**Framework for Writing Descriptive Comments for Reports**

**Background Rationale**

This comment framework has been developed to provide teachers and administrators with a common process for creating comments that reflect the intent of the new guidelines for communicating student learning. Individual schools may adapt the framework to meet their local needs.

Report comments make learning visible by communicating individual student learning to parents. The Written Progress Report and Written Final Summative Report provide opportunities to communicate precise information to parents about what their child is doing well, what areas need further development, and what specific steps can be taken to support their child’s development and learning.

While the framework has been developed for writing descriptive comments, it can also be used during all communications with parents (e.g., conferences, meetings, portfolios, emails, phone calls) and for feedback to students during formative assessment.

Sample comments that reflect the framework are provided at the end of this Appendix and also as part of the Sample Reports in Appendices M and N.

**Effective Written Descriptive Comments**

Reporting and commenting are not synonymous. If you teach it, you report on it but reporting does not necessarily mean a comment is always required. When comments are included they must:

* focus on a student’s **progress/achievement** to date;
* describe student **strengths** first and foremost, focusing on growth performance and giving specific examples of how a student has demonstrated their strengths;
* be written according to the **learning standards** (content and curricular competencies) to describe what students know, can do, and understand;
* provide parents with **personalized**, clear, and meaningful feedback about their child as an individual learner;
* be written in **parent-friendly language** that avoids jargon and repetition of the wording of the curriculum or the proficiency scale;
* identify areas for further development;
* describe ways to support learning at school and at home (next steps);
* include Behaviours for Success when they impact the learning process.

Comments should be written in such a way that parents reading them:

* understand clearly how their child is doing in each subject area/course;
* understand their child’s areas of strength;
* know what is being done to address areas for further development;
* understand the ways their child can take responsibility for improvement;
* understand the ways they can support their child’s learning at home;
* see that teachers understand their child as an individual learner.

Table L1: Effective written descriptive comments

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| **Written descriptive comments should not:** | **Written descriptive comments should:** |
| List what was/will be taught | Focus on what was learned/achieved by the student in relation to the learning standards |
| Overemphasize the negative (challenges) | Identify strengths and challenge(s); connect next step(s) to the challenge(s) identified |
| Comment on a large number of individual learning standards | Comment on groupings/clusters of learning standards |
| Ignore development of Behaviours for Success | Embed feedback on Behaviours when they impact learning |
| Be generated from impersonal comment banks | Reflect personalized, clear, precise, and meaningful feedback |
| Use educational jargon or the exact wording of the curriculum | Use parent friendly language providing specific examples of what the student has demonstrated |
| Mix audiences (parents and students)  e.g., Good job, Jack!; Bravo, Jill!; etc. | Reserve space at the end of the report for these types of comments |

**The Framework**

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| **Table L2: Framework for Writing Descriptive Comments** | |
| **1: Strengths, with specific examples** | * Describe student strengths and achievements in relation to learning standards (content and curricular competencies) * Focus on what the student knows, can do, and understands * Personalize for each student * Share evidence/examples of what the student has done to demonstrate their strengths |
| **2: Areas for Further Development** | * Communicate success criteria that the student has not yet demonstrated * Use strength-based (not deficit) language * Include areas for enrichment if appropriate |
| **3: Ways to Support Learning at School and at Home (Next Steps)** | * Identify ways that learning can be supported both at school and at home * Connect next steps to the learning standard(s), and make sure they are realistic and manageable * Identify student goals/area of focus for the next term that are linked to the areas for further development * Include any extra support the student receives/will receive at school |

**Framework Components 1 and 2: Student Strengths and Areas for Further Development**

Using a strength-based approach, all written descriptive comments should clearly describe a student’s strengths first and foremost, as well as areas for further development in relation to grade level learning standards. Areas for further development should include both challenges and enrichment, as appropriate. If a student is not working at grade level, the comments should clearly reflect the grade level and progress in relation to the learning standards on which the student is working. While it is important to describe students’ Behaviours for Success separately from academic progress/achievement, feedback should be embedded within the descriptive written comments if there are behaviours impacting the learning process.

