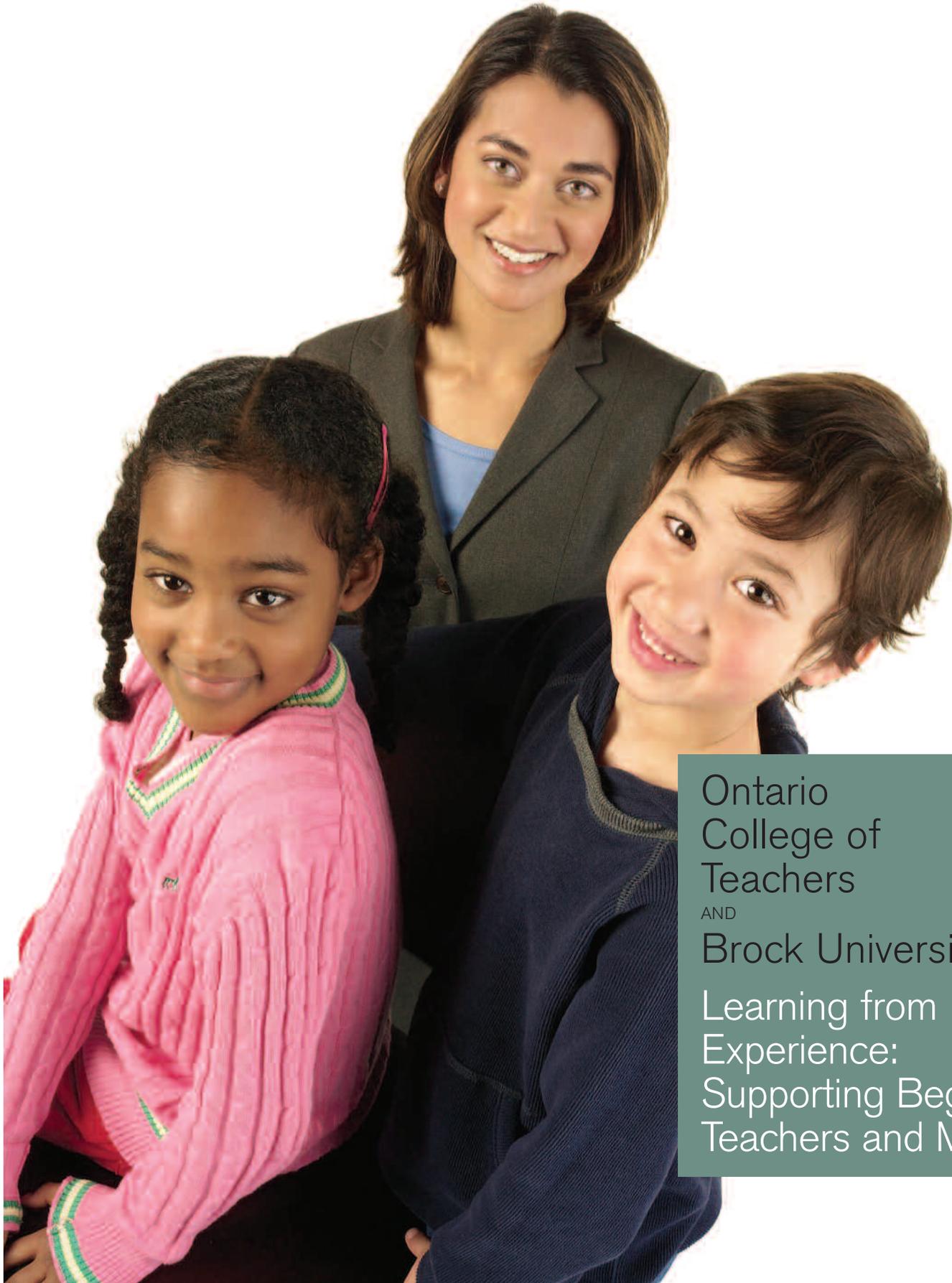


Booklet 3: Exploring Professional Practice with Beginning and Mentor Teachers: Vignettes



Ontario
College of
Teachers

AND

Brock University

Learning from
Experience:
Supporting Beginning
Teachers and Mentors

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Ontario College of Teachers Brock University

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Learning from Experience: Supporting Beginning Teachers and Mentors

Booklet 3: Exploring Professional Practice with Beginning and Mentor Teachers: Vignettes

Exploring Professional Practice with Beginning and Mentor Teachers presents five short vignettes written by beginning teachers. The authors of these teaching vignettes describe experiences they encountered as new teachers. Other beginning teachers and mentors reflected on and responded in writing to the vignettes. The teacher-authored vignettes and collegial responses can serve as a form of professional learning for both beginning and mentor teachers.

