



COLÁISTE CLAVIN

LONGWOOD CO. MEATH

Reviewed Study and Homework Policy

Coláiste Clavin is a rural co-educational, multi-denominational second-level school under the patronage Louth Meath Educational and Training Board. The school endeavours to provide a holistic educational experience for students in a caring and supportive environment. The previous policy was drafted in 2009 and is now being updated.

Scope

This Policy applies to the whole school community which includes management, teachers, parents and students.

Relationship to the School's Mission Statement

It relates to our Mission Statement because it aims to develop each individual's learning potential.

Rationale

Regular homework is a valuable aspect of the learning process and contributes to the development of sound study skills. It consolidates and supplements the work covered in class and promotes independent learning and creativity.

Goals and Objectives

- To encourage students to improve the quality of their homework
- To advise each member of the school community of his/her role in the implementation of the school policy.
- To motivate each student to complete his/her homework to the best of his/her ability and to the satisfaction of the teacher.
- Parents will be encouraged to take an active role in their son's/daughter's education
- Every student will be aware of the consequences for not attempting homework

Policy Statement

The provision of this policy contains roles and responsibilities for each member of the school community, guidelines for parents and teachers and homework procedures. The self-discipline necessary to carryout assignments in a timely manner is a skill that needs to be fostered and developed from an early age. The student journal is a very important resource in honing time management and organisational skills.

Definition of Homework

Homework is an out of class task assigned by a teacher which consolidates classroom learning.

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It may include any of the following:

- 1) *Written assignments*
- 2) *Oral assignments*
- 3) *Research*
- 4) *Project work*
- 5) *Revision*

Definition of Study

Study is learning that may be self-directed or may be assigned by a teacher. It is a necessary and ongoing task for the purpose of consolidating knowledge.

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal

- Is involved in drafting the policy.
- Ensures completed policy is communicated to all partners.
- Has a role to ensure policy is reviewed regularly.
- Offer advice to parents on study at information evening

Parents

- Checks journal nightly, where possible.
- Signs and dates journal each week.
- Provides, as far as practicable, a suitable environment for doing homework.
- Spot checks that son/daughter is working during assigned homework period.
- Will ultimately be responsible that homework is done to the best of his/her son's/daughter's particular ability.
- Places a note in the homework journal if there is a genuine reason why homework is not completed.

Class Tutor

- Responsible for checking homework journal at least once a week
- *Talk to tutor group at start of each year on homework and study*
- Responsible for dating homework journal once a week
- Ensure journal is being kept in a satisfactory condition
- Advising students of the importance and benefits of doing out-of-class assignments and study.

Class Teachers

- Reminding students at the beginning of class to put journals on their desk
- Ensuring students record their homework (this should be easily attainable by a quick glance around the room).
- *Involve students in selecting homework assignments*
- Be aware that the amount of homework given is within their capabilities and is relevant.
- Keeps a record of homework assigned in teacher diary.

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- Show students how work is to be presented
- Differentiates homework for special needs students and students of different nationality.
- Imposes and follows through with sanctions for pupils who do not adhere to the policy.
- *Corrects work and gives formative feedback regularly using the AFL strategy (two stars, a wish and student comment)*
- *Provide feedback on how students are performing in relation to class average*

Students

- Has a homework journal, and records his/her homework in it every day.
- Has his/her journal out and open on the desk in each class and keeps it in a satisfactory condition throughout the school year.
- Does homework to the best of his/her ability.
- Have all necessary materials to enable him/her to complete homework.
- Revisits homework that has been corrected.
- Set aside at least one hour per week for study

Policy Content

It is recommended that students spend, on average, the following length of *productive* time on homework/study:

- 1st years 1 ½ hours
- 2nd years 2 hours
- 3rd years 2 ½ hours
- 5th years 2 ½ hours
- 6th years 3 hours minimum

The following is recommended:

- Homework set will be purposeful and meaningful to the work of the class or to some future work
- Extended exercises may form part of on-going assessment of each student
- Students must present homework on the date specified by the teacher
- Students absent due to school related activities (e.g. Matches, quizzes etc) must ensure that homework set in their absence is completed
- A student absent for a period of time is expected to make every effort possible to complete work missed while absent, where possible
- A student absent for an extended period of time should contact the principal for a record of homework set during this period (e.g. Suspensions, illnesses etc)

Affirmation

It is recommended that a policy of rewarding and giving recognition to students for regular homework compliance should be practised in each classroom. This may be a note in the student journal, a comment on examination reports, a comment at meeting with parents. Incentives such as a free-homework night may also be used at the discretion of the teacher.

