

Descriptive feedback

Descriptive feedback includes concise, strengths-based, written comments or documented conversations that are aligned with the learning standards and describe student learning, as well as identifying specific areas for future growth. A strengths-based approach recognizes that student learning is dynamic and holistic, and that students demonstrate their learning in different ways and at different rates. Feedback is focused on what the student can do and what they are working toward.

Parents' and caregivers' perceptions of the validity of student reporting are often directly related to the quality of the descriptive feedback. Teachers may use the following guidelines for the creation of comprehensive descriptive feedback:

- Write meaningful feedback that refers specifically to the student's strengths and areas for future growth.
- Include information on goals a student can work toward, both at school and at home.
- When commenting on areas for future growth, focus on what the student can do at that point in time (e.g., "Frances has a good grasp of sentence structure but continues to work on using punctuation correctly").
- Provide information on specific supports a student is receiving or could receive to move them forward in their learning.
- Describe ways in which the student's learning will be further supported by the teacher, and how parents and caregivers might help.
- Provide evidence by connecting feedback with examples from the classroom.
- Explain how the student approaches the learning process.
- Anticipate questions parents and caregivers may ask about their child's growth and learning.
- Use plain language, since parents and caregivers may vary widely in their educational experiences, familiarity with educational terms, and levels of English language proficiency.
- Avoid unfamiliar expressions, and if a word may be unfamiliar to parents and caregivers, provide an explanation in parentheses (e.g., instead of "...able to decode words and use context clues," say "...able to figure out unfamiliar words by using clues from surrounding words," and if you use a term like "high-frequency spelling words," add in parentheses "common words used often in writing").



Plain language suggestions

Instead of:	Try using:
a majority of	most
a number of	many, several
as a means to	for, to
assist, facilitate	help
communicate	talk, write, call
constitutes	is, forms, makes up
due to the fact	because, since
endeavor	try
exhibit a tendency	tend
factor	reason, cause
for the purpose of	for
in the course of	during
in the near future	soon
it will be necessary	I/we/you must/could
exhibits	shows, demonstrates



Communicating student learning habits and engagement

Teacher feedback on attendance

The K-12 Student Reporting Policy requires that parents and caregivers are informed about student attendance. How attendance is communicated to parents and caregivers will be decided at the school and/or district level.

An autogenerated number on any of the written reports is sufficient.

Teacher feedback on areas for future growth

Ideally, parents and caregivers should hear from teachers about any areas for future growth, either academically or behaviourally, before they receive a written Learning Update. However, in a written Learning Update or in the Summary of Learning, teachers will provide written feedback that

clearly states areas for future growth, provides specific examples, and describes ways to support further development. Written feedback on areas for future growth should be accompanied by feedback on student strengths, and how these strengths can be used to support the student in their areas for future growth.

When directing attention to areas for future growth, a student's self-reflection on Core Competencies and goal setting becomes important. Involving students in the process of setting goals in areas where they need further development, and working toward those goals, is an important part of the learning process and development of the whole child.



Separation of learning habits and engagement from academic reporting

Assessment feedback for each of the areas of learning should be in relation to the [learning standards](#) alone. Therefore, learning habits and engagement should be reported on separately from academic learning. Student learning habits and engagement should not contribute to a student's overall mark (e.g., 10% of the grade for attendance, 5% of the grade for handing in assignments on time, 20% for class participation) but should be addressed in descriptive feedback, if necessary.

It is also important to note that assessment and reporting are not disciplinary tools. Students should not be penalized via their mark for missing classes or any other behaviour they demonstrate. Behaviour that impacts student learning is best reported to parents and caregivers informally when it

occurs, as opposed to waiting for a traditional reporting communication. It is often most effective to initially communicate student behaviour with parents and caregivers through conversational means, such as phone calls, e-mails, or in-person meetings.

However, in some cases students do not attend enough classes or complete enough learning experiences to provide sufficient evidence of learning. If a teacher does not have enough evidence of learning to assign a proficiency scale indicator or letter grade and percentage, then an IE should be assigned until the teacher has enough evidence of learning to assign the student a mark. If a time comes when the student is unable to demonstrate sufficient evidence of learning, then a promotion-with-supports or retention process will need to be undertaken. For more information, see [Promotion or Retention](#).

