

Statement By Education Minister Kathleen Wynne On New Fall Progress Report Card

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For years, educators and parents have agreed that six to eight weeks into the school year was too early to grade students. And during the past two years, education experts have been looking at ways to improve reporting to parents.

The fall Progress Report Card will facilitate better communication among parents, teachers and students by assessing students early in the school year in a new format. It will evaluate students in the same areas as the report card but instead of assigning a grade or mark, it will indicate how a student is progressing -- very well, well or with difficulty.

We know that parents want clear and understandable information about how their child is doing early in the school year. And this new Progress Report Card means that parents and teachers can work together to help children better succeed in school.

This Progress Report Card is mandatory and counts towards the student's overall assessment. It is also essential in making the fall parent-teacher interview more meaningful and relevant.

The new Progress Report Card has been tested in pilot projects in 60 schools and nine school boards. The results of these pilots have confirmed that a redesigned fall Progress Report Card will benefit students, parents, teachers and principals.

The Progress Report Card will be introduced in the 2010-11 school year. More information is available on the ministry's website (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca>.)

Questions and Answers:

Progress Report Card

For the past decade, elementary teachers used a provincial report card three times per year. Why has the government changed policy so that teachers now use a progress report card in the fall and a provincial report card two times per year?

Our goal is to provide students with the best education possible and achieve the high standards we have set for literacy and numeracy. We believe that clear and well-timed communication among teachers, parents and students about student achievement encourages students to set goals for learning, assists parents in supporting learning at home and helps teachers establish plans for teaching.

For several years, the government has heard from education stakeholders that the methods teachers use to communicate with parents about the achievement of their children in the elementary grades could be improved. We believe that our new policy which introduces a fall progress report card and a revised provincial elementary report card will improve the methods teachers use for communicating with parents.

What features of the fall progress report card make it better than using the current provincial report card in the fall?

The fall progress report card has several features that will facilitate better communication among parents, teachers, and students, encourage students to set goals, assist parents in supporting learning at home, and help teachers establish plans for teaching.

The fall progress report card places a strong emphasis on the development of students' learning skills and work habits. Students' achievement of six learning skills and habits will be shown on the front page of the progress report card. These are: (1) Responsibility, (2) Organization, (3) Independent Work, (4) Collaboration, (5) Initiative, and (6) Self-Regulation. The development of these skills and habits will be reported as "excellent", "good", "satisfactory" or "needs improvement" and a large space is provided for teacher comments about students' strengths and areas for improvement.

Ministry policy places an emphasis on teachers using the progress report card to conduct rich discussions and proactive interviews or conferences with parents and/or students in the fall to help establish a positive tone for the remainder of the year. In addition, spaces are provided on the progress report card for individual board design to reflect local conferencing/interviewing practices, vision statements, or other information about the school community.

The fall progress report card indicates for parents how well their children are progressing in all the subjects and provides an early indication of those subjects where the student may need additional help. For each subject, teachers will check whether the students are: (1) Progressing With Difficulty, (2) Progressing Well, or (3) Progressing Very Well.

Why are there no grades or marks for the subjects on the progress report card?

Early in the fall, students have just begun their learning in the subjects and teachers do not have substantial evidence to accurately assign a grade or mark. However, in the fall, teachers do have enough information to report to parents whether or not they are making progress.

Will students' progress report cards be stored in the students' Ontario Student Records?

Yes. The progress report cards as well as the provincial report cards provide important information about student achievement and will be stored in the OSR's.

May teachers communicate to parents about the achievement of their children in ways other than the mandated progress report card and report cards?

Yes. Although there are three formal reporting periods, ministry policy states that communication with parents and students about student achievement should be continuous throughout the year, by means such as parent-teacher or parent-teacher-student conferences, portfolios of student work, student-led conferences, interviews, phone calls, checklists, and informal reports.

What processes did the government use to make these changes to the provincial report card policy?

In 2007, the Ministry of Education initiated a pilot project to improve methods for communicating meaningful information to parents about the achievement of their children in elementary schools. Nine boards (including both English- and French-language) and 60 schools participated. The educators and parents in these schools developed and pilot tested a total of 19 progress reports cards and an external research team gathered feedback about them from teachers, parents, students, and principals. A draft progress report card was then developed based on the positive features of the 19 formats pilot tested.