



Revised 2008

Ontario  
College of  
Teachers  
Foundations  
of Professional  
Practice



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# The Foundations of Professional Practice

The Ontario College of Teachers' *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession*, *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* and *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession* form the *Foundations of Professional Practice*. They outline the principles of ethical behaviour, professional practice and ongoing learning for the teaching profession in Ontario.

## Introduction

The standards describe what it means to be a member of the teaching profession in Ontario and reflect widely shared beliefs within the profession. They articulate the goals and aspirations of a teaching profession dedicated to fostering student learning and preparing Ontario students to participate in a democratic society. College members use the standards to reflect on their own development as teaching professionals and inform their practice and ongoing learning choices.

The standards acknowledge the contributions the profession makes to Ontario society. They convey to the public the commitment that College members make to students, the teaching profession and society.

The standards and the *Professional Learning Framework* are based on the premise that teachers move through a variety of career stages that will influence the multiple ways teachers live out the standards in their professional practice. All College members should be able to see the work they do described in the standards.

Throughout their careers, College members engage in a variety of formal and informal professional learning experiences that reflect the standards. All teachers – beginning teachers, experienced teachers, principals, supervisory officers, teacher educators and teacher leaders – engage in professional learning appropriate to their interests, needs, perspectives and responsibilities.

To ensure that the *Foundations of Professional Practice* reflect a shared understanding between the profession and the society it serves, the standards were developed and reviewed through extensive consultation and research with College members, educational partners and the public. The standards will be reviewed periodically to enable them to continue to reflect the evolving practices and aspirations of the teaching profession in Ontario. The College is committed to the ongoing development of the teaching profession.



## Self-Regulation and Standards

A self-regulatory body must articulate the values, professional knowledge and skills inherent in the profession it regulates.

The *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* describe the professional beliefs and values that guide the decision-making and professional actions of College members in their professional roles and relationships. The four ethical standards – **Care, Respect, Trust** and **Integrity** – establish the core ethics of teaching and are implicit in the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*.

The five interdependent domains of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* – **Commitment to Students and Student Learning, Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, Leadership in Learning Communities** and **Ongoing Professional Learning** – describe the continuum of knowledge, skills and professional practices of College members.

The *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession* presents a variety of ways College members may pursue opportunities for ongoing professional learning. This framework identifies accredited pre-service and in-service programs of professional teacher education designed to reflect the ethical standards and standards of practice as well as a wide range of other opportunities for professional growth and development.

The standards are not intended to be the criteria for the ongoing performance appraisal of individual College members. Performance appraisal remains the responsibility of employers, who apply the criteria by which teaching performance is assessed. In publicly funded systems, this responsibility is outlined in the *Education Act* and *Regulation 99/02, Teacher Performance Appraisal* under this Act.







# The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession

The *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* represent a vision of professional practice. At the heart of a strong and effective teaching profession is a commitment to students and their learning.

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers, in their position of trust, demonstrate responsibility in their relationships with students, parents, guardians, colleagues, educational partners, other professionals, the environment and the public.

## The Purposes of the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession are:

- to inspire members to reflect and uphold the honour and dignity of the teaching profession
- to identify the ethical responsibilities and commitments in the teaching profession
- to guide ethical decisions and actions in the teaching profession
- to promote public trust and confidence in the teaching profession.



## The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession are:

### Care

The ethical standard of *Care* includes compassion, acceptance, interest and insight for developing students' potential. Members express their commitment to students' well-being and learning through positive influence, professional judgment and empathy in practice.

### Trust

The ethical standard of *Trust* embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members' professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust.

### Respect

Intrinsic to the ethical standard of *Respect* are trust and fair-mindedness. Members honour human dignity, emotional wellness and cognitive development. In their professional practice, they model respect for spiritual and cultural values, social justice, confidentiality, freedom, democracy and the environment.

### Integrity

Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of *Integrity*. Continual reflection assists members in exercising integrity in their professional commitments and responsibilities.





# The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

*The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* provide a framework of principles that describes the knowledge, skills, and values inherent in Ontario's teaching profession. These standards articulate the goals and aspirations of the profession. These standards convey a collective vision of professionalism that guides the daily practices of members of the Ontario College of Teachers.

