

## Exploring Ethical Professional Relationships



Ontario  
College of  
Teachers  
Ordre des  
enseignantes et  
des enseignants  
de l'Ontario



# Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Professional Inquiry	3
Reflecting on my Relationship with Students	5
Reflecting on my Relationship with Colleagues	6
Reflecting on my Relationship with Parents/Guardians	7
Reflecting on my Relationship with Other Professionals	8
Exploring my Professional Relationships	9
Reflecting on my Professional Boundaries	10
Ethical Resources	11

# Exploring Ethical Professional Relationships: A Self-Reflective Resource

## Introduction

The *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* provide a powerful ethical framework for critically reflecting on and exploring the individual and collective professional practices of educators. This holistic framework is intended to be used in an integrated fashion when investigating the ethical nature of teaching and educational leadership. Each ethical standard conveys essential ethical concepts and dimensions associated with ethical professional practice.

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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

(Ontario College of Teachers, 2006)



## Professional Inquiry

Professional inquiry empowers educators to become critically aware of the assumptions and beliefs that inform their decisions and actions. The inquiry process also assists educators in recognizing the importance of engaging in thoughtful reflection and dialogue prior to embarking on actions and making judgments. The professional judgments and moral actions of educators are greatly enhanced through the adoption of a reflective ethical stance.

The ethical standard of *Integrity* highlights the importance of this stance, “continual reflection assists members in exercising integrity in their professional commitments and responsibilities” (Ontario College of Teachers, 2006, pg.9).

*Exploring Ethical Professional Relationships: A Self-Reflective Resource*, is intended to support educators in fostering and sustaining a reflective ethical stance with respect to their professional relationships and contributes to the creation of ethical spaces and cultures within their professional practice.

The ethical standard of *Trust* identifies the importance of these professional relationships. “Members’ professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust” (Ontario College of Teachers, 2006, pg.9). The development and maintenance of trust is a central tenet of ethical professional practice for all members of the teaching profession.

The resource, *Exploring Ethical Professional Relationships: A Self-Reflective Resource*, is designed to invite educators to explore their professional relationships and practice through each of the ethical standards, *Care*, *Trust*, *Respect* and *Integrity*. This exploration supports educators in creating and sustaining positive ethical spaces and cultures. Educators’ professional relationships with students, colleagues, families and other professionals become the focus of professional reflection and exploration within this resource.

## Professional Relationships

The concept of professional boundaries is also included as another area of inquiry for educators. The last section of this resource invites educators to identify challenges, dilemmas or issues associated with professional relationships that they have experienced within the context of their practice. These challenges and issues can also be valuable sources of inquiry for educators.

Exploration into the tensions and dilemmas associated with these challenges can help to foster the ethical knowledge and action of educators. Additional insight and enhanced perspectives can be gained through critically reflecting on and exploring the complex and multifaceted dimensions associated with fostering and sustaining the ethical standards, *Care, Respect, Trust* and *Integrity* in all professional relationships as a member of the teaching profession.



## Fostering Ethical Spaces

Establishing and sustaining ethical spaces and cultures within classrooms and schools is a moral imperative of the teaching profession. Educators critically reflect and continually inquire as to importance and nature of ethical spaces within their professional practice. The ongoing process of creating and sustaining ethical spaces and cultures within schools is a shared responsibility. Ethical spaces and cultures foster positive professional relationships that reflect the ethical standards: *Trust, Respect, Integrity* and *Care* and supports students' well-being and learning.

Educators who collaboratively and respectfully foster ethical spaces and cultures within schools cultivate relationships based on ethical inquiry, dialogue and the professional ethical standards. These processes, relationships and ethical spaces empower educators to respond effectively and relationally to ethical challenges and dilemmas.

# Reflecting on my Relationships with Students

<p><b>Care:</b></p> <p>The ethical standard of <i>Care</i> 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.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all students I embody the ethical standard of <i>Care</i> by:</p>
<p><b>Respect:</b></p> <p>Intrinsic to the ethical standard of <i>Respect</i> 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.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all students I embody the ethical standard of <i>Respect</i> by:</p>
<p><b>Trust:</b></p> <p>The ethical standard of <i>Trust</i> embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members' professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all students I embody the ethical standard of <i>Trust</i> by:</p>
<p><b>Integrity:</b></p> <p>Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of <i>Integrity</i>. Continual reflection assists members in exercising integrity in their professional commitments and responsibilities.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all students I embody the ethical standard of <i>Integrity</i> by:</p>

# Reflecting on my Relationships with Colleagues

<p><b>Care:</b></p> <p>The ethical standard of <i>Care</i> 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.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all colleagues I embody the ethical standard of <i>Care</i> by:</p>
<p><b>Respect:</b></p> <p>Intrinsic to the ethical standard of <i>Respect</i> 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.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all colleagues I embody the ethical standard of <i>Respect</i> by:</p>
<p><b>Trust:</b></p> <p>The ethical standard of <i>Trust</i> embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members' professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all colleagues I embody the ethical standard of <i>Trust</i> by:</p>
<p><b>Integrity:</b></p> <p>Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of <i>Integrity</i>. Continual reflection assists members in exercising integrity in their professional commitments and responsibilities.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all colleagues I embody the ethical standard of <i>Integrity</i> by:</p>



