

Foundations of Professional Practice

August 2016



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



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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 of Practice for the Teaching Profession* and the *Ethical Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* 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. Members of the Ontario College of Teachers (the College), 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 for the Teaching Profession* 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* reflects 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.

Foundations of Professional Practice



Figure 1

Self-regulation and the 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 and in Regulation 234/10, Principal and Vice-Principal Performance Appraisal.

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.



(Ontario College of Teachers, 2006a)

Figure 2

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.

Tuesday, June 19th, 2007
Day 2

Area and perimeter of a
Rectangle


$$\begin{aligned} P &= (l+w) \times 2 \\ &= (45+25) \times 2 \\ 25\text{mm} &= 70 \times 2 \\ &= 140 \\ \text{Perimeter} &= 140 \text{ mm} \end{aligned}$$

$$A = (l \times w)$$

Expressions très utiles

Je comprends.

Comment dit-on « ___ » en français?

Parlez plus lentement s'il vous plaît.

Que veut dire ___ ?

J'ai une question.



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.

Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession



(Ontario College of Teachers, 2006b)

Figure 3

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 (AQ) 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.

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

The photo on the right portrays Bruce K. Beardy, OCT, a First Nations educator and member of the Ontario College of Teachers and Lakehead University's Faculty of Education, Aboriginal Education Department.

Bruce is holding an Anishinaabe representation of the Standard of Practice for the Teaching Profession, Ongoing Professional Learning, which he created to depict the rich and diverse nature of professional learning that members of the profession are committed to and engage in.



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.



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 4) that was collaboratively created by both the profession and the public.

Collective Vision of Teacher Professionalism



Figure 4

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.

Ethical Standards, Standards of Practice and the Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession

