



Ontario  
College of  
Teachers

Ordre des enseignantes  
et des enseignants  
de l'Ontario

# Essential Advice for the Teaching Profession





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# Introduction

This document contains essential information and advice for Ontario Certified Teachers that will help guide and inform your practice.

## Foundations of Professional Practice

Ethical standards, standards of practice and the professional learning framework describe what it means to be a member of the teaching profession in Ontario. 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.

## Professional Advisories

Regulatory bodies like the Ontario College of Teachers routinely issue professional advisories to respond to the professional's need to understand an aspect of professional practice, how the regulator views certain conduct, or to respond to the public's need to understand what professionals are expected and/or obligated to do.

The College has issued professional advisories on the following topics to its members:

- Professional Boundaries
- Professional Misconduct of a Sexual Nature
- Supporting Students' Mental Health
- Maintaining Professionalism — Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media
- Responding to the Bullying of Students
- Duty to Report
- Safety in Learning Environments: A Shared Responsibility
- Additional Qualifications: Extending Professional Knowledge

## Professional Misconduct Regulation

The Professional Misconduct Regulation sets out a list of acts or omissions in practice, which constitute professional misconduct for Ontario Certified Teachers.

# Foundations of Professional Practice — Your Professional Standards

Ethical standards, standards of practice and the professional learning framework describe what it means to be a member of the teaching profession in Ontario.

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.

*Foundations of Professional Practice* articulates the high standards that the teaching profession sets for educators in Ontario, bringing together three documents that form the foundation for the self-regulation of the teaching profession in Ontario: 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 five interdependent domains of the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* 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.

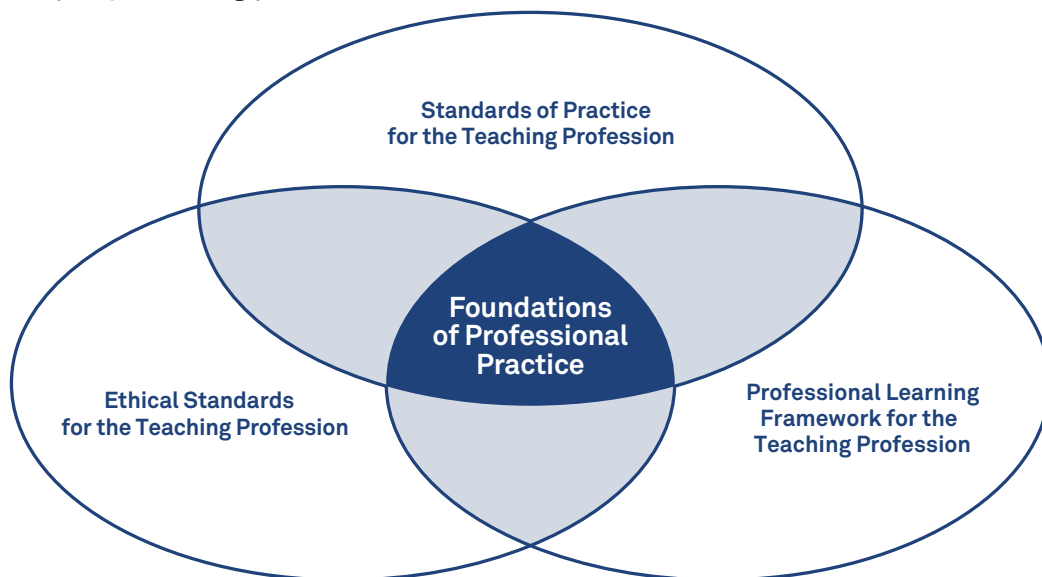
Professional standards that guide and reflect exemplary teaching practice and

continuous professional improvement are essential to effective teaching and learning. The College has fostered the development of these professional standards to support exemplary teaching in Ontario.

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

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

The complete *Foundations of Professional Practice* can also be found on the College website at: [oct.ca/public-protection/professional-standards](http://oct.ca/public-protection/professional-standards).



## 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, education partners, other professionals, the environment and the public.

### 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.





## 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. They convey a collective vision of professionalism that guides the daily practices of members of the Ontario College of Teachers.

The standards of practice include five statements about students and student learning, professional knowledge, professional practice, leadership in learning communities and ongoing professional learning.

## 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.

(Continued on next page.)



### **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.

## The Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession

Members of the College refine their professional knowledge, skills, practices 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* describes some opportunities and processes that support ongoing professional learning for educators. These opportunities have been identified by members of the profession through provincial consultations, surveys, focus groups and written narratives of practice. *The Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching*

*Profession* is one component of a collective vision of teacher professionalism in Ontario (Figure 1) that was collaboratively created by both the profession and the public.

Professional learning takes a variety of forms. *The Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession* is one of the ways 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 for the Teaching Profession* supports the ongoing growth and development of the profession through the identification of a wide range of learning and education opportunities.

### Collective vision of teacher professionalism



Figure 1

## Ethical standards, standards of practice and the Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession

The *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* are strengthened and further embodied through the many professional education and learning processes identified in the *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession*. A holistic vision of teacher professionalism (Figure 2) stresses the interrelationships between ethical practice, professional knowledge, skills, values and ongoing professional learning.

The standard of practice entitled Ongoing Professional Learning highlights the inherent connection between student learning and professional learning. This standard also explicitly identifies the importance of self-directed professional learning, which is enhanced through lived experience, research and collaboration.

### Standard of Practice: 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.*

—Ontario College of Teachers, 2006

Together, the ethical standards, standards of practice and the *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession* support the capacity for thoughtful, ethical and critically reflective practices and innovations that inform professional practice.

### Professional inquiry

A professional inquiry section is included throughout the *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession* document. This inquiry section is designed to invite educators reading this foundational document to reflect upon and further explore their own self-directed professional learning experiences through the various lenses associated with ongoing professional learning and education articulated in the *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession*.

