

Creating Strong Report Card Comments



Tri-County Regional School Board
Nova Scotia, Canada

Students First

A Handbook for
Elementary Teachers

Creating Strong Report Card Comments

A comment on the report card should provide additional information about the student's level of achievement. In combination with the assigned grade it should give the parent/guardian a picture of what the student has accomplished over the course of the term and the areas he/she may need to continue to work on in the future.

| Structure of a Comment | | Example (without anchor statement) |
|---|--|--|
| *Opening/ anchor statement | *State the level of overall achievement related to the subject area. | Jason expresses his ideas clearly, stays on topic and responds well to questions. He listens and follows multi-step directions. He will continue to take advantage of opportunities to express original ideas to our class audience. Jason consistently reads grade level material independently and is able to choose 'just right' books with little guidance. He quickly solves words and ensures that his reading sounds right, looks right and makes sense. He is able to express a solid understanding of what he has read. His fluency is improving but he does not always pay attention to punctuation. He will continue to have small group practice opportunities to pay closer attention to punctuation. In writing Jason is able to use complete thoughts and some details to help the reader understand his ideas. His writing is easy to read because it always goes from left to right, top to bottom, and has spaces between the words. His writing contains most of the proper punctuation and many common words are spelled correctly. His next step is to organize his thoughts according to different forms of writing. |
| State the strengths | What the evidence shows the student achieved/learned. | |
| Identify challenges | What the evidence shows the student has not yet achieved/learned. | |
| Next steps | Plans to address the student's challenges. | |

914 Characters

*Optional: If space is a problem, it is not necessary to include an opening anchor sentence as it is described by the assigned grade.

Consider the audience: Comments should be written in language, free from educational jargon, which will be easily understood by parents/guardians and students.

Creating Strong Report Card Comments

| Try to... | Try Not to... |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a focus on the child • Relate comments to the outcomes • 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. • Give examples to help clarify the broad statements • Identify strengths, challenges • Connect next step(s) to the challenge(s) identified | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List what was taught • Include comments about attendance, homework, behaviour, attitude (this information can – and should – be included in the Learner Profile section of the report card) • 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-centred 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?

The report card comments should reflect the child’s achievement relative to the outcomes. Teachers should avoid a reiteration of the outcomes taught during the reporting period, but rather focus on the child’s experience with them.

Creating Strong Report Card Comments Knowing the Targets

Some teachers find it useful to use a process like this:
(Grade 3 example)

For an A:

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Think about the outcomes covered and the learning targets for the reporting period. In order to receive an A, what do you expect the student to know, what evidence of learning do you expect, what should they be able to do?</p> | <p>Some teachers find it helpful to then write a generic comment which would be appropriate for a student receiving an A. This comment would serve as a starting point. Information specific to the individual student ("needs" and "next steps") should be added on the report card.</p> |
| <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student is able to independently select text appropriate to their interests and uses available time for reading silently from a variety of genres. • Student is able to find information, shows confidence in understanding text features such as captions, table of contents etc. • Student rarely uses finger pointing when reading. • Student knows the expected number of sight words (refer to benchmark – TCRSB P-3 document) • Student can retell and engage in discussion about his/her reading demonstrating solid comprehension. • Student's reading level is at or above expected level for the time of the year being assessed. | <p>For example:</p> <p>Student reads from a wide variety of genre which he selects independently. He/she is able to answer questions about the books (s)he reads and enjoys discussing his books with others. Student demonstrates strong word-solving skills, only using finger-pointing when stuck. His/her knowledge of the basic sight words makes the reading smooth and contributes to his/her high level of comprehension.</p> |

Note: This sample comment is incomplete. It does not include "needs" or "next steps for improvement" as those should be written with individual students in mind.

For a B:

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Think about those students who are meeting <i>most</i> of your expectations (B). Re-examine the targets you set for A.</p> <p>Which ones are likely to be problematic for students?</p> <p>Note the <i>italics</i> below:</p> | <p>Adjust the generic comment for A to reflect the challenges in these areas.</p> <p>This will become the generic comment for B. Of course, it may not apply equally to all children in the B category, but it will provide a starting point. Individual examples will be necessary.</p> |
| <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student is able to <i>independently</i> select text appropriate to their interests and uses available time for <i>reading silently from a variety of genres.</i>• Student is able to find information, <i>shows confidence in understanding text features</i> such as captions, table of contents etc.• Student <i>rarely uses finger pointing when reading.</i>• Student knows the <i>expected number</i> of sight words (refer to benchmark – TCRSB P-3 document)• Student can retell and engage in discussion about his/her reading <i>demonstrating solid comprehension.</i>• Student's <i>reading level is at or above expected level</i> for the time of the year being assessed. (Refer to TCRSB P-3 document) | <p>For example:</p> <p>Student reads from a variety of genre but requires assistance and support in making appropriate choices. He/she is becoming more confident in his/her ability to answer questions about the books (s)he reads and is encouraged to discuss his/her books with others. Student still relies on finger-pointing when reading but is but is becoming better able to process text silently. As his/her knowledge of the basic sight words improves, his/her reading will become more smooth which will aid comprehension.</p> |

