



**GROWING SUCCESS POLICY  
WORKGROUP REPORT**

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**A Resource for Local Leaders to  
Assist in the Implementation of  
*Growing Success***

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The Ministry of Education released the *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools, First Edition, Covering Grades 1 to 12* policy document on April 22, 2010 and an electronic copy of the document can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/growSuccess.pdf>

The *Growing Success* document, according to the introduction on page 2, “updates, clarifies, coordinates, and consolidates the various aspects of the policy” and is “intended to ensure that policy is clear, consistent, and well aligned across panels, and across school boards and schools.” “The policy outlined in this document is designed to move us closer to fairness, transparency, and equity, as well as consistent practice” and “successful implementation of policy depends on the professional judgement of educators at all levels, as well as on educators’ ability to work together.”

The Ministry acknowledges that “the needs and circumstances of individual boards vary widely” (p. 2) so boards have some flexibility to develop guidelines and implementation strategies that “should always be developed in collaboration with all the schools in the board, and in consultation with the school community”. The board assessment, evaluation, and reporting guidelines and practices must respect the parameters provided in the *Growing Success* policy document and be consistently applied across the board.

All boards will be required to develop their own policies pertaining to the following issues:

- i. “The *lower limit* of the range of percentage marks below 50 per cent that teachers may record on the report cards of students in Grades 9 to 12.” (p. 41)
- ii. School board policies on cheating and plagiarism for students in Grades 1 to 12.
- iii. School board policies relating to late and missed assignments for evaluation for students in Grades 7 to 12.

In order to provide some context for the OSSTF/FEESO position on the content of board policies it is important to identify the assessment, evaluation, and reporting rights and responsibilities that teachers have as described in the Ministry policy document *Growing Success*. **Teachers’ rights will be indicated in BOLD in the document.**

1. **Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers in *Growing Success* Chapter 1: Fundamental Principles:**

The *Growing Success* policy document has references to the professional judgement of teachers threaded all the way through the document and the Ministry provides the following definition of professional judgement:

“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.” (p. 152)

The initial reference to the professional judgement of teachers is made in Chapter 1: Fundamental Principles in the *Growing Success* policy document. **“Teachers’ professional judgements are at the heart of effective assessment, evaluation, and reporting [AE&R] of student achievement.” (p. 8)** The AE&R practices and procedures of teachers must respect the Seven Fundamental Principles in order to ensure that AE&R are “valid and reliable, and that they lead to the improvement of learning for all students.” (p. 6) The Seven Fundamental Principles, from page 6 of the *Growing Success* policy document, state that teachers will use AE&R practices and procedures that:

- are fair, transparent, and equitable for all students;
- support all students, including those with special education needs, those who are learning the language of instruction (English or French), and those who are First Nation, Métis, or Inuit;
- are carefully planned to relate to the curriculum expectations and learning goals and, as much as possible, to the interests, learning styles and preferences, needs, and experiences of all students;
- are communicated clearly to students and parents at the beginning of the school year or course and at other appropriate points throughout the school year or course;
- are ongoing, varied in nature, and administered over a period of time to provide multiple opportunities for students to demonstrate the full range of their learning;
- provide ongoing descriptive feedback that is clear, specific, meaningful, and timely to support improved learning and achievement;
- develop students’ self-assessment skills to enable them to assess their own learning, set specific goals, and plan next steps for their learning.

Respecting the Seven Fundamental Principles of AE&R is the prime responsibility of all teachers and the rest of the *Growing Success* policy document clarifies this responsibility. The document also provides teachers with clear examples of rights they have when it comes to choosing how they will apply their own AE&R practices and procedures in their classrooms. The Ministry has provided a balanced approach to the rights and responsibilities and it is imperative that local school boards and schools do not limit those rights.

2. Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers in *Growing Success* Chapter 2: Learning Skills and Work Habits in Grades 1 to 12 :

Teachers have a responsibility to separate, to the extent possible, the evaluation of learning skills and work habits from the evaluation of the student's level of achievement of the overall curriculum expectations

Teachers are expected to work with students to help them develop the following learning skills and work habits: Responsibility, Organization, Independent Work, Collaboration, Initiative, and Self-regulation. **The sample behaviours for each Learning Skills and Work Habits provided in the chart on page 11 of *Growing Success* “are intended to assist *but not restrict* teachers in their efforts to help students become effective learners, and will look different at the various grade levels.”**

3. Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers in *Growing Success* Chapter 3: Performance Standards – the Achievement Chart:

“The Ontario curriculum for Grades 1 to 12 comprises *content standards* and *performance standards*. Assessment and evaluation will be based on *both* {emphasis added} the content standards and the performance standards.” (p. 16 of *Growing Success*)

The content standards are the overall and specific curriculum expectations for every course and this represents the mandated curriculum. The performance standards are presented in the achievement chart that appears in the curriculum documents. “The achievement chart ... is a standard province-wide guide and is to be used by all teachers as a framework within which to assess and evaluate student achievement of the expectations in the particular subject.” (p. 16 of *Growing Success*)

The commonalities of all achievement charts from Grades 1 to 12 are the:

- Categories of Knowledge and Skills which are Knowledge and Understanding, Thinking, Communication, and Application.
- Four levels of achievement (Level 1 to 4) which provides a continuum of achievement relative to the provincial standard of Level 3.
- Criteria which are the subsets of knowledge and skills for each category.
- Descriptors which indicate the characteristics of the student's performance and include specific qualifiers such as limited, some,

considerable, and thorough/a high degree of to indicate the student's level of achievement.

“The four categories [of knowledge and skills] should be considered as interrelated, reflecting the wholeness and interconnectedness of learning.” (p. 17 of *Growing Success*)

“In all subjects and courses, students should be given numerous and varied opportunities to demonstrate the full extent of their achievement of the curriculum expectations across all four categories of knowledge and skills.” (p. 17 of *Growing Success*)

“Teachers will ensure that student learning is assessed and evaluated in a balanced manner with respect to the four categories, and that achievement of particular expectations is considered within the appropriate categories.” (p. 17 of *Growing Success*) The use of the term “balanced” means that all four of the categories need to be part of instruction, assessment, and evaluation for each course but **that the relative weighting of each of the categories may vary based on “the emphasis accorded to them in the curriculum expectations for the subject or course, and in instructional practice.”** (p. 17 of *Growing Success*)

The Ministry has not prescribed the weighting for each of the four categories for each of the subject areas and courses. It has not directed boards and schools to develop guidelines on this issue either. When dealing with boards and schools trying to implement the AE&R policies in *Growing Success* it is important to remember the importance of the professional judgement of teachers and the goal of the Ministry to achieve a greater level of consistency in AE&R practices and procedures between boards and within boards.

The achievement chart and the mandated curriculum ensure that students are assessed and evaluated based on a common performance standard for all students in the province. The move to criterion-referenced assessment and evaluation ensures greater consistency and fairness for students. The norm-referenced model used in the past had a goal of ranking students and to ensure a smooth bell-curve distribution of student marks within a class. A norm-referenced assessment and evaluation model is unfair to students since the performance standard is a moving target based on the students in a particular class at any given time.

4. **Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers in *Growing Success* Chapter 4: Assessment FOR Learning and AS Learning :**

“The primary purpose of assessment is to improve student learning.” (p. 28 of *Growing Success*)

Assessment FOR learning occurs when the teacher provides descriptive feedback to students after gathering assessment information, using a variety of methods, to inform students how well they are achieving the curriculum expectations in a course.

Assessment AS learning occurs when a teacher helps students develop their abilities to be independent learners and to reflect on their own learning.

Both types of assessment are inter-related and have essential steps that are listed on pages 28-29 in the Ministry policy document *Growing Success*.