## The Purposes of the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession are:

- to inspire a shared vision for the teaching profession
- to identify the values, knowledge and skills that are distinctive to the teaching profession
- to guide the professional judgment and actions of the teaching profession
- to promote a common language that fosters an understanding of what it means to be a member of the teaching profession



## The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession are:

### **Commitment to Students and Student Learning**

Members are dedicated in their care and commitment to students. They treat students equitably and with respect and are sensitive to factors that influence individual student learning. Members facilitate the development of students as contributing citizens of Canadian society.

### **Leadership in Learning Communities**

Members promote and participate in the creation of collaborative, safe and supportive learning communities. They recognize their shared responsibilities and their leadership roles in order to facilitate student success. Members maintain and uphold the principles of the ethical standards in these learning communities.

### **Ongoing Professional Learning**

Members recognize that a commitment to ongoing professional learning is integral to effective practice and to student learning. Professional practice and self-directed learning are informed by experience, research, collaboration and knowledge.

### **Professional Knowledge**

Members strive to be current in their professional knowledge and recognize its relationship to practice. They understand and reflect on student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum, ethics, educational research and related policies and legislation to inform professional judgment in practice.

### **Professional Practice**

Members apply professional knowledge and experience to promote student learning. They use appropriate pedagogy, assessment and evaluation, resources and technology in planning for and responding to the needs of individual students and learning communities. Members refine their professional practice through ongoing inquiry, dialogue and reflection.





# Context for the Standards

A vision of the teaching profession is expressed through the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*. This vision is based on beliefs about professional practice, images that underline professional identity, an understanding of professional teacher education and the need for a shared responsibility in learning communities.

The statements which follow support, explain and provide context for the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*.

## Beliefs About Professional Practice

Teaching is guided by the beliefs that:

- teaching and student learning are inextricably linked
- there exists an evolving body of professional knowledge and skills distinct to the teaching profession
- teaching and leadership must be responsive to the diverse nature of Ontario's democratic society
- College members contribute to the development of professional knowledge through their collaborative practice and professional interactions
- teaching is a highly contextual and multi-dimensional profession
- ongoing and self-directed professional learning are integral to and embedded in teacher professionalism
- the knowledge, practice and leadership responsibilities of College members will evolve as teachers move through a variety of career stages.



## Professional Identity and the Standards

The ethical standards and standards of practice provide College members with guiding images that can foster a strong collective professional identity.

College members strive to be:

- caring role models and mentors committed to student success and the love of learning
- ethical decision-makers who exercise responsible, informed professional judgment
- self-directed learners who recognize that their own learning directly influences student learning
- critical and creative thinkers who work towards improving and enhancing professional practice
- collaborative partners and leaders in learning communities
- reflective and knowledgeable practitioners who inquire into and continue to refine professional practice
- responsive pedagogical leaders who are respectful of equity and diversity within Ontario's classrooms and schools.

## Professional Teacher Education and the Standards

Together, the ethical standards and the standards of practice provide the foundation for pre-service and in-service teacher education. These principles of practice are based on the premise that personal and professional growth is a developmental process.

Teacher candidates in a pre-service teacher education program pursue professional learning consistent with the standards at an appropriate level for beginning teachers.

Beginning teachers and more experienced College members who participate in Additional Qualification courses focus on particular areas of professional knowledge, skills and practice that are also based on the standards.

Candidates in the Principal's Qualification Program or the Supervisory Officer's Qualification Program engage in professional learning that applies the ethical standards and standards of practice to responsibilities inherent in school and system leadership.

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## Shared Responsibility in Learning Communities

Learning communities in classrooms, schools and educational systems across the province enable the teaching profession to pursue the goals and aspirations identified in this document.

Collaborative learning communities may be formed to include:

- school staff who plan together and inquire into student learning, select instructional materials, participate in peer coaching, pilot new initiatives or share ideas and resources
- principals, supervisory officers, directors, or teacher educators who meet regularly to discuss how to improve student learning, develop school improvement plans or enhance skills
- parents and members of the community who share their knowledge and skills with members of the profession to support classroom and school activities.

Learning communities become effective through the support and active participation of government, employers, parents, students and the Ontario public. College members believe that all educational partners and the public share a responsibility and commitment to this societal goal.

