

How to Write ELDA Observation Comments That Actually Mean Something to Parents

A practical guide for South African
preschool and ECD teachers.

Stop Writing the Rating in the Comment Box

The Compass vs. The Footprints



THE RATING (NS / D / A)

The compass. It tells the parent exactly where the child is on the NCF scale.



THE COMMENT

The footprint. It shows the parent the actual steps the child took. The observable evidence.

Writing 'Sipho has achieved this skill' tells the parent nothing new.
The comment must add professional evidence.

The 60-Second Observation Formula

1. Context

Where and when did you observe this? Anchors the comment in real daily interaction. (e.g., 'During outdoor play...')

2. Behavior

What the child specifically did or said. Quote them directly if possible. (e.g., 'Placed three blocks and said 'look'...')

3. Demonstration

A brief, simple link to the ELDA skill. No technical jargon. (e.g., 'This shows emerging pattern recognition.')

4. Next Step

Practical encouragement or a home activity. Essential for NS and D ratings. (e.g., 'At home, practice counting stairs.')

Anatomy of a Perfect 'D' Rating

[Context]

[Behavior]

During our morning ring activity, Amahle sorted her counting blocks into two colour groups but needed a prompt for a third. This shows she is developing sorting skills. At home, practice sorting washing together.

[Demonstration]

[Next Step]

ELDA Quick Reference: Well-being & Identity



Well-being (The Key ELDA)

NS: ...has not yet independently managed belongings. We are gently encouraging...

D: ...beginning to wash hands independently. With a reminder, he completes...

A: ...consistently follows safety routines. Reminded a friend not to run...



Identity & Belonging

NS: ...watches with interest, but has not yet initiated joining in. We are creating safe...

D: ...beginning to express preferences clearly. "I want to do painting because..."

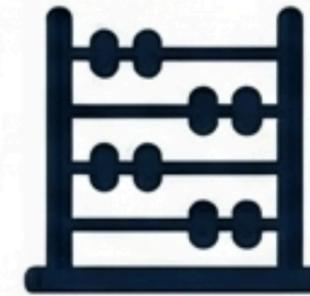
A: ...confidently shares stories about family. Celebrates what makes him different...

ELDA Quick Reference: Communication & Mathematics



Communication

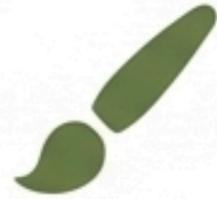
- NS:** ...does not yet follow multistep instructions. We are using picture cues...
-
- D:** ...using 3-4-word sentences. Described construction: 'big one, small one, fall down'...
-
- A:** ...participates actively. Negotiates with peers: 'I was using that, but you can have it after...'



Exploring Mathematics

- NS:** ...does not yet identify numerals 1-5. We are weaving counting into daily routines...
-
- D:** ...can sort by one attribute. Correctly grouped by colour but needed support for size...
-
- A:** ...counted all 12 classmates correctly. Uses more/less language accurately...

ELDA Quick Reference: Creativity & Knowledge



Creativity

NS: ...watches with genuine interest, but has not initiated. We are offering open-ended materials...

D: ...using paints with clear purpose. Named what she drew: "That's my dog, he's orange..."

A: ...dramatic play with remarkable detail. Set up a shop with handwritten labels...