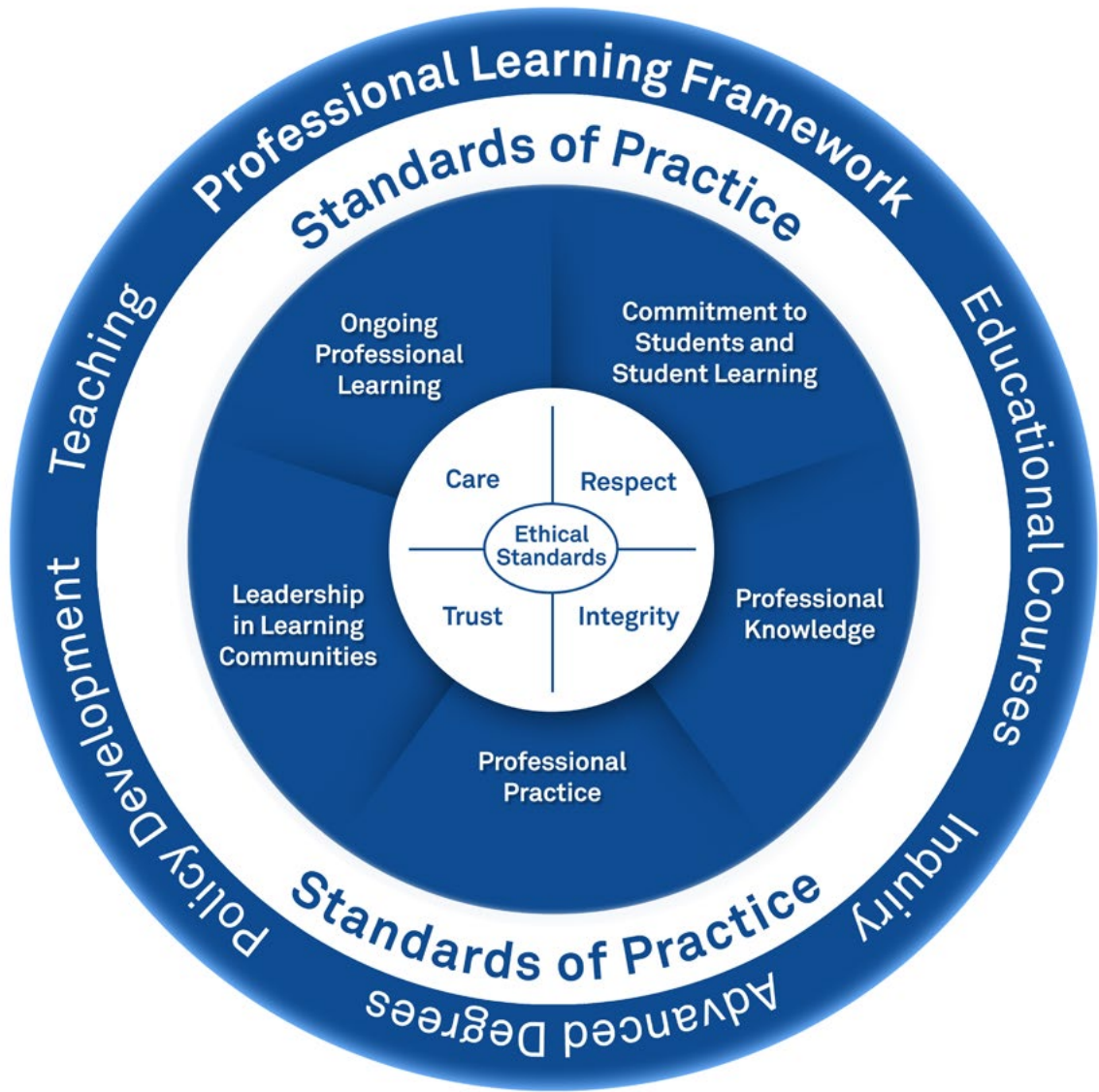


Figure 2

## The purposes of the *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession*

The *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession* (PLF) has been collaboratively designed with members of the teaching profession to reflect the following purposes:

### Purposes of the PLF



Figure 3

A commitment to ongoing learning is a central tenet of teacher professionalism. Educators' professional knowledge and efficacy are fostered through engagement in professional learning and this is inextricably connected to student learning. Members of the Ontario teaching profession

engage in multiple opportunities that increase their learning and further refine professional practice. The adoption of an ethical inquiry stance for professional learning and education helps to support democratic teaching and learning.

## Guiding principles

The *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession* supports a set of guiding principles (Figure 4) that help inform the continuous and diverse processes educators engage in to foster their ongoing learning. These principles include:

### Guiding principles of the professional learning framework

The goal of professional learning is the ongoing enhancement of practice. Educator learning is directly correlated to student learning.

Standards-based professional learning provides for an integrated framework for professional education and learning and teacher education.

Exemplary professional learning opportunities are based on the principles of critically reflective adult learning.

Self-directed professional learning is planned for, guided and critically reflected on by members of the College.

Communities of practice and inquiry enhance professional learning.

- The professional learning framework supports learning opportunities based on student learning needs, professional interests, personal growth needs, provincial legislation and policy, professional contexts and system needs.
- The framework encourages members of the College to identify and pursue their strengths and personal interests to further their professional learning.
- Professional learning may be aligned with board and school improvement plans and Ministry initiatives to support student learning and well-being.
- The *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* are the foundations for ongoing professional education and learning.
- The professional learning framework takes into account individual career and personal priorities.
- It outlines professional learning opportunities that are varied, flexible and accessible to College members.
- Professional judgment and ethics are refined through critically reflective adult learning.
- Responsible lifelong learning is continuous learning that is initiated, directed and reviewed by members of the College on an ongoing basis.
- The professional autonomy of educators is a core dimension of self-directed learning.
- The professional learning framework encourages professional collaboration and interprofessional practice.
- It supports ongoing commitment to the enhancement of professional practice both as an individual and collective activity.
- It supports educators' ongoing commitment to improving knowledge, skills, practices and values, and keeping up to date with new educational research and initiatives.