Collaborative partnerships, reflective dialogue, inquiry and self-directed learning are among the foundations of learning communities. These encourage school cultures that promote student success. Assuming collective responsibility in areas of school leadership, planning special projects, pursuing professional growth, mentoring or developing curriculum outcomes, for example, will be appropriate to the interests, needs, perspectives and the responsibilities of College members' roles.



# The Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession

Members of the College refine the knowledge, skills and values described in the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* through ongoing professional learning.

The *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession* outlines opportunities for ongoing professional learning for members. The framework provides for this growth and development through the identification of accredited pre-service and in-service programs of professional teacher education and a wide range of other learning opportunities.

## Background for the Professional Learning Framework

Professional learning may take a variety of forms. Following their pre-service training, members of the College can complete courses or programs that are identified in *Regulation 184/97, Teachers Qualifications*, made under the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*. These courses or programs are accredited by the College and offered by registered providers. They are outlined in this document. When a member successfully completes one of these courses or programs, it is recorded on the Certificate of Qualification.

Members of the College stay current and up to date in many ways beyond completing Additional Qualification courses and programs. Examples of these professional learning opportunities are identified in this document. Educators can participate in or facilitate professional development activities, mentor colleagues, join professional networks, engage in research activities, and read books and articles about educational issues.

Professional learning is at the heart of teacher professionalism. In addition to the accredited in-service programs, members of the Ontario College of Teachers engage in a wide variety of professional learning in order to improve their practice and enhance student learning. All of these opportunities are an integral part of the professional learning framework. Educators participate in learning opportunities offered by their employers, the Ministry of Education, faculties of education, professional organizations, federations and subject associations. Through this professional learning, College members demonstrate a commitment to continued professional growth.

By developing the *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession*, the Ontario College of Teachers meets its legislated mandate to “provide for the ongoing education of members of the College.” It also informs the public of the many ways educators remain knowledgeable and current.



## The Professional Learning Framework:

- acknowledges the commitment members of the teaching profession make to professional learning
- highlights a range of options to improve practice and enhance student learning
- identifies programs and professional learning activities accredited by the College
- assists members of the College to identify, collect, reflect upon and celebrate their learning experiences and accomplishments
- assures the profession and the public that College members have the opportunity through professional learning to remain current throughout their careers.

## The Professional Learning Framework Supports the Following Principles:

**The goal of professional learning is the ongoing improvement of practice.**

**Teacher learning is directly correlated to student learning.**

The professional learning framework encourages learning activities based on provincial legislation and policy, system needs, personal growth needs and student learning needs. The framework also encourages members of the College to identify and pursue their strengths and personal interests to further their professional learning.

**Standards-based professional learning provides for an integrated approach to teacher education.**

All programs and professional learning activities accredited by the College must be designed to support the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* and the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession*.

**Exemplary professional learning opportunities are based on the principles of effective learning.**

The framework takes into account individual career and personal priorities. It outlines professional learning activities that are varied, flexible and accessible to members of the College.

**Teachers plan for and reflect on their professional learning.**

Responsible lifelong learning is continuous learning that is initiated by members of the College and directed and reviewed by them on an ongoing basis.

**Learning communities enhance professional learning.**

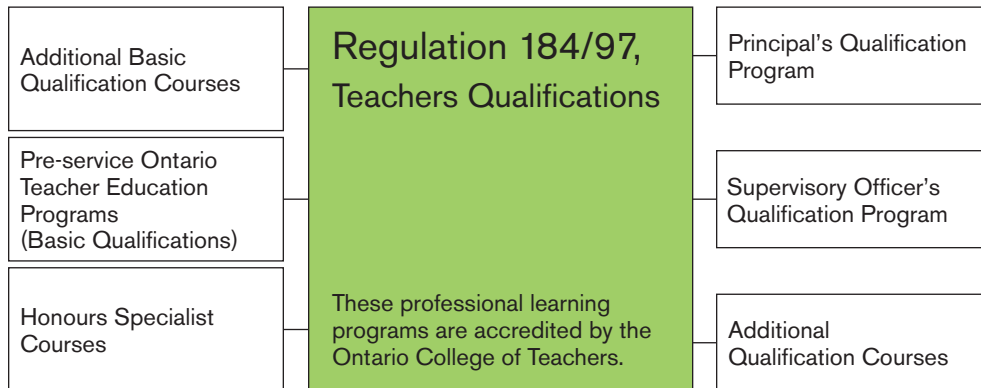
The professional learning framework encourages collaboration. It supports ongoing commitment to the improvement and currency of teaching practice as an individual and collective responsibility.

