

HOMEWORK AND STUDYING

SUPPORTING AND GUIDING MY CHILD



FOREWORD

Dear Parents,

We are pleased to present this document, which is intended to help you make homework and studying a pleasant family time. Studies have shown just how important your support and encouragement are to your children's success in school.

From the moment your children were born, you have looked after them. Over the years, you have nurtured them in countless ways, feeding them, comforting them, entertaining them, telling them stories and explaining thousands of things to them. And, now, another activity has been added to your daily routine—homework and studying.

Dealing with homework and studying may require some adjustment as nearly half of all parents find it stressful and children may not always be very enthusiastic about this activity, which is added to days that are already very full. Doing homework and studying can, however, be a positive experience and contribute to your children's success in school. All that is needed is for some simple conditions to be set in place.

Our aim is to help you establish the conditions in which students benefit from homework and studying. This document will reassure those of you who already feel sure of yourselves and shed light on the situation for those of you who have concerns. It will never replace your own good judgment but will, we hope, provide you with a tool that will help you contribute even more to your children's growth and development.



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AS A PARENT, WHAT IS MY ROLE?

ATTITUDES

As a parent, you know or can surmise what attitudes have a positive influence on your child's scholastic learning:

- ◆ approval
- ◆ encouragement
- ◆ help
- ◆ a constructive attitude to education in general
- ◆ a positive attitude to what your child is learning at school and academic tasks
- ◆ high, but reasonable, expectations of your child

BEING THERE

First and foremost, you need to be there for your child because the main goal of homework and studying is to teach children how to work on their own. The idea is not to do the work for them, but to support them in their efforts.

RECOGNIZING THE CHILD'S RESPONSIBILITY

Primary responsibility for homework and studying belongs to your child, who must be allowed to have this opportunity to learn by himself or herself, develop autonomy and acquire good working habits.

In various ways, homework and studying also enable students to consolidate or pursue the work done in class. It will gradually dawn upon your child that he or she is making progress due to his or her own personal efforts. To get there, your child needs your support, even if homework is done somewhere other than at home.

SUPPORTING THE TEACHER

Homework and studying are another way for teachers to assess the progress their students have made.

Your collaboration and support are necessary for your child to get the most benefit possible out of homework and studying in a way that encourages learning.

MAINTAINING COMMUNICATION

Homework and studying enable parents to see the progress their children are making and, above all, to maintain good communication with them. We know that it is difficult to organize family life around homework. But, finding some quiet time with your children gives them a chance to share part of their daily routine with you.

IN TWO WORDS

Homework and studying are a **shared responsibility** between your child, the teacher and you.

HOW LONG SHOULD HOMEWORK AND STUDYING TAKE?

The length of time that should be spent on homework and studying varies according to the children, the work to be done and the requirements of the school. In general, at the start of elementary school, it should take no more than 30 minutes a day and by the end of elementary school, no more than 60 minutes.

During the early years of elementary school, your son or daughter will need you there to help with homework and studying.

As the years go on, your child will become more and more autonomous. He or she will still need you, but in other ways.

WHAT CAN I DO TO GUIDE, SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGE MY CHILD?

GUIDE AND SUPPORT

To guide and support while taking your child's age and needs into consideration, it is important to:

- ◆ respect your child's pace and personality and to let him or her work things out because that is how he or she will learn to be autonomous
 - *for example, when a challenge arises, do not whisper the answer*
- ◆ express your requirements and expectations clearly and consistently
 - *for example, do not change your requirements about handwriting from one evening to the next*
- ◆ respect the goals pursued by the teacher and the methods that he or she uses
 - for example,*
 - *do not go further than what is asked in class*
 - *do look in your child's notebook to see how the teacher solves math problems*
- ◆ teach your child good working habits within an appropriate framework and routine
 - for example,*
 - *encourage your child to always have his or her school materials ready*
 - *encourage your child to review course notes on a regular basis*
 - *help your child plan assignments and study time for an exam*
 - *ensure that your child is using his or her agenda effectively*

- ◆ find a suitable place with your child where he or she can work without being disturbed

for example,

- *if your child prefers to do homework at the kitchen table, make sure that siblings do not disturb him or her*
- *make sure that there is enough light*
- *make sure that the television is off and that the computer is not connected to social networks*

- ◆ ensure that your child has access to all necessary materials: dictionary, grammar, calculator, books, computer, Internet

for example,

- *have a French/English dictionary, pencil and paper that they can use at home*
- *if you do not have a computer at home, schedule time with your child to go to a public library so he or she can access the Internet*