Figure 4

### Self-directed professional learning

*Professional autonomy and self-directed professional learning puts trust in our professional judgment to decide what we need to learn or be developing. As professional educators, we are committed to ongoing professional learning throughout our careers and require the freedom to gain the experiences we need. This is how learning is best done.*

—Member of the Teaching Profession

Autonomy in professional learning lies at the heart of teacher professionalism. Members of the College are intrinsically motivated to stay current and up to date in many ways through various pathways informed by professional needs, interests, passions and inspirations. (Figure 5)

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. These diverse opportunities are an integral part of the *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession*. Educators engage in many forms of self-directed professional learning as well as participating in learning opportunities offered by their employers, the Ministry of Education, faculties of education, professional institutions, community organizations, federations and subject associations. College members’ commitment to continued professional growth serves as the catalyst for innovative, creative and responsive professional practice.

### Professional Learning Paths



Figure 5



## Learning through practice

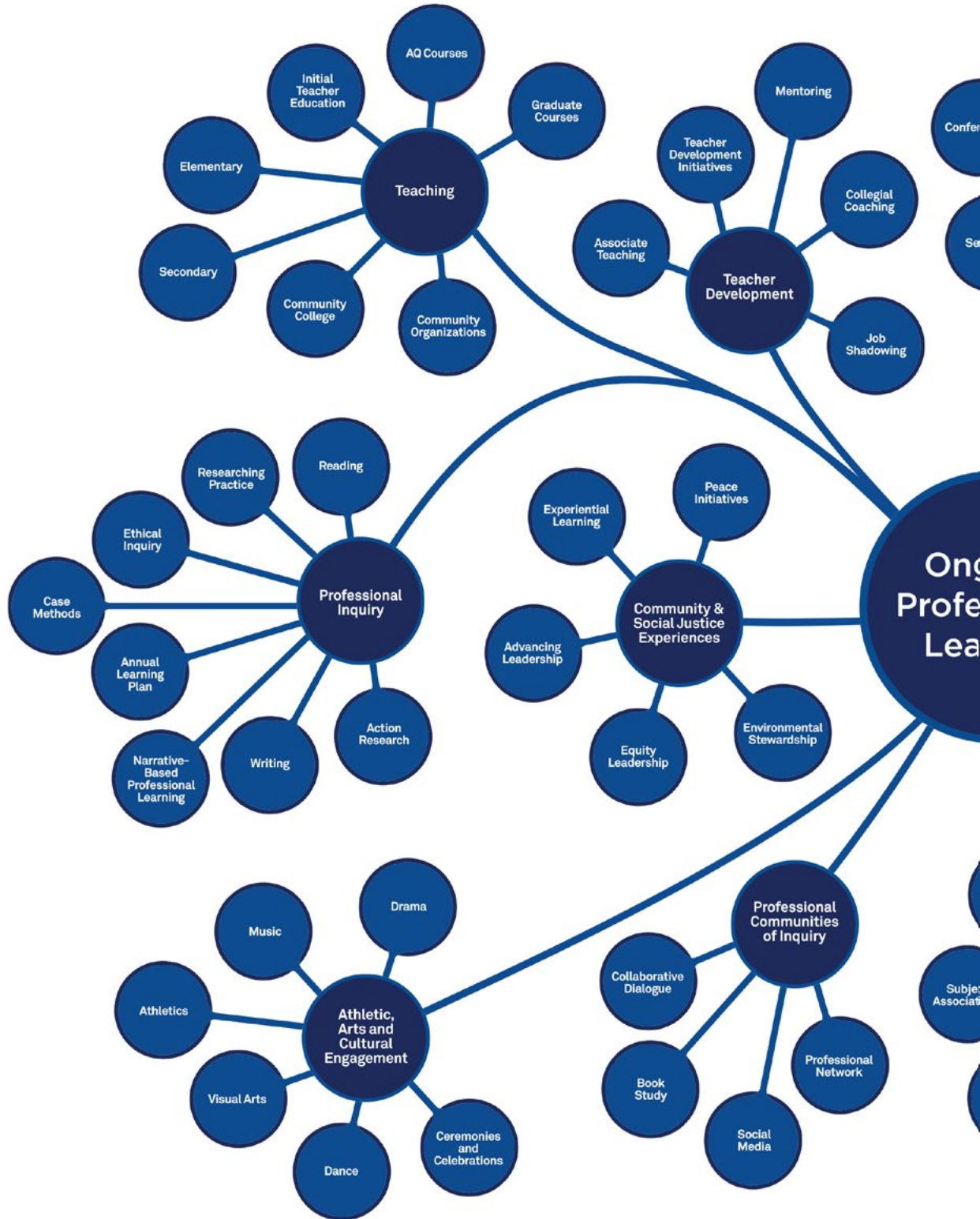
*Listening to the students to know and understand what they truly need. They are the driving and guiding force behind my practice. Working with students, I learn what works and doesn't over time. Through trying certain techniques, adjusting them until I find what works.*

—Member of the Teaching Profession

Members of the teaching profession have identified that the most significant and powerful professional learning that informs their practice is teaching alongside learners. Educators understand that their teaching and leadership experiences are key sources of learning within the context of their practice. Professional learning and efficacy are strengthened by critically reflecting on professional practice. Learning from professional practice can involve experiential, transformative, relational and reflective learning. Professional autonomy is essential for supporting and advancing educators' practices in response to the evolving nature of teaching and learning.