Considerations for communicating about learning habits and engagement

As specified in the Statement of Education Policy Order, the purpose of British Columbia's education system is to develop the "educated citizen." The concept of a well-educated citizen can provide a guiding framework when thinking about student learning habits and engagement, since we aim to develop well-educated citizens who:

- Have a lifelong appreciation of learning
- Demonstrate curiosity about the world around them
- Have a sense of self-worth and personal initiative
- Have a sense of social responsibility
- Are flexible and able to deal with change
- Are capable of making independent decisions
- Demonstrate acceptance and respect for the ideas and beliefs of others
- Have cultivated effective work habits to prepare them to achieve their career and occupational objectives



The Student Progress Order mandates that

reporting includes "a **description** of the student's behaviour, including information on attitudes, work habits, effort and social responsibility."

Therefore, teachers can communicate this information to parents and caregivers in their descriptive feedback.

Descriptive feedback on student learning habits and engagement should focus on observable qualities and attributes that the teacher can support with evidence from the classroom. It is important to remember that engagement isn't just on-task behaviour. Engagement in meaningful learning opportunities is what empowers students to develop the competencies necessary to meet personal goals and become educated citizens who thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Student qualities and attributes that teachers may wish to comment on include but are not limited to:

- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| • self-awareness | • goal setting | • task completion |
| • participation | • leadership | • growth mindset |
| • collaboration | • acting on feedback | • independence and autonomy |
| • citizenship | • creativity | • self-motivation and ownership |
| • self-regulation | • risk taking | • co-operation |
| • self-reflection | • initiative | • respect for self and others |
| • self-evaluation | • organization | • inclusivity |
| • communication | • time management | |
| • self-advocacy | | |

