

Landscape for Educators: Approaching the Initial Observations and Communication of Learning

“The Initial Observations report is designed to identify and describe the child’s learning during the fall of the school year and to provide parents with clear, detailed, and straightforward information about their child’s learning, growth in learning, and next steps in learning in relation to the overall expectations in the Kindergarten Program (2016). In Kindergarten, examples of learning from classroom documentation should be used to provide evidence of the child’s learning in a play environment. These rich examples can be a starting point for discussion with parents about the child’s learning as it relates to the program expectations.

~Growing Success Kindergarten Addendum, p. 19

This document is intended to provide resources for educators to help support and shape thinking about Initial Observations and Communication of Learning comments. The links to the documents and resources below will be helpful to review.

- [Growing Success: The Kindergarten Addendum](#)
- [The Kindergarten Program 2016](#) - p.308 Appendices
- [Communicating with Parents About Children’s Learning: A Guide for Kindergarten Educators Draft](#)
- [Full-Day Kindergarten: Understanding Your Child’s Reports](#) *Note this is being provided to schools for inclusion in the envelopes with Initial Observations

Guidelines and Tips for Initial Observations:

- Identify a core set of OEs to focus on for the first few months of school
- May gravitate to certain frames that reflect the happenings and experiences for this time of year
- Observe and document from this lens
- Consider how each child is responding within those OEs
- Remember the importance of the asset lens - this is building a relationship with families and showing them that you know and care for their child
- Start with a positive and welcoming statement about the child
- Follow the success criteria of key learning, growth in learning, and next steps
- Next step should be linked to the preceding comments, but it may also serve to integrate with another frame (for example, if sharing key learning and growth in learning from an experience building and creating structures, the next step may be to extend communication through writing)

The following Initial Observation comments are samples that have been provided to educators to help frame thinking and support writing. These are **not exemplars**, but *samples*. As we are developing our understanding and familiarity with this reporting tool, the belief is that the provision of samples will help develop our facility with writing comments and the flexibility to evolve. These comments were developed from a variety of focus groups of AMDSB educators and represent profiles of different learners in JK/SK.

The colour coding represents Key Learning, Growth in Learning, and Next Steps.

Red: Key Learning

Green: Growth in Learning

Blue: Next Steps in Learning

Brian brings a quiet and gentle demeanor to our classroom community. He is becoming more comfortable as **he enters the room more willingly than at the start of school**. Brian completes his morning jobs by handing in his zip-lock and putting on his indoor shoes independently. **Brian responds to his classmates and teachers using non-verbal cues, such as nodding his head and pointing to where he would like to explore**. At the beginning of school, he would take on an observer role, watching his classmates carefully before attempting interactions. **Now we have noticed growth in his desire and ability to interact with his classmates**. He enjoyed lining up the jungle animals with his peers and using eye contact and facial gestures to express himself. **As a next step, we will encourage Brian to use verbal communication during interactions with others and build confidence to express his ideas**.

Alex demonstrates a willingness to try new experiences. He chose to construct several letters of the alphabet with our Letter Construction set. **We have noticed growth in his desire to select and persist with things that are challenging and to experiment more with writing**. After making a pumpkin craft, he copied the title, "1 Little Pumpkin" from his classmate's paper. He was challenged to create his own poem about his pumpkin. Although he was hesitant at first, he described three sentences about his pumpkin. Alex worked with the educator to stretch out the sounds he heard in the words and print the letters he knew. He was very proud of his poem and was thrilled to have his name entered in the school Literacy Whiz draw for his accomplishment. **As a next step, we will encourage Alex to use classroom resources, such as the alphabet cards and word wall, to further support his writing and develop his letter/sound recognition**.

