

## Discussions About the Return of Graded Student Work Continues

Last February, representatives of Citizens For Education met with high school and district administration to discuss the return of graded work to students. This issue was raised in response to parent concerns about a widespread practice in the high schools, where little or none of their child's graded work comes home. This means that when high school students are studying for unit tests, midterms, finals and AP exams, many students do not have their previous work available to them. To best study and learn, having the ability to look at one's mistakes, to fully understand coursework, is critical. Using previous graded work as a study tool can be a crucial element to academic success for many students. Currently there is a culture that sets no expectation or defined guidelines for the return of student tests, quizzes, or other graded work.

Following meetings earlier this year, the administration issued a new position, which now appears in the student handbook. This statement reads as follows:

*"Council Rock School District recognizes the need for regular student assessment. Assessment can take many forms: class work, homework, reports, projects, student writing, student performance, quizzes, teacher-developed tests, department/district tests, mid-term exams, and standardized tests.*

*Teachers will provide the opportunity to review assessments in a classroom setting. After this review, students are encouraged to share the responsibility for their own learning by taking advantage of the following methods of preparing for future assessments: clinic, resources posted on the teacher's web site and distributed in class, self-monitoring through academic notebooks, logs, or charting that records areas mastered and those in need of review.*

*When appropriate, teachers will return assessments to students; however, for reasons of test integrity, not all assessments will be sent home. Parents may always schedule an appointment with the teacher to review assessments.*

*Teachers will address their return of assessment practices through a course syllabus and/or during Back to School Night presentations."*

Citizens For Education is not satisfied with this statement because the language is deemed vague and non-specific. Quantifiable language regarding expectations for the return of assessments is needed.

In a small sampling of research among current high school parents following Back to School Night at both high schools, the following anecdotal findings were revealed and anonymously shared with the administration:

- Many teachers did not address this topic in their course syllabus or during Back to School Night presentations
- Some teachers communicated that there is a district policy prohibiting the return of student work

- Teachers who previously returned work to students are now no longer doing so “because of the district directive”

Citizens For Education once again met with administrators in early November to continue the dialogue on this issue. Administrators were surprised and disappointed to hear that no progress was made and that, in some cases, the situation has gotten worse for students. While there was no consensus among the entire group as to what the “right answer” is in terms of how much work should be coming home, the administration unanimously agreed that sending home no assessments at all was not acceptable.

At the time of this writing, the administration continues to look into this matter within each of the high schools, with teachers, department chairs and curriculum coordinators, and will report back to CFE regarding findings and possible changes in policy. Citizens remains committed to lobbying for giving students more of their graded tests and quizzes to review at home. Doing so will allow students to develop better study skills, prepare for future assessments, and allow study time to be more productive and less stressful. It also opens communication for parents to get a clearer understanding of a student’s progress, beyond simply knowing grades.

An update on the status of this issue will appear in our spring newsletter. In the meantime, if anyone has information to share with us on this topic, please email us at [Citizens4Ed@yahoo.com](mailto:Citizens4Ed@yahoo.com). Your feedback will be used help further our efforts and will be shared with the administration confidentially.