Teachers need to:

- plan assessment concurrently and integrate it seamlessly with instruction;
- share learning goals and success criteria with students at the outset of learning to ensure that students and teachers have a common and shared understanding of these goals and criteria as learning progresses;
- gather information about student learning before, during, and at or near the end of a period of instruction, using a variety of assessment strategies and tools;
- use assessment to inform instruction, guide next steps, and help students monitor their progress towards achieving their learning goals;
- analyse and interpret evidence of learning;
- give and receive specific and timely descriptive feedback about student learning; and
- help students to develop skills of peer and self-assessment.

The list of steps provided in this section complement the Seven Guiding Principles of AE&R and clarifies the definition of the Professional Judgement of Teachers.

5. **Rights and Responsibilities of Teachers in *Growing Success* Chapter 5: Evaluation:**

“Evaluation [Assessment OF Learning] refers to the process of judging the quality of student learning on the basis of established performance standards [overall curriculum expectations and the achievement chart] and assigning a value to represent that quality.” (p. 38 of *Growing Success*)

“For Grades 1 to 12, all [overall and specific] curriculum expectations must be accounted for in instruction and assessment but *evaluation focuses on students’ achievement of the overall expectations.*” (p. 38 of *Growing Success*)

**“Teachers will use their professional judgement to determine which specific expectations should be used to evaluate achievement of the overall expectations, and which ones [specific curriculum expectations] will be accounted for in instruction and assessment but not necessarily evaluated.”** (p. 38 of *Growing Success*)

Teachers should use multiple and different sources of evidence of student achievement for evaluation over time to increase the reliability and validity of the evaluation of student learning. The three different sources that can be used are: observations, conversations, and student products. Student products may be in the form of tests, exams, and/or assignments for evaluation such as rich performance tasks, demonstrations, projects, and/or essays. In order to ensure equity for all students the student products collected over time should be completed, whenever possible, under the supervision of a teacher.

“Ongoing homework that students do to consolidate their knowledge and skills or to prepare for the next class” (p. 39 of *Growing Success*) must not be included as evidence of student achievement for evaluation.

Group projects may be included as evidence of student achievement for evaluation if, and only if, “each student’s work within the group project is evaluated independently and assigned an individual mark, as opposed to a common group mark.” (p. 39 of *Growing Success*)

Peer and self-assessment must not be included in the evidence of student achievement for evaluation since the evaluation of student learning is the responsibility of the teacher.

The following extract from page 39 of *Growing Success*

### **Determining a Report Card Grade: Grades 1 to 12**

Teachers will take various considerations into account before making a decision about the grade to be entered on the report card. The teacher will consider all evidence collected through observations, conversations, and student products (tests/exams, assignments for evaluation). The teacher will consider the evidence for all the tests/exams and assignments for evaluation that the student has completed or submitted, the number of tests/exams or assignments for evaluation that were not completed or submitted, and the

evidence of achievement that is available for each overall expectation for a subject in a particular grade or course. In addition, the teacher will consider that some evidence carries greater weight than other evidence; for example, some performance tasks are richer and reveal more about students' skills and knowledge than others. Teachers will weigh all evidence of student achievement in light of these considerations and will use their professional judgement to determine the student's report card grade. The report card grade represents a student's achievement of overall curriculum expectations, as demonstrated to that point in time. (p. 39 of *Growing Success*)

There is a need to move away from using computers which calculate a student's mark based on the parameters entered into the program to generate a neatly quantifiable result because "assessment is closer to an art than a science. It is, after all, an exercise in human communication." (p. 29 of *Growing Success*) **Determining a report grade will involve teachers' professional judgement and interpretation of evidence** and should reflect the student's most consistent level of achievement, with special consideration given to more recent evidence." (p. 39 of *Growing Success*)

