

Education

# Homework guidelines 'lame' says York board trustee

**JULIE CASPERSEN**  
Staff Reporter

A proposal to establish homework guidelines was stalled by the York Region Board of Education in a move described as "lame" by a trustee.

Thornhill/Markham trustee Paul Bennett forwarded a proposal to establish homework policy guidelines and set minimum standards for schools.

His motion said the guidelines should take into account grade levels, age, community and school needs, learning styles and developmental levels, and that parents and students should be included in the policy development. But the board referred the motion to the strategic planning committee in a close vote of 10-9, clearly split between old guard trustees and reform-minded trustees.

"To refer to that committee is the lamest and least effective way

of dealing with it," Bennett said. "It's shocking that the board is not willing to endorse homework and the need for a set of guidelines."

But trustee Ron Stevenson, who voted to defer the motion, said he agreed with the intent of Bennett's proposal.

"I don't disagree with the policy. I just think we should go a little slower and a little more methodically," Stevenson said.

The board does not have a homework policy for schools and teachers to use as a reference guideline, although some York Region schools have internal policies. Homework load differs greatly from school to school, grade to grade, and even teacher to teacher, according to Bennett.

Barb Smith, president of the York Region Quality Education Network said she hears from parents complaining about the amount of homework brought home by their children, and from

parents worried about the lack of homework brought home. "It's disturbing that this board is becoming involved in these political games. I think these trustees who voted for a deferral did not vote with their constituents," said Smith, a Markham resident.

The Toronto Board of Education implemented its current homework policy in 1978, and has since reviewed and reaffirmed these guidelines that are almost identical to the ones proposed by Bennett. The Toronto board requires that every school has a policy set by its staff in consultation with parents. Each school in the North York Board of Education has a homework statement which parents and students are invited to help develop with annual reviews. The statements deal with the amount, frequency and scheduling of homework.

The North York board distributes pamphlets to parents

outlining how parents can assist in their child's homework and urging them to get involved. Through these pamphlets, parents are told homework is not punishment, rather it is work

assigned to be done out of school. The Scarborough Board of Education does not have a formal homework statement, preferring to leave individual school policies up to the principals.

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