



ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINE

Title: Suggested Homework Practices

Effective Date: April 28, 2009 **Responsibility:** Superintendent of Program and Schools

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK PRACTICE

In response to the concerns of students and parents about late nights completing homework, the stress homework places on families, and inconsistency among schools over the types and quantities of homework, the Near North District School Board has investigated the issues and has determined suggestions that will establish consistent practices and reinforce homework as an engaging and relevant learning activity.

DEFINITION - WHAT IS HOMEWORK?

Homework is relevant learning activities that are associated with the school program and which are completed outside classroom time. Homework is a planned part of the educational process designed to enhance student learning, and is directly connected to The Ontario Curriculum Learning Expectations, Learning Skills, and Ministry of Education Reporting Guidelines. Homework is a co-operative effort between home and school involving parents, teachers, and students. Homework should only cover material taught in class and understood by the student involving clear, purposeful, relevant and engaging activities.

PURPOSE - WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF HOMEWORK?

Homework is designed to assist and improve learning. It reinforces what has been learned in class, prepares students for future lessons, teaches organization and responsibility, encourages innovation and creativity and helps students to develop the skills and attitudes they need for successful lifelong learning. Homework supports the development of learning skills, such as self-discipline, task commitment, time management, responsibility, independence, initiative, and problem solving. Homework programs recognize learning at home as an essential part of education. Research has shown that students achieve academic success more consistently when parents are involved in their child's education. Homework facilitates parent involvement in their child's learning and insight into the school curriculum. In addition, effective at-home practices enhance positive attitudes about school and about learning routines.

TYPES OF HOMEWORK

- *Practice* - review and reinforcement of learning presented in class.
- *Preparation* - provides background information for future class work.
- *Extension/Creative* - creative applications that integrate and/or expand upon classroom learning.
- *Completion* - unfinished class work assigned when the student has not effectively used the time allotted in class.

EFFECTIVE HOMEWORK - WHAT ARE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE HOMEWORK?

- Clearly defined, purposeful, and developmentally appropriate.
- Supports student achievement of The Ontario Curriculum Learning Expectations and development of Learning Skills.
- Realistic and appropriate in frequency and length.
- Amount and time required to complete homework is modified to meet individual student's home situation, needs, and abilities. Differentiation of homework is essential.
- Encourages the development of self-discipline and good work habits.

- Helps to develop positive and enthusiastic attitudes towards independent study and lifelong learning.
- Provides opportunities for family members to become involved in the child's learning.
- Acquaints parents with their child's in-school learning experiences and strengthens the partnership between home and school.
- Monitored regularly.
- Provides positive, not punitive experiences.
- Ensures students can complete the homework without access to accommodations they would have at school such as assistive technology.

RESEARCH

- The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children. Research demonstrates that children learn to read by reading, and that reading success generally translates into success in school. Students from homes that support reading are substantially better readers, have larger vocabularies and have more positive attitudes about reading. Less important is what children read. Children should be encouraged to read quality fiction and non-fiction literature, but they will also benefit from reading age-appropriate magazines or other reading materials. (Anderson et al 1985).
- Parents' attitudes about homework have direct, positive effects on their children's attitudes and, in the higher grades, on their children's classroom achievements (Cooper & Lindsay & Nye & Greathouse 1998).
- When families are involved in their children's education in positive ways, children achieve higher grades and test scores, have better attendance at school, complete more homework, demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviour, graduate at higher rates, and have greater enrollment in higher education (Henderson & Berla 1994; Becher 1984). Parents can emphasize good work habits, value learning and good character, set high expectations for their children, stay informed about their children's progress, and monitor their children's activities.
- Studies show that what a family does to help children learn is more important to their academic success than family income or education. This is true whether the family is rich or poor, whether the parents finished high school or not, or whether

the child is in preschool or in the upper grades (Coleman 1966; Epstein 1991; Stevenson & Baker 1987; de Kanter, Ginsburg, & Milne 1986; Henderson & Berla 1994; Keith & Keith 1993; Lontos 1992; Walberg, n.d.). Higher achievement is, in part, the result of the increased amount of homework completed by students with families who are more involved in their education.