## Conceptual framework for ongoing professional learning

A conceptual framework for ongoing professional learning has been designed based on the feedback received from members of the teaching profession regarding their sustained engagement in highly diverse and complex forms of professional learning. This conceptual framework (Figure 6) provides a lived theory of action for understanding the complex, holistic, interrelated, self-directed, contextual and evolving nature of relevant and meaningful ongoing professional learning. The lived theory of action of the various forms of professional learning engaged in by the teaching profession is depicted in Figure 6, and is by no means exhaustive.



going professional learning

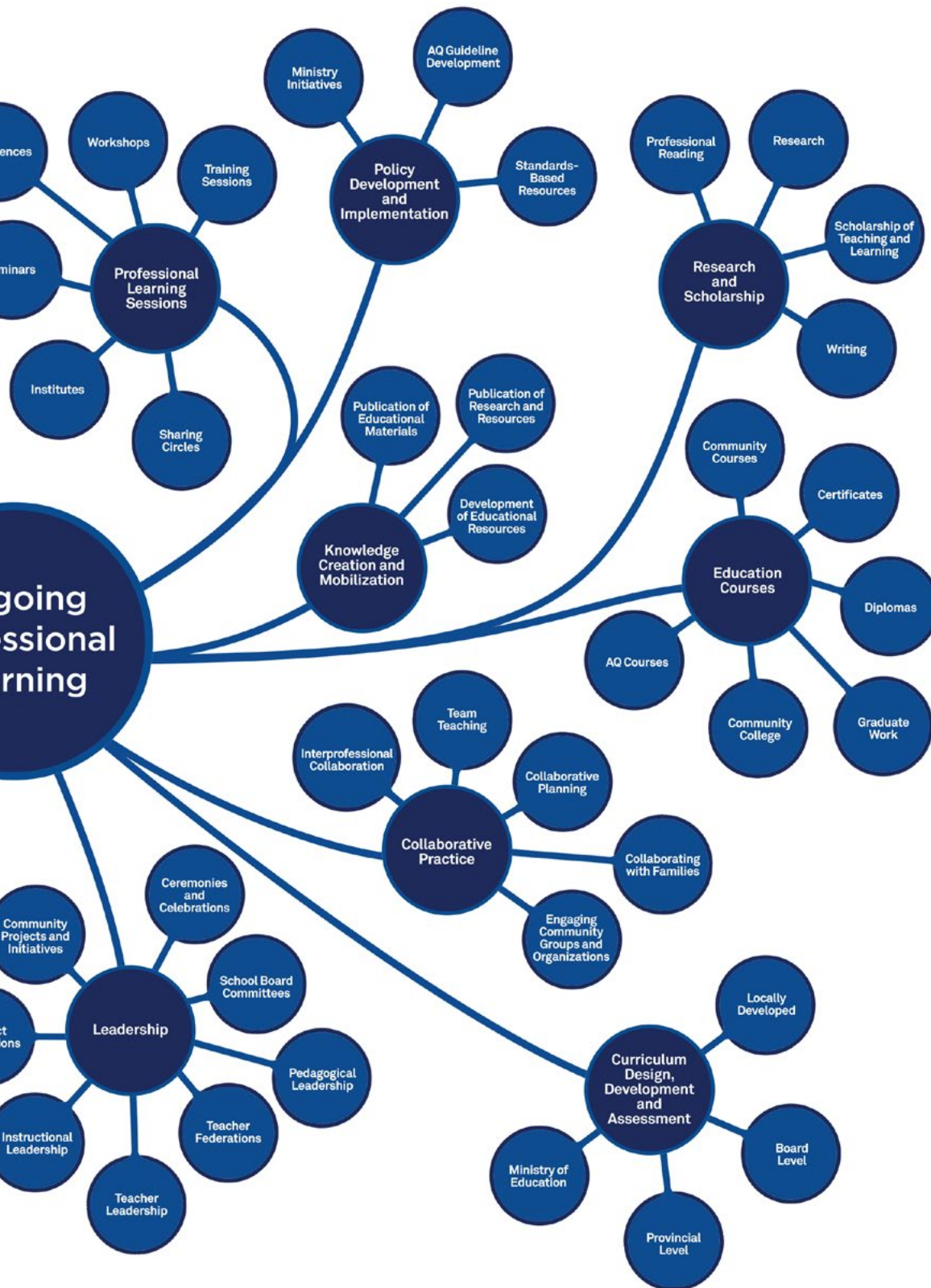


Figure 6

## PROFESSIONAL INQUIRY

As you consider your own professional learning journey, you may want to reflect on the following self-directed inquiries:

- How can you critically reflect on the vast and multifaceted nature of professional learning for the teaching profession?
- How does this conceptual framework connect to your diverse experiences engaged in ongoing professional learning?
- Discuss how this conceptual framework can be used to inform your own ongoing professional learning.
- How can this conceptual framework be enhanced to reflect the evolving nature of ongoing professional learning?
- How does this conceptual framework support your journey of professional learning through designing your own concept map?
- Collaboratively design a concept map to illustrate a school or board's engagement in ongoing professional learning to support school and/or board improvement plans.

### Contexts that support ongoing professional learning

Professional learning takes place in a variety of diverse and wide-ranging contexts. These varying contexts, settings and forms help to foster the ongoing professional knowledge, skills, practices and values of educators. The self-directed learning that occurs in these various contexts is

supportive and responsive to the continually evolving nature of teaching and learning in democratic communities

The following professional learning matrix, *Contexts that Support Ongoing Professional Learning: A Professional Learning Matrix* (Figure 7), illustrates some of the contexts and processes that support educators' engagement in ongoing professional learning. This matrix lists the top professional learning contexts and learning processes identified by members of the teaching profession through provincial consultations. It can serve as a reflective tool to further inquire into and explore professional practice.