- ◆ help your child to use several simple methods to retain what he or she has learned

for example, suggest that your child,

- *rewrite his or her notes and make summaries*
- *use different coloured pencils to highlight or group information*
- *invent a song to learn or remember information*

- ◆ let your child plan work and get organized
for example, ask your child if,
 - *he or she has checked his or her agenda or list of assignments*
 - *he or she has set priorities*
 - *he or she has brought home the right textbooks*
- ◆ show your child where to look for help
 - *for example, suggest that he or she consult a friend, or use **SOS LEARN** or the **Allô prof bibliothèque virtuelle**.*
- ◆ pay attention to your child
 - *for example, know when to suggest a short break; your child will go back to work refreshed*
- ◆ always let your child be responsible for his or her work and always go over it together

ENCOURAGE

To encourage your child by your words and actions, taking his or her age and needs into consideration, it is important to:

- ◆ emphasize your child's successes and make him or her feel proud
 - *for example, make your child aware of his or her progress and strengths (efforts made, quality of work, tenacity, etc.)*
- ◆ not blame your child and, if he or she does encounter a challenge, do not dramatize it
 - *for example, help your child review his or her work methods, be aware of what he or she knows and identify what to do to improve, and encourage him or her to continue on this path*
- ◆ show your child that what is being learnt in school is useful now and will continue to be in the years to come and help your child to see that school is important for his or her future
 - *for example, explain how, in your work, you use the math that he or she is learning*
- ◆ encourage your child to tell you about his or her day at school
- ◆ show interest in what your child is learning in school

- ◆ pay special attention to how enthusiastic and interested your child is in homework and studying as well as school in general; there are times when he or she will need even more encouragement from you
- ◆ talk positively about school to your child; this will make him or her eager to go

READING: A PASSPORT TO SUCCESS

Homework and studying often involve reading. By supporting their children in their homework and studying, parents are also helping them learn to read, especially in Elementary Cycle One. But, there is something more parents can do—instill a love for reading in their children and thus make an even greater contribution to their success.

Experts agree that children who read greatly increase their chances of success. To instill a love of reading:

- ◆ take the time to read with your child as often as possible; when your child is young, read aloud, listen to him or her read a story, take turns reading
- ◆ help your child assess his or her progress in reading
- ◆ ask your child to talk about what he or she is reading, ask questions about what he or she has read, read a bit of the story and ask him or her to imagine what comes next
- ◆ make stimulating and interesting books for young people available to your child: cartoons, novels, biographies, nonfiction
- ◆ suggest reading materials suited to your child's age and tastes: newspaper or magazine articles, news on the Web
- ◆ talk to your child about what you read, your favourite authors, books or articles you liked
- ◆ go to the public library with your child and attend cultural activities offered there, sometimes at no charge

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE EVERY DAY?

TASKS TO KEEP ON TOP OF

Here are some tasks that we suggest you perform on a regular basis:

- ◆ Find out the school's requirements, especially at the beginning of the school year.
- ◆ Read the messages sent to parents by school staff right away, take the necessary action and sign them, if applicable.
- ◆ Especially during the early years of elementary school, look at your child's agenda or list of assignments, whichever is used in his or her class.
- ◆ Attend meetings with the teachers, including meetings where the report cards are handed out.

WHEN AND HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE SCHOOL?

Your child's teacher is the person best positioned to help you if you have any concerns about your child's homework or studying.

- ◆ It is important to know and use the means of communication favoured by the school, such as the agenda, home/school communication sheet book or the school's parent information bulletin or e-mail.
- ◆ Find out the school's policies and the services it provides.
- ◆ Do not hesitate to contact the teacher if a problem arises or persists. You can write a message to the teacher in the agenda, call him or her or send an e-mail.
- ◆ And why not contact the teacher when you see the progress your child is making, either to check whether your child is demonstrating the same progress in class or to thank the teacher for the support and guidance he or she is giving your child?

DID YOU KNOW?

The teacher can provide you with advice to help your child, taking into account his or her specific strength and challenges. The school agenda is an efficient way to communicate with the teacher. You can also use it to point out an achievement or a success your child has experienced.

WHAT TO DO IF THERE'S A PROBLEM?

WHEN A PROBLEM ARISES

- ◆ help your child to remember the teacher's explanations
- ◆ ask your child if one of his or her books or notebooks might have the explanation needed
- ◆ suggest that your child call a friend, SOS LEARN, Allô prof (French only), or a resource person in your community

IF THE PROBLEM PERSISTS

- ◆ leave the teacher a message
- ◆ talk to the teacher to find solutions to the problem
- ◆ ensure that your child is participating in homework help activities or catch-up periods in school, as needed
- ◆ do not hesitate to contact the principal if you need further information or help

IF THE PROBLEMS ARE COMPROMISING YOUR CHILD'S SUCCESS

If your child is facing difficulties that are compromising his or her success, seek satisfactory solutions in concert with school staff. Be aware that, in this case, your school can draw up an individualized education plan to work together to find solutions to the student's problems.

