

My Mom is a Soldier - Facilitator's Guide -

Activities and Discussion Prompts for Educators,
Support Workers and Military Family Resource
Centres.

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My Mom is a Soldier



Written by Shawn Belisle
Illustrations by Donald V. Belisle



National Défense
Defence nationale



Canada

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Introduction

This facilitator's guide was created for educators, military families, support agencies, and all personnel involved in supporting children with deployed parents. It has been created using the experiences of military families, support agencies and educators. This guide is ideal for information pertaining to children between the ages of 3-8 years old. Using this guide will help explore the feelings that are associated with having a loved one away for a deployment or extended period of time.

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How to Use This Guide

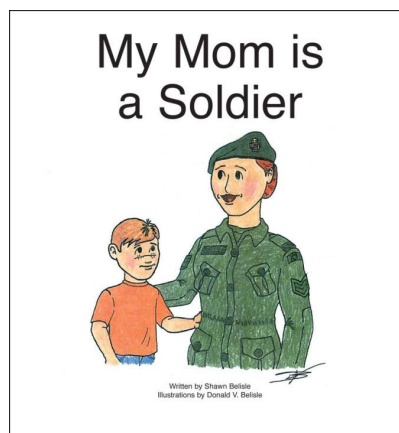
Educators & Support Staff:

The activities were designed to integrate easily into a school curriculum. You can choose one or several of the activities to facilitate discussion and enhance the learning of children 3-8 years old.

Canadian/Military Family Resource Centre (C/MFRC) / Other Support Agencies:

This guide was created to provide you with ready-to-use ideas related to the story *My Mom is a Soldier*. You can choose one or several of the activities to support children 3-8 years old. Some suggested examples to utilize this guide would be:

- *Pre-Teen Mentoring/Homework Clubs* could use the activities to encourage Canadian Forces (CF) youth and children to discuss the military lifestyle.
- *Information and Referral Coordinators and Prevention Support and Intervention Coordinators* could use activities to provide families with tools or as one of the group activities on a “family day”.
- *Other community agencies/organizations (ex. Big Brothers / Big Sisters or Scouts/Guides, etc.)* may find the resource useful to coordinate activities to support children of CF families in your community.



Moving in the Canadian Forces

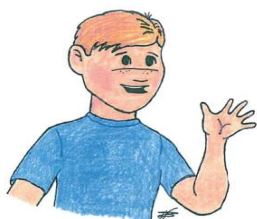
- CF personnel are proud to serve Canada by defending its values, interests and sovereignty at home and abroad. CF personnel belong to air, land, sea and/or special operations components. There are approximately 62 000 Regular Force members and 25 000 Reserve Force members, including 4000 Canadian Rangers.
- Frequent relocations are a reality of military life and may contribute to a sense of isolation and lack of belonging to a community. The C/MFRC mission is to promote and foster the welfare, well-being and quality of life of CF families through various programs and services. Find out more about the C/MFRCs at: www.cfpsa.com/dmfs.



Pre-Reading

Pre-Reading Brainstorming:
(Activating prior knowledge or experience)