Note: This sample comment is incomplete. It does not include “needs” or “next steps for improvement” as those should be written with individual students in mind

For a C:

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Think about those students who are meeting some of the expectations (C). Which of the targets you set will pose problems for these children? See underlined sections below.</p> | <p>Adjust the generic B comment to reflect the challenges for these children. This will become your generic C comment.</p> |
| <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student <u>is able to independently select text appropriate</u> to their interests and <u>uses available time for reading silently from a variety of genres.</u>• Student is able to find information, <u>shows confidence in understanding text features such as captions, table of contents etc.</u>• Student <u>rarely uses finger pointing when reading.</u>• <u>Student knows the expected number of sight words</u> (refer to benchmark – TCRSB P-3 document)• <u>Student can retell and engage in discussion about his/her reading demonstrating solid comprehension.</u>• Student's <u>reading level is at or above expected level</u> for the time of the year being assessed. | <p>For example:</p> <p>During independent reading time student needs support in making appropriate book choices. He/she is becoming more comfortable with various genre but benefits from guidance in this area. He/she answers questions willingly about the books he/she reads and his/her answers demonstrate his/her improving understanding. He/she benefits from small group discussions with other students who are reading the same text. Student still relies on finger-pointing when reading and rarely reads silently. As his/her knowledge of the basic sight words improves, his/her reading will become more smooth which will aid comprehension.</p> |

Note: This sample comment is incomplete. It does not include “needs” or “next steps for improvement” as those should be written with individual students in mind.

Descriptors for Report Card Comments

| A | B | C | D |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>The student demonstrates achievement of the expected learning outcomes during the current reporting period.</p> | <p>The student demonstrates achievement of most of the expected learning outcomes addressed during the current reporting period.</p> | <p>The student demonstrates achievement of some of the expected learning outcomes addressed during the current reporting period.</p> | <p>The student demonstrates achievement of few of the expected learning outcomes addressed during the current reporting period.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consistently • to a high degree • without prompting • is skilled at • has fully demonstrated • clearly • confidently and independently • excellent • solid • is proficient • comprehensive understanding • sometimes exceeds • easily • is able to • is very good at • often uses • skilfully uses • understands how/that | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most of the time • is able to • for the most part • often can • usually • demonstrates • demonstrates some understanding of • requires some support • is developing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is not able to • does not yet • is unable to • needs a great deal of assistance • has not yet demonstrated • not usually • with repeated assistance • rarely • has difficulty with • struggles to • has a limited understanding of |
| <p>Strengths and Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for example • for instance • See Action Verbs on next page | | <p>Next Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • would benefit from • needs to continue to • will have continued opportunities to | |

Useful Words and Phrases to Consider when Writing Report Card Comments

| Strengths | Needs | Suggestions |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 <p style="margin-top: 20px;">Some Action Verbs to Consider Using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applies - Builds - Compares - Completes - Constructs - Creates - Describes - Evaluates - Experiments - Explains - Expresses - Extends - Illustrates - Interprets - Knows - Organizes - Operates - Participates - Performs - Produces - Shows - Solves | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 |

Character counts for Elementary English and French Immersion Report Cards

| Grade Level | Learner Profile | Additional Comments | ELA | FLA | Math | Other Subjects |
|-------------|-----------------|---------------------|------|------|------|-----------------------|
| Elementary | 450 | 2500 | 1500 | 1500 | 1500 | 600 (700 for primary) |

Using Smart Pronouns When Writing Comments

Smart pronouns can be used to ease the process of creating comments for students.

For example, the below comment is part of a comment that an English Language Arts teacher wishes to use for some students.

Jason expresses his ideas clearly, stays on topic and responds well to questions. He listens and follows multi-step directions.

Rather than editing the underlined words for each individual student, smart pronouns can be used to automatically populate the comment with the appropriate name/word.

By using smart pronouns, the comment would be written as follows:

~([01]first_name) expresses ~(his/her) ideas clearly, stays on topic and responds well to questions. ~(He/She) listens and follows multi-step directions.

Examples of Smart Pronouns for Grades P - 6

| | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| ~(He/She) | ~(son/daughter) |
| ~(he/she) | ~([01]first_name) |
| ~(His/Her) | ~([01]last_name) |
| ~(his/her) | ~([01]lastfirst) |
| ~(him/her) | ~([01]grade_level) |
| ~(Son/Daughter) | ~([01]home_room) |

Sample Report Card Comments

English Language Arts, Grade 5

"A" Comment

Option: 1

Student has demonstrated achievement of the expected learning outcomes during this reporting period.