"For Grades 9 to 12, teachers will use percentage marks to indicate achievement below 50 per cent." (p. 41 of *Growing Success*) A conversion chart is provided on page 40 of *Growing Success* that shows how the four levels of achievement are aligned to percentage marks for Grades 7 to 12. The Ministry has directed individual school boards to work collaboratively with their school communities to determine the lower limit of the range of percentage marks below 50 per cent that teachers may record on the progress and final report cards of students in Grades 9 to 12. The Ministry is requiring that a consistent approach be adopted among all the schools within a particular school board. (p. 41)

**OSSTF/FEESO's Recommendation for Board Guidelines dealing with the Lower Limit of Percentage Marks on Provincial Report Cards:**

*In order to provide a true indication of a student's level of achievement of the overall curriculum expectations that falls below Level 1 (below 50 per cent), a mark range of 0 to 49 per cent will be recorded on the two mandated Ontario Provincial Report Cards for Grades 9 – 12. Teachers will use their professional judgement and take various considerations into account before making a decision about the grade to be entered on the report card. The report card grade will represent a student's achievement of overall curriculum expectations, as demonstrated to that point in time and should reflect the student's most consistent level of achievement, with special consideration given to more recent evidence submitted by the student and evaluated by the teacher.*

## Students' Responsibilities With Respect to Evidence for Evaluation

“It must be made clear to students that they are responsible for providing evidence of their learning within established timelines, and that there are consequences for cheating, plagiarizing, not completing work, and submitting work late.” (p. 42 in *Growing Success*)

“For Grades 1 to 10, the code “I” may be used in a mark book and/or on a student’s report card, including the final report card, to indicate that insufficient evidence is available to determine a letter grade or percentage mark.” (p. 42 in *Growing Success*)

**Teachers will use their professional judgement to determine when it is appropriate to use an “I” on a report card and when this course of action is in the best interest of the student.**

For students in Grades 9 and 10, an “I” on a final report card indicates that a credit has not been earned. **Students who receive an “I” may be considered for credit recovery but “these are cases where, in the professional judgement of the teacher, evidence of achievement is available for at least a few overall expectations, on the basis of which it is possible to identify the remaining expectations that must be addressed and to design a credit recovery program.”** (p. 42 in *Growing Success*)

The Ministry clearly states that students are responsible for their behaviour in the classroom and school as well as providing, to their teachers, the evidence of their achievement of the overall curriculum expectations in a form that is approved and within the time lines established by the teacher. If students do not live up to this expectation then there will be consequences for submitting late assignments or not completing assignments for evaluation. **“Where in the teacher’s professional judgement it is appropriate to do so, a number of strategies may be used to help prevent and/or address late and missed assignments.”** (p. 43 in *Growing Success*)

The list of 17 strategies on page 43 of *Growing Success* begins with the teacher asking the student to clarify why they did not complete the assignment and ending with the statement **“deducting marks for late assignments, *up to and including the full value of the assignment.*”** The italicized section was added to the statement a few days after the *Growing Success* document was released on April 22, 2010. The Ministry also added the following paragraph: **“The professional judgement of the teacher, acting within the policies and guidelines established by the ministry and board, is critical in determining the strategy that will most benefit student learning”** (p. 46 of *Growing Success*) to the context section of this chapter. The addition of that last paragraph to the context section for late and missed assignments on pages 45 – 46 in *Growing Success* indicates that the **Ministry has confidence in**

the professional judgement of teachers and that teachers are the ones that are best suited to determine if marks should be deducted for late assignments and that a mark of zero could be assigned to work that is not submitted for evaluation. This is a right that cannot be taken away from teachers.