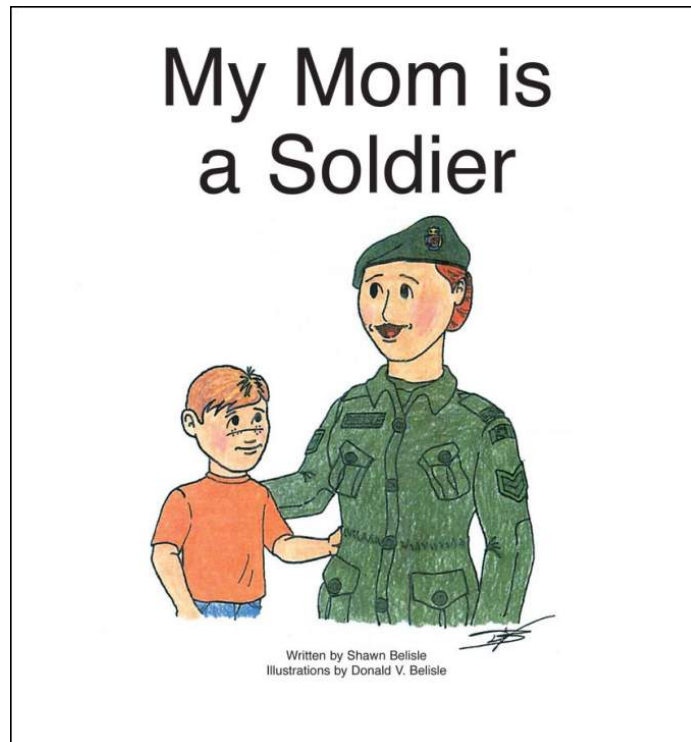
- How many times have you moved?
- Where are some of the places you have lived?
- How many places/cities/countries have you lived in?
- What are some of the reasons that families have to move?
- What is a soldier, sailor, airman and airwomen?
- What jobs do your parents do?
- Where is Borden, Yellowknife, Esquimalt?
- Would you like to move? Do you like to move? Why or why not?
- What do you think the book is going to be about based on the cover?
- What does your Mom and Dad do?
- What do you think the best things about moving are?
- What would be a hard thing about moving (posted)?
- Have you ever changed schools? What was good about it? What was hard about it?
- What would be good about having a Mom who is a soldier?
- What are some things that make you nervous, happy or scared?
- What are some adventures you have been on with your family?
- What do you think the advantages and disadvantages of being new at a school would be?
- Do you find it hard to meet new people? What makes it easier? What makes it harder?
- What makes you worry?



Pre-Reading Activities:

- Get a map of Canada and mark the different cities/towns that students have lived in.
- Use a world map to mark different countries students have lived in (if necessary).
- Using the appendix, create a story web about what make your town or city unique and different than other places. (see appendix)
- Give each students a map of Canada to mark where they live.
- Using chart paper, write all of the different types of work that their Moms or Dads do.
- Ask students to show what they look like when they are nervous or scared.
- Get students to talk about what makes them nervous or scared and some things that they do to help them feel less so.
- Make a list of things that you worry about and another about things you don't worry about. (see appendix)
- Make a list on chart paper of things you would have to pack or take with you if you moved..
- Cut out pictures from magazines or students could bring in a picture of their parent at work or going to work and make a giant collage.
- Have students trace their body on brown paper, then take their magazine cuttings and glue them to their outlays to be able to present who they are to their classmates.

- Chart paper and markers
- Mini cards (appendix)
- Book *My Mom is a Soldier* (Download a copy [here](#) or order free copy for each student from local C/MFRC www.cfpsa.com/dmfs).
- Post-it notes
- Flip-chart
- Crayons and paper
- Create ‘pros and cons’ chart
- Reproducible sheets (see appendix)
- Poster paper for collage
- Glue
- Scissors



Reading

Active Listening/Checking for Understanding:

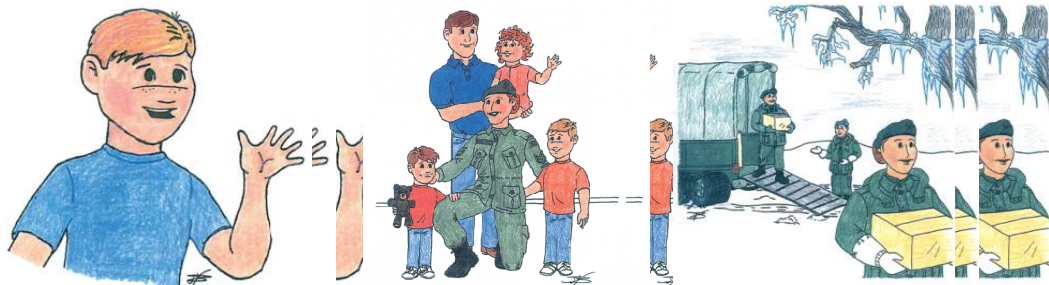
(Making judgments, perspective, making connections and recounting/retelling)

