

Elementary Report Cards: Questions and Answers (September 2011)

PROGRESS REPORT CARD

1. Question.

On the progress report card, there is no delineation of strands for language and mathematics; however, the health and physical education and the four areas of the arts are broken into complementary parts. This seems to be counter-intuitive given the importance of literacy and numeracy. Visually, at least, this seems out of balance. Is this open to change or is the template fixed?

Answer.

No changes are to be made to the template. The template is standard and is ministry policy. In the case of The Arts, the four areas are considered to be subjects. In the case of Health Education and Physical Education, ministry policy now requires teachers to report separately on Health education and Physical education. There are no changes anticipated in the template.

2. Question.

For the statement: "In the case of the elementary progress report card, it is not necessary for teachers to comment on all subjects/strands in the one space provided for comments." Does this mean that writing in the comment box on the progress report card is optional for elementary teachers?

Answer.

Teachers are required to ensure that report cards are fully and properly completed. The progress report card and provincial report cards ensure students and parents receive clear, detailed and straightforward information. To fulfill these requirements, it is expected that teachers will comment in the comment box on the progress report card to provide parents with information about the progress of their children. The statement indicates that Ministry policy does not require teachers to comment on ALL subjects/strands.

3. Question.

Can a principal or a board require teachers to comment on all subjects on the Progress Report Card?

Answer.

In *Growing Success*, page 2, it states: "Recognizing that the needs and circumstances of individual boards may vary widely, the policy outlined in this document provides flexibility for boards to develop some locally focused guidelines and implementation strategies within parameters for consistency set by the ministry."

The parameters for comments on pages 64 and 66 of *Growing Success* establish that it is expected that principals will support effective practice in writing comments in language that parents will understand, and will ensure that parents have the information they require to interpret their child's report card. While Ministry policy does not require teachers to comment on all subjects/strands, it does not prohibit boards or schools from doing so if the established parameters are being met.

4. Question.

For the progress report card comment field, is this one comment field for all teachers to share or subject specific for each teacher? If this is one field for all teachers to share, it would be difficult technically to manage the print area for all of the comments entered by each teacher. Some may enter more comments than others. There is a sensitivity to altering comments entered by other staff. We struggle with this technically today with the existing elementary report cards. If the comment area is subject specific how much space is each teacher

Answer.

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.

5. Question.

When the elementary progress report card is printed, do the sections designated for board design remain blank?

Answer.

No. Each board must work with their vendor to design the two sections on the elementary progress report card that appear at the top of the first page and at the bottom of the second page. The resulting design will be used consistently in all the elementary schools in the board.

6. Question.

What precisely does "complete the design of the elementary progress report card" mean?

Answer.

Suggestions for completing the two spaces on the elementary progress report card designated for board use are provided on page 50 of *Growing Success*. For example, the tear-off space on the bottom of the second page might be designed to look similar to the tear-off section of the elementary provincial report card. Boards should work closely with their vendors to design these spaces.

7. Question.

Will the information on the elementary progress report card for Grades 1-8 be included in the OnSIS data submissions beginning in 2010?

Answer.

No.

8. Question.

For the elementary progress report card and provincial report card, should all teachers who teach a particular student be able to enter an evaluation (E, G, S, N) for the learning skills and work habits? Should all teachers be able to enter comments?

Answer .

Growing Success (p. 55) states: “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.”

9. Question.

On the Progress Report Card, is “Progressing Well” equivalent to a Level 3, a letter grade of B, and a percentage grade of 70 to 79?

Answer.

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 new 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. The Comments section provides teachers, through the use of personalized and meaningful comments, with an opportunity to clarify for parents how a student is progressing towards meeting the expectations of the subjects, identify significant strengths, areas of difficulty, next steps for improvement and help parents understand how they can support this progress at home.

10. Question.

Are teachers required to write learning skills / work habits comments on the Progress Report Card?

Answer.

Page 55 of *Growing Success* states “In the space provided for anecdotal comments, the teacher **will** elaborate on the student’s demonstration of the skills.” This applies to both the Progress Report Card and Provincial Report Card.

PROGRESS REPORT CARD AND PROVINCIAL REPORT CARD

11. Question.

What flexibility, if any, do we have in determining the size of comment boxes on the provincial report card or the progress report card? Can we change the size to suit our needs?

