

## Assessment and Evaluation in Kindergarten

### The Question

“How can I help my Kindergarten educator teams refine their assessment and evaluation practices so they align with the policy outlined in [Growing Success – The Kindergarten Addendum: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools](#) (2016) and [The Kindergarten Program](#) (2016)?”

### The Answer

There are five important aspects to be aware of:

1. The definitions of assessment and evaluation in Kindergarten
2. The requirements for schools around communicating with parents<sup>1</sup> about children’s learning
3. How educators complete the Kindergarten Communication of Learning
4. How assessment and evaluation align with the pedagogical approaches set out in *The Kindergarten Program*
5. The importance of “leading with relationships” to engage families in their children’s learning through ongoing communication

#### 1. The definitions of assessment and evaluation in Kindergarten

It is important to note that the seven fundamental principles that guide assessment, evaluation, and reporting in Ontario schools in Grades 1 to 12 also apply to Kindergarten (see *Growing Success – The Kindergarten Addendum*, page 4).

Assessment is the process of gathering and interpreting information that accurately reflects the child’s demonstration of learning in relation to the knowledge and skills described in the overall expectations outlined in *The Kindergarten Program*.

Evaluation, for children in Kindergarten, involves the judging and interpreting of evidence of learning to determine children’s **growth** and **learning** in relation to those overall expectations. Evidence of growth in learning for evaluation is collected over time using pedagogical documentation. It is expected that multiple sources of evidence will be used in order to increase the reliability and validity of the evaluation of learning.

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<sup>1</sup> The word *parents* is used in this document to refer to parent(s) and guardian(s). It may also be taken to include caregivers or close family members who are responsible for raising the child.



Educators engage in assessment *for* learning as they observe and document evidence of children’s learning (through the process of “[pedagogical documentation](#)”) and provide descriptive feedback to the children that is designed to help them move forward within their zone of proximal development.

Educators engage in assessment *as* learning when they support children in setting individual goals, monitoring their own progress, determining next steps, and reflecting on their thinking and learning, to help them become confident, autonomous learners.

See section 4 for more about pedagogical approaches in the Kindergarten program.

## **2. The requirements for schools around communicating with parents about children’s learning**

Communication with parents about a child’s learning should be ongoing throughout the school year and should include a variety of formal and informal means. Your board is encouraged to develop processes for communication throughout the year (see section 5).

Parents will be provided with three formal written reports during the school year. Templates will be used by educators, in each of years 1 and 2 in Kindergarten, to formally report findings from their assessment and evaluation of the child’s learning:

- The **Kindergarten Communication of Learning: Initial Observations** will be issued at the end of the first reporting period, between October 20 and November 20.
- The **Kindergarten Communication of Learning** will be issued at two points in the school year:
  - at the end of the second reporting period, between January 20 and February 20, reflecting the child’s growth in learning since September; and
  - at the end of the third reporting period, towards the end of June, reflecting the child’s growth in learning since January/February.

## **3. How educators complete the Kindergarten Communication of Learning**

The Kindergarten Communication of Learning is intended to provide parents with descriptions in plain language, including anecdotal comments, about their child’s strengths and growth in relation to the overall expectations within each frame of the Kindergarten program.

Educators will use the appropriate template to communicate information about the child’s learning in three categories:

- **Key Learning** – refers to the most important or significant skills and/or understandings (knowledge) that the child has demonstrated during the reporting period, in relation to the overall expectations. It is appropriate for educators to include their perceptions about the child’s interests and learning preferences in their descriptions of *key learning*.
- **Growth in Learning** – refers to positive developments in learning that the child has demonstrated over the reporting period, in relation to the overall expectations. Developmental stage, learning trajectory, and/or other individual processes of learning should be taken into account when evaluating and describing *growth in learning*.
- **Next Steps in Learning** – refers to ways in which the child can move forward in developing knowledge and skills, in relation to the overall expectations, both at school and at home. Developmental stage, learning trajectory, and/or other individual processes of learning should be taken into account when determining *next steps in learning*.

It is important for educators to reflect on pedagogical documentation together to develop a shared understanding of what key learning and growth in learning might look like, as well as identifying possible next steps.

It is appropriate to use rich examples of learning from pedagogical documentation to provide evidence of a child's learning in a play- and inquiry-based environment. These can be the starting point for discussion with parents about the child's learning as it relates to the Kindergarten program expectations. Educators should use language that is parent friendly and not simply a restatement of overall and/or specific expectations.

#### **4. How assessment and evaluation align with the pedagogical approaches set out in *The Kindergarten Program***

The policy outlined in *Growing Success – The Kindergarten Addendum* is based on a view of the young child as “competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential” and actively engaged in the assessment process. The policy recognizes that children enter Kindergarten at different stages of development and with diverse backgrounds and experiences, and that they will also leave Kindergarten demonstrating variations in growth and learning in relation to the expectations.

The pedagogical approaches that work best for young children, as discussed in *The Kindergarten Program* (page 11), include: responsive relationships; learning through exploration, play, and inquiry; educators as co-learners; environment as third teacher; pedagogical documentation; and reflective practice and collaborative inquiry.

As educators interact with children during play and inquiry, provide descriptive feedback, and review documentation of the children's learning with them, they use “noticing and naming the learning” to make the children's thinking and learning visible to them. They introduce language that enables children to describe their own learning and continue their development as autonomous, self-regulating, lifelong learners.

Through analysis and interpretation of a child's learning, educators gain insight into the child's relationships, interactions, understanding of concepts, learning styles, dispositions, and interests, as well as into the role of cultural context in the child's learning. With this insight, educators are able to judge each child's key learning, growth in learning, and next steps in learning at given points in time, as noted above in section 3.

#### **5. The importance of “leading with relationships” to engage families in their children's learning through ongoing communication**

Ongoing, reciprocal communication with children and their families throughout the processes of assessment *for*, *as*, and *of* learning is essential to support children's learning. Learning and development happen within the context of relationships among children, families, educators, and their environments.

It is important to the child's development for educator teams and principals to engage parents in the child's learning early in the school year and to support them throughout the year in helping their child with next steps in learning.

It is expected that teachers and early childhood educators will collaborate in observing, monitoring, and assessing the development of children in Kindergarten and in communicating with families.

## References

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ISSN 1923-9653 (Online) © Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2017