



**Homework Guideline for
Elementary Schools
in the
Halton Catholic District School Board**

Achieving Believing Belonging

Revised June 2019

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As a faith-based system, the Halton Catholic District School Board, approaches all issues that have an impact on child development and family life from a Catholic worldview that recognizes the importance of family time, and honours the bonds between school, family and parish in all that we do.

The Halton Catholic District School Board's specific outcome measures in the broad areas of Achieving, Believing and Belonging necessitate the creation of a consistent homework guideline for all elementary schools within the board that:

1. Maintains our commitment to high level, achievement expectations for all learners
2. Values the differentiated needs of the learner
3. Strengthens the relationship between the home and the school
4. Honours the expertise of educators for the teaching, assessment and evaluation of curriculum content and learning skills
5. Recognizes the differences between families
and
6. **Champions the importance of family time for the spiritual, intellectual, social and emotional development of children**

Definition of Homework:

Homework is work that students do at home to practice skills, consolidate knowledge and skills, and/or prepare for the next class. (*Growing Success, 2010 – p. 148*)

What Does the Research Say?:

The most comprehensive research on homework to date comes from a 2006 meta-analysis by Duke University psychology professor, Harris Cooper, who found only a weak relationship between the completion of homework and stronger academic performance for students below Grade 7. Cathy Vatterott, the author of *Rethinking Homework: Best Practices That Support Diverse Needs* asserts that more emphasis should be placed on improving the quality of homework tasks, and supports efforts to eliminate homework for younger children altogether.

Aside from this research, what we know about families in Halton Region is that they are busy! Between work/school, after work/school commitments, spiritual development pursuits, social and family time, there is not much time left for students and their parents to be completing homework. Homework that does come home needs to have a clearly defined purpose.

Purpose of Homework:

Homework **must** support learning in one of four ways: pre-learning, checking for understanding, practicing or processing, each with a different definition and intended outcome as shown in the chart below:

Type	Definition	Intended Outcome	Examples
<p>Pre-Learning</p> <p><i>“To Show Something that I will learn about soon”</i></p>	An assigned homework task that is used to provide an introduction to a topic or background for a more in-depth lesson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Finding out what students already know - Determining what students are interested in learning about - Stimulating interest in a concept to be taught in the educational setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading a story/chapter in advance of it being discussed in class - Generating questions about what a student already knows or wants to know about a new topic - Investigating a topic (i.e., hair colour and eye colour of family members in advance of a lesson on human genetics) and being prepared to discuss it in school
<p>Checking for Understanding</p> <p><i>“To find out if I understand what I learned”</i></p>	An assigned homework task that allows educators to gain insight into student learning on concepts already taught	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Checking for understanding of a previously taught concept - Gaining insight into student learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explaining the steps in a Math problem that was worked on in class - Thinking about why something happened in a Science experiment that was demonstrated in class - Finding a literary device in a book at home after learning about the various literary devices in class
<p>Practicing</p> <p><i>“To practice doing something that I learned at school”</i></p>	An assigned homework task, given after an educator has completed a check for understanding, which provides students with additional practice of a previously learned concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing extra practice with a skill or concept that has been already been learned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practicing Math concepts learned in class by playing a Math game with a family member at home - Reading books at the appropriate independent reading level - Using inventive spelling or knowledge of commonly spelled words to generate a list (i.e. grocery list) or a note to someone at home - Extra practice of a few Math questions (once a thorough “Check for Understanding” has been completed by the teacher)
<p>Processing</p> <p><i>“To show what I know”</i></p>	An assigned homework task which promotes student reflection on concepts that were previously taught in class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allowing time for students to think of new questions to ask - Application of previously learned knowledge or skills - Synthesizing information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviewing previously learned Science concepts and generating questions to assist in synthesizing information: ex. “What do I know about this?”, “What do I still need to review more?”

