

# BREAK OUT OF THE RACE

LEVERAGING THE POWER OF COMMUNITY TO TRANSFORM EDUCATION AND OUR CULTURE

## SAMPLE LETTERS

Use the sample letters below to draft a letter supporting the adoption of the Healthy Homework Guidelines in your school community. If you can, include a personal example or two to lend context to your letter!

If your school has not yet hosted a community screening of “Race to Nowhere,” you may also wish to include your interest in hosting a screening as a way to spark discussion about homework policies.

### FOR PARENTS: LETTER TO YOUR CHILD’S PRINCIPAL, SUPERINTENDENT, CLASSROOM TEACHER, or THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As a parent of a student at [your school], I am in support of the Healthy Homework Guidelines. I hope you will support me and my fellow parents in working toward the adoption of Healthy Homework Guidelines at [your school].

Already over 18,000 students, parents, educators, administrators, and PTA members nationwide have signed their names in support of the Healthy Homework Guidelines, which encourage schools and teachers to assign homework only when it:

- 1) demonstrably encourages true learning and engagement among students;
- 2) is centered around student interests and academic development; and
- 3) promotes a student’s balanced schedule, which must include time for sleep, family meals and valuable extracurricular pursuits like athletics, arts and community service.

Many schools have already adopted new homework policies in the wake of their screenings of the documentary film “Race to Nowhere,” which [your school] also hosted on [date of screening].

Adopting the Healthy Homework Guidelines as a policy at [your school] could be transformative for our students. It would encourage student engagement with learning. It would prioritize physical and mental health. It would discourage cheating. And it would allow us to stop relying on parents to put in a second shift as “homework wardens.”

Most of all, restructuring homework policies to better support student health, learning and engagement would send a powerful message to our children: that we value their health, interests and passions, and that we aren’t afraid to preserve time in their day for unstructured learning, sleep, play, family, friendships and creative pursuits in the hours outside the seven-hour school day.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you the possibility of our school formally endorsing and implementing the Healthy Homework Guidelines, and I look forward to following up to arrange a time to meet with me and other concerned parents. In the meantime, please take a moment to peruse the Healthy Homework Guidelines in the attached flyer. Please don’t hesitate to be in touch at [(xxx) xxx-xxxx] or [xxx@xxx.com].

Sincerely,

[Name]

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## SAMPLE LETTERS, CONTINUED

### FOR STUDENTS: LETTER TO YOUR PRINCIPAL, SUPERINTENDENT, CLASSROOM TEACHER, or THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a student at [your school] and I am in support of the Healthy Homework Guidelines.

I hope you will support me and my fellow students in working toward the adoption of Healthy Homework Guidelines at [your school].

Already over 18,000 students, parents, educators, administrators, and PTA members nationwide have signed their names in support of the Healthy Homework Guidelines, which encourage schools and teachers to assign homework only when it:

- 1) demonstrably encourages true learning and engagement among students;
- 2) is centered around student interests and academic development; and
- 3) promotes a student's balanced schedule, which must include time for sleep, family meals and valuable extracurricular pursuits like athletics, arts and community service.

My fellow students and I believe that bringing such guidelines to bear on the homework policies at [your school] will encourage students to learn more effectively and with more enthusiasm for and engagement with our schoolwork. Such guidelines will also remind students and teachers alike to make time for a healthy balance among school, family, friends, creative and extracurricular pursuits and community involvement.

I believe that the benefits of adopting the Healthy Homework Guidelines at [your school] could be transformative for students. With balanced homework policies, we'd gain time to pursue passions and learning for its own sake. We'd gain time for physical and mental health, including adequate sleep. We'd gain time for family and friends. And we'd gain the kind of rest and downtime that encourages refreshed, engaged learning when we return to school. Engagement with learning would go up. Cheating would go down. And best of all, we'd all be more healthy, engaged and ready to learn!

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you the possibility of a schoolwide policy supporting the Healthy Homework Guidelines at [school].

I hope you will consider meeting with me and a coalition of my fellow students to discuss this important issue. In the meantime, please take a moment to peruse the Healthy Homework Guidelines in the attached flyer. Please don't hesitate to be in touch at [(xxx) xxx-xxxx] or [xxx@xxx.com].

Sincerely,

[Name]

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## SAMPLE LETTERS, CONTINUED

### FOR TEACHERS: LETTER TO YOUR PRINCIPAL, SUPERINTENDENT, or THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a teacher at your school and I am in support of the Healthy Homework Guidelines.

I hope you will support me and my fellow teachers in working toward the adoption of Healthy Homework Guidelines at [your school].

Already over 18,000 students, parents, educators, administrators and PTA members nationwide have signed their names in support of the Healthy Homework Guidelines, which encourage schools and teachers to assign homework only when it:

- 1) demonstrably encourages true learning and engagement among students;
- 2) is centered around student interests and academic development; and
- 3) promotes a student's balanced schedule, which must include time for sleep, family meals and valuable extracurricular pursuits like athletics, arts and community service.

My fellow educators and I believe that bringing such guidelines to bear on the homework policies at [your school] will encourage students to learn more effectively and to develop more enthusiasm for and engagement with their schoolwork. Moreover, adopting the Healthy Homework Guidelines at [your school] would be transformative for teachers.

With balanced homework policies, we'd gain time to encourage student passions and learning for its own sake. We'd gain more time for in-class instruction and student-directed projects, and eliminate the need to spend valuable instructional periods collecting, correcting and assigning homework that does not improve student engagement. We'd also gain an opportunity to teach students who would have the essential tools for learning: adequate rest and downtime, a balanced schedule, and a sense of ownership over assignments and projects.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss with you the possibility of a schoolwide policy supporting the Healthy Homework Guidelines at [school].

I hope you will consider meeting with me and a coalition of my fellow teachers to discuss this important issue. In the meantime, please take a moment to peruse the Healthy Homework Guidelines in the attached flyer. Please don't hesitate to be in touch at [(xxx) xxx-xxxx] or [xxx@xxx.com].

Sincerely,

[Name]

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## POSTCARD TEXT

If your school hosts a screening of “Race to Nowhere,” convene a post-film postcard-writing campaign to communicate your support of the Healthy Homework Guidelines to your administrators and/or district superintendent. Strength lies in numbers, so aim to write as many postcards – from as many stakeholders – as you can. Send them on the same day for maximum impact!

Dear Superintendent,

I recently attended a screening of the documentary film “Race to Nowhere” and am writing to encourage you to support positive change in our school community by supporting the Healthy Homework Guidelines and by adopting and implementing the guidelines for all students at [your school].

Since you are an education leader in our community, I hope you will join a growing chorus of stakeholders in our community who believe that homework should be assigned only when it:

- 1) demonstrably encourages true learning and engagement among students;
- 2) is centered around student interests and academic development; and
- 3) promotes a student’s balanced schedule, which must include time for sleep, family meals and valuable extracurricular pursuits like athletics, arts and community service.

I encourage you to involve teachers, parents and students in your decision-making process, and to see “Race to Nowhere” for further evidence of how shifting homework policies can enhance learning and prioritize health for our students.

Sincerely,

[Name]

*“Race to Nowhere” is a documentary film that seeks to mobilize families, educators, and policy makers to challenge current assumptions on how to best prepare the youth of America to become healthy, bright, contributing and leading citizens. [www.RaceToNowhere.com](http://www.RaceToNowhere.com)*