



**GUIDELINES FOR THE ASSIGNMENT,  
COMPLETION AND  
ASSESSMENT OF HOMEWORK  
IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board

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## *Introduction*

The Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board's guideline on homework supports our mission of "enabling all learners to realize the fullness of humanity of which our Lord Jesus is the model."

The learning process, among other things, begins at home, is part of family life, and is embraced by the learner as a personal responsibility for life. The process of completing homework is therefore as important as the homework itself. Homework encourages family involvement in the student's education.

Learning takes place in an appropriate and challenging environment, which, among other things, promotes academic excellence and clear indicators of achievement. This environment is not limited to the four walls of the school, but includes the entire Catholic school community.

There are a number of different viewpoints regarding the appropriateness, type and amount of homework given to students. The intent of this document is to provide some clarification to teachers and parents of elementary students, based on research and experience, around the assignment, completion and assessment of homework. It is essential for families to recognize that their children's homework responsibilities are of primary importance, notwithstanding the value of the wide variety of activities and family responsibilities that also contribute to students' growth during their hours away from school.



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M. J. Castura  
Director of Education



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P. J. Daly  
Chair of the Board of Trustees

**It must be stressed that this document is a guideline. It is a context for the homework policy of our elementary schools. Their individual policies may deviate somewhat from this framework.**

## GUIDELINES FOR THE ASSIGNMENT, COMPLETION AND ASSESSMENT OF HOMEWORK

### 1.0 Definition

- **Homework**

Homework can be defined as out-of-class tasks assigned to students which are intended to assist them in acquiring knowledge and consolidating and reinforcing learning in practical and meaningful ways.

- **Homework generally falls into 3 categories:**

- **practice** – reinforces the lessons that are taught in the classroom
- **preparation** – includes activities designed to gather and organize materials for the classroom
- **projects and extensions** - builds upon the student's independent learning abilities by emphasizing initiative and research

### HOMEWORK TYPES

TYPE	EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
<b>Practice</b>	Today students learned how to add fractions with different denominators. Assign practice questions.	Automatically, regardless of the day's lessons, Monday night – 1 page of Spelling; Tuesday night – 1 page of grammar, etc.
<b>Preparation</b>	Ask children to bring in a handful of different leaves from home as preparation for the next day's lesson on classifying leaves.	Read the next section of Math and try to follow the examples given.
<b>Projects and Extensions</b>	Students have completed work on aircraft and principles of flight. Have them construct a working model paper airplane that will travel 10 metres.	Do a project on Christopher Columbus or a book report at home --- without class preparation and more direction.

## 2.0 Rationale

- There are a number of reasons, supported by empirical research (Cooper, 2001), for assigning homework to students, including:
  - homework can help younger students (grades 1-6) develop good study habits;
  - homework can help students recognize that they can learn at home as well as at school;
  - homework fosters independent learning and accountability;
  - homework can give parents the opportunity to observe what their children are learning at school and express positive attitudes toward their achievements;
  - homework helps improve the academic achievement of older students (grades 7-12).

## 3.0 Assignment of Homework

- Research supports the “Ten Minute Guide” when assigning homework to students; that is, students can be assigned homework that increases at the rate of 10 minutes per grade, e.g. grade 3 receives a maximum of 30 minutes of homework per evening. (Cooper 2001)
- Studying for tests is above and beyond assigned homework.

<b>10 Minute Guideline</b>	
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Appropriate Homework Time</b>
1	5-10 minutes
2	10-20 minutes
3	15-30 minutes
4	20-40 minutes
5	25-50 minutes
6	30-60 minutes
7	35-70 minutes
8	40-80 minutes

- When assigning homework to students it is important that teachers take the following into consideration:
  - guidelines for homework should be communicated to parents and students through a variety of activities such as curriculum nights, school newsletter, parent-teacher meetings, school websites, etc.;
  - homework should **never** be used as a punishment;
  - homework should be accompanied by clear instructions and/or an assessment rubric where applicable;
  - homework assignments should not exceed the “Ten Minute Guide” outlined above, including work not completed in class;
  - homework should be grade-appropriate and should come with feasible completion timelines;
  - the completion of group projects outside of the school day is discouraged;

- students should be taught the necessary knowledge and skills required to complete homework assignments (practice vs. untaught material);
- accommodations to the length and type of homework assignments, as well as to the methods used to complete homework assignments, are to be made for exceptional pupils and ESL students;
- homework, book reviews and projects should not be assigned during holiday periods (Christmas, March Break, Easter);
- there can be evenings when homework is not assigned;
- careful coordination of the assignment of homework by rotary teachers is necessary. The Ten Minute Guide is not to be interpreted on a per teacher basis.

**Homework is Planned, Purposeful, Connected**

#### 4.0 The Role of the Parent in the Completion of Homework

- The parent's role is one of guidance and encouragement. If a child is puzzled by an assignment, it is appropriate for a parent to explain the instructions. It is also appropriate for a parent to encourage the child to begin his/her homework by brainstorming ideas together, or by working on the first problem together. After that, it is time for the parent to back away and allow the child to finish the work independently. Parents who get overly involved prevent their children from understanding the intended lesson, and also run the risk of their children becoming dependent on them for the completion of future homework assignments.
- The following guidelines are designed to help parents provide appropriate guidance and encouragement for their children when completing homework assignments:
  - set a consistent time when homework will be done each evening;
  - provide a suitable environment for completing homework;
  - remove distractions;
  - be available to help your children with their homework;
  - talk to your children about what they are learning in school;
  - read together with younger children;
  - help your children learn organizational skills;
  - ensure that your children have the required materials to complete homework;
  - ensure a balance between homework and other activities;

- encourage your children to help you with reading and writing activities (recipes, newspapers, shopping lists, letters, thank you cards, etc.);
- encourage your children to ask the teacher for help if they find the work difficult or confusing;
- keep in touch with your children's teacher, especially if your children are experiencing significant difficulties completing their homework or if they are exceeding the "10 Minute Guide" on a regular basis;
- monitor homework assignments and check that homework is completed utilizing your children's school agenda books;
- observe your children's style of learning and try to understand how they work best (e.g., by using visual aids, by reading material aloud or by manipulating materials);
- praise and encourage your children.

**Organization, Concentration and Reading are the  
Essentials of good Study Habits**

## 5.0 **Assessment of Homework**

- Research clearly indicates that when homework assignments are graded and feedback is provided to students concerning their performance, the academic achievement of students is improved to a much greater extent than if the homework is merely assigned but with no feedback from the teacher (Wahlberg, 1985).

It is therefore, very important that teachers review all homework assignments and provide students with constructive feedback, in a timely fashion.

## 6.0 **Absences**

### 6.1 **Family Vacations**

Family vacations should be planned to coincide with the school calendar. In the event of an absence due to a vacation when school is in session, the teacher, upon request, is encouraged to provide a general overview of the topics that will be covered in the core subject areas, i.e. English and Mathematics. It is important to realize that this overview can not be considered as a substitute for the direct instruction that will be missed. It will be the responsibility of the student to catch up on missed assignments, upon his/her return.

## 6.2 **Prolonged Absences Due to Ill Health**

Students who are absent more than five (5) consecutive school days due to ill health may receive any missed assignments upon request. Necessary texts, handouts and/or materials should be picked up at the school.

## 6.3 **Suspension/Expulsion**

In the event of a suspension or expulsion, in accordance with the Education Act, the school is not obliged to provide homework, but may choose to do so.

## 7.0 **Bibliography**

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