**OSSTF/FEESO’s Recommendation for Board Guidelines dealing with the Late and Missed Assignments:** (p. 44 in *Growing Success*)

- i. All Board guidelines must emphasize the responsibility of students to provide evidence of their achievement of the overall curriculum expectations within the time frame specified by the teacher, and in a form approved by the teacher. Students must understand that there will be consequences, such as the deduction of marks up to and including the full value of the assignment, for not completing assignments for evaluation or for submitting those assignments late.
- ii. Board late and missed assignment guidelines should only apply to assignments that will be evaluated and considered by the teacher as being part of the final grade of the student. Any assignments that are assessed FOR and/or AS learning and not handed in should be reflected in the Learning Skills and Work Habits section of the report card and not in the final grade.
- iii. Boards and schools should use a differentiated communication strategy to inform students, parents, all board employees, and community partners of the board’s guidelines for dealing with late and missed assignments. Potential strategies to inform all stakeholders could be standardized course templates, school newsletters, student assemblies, Grade 9 parents’ night handout, school and board websites, and a common page for the student agenda for all schools.
- iv. The teacher’s professional judgement must be integral at each step of the board’s guidelines.
- v. The list of strategies on page 43 of *Growing Success* should not be seen as a complete checklist of interventions that must be done before marks are deducted for late and missed assignments. Teachers will use the appropriate strategies, based on their professional judgement, to help students provide the required evidence of their achievement of the overall course expectations. The deduction of marks should not be the first strategy considered but it

does not need to be the last one used either. The list on page 43 should only be referenced in the board's guidelines in order to prevent the board from making changes to the text that could restrain the rights of teachers.

- vi. To reduce the number of late and missed assignments and to ensure equity for all students, assignments for evaluation and tests or exams should be completed under the supervision of the teacher.
- vii. Students should be given numerous and varied opportunities to demonstrate the full extent of their achievement of the overall curriculum expectations across all four categories of knowledge and skills. Teachers will use their professional judgement to determine a student's report card grade by taking into consideration the student's most consistent level of achievement, with special consideration given to more recent evidence. If a student chooses not to submit an assignment for evaluation or submits it late the teacher will take that decision into consideration and weigh all of the evidence of student achievement to determine the student's report card grade which will not misrepresent the student's actual level of achievement for the course.
- viii. Teachers have collected evidence from observations, conversations, and student products for evaluation of student achievement for each of the overall curriculum expectations in a course and will weigh each of the data points in order to determine the final grade for each student. Students are measured to the same provincial standard on the same overall curriculum expectations but teachers differentiate their instruction for students therefore they should be able to differentiate how the final mark is determined. The use of computer programs to generate a student mark can easily remove the human factor that is integral to assessment and evaluation practices. Assessment is more an art than a science so an overreliance on a mathematical formula to determine a student's grade is neither reliable nor valid.

### **Cheating and Plagiarism:**

Cheating and plagiarism should be dealt with very similarly to late and missed assignments. If a student cheats or plagiarizes then they are not providing the evidence of their achievement of the overall curriculum expectations for a course. Just like late and missed assignments there are consequences for not providing the required evidence of achievement in a timely manner.

**OSSTF/FEESO’s Recommendation for Board Guidelines dealing with the Cheating and Plagiarism:** (p. 42-43 in *Growing Success*)

- i. All Board guidelines must emphasize the responsibility of students to provide evidence of their achievement of the overall curriculum expectations within the time frame specified by the teacher, and in a form approved by the teacher. Students must understand that there will be consequences, such as the deduction of marks up to and including the full value of the assignment, for cheating or plagiarizing. It is the student’s responsibility not to cheat or plagiarize.
- ii. Board cheating and plagiarism guidelines should only apply to assignments that will be evaluated and considered by the teacher as being part of the final grade of the student. Any assignments that are plagiarized and being assessed FOR and/or AS learning should be reflected in the Learning Skills and Work Habits section of the report card and not in the final grade.
- iii. Boards and schools should use a differentiated communication strategy to inform students, parents, all board employees, and community partners of the board’s guidelines for dealing with cheating and plagiarism. The board must use a consistent definition of plagiarism such as the definition contained in the Glossary section on page 151 of *Growing Success*. The different types of plagiarism such as complete plagiarism, near-complete plagiarism, patchwork plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and paraphrasing without providing citations must be explained to students in an age and grade level appropriate manner. Boards must develop the necessary resources for all students to help them understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it when providing evidence of student achievement.
- iv. Students will be required to sign an agreement where they acknowledge that they have been informed by the teacher of the definition and examples of plagiarism, that they understand that if they submit a plagiarized assignment they may receive a mark of zero for the assignment, that if they have any questions about avoiding plagiarism that they can approach the teacher, that they know where they can get information about citations and other tools to avoid plagiarism, that they acknowledge academic dishonesty is unacceptable,