Knowledge of the World

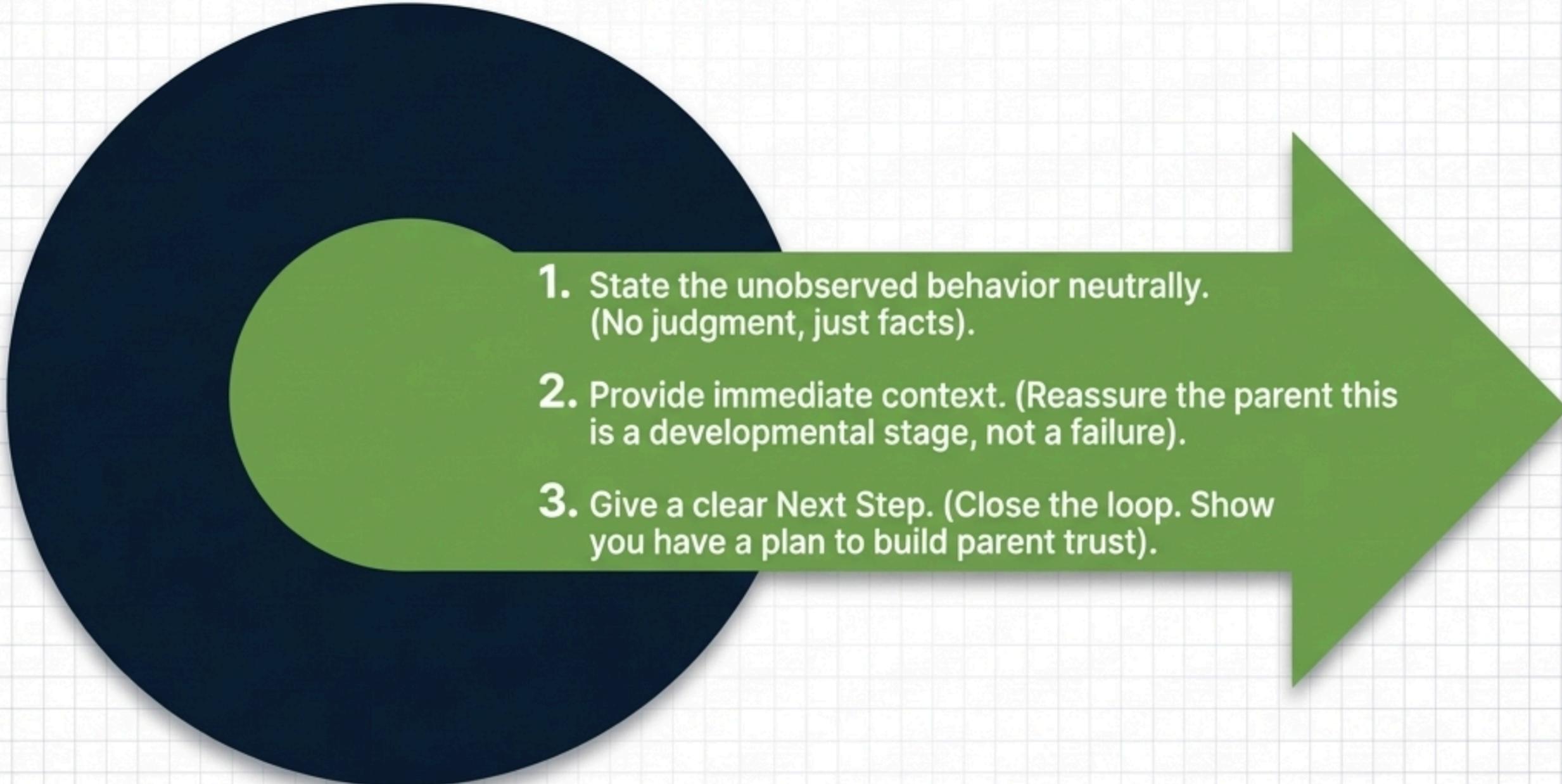
NS: ...not yet engaging in a structured way. Introducing open-ended questions to spark curiosity...

D: ...noticed a plant wilted and asked why. Beginning to connect cause and effect...

A: ...consistently asks "why". Compared a wet and dry sponge, predicting what happens...

