude *shared* or *partner* or *demonstration* homework.Family partners can be parents or other significant adults or siblings or childcare providers or extended family. *Interactive homework* can expand academic and social, emotional, behavioral learning opportunities. It can be successfully implemented at various developmental levels and with various topic/subject areas. It can use both paper/pencil and technology in implementation. Families and students who might experience linguistic, cultural, socioeconomic, or learning differences all can successfully participate.

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| **Roles and Responsibilities in Interactive Homework** |

##### What the Teacher Does…

1. Conducts an orientation meeting for families. Follows up with those who cannot attend to explain interactive homework program and what family members are asked to do; ensure every family has information. Problem solves situations if other caregivers or extended family might be serving as learning partners for students. Stresses the importance of every student’s success and how the school and home will work together to help ensure this.
2. Plans and selects which interactive homework will be used each week (or every two weeks or every month) to fit in with the students’ classwork or needed skills.
3. Distributes the assignment to students and, each time:

* Addresses and clarifies students’ questions about procedures or vocabulary before the assignments are sent home.
* Emphasizes the importance of students involving partners in schoolwork; “family partner” can be anyone the family and teacher and student decide can be a partner.
* Emphasizes that some partners may be at school (afterschool caregivers) or other adults or older students; differences are ok!
* Notes the sections that require interactions with a family partner.
* Tells students when the homework is due.

In some classes, a teacher may need to go through each step, review difficult terms, and clarify directions. A teacher may also differentiate assignments by assigning only some portions for struggling students, making some sections extra credit, or adding activities for advanced students. Every student needs to be successful.

1. Follows up the homework in class on the due date. The teacher discusses the interactive assignment and may ask students to share their work and discuss family partner reactions and ideas. The teacher may clarify questions, introduce enrichment activities, and/or continue with the next lesson. Homework assignments are always reviewed for learning assessment and data used to target or revise instruction.
2. Considers incentives or recognition for students who not only do their homework, but also involve family partners.
3. Maintains records of student homework, including interactive assignments.
4. Notes ideas for improving the interactive homework assignments and designs new activities to fit the curriculum as needed. New or additional interactive homework will be needed as the curriculum is expanded or changed.
5. Shares ideas or suggestions about the homework assignments, family participation, project implementation, or other issues with other teachers.

What the Student Does?

1. Looks over the interactive homework assignment. Asks the teacher any questions about procedures or directions that are not clear.
2. Takes the shared assignment home, shows it to a family partner, gathers needed materials, and finds a location in which to work.
3. Follows the directions, talks with family partner as directed in the assignment, and completes the homework. This should be an enjoyable exchange of ideas and information.
4. Asks a family member or significant adult to respond to the Home-to-School Communication and to sign the activity; shares his/her ideas and feedback.
5. Returns the assignment to class on the due date. Shares responses and questions about the activity.

What the Family Partner Does?

1. Learns how the interactive homework process works and how to interact with their child on activities. Information is provided to families in multiple forms: a letter from the principal, orientation sessions, information from the students, and phone calls from teachers, emails, texts, website.
2. Assists student, when necessary, to gather materials for the activities.
3. Participates and interacts with student as described in each homework assignment.
4. Checks each week to see if there is an interactive homework activity and encourages the student to think about and discuss the homework assignment.
5. Monitors interactive and all homework so that the student knows that the family cares about what he or she is learning in school.
6. Completes the Home-to-School Communication, adds a comment if desired, and signs each interactive activity. Communicates with the teacher about any questions or concerns; if not an immediate family member, shares information continuously with family.
7. Expresses enjoyment and interest in the child’s work in each subject; motivates student to do his or her best each day in school and on each homework assignment: conveys family belief that school and learning are important.

What the School Administrator Does?

1. Supports the teachers, students, and family partners in the development and implementation of interactive homework.
2. Sends a communication in multiple forms to families explaining interactive homework, the rationale, and how important families are as partners. Includes how there are many significant people in a child’s life who may serve as a partner. This may be sent during the summer or early in the fall. A reminder may be sent during the school year and in school newsletters throughout the year. In all communications, language must be understandable to all families.
3. Monitors the success of interactive homework and reviews data; offers teachers and students and family partners recognition, encouragement, and suggestions.
4. Provides time for the orientation of teachers and families to interactive homework.