## PROFESSIONAL INQUIRY

As you consider your own professional learning journey, you may want to reflect on the following self-directed inquiries:

- Critically reflect on the diverse and varied contexts that have fostered your ongoing professional learning.
- Identify additional contexts, settings or forums that could nurture your ongoing professional learning.
- Explore how your professional learning is supported through each of the contexts identified in the matrix (for example, classrooms, schools, school board, provincial, community).
- Generate professional learning goals for supporting your ongoing growth and development.

## Contexts that support ongoing professional learning: A professional learning matrix

SCHOOL	COMMUNITY	SYSTEM	PROVINCIAL	HIGHER EDUCATION
Teaching	Community service	Board level workshops	Conferences	Additional Qualification (AQ) courses
Collaborative planning with colleagues	Workshops offered by other organizations	Professional activity days	Additional Qualification (AQ) courses	Master's course(s)
Professional activity days	Artistic performances	Conferences	Workshops offered by other organizations	Certificate courses
Team teaching	Cultural ceremonies	Curriculum in-service sessions	Presentations	Online learning modules
Mentoring	Social justice actions	Collaborative planning with colleagues	Summer institutes	Research and scholarship
Annual Learning Plan process	Leadership opportunities	Presentations	Leadership opportunities	Diploma courses
Performance appraisal process	Conferences	Leadership opportunities	Online learning modules	Professional inquiry
Leadership opportunities	Presentations	Facilitating professional learning sessions	Curriculum leadership	Reflective writing
Presentations	Athletic experiences	Teaching	Curriculum in-service sessions	Presentations
Professional excursions	Teaching	Curriculum leadership	Curriculum writing	Teaching
Peer coaching	Professional excursions	Mentoring	Certificate courses	Additional Qualification (AQ) instructor
Coaching	Member of a community of practice	Professional inquiry	Facilitating professional learning sessions	Conferences
Divisional meetings	Coaching	Summer institutes	Collaborative planning with colleagues	Action research
Curriculum in-service sessions	Collaborative planning with colleagues	Professional communities of inquiry	Teaching	Workshops offered by other organizations
Facilitating professional learning sessions	Retreats	Strategic planning	Professional inquiry	Leadership opportunities

*Figure 7*

## Additional Qualification courses

*Additional Qualifications ... extend teachers' knowledge, skills, collaborative abilities, professional learning, and support student learning and enable educators/practitioners to stay informed of the ever-evolving nature of our practice.*

—Member of the Teaching Profession

An Additional Qualification (AQ) is a program of study designed to inform and enhance professional practice, and taken in addition to initial teacher education in an area of study based on theory, research, pedagogy, the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession*, the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* and the application of theory to practice. AQ courses are another form of self-directed professional learning designed to reflect the rich diversity and complexity of Ontario's educational system. They support professional practice by inviting educators to engage in reflection,

critical inquiry, research, as well as pedagogical and curriculum leadership to foster positive, safe and accepting school cultures. AQ courses also support ongoing professional learning in various areas of teaching, and enable educators to gain qualifications associated with various leadership roles such as Principal qualifications and Supervisory Officer qualifications. Regulation 176/10, Teachers' Qualifications Regulation, made under the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*, identifies over 370 qualifications available for Ontario educators in both English and French ([oct.ca/members/additional-qualifications/schedules-and-guidelines](http://oct.ca/members/additional-qualifications/schedules-and-guidelines)). (See Figure 8.)

AQ courses are accredited by the College and offered by approved providers. Successful completion of an AQ course is recorded on a teacher's Certificate of Qualification and Registration.

**Professional education courses  
accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers**



*Figure 8*

### Advanced degrees

The pursuit of advanced degrees provides educators with rich professional education and learning opportunities.

These educational experiences enable educators to further refine and deepen their professional knowledge, skills, practices and perspectives.

### Communicating with the public

Highly knowledgeable, ethical, insightful and skilled educators committed to fostering the growth of all learners support

public trust and confidence in the teaching profession. Educators' ongoing commitment to and engagement in multiple forms of ongoing professional learning serves the public interest.

The teaching profession's deep commitment to engage in rich ongoing professional learning is communicated to the public through multiple transparent communication mechanisms. This is a shared responsibility and a direct object of the College's mandate (Figure 9).



Figure 9



## **Vision for exemplary professional practice**

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.

# Professional Advisories

The College's professional advisories inform professional judgment and practice.

Brief descriptions of each of the College's seven advisories are provided on the pages that follow.

To read these publications in their entirety, please visit our website at: [oct.ca/resources/categories/professional-advisories](https://oct.ca/resources/categories/professional-advisories).

## Professional Boundaries — An Advisory for Ontario Certified Teachers

This advisory highlights the importance of maintaining professional boundaries and provides practical advice to Ontario Certified Teachers at any point in their education careers. It identifies some of the professional, ethical and legal parameters that govern their practice. It also clarifies their professional responsibilities to conduct themselves in accordance with professional standards, legislation, and the law. It applies to all Ontario Certified Teachers (OCTs) including teachers, consultants, vice-principals, principals, supervisory officers, directors of education, those working in non-school-board positions, College members in private and independent schools, and those in positions requiring a certificate of qualification.

Members of the profession spend a tremendous amount of time with their students. Proximity and time enable them to get to know students well and to assess and address their individual learning needs. Members require greater self-awareness and sensitivity to the conditions which give rise to the possibility for overstepping professional boundaries — in class, online or in any learning or supervisory situation.

Ontario Certified Teachers (OCTs) understand the imbalance of power they have with students and are careful to manage their responsibilities with respect and integrity. The overwhelming majority do. As professionals, OCTs are expected to demonstrate good judgment and common sense at all times. Their actions should be as transparent as possible and have the appropriate consent of supervisors and parents/guardians.

This advisory highlights the importance of maintaining professional boundaries and provides practical advice to OCTs at any point in

their education careers. It identifies some of the professional, ethical and legal parameters that govern their practice. It also clarifies their professional responsibilities to conduct themselves in accordance with professional standards, legislation, and the law.

