

Homework Guidelines of the Toronto Catholic District School Board

Homework is a long recognized thread in the fabric of Catholic Education. The Toronto Catholic District School Board believes that homework represents a tradition of partnership between home and school. It represents an opportunity for partnership, a co-operative effort between home and school, involving parents, teachers and students.

OUR VISION OF THE LEARNER

The Toronto Catholic District School Board's Graduate is expected to be:

1. ***A discerning believer*** formed in the Catholic Faith community who celebrates the signs and sacred mystery of God's presence through word, sacrament, prayer, forgiveness, reflection and moral living.
2. ***An effective communicator*** who speaks, writes and listens honestly and sensitively, responding critically in light of gospel values.
3. ***A reflective, creative and holistic thinker*** who solves problems and makes responsible decisions with an informed moral conscience for the common good.
4. ***A self-directed, responsible, lifelong learner*** who develops and demonstrates their God-given potential.
5. ***A collaborative contributor*** who finds meaning, dignity and vocation in work, which respects the rights of all and contributes to the common good.
6. ***A caring family member*** who attends to family, school, parish, and the wider community.
7. ***A responsible citizen*** who gives witness to Catholic social teaching by promoting peace, justice and the sacredness of human life.

The achievement of the expectations of a Toronto Catholic District School Board Graduate can be enhanced through an appropriate homework program based on the needs of the child.

Catholic education views human life as an integration of body, mind, and spirit. Rooted in this vision, Catholic education fosters the search for knowledge as a lifelong spiritual and academic quest. The expectations of the Toronto Catholic District School Board's graduates, therefore, are described not only in terms of knowledge and skills, but also in terms of values, attitudes and actions.

This foundation statement is intended for use by administrators and schools in their review and development of local school homework guidelines, and by School Councils, parents, teachers, and students in their ongoing work to enhance student achievement.

1. Definition of Homework

The Toronto Catholic District School Board recognizes the value of homework that furthers students' learning in relation to the curriculum. Homework should be a positive experience. The Board also recognizes the value to communicate clearly and effectively to parents the learning expectations related to homework.

Homework can be defined as an important and relevant learning activity that is related to the school program, and that takes place in a variety of settings in the home or in the community. When children complete homework, they consolidate and reinforce the learning from in-school experiences in a practical and meaningful way. Homework is a planned and purposeful activity that is linked to *The Ontario Curriculum Learning Expectations, Learning Skills, and Ministry of Education Reporting Guidelines, and the Ministry of Education Curriculum Guidelines*.

2. Purpose of Homework

Homework consists of relevant learning experiences that are related to the school curriculum.

A well-designed homework program **should**:

- meet the developmental and individual needs of the student.
- reinforce and extend school experiences.
- assist students in assuming responsibility for their own learning development.
- develop positive attitudes towards independent study and life-long learning.
- encourage the development of self-discipline, good work habits, and time management skills.
- enable parents to become involved and to participate in their child's learning.
- enable regular and on-going communication between teachers, parents and students.
- assist students in preparing for subsequent learning activities.

A well-designed homework program **should not**:

- be punitive.
- place unreasonable demands on the parent(s).

3. Time Guidelines

Grade	Amounts of Time
1 – 8	5 to 10 min. per grade most nights Grade One – 5 to 10 min. Grade Two 10 to 20 min. Grade Three – 15 to 20 min. Grade Four – 20 to 40 min. Grade Five – 25 to 50 min. Grade Six – 30 to 60 min. Grade Seven – 35 to 70 min. Grade Eight – 40 to 80 min. (plus Read Aloud or Independent Reading)
9 – 10	6 to 10 hours per week (depending on type of assignment, course, or program; some students, including those with special needs, may have more of an in-class focus for their learning)
11 – 12	an average of 10 to 20 hours per week (depending on grade and courses)

4. Types of Homework

Homework offers a variety of experiences, using a variety of mediums, which encourage and support children in relation to their in-school experiences.

