

# Professional Judgement Matters

## ETFO Professional Judgement Guidelines for Completion of the Kindergarten Communication of Learning: Initial Observations Report Fall 2017 (*Growing Success: Kindergarten Addendum, Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting in Ontario Schools, 2016*)

This document applies to the **Kindergarten Communication of Learning: Initial Observations Report**.

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: Initial Observations* report will be issued at the end of the first reporting period, between October 20 and November 20.

“The *Kindergarten Communication of Learning: Initial Observations* is intended to provide parents with an *overview* of initial observations of their child’s learning and early evidence of growth in learning in relation to the overall expectations in *The Kindergarten Program (2016)* and with information about appropriate next steps to further the child’s learning.” *Growing Success: The Kindergarten Addendum 2016* (p.12)

Professional Judgement is an important concept for educators. 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: Initial Observations* comments. The term “teachers’ professional judgement” is used in the *Growing Success: The Kindergarten Addendum 2016* document. This Professional Judgement Matters document will support members in advocating for their ability to use their professional judgement, protect against increased workload and ensure consistency from school to school across the province as the *Kindergarten Communication of Learning: Initial Observations* report is completed this fall.

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



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## 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 based on their initial observations of the child related to the overall expectations of the *Kindergarten Program* (2016).
3. Teachers should rely on their professional judgement when determining the comments to be written. Teachers are not required to completely fill the comment box. *The Growing Success: Kindergarten Addendum* requires that a comment is provided for: Key Learning, Growth in Learning and Next Step in Learning based on their initial observations. This would mean a minimum of three sentences would be required.
4. Teachers will use their professional judgement to determine how to best address the key learning, growth in learning and next steps in learning. They can choose to focus on the most significant and important area of learning for each child based on their initial observations. They are not required to complete comments for the “Demonstrating Literacy and Mathematics Behaviours” frame if this is not the area of a child’s most significant learning.
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

The comments in the *Communication of Learning: Initial Observations* 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.

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**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 template of the *Kindergarten Communication of Learning: Initial Observations* is Ministry mandated. No changes can be made to the template.
2. Teachers should not be asked for any additional written reporting to parents (formal or informal) other than the *Communication of Learning* templates.
3. The space for district school board information on the template is to be completed by the school board, not the classroom teacher.
4. Kindergarten teachers should not be reporting on the components of the program that were delivered during their preparation time, nor be asked to input comments provided to them by preparation teachers into the *Communication of Learning: Initial Observations* template.

## Signatures

The *Communication of Learning: Initial Observations* report includes a section on the second page for signatures. There is a teacher and principal signature line and there is a DECE box where the DECE’s name is inserted. DECE members should not sign the *Communication of Learning: Initial Observations* report. The DECE’s 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; the DECE is a contributor.

## Interviews

Formal interviews should follow the same process and timelines as Grades 1-8 within a district school board. Teachers would then use their professional judgement to decide to meet with parents at other times if they have concerns with a child’s learning.

## Classroom Visits

Before the *Addendum to Growing Success* was released, many district school boards had developed other ways for kindergarten teachers to communicate student learning with parents in the fall. A number of district school boards had classroom visitations followed by an extensive discussion regarding the child’s progress. The *Communication of Learning: Initial Observations* report now replaces that as the formalized process of communicating learning with parents in the fall. It is important that there be no duplication of effort. If you are directed to continue using the previous process as well as the report, call your local office immediately.

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## Children with Special Education Needs

If a student is identified as exceptional through an IPRC, the IEP must be created and in place within 30 school days. If a student with special needs has not been identified as exceptional through an IPRC, an IEP can be created at any point during Year One or Year Two based on a teacher's professional judgement and in consultation with the administrator. Typically, students coming into Kindergarten with high needs or medical needs would have an IEP in place within 30 school days.

The IEP, created within the first 30 school days of the new school year, will serve as the required IEP review and update for the *Communication of Learning: Initial Observations* report.

As the IEP is a working document, it can be adjusted at any point during the year.

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.

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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)

## Related Resources

Check the ETFO provincial website for: Advice for Members and the Professional Judgement Section  
[www.etfo.ca](http://www.etfo.ca)

The link to the EduGAINS website for further information can be found at:  
[www.edugains.ca/newsite/Kindergarten/index.html](http://www.edugains.ca/newsite/Kindergarten/index.html)

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

The *Growing Success Kindergarten Addendum (2016)* is available at the following link:  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/growingSuccessAddendum.pdf](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:  
[www.edugains.ca/resourcesKIN/OtherResources/Educator\\_Guide\\_DRAFT\\_CommWParents\\_about\\_Childrens\\_Learning.pdf](http://www.edugains.ca/resourcesKIN/OtherResources/Educator_Guide_DRAFT_CommWParents_about_Childrens_Learning.pdf)

The link to the EduGAINS website and the Frequently Asked Questions about Assessment is available at the following link: [www.edugains.ca/newsite/Kindergarten/faq.html](http://www.edugains.ca/newsite/Kindergarten/faq.html)

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