

# Avoiding the homework blues

After spending up to six hours a day, five days a week in the classroom, it is not surprising that some students are reluctant to spend another couple of hours studying at home.

Parents sometimes worry about how many hours students should spend on homework and how much help they need with special projects and assignments.

Education Queensland Guidance Officer Bronwyn Morris said the amount of homework children were set usually depended on their age and individual needs.

'In the early years of schooling, students are often given set homework tasks to help them revise what they have learnt in the classroom during the day. In Years 1 to 3, for instance, students might have spelling to learn, stories to write and books to read,' said Ms Morris.

'Students in secondary school can expect a set pattern of study requiring one to three hours of homework per day, depending on their year level and course. This study involves review and revision, and research for projects and assignments.'

Brisbane Catholic Education Area Supervisor Neil Bloxside said the early years of schooling were a particularly important time for parents to involve themselves in their children's homework routines.

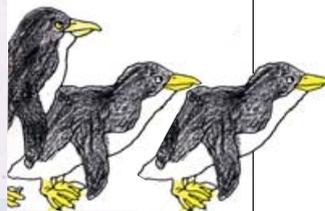
'One of the aims of homework for younger children is to motivate them to establish a foundation for homework study in their secondary schooling. Parents can help them develop attitudes and habits that will benefit them throughout their years at school,' he said.

For upper primary students, some Catholic schools have introduced what is referred to as 'contract homework' — a block of work that may be completed any time over a set period of days or weeks.

'The contract homework approach recognises that parents and students lead busy lives. Setting homework which may be completed over a period of time helps students plan their

## THE PENGUIN

The penguin is a sea bird. Like the emu it cannot fly, but it is a very good swimmer.



It eats fish with its long beak and stro quickly thro

Penguins live near the coast. They have white feathers.

Both ma and pa sit on the ground.



homework around family and sporting activities. It also helps students hone their planning skills by recognising they have set tasks to complete in set timeframes,' Mr Bloxside said.

Most teachers would agree that there are no hard and fast rules for parents when it comes to homework. It is important, though, to prevent homework from becoming a cause of friction in the family.

'If there are problems, parents should seek advice from someone at the school,' Ms Morris said.

For many teachers, homework is a valuable source of feedback about individual students.

'In the early years, the ease with which students finish homework correctly can indicate whether they've understood the lessons taught in the classroom. This helps teachers identify any learning problems early,' Ms Morris said.

Although it is good to become involved with their children's homework and to help out, Ms Morris advised parents not to do the homework for them.

'If children are unable to understand a task, parents should let teachers know, either by writing a note or speaking with them,' she said.

'Be supportive of your child and if there is a cause for concern, work with the teacher to find a solution to the problem.'

Ms Morris believes children learn valuable lessons by interacting with their parents during everyday activities.

'These hands-on learning opportunities often help children better understand or apply what they have learnt at school,' Ms Morris said.

'For example, shopping at the supermarket offers opportunities for children to read the names and prices of products and to practise counting and adding up,' she said.

So how do parents deal with older students — the ones who just can't drag themselves away from the television or who spend hours playing computer games?

Education Queensland Senior Guidance Officer Veronica Eastgate brings her experience as a teacher and a parent to solving homework problems.

'Parents can motivate students by teaching them from an early age to set small goals and to plan their homework and leisure times,' Ms Eastgate said.

'Getting a better mark at the next examination is an achievable goal for students of all ages.

'Senior students should plan a study timetable which includes time for revision and for completing assignments by the due dates.'

Ms Eastgate advises against marathon study periods, particularly before exams.

'After every 40 minutes of study — or less if concentration falters — take a short break to relax,' she said.

'There is no right or wrong way for parents to handle their children's homework routines. What works for the individual student is right. If students learn to manage their time well, they will achieve their study goals.

'Life for students should not be all study. There should be a balance of time for schoolwork, for leisure and for just having fun.' ■