Questions to consider:

- Where is Borden, Ontario? Where do we live?
- How many people are in Robby's family?
- Where did Robby's family used to live?
- Why did they move?
- Where did they move?
- Why was Robby scared?
- When do you get scared?
- When you are upset or scared what do you do?
- Who comforts you when you are scared or worried?
- Have you ever moved?
- How do you make new friends?
- If you were moving what would you not be willing to leave behind?
- When a new student comes to our class how do we greet them? What do you do to make them feel less scared and more comfortable?
- What types of adventures have you been on with your family?
- What parts of Canada have you seen?
- Have you ever taken a trip that took eight days of driving to get there?
- What were some of the things that Robby liked about his new house?
- Who did Robby meet when he moved into his new house?
- Have you ever traveled to see friends and family in another city, province or country? What was it like? How did you get there?
- What are all the different ways you can travel from one place to another?
- What is in your community that you like to do?

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- What types of routines does your family have before and after school?
- What are some of your favourite things to do with your family?
- Have your parents ever gone away? Have they traveled for work?
- What are some things that you miss when your parents are away?
- Who takes care of you when your parents are away? What is good about it and what is not so good?
- How is Robby’s Mom’s job like your parent’s job?
- What types of jobs does a soldier do?
- What types of things do soldiers do to help people?
- What are some other jobs which help people in our community?
- What do you want to be when you are older?

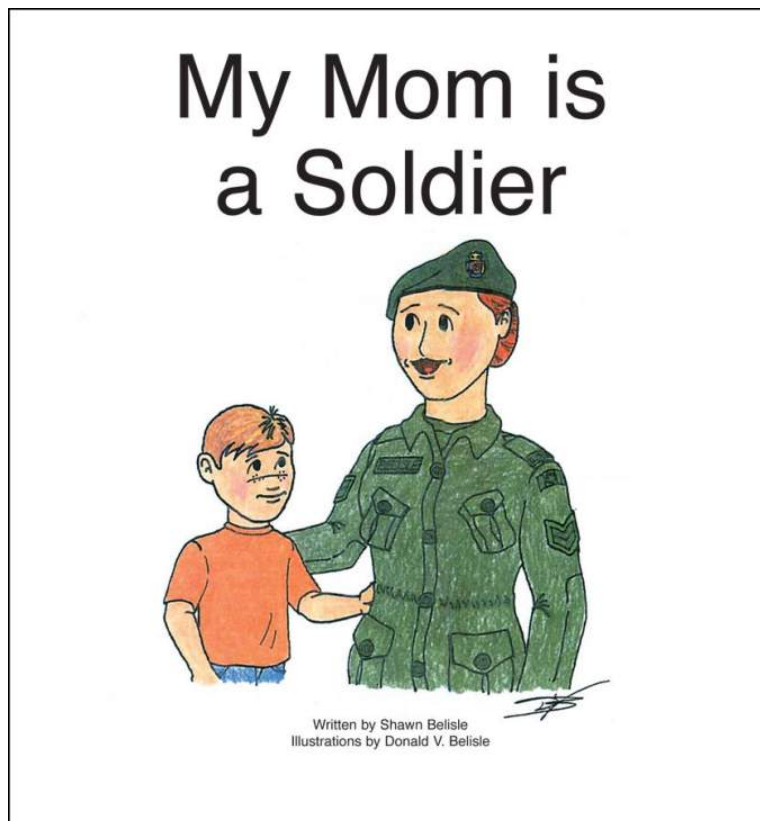


Reading Activities:

- Choose a few questions from the previous list that you could ask while reading the book to verify students' understanding.
- Put difficult vocabulary/words students may be unfamiliar with on different pieces of chart paper, to see if the words are in context they can understand them better.
- Do an “agree/disagree” activity with students to reduce the time they are simply sitting. Ask students questions like: if they would be alright with their parent leaving for a couple of weeks or moving somewhere else. Ask student to go and stand under either the agree or disagree sign and then ask some of them to explain their choices.
- Stop momentarily at page 1 and ask students to trace Robby's journey across Canada with their finger on the map.
- Stop momentarily at page 3 and ask students to predict what some of Robby's feelings and reactions might be after he hears he is moving.
- Stop at page 19 and have students talk about how it would feel to have a parent go away, even when it is for a good reason.
- Show students one page of the book and ask them to write the following one. The next day the students can then share with their classmates what they wrote and will hear the actual story to the end.
- Ask students to show how they would react if Robby was a new student in their class – how they would help him feel more comfortable, what they would say and what they would do to welcome him (role playing).

Suggested Materials:

- Book “My Mom is a Soldier” (Download a copy [here](#) or order a free copy for each student from the local C/MFRC www.cfpsa.com/dmfs).
- Markers
- Paper
- Scanned picture page with some lines beneath (one for each student)
- Chart paper with unfamiliar words
- Map, pins and highlighter (to mark where Robby used to live, highlight his journey and another pin to mark where he is now)



Post Reading

Demonstrating Knowledge and Understanding

(Writing, role playing, dramatizing, recounting/retelling, perspective, journaling)

Summarizing Activities:

Have the students...

- Recount their favourite part in the story.
- Write in their journals what they learned from the story, what they would want to do if they were moving, and what they would pack up. (see appendix page 18)
- Complete an exit card before leaving about what they would like to know more about after reading the story. (see appendix page 20)
- Draw their favourite part of the story.
- Complete a comparison chart about what Robby’s experiences were and how the student thinks they would react in the same situation. (see appendix page 25)
- Receive a strip of paper summarizing a section of the story and they have to get themselves in order.
- Create a class manual for new students with tips, instructions and ideas for making their first weeks at school more fun.
- Make a journal about a time they went to visit grandparents, family or friends.
- Write about another adventure that Robby might have.
- Create another page of the book using the blank page at the back or inserting a page somewhere to give more details or create another ending.
- Place pins on places/countries on the world map where they have lived.
- Meet with you in small groups to read sections of the book or focus on words.
- Use the blank page at the back of the book to draw a picture of what they will look like when they are older and what they want to be.

Extension of Themes Activities:

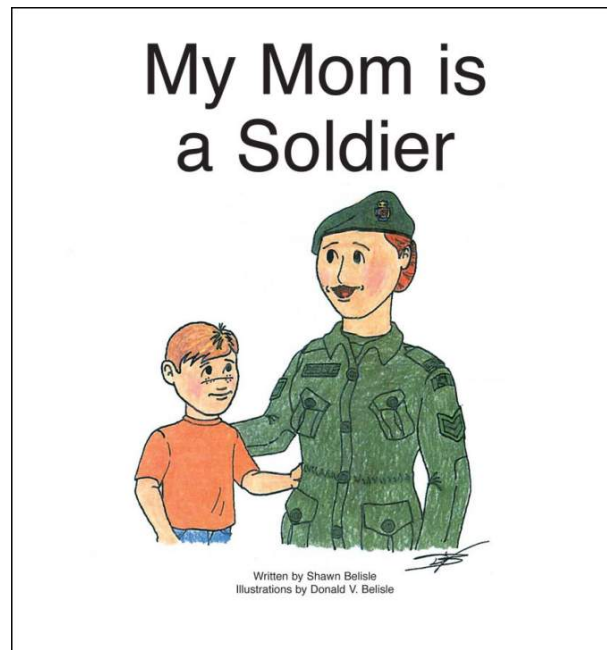
- Discuss what to do when your parents tell you something that makes you sad or scared.
- Create a class top ten list of coping strategies for when you are sad or scared (see appendix page 19).
- Have students write a letter to their parents or draw a picture telling them about the book they read and have them come up with questions they would like to ask their parents about the jobs they do.
- Create a worry tree – individually students share with the facilitator a worry or write it down. It is then tied to the ‘worry tree’ (plant pot with aquarium rocks and a stick with multiple branches). The tree is then brought out each week and you take another worry off the tree and the class talks about that particular worry and ways to find solace or comfort. The worry is then put on a ‘Working Our Worries Out’ wall. After posting the worry you can attach pictures or words to the different suggestions students have provided. (see appendix page 17)
- Have a CF personnel or military parent (or a couple of different CF personnel from different units), fireman, police officer, nurse, doctor, member of C/MFRC, etc. come in and talk about how they help others (ex. Ice Storm, Tsunami efforts, building roads, providing food and water, deployment support groups, medical care, etc.)
- Have students from older grades (if you have any) or from other schools come and talk about their experiences on having to move or having their parent away and the things that they did to make it easier
- Have reading buddies come and read other stories about parents leaving their children, worries, fears, starting a new school, absence, journeys, etc.