**Framework Component 3: Ways to Support Learning at School and at Home (Next Steps)**

These comments should clearly describe how the student will be supported to move their learning forward in terms of academic success. This includes things that the student should do differently or in addition to what they are doing that would provide more success or deeper understanding. Next steps should focus on student action and choice, not the next unit of teaching. Comments should describe ways to support learning at school, for example:

* <Name> is encouraged to ask for clarification when required;
* <Name> is supported to use manipulatives regularly in math to ensure a concrete understanding of concepts;
* <Name> receives a reduced number of questions on assessments and is encouraged to take the allowed extra time when needed to ensure success;
* <Name> will be supported to try using pictures to explain and show mathematical thinking;
* <Name> is encouraged to express their thoughts orally before writing and have someone record them.

Comments should also clearly describe ways to support student learning within the home environment, particularly in light of the many parent respondents to the 2019 survey who noted their interest in receiving more information on reports to support their child’s learning at home. For example, <Name> is encouraged to:

* read aloud at home daily to increase oral fluency;
* talk with his family about simple cause and effect relationships around the house;
* read the newspaper at home to practice making predictions using the headlines;
* review online classroom notes and resources at home;
* reinforce concepts taught in class by investigating ways that light is used at home and in the community;
* participate in a wider range of physical activities to help him meet his personal fitness goals.

**Language Suggestions for Writing Descriptive Comments**

The following two tables are intended to support teachers in the writing of descriptive comments. They are not intended to be exhaustive or authoritative, but rather to provide support for the creation of comments.

Table L3: Words/Phrases for Writing Descriptive Comments

These words/phrases are aligned with the framework components and should be used in relation to the curricular learning standards.

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| **Strengths** | **Areas for Further Development** | **Ways to Support Learning**  **(Next Steps)** |
| Able to…construct, determine, extend, research, respond, support | Attempts to, Makes attempts | At home or at school |
| Can…accurately, adapt, consistently, easily, effectively, explain, identify, solve, successfully | Can continue to start | Can practice/apply at home by |
| Completely | Can participate | Continue to remind |
| Consistently | Can re-examine | Greater focus on |
| Continues to | Continues to need help with | Invite |
| Demonstrates a clear understanding | Could profit by | Is encouraged to |
| Demonstrates effective | Demonstrates a limited ability to | Is encouraged to be more |
| Displays strong, exceptional | Encouragement with | Is encouraged to seek |
| Effectively | Experiences difficulty with, | Is encouraged to strive to |
| Has achieved | Extend participation by | It is recommended that |
| Has a good grasp of | Finds it difficult at times to | It is suggested that |
| Has developed | Has difficulty with | Needs improvement in |
| Has successfully | Has not yet demonstrated the ability | Needs more time to develop |
| Has learned | Has not yet demonstrated understanding | Needs reinforcement in |

Table L3: Words/Phrases for Writing Descriptive Comments (cont’d)

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| **Strengths** | **Areas for Further Development** | **Ways to Support Learning**  **(Next Steps)** |
| Has very good insight | Has trouble with | Needs to ask |
| Improved tremendously | Is beginning to demonstrate | Needs to be more open |
| Is able to | Is benefiting from practice with | Needs to consider |
| Is capable of | Is encouraged to | Needs to continue to |
| Is clearly committed to | It is important that | Needs to develop |
| Is competent in | Is learning to/that | Needs to expand on |
| Is consistently able to | Is seldom able to | Needs to spend more time on |
| Is developing | Is receiving additional help with | Needs time to |
| Is proficient at | Is working at | Needs to work on |
| Is skillful at | Lacks a clear understanding of | Needs to refer to |
| Is very good at | Needs more opportunities to | Needs to review |
| Masterfully | Needs ongoing help with | Please continue to |
| Meticulously | Needs support | Please read |
| Often uses | Needs to clarify | Practice |
| Precisely | Needs to develop | Provide opportunities for |
| Recognizes that | Often lacks | Request help |
| Recognizes the importance | Practice, review, read and improve | Requires additional effort |
| Shows commitment | Rarely uses, Rarely able to | Requires additional practice |
| Skillfully uses | Requires adult support for | Requires further understanding |
| Successfully | Requires more time | Requires guided instruction |
| Thoroughly | Seeks opportunities to | Review notes at home on a regular basis |
| Successfully interprets | Seems to use few | Should continue to |
| Understands…how, that | Struggles to, Struggles with | Should do further practice |
| Uniquely | Tries to | Should take the time to |
| Uses a variety of | Unable to explain | Should utilize options for |
|  | Use strategies for | Should work towards |
|  | Utilize supports or resources | Student will |
|  | Will be reminded to | Teacher will |
|  | Will continue to develop | Use |
|  | Works on developing | Would benefit from |
|  |  | Will have opportunities to |
|  |  | Will receive support |
| Consider the use of actions verbs like; applies, builds, compares, completes, constructs, creates, demonstrates, describes, evaluates, experiments, explains, expresses, extends, illustrates, interprets, knows, organizes, operates, participates, performs, produces, shows; solves. | | |

Table L4: Sentence Starters and Qualifiers for Commenting on Academic Achievement

These example sentence starters and qualifiers are aligned with proficiency levels and should be used in combination with curricular learning standards.