Never Leave an 'NS' Rating Blank

A blank "Not Shown" creates instant panic. A professional NS comment must always accomplish three things:

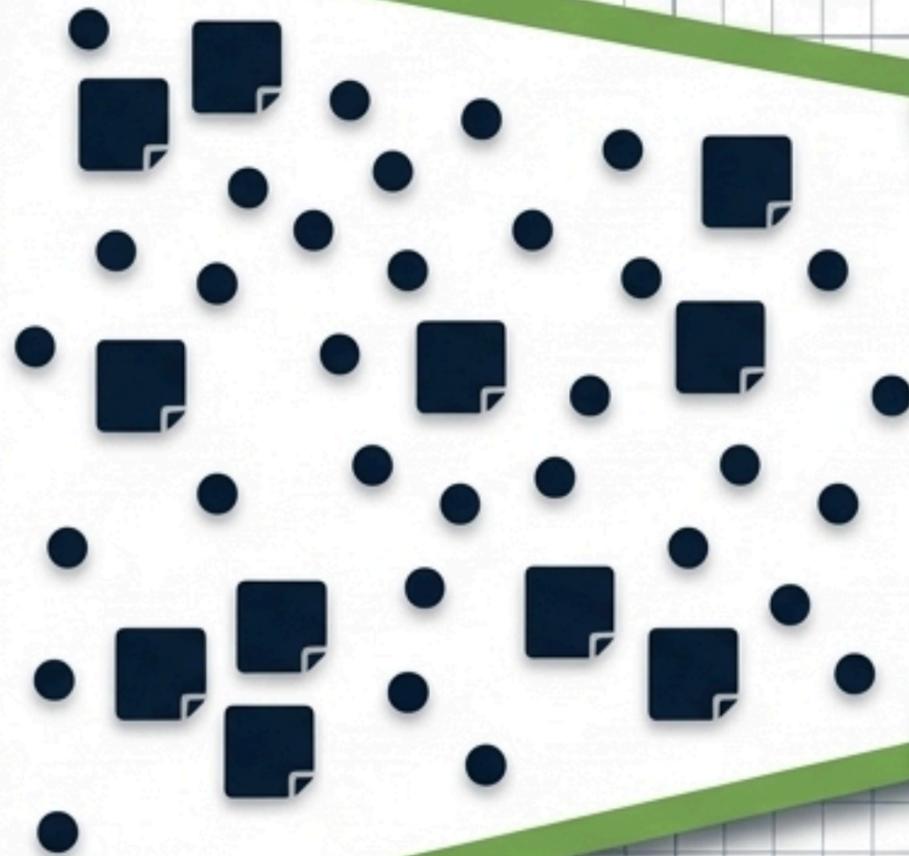
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- 1.** State the unobserved behavior neutrally. (No judgment, just facts).
 - 2.** Provide immediate context. (Reassure the parent this is a developmental stage, not a failure).
 - 3.** Give a clear Next Step. (Close the loop. Show you have a plan to build parent trust).

The Comment Diagnostic Matrix

Red Flags (The Mistake)	Green Flags (The Fix)
Vague Praise: “Amahle is a joy to teach and shows great enthusiasm.”	Specific Evidence: “Amahle sorted her counting blocks into two colour groups with confidence.”
Interpreting Feelings: “Liam seems unhappy during group work.”	Stating Behavior: “Liam moved to the edge of the group during the circle activity.”
Copy-Pasting: Identical comments across multiple children’s reports.	Individualization: Direct quotes from the child that could only apply to them.
Dead Ends: Leaving the next step blank for NS and D ratings.	Actionable Tips: Providing a specific, easy home activity to reinforce the skill.

Scale & Sanity: Managing 492 Skills

Observe Ongoing



Record small notes weekly (Weeks 1-10). Don't cram at the end.

Domain-Level Writing



Group 2-3 related skills into one flowing sentence per domain. You don't need 492 separate comments.