Such as:

Goodbye House by: Frank Asch.	0-3 years
The Berenstain Bears' Moving Day by: Stan Berenstain	3-7 years
Who Will be My Friends by: Syd Hoff	4-6 years
A Tiger called Thomas by: Charlotte Zolotow	4-6 years
Boomer’s Big Day by Constance W. McGeorge	6-10 years

Suggested Materials:

- Sample journal pages
- Pencil
- Paper
- Map of Canada
- World Map
- Bulletin Board
- ‘Worry Tree’ (pot with aquarium rocks and a stick with multiple branches)
- Crayons, markers, pencil crayons, paint
- Chart paper
- Selected words for focus available for everyone to see (chart paper, handout, etc.)
- Book “My Mom is a Soldier” (Download a copy [here](#) or order free copy for each student from local C/MFRC www.cfpsa.com/dmfs).
- Reproducible



Facilitator Activities and Tools: Worry Tree Cards

<p>Today I am worried about ...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Today I am worried about...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Today I am worried about...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Today I am worried about...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>Today I am worried about...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>Today I am worried about...</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Top Ten Things To Do When You Are Scared!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

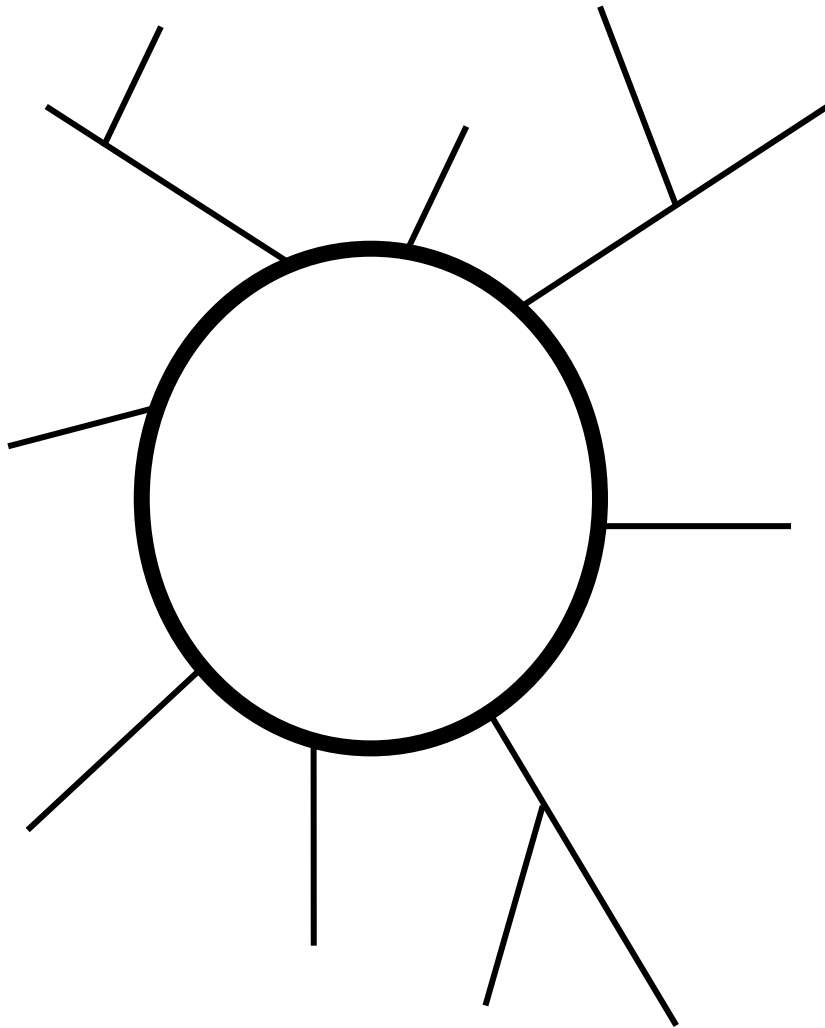
By: _____

Exit Cards

Name: _____ I would like to know more about... _____ _____ _____	Name: _____ I would like to know more about... _____ _____ _____
Name: _____ I would like to know more about... _____ _____ _____	Name: _____ I would like to know more about... _____ _____ _____
Name: _____ I would like to know more about... _____ _____ _____	Name: _____ I would like to know more about... _____ _____ _____

Story Web

- Insert the name of your town or city in the centre of the web
- Use the branches of the web to brainstorm all of the things that make your town special



By: _____

Story Strips

Hi! My name is Robby. I live at Canadian Forces Base Borden. I live here with my brother Stephen, my sister Jennifer, my Dad and my Mom. My Mom is a soldier. We didn't always live here. We used to live in Victoria, British Columbia.

One day my Mom and Dad told me that we were going to move to a new house far away. I was a little bit scared. I didn't want to leave my house or my friends or my Grandma and Grandpa.

My Mom told me that I should be excited because I was very lucky. Since she is in the military, we were going to move to different cities all over Canada.