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|  | | | |
| **Emerging** | **Developing** | **Proficient** | **Extending** |
| **1** | **2** | **3** | **4** |
| Has a limited understanding of | Demonstrates a basic understanding | Understands | Demonstrates an in-depth understanding of |
| Has difficulty with | Is approaching | Has learned | Is skilled at |
| Has not yet demonstrated | Sometimes demonstrates | Consistently demonstrates the ability to | Demonstrates…..with detail/accuracy/  confidence |
| Is beginning to | Sometimes is able to | Engages in | Is innovative when |
| Is working to | Is beginning to | Often can | Can…..in complex situation |
| Needs assistance to | Needs reminders to | Is working on | Can independently |
| Shows some understanding of | Is aware of..…but is not yet able to independently | Has a good ability to | Creatively/insightfully applies |
| Struggles to/with | Is able to…..at a basic level/in familiar situations | Identifies strategies when | Is strategic |
| basic, few contexts, few conventions, few purposes, incomplete, imprecise, inconsistently, limited range, limited understanding, major errors, rarely, seldom, simple ideas,  unclear, with monitoring, with difficulty | adequately, appropriate but incomplete, attempts familiar, beginning to demonstrate, developing, require review or practice, several minor omissions and sometimes major  errors, simple purposes, some appropriate strategies, some concepts, some specific purpose, sometimes, some understanding | Applies, firm understanding, frequently, good, grasps, most concepts, often, regularly, routinely, strives, usually, very good | accurately, almost always, clearly, complex, confidently, consistently, consistently accurate, expands, extends, high level of proficiency, logical, precisely, proficiently, self corrects, sophisticated, thorough understanding, very successfully, wide range of context, with no minor errors or omissions |

**Comments for Written Progress Report and Comments for Written Final Summative Report**

Comments for both reports should follow the framework outlined above. Comments on the Written Progress Report should reflect the student’s **progress** towards the learning standards, while comments on the Written Final Summative Report should reflect the student’s **achievement** of the learning standards. Parents should be presented with persuasive evidence from student work to support teachers’ assessment, evaluation, and grading.

**Comments for Students Requiring Support**

In the 2019 Assessment Survey, parents of children requiring support emphasized the need for more information about their child’s progress. When writing comments for a student receiving adaptations who is able to demonstrate learning in relation to their grade-level learning standards, comments should reference the adaptations used to support the achievement. When writing comments for a student receiving adaptations who is not able to demonstrate learning in relation to their grade-level standards, the comments should clearly reference the current grade-level learning standards at which the student is working. When writing comments for students on an IEP, the framework (strengths, areas for further development, ways to support learning) should be used in relation to the student’s individualized goals. The comments must also include:

* <Name> has an Individualized Education Plan that includes individualized programming goals and objectives for <subject area>.
* <Name> has an Individualized Education Plan that includes modifications for <subject area>.

For further support writing comments for students requiring support please contact [studentsupportservices@gov.yk.ca](mailto:studentsupportservices@gov.yk.ca)

**Comments on Behaviours for Success**

Results from the 2019 Assessment Survey indicated that many parents want to know about more than just their child’s academic achievement, having listed areas including social-emotional growth, behaviour, work ethic, attitude towards learning, cooperation, effort, etc. As noted throughout this Book, teachers should write separate descriptive feedback about this area of a student’s development, reported as Behaviours for Success.

The following table is intended to support teachers in the writing of descriptive comments for Behaviours for Success. These qualifiers are aligned with frequency levels and should be used in combination with the school’s Behaviours for Success.

Table L5: Qualifiers for Commenting on Behaviours for Success

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

**Sample Written Descriptive Comments for Academic Achievement**

The following comments reflect the guidelines of the comment framework, but are just samples. Teachers should use their professional judgement to create their own personalized comments for each student. More sample comments are included in the Sample Reports in Appendices M and N.