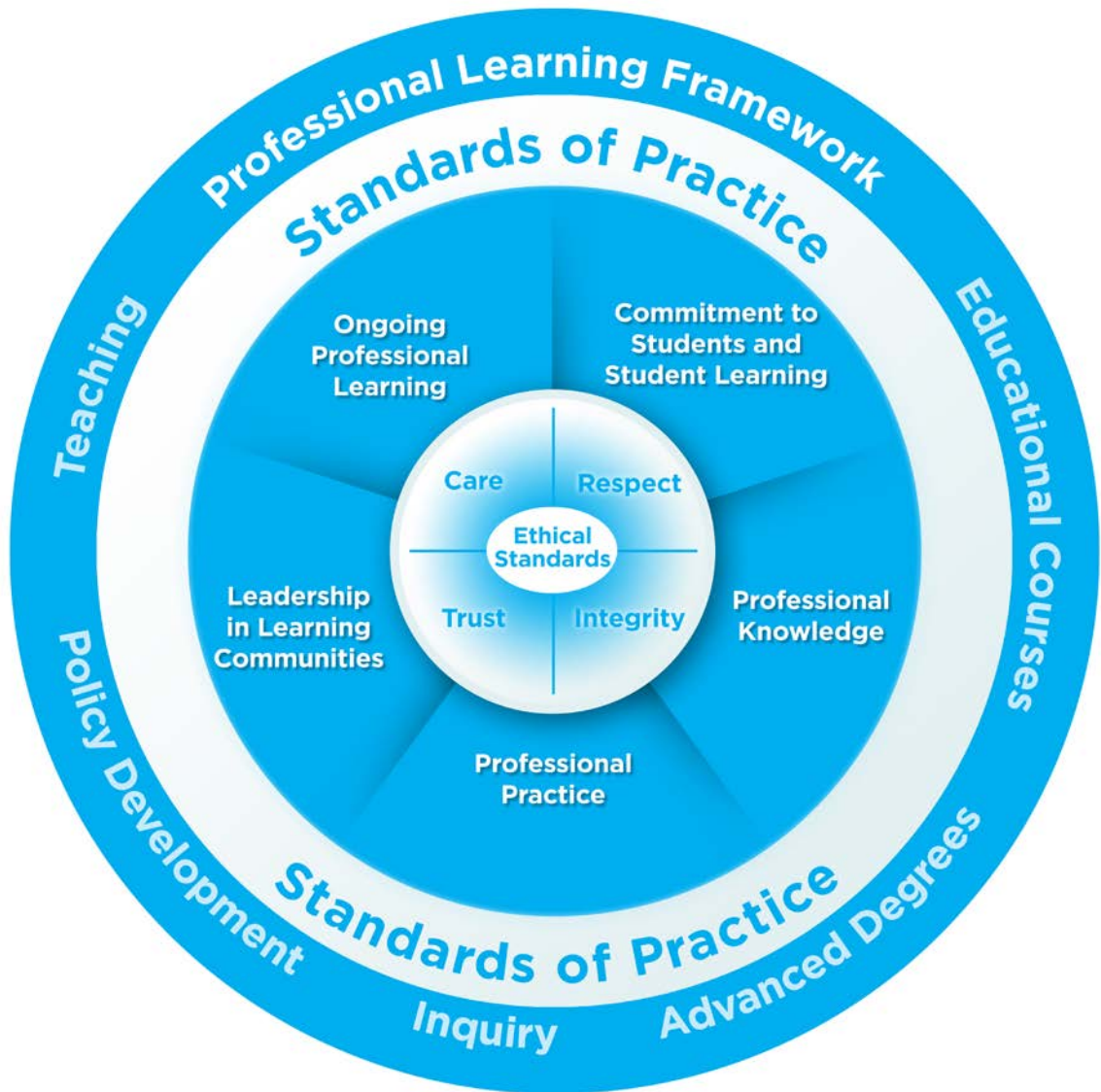


Figure 5

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 5) 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, 2006b)

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*.

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 (Figure 6):