(Vatterott, 2009)

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Roles and Responsibilities:

Although homework assigned by teachers must support learning in one of the four ways mentioned above, it is not a requirement of this guideline for homework to be assigned at all. Teachers are encouraged to use their professional judgement, in on-going consultation and collaboration with their school administrators and the parents of the students in their classroom when deciding whether to assign work to be done at home. If homework is being assigned, it must have a clearly defined and articulated purpose (as taken from the chart above) AND must adhere to the roles and responsibilities as outlined below.

The Principal:

- Communicates this homework guideline early in the school year to staff and parents within the school community
- Ensures school-wide understanding and consistent implementation of this homework guideline and adherence to instructions provided to teachers in the Ministry of Education's policy document on Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools, *Growing Success, 2010*.
- Co-ordinates school-wide resources and practices that support homework (e.g., use of an agenda, homework support programs etc.)
- Offers information to support and assist parents in helping their children at home

The Teacher:

- Reinforces the communication of the details in this homework guideline, early in the school year, to parents and students (i.e. at Curriculum Night, through newsletters, regular class social media communication tools etc.)
- Follows the responsibilities as detailed in this guideline and adheres to the practices outlined in the Ministry of Education's policy document on Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools, *Growing Success, 2010*.
- Encourages a partnership between teacher, student and family that promotes regular, timely, communication and supports for the homework process (e.g., use of a student agenda)
- Ensures that homework assigned is purposeful (Pre-Learning, Checking for Understanding, Practicing or Processing), understood, directly related to Ministry of Education Curriculum Expectations and that work done at home will NOT be used for a final evaluation grade (*Growing Success, 2010, p 39*)
- Articulates and carefully plans homework in partnership with core, rotary and support teachers
- Differentiates homework, as appropriate, to meet student learning needs including those outlined in Individual Education Plans (IEP's)
- Respects the varying family situations, barrier issues to the completion of homework (e.g., resource issues, primary language spoken in the home etc.) and the placement of family needs as a priority over the completion of assigned homework
- **Ensures that homework not be assigned for completion during Statutory/Board holidays, Professional activity days, Sacramental or school evenings/events as per the Board's school year calendar and the school events calendar found on the school website.**
- Reviews and checks homework in a timely manner and provides assistance to students who did not complete homework where appropriate

- Considers a students' ability to complete homework under the "Learning Skills and Work Habits" category of Responsibility on the Elementary Provincial Report Card Gr. 1-8.

****To ensure equity for all students, assignments for evaluation (Assessment OF Learning) are to be completed, whenever possible, under the supervision of a teacher.***

**** Assignments for evaluation (Assessment OF Learning) must NOT include ongoing homework that students do in order to consolidate their knowledge and skills or to prepare for the next class***

(Growing Success, 2010 – p. 39)

The Family:

- Provides a healthy balance between homework, co-curricular, after school activities, family commitments and needs for family time
- Reads with their child/children in English, French and/or the family's first language as appropriate
- Creates an environment and establishes routines at home to support the completion of homework
- Gives encouragement and appropriate support without doing homework for their child/children
- Shows interest in the child's/children's homework and learning
- Monitors their child's/children's stamina and vigor and stops them from completing work when signs of frustration, loss of stamina, exhaustion or lack of understanding occur
- Communicates such times as outlined above to the classroom teacher and partners with the teacher to create a mutually agreeable plan for the completion of homework in the future

The Student:

- Ensures understanding of the homework task and purpose, and asks for clarification or assistance from the teacher when homework assignments or the expectations are not clear
- Uses a management tool to record homework (i.e., a student agenda)
- Organizes materials and ensures that the required materials/resources that are needed to complete homework are taken home and returned, as necessary
- Manages time and priorities to ensure a healthy balance between homework, co-curricular, after school activities, family commitment and needs for personal and family time
 - Completes assigned homework on time and to the best of his/her ability

Special thanks to the following team for developing and piloting the guidelines:

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