

Education and Early Childhood Development
Provincial Report Card Review Committee

Results Overview and Action Plan Summary

August 2014

Results Overview

In response to concerns heard from parents and educators about the provincial report card, a public survey was developed to provide parents, students, teachers, and administrators with an opportunity to communicate specific concerns and to provide suggestions for improvements. The survey was available on the department's website between March 19 and April 11, 2014.

The survey included separate questionnaires for parents, students, teachers, and administrators. The survey respondents were asked to indicate the grade or grades relevant to them and were asked questions appropriate to the grade indicated.

The survey asked questions about the different sections of the report card: the Learner Profile, Grades and Descriptors, Comments from Teachers, as well as the Grade Primary Report Card. Questions asked respondents to indicate the degree to which they agreed with specific statements and asked for comments on each section of the report card. This overview provides a high level summary of the key findings.

Respondent Profile

In total, 5,811 completed or partially completed surveys were received. Of those

- 2,637 respondents identified as parents (45%)
- 2,374 respondents identified as teachers (41%)
- 544 respondents identified as students in grades 6–12 (9%)
- 256 respondents identified as administrators (4%)

Key Findings

Overall, parents want teacher comments that communicate the student's strengths/challenges, and how parents can support learning at home. Parent respondents suggested that teacher comments should be more personal or individualized, clearly explain how students can improve, and how parents can help at home.

- 57% of **parent respondents** felt that teacher comments did not help them understand where their child may be struggling
- 63% of **parent respondents** felt that the comments did not help them further understand report card grades and descriptors
- 62% of **parent respondents** felt that the comments did not help them support their child's learning at home
- 61% of **teacher respondents** felt that the comments did not help students to understand how well they are progressing in each subject
- about 40% of **student respondents** felt the comments did not help them understand what they have learned (36%) or where they are struggling (44%)

LEARNER PROFILE

The Learner Profile is viewed positively by the majority of respondents. Respondent comments underlined the importance of clear teacher comments to accompany the Learner Profile, which explains the student's performance.

- the majority of **parent respondents** felt that the Learner Profile helps them understand their child's strengths in the development of work habits and social skills, and is equally important to them as the academic grade
- 68% of **parent respondents** (grades P–6) and 57% of parent respondents (grades 7–12) felt that they are able to use the information from the Learner Profile to support their child at home
- 80% of **teacher respondents in grades P–6** felt the Learner Profile is effective for communicating the student's development of social skills and work habits and is easy for parents to understand; this was significantly lower for **teacher respondents in grades 7–12**, where only 52% felt the Learner Profile is effective for communicating student development, and 57% felt it is easy for parents to understand

GRADES 1 TO 8

In grades 1 to 8, parent respondents are seeking more clarity on report card grades and what they mean. Parent respondents commented that the grade descriptors, introduced in September 2013, can be difficult to understand and teacher respondents commented that they need more information to be able to explain them to parents. Student respondents felt more positively about the usefulness of the grades and descriptors.

- 56% of **parent respondents** felt that grades and descriptors helped in communicating a student's progress at school; less than half (46%) felt that grades and descriptors were useful to support their child's learning at home
- 58% of **teacher respondents** reported that grades and descriptors did not help in communicating a student's progress and achievements at school
- 68% of **student respondents (grades 6 to 8)** felt that the grades and descriptors help them understand how well they are doing in school

GRADES 9 TO 12

Overall, in grades 9 to 12, survey respondents were positive about percentage grades. However, responses from students suggest that the grades do not provide enough information to help them improve their learning. Survey comments from parent respondents suggested that they would like more clarity on the grading descriptors.

- 84% of **parent** and 81% **student respondents** felt that percentage grades helped them understand how well the student is doing in school
- 75% of **parent respondents** felt they are able to use the information from the grades and descriptors to support their child's learning at home
- only about half (52%) of **student respondents** felt that the grades and descriptors help them understand what they need to do to improve their learning

Action Plan Summary

Based on the analysis of the Provincial Report Card Review Committee, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is changing the way report cards are written to address concerns raised by parents, teachers, administrators, and students. An action plan has been developed and shared with school board staff that outlines the responsibilities for the department, superintendents, principals, and teachers. The action plan includes specific expectations and responsibilities to ensure improvements in reports cards.

Based on initial survey results in June 2014, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development recommended the following report card improvements:

- clear, jargon-free language
- comments that are individualized to the student—based on the students’ strengths, any areas for improvement, and what students can do to improve
- suggestions to parents on what they can do to support their child’s learning at home

Action Items for 2014–15

TEACHERS/PRINCIPALS

- Teacher communication plans will have a variety of communication opportunities listed for parents, such as parent conferences, curriculum nights, emails, etc. These will assist in providing ongoing feedback about student learning.
- There will be an increased use of the Student-Parent Portal P–12 as a communication tool for families and for the ongoing implementation of Power Teacher Gradebook. As we continue the implementation of the Gradebook teachers will be able to share more information of ongoing progress that will make it easier for parents to access up-to-date information about their child’s learning progress.
- Principals will work with teachers to ensure ongoing support and monitoring of parent-friendly report cards that provide honest feedback on student progress and achievement.
- Teachers will continue to ensure that report card comments are personal, talk about the students’ strengths and areas for improvement, and make suggestions for supporting that student’s learning at home by parents.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

- Professional development will be provided for principals.
- Guidelines will be developed and communicated for Learner Profile comments and subject/course comments. This will give clear direction to teachers and principals about what comments should include based on parent information needs.
- Materials will be developed to support communication with parents about the changes being implemented. Principals will have information that can be included in presentations, newsletters, bulletins, websites, etc. All parents will receive report card information before the first reporting period in November 2014.
- The department will work with school board staff to ensure that teachers and principals are provided with professional development materials. Teachers and administrators have

expressed a desire for consistent messages and materials to support teachers in improving report cards. Materials developed for the 2013–2014 school year will be revised and distributed as well as new pieces that assist Principals and teachers in determining what areas of assessment and reporting they want or need to focus on first.

FALL 2014 REPORT CARD TEMPLATE CHANGES

In addition to the changes mentioned above, the following report card templates will be changed for the upcoming November reporting period:

- The grades and descriptors for grades 7 and 8 will be changed to include percentages.
- A comment section will be added for specialist teachers (music and physical education) to have the opportunity to contribute to the Learner Profile section of the grades P–8 report card.
- A comment section will be added to the Learner Profile for grades 7–12 so that teachers who interact with the student daily can contribute to the report card.
- The grade primary Learner Profile will be revised to ensure appropriate wording for this grade level.
- The first report for grade primary will include a Learner Profile, Learner Profile comment section, attendance, as well as English Language Arts/French Language Arts and Mathematics comment sections.
- Grade primary second- and third-term reports will include all subject areas.

Next Steps

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will develop a policy on Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting for implementation in the 2015–16 school year. In addition, the department will monitor the implementation of the changes to the report cards on an ongoing basis. The department will meet with the Report Card Review Committee to update the group on the progress of implementing the changes and will discuss whether there is a need for further improvements in the way report cards are written.