Purposes of the PLF

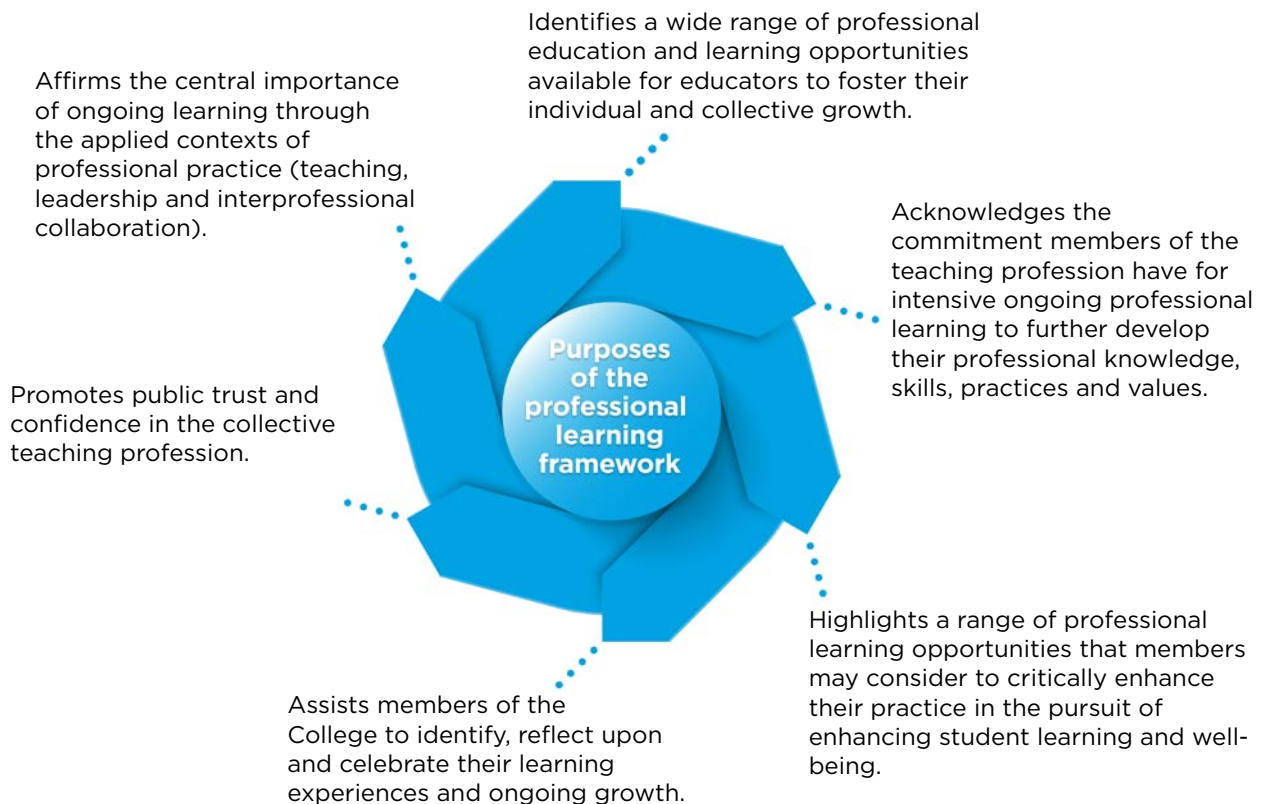


Figure 6

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 7) 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 for the Teaching Profession* 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 7

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 8).



Figure 8

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.

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.

