Communicating Student Learning

Creating Effective Report Card Comments

**This document is meant to support teachers in writing effective report comments. It is not meant to prescriptive.*

Big Ideas

Teachers write comments that:

- ✓ **focus on what students have learned**
- ✓ **describe significant strengths**
- ✓ **identify next steps for improvement**
- ✓ **demonstrate knowledge of the child as an individual learner**

- ✓ *Descriptive feedback helps students learn by providing them with precise information about* ***what they are doing well, what needs improvement****, and* ***what specific steps*** *they can take to improve.*

- ✓ *Descriptive feedback* ***enables the learner to adjust*** *what he or she is doing to improve.*

- ✓ *Ongoing descriptive feedback linked specifically to the learning goals and success criteria is a powerful tool for* ***improving student learning*** *and is fundamental to* ***building a culture of learning*** *within the classroom.*

- ✓ *Communication provides* ***meaningful evidence*** *about the student's progress in relation to the learning standards.*

- ✓ *Learning standards include curricular competencies and content and describe what students are expected to* ***KNOW, DO*** *and* ***UNDERSTAND****.*

Comments:

- describe in overall terms what students know, can do and understand
- avoid language that simply repeats the wordings of the curriculum expectations or the achievement chart
- use language that parents/guardians will understand
- provide parents/guardians with personalized, clear, precise, and meaningful feedback
- help parents/guardians understand how they can support their children at home

Comments are created with strengths, specific examples, and next steps personalized to the student

Do...	Do Not...
☐ Maintain a focus on the child ☐ Connect comments to learning standards ☐ Focus on what was learned/achieved ☐ Use "parent friendly" language and maintain a focus on that audience – remind yourself of what you would like to read about your own child. ☐ Provide examples to help clarify the broad statements ☐ Identify strengths, challenges ☐ Connect next step(s) to the challenge(s) identified	☐ List what was taught ☐ Use teacher jargon ☐ Over-emphasize the negative (challenges) ☐ Mix speaking to parents and students interchangeably by inserting comments such as "Good Job, Jason!", or "Bravo!" etc. (These comments should be reserved for the additional space at the end of the report card.) ☐ State what will be the focus for the whole class instruction during the next term.

Throughout the report card, for each comment that is written, maintain a student-centered focus.

Keep these questions in mind:

Will a parent reading these comments

- ☐ understand clearly how his/her child is doing in your class/subject?
- ☐ understand that his/her child has areas of strength?
- ☐ know what is being done to address any areas of weakness? (This might also include ways the child can take some responsibility for his/her improvement and/or ways the family can support.)
- ☐ be aware of your interest in his/her child as an individual learner?

FRAMEWORK

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Structure of a Comment</th><th>Examples</th></tr>
<tr><td>*Opening / anchor sentence</td><td>* State the level of overall achievement related to the subject area.</td><td rowspan="4">Math Foundations 10

STUDENT achieved most of the expected learning standards in Data Management, and Numbers and Operations. For example, she can create various graphs following models but has some difficulty interpreting graphs. She struggles with the standards in Geometry, such as the relationship of surface area to volume. She is encouraged to refer to whole-class sample problems when working independently.

Grade 7

STUDENT had a very positive start to the school year. He participates enthusiastically in class discussions and demonstrates leadership in group activities, contributing his ideas and respectfully acknowledging the ideas of his peers. He generally uses class time effectively, focusing on the task at hand and asking questions when necessary. Taking the time to use the set criteria to review and improve assignments before submission should be a focus for STUDENT in the next term. In our Integrated Studies unit on the governments of ancient civilizations, his group of four chose to study the governmental structures of ancient Greece and ancient Rome. His work demonstrated exemplary use of research processes to gather and interpret information from a variety of sources. His contribution to the group's final project, a scripted panel discussion, was organized, accurate, and detailed. In Math, STUDENT has demonstrated a solid grasp of concepts covered and enjoys problem-solving challenges which require application of these concepts. STUDENT must be commended for his positive attitude and his willingness to take risks in his learning.</td></tr>
<tr><td>State the strengths</td><td>What the evidence shows the student achieved/ learned.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Identify challenges</td><td>What the evidence shows the student has not yet achieved/ learned.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Next steps</td><td>Plans to address the student's challenges</td></tr>
</table>

Qualifiers for Learning Skills and Work Habits

Excellent	adaptable, astutely, autonomous, can model, caring, clearly, committed, completely, consistently, discerning, distinguished, divergent, easily, effectively, extensively, exemplary, flawless, flexible, giving, impressive, innovative, insightful, inspirational, kindly, masterfully, meticulously, positively, precisely, proficiently, reflective, reverent, secure, seeks challenges, self-assured, servant leadership, synthesizes, thoroughly, uniquely, virtuous
Good	accomplished, comfortably, competent, confidently, constructively, credible, developed, frequently, generally, influences, knowledgeable, manages, more, most, often, regularly, skilled, successfully, usually
Satisfactory	acceptable, adequate, approaching, at times, developing, fair, inconsistently, learning to, limited, occasionally, sometimes, passable, periodically, some, suitable
Needs Improvement	avoids, clarification needed, disengaged, few, hardly, indifferent, infrequently, illogical, literal, little, minimal, minor, naïve, numerous attempts, only, poor, rarely, reflection needed, reluctantly, review needed, seldom, simplistic, when required, with difficulty, unclear, unsure