# Reflecting on my relationships with Parents/Guardians

<p><b>Care:</b></p> <p>The ethical standard of <i>Care</i> 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.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all parents/guardians I embody the ethical standard of <i>Care</i> by:</p>
<p><b>Respect:</b></p> <p>Intrinsic to the ethical standard of <i>Respect</i> 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.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all parents/guardians I embody the ethical standard of <i>Respect</i> by:</p>
<p><b>Trust:</b></p> <p>The ethical standard of <i>Trust</i> embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members' professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all parents/guardians I embody the ethical standard of <i>Trust</i> by:</p>
<p><b>Integrity:</b></p> <p>Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of <i>Integrity</i>. Continual reflection assists members in exercising integrity in their professional commitments and responsibilities.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all parents/guardians I embody the ethical standard of <i>Integrity</i> by:</p>

# Reflecting on my relationships with Other Professionals

<p><b>Care:</b></p> <p>The ethical standard of <i>Care</i> 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.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all other professionals I embody the ethical standard of <i>Care</i> by:</p>
<p><b>Respect:</b></p> <p>Intrinsic to the ethical standard of <i>Respect</i> 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.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all other professionals I embody the ethical standard of <i>Respect</i> by:</p>
<p><b>Trust:</b></p> <p>The ethical standard of <i>Trust</i> embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members' professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all other professionals I embody the ethical standard of <i>Trust</i> by:</p>
<p><b>Integrity:</b></p> <p>Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of <i>Integrity</i>. Continual reflection assists members in exercising integrity in their professional commitments and responsibilities.</p>	<p>In my relationship with all other professionals I embody the ethical standard of <i>Integrity</i> by:</p>

# Exploring my Professional Relationships

## Reflecting on my Practice:

Tensions, issues, challenges and dilemmas I have experienced within my professional relationships include:

Tensions	Issues	Challenges	Dilemmas

I responded to these experiences by...

--	--	--	--

The new insights I gained from reflecting on and exploring these tensions, issues, challenges and dilemmas include:

--

The additional perspectives I gained from reflecting on and exploring these tensions, issues, challenges and dilemmas include:

--

My ethical knowledge and ethical sensitivity have been enhanced from reflecting on these experiences from my practice:

--

# Reflecting on my Professional Boundaries

I consciously maintain professional boundaries in all my professional relationships, communications and use of social media by...

My judgments and decisions regarding professional boundaries are influenced by...

# Ethical Resources

The following resources can be used to support educators' professional relationships within the context of their practice.

Allard, C.C., Goldblatt, P.F., Kemball, J.I., Kendrick, S.A., Millen, K.J., & Smith, D. (2007). Becoming a reflective community of practice. *Reflective Practice* 8(3), pp. 299-314.

Cherubini, L., Kitchen, J., Goldblatt, P., & Smith, D. (2011). Broadening landscapes and affirming professional capacity: A metacognitive approach to teacher induction. *The Professional Educator*, 35(1), 15 p.

Cherubini, L., Smith, D., Goldblatt, P.F., Engemann, J., & Kitchen, J. (2008). *Learning from experience: Supporting beginning and mentor teachers*. Toronto, ON: Ontario College of Teachers.

Ciuffetelli Parker, D., Smith, D., & Goldblatt, P. (2009). Teacher education partnerships: Integration of case studies within an initial teacher education program. *Brock Education*, 18(2), pp. 96-113

Goldblatt, P.F., & Smith, D. (2004). Illuminating and facilitating professional knowledge through casework. *European Journal of Teacher Education* 27(3), pp. 334-354.

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

Killoran, I., Zaretsky, H., Jordan, A., Smith, D., Allard, C & Moloney, J. (2013). *Supporting Teachers to Work with Children with Exceptionalities*. Canadian Journal of Education (36) 1, 240-270.

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

Ontario College of Teachers. (2006). *Foundations of professional practice*. Toronto, ON: Author.

Ontario College of Teachers. (2008). *Living the standards*. [Resource kit 2]. Toronto, ON: Author.

Ontario College of Teachers. (2010a). *A self-reflective professional learning tool*. Toronto, ON: Author.

Ontario College of Teachers. (2010b). *Voices of wisdom* [DVD]. Toronto, ON: Author.

- Smith, D., & Goldblatt, P.F. (Eds.). (2006). *Casebook guide for teacher education*. Toronto, ON: Ontario College of Teachers.
- Smith, D., & Goldblatt, P.F. (Eds.). (2009). *Exploring leadership and ethical practice through professional inquiry*. Québec City, QC: Les Presses de l'Université Laval.
- Smith, D. (2010). Developing leaders using case inquiry. *Scholar-Practitioner Quarterly*, 4(2), pp. 105-123.
- Smith, D. (2012a). Supporting new teacher development using narrative based professional learning. *Reflective Practice*, (13)1, pp. 149-165.
- Smith, D. (2012b). *Teaching and learning through e-learning: A new additional qualification course for the teaching profession*. In, Barbour, M. (Ed). *State of the nation: K-12 online learning in Canada*. Victoria, BC: Open School BC.
- Smith, D. (2013). *A dialogic construction of ethical standard for the teaching profession*. *Issues in Teacher Education*, 22(1).
- Smith, D. (2013). The Power of collective narratives to inform public policy: reconceptualizing a Principal's Qualification Program. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, (16)3, 349-366.





Ontario  
College of  
Teachers

Ordre des  
enseignantes et  
des enseignants  
de l'Ontario

Cette publication est également disponible en français sous le titre  
*Explorer la déontologie dans les relations professionnelles.*

For additional information:  
Ontario College of Teachers  
101 Bloor St. West  
Toronto ON M5S 0A1

Telephone: 416-961-8800  
Fax: 416-961-8822  
Toll-free in Ontario: 1-888-534-2222  
Email: [info@oct.ca](mailto:info@oct.ca)  
[www.oct.ca](http://www.oct.ca)