It would be a big adventure! We would see different places and meet all kinds of people. Maybe some of them would be my new friends.

A few weeks later some men came and packed up all my toys and things and put them on a big truck. Our whole house was empty!

I had to say goodbye to my best friend Stirling. I cried, and wanted him to come with me. My Mom said that we would come back and visit him.

It took a long time to get to our new house. We stopped and visited my Grandma and Grandpa on their farm. We stayed in hotels that had pools so we could go swimming. It seemed like we were driving forever! My Mom said that it took eight days.

When I saw our new house I was excited. It was bigger than our old house and we had a big tree in the front yard.

There is a boy the same age as me that lives behind us. His name is Kyle and he is my new best friend. Sometimes I still miss my other house and my other friends.

My Mom says the best thing about having friends far away is that you get to go and visit them.

The last time we visited my friend Stirling and my Grandma and Grandpa, I got to travel on a bus and then on an airplane.

I am glad my Mom is in the Forces and we live on a military base. There is a bowling alley, a movie theatre and even McDonalds!

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Every year there is a Christmas party for us kids at the Military Family Resource Centre. Santa flies down in a helicopter to talk to us and give us treats. It is really cool!

My Mom works a lot. She goes to work almost every day. She makes my breakfast in the morning before she goes and gives me a hug and kiss goodbye. When my Mom is gone, my Dad takes care of me and my brother and sister. We play games, do crafts, or watch movies. Sometimes my Mom calls me on the phone to see how I am doing.

When my Mom comes home at night I am glad. Sometimes I wish my Mom didn’t have to go to work because I miss her. When she’s home we do lots of fun stuff. We go sledding; grocery shopping or take walks to the park. Sometimes I even help my Mom make cookies.

One time my Mom left for two weeks. She said she wouldn’t be home to read my bedtime story or tuck me in at night because she was going to Quebec. It was very cold there and some people didn’t have food or electricity. I worried something bad would happen to her. She told me that she was going there to help; because that’s what CF personnel do they help people.