Key: Student Strengths, with specific examples of student demonstrating their strengths

Areas for Further Development

Ways to Support Learning at School and at Home (Next Steps)

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| ***Written Progress Report – Primary***  ***Kindergarten – Mathematics – Proficient*** |
| Jill understands number concepts to 10. She can identify these numbers out of order, and is able to write them down when called out to her. Jill can add and subtract numbers up to 10 using concrete materials such as buttons and beads. She can easily identify 2D shapes and 3D objects and describe their features. Jill is close to being able to recognize and create repeating patterns with two and three elements. Her learning can continue to be supported at home by making a game of reading all the numbers she sees when driving or walking around town with her family. Jill could be included in helping her parents with counting during everyday activities such as baking, folding laundry, building a garden bed, planting seeds, etc. She is encouraged to tell her parents about the patterns and shapes she sees in the backyard, for example how she knows that it’s a pattern or a square. Math is everywhere, have fun with it! |
| **Used with permission from Heidi Cyr, Selkirk Elementary School** |

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| ***Written Progress Report - Intermediate***  ***Grade 4 – Music – Extending*** |
| Pat understands that music is a unique language for creating and communicating. With a bucket drum, he demonstrates excellent technique for a variety of fundamental music skills related to duration, rhythm, tempo and dynamics such as listening, echoing, repeating and playing in a group. With guitar notes, guitar chords, and vocals he demonstrates excellent technique for a variety of fundamental music skills related to pitch, timbre, form, and texture, such as discerning the qualities of notes, phrases, sounds, the parts of a song, and the layering of sounds. Further, he is learning to clearly communicate why it is important to accept personal and collective responsibility for creating, experiencing, and sharing music in a safe learning environment. Pat can continue to be supported outside the classroom by engaging in activities that promote listening skills and music appreciation. Singing and/or playing instruments with family and friends will provide Pat with opportunities to experience the joys of music and the power of collaboration. Further, he is encouraged to continue his music learning with The After-School Dancers and The Guitar Club. |
| **Used with permission from Grant Hartwick, Selkirk Elementary School** |

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| ***Written Progress Report – Secondary***  ***Anatomy and Physiology 12 - Developing*** |
| In his homeostasis presentation, Mike was able to clearly identify long-term risks and benefits of performance enhancing steroids on bodily functions. Mike has difficulty linking chemical processes and nervous signals as they relate to maintaining internal balance. On his homeostasis unit test, he showed inconsistent understanding of human chemical processes and was able to identify only a few human hormones. Mike is encouraged to use the homeostasis resource materials developed in class (e.g., flowchart) to deepen his understanding of chemicals/hormones and their effect on the human body as this is important foundational knowledge for his continued study of human body systems. |

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| ***Written Progress Report – Secondary***  ***Mathematics - Student on an IEP*** |
| Jack has an IEP that includes individualized programming goals and objectives for math. During Math, Jack regularly participates in shopping for supplies to bake and cook. He understands the money denominations of whole dollars and the names of all coins. Jack is beginning to demonstrate an understanding of fractions through measurement. Continued teaching and practice is occurring to support Jack’s understanding of the parts to make up $1.00 (e.g., four quarters = $1.00, ten dimes = $1.00, etc.). Jack is encouraged to practice using money when out with his parents in the community |

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| ***Final Summative Report - Primary***  ***Kindergarten - Applied Design, Skills, and Technologies\* - Proficient*** |
| This year Becky developed her skills through play-based activities and exploration. She showed natural curiosity when experimenting with a large variety of materials. She created new things by recognizing her ideas and putting them into action. For example, she independently designed and selected the materials to make her Mother’s Day card. Becky is able to share ideas and incorporate her friends’ ideas during play-based activities and collaborative exploration. During Science, Becky was able to appreciate how the natural objects she collected could be used to create a new product to be enjoyed by others. Becky was always willing to share her thinking and creations during circle time. She used technologies and tools, both digital and physical, in a safe and age-appropriate manner. Next year, Becky will continue to develop her skills when using tools, such as scissors. Becky is encouraged to continue to share her wonderful artwork, creations, and creative ideas with others.  \* ADST: For Grades K-5, students are expected to use the curricular competencies from ADST in combination with grade-level content from other areas of learning in cross-curricular activities to develop foundational mindsets and skills in design thinking and making. This should be reflected in the written descriptive comments for ADST. |