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Assessment

All homework assigned must be corrected in class or at a later stage by the teacher. Assessment will be in accordance with the criteria for success for the assignment. In keeping with the school's Assessment for Learning strategy teachers give feedback in three key areas.

1. What work has been completed successfully and why?
2. What needs to be addressed?
3. How might an improvement be brought about

Procedure for Incomplete Homework

If there are extenuating circumstances, verification note (written by parent/guardian) must be presented to that effect at **the beginning of class**

In the event of non-compliance with homework, the following will apply:

- **1st unexplained offence:** incident is recorded by the subject teacher in his/her diary, and the teacher speaks privately with the student to ascertain the reason for noncompliance. The student is reminded of the importance of doing assigned work
- **2nd unexplained offence:** the incident is recorded by the teacher in his/her diary and a note is placed in the student journal. Verbal reprimand issued
- **3rd unexplained offence:** the incident is recorded in the teacher's diary and a note is placed in the student journal and a written sanction is imposed.
- **4th unexplained offence:** the incident is recorded by the teacher in his/her diary and a notification of lunch-time detention is placed in the student journal. A lunchtime detention is given and appropriate work assigned
- **5th unexplained offence:** Incident is recorded by the subject teacher in his/her diary. The student's parents are contacted by phone and the situation is explained by the teacher. The student is given a lunchtime detention.
- **6th unexplained offence:** Teacher records incident in his/her diary. A note is placed in the student's journal. The matter is referred to school management who will consult with other teachers in relation to the student compliance with homework. The student's parents are invited to the school to discuss the matter. A lunchtime detention is imposed by the teacher.
- The School Discipline System will apply in the case of subsequent offences starting with a Stage 1 Discipline Notification

Monitoring

Homework will be monitored at the following levels:

- Note in Homework Journal
- Parent Teacher Meetings
- Student Council Meetings
- Staff Meetings
- Board of Management Meetings

Success Criteria

Increase in the number of students completing homework

Satisfactory homework exercises and assignments submitted by pupils

Feedback from all the school partners- parents, teachers and students

Review questionnaires

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Review of Policy

The policy will be reviewed regularly by staff.
Amendments to be made after staff consultation.
A major review is to be carried out every five years.

Staff consulted on: 13th January 2016
Ratified by BOM: 2nd February 2016
Ratified by LMETB: February 2016

Appendix 1

Study Ideas

1. Design a simple study plan.
 - Assign a few hours of study time throughout the week
 - Study around the same time each day
 - Create a numbered list of what you want to do during each session
 - Start early and finish early
2. Get into the zone quickly.
 - Don't waste time getting ready for study
 - Bring all necessary materials for the session with you at the start
 - Motivate yourself by reminding yourself that you will succeed because you are working hard
3. Select a suitable and comfortable learning environment
 - Leave the mobile phone elsewhere
 - Ensure you have good lighting
4. Sessions should be at most one hour in length
 - Take your break away from the area you are studying
 - Stick rigidly to the time you have assigned for the break (15 minutes)
5. Take your own notes.
 - Use flashcards to remember key information.
 - If you know what is on the card put it to one side
 - You might also find mind maps useful
6. Get plenty of exercise and eat healthy meals
 - Take sufficient fluid
 - Get plenty of sleep
7. Use what works.
 - Some study better alone and others need to be in the company of others
 - Some like music playing others prefer silence
 - You cannot study **effectively** and watch television.
 - Test yourself regularly on vocabulary, grammar, definitions, diagrams and formulae

Suggestions

- **A talk on study technique for all students at least once a year**
- **Help students develop a study habit from 1st year**
- **Get a former pupil in to talk to examination classes**
- **Organise supervised study in the school**
- **Have a class average column in reports if feasible**

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- **Reward students who are working**
- **School motto**

Whatever level of motivation your students bring to the classroom will be transformed, for better or worse, by what happens in that classroom.