There are also multiple roles with colleagues, parents and others in the community that can lead to boundary questions. For the purposes of this document, the College's advice is restricted to professional boundaries between educators and students.

Issues of establishing professional boundaries are complex. Although some choices are clear in terms of what is wrong or right, some grey areas exist. The guidance and examples provided in this advisory are not an exhaustive list of unacceptable behaviours. OCTs should never assume that conduct that is not specifically prohibited is acceptable. They should consult their employer policies, protocols and Ministry of Education resources.

**Learn how to maintain healthy professional boundaries with your students.**

**Read the Professional Advisory — *Professional Boundaries: An Advisory for Ontario Certified Teachers* in its entirety by visiting [oct-ooeo.ca/boundaries](http://oct-ooeo.ca/boundaries).**

## Professional Misconduct of a Sexual Nature

The Council of the Ontario College of Teachers approved this professional advisory on September 27, 2019. It was originally titled “Professional Misconduct Related to Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct” in 2002 and has been updated to reflect amendments to the College’s legislation.

This advisory applies to all Ontario Certified Teachers (OCTs) including teachers, consultants, vice-principals, principals, supervisory officers, directors of education, those working in non-school-board positions, College members in private and independent schools, and those in positions requiring a certificate of qualification. Read this document in conjunction with College advice on the use of social and electronic media, the duty to report child abuse, bullying, safety in learning environments, and supporting students’ mental health<sup>1</sup>.

This advisory helps OCTs to identify the legal, ethical and professional parameters that govern their behaviour and aims to prevent professional misconduct of a sexual nature with students regardless of consent. It clarifies College members’ responsibilities to govern their conduct according to professional standards, provincial law and the *Criminal Code*. The advisory

provides guidance and examples. It is not an exhaustive list of unacceptable behaviours.

The *Ontario College of Teachers Act (OCTA)* requires that the College investigate complaints made by a member of the public, a member of the College, the Registrar or the Minister of Education against members about their behaviour, including the alleged sexual abuse of students.

OCTs recognize the trust the public places in them, work to maintain professional relationships with students of any age, and avoid boundary violations.

OCTs are expected to behave professionally at all times. Ignorance of the law or College regulations is not an acceptable excuse for unprofessional behaviour. Engaging in any form of professional misconduct of a sexual nature with students will result in an investigation by the College.

<sup>1</sup> Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media: [oct.ca/resources/advisories/use-of-electronic-communication-and-social-media](https://www.octo.ca/resources/advisories/use-of-electronic-communication-and-social-media); Duty to Report: [oct.ca/resources/advisories/duty-to-report](https://www.octo.ca/resources/advisories/duty-to-report); Responding to the Bullying of Students: [oct.ca/resources/advisories/bullying](https://www.octo.ca/resources/advisories/bullying); Safety in Learning Environments: A Shared Responsibility: [oct.ca/resources/advisories/safety](https://www.octo.ca/resources/advisories/safety); Supporting Students’ Mental Health: [oct.ca/resources/advisories/mental-health](https://www.octo.ca/resources/advisories/mental-health)

**Learn about what constitutes professional misconduct, about the College’s Discipline Committee, and about your and your employers’ responsibilities.**

**Read *Professional Advisory — Professional Misconduct of a Sexual Nature* in its entirety at [oct-oeo.ca/prof\\_misconduct](https://www.octo.ca/prof_misconduct).**

## Supporting Students' Mental Health

On November 8, 2018, the Council of the Ontario College of Teachers approved this professional advisory. It is intended to help Ontario Certified Teachers (OCTs) to support students with mental health concerns and understand how to assist in their support. This advisory applies to all OCTs, including, but not limited to, teachers, consultants, principals, vice-principals, supervisory officers, directors of education and those working in non-school board positions.

Ontario Certified Teachers (OCTs) support students' mental health. The responsibility exists in the profession's ethics and lives in its practices. It resides in the intentions of individual practitioners and in the collective duties of a multi-disciplinary team of professionals. It entails knowing how to recognize and address signs of mental illness, understanding where to turn for help, and working to avoid stigmatization while promoting wellness. The stigmas, ideas, preconceived notions, and understanding of mental health differs across families and cultures.

For the purposes of this advisory, the College has adopted the Public Health Agency of Canada's definition of positive mental health as "the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face." Mental

health encapsulates one's ability to manage thoughts, feelings and behaviour, making it possible to set and achieve goals, create and keep relationships, adapt to and cope with stress and sadness, and feel happiness.

Mental illness is more than feeling stressed or unwell. It is "a disturbance of brain function characterized by difficulties in thinking, mood, behaviour, perception, physical functioning and/or signaling mechanisms (or some combination thereof) [that] helps us decide what to do day by day. [It is] diagnosed using internationally recognized criteria that lead to significant impairments in day-to-day living (work, home, social)"<sup>1</sup>.

This advisory aims to help OCTs enhance their professional knowledge and practice with respect to understanding how to support students' mental health.

<sup>1</sup> [teenmentalhealth.org/live](http://teenmentalhealth.org/live)

**Learn to recognize, understand and support students' mental health.**

**Read the *Professional Advisory — Supporting Students' Mental Health* in its entirety by visiting [oct-oeeo.ca/student\\_mental\\_health](http://oct-oeeo.ca/student_mental_health).**

## Maintaining Professionalism — Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media

The Council of the Ontario College of Teachers approved this professional advisory on September 27, 2017. This advice applies to all members of the College including, but not limited to, teachers, consultants, vice-principals, principals, supervisory officers, directors of education and those working in non-school board positions.