(S)he regularly participates in class discussions in ways that are respectful of others and that demonstrate critical awareness of the ideas being discussed. (S)he is encouraged to continue to use talk to extend her learning and will benefit from more exposure to varying points of view. (S)he is a confident and independent reader. (S)he reads from a wide variety of text and applies comprehension strategies effectively. Responses to text demonstrate personal reactions and she is learning to better apply her understanding of information appropriate to the task. She will continue to develop and demonstrate her growing understanding of text using evidence from her reading. Student skilfully uses writing to both extend and demonstrate her learning. She adjusts her writing to suit both purpose and audience. (S)he is encouraged to continue to fine-tune her language choices at the word, sentence and paragraph levels. (S)he will continue to grow as a writer through increased experience with planning and drafting and can benefit from the feedback received during the writing process.

1010 characters with spaces, addressing SCOs 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.2, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1, 9.2, 9.4

Option 2:

More simplified "parent-friendly" language

Student has demonstrated achievement of the expected learning outcomes during this reporting period.

In class discussions(s)he listens to others and thinks about her response before joining in. Practice with discussing and listening will help her better understands the topics and will make her aware of the opinions of others.

(S)he reads well on her own. (S)he reads a variety of texts and knows how to help herself when she has trouble understanding . When she writes about what she reads she shows that she understands and is able to make connections to her own life. She is encouraged to continue to read widely.

S(he) writes well and her writing shows her growing understanding. (S)he adjusts her writing to suit different audiences and purposes. As she writes more, she will become even more confident in word choice and sentence structure. She plans her writing carefully and will continue to benefit from feedback received in the writing process.

800 characters with spaces, SCOs as above

English Language Arts, Grade 5 "C" Comment

Option 1:

Student has demonstrated achievement of some of the learning outcomes addressed in this reporting period.

(S)he only occasionally participates in either small group or whole class discussions in ways that are respectful of others and demonstrates only basic awareness of ideas discussed. (S)he sometimes uses talk to extend his/her learning. (S)he is encouraged to ask questions to clarify his/her understanding.

(S)he is capable of reading for assigned purposes but does not independently choose from a variety of text. Comprehension strategies are applied only when prompted. Responses to text demonstrate few personal reactions and limited understanding of information.

Reactions and understanding are often unsupported by evidence from the text. (S)he would benefit from making summary notes of brief portions of text while reading.

Student sometimes uses writing to demonstrate his/her learning. Texts are created with limited awareness of purpose and audience. Language choices at the word, sentence and paragraph levels are basic and errors are common. (S)he rarely plans writing or completes more than one draft. Using feedback from writing conferences would be helpful.

1006 characters with spaces, addressing SCOs 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 3.1, 3.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.2, 6.3, 7.1, 7.3, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1, 9.2, 9.4

Option 2:

More simplified "parent-friendly" language

Student has demonstrated achievement of some of the learning outcomes addressed in this reporting period.

When student takes part in class discussions (s)he is better able to understand class work. She needs to work on being respectful of others in conversation. (S)he is encouraged to ask questions to make sure (s)he understands.

(S)he is able to read when asked to do so in class. When she has difficulty understanding what she is reading she can help herself, but may need to be reminded. (S)he does not read on her own for enjoyment. When she writes about what she has read, she may not show a deep understanding or an ability to connect her reading to her own life. Student would benefit from slowing her reading and checking her understanding of the text as she reads.

(S)he is sometimes able to use writing to show her learning. When writing she needs to pay more attention to the purpose and audience and use more care to avoid simple errors. Student is encouraged to more carefully plan her writing and to use the feedback she receives from others.

874 characters with spaces addressing SCOs above

Math, Grade 5
"A" Comment

Option 1:

Student has demonstrated achievement of the expected learning outcomes during this reporting period.(S) he consistently demonstrates an understanding of place value by reading, modeling and representing whole numbers to millions and decimals to thousandths.

(S)he is able to interpret, model, order and rename fractions, and has a clear understanding of the relationship between fractions and division.

(S)he successfully demonstrates the ability to multiply and divide 2,3 and 4 digit by 1 digit numbers and to multiply 2 digit by 2 digit numbers.

(S)he is consistently demonstrates the ability to mentally multiply numbers by 0.1, 0.01, and 0,001, and to divide numbers mentally when appropriate.

S(he) should continue to work on developing effective problem solving skills through the use of graphic organizers.

816 characters with spaces, addressing SCOs A1, A2, A3, A4, A6, A7, A8, A9, A10, B13, B14, B 15, C1, C2, C4, C5.