Researchers have begun to identify those aspects of the teaching situation that enhance students' self-motivation (Lowman, 1984; Lucas, 1990; Weinert and Kluwe, 1987; Bligh, 1971). To encourage students to become self-motivated independent learners, instructors can do the following:

- Give frequent, early, positive feedback that supports students' beliefs that they can do well.
- Ensure opportunities for students' success by assigning tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult.
- Help students find personal meaning and value in the material.
- Create an atmosphere that is open and positive.
- Help students feel that they are valued members of a learning community.

Research has also shown that good everyday teaching practices can do more to counter student apathy than special efforts to attack motivation directly (Ericksen, 1978). Most students respond positively to a well-organized course taught by an enthusiastic instructor who has a genuine interest in students and what they learn.

General Strategies

Capitalize on students' existing needs. Students learn best when incentives for learning in a classroom satisfy their needs. Some of the needs your students may bring to the classroom are the need to learn something in order to complete a particular task or activity, the need to seek new experiences, the need to perfect skills, the need to overcome challenges, the need to become competent, the need to succeed and do well, the need to feel involved and to interact with other people.

Make students active participants in learning. Students learn by doing, making, writing, designing, creating, solving. Passivity dampens students' motivation and curiosity.

Ask students to analyse what makes their classes more or less "motivating." Sass (1989) asks his classes to recall two recent class periods, one in which they were highly motivated and one in which their motivation was low. Each student makes a list of specific aspects of the two classes that influenced his or her level of motivation, and students then meet in small groups to reach consensus on characteristics that contribute to high and low motivation. In over twenty courses, Sass reports, the same eight characteristics emerge as major contributors to

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student motivation:

- Instructor's enthusiasm
- Relevance of the material
- Organization of the course
- Appropriate difficulty level of the material
- Active involvement of students
- Variety
- Rapport between teacher and students
- Use of appropriate, concrete, and understandable examples

Hold high but realistic expectations for your students. Research has shown that a teacher's expectations have a powerful effect on a student's performance. If you act as though you expect your students to be motivated, hardworking, and interested in the course, they are more likely to be so. Set **realistic** expectations for students when you make assignments, give presentations, conduct discussions, and grade examinations. "

Help students set achievable goals for themselves. Failure to attain unrealistic goals can disappoint and frustrate students. Encourage students to focus on their continued improvement, not just on their grade on any one test or assignment. Help students evaluate their progress by encouraging them to critique their own work, analyse their strengths, and work on their weaknesses.

Tell students what they need to do to succeed in your course. Reassure students that they can do well in your subject, and tell them exactly what they must do to succeed. Say something to the effect that "If you can handle the examples on these problem sheets, you can pass the exam. People who have trouble with these examples can ask me for extra help." Or instead of saying, "You're way behind," tell the student, "Here is one way you could go about learning the material. How can I help you?" (Sources: Cashin, 1979; Tiberius, 1990)

Strengthen students' self-motivation. Avoid messages that reinforce your power as an instructor or that emphasise extrinsic rewards. Instead of saying, "I require," "you must," or "you should," stress "I think you will find. . ." or "I will be interested in your reaction." (Source: Lowman, 1990)

Avoid creating intense competition among students. Competition produces anxiety, which can interfere with learning. Reduce students' tendencies to compare themselves to one another. Bligh (1971) reports that students are more attentive, display better comprehension, produce more work, and are more favorable to the teaching method when they work cooperatively in groups rather than compete as individuals.

Be enthusiastic about your subject. An instructor's enthusiasm is a crucial factor in student motivation. If you become bored or apathetic, students will too. Typically, an instructor's enthusiasm comes from confidence, excitement about

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the content, and genuine pleasure in teaching. If you find yourself uninterested in the material, think back to what attracted you to the field and bring those aspects of the subject matter to life for your students. Or challenge yourself to devise the most exciting way to present the material, however dull the material itself may seem to you.

