

ETFO Bargaining Bulletin

CENTRAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UPDATES PUBLISHED BY ETFO

ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' FEDERATION OF ONTARIO

SPECIAL BULLETIN: PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT AND THE PROVINCIAL REPORT CARD

January 11, 2016

NOTE: In accordance with Bill 122, the terms of the central agreement (including the new definition of professional judgement) are not in full effect until a local collective agreement has been reached and ratified.

Professional judgement is an important concept for educators. For the first time it is now defined in our new central agreement. Section C. 2.5 of the Teacher/Occasional Teacher Central Agreement reads as follows:

“Professional Judgement” shall be defined as judgement that is informed by professional knowledge of curriculum expectations, context, evidence of learning, methods of instruction and assessment, and the criteria and standards that indicate success in student learning. In professional practice, judgement involves a purposeful and systematic thinking process that evolves in terms of accuracy and insight with ongoing reflection and self-correction.

What does this mean for ETFO members now?

Because this language is now written explicitly into our central agreement, ETFO believes that members have a valuable opportunity to make purposeful decisions about all areas of their practice and act upon these decisions with protections that they did not have before. ETFO members now have an opportunity to return some balance to their practice. Members **need** to be aware of their rights and exercise them in a consistent manner.

While professional judgement is an issue impacting all areas of a teacher's professional practice, it can be a significant component of the reporting process. The *Growing Success* document stresses that professional judgement is the foundation of the reporting process.

ETFO members will soon be completing the Term 1 Report Card and need to be aware of changes that may occur as a result of the new central agreement language re professional judgement. This special bulletin has been written to heighten awareness of the importance of using professional judgement during the reporting process. We will be developing other resources to raise awareness of the other areas where professional judgement impacts upon teaching practice.

Ontario Ministry Guidelines (*Growing Success*, First Edition, 2010)

In addition to the definition of professional judgement in our new central agreement, there continue to be professional reporting responsibilities that must be adhered to in accordance with the *Growing Success* policy. The majority of the guidelines in the *Growing Success* policy focus on the reporting of grades for subject areas and strands. It is in the area of comments that teachers can most exercise their professional judgement.

The following table highlights the key expectations that all teachers must follow when completing the provincial report card. The information below applies to the Elementary Provincial Report Card only and ETFO will be providing subsequent information about the 2016 Elementary Progress Report at a later date.

Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four strands are reported on in January/February and four strands in June;
French	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Core, grades 1-3: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Boards will make decisions about which strands to cover, if the program is offered in the board. If certain strands are not taught in grades 1-3, the teacher should leave the grade/mark column blank. An explanatory comment should be provided. • For Core and Extended, grades 4 to 8 and Immersion, grades 1 to 8: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Teachers are expected to report on all four strands within the school year.
Mathematics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least four strands are reported on in January/February and at least four strands in June; • Each strand must be reported on at least once;
Science and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be reported on in January/February and in June; • May indicate in the comments box which strands are being reported on within the subject; • All of the strands must be accounted for in instruction, assessment and evaluation by the end of the year;
Social Studies (Grades 1 to 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be reported on in January/February and in June; • May indicate in the comments box which strands are being reported on within the subject; • All of the strands must be accounted for in instruction, assessment, and evaluation by the end of the year;
History and Geography (Grades 7 and 8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers should complete percentage marks for history and/or geography in the column headed Report 1 or Report 2, as appropriate; • Achievement in both history and geography must be reported at least once in the school year;
Health and Physical Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both Health and Physical Education must be reported on in January/February and in June;

The Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least three of the subjects are reported on in January/February and at least three subjects in June; • Each subject must be reported on at least once; • The French box should be checked if a particular Art subject is taught in French;
Strands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When achievement in a strand for any subject area is not reported for January/February or June, it should be noted in the comments that instruction was not provided for that strand, and the “NA” box for that strand should be checked.

Special Education

If a student’s expectations in the IEP are modified and vary from the expectations of the regular program for the grade, teachers must check the “IEP” box for that subject/strand on the report card. Teachers must include the following statement in the section “Strengths/Next Steps for Improvement:” “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.”

If the student’s IEP requires only accommodations to support learning in a subject and/or strand, teachers will not check the “IEP” box. The letter grade or percentage mark is based on the regular grade expectations.