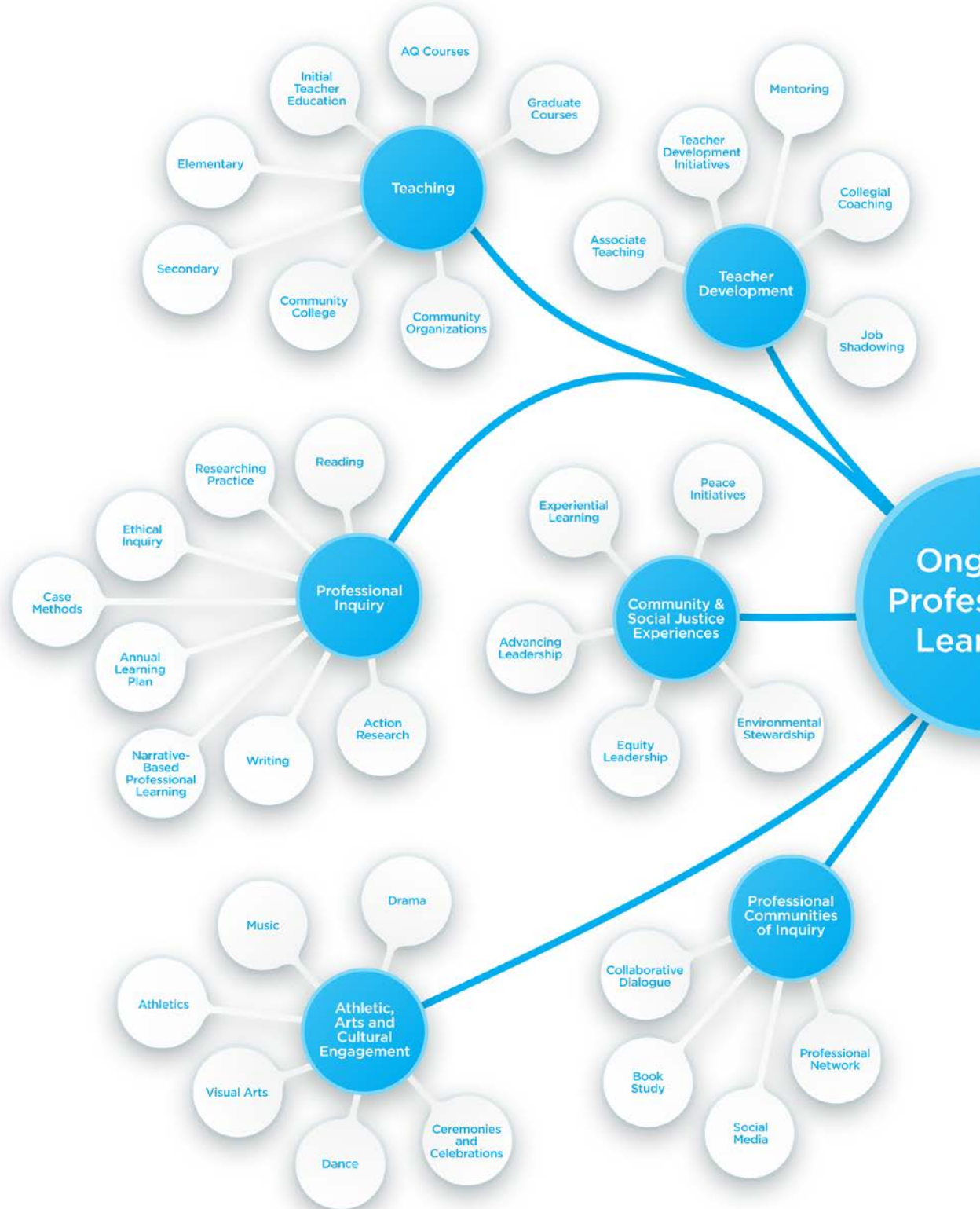
—Member of the Teaching Profession

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 9) 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 9, and is by no means exhaustive.