Cody enters the classroom full of enthusiasm and eager to play each day. He particularly likes playing in the building area and enjoys using the magnetic tiles to make spaceships. He is able to build and **create elaborate structures** on his own, but he also will choose to **collaborate with his classmates**. **Cody has demonstrated growth in his awareness of social skills used in play**. Earlier in the year, he would become frustrated and react over turn taking with the building materials, but he **is now learning that there are many ways to solve social problems, such as offering a trade, or waiting his turn**. We all can continue to help Cody use these strategies when problem solving in social situations by reminding him to “take a breath” or to offer a trade.

Brianna shows creativity and originality. She enjoys playing at our production centre, **where she explores with a variety of materials and tools to create wonderful works of art**. She shows respect for the environment by reusing and recycling the resources in the classroom. Earlier in the year, Brianna would often sit and watch the other children play; **now she feels more comfortable to join in the conversation and contribute her ideas for play in both small and larger groups**. We are supporting Brianna with **questions to ask herself in order to consider others’ viewpoints during difficult social interactions with her classmates**. We will remind Brianna to use her first strategy - a kind voice - when solving problems with her classmates.

Brandon is an adventurous and energetic class member. He dedicates great attention and focus on the creations he builds in the block and lego areas. **He discusses his design process and provides suggestions to others who are also building complex structures**. He has been working hard at **regulating and communicating his reactions to frustration**. At the beginning of the year, transitions such as clean up time, were frustrating for him. Together, we developed steps and strategies to help him transition between activities, and **he has recently shown growth in his ability to follow routines with less direct support**. For instance, using visual schedules, he can transition through his morning routine almost independently- hanging up his coat, signing in and finding a tabletop activity. As the year progresses, **we will add new strategies to help Brandon when he is problem solving with his classmates, such as expressing his feelings with words**.

Julianna has brought creativity and energy to the dramatic play area as she enacts caretaking scenarios with the pets and the dolls. She begins her day by seeking a warm welcome interaction with the educators. Together, we have been working with Julianna to better **communicate her emotions and regulate her reactions to new or challenging situations**. At the beginning of the year, Julianna wept or withdrew when faced with a new or uncomfortable situation, seeking comfort in quiet areas of the classroom. **Now, she has developed some strategies to calm herself, and is becoming more accepting of being patient to wait for things she wants or to solve problems.** **As she continues to try new things and build relationships with her classmates, we will share strategies with Julianna to help her describe and name her emotions.**

Tim greets his day in a cheerful and assured manner. **He approaches learning activities with confidence and gathers the learning materials he needs to support his inquiry.** He especially enjoys nature with a focus on animals. One morning he was teaching a group of children the life cycle of a monarch butterfly with visual aids he found in the classroom. His ideas were accurate but he was hesitant to be recorded. Once made comfortable, his explanation was detailed and sequential, and we were able to share with a larger group. He seeks out science activities in the classroom and eagerly talks about the facts he knows with familiar classmates. **Earlier in the year, he was hesitant to share his ideas with others, but recently he brought in a grasshopper and crickets to share with the whole group. In discussing his knowledge of insects, W explained the habitat he created for them.** **We will support Tim to continue to share his knowledge with children he is less familiar with as he builds relationships with new classmates.**

During play, Tim often chooses to build with big blocks using his imagination to create a variety of structures. Tim initiated an idea of creating a tree house and worked **collaboratively** with a group of peers. He lead the group and **listened to the ideas of others**. He came up with an idea to add a window. After trying various arrangements with the big blocks, **he sought advice to improve the design.** With educator encouragement, he added to the group drawing of the treehouse, but was hesitant to use print. **We will help Tim use some strategies to 'stretch out the sounds' in his writing.**

Tim independently handles his personal needs. He manages his own belongings and remembers morning routines like unpacking his backpack, signing in and going to community gathering time at the carpet. During eating times, he is **making healthier food choices in response to reminders and is learning to clean up his space when he is finished.** **We will encourage Tim to drink more water throughout the day.** **He independently dresses and undresses for the outdoors.** He often seeks to be first in the line, **so he is using visual aids to help him make choices about personal space and turn taking.** **We can continue to develop his awareness in this respect, in a variety of places and situations like the gym, outdoors, or bus time, and at home.**