Induction and Teacher Education

The beginning teachers believed that their brief written accounts from practice would enhance educators' understanding of the multiplicity of issues and tensions that challenge them. They also recognized that additional insights and perspectives gained from reading and discussing the vignettes could facilitate understanding and inform practices related to teacher induction. Each vignette provides a window into the thoughts, issues and questions contemplated by educators. Some of the ways in which beginning teachers make sense of their experience are also revealed in the vignettes.

The beginning teachers who wrote the vignettes recommended that the inquiry-based professional learning methods identified in this booklet be incorporated into initial teacher education programs and induction procedures. They recognized the potential value of using their own lived experiences as powerful resources to enhance teacher induction practices. The narratives resonated strongly with the beginning and experienced mentor teachers who read them. The mentors' responses reveal their professional knowledge, ethical stance and skills. The dialogic exchange (indicated in the reflective insights and collective analysis that accompany each vignette) illustrates the significance of using the lived experiences of individuals for the collective knowledge of the teaching profession.

Narrative Inquiry Process

Exploring professional practice through narrative inquiry can positively enhance induction practices. In the collaborative induction project, the narrative inquiry process used with beginning and mentor teachers focused on written vignettes and involved four dimensions: experience, reflection, analysis and synthesis. These dimensions support individual and collegial investigation into professional practice. As outlined in this booklet, each dimension can be used independently or in a more integrated fashion to extend inquiry into beginning teaching and mentoring. Deep examination of practice can augment professional knowledge, teaching skill, understanding and perspective.

The following graphic representation highlights the key dimensions in the cyclical narrative inquiry process that the beginning and mentor teachers engaged in as a method to enrich professional practice. This professional learning approach could be employed with beginning and mentor teachers during school district induction sessions.



Using Narrative-Based Activities

Beginning teachers feel affirmed and acknowledged as they reflect on the written experiences of colleagues who are also being inducted into teaching. They might engage in the narrative inquiry process individually, in small groups or with an entire school staff.

Mentor teachers would benefit from reflecting and engaging in dialogue regarding the vignettes and the written responses of mentor leaders. Mentor teachers could individually or collectively extend their skills and knowledge as they critique and analyze the responses of other mentors. This process could foster additional insight and an understanding of effective methods to coach and mentor colleagues new to the profession.

The narrative inquiry process outlined in this text may also be used with education leaders to enhance their understanding and their ability to facilitate the effective induction of beginning teachers. School learning communities could thus collaboratively share in the professional responsibility and privilege of supporting the successful transition of new teachers into the profession.

Educators may use the written vignettes in this booklet as a professional learning tool to assist understanding of the experiences and perspectives of beginning teachers and mentors. The facilitator of a session might assign different roles (beginning teacher, mentor, colleagues' insights and colleagues' analysis) to different participants. Through the assignment of roles, participants can take on the persona of a beginning teacher or mentor. Speaking from the perspective of another person extends insight into the experience of that person. This process facilitates perspective taking, which can ultimately lead to transformations in how individuals support beginning and mentor teachers.

Vignette I

Beginning Teacher Vignette

EXPERIENCE

“Do I have to speak with that woman?” I asked the principal.
“She is the parent of one of your students,” replied the principal.

Colleague’s Reflective Insights

REFLECTION

Beginning Teacher Reflections

The feeling that your principal is on your side and concerned with your well-being is incredibly important. Otherwise you begin to feel isolated. Teamwork! The new teacher seemed to want and need much more – would it have hurt the principal to help in some way? The teacher was probably shy/scared for many good reasons. Was the fact that “that woman” was a parent enough to warrant a potentially volatile situation? I think the question was a good indicator of nerves being stretched to the limit. The new teacher needed support, not silence. – BEGINNING TEACHER

I am a little disappointed with the principal's response. It does not offer any support. Rather it leaves the teacher with a feeling of, “It's your problem. Deal with it.” The principal has stated the obvious – she's a parent. How does this offer any help or support to a beginning teacher? – BEGINNING TEACHER

Mentor Teacher Reflections

Reflect on the importance of communication with parents and ways to go about it. Encourage the beginning teacher to approach the meeting in a positive way. Start with the student's strengths and then move on to talking about her/his needs. Try not to have expectations – sometimes parents call with concerns, sometimes it is just a quick question or check-in. Basically it could be anything. Questions range. Be confident in your program and your abilities and be prepared. Document the meeting. – MENTOR TEACHER