Answer.

The design of the progress report card and the provincial report card is standard. The size and location of boxes must not be changed.

12. Question.

“Intensive Core French” is not an option under French on the Progress Report Card or Provincial Report Card. Are these students identified as Core French?

Answer.

Yes. “Intensive Core French” is to be checked as Core French. Intensive Core French is still a pilot program.

13. Question.

Our board does not provide instruction or report student achievement for Native Language. May we exclude it from the report card? We do not include it on the current report card.

Answer.

Native Language must not be removed from the report cards.

14. Question.

What date range should be used to calculate the days absent and times late? When producing the first of two provincial report cards should the date range start with the first day after the progress report card period ended, or the first day of the school year? (The total days absent and total times late would naturally be calculated from the first day of the school year).

Answer.

There are three reporting periods. For each of the three report cards, for days absent and times late, report the student’s attendance and punctuality record for that reporting period. For each of the three report cards, for total days absent and total times late record the accumulated attendance and punctuality totals from the start of the year to date.

15. Question.

Does the *Growing Success* policy change current policy for the development of an IEP in the elementary grades?

Answer.

Currently, an IEP must be developed and in place within 30 school days of the student's placement in a special education program/service. The formal review and update of the IEP should take place at least once every formal reporting period.

Growing Success policy has introduced a fall progress report card to be issued between October 20 and November 20. In addition, a revised provincial report card is issued in January/February and June. As in the past, *Growing Success* policy indicates that there are three formal reporting periods. Therefore, the number of IEP reviews in the elementary grades continues to be three (3).

16. Question.

When report cards are filed in students' Ontario Student Records (OSR's), must they include the principal's signature?

Answer.

Yes. Report cards are official records and must be signed by the principal or designate. A report card is not complete without the principals' signature.

17. Question.

As Religious and Family Life Education appears on the first page of the Progress Report Card and the Provincial Report Cards, was it the Ministry's intention to have the comments in this area for this subject.

SRB is telling us that we need to assign Religious and Family Life Education as a subject and it will appear in the extra subject box for a mark and comment.

Answer.

The following paragraph appears on pages 50 and 51 of *Growing Success*. There is also a version of each for the use of Catholic schools that includes a section called "Religious and Family Life Education". All Catholic district school boards may organize the contents of this section to include a letter grade or percentage mark. However, the size and placement of this section may not be changed in any way.

18. Question.

With the new *Growing Success*, are we to follow the six week rule for all three report periods, or just for report period 1 and 2?

Answer.

As stated on page 49 of *Growing Success*, both the elementary Progress Report Card and the elementary Provincial Report Card are placed in the student's OSR.

Also, on page 53, policy states that there are three formal reporting periods for elementary schools. Therefore, the six week rule applies for all three reporting periods.

19. Question.

If a student is enrolled in a school for six weeks or more from the beginning of the second reporting period, between the elementary Progress Report Card and the January/February Provincial Report Card, is that school responsible for reporting on the achievement of expectations addressed in the first reporting period (between September and the Progress Report Card) when the student was in a different school?

Answer.

Yes. The first provincial report card will reflect the student's achievement of curriculum expectations introduced and developed from September to January / February of the school year.

20. Question.

Does your ministry have a formal policy or guidelines on student promotion from one grade to another? Or are these decisions made solely at the school/school board level?

Answer.

With respect to promotion policy, according to the Education Act, it is the responsibility of the school principal to decide whether a student is sufficiently prepared for work at the next grade level, or whether it would be in the best interest of the student to repeat the grade. This decision is made in consultation with the child's teacher and parents, who know the characteristics of the particular child, and which approach would be more beneficial for his or her continued learning and progress.

PROVINCIAL REPORT CARD

21. Question.

The last page of the provincial report card includes a tear-off for the parent/guardian to write comments and sign. Would it be better if this was on a separate page to:

- provide more space for the parent to comment;
- make it easier to file; and

Answer.

No changes of any kind can be made to the report cards. Schools can allow additional notes from parents to be stored in the OSR with the PRC.

22. Question.

Has the size of the font and/or the type face itself been determined or can we establish this with our vendor?

Answer.