Structuring the Course to Motivate Students

Work from students' strengths and interests. Find out why students are enrolled in your course, how they feel about the subject matter, and what their expectations are. Then try to devise examples, case studies, or assignments that relate the course content to students' interests and experiences. For instance, a chemistry professor might devote some lecture time to examining the contributions of chemistry to resolving environmental problems. Explain how the content and objectives of your course will help students achieve their educational, professional, or personal goals. (Sources: Brock, 1976; Cashin, 1979; Lucas, 1990)

When possible, let students have some say in choosing what will be studied. Give students options on term papers or other assignments (but not on tests). Let students decide between two locations for the field trip, or have them select which topics to explore in greater depth. If possible, include optional or alternative units in the course. (Sources: Ames and Ames, 1990; Cashin, 1979; Forsyth and McMillan, 1991; Lowman, 1984)

Increase the difficulty of the material as the semester progresses. Give students opportunities to succeed at the beginning of the semester. Once students feel they can succeed, you can gradually increase the difficulty level. If assignments and exams include easier and harder questions, every student will have a chance to experience success as well as challenge. (Source: Cashin, 1979)

Vary your teaching methods. Variety reawakens students' involvement in the course and their motivation. Break the routine by incorporating a variety of teaching activities and methods in your course: role playing, debates, brainstorming, discussion, demonstrations, case studies, audiovisual presentations, guest speakers, or small group work. (Source: Forsyth and McMillan, 1991)

De-emphasizing Grades

Emphasize mastery and learning rather than grades. Ames and Ames (1990) report on two secondary school math teachers. One teacher graded every homework assignment and counted homework as 30 percent of a student's final grade. The second teacher told students to spend a fixed amount of time on their homework (thirty minutes a night) and to bring questions to class about problems they could not complete. This teacher graded homework as satisfactory or unsatisfactory, gave students the opportunity to redo their assignments, and counted homework as 10 percent of the final grade. Although homework was a smaller part of the course grade, this second teacher was more successful in

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motivating students to turn in their homework. In the first class, some students gave up rather than risk low evaluations of their abilities. In the second class, students were not risking their self-worth each time they did their homework but rather were attempting to learn. Mistakes were viewed as acceptable and something to learn from.

Researchers recommend de-emphasizing grading by eliminating complex systems of credit points; they also advise against trying to use grades to control nonacademic behavior (for example, lowering grades for missed classes) (Forsyth and McMillan, 1991; Lowman 1990). Instead, assign ungraded written work, stress the personal satisfaction of doing assignments, and help students measure their progress.

Design tests that encourage the kind of learning you want students to achieve. Many students will learn whatever is necessary to get the grades they desire. If you base your tests on memorizing details, students will focus on memorizing facts. If your tests stress the synthesis and evaluation of information, students will be motivated to practice those skills when they study. (Source: McKeachie, 1986)

Avoid using grades as threats. As McKeachie (1986) points out, the threat of low grades may prompt some students to work hard, but other students may resort to academic dishonesty, excuses for late work, and other counterproductive behavior.

Motivating Students by Responding to Their Work

Give students feedback as quickly as possible. Return tests and papers promptly, and reward success publicly and immediately. Give students some indication of how well they have done and how to improve. Rewards can be as simple as saying a student's response was good, with an indication of why it was good, or mentioning the names of contributors: "Cherry's point about pollution really synthesized the ideas we had been discussing." (Source: Cashin, 1979)

Reward success. Both positive and negative comments influence motivation, but research consistently indicates that students are more affected by positive feedback and success. Praise builds students' self-confidence, competence, and self-esteem. Recognize sincere efforts even if the product is less than stellar. If a student's performance is weak, let the student know that you believe he or she can improve and succeed over time. (Sources: Cashin, 1979; Lucas, 1990)

Introduce students to the good work done by their peers. Share the ideas, knowledge, and accomplishments of individual students with the class as a whole:

- Pass out a list of research topics chosen by students so they will know whether others are writing papers of interest to them.
- Make available copies of the best papers and essay exams.
- Provide class time for students to read papers or assignments submitted by

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classmates.

- Have students write a brief critique of a classmate's paper.
- Schedule a brief talk by a student who has experience or who is doing a research paper on a topic relevant to your lecture.

