

# 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. **It should be noted that 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.**

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.

## The Framework

Table L1: Framework for Writing Descriptive Comments

Framework Component	Component Criteria
<b>1: Strengths, with specific examples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe student strengths and achievements in relation to learning standards (content and curricular competencies)</li> <li>• Focus on what the student knows, can do, and understands</li> <li>• Personalize for each student</li> <li>• Share evidence/examples of what the student has done to demonstrate their strengths</li> </ul>
<b>2: Areas for Further Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate success criteria that the student has not yet demonstrated</li> <li>• Use strength-based (not deficit) language</li> <li>• Include areas for enrichment if appropriate</li> </ul>
<b>3: Ways to Support Learning at School and at Home (Next Steps)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify ways that learning can be supported both at school and at home</li> <li>• Connect next steps to the learning standard(s), and make sure they are realistic and manageable</li> <li>• Identify student goals/area of focus for the next term that are linked to the areas for further development</li> <li>• Include any extra support the student receives/will receive at school</li> </ul>

## **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;
- participated in a wider range of physical activities to help him meet his personal fitness goals.

## Effective Written Descriptive Comments

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 L2: Effective written descriptive comments

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

## 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

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


<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for Further Development</b>	<b>Ways to Support Learning (Next Steps)</b>
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
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

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

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Areas for Further Development</b>	<b>Ways to Support Learning (Next Steps)</b>
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
<p>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</p>		

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.

			
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 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.

It is **not** necessary for elementary teachers to comment on every subject area. Teachers must **report** on all subject areas (by learning standards) but should use the Comment Framework and apply their own professional judgement to determine which subject areas require comments. Secondary teachers are expected to comment for each course.

## 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

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**  
**Areas for Further Development**  
**Ways to Support Learning at School and at Home (Next Steps)**

### **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!

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### **Written Progress Report - Intermediate Grade 4 – Music – Extending**

Nick 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 Nick 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. Nick 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 Nick 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.

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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. He has difficulty linking chemical processes and nervous signals as they relate to maintaining internal balance. On his homeostasis unit test, Mike 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.

**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.

**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, Becky independently designed and selected the materials to make her Mother's Day card. She 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. She was always willing to share her thinking and creations during circle time. Becky 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. She 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.

**Final Summative Report – Intermediate**

**Grade 4 – English Language Arts – Proficient - Student Receiving Adaptations**

Comprehend and Connect (Reading, Listening and Viewing): With extra processing time, Pat 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) Pat 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 Pat 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): Pat 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 Pat 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. Pat’s progress with the writing process is attributed to the use of assistive technology and the program Inspiration.

Pat will continue to require assistive technology in order to meet curricular expectations. Over the summer, Pat is encouraged to continue reading a variety of texts to expand his vocabulary and to keep a journal of his continued awesome adventures!

**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 is encouraged to have a discussion with her parents about creative and/or alternative ways of demonstrating her learning before the end of February.

## Sample Written Descriptive Comments for Behaviours for Success

### **Responsibility – Consistently**

Jane 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. Jane is encouraged to ask questions to clarify meaning/ensure understanding before beginning an assignment or project.

### **Organizational Skills – Sometimes**

During his recent ancestral technologies project John 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. John is encouraged to use a timeline or a checklist when organizing long-term projects.

### **Independent Work Skills - Rarely**

Jane 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, Jane is encouraged to move on to the next task independently.

### **Collaboration Skills - Consistently**

John 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. John is encouraged to focus on listening whenever others speak in order to establish positive relationships with the group.

### **Initiative Skills - Frequently**

In a small group setting, Jane 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. Jane is encouraged to accept leadership roles in the class or in small groups.

### **Self-regulation Skills - Rarely**

John 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, John is encouraged to set goals for himself based on feedback from peers and the teacher.