ESL/ELD

Teachers will check the ESL/ELD box on the provincial report cards to indicate that modifications have been made to curriculum expectations to address the language learning needs of English language learners. The ESL/ELD boxes should be checked at the strand level.

Learning Skills and Work Habits

In most cases, the homeroom teacher will complete the learning skills and work habits section. In the space provided for anecdotal comments, the teacher will use his/her professional judgement to 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.

Kindergarten Reporting

For Kindergarten reports, there is a wide range of reporting processes currently being used across the province. Teachers should follow their district school board reporting guidelines for Kindergarten reporting. There is no province-wide Ministry policy or process for Kindergarten at this time. Teacher professional judgement should be exercised when completing comments, if applicable.

ETFO’s PRS Matters based on the *Elementary Provincial Report Card* has been updated and can be found at

<http://www.etfo.ca/AdviceForMembers/PRSMattersBulletins/PDF%20Versions/The%20Elementary%20Provincial%20Report%20Card%20Continued%20Implementation%20Update%20-%20Grades%201%20to%208.pdf> .

School Board and Individual School Guidelines

Growing Success (pp. 38-67) clearly outlines the province-wide guidelines for the completion of the *Provincial Report Card* including the comment section and those guidelines are outlined above. Individual district school boards or individual school principals may have established additional guidelines for the *Provincial Report Card*. It is ETFO’s position that Board and school guidelines should not go beyond the requirements outlined in *Growing Success* since teacher professional judgement is the foundation of assessment and evaluation of students.

The following chart provides an overview of what ETFO believes should/should not be included in board or individual school guidelines:

Board/School Guidelines May Include:	Board/School Guidelines Should Not Include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the format of comments (i.e., bullet form or full sentence form); • Guidelines re the use of pronouns or student names in comments; • Guidelines re the use of present and past tenses in comments; • Requirement that comments be focused on specific expectations; • Timelines for submission of report cards; • Guidelines re the strands for Core French to be reported on; • Sample/Bank of Board approved report card comments that teachers may choose to utilize; and • Proof-reading processes for spelling and grammar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum number of words per report card comment; • A specific number of Learning Skills that must be commented on; • A requirement that rotary teachers must provide comments for Learning Skills; • A requirement that Strengths/Next Steps for Improvement have to be two separate sentences or phrases in a comment box (e.g., this can be difficult due to the size of the rotary subject boxes); • A specific number of comments required per subject; • Additional required strands to be reported on beyond those required by <i>Growing Success</i> (e.g., Mathematics and Arts); • A requirement that every student have a unique ‘personalized’ comment; and • A requirement to fill the entire comment box.

Your Professional Judgement and the *Provincial Report Card*

ETFO believes that all members should exercise their professional judgement as they complete the comment sections of the *Provincial Report Card*. Professional judgement would guide members as they:

- Integrate specific comments about expectations and/or achievement for each subject on the *Provincial Report Card*;
- Make decisions about which Learning Skills are commented on for individual students;
- Formulate individual sentences/phrases that may include a combination of strengths, weaknesses, and /or next steps;
- Determine the length of individual comments; and
- Make decisions about the number of comments to include for individual students.

How do Members Ensure that their Professional Judgement Counts?

While the *Growing Success* document is clear as to the expectations for the Elementary Report Card, ETFO understands that some school boards have issued guidelines that require more than what is set out in *Growing Success*. In other situations, individual school administrators have also set higher expectations than those required in the document. If an ETFO member is directed to do more than what is required by the Ministry in *Growing Success*, the member should contact the local ETFO office immediately to seek advice on next steps. Local leaders, working in conjunction with Provincial staff, will work to ensure that members use their professional judgement while completing the report card.

ETFO's Next Steps on Professional Judgement

Over the next few months, ETFO will be developing additional resources (including one for the Elementary Progress Report Card) to support members in developing a more fulsome understanding of how the new central definition of *professional judgement* will impact their work. ETFO will work to clarify additional situations where professional judgement can be exercised within the protection of the collective agreement. We will also work to highlight the professional duties and responsibilities of educators to ensure that ETFO members avoid situations that could result in difficulty. Stay tuned!

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