Be specific when giving negative feedback. Negative feedback is very powerful and can lead to a negative class atmosphere. Whenever you identify a student's weakness, make it clear that your comments relate to a particular task or performance, not to the student as a person. Try to cushion negative comments with a compliment about aspects of the task in which the student succeeded. (Source: Cashin, 1979)

Avoid demeaning comments. Many students in your class may be anxious about their performance and abilities. Be sensitive to how you phrase your comments and avoid offhand remarks that might prick their feelings of inadequacy.

Avoid giving in to students' pleas for "the answer" to homework problems. When you simply give struggling students the solution, you rob them of the chance to think for themselves. Use a more productive approach (adapted from Fiore, 1985):

- Ask the students for one possible approach to the problem.
- Gently brush aside students' anxiety about not getting the answer by refocusing their attention on the problem at hand.
- Ask the students to build on what they do know about the problem.
- Resist answering the question "is this right?" Suggest to the students a way to check the answer for themselves.
- Praise the students for small, independent steps.

If you follow these steps, your students will learn that it is all right not to have an instant answer. They will also learn to develop greater patience and to work at their own pace. And by working through the problem, students will experience a sense of achievement and confidence that will increase their motivation to learn.

Motivating Students to Do the Reading

Assign the reading at least two sessions before it will be discussed. Give students ample time to prepare and try to pique their curiosity about the reading: "This article is one of my favorites, and I'll be interested to see what you think about it." (Sources: Lowman, 1984; "When They Don't Do the Reading," 1989)

Assign study questions. Hand out study questions that alert students to the key points of the reading assignment. To provide extra incentive for students, tell them you will base exam questions on the study questions. (Source: "When They Don't Do the Reading," 1989)

If your class is small, have students turn in brief notes on the day's reading that they can use during exams. At the start of each class, a professor in the physical sciences asks students to submit a 3" x 5" card with an outline,

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definitions, key ideas, or other material from the day's assigned reading. After class, he checks the cards and stamps them with his name. He returns the cards to students at a class session prior to the midterm. Students can then add any material they would like to the cards but cannot submit additional cards. The cards are again returned to the faculty member who distributes them to students during the test. This faculty member reports that the number of students completing the reading jumped from 10 percent to 90 percent and that students especially valued these "survival cards." Source: Daniel, 1988)

Ask students to write a one-word journal or one-word sentence. Angelo (1991) describes the one-word journal as follows: students are asked to choose a single word that best summarizes the reading and then write a page or less explaining or justifying their word choice. This assignment can then be used as a basis for class discussion. A variation reported by Erickson and Strommer (1991) is to ask students to write one complex sentence in answer to a question you pose about the readings and provide three sources of supporting evidence: "In one sentence, identify the type of ethical reasoning Singer uses in his article 'Famine, Affluence, and Morality.' Quote three passages that reveal this type of ethical reasoning" (p. 125).

Ask nonthreatening questions about the reading. Initially pose general questions that do not create tension or feelings of resistance: "Can you give me one or two items from the chapter that seem important?" "What section of the reading do you think we should review?" "What item in the reading surprised you?" "What topics in the chapter can you apply to your own experience?" (Source: "When They Don't Do the Reading," 1989)

Use class time as a reading period. If you are trying to lead a discussion and find that few students have completed the reading assignment, consider asking students to read the material for the remainder of class time. Have them read silently or call on students to read aloud and discuss the key points. Make it clear to students that you are reluctantly taking this unusual step because they have not completed the assignment.

Prepare an exam question on undiscussed readings. One faculty member asks her class whether they have done the reading. If the answer is no, she says, "You'll have to read the material on your own. Expect a question on the next exam covering the reading." The next time she assigns reading, she reminds the class of what happened the last time, and the students come to class prepared. (Source: "When They Don't Do the Reading," 1989)

Give a written assignment to those students who have not done the reading. Some faculty ask at the beginning of the class who has completed the reading. Students who have not read the material are given a written assignment and dismissed. Those who have read the material stay and participate in class discussion. The written assignment is not graded but merely acknowledged. This technique should not be used more than once a term. (Source: "When They Don't Do the Reading," 1989)

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