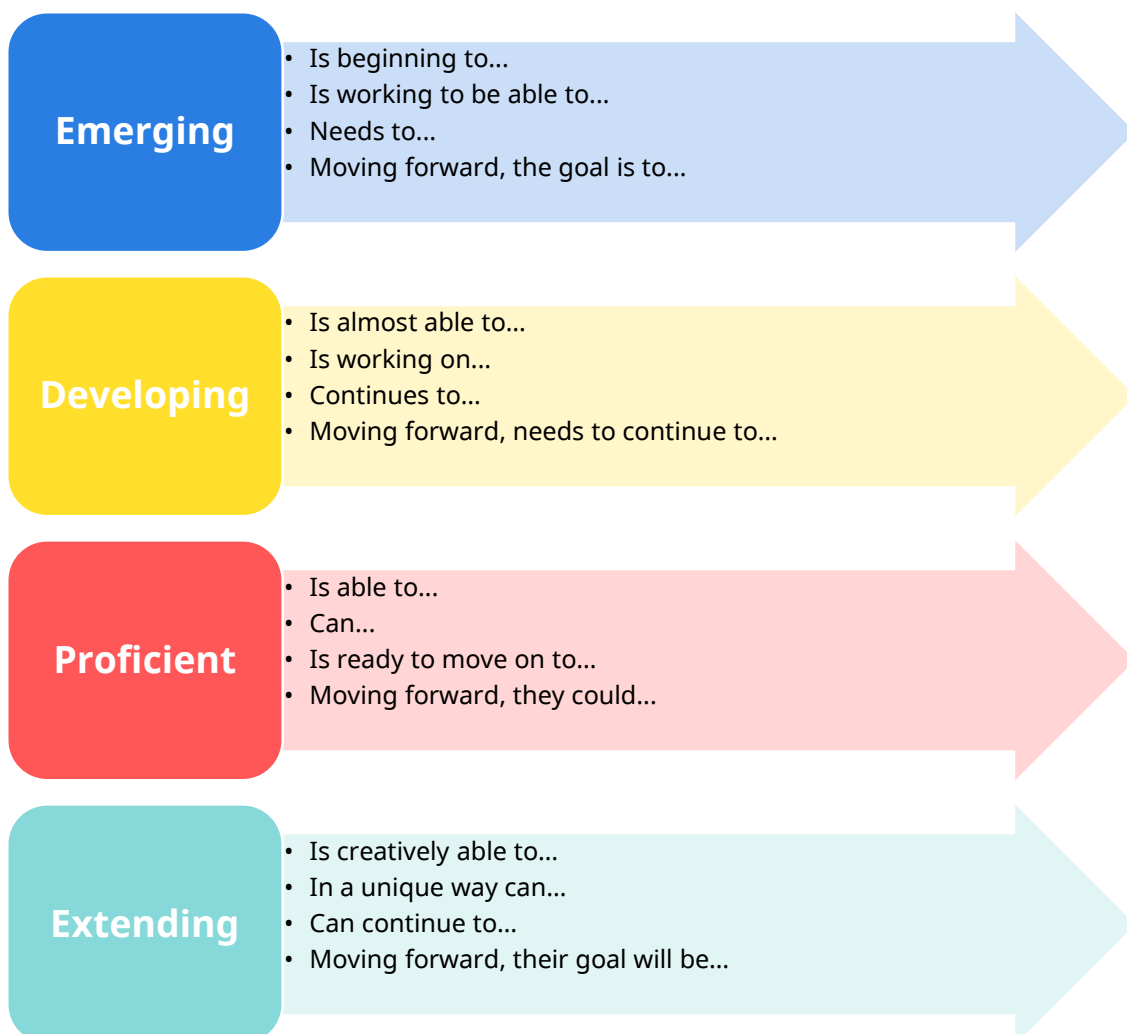
Writing descriptive feedback

Descriptive feedback about what a student can do should note significant events in the student's growth, development, and learning.

Feedback could include:

- Individual evidence of learning, using appropriate pronouns and name of the student
- Strengths-based language, recognizing that student learning is dynamic and holistic
- Language that is easy to read for parents and caregivers
- Highlighting of areas of significant growth in relation to the learning standards
- Opportunities for further development in relation to the learning standards
- Suggested helpful strategies and ways to support the student in their learning
- Information about student behaviour, engagement, and their approaches to learning

Optional sentence stems for descriptive feedback



Examples of descriptive feedback

Note that all of the examples provided below are for illustrative purposes only. There are no prescribed or mandated comments. Teachers are encouraged to use their professionalism and deep understanding of their students when delivering descriptive feedback. The intent of these exemplars is to emphasize that descriptive feedback can be provided in a variety of formats, and doesn't need to be lengthy and/or summarize the learning standards or a teacher's lesson plans.

For more examples of descriptive feedback, see the sample comments on the exemplars in [Student Self-Reflection on Core Competencies and Goal Setting](#).

Applied Design, Skills, and Technology

Kaylen demonstrated proficiency through all stages of the design process, as evidenced in our science investigation on bodily systems. Kaylen did require support during the idea stage, due to at times wanting to rush and not take the time to explore a variety of ideas, which meant they didn't always select the strongest idea to try. However, Kaylen is creative and generates ideas well, so with more opportunities to go through the design process, Kaylen will be better able to think critically about which idea is the strongest.

Career Education

Aidyn can recognize his strengths and set a SMART goal. When he met his goal, he was able to reflect on his success and identify how support from others contributed to his accomplishments. Moving forward, Aidyn can begin to work on how he can be a valuable support to others and help them reach their own goals.

Science

Cheyenne is:

- Curious and a hard worker
- Able to make keen observations and predictions
- Able to use strong planning skills to design their own inquiry

Cheyenne continues to need support in understanding and evaluating information, such as comparing data from a variety of sources. Cheyenne is good at advocating for their own needs, and by continuing to ask for help and getting more experience interpreting graphs, they will begin to build their ability to evaluate information.

Core French

Quinn:

- Is very engaged and actively participates in our everyday French language routines
- Can respond appropriately to simple commands and instructions
- Continues to develop in their comprehension of both written and spoken French language.

Quinn has a strong vocabulary that they can use, along with more exposure and practice, to build their comprehension.