FURTHER READING FOR HELPING YOUR CHILD

BÉLIVEAU, Marie-Claude. *Homework and Studying*. Montréal: Éditions du CHU Sainte-Justine, 2009.

BÉLIVEAU, Marie-Claude. *Au retour de l'école... La place des parents dans l'apprentissage scolaire*. Montréal: Éditions du CHU Sainte-Justine, 2004.

CARRIER, Gilles. *À l'heure des devoirs et des leçons: Des outils pour accompagner son enfant*. Lévis: L'école des parents de la Commission scolaire des Navigateurs, Presses Inter Universitaires, 2006.

DUCLOS, Germain. *Guider mon enfant dans sa vie scolaire*, 2^e ed., rev. and enl. Montréal: Éditions du CHU Sainte-Justine, 2006.

MARSHALL LOCKET, Sharon. *Home Sweet Homework: A Parents Guide to Stress-Free Homework & Studying Strategies That Work*. Avon, Adams Media, 2007.

Guide des parents. Pour mieux suivre mon enfant à l'école, Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, C.S. des Laurentides, 2010. Available at www.fcpq.qc.ca

WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE TO HELP ME WITH HOMEWORK AND STUDYING?

IN YOUR COMMUNITY

If it is difficult for you to monitor homework and studying, you can find, around you or in your community, various resources suitable for your child. Often, school boards and schools offer services; just ask them.

You must remember, however, that these services, no matter how useful, cannot take your place. Being there for your child, taking an interest in his or her work and offering your support remain indispensable.

ON THE WEB

To instill a love of reading:

- ◆ www.livresouverts.qc.ca (French only)
- ◆ www.banq.qc.ca/accueil
(Grande Bibliothèque du Québec)

USEFUL RESOURCES: SOS LEARN

SOS Learn offers online assistance to children and parents **at no charge**. Help is available every evening from Monday to Thursday for children in elementary and secondary school.

Web: www.learnquebec.ca

ANOTHER RESOURCE: ALLÔ PROF (FRENCH ONLY)

Allô prof is a francophone organization that offers assistance to children and parents **at no charge**. There are four main services:

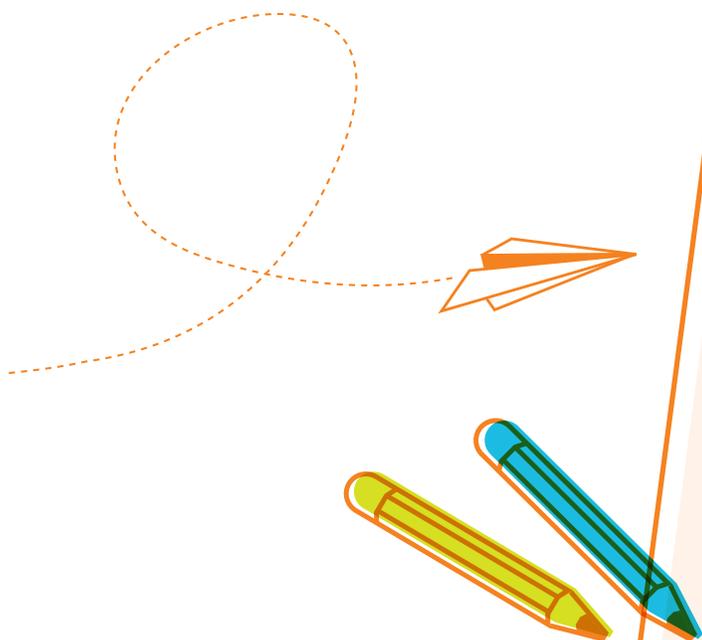
- ◆ **a quick, toll-free conversation on the telephone** with teachers who are available to answer questions from children and parents on all subjects, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Monday to Thursday
- ◆ **virtual classes on the Web** where young people can participate in exchanges with a teacher and a group of children
- ◆ **a young people's forum** where they can help each other
- ◆ **a virtual library** where you will find explanations on all the subjects taught in school

Web: www.alloprof.qc.ca

Telephone: Montréal: 514-527-3726

Québec: 418-843-5355

Other areas: 1-888-776-4455
(toll free)



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