While my Mom was gone, I did a lot of neat things with my Dad. He took me to playschool and the library. We visited with my friends and played outside. My Dad made supper everyday. We ate a lot of pizza!

I was happy when my Mom came home. She said she missed me and my brother and sister very much while she was gone. She said that maybe some day she’ll have to go away again but I know she’ll be helping people, maybe even little kids like me. I know my Mom will be alright but I will still miss her.

When I grow up I want to help people too. The police help people, and firefighters too, and so does my Mom, because my Mom is a soldier.

What Would You Do?

Name: _____

<i>Happened to Robby</i>	<i>How I would react.</i>
Robby found out he was going to move	_____ _____ _____
Robby had to say good-bye to friends and his grandparents.	_____ _____ _____
Robby had to make new friends and live in a new house.	_____ _____ _____
Robby’s Mom went away for a couple of weeks.	_____ _____ _____

Making Comparisons

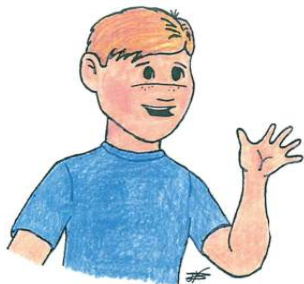
Name: _____

Things I worry about	Things I don't worry about

Achievement Charts

Knowledge and Understanding

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Level 1</i>	<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Level 3</i>	<i>Level 4</i>
Knowledge of content	Limited knowledge of _____	Some knowledge of _____	Considerable knowledge of _____	Thorough knowledge of _____
Understanding of content	Limited understanding of _____	Some understanding of _____	Considerable understanding of _____	Thorough understanding of _____



Achievement Charts

Thinking

Criteria	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Use of planning skills	Is able to with limited effectiveness	Is able to with some effectiveness	Is able to with considerable effectiveness	Is able to with a high degree of effectiveness
Use of processing skills	Uses processing skills to with limited effectiveness	Uses processing skills to with some effectiveness	Uses processing skills to with considerable effectiveness	Uses processing skills to with a high degree effectiveness
Use of critical/creative thinking processes	Uses critical/creative thinking processes to with limited effectiveness	Uses critical/creative thinking processes to with some effectiveness	Uses critical/creative thinking processes to with considerable effectiveness	Uses critical/creative thinking processes to with a high degree of effectiveness

Achievement Charts

Communication

Criteria	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Expression and organization of ideas and information	Expresses and organizes ideas and information when	Expresses and organizes ideas and information when	Expresses and organizes ideas and information when	Expresses and organizes ideas and information when
	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Communication for different audiences and purposes	Communicates for	Communicates for	Communicates for	Communicates for
	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with limited high degree of effectiveness
Use of conventions, vocabulary, and terminology of the discipline in oral, visual, and written forms, including media forms	Uses conventions, vocabulary, and terminology with limited effectiveness such as	Uses conventions, vocabulary, and terminology with some effectiveness such as	Uses conventions, vocabulary, and terminology with considerable effectiveness such as	Uses conventions, vocabulary, and terminology with a high degree of effectiveness such as

Achievement Charts

Application

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Level 1</i>	<i>Level 2</i>	<i>Level 3</i>	<i>Level 4</i>
Application of knowledge and skills in familiar contexts	Applies _____ _____ _____ _____	Applies _____ _____ _____ _____	Applies _____ _____ _____ _____	Applies _____ _____ _____ _____
	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Transfer of knowledge and skills	Transfers knowledge and skills to new contexts by _____ _____	Transfers knowledge and skills to new contexts by _____ _____	Transfers knowledge and skills to new contexts by _____ _____	Transfers knowledge and skills to new contexts by _____ _____
	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness
Making connections within and between various contexts	Makes connections within and between _____ _____	Makes connections within and between _____ _____	Makes connections within and between _____ _____	Makes connections within and between _____ _____
	with limited effectiveness	with some effectiveness	with considerable effectiveness	with a high degree of effectiveness

*Adapted from Revised Ontario Language Curriculum Document 2006

