

# Professional Judgement Matters

## ETFO Professional Judgement Guidelines for Completion of the Elementary Progress Report Card (*Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools, First Edition, 2010*)

This document applies to the **Elementary Progress Report Card** – Grades 1 to 8 only.

Teachers' professional judgements are at the heart of effective assessment, evaluation, and reporting of student achievement. *Growing Success*, page 8.

Schools will use the new Elementary Progress Report Card between October 20 and November 20 of the school year. The following language is taken from *Growing Success*.

All versions of the Elementary Progress Report Card are designed to show a student's development of the learning skills and work habits during the fall of the school year, as well as a student's general progress in working towards the achievement of the curriculum expectations in all subjects. *Growing Success*, page 50.

For grades 1 to 8, in the fall, teachers will use the Elementary Progress Report Card (Grades 1 to 6 or Grades 7 and 8) to inform parents of the progress students are making towards achievement of the curriculum expectations for each subject/strand. Teachers will check one of the progress boxes to indicate progress. *Growing Success*, page 56.

Professional judgement is an important concept for educators. For the first time it is now defined in our new 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 reporting comments. The term “teachers’ professional judgement” is used consistently throughout the *Growing Success* document and is enshrined for the first time in our new central agreement. This PRS 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 Elementary Progress Report Cards are completed.

As an educator exercising your professional judgement, you should be prepared to provide rationale for the decisions you make. The Elementary Progress Report Card guidelines outlined below are aligned with the *Growing Success* policy.

### Comments

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

1. The term “teachers’ professional judgement” is used consistently throughout the *Growing Success* document. Teachers use their professional judgement to determine where a child is



# Professional Judgement Matters

progressing in the progress report card boxes. The teachers' professional judgement should also be relied upon to determine which subject areas to comment on in the "Strengths/Next Steps for Improvement" comments boxes. Teachers do not need to comment on every subject or learning skill.

In writing anecdotal comments, teachers should focus on what students have learned, describe significant strengths and identify next steps for improvement. Teachers should strive to use language that parents will understand and should avoid language that simply repeats the wording of the curriculum expectations or the achievement chart. When appropriate, teachers may make reference to particular strands. The comments should describe in overall terms what students know and can do [...]

In the case of the Elementary Progress Report Cards, it is not necessary for teachers to comment on all subjects/strands in the one space provided for comments. *Growing Success*, page 64. (See pages 98-99 and 110-111 of *Growing Success* for Progress Report Card Templates.)

2. The term "personalized comments" does not mean that every student must have a different comment.

It is expected that teachers, with the support of their principal, ensure that 'personalized comments' are clear, meaningful and precise for each student. Students with similar learning profiles may have comments that are the same or similar, however teachers are required to have evidence to support their comments and assessments. EduGAINS Website Frequently Asked Questions about Assessment.

3. Teachers should rely on their professional judgement when determining the amount of comments to be written in the comment boxes. Teachers are not required to completely fill the comment boxes. Comments should be general rather than specific as it is the beginning of the year. Comments should follow the format of Strengths/Next Steps for Improvement.
4. The inclusion of appropriate comments should be considered when "Progressing with Difficulty" is checked off for a student.
5. Teachers should use their professional judgement in choosing which learning skills/work habits to comment on.

In the space provided for anecdotal comments, the teacher will elaborate on the student's demonstration of the skills and comment on "strengths" and "next steps for improvement." *Growing Success*, page 55.

6. Completion of the progress report card should not be the sole responsibility of the homeroom teacher. A process should be in place for all teachers who instruct a classroom to have the opportunity to include comments on the progress report card if it is requested. A school-based strategy should be developed and in place.

Ministry policy does not require teachers to enter comments for all subjects/strands on the Progress Report Card. The comment area on the Progress Report Card is not designed to be subject specific; one teacher may enter more comments than another when identifying improvements and next steps. The position of the Ministry is that students benefit when teachers collaborate in the assessment of their student's work. Teachers are to share this space and if possible, the electronic versions should facilitate the sharing. EduGAINS Website Frequently Asked Questions about Assessment.

# Professional Judgement Matters

7. Comments may be written in full sentences or in point form. Individual boards and schools may make decisions about this format. Comments should be in nine-point type for legibility.

## Reporting

1. The terms “Progressing Very Well, Progressing Well and Progressing with Difficulty” are not meant to be directly aligned with the four levels of the achievement chart, letter grades or percentage marks.

The phrases “Progressing Very Well, Progressing Well and Progressing with Difficulty” are new terms and are not meant to be directly aligned with the four levels of the achievement chart, letter grades or percentage marks. The Progress Report Card uses these terms to indicate early on in the school year areas of strength and possible areas for improvement in student learning or in achieving expectations by January/February or June. EduGAINS Website Frequently Asked Questions about Assessment.

2. All teachers who teach a particular student do not have to enter an evaluation (E, G, S, N) for the learning skills and work habits. In most cases, the homeroom teacher will complete the learning skills and work habits section. Other teachers may choose to comment in the comment space.

For Grades 1 to 8, in most cases, the homeroom teacher will complete the learning skills and work habits section...Other teachers wishing to highlight some aspect of a student’s development of learning skills and work habits may comment in this space as well. *Growing Success*, page 55.

3. The six week rule regarding report card completion applies for all three formal reporting periods. In the case where neither teacher has had the student for six weeks, support from administration and collaboration on behalf of the teachers is suggested. (Guidelines regarding the six week rule can be found in Section 3.2 of the Ontario Student Record (OSR) Guideline, 2000.)
4. The template of the progress report card is standard and is Ministry policy. No changes are to be made to the template.
5. Teachers should not be asked to do any additional written reporting to parents (formal or informal) other than the progress report card and the two provincial report cards.
6. Space for Board Information and Space Designated for Board on the progress report card is to be completed by the school board, not the classroom teacher.

## Special Education

1. IEPs need to be created and in place within 30 school days of the start of the student’s program, typically the first day of school. The IEP is to be reviewed and updated, if changes are needed, for the fall progress report card. It is unlikely that within a few weeks of completion of the initial IEP there would be many changes to it. If upon review of the IEP there are no changes to it, then the initial IEP is what will stand for the fall Elementary Progress Report Card.

# Professional Judgement Matters

## Related Resources about Professional Judgement

Check the ETFO provincial website for:

- Advice for Members
- Professional Judgement Section

The link to the EduGAINS Website for the Frequently Asked Questions about Assessment can be found at:

<http://www.edugains.ca/newsite/aer/faqced.html>

Please discuss any concerns with your ETFO school steward or your ETFO local president.

Staff in Professional Relations Services (PRS) can be reached at 416-962-3836 or 1-888-838-3836. See also ETFO's website – Advice for Members.