Conceptual framework for ongoing professional learning



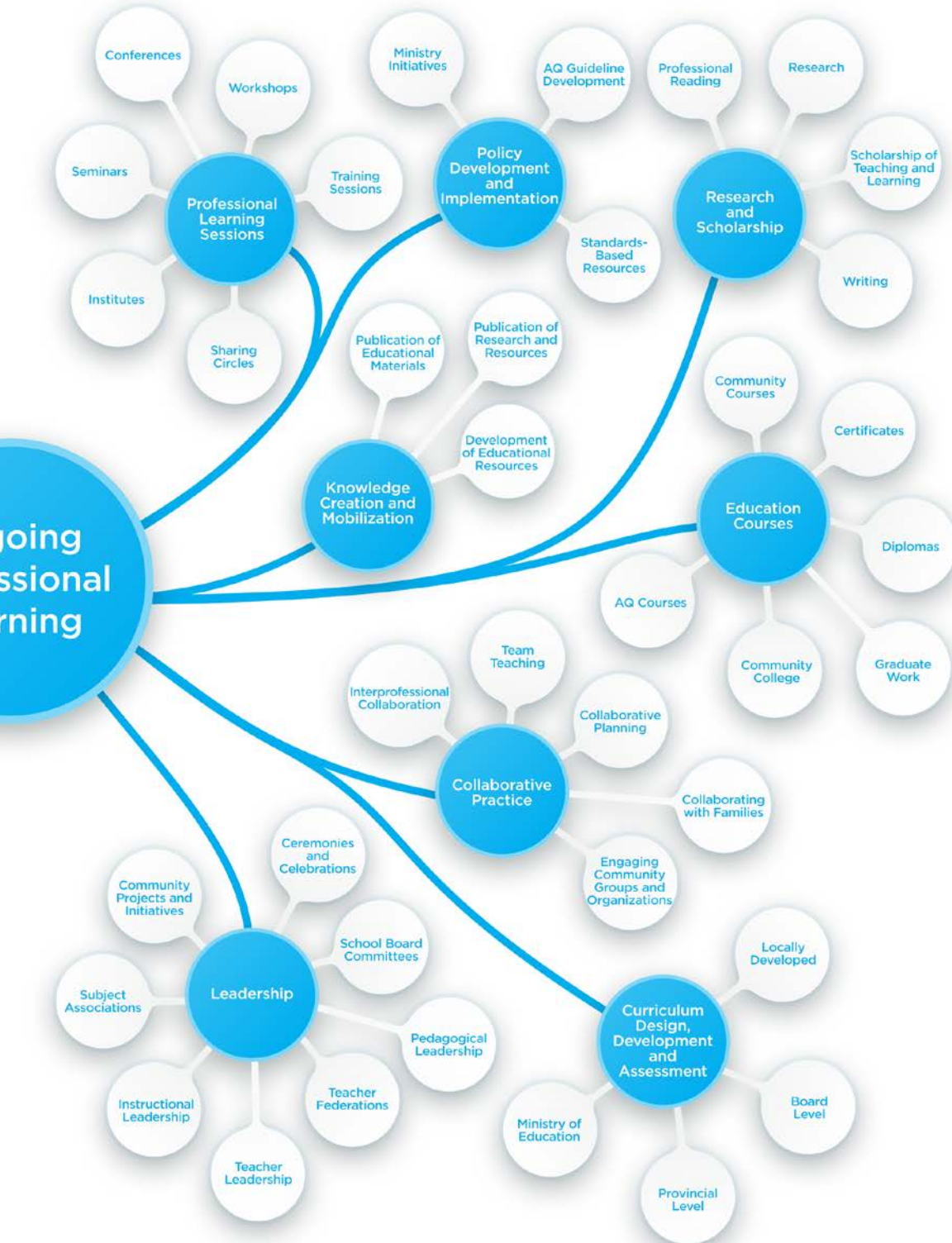


Figure 9

Conceptual framework for ongoing professional learning

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 10), 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.

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 10

Contexts that support ongoing professional learning

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 and community).
- Generate professional learning goals for supporting your ongoing growth and development.

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). (See Figure 11.)

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 11

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 12).

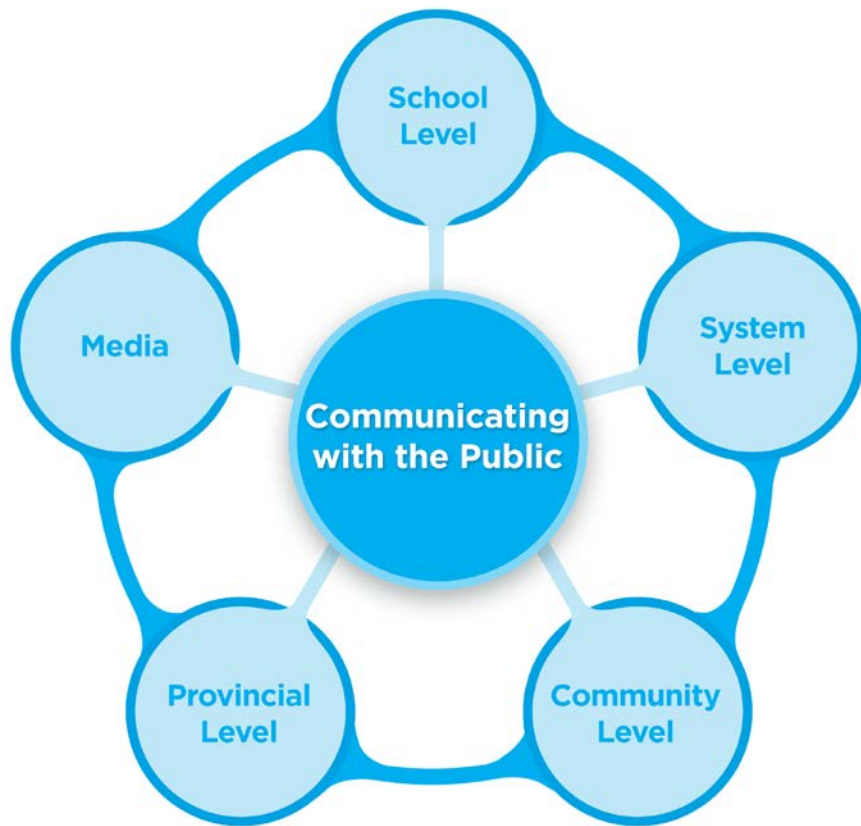


Figure 12

WHAT IS CAPACITY

Grade 45
Lesson Study # 1

AGENDA

Science!

Structures - (3)
Light & Sound (4)
→ Flashlight

Reading!

Always

Listening!

Maple
leaves form

Writing!

Math!

Small Change
Family Life
Sheet

Library!



References

Ontario College of Teachers. (2006a). *The ethical standards for the teaching profession*. Toronto, ON: Author.

Ontario College of Teachers. (2006b). *The standards of practice for the teaching profession*. Toronto, ON: Author.

RRO 176/10. *Teachers' Qualifications Regulation of the Ontario College of Teachers Act*

Foundational Concepts for Professional Learning

Self-Directedness

Collaboration

Professional
Autonomy

Critical Inquiry

Transformation
of Practice





Ontario
College of
Teachers

Setting the Standard
for Great Teaching

Cette publication est également disponible en français sous le titre de
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