Comments about student achievement should be in nine-point type, for legibility. (This statement appears in the *Growing Success* policy document.) No type face has been determined.

23. Question.

For the elementary report cards, the ESL/ELD and IEP boxes are shown at the strand level rather than subject level. Is this the direction that the ministry is taking?

Answer.

Yes, the ESL/ELD and IEP boxes are now checked at the strand level. The intent is to align the report card more closely with the IEP and students' language learning needs.

24. Question.

On the elementary provincial report card, there is only one box for French for The Arts. What is the process for checking the box for French if some of The Arts strands are taught in French and some are not?

Answer.

Check the box for French if at least one of The Arts strands is taught in French. Use the space for comments to indicate if some of the other strands are taught in English.

25. Question.

How is the median calculated when there is an even number of students? For example, 40 students are taking the course □ the 20th student has a percentage mark of 63% and the 21st student has a percentage mark of 60%.

Answer.

The median is the arithmetic mean of the two middle scores. In this case, the median is $(63 + 60)/2 = 61.5$.

26. Question.

How will the ministry support trending analysis with the changes to the marks, subjects, and the new learning skills and work habits?

Answer.

In some cases such as grades for the elementary mathematics strands and grades and medians for the secondary courses, trending analysis can be continued as in the past. In other cases such as for the evaluation of the learning skills and work habits for Grades 1-12 and grades for elementary Health and Physical Education, trending analysis will need to restart at the 2010-2011 school year.

27. Question.

Should a letter grade or a percentage mark be assigned along with the code "I"?

Answer.

No.

28. Question.

In a small school where very few students are taking a subject/course, should the median be suppressed due to privacy concerns?

Answer.

No. The median on a report card provides very little information about the marks of other students. For example, the marks 90, 80, 70, 60, and 50 have a median of 70 as do the marks 72, 71, 70, 69, and 68.

29. Question.

In a small school, where only two students are taking a subject/course, and one student has an “I”, what is the median? Does the same apply when one of the students has an “R”?

Answer.

In these special cases, the space for the median should be left blank.

30. Question.

Will the final edition of *Growing Success* include report cards for Junior and Senior Kindergarten?

Answer.

The final edition of *Growing Success* will include policy related to Full-Day Kindergarten. No decisions have been made about what the policy will be and what report cards might be included. Consultation with all stakeholders in 2011-2012 will inform these decisions.

31. Question.

For the elementary Provincial Report Card in Grades 1 to 6, are teachers expected to report on Social Studies and Science and Technology on both the January/February and June report cards?

Answer.

Teachers are expected to enter a grade for Social Studies and for Science and Technology on both the January/February and June report cards. Teachers may indicate in the comments box which strands are being reported on within each subject.

To comply with OnSis business rules, it is mandatory that a grade be entered for each subject at least once over both reporting periods. All of the strands in both Social Studies and Science and Technology must be accounted for in instruction, assessment and evaluation by the end of the year.

32. Question.

On the Elementary Provincial Report Card, are teachers expected to report both Health and Physical Education on both the January/February and June report cards?

Answer.

Teachers are expected to enter a grade for both Health and Physical Education on both the January/February and June report cards. To comply with OnSis business rules, it is mandatory that a grade be entered for each strand at least once over both reporting periods.

33. Question.

On the elementary Provincial Report Card, how many strands must teachers report on for Language, Mathematics and The Arts in January / February and June?

Answer.

For Language, four strands are reported on in January / February and four strands in June. For Mathematics, at least four strands are reported on in January / February and at least four strands are reported on in June. Each strand must be reported on at least once. For The Arts, at least three of the subjects are reported on in January / February and at least three subjects are reported on in June. Each subject is reported on at least once.

34. Question.

Can a school or board require a teacher to report on all five strands in Mathematics and/or all four strands in The Arts on both the January / February and June Provincial Report Cards?

Answer.

Yes. Boards have the flexibility and discretion under the policy to establish these requirements.

35. Question.

If a student has an IEP, does a teacher have to put in a rider statement in the Learning Skills section?

Answer.

In the case of the Learning Skills and Work Habits, there are no IEP boxes to check to indicate that modifications have been made. In addition, teachers are not required to write a statement in the comments box. The IEP boxes are checked for the subjects/strands/courses only, in order to indicate that modifications have been made to the curriculum expectations and the rider statement is used to further describe the modifications.

