

Professional Judgement Matters

ETFO Professional Judgement Guidelines for Completion of the Kindergarten Communication of Learning Report (*Growing Success: Kindergarten Addendum, Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools, 2016*)

This document applies to the **Kindergarten Communication of Learning Report: Year 1 and Year 2 only**.

Teachers' professional judgements are at the heart of effective assessment, evaluation and reporting of the child's active engagement in the process of learning. *Growing Success*, 2010 (p.8)

The *Kindergarten Communication of Learning* will be issued at two points in the school year:

- At the end of the second reporting period, between January 20 and February 20 reflecting the child's growth and progress since September; and
- At the end of the third reporting period, towards the end of June, reflecting the child's growth and learning since the January/February report.

According to *Growing Success: The Kindergarten Addendum 2016*:

The assessment, evaluation and reporting policy for Kindergarten aligns with the content, philosophy and intent of *The Kindergarten Program (2016)*, a play and inquiry-based program designed to be developmentally appropriate for young children. Assessment is conducted concurrently with instruction and is an integral part of learning in Kindergarten. Assessment, evaluation and reporting policy is based on a view of the young child as "competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential" and actively engaged in the assessment process (*Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 7*). The policy also recognizes that children enter kindergarten at different stages of development and with diverse backgrounds and experiences, and that they will also leave kindergarten demonstrating variations in growth and learning in relation to the expectations. (p. 3)

Professional Judgement is an important concept for educators. For the first time it is now defined in the ETFO Central Agreement. Section C. 2.5 of the *Teacher/Occasional Teacher Central Agreement* reads as follows:

"Professional Judgement" shall be defined as judgement that is informed by professional knowledge of curriculum expectations, context, evidence of learning, methods of instruction and assessment and the criteria and standards that indicate success in student learning. In professional practice, judgement involves a purposeful and systematic thinking process that evolves in terms of accuracy and insight with ongoing reflection and self-correction.

Teachers should use their professional judgement when completing the Communication of Learning comments. The term "teachers' professional judgement" is used in the *Growing Success: The Kindergarten Addendum 2016* document. This Professional Judgement Matters will support members in advocating for their professional judgement, protect against increased workload and ensure consistency from school to school across the province as the *Kindergarten Communication of Learning Reports* are completed.



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When exercising professional judgement, teachers should be prepared to provide rationale for the decisions they make with regard to reporting on student learning. The *Kindergarten Communication of Learning* guidelines outlined below are aligned with the *Growing Success: Kindergarten Addendum* (2016) policy.

Comments

It is in the writing of comments that teachers can most exercise their professional judgement.

1. “It is expected that teachers and early childhood educators will collaborate in observing, monitoring, and assessing the development of children in Kindergarten and in communicating with families, and that the teacher will ensure that the appropriate *Kindergarten Communication of Learning* templates are fully and properly completed and processed.” *Growing Success: Kindergarten Addendum* (p.13)
2. Teachers will provide parents with comments, written in plain language, describing key learning, the child’s growth in learning and identifying next steps in learning related to the overall expectations within each of the four frames of the *Kindergarten Program*. Teachers should use examples from documentation to provide evidence of the child’s learning in the play environment.
3. Teachers should rely on their professional judgement when determining the number of comments to be written within the four frames. Teachers are not required to completely fill the comment boxes. The *Growing Success: Kindergarten Addendum* requires that comments are provided for: Key Learning, Growth in Learning and Next Steps in learning in each of the four frames. This would mean a minimum of three sentences would be required per frame.
4. Teachers will use their professional judgement to determine how best to address the key learning, growth in learning and next steps in learning within the “Demonstrating Literacy and Mathematics Behaviours” frame. They are not required to complete comments for both literacy and mathematics. Instead, they can choose to focus on one or both areas. For example, teachers using their professional judgement may choose to write a key learning and growth in learning for literacy and a next step for math.
5. Comments may be written in full sentences or in point form. Comments should be entered in a font size that is clear and legible. ETFO would suggest a 12 point font.
6. Teachers are not required to write distinct and unique comments for each child. Teachers may include similar comments for children who have demonstrated similar skills and understandings.

Completing the Templates

In *The Kindergarten Program* (2016), the overall expectations are organized under the four “frames” or four broad cross-curricular areas of learning: *Belonging and Contributing, Self-Regulation and Well-Being, Demonstrating Literacy and Mathematics Behaviours, and Problem Solving and Innovating*. These four frames are designed to support the way children’s learning naturally occurs and are critical

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to young children's development. They are used to structure thinking about learning and assessment. The four frames are reflected in the *Communication of Learning* template.