Qualifiers for Curricular Areas

High Degree	accurately, consistently, almost always, clearly, precisely, confidently, proficiently, very successfully, all or almost all concepts, complex, logical, sophisticated, thorough understanding, wide range of context, consistently accurate, with no minor errors or omissions, high level of proficiency, extends, expands, self corrects
Considerable	usually, often, routinely, regularly, frequently, most concepts, fair range of context, very good, good, firm understanding, strives, grasps, applies
Some	sometimes, adequately, some concepts, some specific purpose, simple purposes, some appropriate strategies, some understanding, appropriate but incomplete, attempts familiar, require review / practice, beginning to demonstrate, developing, several minor omissions / sometimes major errors
Limited	rarely, seldom, with monitoring, few purposes, few contexts, incomplete unclear, imprecise, basic, limited understanding, limited range, inconsistently, with difficulty, few conventions, major errors, simple ideas

Useful Words and Phrases to Consider when Writing Report Card Comments

Strengths

- Able to construct, Able to determine, Able to extend, Able to research, Able to respond, Able to support
- Can accurately ...., Can adapt, Can consistently ...., Can easily ..., Can effectively ..., Can explain, Can identify, Can solve, Can successfully ....
- Consistently makes
- Continues to
- Demonstrates a clear understanding
- Demonstrates effective
- Displays strong, Displays exceptional
- Has achieved
- Has a good grasp of
- Has successfully
- Has learned
- Has very good insight
- Improved tremendously
- Is able to
- Is capable of
- Is developing
- Is consistently able to
- Recognizes the importance
- Shows commitment
- Is competent in
- Is proficient at
- Is skillful at
- Is very good at
- Often uses
- Recognizes that
- Successfully interprets
- Skillfully uses
- Understands how, Understands that
- Uses a variety of

Some Action Verbs to Consider Using:

- Applies
- Builds
- Compares
- Completes
- Constructs
- Creates
- Describes
- Evaluates
- Experiments
- Explains
- Expresses
- Extends
- Illustrates
- Interprets
- Knows
- Organizes
- Operates
- Participates
- Performs
- Produces
- Shows
- Solves

Needs

- Attempts to, Makes attempts
- Continues to need help with
- Could profit by
- Demonstrates a limited ability to
- Does not always
- Does not demonstrate
- Encouragement with
- Experiences difficulty with, Has difficulty with
- Finds it difficult at times to , Has difficulty
- Has not yet demonstrated the ability
- Has not yet demonstrated understanding
- Has trouble with
- Is seldom able to
- Is encouraged to
- Is benefiting from practice with
- Is learning to/that
- Is receiving additional help with
- Is working at
- It is important that
- Lacks a clear understanding
- Needs more opportunities to
- Needs ongoing help with, Needs ongoing assistance with
- Needs support
- Needs to clarify
- Needs to develop
- Often lacks
- Rarely uses, Rarely able to
- Requires adult support for
- Requires more time
- Seems to use few
- Tries to, Makes attempts to
- Struggles to, Struggles with
- Unable to explain

Suggestions

- Can practice/apply at home by
- Greater focus on
- Is encouraged to
- Is encouraged to be more
- Is encouraged to seek
- Is encouraged to strive to
- Is not always willing to
- It is recommended that
- It is suggested that
- Needs more time to develop
- Needs to ask
- Needs to be more open
- Needs to consider
- Needs to continue to
- Needs to develop
- Needs to expand on
- Needs to improve, Needs improvement in
- Needs to refer to
- Needs to review
- Needs reinforcement in
- Needs to spend more time on, Should spend more time on
- Needs time to
- Needs to work on
- Requires additional effort
- Requires additional practice
- Requires further understanding
- Requires guided instruction
- Should continue to
- Should do further practice
- Should take the time to
- Should utilize options for
- Should work towards
- Would benefit from
- Will have opportunities to

Language Suggestions for Descriptors in Report Card Comments

EXTENDS The student demonstrates achievement of the expected learning standards addressed during the current reporting period.	**PROFICIENT** The student demonstrates achievement of most of the expected learning standards addressed during the current reporting period.	**DEVELOPING** The student demonstrates achievement of some of the expected learning standards addressed during the current reporting period.	**EMERGING** The student demonstrates achievement of few of the expected learning standards addressed during the current reporting period.
□ consistently □ to a high degree □ without prompting □ is skilled at □ has fully demonstrated □ clear(ly) □ confident(ly) □ independent(ly) □ is proficient □ comprehensive □ easily □ excellent □ comprehensive understanding □ sometimes exceeds □ is able to □ is very good at □ skillfully uses □ understands how/that	□ most of the time □ is able to □ for the most part □ often can □ usually □ demonstrates □ demonstrates some understanding of □ understands most of □ competent □ capable □ general(ly) □ common(ly)	□ sometimes □ with support □ with prompting □ occasionally □ is beginning to □ has some difficulty with □ is developing □ is aware of… but is not applying independently □ is approaching □ strives to □ has a basic understanding of □ understands some of	□ is not able to □ does not yet □ is unable to □ needs a great deal of assistance □ seldom □ has not yet demonstrated □ with repeated assistance □ rarely □ has difficulty with □ struggles to □ has a limited understanding of
Strengths and Needs: Give specific examples (e.g. for example, for instance, such as)		**Suggestions:** □ needs to continue to • would benefit from □ will have opportunities to □ can practice/apply at home by	