and that they are responsible to provide proof, upon request, of the progress of their work and research.

- v. Students in all grades will be informed of what plagiarism is and teachers will use their professional judgement on how to best deal with suspected cases of plagiarism and cheating by using strategies that will most benefit student learning.
- vi. The teacher's professional judgement must be integral at each step of the board's guidelines. The plagiarism and cheating guideline will reflect a continuum of behavioural and academic responses and consequences based on the grade level of the student, the maturity of the student, the number and frequency of incidents, and the individual circumstances of the student.
- vii. The list of strategies on page 43 of *Growing Success* to deal with late and missed assignments can be a list of potential strategies teachers can use to deal with cheating and plagiarism. Teachers will use the appropriate strategies, based on their professional judgement, to help students provide the required evidence of their achievement of the overall course expectations. The deduction of marks should not be the first strategy considered but it does not need to be the last one used either. The list on page 43 should only be referenced in the board's guidelines in order to prevent the board from making changes to the text that could restrain the rights of teachers.
- viii. To reduce the number of plagiarized assignments and to ensure equity for all students, assignments for evaluation and tests or exams should be completed under the supervision of the teacher. Cheating can be significantly reduced if electronic devices are not allowed in classes in order to avoid activities such as texting answers within the classroom and having tests photographed and then emailed to other students in other classes, schools, or even boards.
- ix. Teachers will use their professional judgement to determine a student's report card grade by taking into consideration the student's most consistent level of achievement, with special consideration given to more recent evidence. If a student chooses to submit a plagiarized assignment for evaluation and the teacher determines it is plagiarized then the teacher will take into consideration this factor and weigh all of the evidence of student achievement to determine the student's report card grade which will not misrepresent the student's actual level of achievement for the course. The act of plagiarism

and/or cheating may be reflected in the evaluation of Learning Skills and Work Habits.

- x. Teachers have collected evidence from observations, conversations, and student products for evaluation of student achievement for each of the overall curriculum expectations in a course and will weigh each of the data points in order to determine the final grade for each student. Students are measured to the same provincial standard on the same overall curriculum expectations but teachers differentiate their instruction for students therefore they should be able to differentiate how the final mark is determined. Assessment is more an art than a science so an overreliance on a mathematical formula which does not take into consideration all factors that teachers, in their professional judgement, should take into account when determining a student's grade is not fair, reliable, or valid. The use of mark book printouts, when required by principals to communicate to students and parents about the level of student achievement, should be limited since it promotes the idea of students working for marks and not to be life-long learners.

The Ministry has consulted extensively with all stakeholders, including all of the Affiliates, in the 2 year evolution of AE&R policies contained in the *Growing Success* document. The document provides a sound foundation for respecting the professional judgement of teachers and helping ensure that assessment, evaluation, and reporting practices are fair to all students. Local Boards need to respect the work that has gone into this document and work with their communities, including the local OSSTF/FEESO leadership, to develop AE&R guidelines that respect our members' professional judgement. If you have any questions or comments about this resource or any other concerns about AE&R issues, please do not hesitate to contact Marc Robillard at [robillm@osstf.on.ca](mailto:robillm@osstf.on.ca) or at 416.751.8300 Ext. 225 or 1.800.267.7867 Ext. 225