

## 2017-2018 CFIS Homework Guidelines

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# HOMEWORK

## Background

CFIS recognizes meaningful, carefully-planned homework can support student success and be a complementary part of a student's overall learning program. We also recognize:

- The potential impact of homework on family life;
- The role homework may play in supporting a student's self-confidence as a successful learner;
- The benefit of a division-wide, balanced, reasonable approach to homework.

The complexity of the topic of homework also requires conversation and cooperation at the school and classroom level to provide details, to clarify expectations, and to support student success with homework assignments.

## Definition

Homework is "any task assigned by teachers intended for students to carry out during non-instructional hours" ([Canadian Council on Learning: A Systematic Review of Literature Examining the Impact of Homework on Academic Achievement, 2009](#). p. 5).

## Procedures

### 1. Types of Homework

While reading and writing are usually part of all homework assignments, it is also important to bear in mind that reading and other activities such as journal writing, recreational reading, vocabulary games, not assigned for mandatory completion by teachers are part of daily life and are not considered to be homework. For the purpose of this administrative procedure four types of homework are identified: Practice, Completion, Enrichment and Projects.

#### 1.1 Practice:

1.1.1 Practice homework reviews and reinforces skills and concepts taught during instructional time.

#### 1.2 Completion:

1.2.1 Completion homework is work assigned during the school day that was not finished in a reasonable amount of time. This may include, but is not limited to, a written story or completing a set of questions. In situations where the

majority of students have been unable to complete an assignment, additional class time is to be provided before it is assigned for homework.

### 1.3 Enrichment:

1.3.1 Enrichment homework extends the learning through higher order critical thinking skills and complex problem solving.

### 1.4 Projects:

1.4.1 Project homework relates to the curriculum and occurs when additional time outside of the school day is required to complete an activity or task assignment. Project homework may involve a small group of students who share the work of completing the project.

1.4.2 When assigning a project for homework, it is particularly important for teachers to pay careful attention to how projects are differentiated for student success. Teachers must also supply clear marking criteria for students outlining all parts of the project. Regarding group project homework: In junior high, time is given for group projects in class and students are encouraged to use collaborative online tools to complete the project.

## 2. Guiding Principles

2.1 In designing homework for students, teachers must apply the following guiding principles:

2.1.1 Ensure homework is purposeful and meaningful;

2.1.2 Plan and differentiate assignments in order to ensure students are able to complete homework independently or with minimal support;

2.1.3 Consider and be sensitive to the impact of homework on family life and balance the benefits of homework with respect for the value of family time;

2.1.4 Ensure students and parents/legal guardians are aware of and encouraged to use strategies for communicating challenges students may face in successfully completing homework;

2.1.5 When working with students, seek their input into the structure of homework that best supports their learning and success;

2.1.6 Strive to identify interesting, engaging learning tasks for homework assignments;

## 3. Holidays and Weekends

3.1 In addition to consideration of homework types, and the need for careful design of homework tasks, CFIS recognizes the importance of family time, the value of celebrating religious traditions and the need to balance homework with other demands.

3.2 It is therefore recommended that teachers refrain from assigning homework over holidays and on designated “no homework” days that will support some school-wide events such as music concerts and musical theatre performances. Since

regular weekends are often filled with many family demands, discretion is to be used to ensure homework over regular weekends is no more than what might be normally assigned on a school night. Homework is also to be differentiated to reflect varying student needs.

#### 4. Recommended Times

To recognize the importance of personal and family time, it is recommended teachers use the following guidelines related to the quantity of homework.

- 4.1 The amount of homework assigned to students is to be differentiated according to age, developmental stage and grade level along a continuum from junior high school to high school. At all levels, the time a student spends on homework may vary, and individual student needs and capacity are always to be considered.
- 4.2 Keeping in mind that the first grade in each divisional range below is to reflect time at the low end of the scale, with a gradual extension at the upper end of the division to the higher time range. The recommended time guideline is as follows: 10 minutes per grade for total homework time. For example, it is expected that a grade 7 student spend approximately 70 minutes on homework on school days.

#### 5. Roles and Responsibilities

Since student learning and success are shared responsibilities, teachers, parents/legal guardians, students and school administrators all have important roles and responsibilities related to the completion of homework.