Electronic communication and social media create new opportunities for extending and enhancing education. However, as the number of communication forms increase, so does the chance of an unintentional mistake. Ontario Certified Teachers must be aware of the potential risks associated with electronic communication and social media so that they can use them safely and appropriately. By being aware, you can minimize risks and model the digital professionalism expected for teaching professionals.

Maintaining professional boundaries in all forms of communication, technology-related or not, is vital to maintaining the public trust and appropriate professional relationships. However, when more informal communication channels are used with students and parents,<sup>1</sup> professional boundaries can begin to blur. This advisory will help you to use your professional judgment to identify and avoid potential risks.

<sup>1</sup> In this advisory, 'parent' means the student's parent, legally appointed guardian, or any person in a custodial role such as adoptive parent, step-parent, or foster parent.

**Increase your awareness surrounding social media use.**

**Read *Maintaining Professionalism — Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media* in its entirety by visiting [oct-ooeo.ca/social-media-adv](http://oct-ooeo.ca/social-media-adv).**

### The starting point — maintain standards

This professional advisory supports the College's *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*. The standards, which were developed by members of the College and members of the public, guide and inform the practice of Ontario's certified teachers.

The ethical standards — in which care, trust, respect and integrity are the cornerstones — identify ethical responsibilities and commitments. "Members express their commitment to students' well-being and learning through positive influence, professional judgment and empathy in practice," the standards say in reference to care. Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of integrity. The standards of practice guide the professional judgment and all actions of the teaching profession.

## Responding to the Bullying of Students

The Council of the Ontario College of Teachers approved this advisory on June 8, 2017. This advice applies to all members of the College including, but not limited to, teachers, consultants, vice-principals, principals, supervisory officers, directors of education and those working in non-school board positions.

What is bullying? What effect does it have on a student’s self-esteem, development, and learning? How does bullying both inside and outside the classroom affect the learning environment? Can you recognize bullying in its various forms, including by electronic means? Do you know how to address and prevent bullying among your students?

Bullying means “aggressive and typically repeated behaviour”<sup>1</sup> that is pervasive in society, particularly among young people. In a comprehensive study conducted by the Nova Scotia Task Force on Bullying and Cyberbullying, 58 per cent of the 3,052 student respondents reported that they had been bullied and 30 per cent admitted to bullying others.<sup>2</sup> According to a 2015 Ontario

study, 24 per cent (representing about 231,000 students) reported being bullied at school, and 13 per cent said that they had bullied others at school.<sup>3</sup>

The scale of the problem signals that “many children may not be learning the skills and competencies necessary to engage positively or constructively in human relationships.”<sup>4</sup> This has a tremendous negative impact on students and learning environments.

By understanding the characteristics of bullying, you can identify bullying behaviour and provide effective interventions that can minimize its effects and reduce occurrences.

<sup>1</sup> RSO 1990, c. E.2, s.1.(1)

<sup>2</sup> A. Wayne MacKay, “Respectful and Responsible Relationships: There’s No App for That” (The Report of the Nova Scotia Task Force on Bullying and Cyberbullying, 29 November 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Boak, A., Hamilton, H.A., Adlaf, E. M., Henderson, J.L., & Mann, R.E. (2016). “The mental health and well-being of Ontario students, 1991-2015: Details OSDUHS findings” (CAMH Research Document Series No. 43). Toronto, ON: Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

<sup>4</sup> MacKay, 5.

### Help prevent bullying in schools.

Read *Professional Advisory — Responding to the Bullying of Students* in its entirety by visiting [oct-oeeo.ca/bullying](http://oct-oeeo.ca/bullying).

## Duty to Report

The Council of the Ontario College of Teachers approved this advisory on June 4, 2015, to remind members that they have a duty to report abuse and/or neglect of children and youth.

Each of us has a responsibility to protect children and youth from harm. As a professional educator working directly with students and supporting others who are, you have a legal and ethical duty to report to a children's aid society when you have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection.

Ontario's *Child, Youth and Family Services Act* (CFSA) requires those who perform professional or official duties with respect to children to report suspected child abuse where there are reasonable grounds. A child is anyone under 16 (or appears to be) or who is 16 or 17 and subject to a child protection order.

You don't have to be certain that a child may need protection. Suspicion on reasonable

grounds — information that an average person, using normal and honest judgment would need to decide — is reason enough to report. You have to report to a children's aid society so that they can assess and determine what the child needs.

Do you notice when children and youth have unexplained injuries, they're not eating, they have poor hygiene or are falling asleep in class? These may be signs of family problems, abuse or neglect.

Do you know what prompts your duty to report? Do you know to whom you report? Do you know the consequences of not reporting?

This advisory will help to address those questions.

**Know your responsibility for student safety as an Ontario Certified Teacher.**

**Read the *Professional Advisory — Duty to Report* in its entirety by visiting [oct-ooeo.ca/Duty-Adv](http://oct-ooeo.ca/Duty-Adv).**



## Safety in Learning Environments

The Council of the Ontario College of Teachers approved this advisory on April 4, 2013. In response to the recommendations of the Coroner’s Jury in the Inquest into the Death of Rowan Stringer, the Council of the College approved an update to this professional advisory on March 3, 2016, in order to include guidance related to safety in volunteer training or coaching situations, and first aid.

What is an unsafe learning situation? Do you know the actions to take when you see one? Are you clear about your duty to report incidents or how to respond in unsafe situations? What might happen if you are not?

Questions of safety infuse conversations in education every day. Concerns about bullying (in person or electronically) and food allergies are every bit as important as safety in classrooms, including technological labs, sciences labs and the gymnasium. When student safety and well-being are involved, your foresight, knowledge and keen professional judgment are essential. Recognizing student vulnerability and acting to mitigate it is your professional responsibility.