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| **Sample Interactive Homework Assignment** |

**Student Name: Date:**

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| 1. **LOOK THIS OVER:** Explain this example to your family partner.   Remember: To find the average for a set of data: 1. Add all of the data;  2. Divide by the number of pieces of data; and 3. Round to the nearest whole number if necessary. Here is an example:  **DATA: 4,9,5,6,11**  **ADD: 4 + 9 + 5 + 6 + 11 (5 items of data)**  **DIVIDE BY NUMBER OF DATA ITEMS: 35 by 5 = 7**  **AVERAGE = 7** |
| 1. **NOW TRY THIS:** Show your family member how to do this example.   **DATA: 7,13,23,3 ADD THE DATA: \_\_\_\_\_\_**  **DIVIDE BY NUMBER OF DATA ITEMS:\_\_\_\_\_**  **AVERAGE (ANSWER): \_\_\_\_\_** |
| 1. **PRACTICE in the REAL WORLD:** Complete this example with your partner. Show your work. Explain how you found your answer.   **1. FIND OUT THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS YOUR FAMILY PARTNER SLEPT THIS WEEK!**  **2. DATA: WRITE DOWN THE HOURS**  **M\_\_\_\_; T\_\_\_\_; W\_\_\_; TH: \_\_\_; F: \_\_\_\_; S: \_\_\_\_; S: \_\_\_\_**  **3. FIGURE THE AVERAGE BY ADDING AND DIVIDING.**  **4. ANSWER:** |
| **IV. FAMILY PARTNER -TO-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION: Thanks for Partnering !**  Dear Family Partner,  Please share your reactions to your student’s work on this activity. Please mark statements, which are true for you.  \_\_\_\_\_My student understood the homework.  \_\_\_\_\_My student was able to complete the homework.  \_\_\_\_\_This assignment helped me to know what my child is learning in math.  \_\_\_\_\_I would like more information about how I can support learning out of school.  Family Partner Comments:  Student Comments:  Family Partner Signature and Contact Information: |

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| **Interactive Homework Checklist** |

**DIRECTIONS:**

Use this checklist to discuss the content of the interactive assignments you develop, and identify the student and family partner responsibilities and interactions. Check to evaluate whether the assignment includes the following characteristics.

## Meaningful Curriculum Content

\_\_\_\_\_1. Is the content important and/or enriching for building student skills and abilities?

\_\_\_\_\_2. Are the directions, vocabulary, background, and content clear and concise?

## Realistic Student Responsibilities

\_\_\_\_\_3. Are the student responsibilities clear and easy for students to conduct?

\_\_\_\_\_4. Can the assignment be completed in a reasonable amount of time by students

at this grade level? \_\_\_\_5. Does the assignment need to be adapted for students with different levels of

skill development?

## Productive Family Partner Interactions

\_\_\_\_6. Is the assignment enjoyable for students’ family partners?

\_\_\_\_7.Is the family partner asked to do something that ALL family partners

can do? (Note: Family members should not be asked to read or write anything

except in the section for home-to-school communications.)

\_\_\_\_8. Will a family partner learn something about

what the student is learning, thinking, and doing in class?

## Effective Interactive Design

\_\_\_\_\_9. Does the assignment include the essential two-way **Learning Partner-to-School** **Communication** sections for familypartners and students**?**

\_\_\_\_\_10. Does the assignment include other appropriate components for the

specific subject?

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| **Guidelines for Interactive Homework**  **Key Points to Remember as You Design Interactive Homework** |

**1. Recognize the importance of the interactive nature of the assignment.**

Teachers should think carefully about how the skill or objective of the assignment may be highlighted in an interaction *before* writing the actual assignment. Some skills lend themselves to better interactions than others. By identifying the interactive components of the assignment first, one can insure that the interactive assignment will promote productive and meaningful student-parent interactions.

**2. Do not expect the family partner to teach school skills.**

The student should compute the answers to problems, write paragraphs, and collect information. The family partner serves as an assistant, never the teacher. All family partners, regardless of formal education, should be able to participate in the assignment.

**3. Identify the student and family roles clearly.**

* The directions of the assignment should be clear to students. They should see easily where they will ask for family partner involvement. For example, if important definitions are included in the assignment, teachers should write the following statement for students to follow: “*Explain the following definitions to your family partner.*”
* The family partner should know about interactive homework, how it works, what their responsibilities are, how to share their observations and feedback with the teacher and student.

**4. Link skills and objectives to the real world.**

Try to link the skill and the required student work and interactions to the real world as often as possible.

**5. Focus on the objective of the assignment.**

Teachers should be careful not to lose sight of the objective. Because the assignments are best as two sides of one page, it is important for the students’ work to focus in on the assignment’s objective.

**6. Pilot and edit the assignment.**

Part of the writing process includes piloting the assignment. Teachers should complete the assignment to make sure that it is doable. If two teachers designed interactive activities, they should pilot and edit each other’s assignments. Thinking of the average student and family, partners consider:

How much time is needed to complete the assignment?

Are the questions absolutely clear?

Are the student and family partner roles clear?

Then edit the assignment to improve it. Adapt for students and families as needed.

**7. Vary the types of interactions in the assignments.**

Teachers should vary the types of interactions that are required across assignments. Not all assignments should ask students to interview a family partner. Students might like to conduct different interactions such as an interview, demonstration, experiment, or collect reactions, memories, or ideas.

**8. Develop assignments YOU would enjoy completing.**

Teachers should work to produce assignments they would find interesting and enjoyable. Your enthusiasm for the assignments will encourage students and family partners to see the value and importance of completing interactive homework.