##### 5.1 Teachers

Teachers have a responsibility to:

- 5.1.1 Maximize instruction during school hours by using strategies such as differentiated assessment and instruction;
- 5.1.2 Make every effort to differentiate expectations when homework is assigned;
- 5.1.3 Ensure homework is used for review, practice, enrichment, completion of work, or introduction of new information in a flipped classroom learning model (in a flipped classroom learning model, the new information is thoroughly explained and discussed during the very next class);
- 5.1.4 Prepare students to succeed with homework and support them to develop skills they need to complete homework successfully;
- 5.1.5 Utilize appropriate strategies to communicate homework assignments to students, as well as, strategies for completing assignments. For example, student agendas, electronic means, etc.
- 5.1.6 Establish communication strategies for parents/legal guardians and students in cases where the student encounters challenges in completing the homework.

## 5.2 Parents/Legal Guardians

5.2.1 Parents/legal guardians are educational partners with teachers. Homework is one of the options parents/legal guardians have to support their child's learning. Homework provides parents/legal guardians with opportunities to:

5.2.1.1 Encourage and supervise learning as students practice skills at home;

5.2.1.2 Deepen their understanding of how their child is doing;

5.2.1.3 Model the family's commitment to education;

5.2.1.4 Provide appropriate assistance.

5.2.2 A key parental/legal guardian's responsibility is to communicate to teachers concerns related to homework completion, circumstances where their children are experiencing difficulty with their homework or if there are extenuating circumstances that made it difficult for the student to complete an assignment as planned.

5.2.3 Since homework is designed to support learning and is not intended to provide instruction, parents/legal guardians are not required to take on the role of a professional teacher.

5.2.4 Parents/legal guardians, who wish to significantly modify homework expectations for their children, are encouraged to meet with our Student Services team and the teachers to discuss the details of a homework plan to meet the student's needs.

## 5.3 Students

5.3.1 Students have a responsibility to do their best in completing assignments.

5.3.2 Students are also to be encouraged by their teacher and parents/legal guardians to share challenges that they encounter with homework.

## 5.4 School Administration

5.4.1 The principal will communicate the school homework plans and procedures through a variety of means including websites and letters to parents.

5.4.2 The principal has a role in supporting teachers, parents/legal guardians and students to find solutions to homework issues as well as in planning.

5.4.3 In collaboration with staff, the principal is encouraged to organize and deliver professional development opportunities related to homework

## 6. Homework support

6.1 Lunchtime: on a daily basis, incomplete homework is recorded in a Google document accessible by all teachers.

- 6.1.1 Every day during lunchtime, students whose homework is incomplete must go to the “homework room” to complete their homework under teacher supervision
- 6.1.2 Every Friday, students whose names are still on the “incomplete homework” list will receive an email from the school (copied to the parents), explaining that the missing homework must be submitted by Monday or receive a low grade on the upcoming Learner Profile report card. For assignments to be graded, a second deadline is mentioned. If this one-week extension deadline is not met, the student’s score on this assignment will be “unable to assess” which is equivalent to a zero.

### **Five Major Reasons Why Students May Fail to Complete Homework *and how to help them***

1. **Academic** - task is too hard or too lengthy for the student’s working speed
  - Have a discussion with the student and teacher and possibly the Learning Strategist to explore differentiated assignments to meet the student’s needs
2. **Organizational** - getting it home, getting it done, getting it back is difficult
  - Checklists (electronically or on paper) transform the difficulty from internal mode to external so that the student “sees” what he/she needs to do
3. **Motivational** - burnout, overload, too much experience with failure, or frustration with the specific task
  - Have the student identify what he/she can do, how to do it and when to do it. The student’s buy-in is essential.
4. **Situational** - unable to do work at home, too many other activities vying for time, or no materials available to complete the assignment at home
  - Plan. Try Sunday Planning On Time (SPOT). Take the time as a family to model as well as support the planning of and prioritization of all work and activities. Don’t forget to allow for “unscheduled” time.
  - The student should focus on mindfully applying himself/herself to the sole task of completing one piece of homework at a time. This will maximize the student’s level of engagement with the academic task at hand and will perhaps generate some enjoyment in the learning experience.
5. **Personal** - depression, anxiety, family problems, or other personal issues.
  - Talk, find someone to confide in about feelings and personal issues (for example, the Students Services team at school, friends, family or a teacher). At times, professional support is most beneficial.

#### **Sources:**

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2. Cooper, H. The battle over homework: Common ground for administrators, teachers, and parents, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2007
3. Vatterott, C. Rethinking homework: Best practices that support diverse needs. Alexandria, VA: ASCD, 2009
4. Wormeli, R. “12 homework perspectives” - handout at conference in Edmonton, Alberta, 2009
5. Calgary Roman Catholic School Board Homework Policy, April 2016

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