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| ***Final Summative Report – Intermediate***  ***Grade 4 – English Language Arts – Proficient - Student Receiving Adaptations*** |
| Comprehend and Connect (Reading, Listening and Viewing): With extra processing time, Nick consistently utilized reading comprehension strategies such as asking questions and making predictions as demonstrated by his reading response journal. With the adaptation of assistive technology (text to speech) Nick was able to respond to text in personal and creative ways during our novel study project by successfully explaining the story map. During guided reading conversations Nick demonstrated that he is committed to learning to apply a variety of thinking skills to gain meaning from non-fiction texts.  Create and Communicate (Writing, Speaking and Representing): Nick was able to use language in creative ways during a group science project skit. He was generally able to transform ideas and information to create original texts as demonstrated by his great Canadian Mail Race letter. Most recently Nick worked on using the writing design process to plan, develop and create a personalized narrative text titled “My Awesome Adventure” which was a pleasure to read. Nick’s progress with the writing process is attributed to the use of assistive technology and the program Inspiration.  Nick will continue to require assistive technology in order to meet curricular expectations. Over the summer, Nick is encouraged to continue reading a variety of texts to expand his vocabulary and to keep a journal of his continued awesome adventures! |

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| ***Final Summative Report - Secondary***  ***Grade 10 - Physical Education and Health 10 - Incomplete*** |
| **Physical and Health Literacy** - **Proficient**  Darla is able to apply proper techniques for movement and is able to adjust exertion level when necessary as demonstrated by her development in running, soccer and basketball. She demonstrates fair play through her team approach and understanding of game rules. Darla is developing the ability to apply movement strategies such as passing during competitive sport.  **Healthy and Active Living - Developing**  Darla demonstrates a competitive nature and is developing her understanding of health benefits beyond competition. She is able to identify how health messages may possibly influence a person’s well-being and is working on identifying her own personal healthy living goals. Darla would benefit from deep reflection of health benefits as delivered through Protect Your Pal presentations, explorations of health and exercise, and class conversations to help her identify a personal journey towards healthy living beyond competitive sport.  **Social and Community Health - Proficient**  Darla communicates many ways to avoid potentially unsafe situations with respect to sexual health, bullying, and discrimination. She has participated in mock scenarios that allowed her to demonstrate her understanding of how to respond effectively to emergency situations. Darla would benefit from reflecting on effective ways to manage a situation should emergency help not be readily available.  **Mental Well Being - Incomplete**  Due to her extended absence, Darla has not yet shown sufficient evidence to demonstrate her learning in this area, specifically about how the consequences of negative behaviour (such as substance abuse) can have a direct impact on a persons’ mental well- being. Darla encouraged to have a discussion with her parents about creative and/or alternative ways of demonstrating her learning before the end of February. |

**Written Descriptive Comments for Behaviours for Success**

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| ***Responsibility – Consistently*** |
| Jill completes class work in the time given and makes good use of her agenda to record what needs to be done next. Her recent seasonal rounds project showed that she is learning to pay greater attention to detail. Jill is encouraged to ask questions to clarify meaning/ensure understanding before beginning an assignment or project. |

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| ***Organizational Skills – Sometimes*** |
| During his recent ancestral technologies project Jack did a good job of gathering information from classmates, the local First Nation, library books, and online. He is learning to use his visual schedule to prepare for learning. Jack is encouraged to use a timeline or a checklist when organizing long-term projects. |

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| ***Independent Work Skills - Rarely*** |
| Jill follows daily routines with little supervision. During her recent Southern Tutchone presentation, she accepted support to revise her plan to finish it on time. When her work is completed, Jill is encouraged to move on to the next task independently. |

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| ***Collaboration Skills - Consistently*** |
| Jack shares ideas, information, and resources when working in a group, as demonstrated by the way he helped his group to make decisions during their recent robotics challenge. He is beginning to take on more of a leadership role when working in a group. Jack is encouraged to focus on listening whenever others speak in order to establish positive relationships with the group. |

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| ***Initiative Skills - Frequently*** |
| In a small group setting, Jill is able to observe, question and explore different possibilities, and strategies to come up with solutions. She is showing more initiative in applying creative ideas to solve problems as demonstrated during work on her recent construction project. Jill is encouraged to accept leadership roles in the class or in small groups. |

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| ***Self-regulation Skills - Rarely*** |
| Jack perseveres when responding to a challenge, as demonstrated during the school’s Terry Fox Run. He is learning to check in more frequently to make sure he keeps on track to meet his personal fitness goals. As a next step, Jack is encouraged to set goals for himself based on feedback from peers and the teacher. |