# Professional Learning Required in Legislation

## **Regulation 184/97, Teachers Qualifications**

Regulation 184/97, Teachers Qualifications made under the Ontario College of Teachers Act identifies the programs currently recognized by the Ontario College of Teachers. These include:

*Certification Programs: Regulation 184/97, Teachers Qualifications*



## Other Opportunities for Professional Growth and Development

The challenge for members of the College today is to maintain and extend their professional knowledge and skills in a rapidly changing educational environment. Educators engage in many forms of professional learning. The range of opportunities reflects the complexity of the teaching profession and identifies ways that educators remain current in their practice.

Opportunities for professional growth and development might include but are not limited to:

### **Academic Programs**

Currently the Certificate of Qualification includes only completed degree programs. Members of the Ontario College of Teachers may choose to:

- participate in programs or courses offered through universities, colleges or other institutions or organizations that do not always lead to academic degrees.

These programs may be prerequisites to enrolment in the certification programs listed in Regulation 184/97, Teachers Qualifications.

### **Research Activities**

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers may choose to:

- inquire into teaching practice
- plan and conduct research activities to enhance teaching and learning
- work collaboratively with others to contribute to the knowledge base of teaching and learning
- explore ways to access and use educational research.

### **Professional Networks**

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers may choose to:

- partner with business, industry, colleges and universities
- contribute to subject councils, the work of the federations or other professional organizations
- participate on school-based committees
- serve on a local school community committee or school council.

### **Professional Contributions**

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers may choose to:

- participate in, present at, or organize conferences, workshops and institutes
- contribute to a professional publication.

### **Mentoring and Networking**

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers may choose to:

- serve as an associate teacher
- become involved in a mentoring partnership
- learn with colleagues through co-operative planning and problem solving
- form study groups.

### **Professional Activities**

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers may choose to:

- maintain a professional portfolio
- arrange opportunities to observe exemplary practice
- stay current by reading educational books and journals
- share ideas and resources with other colleagues
- participate in curriculum writing and/or assessment projects.

### **Learning through Practice**

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers may choose to:

- develop and implement curriculum materials
- participate in school-based collaborative inquiry
- implement a new instructional or assessment strategy
- conduct and publish action research projects
- pilot new initiatives individually or with colleagues.

### **Technology and Learning**

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers may choose to:

- increase their competency in computer, telecommunication, videoconferencing, CD-ROM and videodisc technology
- join a listserv
- integrate technology into teaching practice
- enrol in a distance education program.

*Members of the Ontario College of Teachers may also choose to determine other options for learning beyond these examples.*



The Ontario College of Teachers uses the processes described in the professional learning framework to guide its consultation and research activities.

These processes were used to develop, implement and initiate the revision of the standards of practice, ethical standards and the professional learning framework. They also provide the opportunity for the accreditation of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs.



## Conclusion

The *Foundations of Professional Practice* articulates the knowledge, skills and values inherent in the ethics, the practice and the ongoing professional learning of College members.

The ethical standards, the standards of practice and the professional learning framework are interconnected. Their overarching purpose is to guide College members in their practice so they can more readily enhance student learning.

The *Foundations of Professional Practice* provides a vision for exemplary professional practice for all teachers in Ontario.

## Standards Resources

Goldblatt, P., & Smith, D. (Eds.). (2005). *Cases for teacher development: Preparing for the classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Ontario College of Teachers. (2003). *Standards in practice: Fostering professional inquiry*. [Resource kit 1]. Toronto, ON: Author.

Ontario College of Teachers. (2006). *Casebook guide for teacher education*. Toronto, ON: Author.

Ontario College of Teachers. (2006). *Living examples of the standards: Resources for the revised standards*. [Resource kit 2]. Toronto, ON: Author.

Additional information on the *Foundations of Professional Practice* is available from:

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College Council approved the revised *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the revised *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* on June 8, 2006. Council approved the *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession* in 2000.



College members use the ethical standards and the standards of practice to reflect on their own development as teaching professionals and inform their practice and ongoing learning choices.

A collective vision of the teaching profession is conveyed and guided by the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession*, the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*, and the *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession*.

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