Start Strong

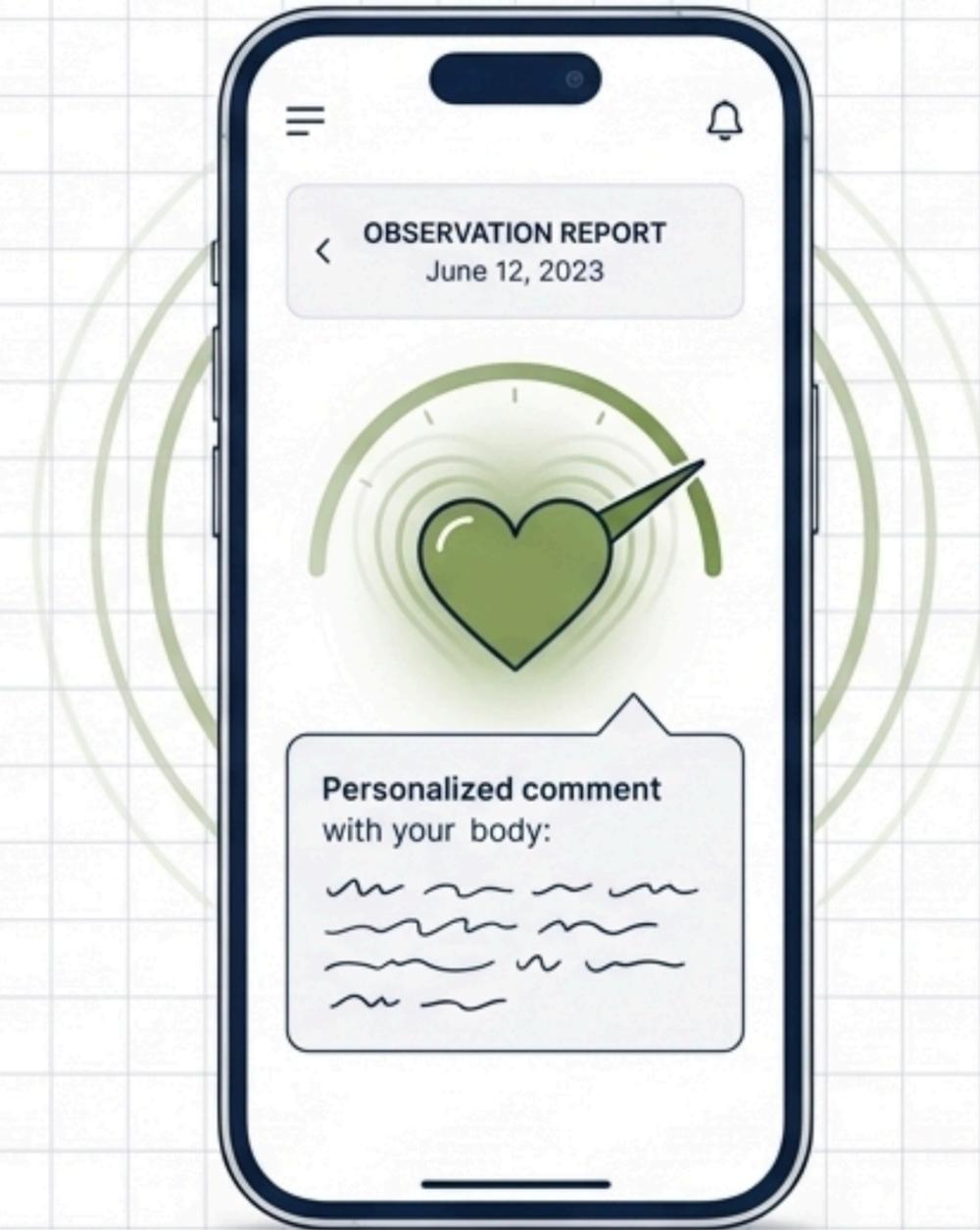


Write for the kids you know best first. This builds momentum.

Beyond Compliance: The Parent Impact

A good ELDA comment isn't just an administrative requirement—it is the foundation of connection.

