



# A dog ate my...

There's more to homework than getting assignments in on time.

Homework teaches organisation, time management and research skills. It gives students the opportunity to build upon their class work and involve family members in their learning.

Most students are currently assigned homework, but how much is the right amount? What type of work should be set? And to what extent should parents be involved?

In about 60 per cent of all Queensland families with dependent children, both parents are working (ABS 2003). Finding time to be involved in your child's homework can be difficult.

To help find a balance between family life and helping students reach their full potential, the Queensland Government has recently released the *Homework in State Schools Policy*. The policy sets out guidelines for homework, including the amount of time students should spend on homework each week.

During 2006, all state schools will develop a school homework policy relevant to the needs of their students.

In Catholic schools and independent schools, teachers and principals work in partnership with parents and students to develop guidelines that attempt to reflect a healthy balance between family life, homework and other pursuits according to their own situations.

## Interaction is the key

Leigh Pitt, Acting Deputy Principal at Ascot State School says in the early phase of learning, homework is more about quality than quantity.

"The focus in Year 1 is reading. Students have a reading book that they share with their parents every night," she says.

"In Years 4 through 7, only around half of their homework time should involve written work, such as spelling activities, basic maths revision or learning their tables. The remainder of the time would involve reading and could also include activities such as investigative problem-solving or creative thinking."

## Learning to learn

Norm Hunter, Principal of Hillbrook Anglican School, says homework is important, but it needs to be meaningful to

students. Ideally it would be asking them to build on today's lesson, prepare for tomorrow's lesson, or be part of continuing work on an assignment or research task.

"Students should establish a homework routine. That way they can plan their extra curricular commitments such as sports or a part-time job around their study and not get caught short with sudden deadlines," he says.

"Hillbrook students have an assessment planner which serves two roles. It encourages students to plan their time and keep track of their workload."

### Keep it relevant

Greg Myers, Principal of St Dymphna's Parish School, says homework shouldn't be set just to 'keep them busy'.

"Homework should be a productive experience where students are applying themselves to something that relates to real-life experience."

Mr Myers suggests parents incorporate everyday tasks into their homework, from playing games and shopping to simply engaging in conversation.

"Spend 10 minutes talking about what happened at school. Encouraging students to actively recall what they did at school helps them to consolidate and contextualise what they have learned," he says.

### Extra help when needed

Redbank Plains State High School is one of many Queensland schools to establish a free 'Homework Centre'.

Principal Mark Breckenridge says the benefits of the centre are numerous.

"Students can get some one-on-one time with teachers to discuss specific project work and they can also access the latest ICT tools to help with their research," he says.

## State school homework hours

### Early Phase of Learning (Prep to Year 3)

In the Prep Year, generally students will not be set homework.

Homework in Years 1, 2 and 3 could be up to but generally not more than 1 hour per week, and may include:

- daily reading to, with, and by parents/caregivers or other family members
- conversations about what is happening at school
- preparation for oral presentations
- opportunities to write for meaningful purposes.



### Middle Phase (Year 4 to Year 9)

Homework in Years 4 and 5 could be up to but generally not more than 2–3 hours per week.

Homework in Years 6 and 7 could be up to but generally not more than 3–4 hours per week.

Homework in Years 8 and 9 could be up to but generally not more than 5 hours per week.



### Senior Phase (Years 10, 11 and 12)

The amount of time devoted to homework and independent study will vary according to the student's learning needs and individual program of learning, determined through their Senior Education and Training (SET) Plan.