- Research suggests that, in general, students who do homework have higher achievement scores than students who do not do homework. Supervised study has a more positive effect than homework in the elementary grades up to Grade 6, whereas homework is more effective for junior high (Grades 7 - 9) and high school students (Cooper 1994).
- Homework in the earlier grades promotes good attitudes and study habits, and can have a long-term effect that reveals itself later on, when the student moves into secondary school. Therefore, research supports the assignment of homework in early grades, not necessarily for its immediate effects on achievement, but rather for its potential long-term impact (Cooper & Lindsay & Nye & Greathouse 1998).
- Schools that assigned homework frequently showed higher student achievement levels than did schools that made little use of homework (Rutter and others 1979).

HOMEWORK PRACTICE

The suggested guideline balances the time required to complete homework with extra curricular activities and family time. The types and quantity of homework should reflect the student's learning profile. Differentiation of homework is essential; careful consideration must be given to modification of assignments when appropriate. Provided that the student (based on his/her capabilities) took full advantage of in-class time offered for work completion, the following homework timelines should be adhered to:

- Kindergarten students will not be assigned homework except for early learning activities such as reading with or talking to their parents, or playing.
- Grades 1 to Grade 6 will primarily have homework involving family time such as discussion, playing games, cooking, etc. or reading. On occasion relevant junior students Grades 4 to 6 independent or group project work may be assigned such as book talks, oral presentations, science fair or heritage fair projects.
- Grade 7 & 8 students should have no more than 1 hour per day.

- On average, secondary students taking up to and including grade 11 courses should have, on average, no more than ½ hour per subject area (2 hours/day).
- On average, secondary students taking grade 12 courses especially at the U/M level may have slightly more homework depending on the level, course and circumstances.
- Wherever possible, staff are to chunk or block homework assignments, giving timelines for each component of the assignment to keep students on task and to prevent falling behind. This enables families to plan around assigned homework.
- Staff will move away from time by grade guidelines (i.e. 10 minutes grade 1; 20 minutes grade 2) - homework is differentiated by division and grade to reflect the unique learning needs of students.
- No homework is to be assigned on holidays. PD days and weekends are not considered holidays.
- All students should read daily, whether to an adult at home or independently.
- After extended absences, students will be expected to complete a 'pro-rated' amount of work.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Teachers, Parents and Students must share responsibility for establishing and maintaining effective homework practices.

THE TEACHER'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

assign, monitor, report

- Work collaboratively with staff to coordinate reasonable amounts of homework and to avoid overload for those in rotary situations.
- Provide clear, purposeful, and developmentally appropriate assignments.
- Provide variety in homework assignments: review, practice and enrichment; class, group, or individual assignments; daily or long-range. Rubrics should accompany homework.
- Explain the purpose and relevance of the assigned homework.
- Provide expectations for work quality and due dates.
- Monitor completion and quality of assignments.

- Provides for use of accommodations such as assistive technology if required in the school setting.
- Offer specific praise for the effort students have put into completing and returning assignments.
- Communicate regularly with parents.
- Advise parents of problems.
- Ask students and parents for feedback about homework.
- Summarize and report on homework completion in the Learning Skills section of the Report Card.

THE FAMILY'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

guide, encourage, supervise

- Promote a positive attitude and outlook toward homework.
- Provide a quiet study area and needed supplies.
- Take an active part in the supervision of their child by establishing homework routines, clarifying expectations, and providing guidance as needed.
- Provide encouragement and support.
- Communicate concerns regarding student needs/frustrations to the teacher.
- Establish a balance between homework and other activities.
- Ensure children get adequate sleep whether homework is completed or not.
- Show an interest in their child's schoolwork and progress.

THE STUDENT'S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

responsibility, self-discipline

- Make sure the assignment is understood.
- Bring home the required materials.
- Complete all homework carefully and with pride.
- Keep up with and plan long-term assignments.
- Hand in homework on time.
- Bring late homework to school the following day.
- Ask for help if homework assignment is not clear.

- Students should, based on his/her capabilities, take full advantage of in-class time offered for assignment and homework completion to help reduce what is left for homework.
- Students should, based on his/her capabilities put forth a strong effort to complete the tasks required.
- Students should negotiate with the teacher in advance if the student expects that they may not be able to accomplish the required homework due to special circumstances.