The comments in the template used to communicate learning are defined in the following categories:

“Key Learning refers to the most important or significant skills and/or understandings (knowledge) that the child has demonstrated during the reporting period, in relation to the overall expectations. It is appropriate for educators to include their perceptions about the child's interests and learning preferences in their descriptions of key learning.

Growth in Learning refers to positive developments in learning that the child has demonstrated over the reporting period, in relation to the overall expectations. Developmental stage, learning trajectory and/or other individual processes of learning should be taken into account when evaluating and describing growth in learning.

Next Steps in Learning refers to ways in which the child can move forward in developing knowledge and skills, in relation to the overall expectations, both at school and at home. Developmental stage, learning trajectory and/or other individual processes of learning should be taken into account when determining next steps in learning.” *Growing Success: Kindergarten Addendum* (p.14)

Reporting

1. The “six week rule” regarding report card completion applies for all formal reporting periods. The Kindergarten Communication of Learning report would be completed for each student who has been enrolled in the school for more than 6 weeks within the reporting period. (Section 3.2 of the *Ontario Student Record (OSR) Guideline*, 2000. (p. 8)
2. The template of the *Kindergarten Communication of Learning* is standard and is Ministry mandated. No changes can be made to the template.
3. Teachers should not be asked for any additional written reporting to parents (formal or informal) other than the *Communication of Learning* templates.
4. The space for district school board information on the template is to be completed by the school board, not the classroom teacher.
5. Kindergarten teachers should not be reporting on the components of the program that were delivered by the planning time teacher during the classroom teachers' preparation time.

Signatures

The *Communication of Learning* template includes a section on the third page for signatures. There is a teacher and principal signature line and there is a DECE box where the DECEs name is inserted. DECE members should not sign the *Communication of Learning* report. The DECEs name should not be hand written in the box but instead it should be electronically generated and inserted by the board or school. The teacher is the author of the report card; the DECE is a contributor.

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Interviews

Formal interviews should follow the same process and timelines as Grades 1-8 within a district school board. Kindergarten teams communicate with individual parents on an ongoing basis during the year to discuss issues and provide important information about their child's learning and development. There should be no requirement that kindergarten teams conduct formal interviews after all three reporting periods. Teachers will use their professional judgement to have meetings with parents if they have concerns with a child's learning outside of the formal interview timelines.

Children with Special Education Needs

The following references guidelines from the *Growing Success: Kindergarten Addendum (2016)*:

IEP with Accommodations Only

If the child's IEP requires only accommodations to support learning, educators will *not* check the "IEP" box. Key learning, growth in learning and next steps in learning are based on the expectations in *The Kindergarten Program (2016)*.

IEP with Modified Expectations

If the expectations in the IEP are based on but vary from the expectations of the regular program, educators must check the "IEP" box for the frame and include the following statement:

"Program expectations have been modified to meet the needs of the child." (p.15-16)

IEP with Alternative Learning Expectations

Where a child's IEP identifies alternative learning expectations, the educator must check the "IEP" box for the frame and must include the following statement:

"Key learning, growth in learning, and next steps in learning are based on alternative learning expectations in the IEP."

English Language Learners

The following references ELL guidelines from the *Growing Success: Kindergarten Addendum (2016)*:

When a child's learning and growth in learning are based on expectations modified from the expectations in *The Kindergarten Program (2016)* to support English language learning needs, educators will check the "ESL" box for the frame.

Educators will *not* check the "ESL" box to indicate only:

- that the child is an English language learner; or
- that accommodations have been provided to support learning. (p.16)

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Related Resources

Check the ETFO provincial website for: Advice for Members and the Professional Judgement Section
www.etfo.ca

The link to the EduGAINS Website for further information can be found at:
<http://www.edugains.ca/newsite/Kindergarten/index.html>

The *Kindergarten Program (2016)* is available at the following link:
http://www.edugains.ca/resourcesCurrImpl/OntCurriculum/kindergarten_english.pdf

The *Growing Success Kindergarten Addendum (2016)* is available at the following link:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/growingSuccessAddendum.pdf>

The working draft of the *Communicating with Parents about Children's Learning: A Guide for Kindergarten Educators (2016)* can be found at the following link:
http://edugains.ca/resourcesKIN/OtherResources/Educator_Guide_DRAFT_CommParents_about_Childrens_Learning.pdf

If you have any questions or concerns contact staff in Professional Relations Services (PRS) at 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836.

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