

HOMework

BRUNSWICK EAST PRIMARY SCHOOL POLICY

Introduction & Rationale:

What is homework? Homework comprises activities that enrich learning through reading, talking and living life. The **best homework** of all has nothing to do with textbooks and exercises. It is real family living, playing and sharing interests with relatives and friends. This includes lots and lots of family conversation, shared bed-time stories, private reading before lights out, family games, activities and hobbies, visits to the local library, outings to all kinds of places of historic or natural interest and imaginative play that comes naturally to children of all ages.

Reading enables children to enter another world of communication. Reading will expand vocabulary, strengthen grammar and build on comprehension skills whilst journeying through adventure, mystery and excitement. Young children can be read to by adults and gradually build on their own skills to read more challenging texts independently. Building on reading skills early will enrich their learning and improve student outcomes over the years.

Talking to children empowers them to think and encourages them to respond. Children need to talk and to experience a rich diet of spoken language in order to think and to learn. Talking builds relationships, confidence and a sense of self. It strengthens their ability to communicate both orally and in written form. Language and the development of thought are inseparable. Learning is a social process, and high-quality talking helps to scaffold the child's understanding from what he knows now and what he has yet to learn. It is about adults and children articulating their ideas freely, sharing ideas and considering different viewpoints. (*Robin Alexander: Towards Dialogic Teaching*)

Living Life. Do we not all want a life of fulfilment for our children? Living is not just about school and homework, it is about enjoying living – sport, music, dance, drama, playing with friends, family trips and outings etc. We must not forget these important factors that contribute to a fun life – 'fun' is also one of our school values. Researchers have found that meaningful activities can enhance learning whilst excessive and mundane tasks can negatively impact on student achievement and reduce student access to leisure activities. (*Homework Literature Review – Summary of Key Findings- Qld Gov't*)

Having stated this, there is a place for **meaningful** 'school set' homework activities that can enrich and enhance student learning. Research indicates that most parents **expect** school to set homework and that parents of younger children are more likely to be actively involved with their children's homework. (*Homework Literature Review – Summary of Key Findings- Qld Gov't*)

Homework that is set at BEPS will **not** become a tedious routine that robs children, not only of enthusiasm, but also of time to relax and play and enjoy family activities. **Below are the departmental Guidelines outlined by the Victorian Department of Education & Training that have been modified to support the above philosophy.**

Early Years (Prep – Year 4)

Primarily, homework will consist of reading activities to, with, and by parents/caregivers or older siblings – recommended reading time should begin with 10 minutes for prep children, progressively moving towards 30 minutes for grade 4 students each day – but this will vary from child to child. Parents/caregivers are encouraged to talk about the books, ask children questions about characters, plot etc. Parents, who encourage students by talking about their books, will encourage and motivate their children to read further. Talking to your child will also assist them to build on their oral language experience to assist them to think and learn. It is arguably the true foundation of learning. (*Robin Alexander: Towards Dialogic Teaching.*) Children who are independent readers gain a deeper understanding of literature when parents/caregivers read and discuss more challenging books.

On occasions, teachers will set homework tasks that ask students to explore additional information associated with classroom activities. (Usually grades 2 –4)

These homework tasks should:

- Be balanced with a range of recreational, family and cultural activities
- Be purposeful, interesting, meaningful and relevant to the curriculum

Types of homework that meet these requirements are practice exercises that include providing students with opportunities to apply new knowledge or to review, revise and reinforce newly acquired skills such as:

- Researching for school topics requiring children to survey and interview family members.
- Completing consolidation exercises for Mathematics – memorisation of tables (grades 3 &4)
- Practising spelling words (grades 3 & 4)
- Reading for pleasure.
- Practising physical education skills e.g. throwing, catching, kicking a ball etc

This additional homework will generally not exceed one hour over the week and will **not** be set on **weekends** or **during vacation periods**.

Middle Years (Years 5 – 6)

Primarily, homework will consist of reading by the students with a recommended minimum reading time of 30 minutes each day. Parents/caregivers are still encouraged to talk about the books, ask children questions about characters, plot etc. to provide students strategies to analyse and evaluate books. Students in the upper school also like to have books read to them, particularly if they are more challenging texts. Talking to your child will also assist them build on their oral language experience to assist them to think and learn –it is arguably the true foundation of learning. (*Robin Alexander: Towards Dialogic Teaching*)

Teachers will set other homework tasks that are extension tasks associated with classroom work, projects and research where students can explore additional information.

This additional homework will generally not exceed one and a half hours over the week and will **not** be set on **weekends** or **during vacation periods**. Students will of course be expected to undertake homework tasks during these periods in their secondary years of schooling.

Homework tasks should:

- Be interesting, challenging and, where appropriate, open-ended
- Be balanced with a range of recreational, family and cultural activities
- Be purposeful, meaningful and relevant to the curriculum

Types of homework that meet these requirements are practice exercises that include providing students with opportunities to apply new knowledge or to review, revise and reinforce newly acquired skills such as:

- Completing consolidation exercises for Mathematics – memorisation of tables
- Practising spelling words
- Practising phrases learnt in Italian
- Reading for pleasure
- Writing essays and other creative tasks
- Practising and playing musical instruments
- Practising physical education skills

Some extension homework tasks which enable students to pursue knowledge individually and imaginatively, such as:

- Writing a book review
- Making or designing an art work
- Finding material on the Internet

Parents and caregivers:

A most valuable form of homework is where the child is sufficiently stimulated to initiate his or her own home studies. This form of self-motivated activity should be promoted. Parents and caregivers can help their children by:

- Encouraging them to read on a habitual basis by setting aside a regular time daily;
- Reading books to their children – no matter what age – all children like to be read to;
- Spending time discussing the books they are reading and ask them questions about the book;
- Observing and acknowledging their success and ask them how their school work is progressing;
- Attending school events, displays or production in which their children are involved;
- Contacting the relevant teacher to discuss any problems their child/ren may be having with reading or set homework tasks;
- Helping them to balance the amount of time spent of reading, completing homework tasks, watching television, playing computer games and engaging in other leisure and recreational activities.

Teachers:

Teachers can help their students by:

- Setting varied, challenging and meaningful tasks related to class work that are appropriate to the students' needs;
- Giving upper school students enough time to complete homework tasks in the 1½ hours set a week, over and above regular reading time, taking into account home obligations and extracurricular activities;
- Assessing any set homework tasks and providing timely and practical feedback and support;
- Making effective use of homework diaries for grades 5 & 6 students;
- Helping students in grades 5 & 6 develop the organisational and time-management skills needed for them to be responsible for their own learning;
- Ensuring students have good information skills;
- Ensuring that the homework can be done independently;
- Ensuring parents and caregivers are aware of the school's homework policy.

There may be some families that do not wish their child/ren to undertake some/any components of the homework set by teachers and may want to choose their own activities to enhance learning at home. It would be appreciated if the decision not to do some/any of the homework is placed in writing and submitted to the classroom teacher as early as possible, to avoid stress for child and the family.

Evaluation:

- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's regular review cycle.

This policy was ratified by School Council on 24th July 2006