There are four main types of homework:

<i>TYPE</i>	<i>REASON</i>	<i>EXAMPLES</i>
Completion	To keep up-to-date with classroom work.	Completing classroom assignments, including reading responses, notes, exercises, pieces of writing, reading selections Completing activities from the Family Life program.
Preparation	To prepare for the next day's class work or for coming lessons.	Collecting information, reading background materials, or studying for quizzes, tests and exams. Completing tasks associated with sacramental preparation. Using planners to establish regular study and review time.
Practice and Application	To develop, review, and reinforce specific skills. To transfer skills or concepts into new situations.	Completing extra questions in a textbook if an assessment item demonstrates that the student has not mastered a skill (i.e., calculating tax, categorizing plants). Writing a letter after being taught the components of a business letter. Completing community service hours. Reviewing and drilling of number operations and troublesome spelling words, where necessary. Being read to, reading aloud, and independent reading (materials may be English, dual track and/or first language).
Extension/ Creative	To enrich classroom experiences and to deepen the student's understanding. To provide opportunities for problem-solving and critical thinking. To integrate skills.	Identifying local plant and animal life in one's environment. Volunteering to help in local parish or a community group. Working on projects, research and independent study Inventing a product to solve a problem. Creating designs, stories, drama, and prayers.

5. Provisions for students with different needs

The types and quantity of homework assigned should reflect the wide variation in students' academic ability. **Careful consideration should be given to modification of expectations and/or quantity of assigned work according to the individual needs of the students**, for example:

- highly motivated independent learners,
- students involved in dual programs,
- students experiencing difficulty,
- students receiving Special Education support,
- students for whom English is a second language

6. Roles and Responsibilities in the Homework Partnership: School, Teachers, Parents, and Students

For homework to be an effective extension of the school program, the school, teachers, parents, and students must share the responsibility for developing and maintaining good homework practices.

The **school**:

- develops and communicates school guidelines for homework to be used by teachers, parents, and students;
- offers information to assist parents in helping their children at home (e.g., Curriculum Nights, interviews/conferences, newsletters).
- works with the community to develop programs to provide students with support for homework (e.g. remedial programs, peer tutors, homework clubs)

The **teacher**:

- explains to students the purpose and importance of homework and its connection to school success;
- teaches skills necessary for the student to complete homework (e.g., note-making, preparation for upcoming test);
- provides homework that is clear, meaningful, purposeful, and understood;
- assigns work that is appropriate to the student's age, developmental level, learning style, maturity, skills, and individual needs;
- provides support to parents and students on establishing homework routines and effective study habits (e.g., time management, using school planner);
- uses homework as a vehicle for developing and reinforcing learning, not as a punishment for misbehaviour or failure to perform as expected;
- monitors, checks, or evaluates homework, as appropriate;

- works collaboratively with other teachers to assign reasonable amounts of home-work, and to avoid overload in rotary class situations;
- communicates regularly with parents;
- summarizes and reports on homework completion in the Learning Skills section of the Provincial Report Card.

The parent:

- provides encouragement and appropriate support, without doing the homework for the student;
- expects the student to complete homework regularly;
- provides an environment (i.e., workplace, block of uninterrupted time), usually in the home or in an alternate setting, e.g., Homework Club;
- shows interest in the student's schoolwork and progress;
- maintains regular contact with the teacher;
- continues to read to and with the student in English, French (French Immersion), or in the home language(s) of the family throughout the early years of a child's schooling.

The student:

- ensures that he/she clearly understands the homework (i.e., assignments, criteria, timelines);
- asks for help if homework assignments or expectations are not clear;
- completes homework regularly;
- prepares appropriately for upcoming lessons;
- participates actively in all aspects of the school program;
- manages time and materials appropriately (e.g., uses school planner, submits homework on time, organizes necessary materials);
- studies appropriately for tests and examinations;
- communicates regularly with teachers and parents;
- monitors progress and sets goals, as appropriate;
- assumes appropriate responsibility for homework completion as he or she proceeds through school.

HOMEWORK TIPS

Tips for teachers:

- Give the right amount of homework (see Time Guidelines).
- Keep parents informed via communication book or agenda.
- Vary the kinds of homework.
- Be cognizant about how much time parents can be involved with homework.
- Never let homework be punitive.
- Be mindful of students' ability to access resources and technology, and provide alternatives where necessary.

Tips for parents:

- Make sure your child has an appropriate place and sufficient time for homework.
- Be a positive role model about the homework your child receives.
- Be a monitor and a mentor in your child's learning at home.
- Communicate promptly with the school when homework concerns arise.

Tips for students:

- Pick a good time and place to do homework. Your place needs to be comfortable and to make studying easy.
- Remember to budget enough time for lengthier projects and assignments.
- Spend more time on more difficult homework, and complete it first.
- If homework is getting too hard, seek help.