Creating an Environment for Learning:

**Time**

As much as possible, set aside a specific time for your student to do homework and establish a minimum amount of time.

**Space**

Try to find a place that is free from most distractions where homework can be completed. If the homework requires writing, your student should work at a table or desk. A comfortable chair or couch can and probably should be used for reading if writing is not part of the assignment.

Distractions can be a TV, telephone, computer, meal preparation and/or clean-up, and even other family members who are engaged in activities that might seem like more fun. It is most helpful if the time set aside for homework is when all family members are involved in learning activities (e.g. reading a newspaper or magazine, reading and writing from work, looking at the papers in your student’s book bag, creating a grocery list, writing a thank-you note, etc.).

Assignment Notebooks:

Requiring that your student record assignments in an assignment notebook helps him/her to be more organized and will help you to know what homework needs to be done. You can also help your student plan ahead for long-term assignments by considering all requirements and setting up a schedule for completing each part.

**Activities to Support, Reinforce, & Extend Learning + Ideas for the “I don’t have any homework” Student**

If your student says he/she doesn’t have homework, use homework time to further develop literacy skills and enrich topics they are learning about in class.

- **Watch a movie!** Choose a movie that is set during the time period they are studying in history or reading about in English. Or, you might choose a movie with a similar theme to the book they are reading.

Some suggestions for novels that freshmen read:

**All Freshman Read…**
- To Kill a Mockingbird

**Accompanying Movie Suggestions…**
- Places in the Heart
- Oh Brother, Where Art Thou
- The Color Purple

**Honors Freshman Also Read…**
- A Midsummer Night’s Dream
- The Power of One
- Inherit the Wind

**Accompanying Movie Suggestions…**
- Much Ado About Nothing
- Cry Freedom
- A Dry White Season
- Cry, The Beloved Country
- Mandela

- **Teach Me** – Have your student teach you how to solve some of the math problems being taught in class or describe a lab experiment they’ve completed and what was learned from it. This type of activity serves as a review for the student.
• **Internet Searches** – Ask your student what he/she didn’t understand from topics being studied in class. Or, have them develop a list of questions they have about something related to their learning and then search for the answers to these questions on the Internet. Their search should not be limited just to reading materials. Sometimes images, diagrams, and charts will help learners to see what they didn’t understand.

• **Read** – Many students are required to read a free choice novel in their English class, and homework time is a good time for this reading. Your student could also read to a younger sibling or an adult who is learning English.

• **Review** – Have your student go to the end of the chapter he/she is studying or in some textbooks the end of the book to review the material. Another way to review material is to have your student go through the notes he/she has taken in class and read and explain them to you.

• **Create flashcards** – Many tests expect students to know the vocabulary connected to a particular topic. Students can create flashcards from assigned vocabulary, from vocabulary identified in their textbooks, or vocabulary on handouts from the teacher.

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**Listen to music while doing homework...**
- Music without words can help students to transition into study, focus, and block out other noises that can be distracting.

**Making flashcards...**
- Helps students focus only on the information they don’t know.
- Prevents students from memorizing information in the order listed in their notes or books.
- Helps students internalize the information.

**Doing homework at the kitchen table...**
- **Advantage** – You are there to monitor and provide support.
- **Disadvantage** – there are often many other distractions.

**Having Snacks...**
- Learners have difficulty focusing if they are hungry.
- Having a snack before studying or doing homework after eating is helpful.

**Work from Strengths**

Is your student a talker or does he/she seem to be really good at drawing? Try to support the use of these areas of strength when he/she has to write. For example, if students have to write an essay or paper, have them talk to you about what they will write about first and then have them write on paper or on the computer. Or, they might sketch the ideas and the organization of those ideas on paper before they write.

**Create opportunities for learning:**
- Watch the news together and discuss what you’ve heard and learned.
- Listen to the news on the radio while driving and discuss what you’ve heard, opinions you have, and have your student make connections to what they are learning in school.
- Talk about something you’ve read or heard.
- Read the same novel your student is reading (many of these novels are written in Spanish) and discuss your opinions, ask questions for your own clarification, and make connections to your own life or other books you’ve read.
- Listen to the audio versions of the required readings (make sure your student is following along while the book is being read so he/she sees the words while hearing them).
- Model your thinking. While watching a movie, pause it and make a prediction and explain your reasons or make a connection and explain how that helps you to better understand the movie. Then watch more of the movie to see if your prediction was right and make another prediction or ask a question. The same thing can be done with a TV show by using commercial time for this type of thinking and talking.

**Use Available School and Community Resources**
- After school homework club
- Academic resource rooms

These resources are especially useful when as a parent you find that you are unable to help them with certain homework assignments. What are your areas of strength? You might be able to help with math but don’t feel comfortable helping with science. In this case your student should use the science resource room for help during the day and you can help with math in the evening.