**Article of the Week #1**

**Directions:**

1. **Show evidence of a close reading (highlighting key points and making notes in the margins – can be questions, thoughts, confusion, etc.)**
2. **Answer the question at the bottom of the article in paragraph form.**

# Editorial: It’s time to do our homework on homework

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Students returning to class this week at an elementary school in the city of Saguenay are to become guinea pigs in a year-long educational experiment.

Collège de Saint-Ambroise/Bon Pasteur [is launching a pilot project that prescribes no homework this school year](http://www.ledevoir.com/societe/education/417319/des-ecoliers-du-saguenay-dispenses-de-devoirs), in order to gauge how the moratorium will affect both student achievement and family life.

Children will surely cheer and parents will heave sighs of relief. Less predictable are the results of the study, which will be a valuable test of competing philosophies in the education sphere about the value and impact of homework. It’s a debate that has been ranging for years. This school in Saguenay [should be applauded for putting theory to test](http://tvanouvelles.ca/lcn/infos/regional/saguenay/archives/2014/08/20140829-130453.html).

[Proponents of homework say it reinforces classroom lessons](http://eduflow.wordpress.com/2013/10/03/homework-harmful-or-helpful/), teaches individual responsibility, fosters a better grasp of concepts and keeps parents up to speed on their children’s learning. [Detractors say it is too often mindless busy work](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/family-dinners-can-act-as-protective-buffer-against-cyberbullying-study/article20293966/#dashboard/follows/), thoughtlessly assigned, frustrating to students and annoying to parents, and impinges on that precious commodity, family time

There is some consensus among experts that well-conceived assignments that engage students and have a clear purpose do augment learning — but that a lot of homework simply fails to meet that standard.

Each child is different and handles assignments in his or her own way, with some plunging in quickly, and others procrastinating until a deadline looms. Thus absorption of material is highly variable — as is the length of time a given amount of homework can take. Parents who help too much, or not enough, can also undermine the objectives. Meanwhile, weak teachers only check that the homework has been done, rather than evaluate their pupils’ progress.

It’s at the elementary school level that research suggests homework is most onerous — and of least value. At the high-school level, there is agreement among educators that homework remains essential.

But there is more to be considered in the discussion over homework at the primary level than just the impact of homework on standardized test scores, grades and retention of subject matter. Heavier volumes of homework have become increasingly difficult for busy modern families to manage.

Children spend long hours in class — and before and after class, many of them also spend time in school-based daycare. Meanwhile, in many households, both parents work. And crammed into the evening hours are meals to be cooked and extracurricular activities. Sufficient sleep is a problem for many. [Spending quality time with loved ones and eating together as a family](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/family-dinners-can-act-as-protective-buffer-against-cyberbullying-study/article20293966/#dashboard/follows/) are also increasingly being recognized as important to child development. Plus children need down time simply for their own internal reflection. Too much homework can squeeze a lot of these intangibles out of personal and family life.

And so the homework debate is running parallel to another one [about whether kids today are simply too busy on all levels, living over-scheduled lives](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/13/fashion/over-scheduled-children-how-big-a-problem.html?pagewanted=all). Indeed, many experts say contemporary children are involved in too many activities — or are simply pushed too hard to perform them at more elite levels. There is recognition, in Canada at least, that minor hockey — and some other extracurriculars — are becoming prohibitively expensive, not only financially but in terms of the time commitment. If our children are too busy, homework is far from the only culprit.

It’s important, then, not to generalize too much. If society moves toward less homework in the early grades of school, the move should be based on evidenced-based criteria, not suppositions. More study is needed, and schools in other provinces would be wise to emulate the pilot project set to take place in Saguenay.

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**Response Question (answer in paragraph form and staple to this sheet): Do you feel that homework is a necessity? Why or why not?**