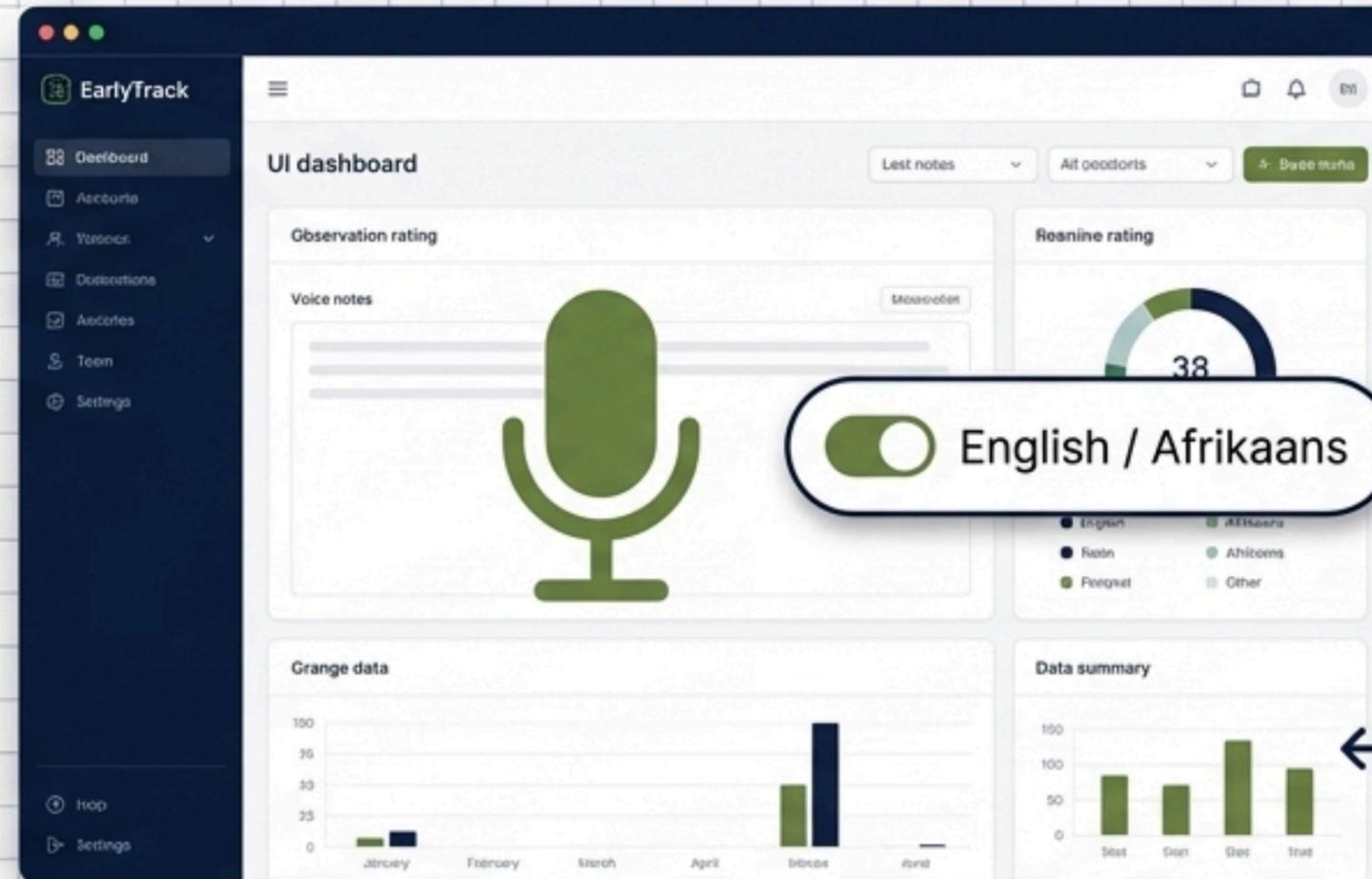
When a parent reads specific, evidence-based comments, they feel seen. The NCF assessment does more than track milestones; it builds deep school trust and shapes exactly how a parent supports their child's development for years to come.



Trust Meter: Maximize Connection

Replace the Blank Page at 10 PM

EarlyTrack's AI observation generator is built specifically for the South African ELDA framework. You provide the rating and voice notes; the AI drafts the contextual, age-appropriate comment.



Contextual AI drafting
(English & Afrikaans)

Voice-to-text daily
observation capture

Built-in Principal
approval workflows

Start your free 14-day trial today. Generate professional, NCF-aligned reports in a fraction of the time.