

Dear Families of our Young and Bright Mathematicians,

This year is promising for your child. A fresh start, a clean slate, a new beginning. We are excited to start something new with your student and the ways in which we do “homework”.

We ended last school year feeling the tension of homework stronger than ever before. We felt two strong issues: one being that students often did not gain much from the prescribed homework and the other that homework was a nightly battle that ended in tears with both student and families left not knowing what to do. Being a developmental research school, we set out to explore this tension and to try to find some resolution. The big issues we sought to tackle with homework were:

- creating supports for students (and families) who need more help with the concepts taught at school
- offering enrichment activities that take students an extra step deeper into the concept
- making learning outside of school engaging and FUN

We began by reading the research on homework. The research is generally divided into two types: one exploring the effectiveness of homework in general, the other exploring the right amount and type of homework if we assume that homework is effective. When reading the research critically, two things became clear. First, that the research is mixed on whether or not homework is effective at all with students in the elementary grades, and second, that the only homework that shows any positive effect is homework that is meaningful and engaging. What we realized is this: if we predetermine before school starts that there will be homework every single night, then we aren't responding to student need and there is no way to make that many homework assignments engaging. When we add that there is no research that shows homework builds study skills or patterns of behavior (the other reasons often given for homework), we couldn't, in good conscience, continue to assign homework every night.

In addition, we are also continuing to move toward standards based grading - where students and parents are aware of the Learning Goals (standards) for each unit of study and are tracking their progress toward meeting those goals. It makes sense that a student's homework matches the goals they need to work on, but that means that each student needs to have his/her own work based on his/her own needs.

In order to be responsive to the research and our students' needs, we are moving away from graded homework this year. **This means that students will not be mandated to complete a given task at home to be turned in for a grade.** This is not the same thing as “no homework” - we still expect students to be working on math skills and concepts at home. To help make this happen, we are offering something more powerful and individualized than workbook pages and skills practice. The math team has created a PKY Treehouse Math website to house resources for each learning goal for every unit covered in class.

During set-apart times during your week (outside of school), we want students to:

1. Access our PKY Treehouse Math Website at :
<https://sites.google.com/a/pkyongee.ufl.edu/pky-4-5-treehouse-math/>
2. Select their grade level.
3. Select “home resources”.
4. Select the current unit.
5. Use their **Unit Goal Tracker** (Google Spreadsheet) to see which learning goals they need support, practice, or push in. (Located in their Google Drive → Classroom → 4th Grade or 5th Grade)
6. **Choose** activities to support, practice, or push desired learning goals.
7. **Record** what activity they did and why they choose it in their Unit Goal Tracker.

On our math website, you will find:

- corresponding help pages from our Student Math Handbook (SMH) listed
 - If you and your child want a hard copy of our SMH, just let us know and we will send one home with your child.
- tutorials from our Treehouse teachers
- instructions for online games for your student.

Additionally:

- We will send home a packet of resources from our Student Activity Book (SAB) for some paper practice (If students choose to complete some of these pages, we ask that they turn this work into their math teacher when complete. Teachers will use this work in making sure your student has reached mastery on all unit learning goals.)
- We are continuing to offer **Homework Time every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 2:30-3:00 pm where students will have access to their Chromebooks and a Treehouse Math teacher.**

The purpose behind this shift is for students to be able to be responsible for their own learning and to choose what they need to work on for their personal growth as a mathematician. **The biggest way you can help your student with their “homework” this year is to help them create that set-apart time for them to focus on growing their math skills.** As we move in this direction, we are open to feedback about how this new way of “homework” works for your child, suggestions on what to add to the site, and any questions you might have.

We are excited to learn alongside your student this year!

Onward,
The Treehouse Math Team

Ms. Erin Carlson
Mr. Cary Kirby

Mrs. Kelly Haynes
Mrs. Sara Montgomery



(QR Code for PKY Treehouse Math Website)