36. Question.

Growing Success policy states that if the expectations in the IEP are “modified” so that they vary from the expectations in the regular program for the grade, teachers must check the IEP box and add the comment: “This (letter grade/percentage mark) is based on achievement of expectations in the IEP that vary from the Grade X expectations (and/or) are an (increase/decrease) in the (number and/or complexity) of curriculum expectations”. Does that entire statement have to be included or only the relevant sections? For example if you have a student in grade 4 working on Grade 2 expectations, could the statement read: “This letter grade is based on achievement of expectations in the IEP that vary from the Grade 4 expectations.” Or, for example, if you have a student in Grade 4 working on Grade 4 expectations but vary in the number only, could the statement read: “This letter grade is based on achievement of expectations in the IEP that are a decrease in the number of curriculum expectations”.

Answer.

The statement which must appear in the section “Strengths/Next Steps for Improvement” may be an edited version of the official statement which will make it accurate and clear. However, the edited version must still use the wording of the approved policy statement. The two examples provided would be allowed.

37. Question.

Can the section of the elementary Provincial Report Card established under “Learning Skills / Work Habits” for “Strengths / Next Steps for Improvement” be used for other types of comments such as statements on “retention and placement”?

Answer.

In the last paragraph on page 55 in *Growing Success*, Chapter 6, the purpose and use of the comment box in the “Learning Skills and Work Habits” section of the elementary Provincial Report Card is articulated:

“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”. 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”. A separate space is provided at the top of the report card “Grade in September” to indicate promotional status of the student.

38. Question.

If a student has an IEP and/or an Alternative Report Card, should all of the Learning Skills and Work Habits be reported on the Report Cards and to OnSis?

Answer.

The Learning Skills and Work Habits would be reported on “to the extent possible”.

39. Question.

Can the ESL/ELD box be checked if the child is not on an IEP (re. page 63-64 *Growing Success* document)? Would the comment box in this instance require specific language to communicate to parents?

Answer.

This policy is found on page 76 of *Growing Success*. The ESL/ELD box is checked to indicate that modifications have been made to curriculum expectations to address the **language needs** of English language learners. The answer to the first question is “YES”.

The required statement about modifications refers only to the modifications of curriculum expectations related to an IEP and the IEP is about students with **special education needs**. Therefore, no specific statement is used in the comments section when the ESL/ELD box is checked. This is a change in policy from the past and has been made because modifications for students with language learning needs are usually made on a more temporary basis.

Also on page 64 policy states that for an English language learner, both the ESL/ELD and IEP boxes can be checked to indicate that modifications have been made to address both English language learning needs and special education needs. In this case, the statement would be included in the comments related to the modifications made for the IEP.

40. Question.

If a student has missed a lot of classes, or has not handed in a substantial amount of work during the year or reporting period, can a teacher enter an “I” indicating they do not have enough evidence to make an evaluation if the reasons are not based on protracted illness or late enrolment? Can an “R” be used if the teacher does not have enough evidence to determine if a student’s achievement falls below level 1?

Answer.

“Late enrolment” or “protracted illness” are only given as *examples* of extenuating circumstances beyond the student’s control – they are not intended to be exhaustive. The teacher using his/her professional judgment and working with the principal is in the best position to make the determination on the use of an “I” or an “R”. Grades, letters and levels of achievement indicate the extent to which a student demonstrates expectations of the subject or course. If insufficient evidence exists, and the extenuating circumstances do not exist, then an R is appropriate indicating that there is a need to develop strategies to address the students learning needs in order to support success. These may be based on academic support, program modification, development of learning skills and work habits or personal support and intervention.

41. Question.

Is it appropriate to place an I at the end of the year in French strands for special education students?

Answer.

Teachers will use their professional judgement to determine when the use of “I” is appropriate and in the best interest of the student. This may be because “there were issues or extenuating circumstances beyond the student’s control”. If a student’s IEP indicates that certain strands would not be evaluated, an I could be entered. The reasons should be made clear to the parents.

There may be cases where a student who is identified with special education needs is exempt from taking French. This would be recorded in a student’s IEP and it would be appropriate to check N/A.