

Policy Regarding the Return of Tests and Quizzes

Should tests, quizzes, and other graded work be given back to students to be used to review and study from? Or, should these tests and quizzes be kept by teachers to reduce the time and effort needed to write new tests? Will giving back students' graded work offer an additional tool for learning or will it lead to an increase in student cheating? These questions are being debated as the district works to create a written policy to address concerns brought to the forefront by Citizens For Education.

Nearly fifteen years ago, Citizens For Education advocated for a written district policy regarding student assessments. Specifically, there was concern that students were not getting back their work and information about student progress was not available to parents. In response, the district issued a directive acknowledging that student assessments (class work, homework, reports, project, student writing, student performance, quizzes, teacher designed tests, department/district tests, midterms, final exams and standardized tests) should be available to parents. The directive concluded with the statement: "The District's position is that a minimum of 80% of all assessments will be returned to students to take home for parent review."

Over the past decade, the practice regarding the returning of assessments changed. Although most of the language remained intact, the final statement that quantified how this policy would be administered was removed.

Currently, within the high schools there is now a culture that sets no expectation or defined guidelines for the return of student tests, quizzes, or other graded work. Without a specific published guideline of how many assessments a parent should expect to see, a serious lack of communication exists.

Members of the Citizens board have met with many parents and discussed this topic within the Council Rock community and learned that there are instances where teachers are **not allowing any tests or quizzes to come home**. The culture has evolved from one where there was an expectation that the majority of a student's work would come home to today where in some instances 0% of work comes home.

This evolution adversely affects students. 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.

Citizens listened to the concerns from within the community and asked to meet with district administration about this topic. In late February, members of the Citizens Executive Board met with Barry Desko (Director of Secondary Education), Joy McClendon (Director of Elementary Education and Curriculum), Susan McCarthy (Principal of CRHS North), Al Funk (Principal of CRHS South) and Frank Grimes (Chemistry Teacher at CRHS North). At that time, the administration agreed to investigate this matter further within the high schools and scheduled meetings in early

April with high school department chairpersons. From that meeting, a subcommittee that includes teachers from both high schools, covering each content area, and both principals was formed. The purpose of this subcommittee, which will meet in late April, is, according to Joy McClendon, "The drafting of an updated statement of practice."

Citizens is advocating for the return of quantifiable language in the student handbook that makes clear what parents can expect to review at home with regard to their child's work. Giving students their own graded tests and quizzes to review at home could help develop better study skills, and potentially 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.

Citizens will follow up in the fall newsletter with specific information about how this policy has changed. We thank the many community members who brought this issue to our attention.