

Provincial Homework Policy (Grades P–12)

1. Introduction

The Provincial Homework Policy establishes the expectation for educators to assign developmentally appropriate homework at each grade level to enhance student learning. This policy applies to all public schools in the province of Nova Scotia.

Homework is an out-of-classroom activity that provides an opportunity for students to practice what they are learning in class. It should be evaluated to provide feedback to students.

Homework can help students develop academically and personally when the work is carefully planned, directly connected to classroom learning, meaningful to students, and appropriate for a student's age and stage of development.

2. The Purpose of Homework

Homework has one or more of the following three purposes:

- **Prepare** information or materials for future learning activities (e.g., gather resources, read something for a class discussion, or rehearse for a presentation).
- **Practice** new knowledge or new skills (e.g., read for pleasure, practice physical skills, practice a musical instrument, use new knowledge to complete a project, or practice basic literacy and math skills).
- **Enrich** students' understanding of a topic and apply it in new ways (e.g., research local news, investigate a science experiment, write daily or weekly reflections in a journal, or apply skills to a class project).

Homework will not be used for the following reasons:

- to discipline or punish a student
- to introduce or practice skills the student does not understand
- to assess a student's learning without reference to other work

The purpose of homework will vary by grade and subject:

- Homework assigned in grades primary–6 will
 - enhance student learning of foundational skills in reading and math (e.g., reading for pleasure, educational games)
 - gradually introduce time to practice or apply learning in other subject areas
 - promote healthy growth and development (e.g., practicing physical skills, interviewing family members)
- Homework assigned in grades 7–12 will expand students' learning of advanced skills and subject-specific knowledge.

The development of life skills (e.g., time management, self-direction, independent problem solving) will be an important element of homework at all grade levels (primary–12).

3. Standards for Effective Homework

Homework assignments will

- reinforce, enrich, or help students prepare for classroom learning
- be designed with consideration for the needs and circumstances of each student
- be appropriate for each student's age and developmental stage
- have a clear purpose
- directly connect to what students are learning in their classes
- build on skills or knowledge that a student already has
- be designed so that the student can do the work without extra help
- be evaluated promptly
- provide evidence of student learning
- offer a way for families to support their children's learning, without requiring family members to teach new skills or concepts
- be coordinated by teachers and administrators through a school-wide approach that ensures assignments are realistic and fair to all students

Class projects and assignments are opportunities for students to show what they have learned. Class projects and assignments should be evaluated to provide feedback to students and to contribute to their grades.

Evaluation will

- check that students have understood and followed directions
- provide specific information to students about their work
- describe areas for improvement
- provide positive praise and reinforcement
- suggest strategies for moving forward
- encourage students to respond to feedback and try new approaches to their schoolwork

When assigning homework, all educators will respect cultural, religious, or other days of significance for individual students and their families (e.g., Eid, Diwali, Passover, Treaty Day). In rare circumstances and for specific programs only (e.g., International Baccalaureate), homework may be assigned over the summer holidays and other extended breaks.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will

- Communicate the Provincial Homework Policy to school boards.
- Provide school boards with information on best practices for designing homework to support student learning.
- Monitor implementation of the policy.

School boards will

- Monitor implementation of the policy in all schools.
- Provide principals with information on best practices for designing homework to support student learning.
- Ensure that all schools have a process for regular communication with parents¹ about homework assignments (e.g., class websites, newsletters).

School administrators will

- Establish a school-wide approach to designing and assigning homework, including a process for home-school communications.
- Inform families about the Provincial Homework Policy.
- Ensure that all teachers adhere to the policy.
- Identify opportunities for students to receive homework help at school (e.g., homework club) and after school hours.
- Coordinate school-wide resources that support the successful completion of homework (e.g., newsletters, homework clubs, assignments coordinated among teachers).
- Offer information to help families support their children with homework.

Teachers will

- Implement the expectations outlined in the policy, in all classes.
- Evaluate homework and provide timely feedback to students.
- Participate in a school-wide approach to coordinating and communicating about homework.
- Follow up with families if a student is consistently unable to complete homework assignments on time.

Students will

- Regularly complete homework assignments on time and to the best of their ability.
- Seek a clear understanding of assigned homework (e.g., objectives, timelines, resources needed) and ask for clarification if expectations are not clear.
- Learn to manage the time and resources they need to complete homework.

Families will

- Provide encouragement and appropriate support to help students develop study skills at home (e.g., time management).
- Help students balance time spent on homework, extracurricular, and out-of-school commitments.
- Contact teachers if their child is regularly unable to complete homework assignments or needs significant amounts of time or help.

1. In this policy, the term parent is intended to include both parents and guardians.