Option 2:

More simplified "parent-friendly" language

Student has demonstrated achievement of the expected learning outcomes during this reporting period.

S(he) consistently demonstrates an understanding of place value of whole numbers to millions and decimals to thousandths.

S(he) has a good understanding of fractions and how they relate to division.

S(he) is able to multiply and divide numbers using appropriate methods.

S(he) should continue to work on problem solving skills by drawing pictures and creating charts.

466 characters with spaces, same SCOs as above

Math, Grade 5
"C" Comment

Option 1:

Student has demonstrated achievement of some the expected learning outcomes during this reporting period.

(S) he consistently demonstrates an understanding of place value by reading, modeling and representing whole numbers to hundred thousands and decimals to hundredths but has difficulty with whole numbers to millions and decimals to thousandths. Student is encouraged to use manipulatives such as place value charts and grid paper to model larger or smaller numbers.

(S)he is able to interpret, model, order and rename fractions and has some understanding of the relationship between fractions and division. Student should continue to use manipulatives such as fraction circles and pattern blocks to develop a clear understanding of this relationship.

(S)he usually demonstrates the ability to multiply and divide 2,3 and 4 digit by 1 digit numbers and sometimes can multiply 2 digit by 2 digit numbers. Student should continue to construct area models for this multiplication.

(S)he usually demonstrates the ability to mentally multiply numbers by 0.1, 0.01, and 0,001, but has some difficulty with dividing numbers mentally when appropriate. Practice with basic multiplication facts would be helpful. Student is developing problem solving skills, but should make use of graphic organizers regularly.

1319 characters with spaces, addressing SCOs A1, A2, A3, A4, A6, A7, A8, A9, A10, B13, B14, B 15, C1, C2, C4, C5.

Option 2:

More simplified "parent-friendly" language

Student has demonstrated achievement of some of the expected learning outcomes during this reporting period.

S(he) consistently demonstrates an understanding of place value of whole numbers to hundred thousands and decimals to hundredths but has difficulty with whole numbers to millions and decimals to thousandths. Student is encouraged to use place value charts and graph paper.

S(he) has a good understanding of fractions and sometimes can show how they relate to division. Student should continue to use fraction circles and pattern blocks.

S(he) is usually able to multiply and divide numbers using appropriate methods. Practice of basic facts would be helpful.

S(he) should continue to work on problem solving skills by drawing pictures and creating charts.

769 characters with spaces, same SCOs as above.

Science, Grade 5
"A" Comment

Student has demonstrated achievement of the expected learning outcomes during this reporting period.

(S)he has consistently shown the ability to observe, investigate and demonstrate how weather information is gathered and how forecasters use that information. (S)he is working on developing an understanding of how weather systems work and is encouraged to use appropriate terms to demonstrate his/her understanding.

Student can successfully classify materials as solids, liquids or gases and describe changes in those materials. (S)he should continue to develop effective problem solving skills in science.

298 characters with spaces, addressing the weather and parts of the properties and changes in materials units

Science, Grade 5
"C" Comment

Student has demonstrated achievement of some of the learning outcomes addressed in this reporting period.

Student has sometimes shown the ability to observe, investigate and demonstrate how weather information is gathered and how forecasters use that information. (S)he has limited understanding of how weather systems work and uses irregular terms to demonstrate his/her understanding. Student struggles to classify materials as solids, liquids or gases or describe changes in those materials. (S)he has developed limited problem solving skills in science.

479 characters with spaces, addressing the weather and parts of the properties and changes in materials units

Social Studies, Grade 5
"A" Comment

Student has demonstrated achievement of the expected learning outcomes during this reporting period.

Student was consistently able to demonstrate an understanding of how Canadian society has changed over time. (S)he successfully explained the various cultural groups that have settled in, and their impact on, Canada, including the colonial French and early aboriginal peoples. Student is learning to use this knowledge to come to a good understanding of the interactions among people and places over time and the resulting effects on the environment. She will benefit from more opportunities to explore these concepts

527 characters with spaces, addressing parts of societies over time, early aboriginal and colonial French units; and interdependence, and people, place and environment GCOs

Social Studies, Grade 5
"C" Comment

Student has demonstrated achievement of some of the learning outcomes addressed in this reporting period.

Student was sometimes able to demonstrate an understanding of how Canadian society has changed over time. (S)he could identify some cultural groups that have settled in, but struggled to explain their impact on, Canada. Student only occasionally used this learning to demonstrate an understanding of the interactions among people and places over time and the resulting effects on the environment. (S)he needs to consider alternate points of view.

470 characters with spaces, addressing parts of societies over time, early aboriginal and colonial French units; and interdependence, and people, place and environment GCOs