This advice aims to help all College members reflect on their practice so that they can remain current in their knowledge and skills to make responsible decisions as would a careful or prudent parent or guardian. It applies to all Ontario Certified Teachers (OCT), including teachers, consultants, vice-principals, principals, supervisory officers, directors of education and those working in non-school-board positions. **Each has a different role. All share the responsibility for student safety.**

**Learn to determine whether the activity or situation involving students poses some level of health or safety risk, how to minimize this risk, and how to deal with safety in learning environments.**

**Read *Professional Advisory — Safety in Learning Environments: A Shared Responsibility in its entirety* at [oct-ooeo.ca/Safety-Adv](http://oct-ooeo.ca/Safety-Adv).**

## **Additional Qualifications: Extending Professional Knowledge**

The Council of the College approved a professional advisory on extending professional knowledge through Additional Qualifications on March 28, 2008, to clarify for members the purpose of the regulated system of qualifications in a division or subject, commonly referred to as Additional Basic Qualifications (ABQs) and Additional Qualifications (AQs).

Ongoing professional learning is an integral part of teaching. The College mandate includes a requirement to provide for the ongoing education of members. The profession's standards reflect the expectation that all members will participate in ongoing learning. Adding to professional knowledge enhances teaching practice, which improves student learning.

Ongoing learning, as expressed in the College's *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession*, covers a wide range of activities that help members expand their knowledge, increase their skills and prepare for career changes.

Many valuable courses and opportunities are offered by universities, colleges, teacher federations, principals' organizations, school boards, subject organizations and community organizations.

The regulated system of Additional Basic Qualifications (ABQs) and Additional Qualifications (AQs) is one form of professional learning. ABQs/AQs are recognized in legislation, accredited by the College, offered by providers approved by the College and, when successfully completed, recorded on the member's Certificate of Qualification and Registration.

The College works with experts to develop guidelines that providers must use in creating ABQs and AQs. Guidelines establish content, learning expectations, instructional strategies and forms of assessment. The College itself does not conduct courses or programs.

**Learn more about Additional Qualifications and the various scenarios for which teachers may seek professional learning opportunities.**

**Read *Professional Advisory — Additional Qualifications: Extending Professional Knowledge in its entirety* at [oct-ooeo.ca/AQs-Adv](http://oct-ooeo.ca/AQs-Adv).**

# Professional Misconduct Regulation

The Professional Misconduct Regulation sets out a list of acts or omissions in practice which constitute professional misconduct for Ontario Certified Teachers.

The following pages contain this regulation in its entirety.

## The Professional Misconduct Regulation (made under the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*)

### Section 1

The following acts are defined as professional misconduct for the purpose of subsection 30 (2) of the Act:

1. Providing false information or documents to the College or any other person with respect to the member's professional qualifications.
2. Inappropriately using a term, title or designation indicating a specialization in the profession which is not specified on the member's Certificate of Qualification and Registration.
3. Permitting, counselling or assisting any person who is not a member to represent himself or herself as a member of the College.
4. Using a name other than the member's name, as set out in the register, in the course of his or her professional duties.
5. Failing to maintain the standards of the profession.
6. Releasing or disclosing information about a student to a person other than the student or, if the student is a minor, the student's parent or guardian. The release or disclosure of information is not an act of professional misconduct if,
  - i. the student (or if the student is a minor, the student's parent or guardian) consents to the release or disclosure, or
  - ii. if the release or disclosure is required or allowed by law.
7. Abusing a student verbally.
  - 7.1 Abusing a student physically.
  - 7.2 Abusing a student psychologically or emotionally.
  - 7.3 Abusing a student sexually.
8. Practising or purporting to practise the profession while under the influence of any substance or while adversely affected by any dysfunction,
  - i. which the member knows or ought to know impairs the member's ability to practise, and
  - ii. in respect of which treatment has previously been recommended, ordered or prescribed but the member has failed to follow the treatment.
9. Contravening a term, condition or limitation imposed on the member's Certificate of Qualification and Registration.
10. Failing to keep records as required by his or her professional duties.
11. Failing to supervise adequately a person who is under the professional supervision of the member.
12. Signing or issuing, in the member's professional capacity, a document that the member knows or ought to know contains a false, improper or misleading statement.
13. Falsifying a record relating to the member's professional responsibilities.

14. Failing to comply with the Act, the regulations or the bylaws.
15. Failing to comply with the *Education Act* or the regulations made under that Act, if the member is subject to that Act.
16. Contravening a law if the contravention is relevant to the member's suitability to hold a Certificate of Qualification and Registration.
17. Contravening a law if the contravention has caused or may cause a student who is under the member's professional supervision to be put at or to remain at risk.
18. An act or omission that, having regard to all the circumstances, would reasonably be regarded by members as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional.
19. Conduct unbecoming a member.
20. Failing to appear before a panel of the Investigation Committee to be cautioned or admonished, if the Investigation Committee has required the member to appear under clause 26(5)(c) of the Act.
21. Failing to comply with an order of a panel of the Discipline Committee or an order of a panel of the Fitness to Practise Committee.
22. Failing to co-operate in a College investigation.
23. Failing to take reasonable steps to ensure that requested information is provided in a complete and accurate manner if the member is required to provide information to the College under the Act and the regulations.
24. Failing to abide by a written undertaking given by the member to the College or an agreement entered into by the member with the College.
25. Failing to respond adequately or within a reasonable time to a written inquiry from the College.
26. Practising the profession while the member is in a conflict of interest.
27. Failing to comply with the member's duty under the *Child and Family Services Act*.
28. Making remarks or engaging in behaviours that expose any person or class of persons to hatred on the basis of a prohibited ground of discrimination under Part I of the Human Rights Code.

## Section 2

A finding of incompetence, professional misconduct or a similar finding against a member by a governing authority of the teaching profession in a jurisdiction other than Ontario that is based on facts that would, in the opinion of the Discipline Committee, constitute professional misconduct as defined in section 1, is defined as professional misconduct for the purposes of subsection 30 (2) of the Act.







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Setting the  
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