I would ask the teacher to describe her/his apprehensions about speaking to the parent. Based on her/his response, I would offer suggestions for approaching a conversation with a challenging parent. I would also suggest that the teacher note the time, date and content of the conversation. I would counsel the teacher against stating concerns in such a way to the principal. Instead, the teacher could state her/his reasons for feeling uncomfortable and ask for advice/direction from the principal. It would also be beneficial to speak to other teachers who deal with the parent. – MENTOR TEACHER

Colleague's Collective Analysis

	Beginning Teacher Analysis	Mentor Teacher Analysis
ANALYSIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I like the advice about being confident about your program. Some parents will try to find ways to manipulate the situation. ▪ We really like the advice on how to speak to the principal. The teacher's initial remark about "that woman" is quite unprofessional. When dealing with children we also must deal with parents. It is part of the job! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The context is obviously fiction as teachers have to speak with parents. ▪ The principal needs to be attentive to the teacher's feelings.. The teacher can stop the interview if appropriate. ▪ A strategy might be to make an appointment at a later date. ▪ If the teacher feels threatened – leave the meeting. ▪ The students you are worried about are the ones you should be talking with the parents about prior to the report card. ▪ Consider student-led interviews.

New Understandings

SYNTHESIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What insights can be obtained from this vignette about the experience of a beginning teacher? ▪ What implications does the vignette have for the induction of beginning teachers and for the professional learning of mentors? ▪ Comment on the analysis made by the beginning teachers and mentors. ▪ Identify the professional knowledge and skills of the mentor teachers. ▪ How are the ethical standards and/or standards of practice reflected in the vignette, reflective insights or collective analysis?

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Vignette II

Beginning Teacher Vignette

EXPERIENCE

I hung up the phone after talking to the principal and burst into tears. I had not even spent a moment teaching and I already believed I could not do it. Of course, how could I have overlooked the importance of a fire drill and a busing schedule?

Colleague's Reflective Insights

REFLECTION

Beginning Teacher Reflections

I think it was insensitive of the principal to call before the teacher had even started teaching. – BEGINNING TEACHER

The beginning teacher is already feeling inadequate even before beginning to teach. I think a sense of confidence is an issue. A first day of school package should be presented before the first day! – BEGINNING TEACHER

Mentor Teacher Reflections

Review the policies and procedures for the school. Ask the principal to review crucial procedures such as busing and fire drills at the beginning of the year, at a staff meeting prior to the start of school with all present, to ensure that everyone is getting the same message. – MENTOR TEACHER

Encourage the teacher to create/ model routines to allow for quick and easy execution of these matters. Share how these routines work in my class. – MENTOR TEACHER

Colleague's Collective Analysis

Beginning Teacher Analysis

ANALYSIS

- The teacher is already feeling inadequate. Confidence can be a big issue for new teachers. Provide sufficient information to reduce anxiety and build confidence.
- This teacher is beating her/himself up. What do you do on the first day of school? It is the longest day of the year.
- Provide an orientation package for new teachers that illustrates what to do in the first three weeks.
- The school or board needs to provide orientation.
- How prepared do we feel when we graduate from teachers' college? New teachers would benefit from information about what to do on the first day.

New Understandings

SYNTHESIS

- What insights can be obtained from this vignette about the experience of a beginning teacher?
- What implications does the vignette have for the induction of beginning teachers and for the professional learning of mentors?
- Comment on the analysis made by the beginning teachers and mentors.
- Identify the professional knowledge and skills of the mentor teachers.
- How are the ethical standards and/or standards of practice reflected in the vignette, reflective insights or collective analysis?

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Vignette III

Beginning Teacher Vignette

EXPERIENCE

Eve is a student in my class who has spent eight years here in Canada. She is functioning at a kindergarten level in my Grade 7/8 class. Her family does not have a telephone so there is limited communication with the school. The family has moved a great deal and, given this pattern, it is very likely that she may not be at the same school for more than a year.

Colleague's Reflective Insights

REFLECTION

Beginning Teacher Reflections

Treat the child according to the ethical standards and standards of practice. Seek support from the teachers at the school. – BEGINNING TEACHER

Mentor Teacher Reflections

Not sure about this one but focus on the needs and well-being of Eve in the class. Make sure there is work she can do at which she will experience success. Perhaps involve some of her culture in the class? – MENTOR TEACHER

Colleague's Collective Analysis

		Beginning Teacher Analysis	Mentor Teacher Analysis
ANALYSIS		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I agree with focusing on the needs of Eve. Try to get support from a SERT/ESL teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Get support from the administrator. ▪ The teacher needs to focus on her/his responsibility. ▪ Get volunteer help from parents. ▪ To support the learning, seek help from colleagues. The issue is not how long the child will stay in the school. The issue is the child's learning and performance. ▪ Build community relationships. ▪ Build on the child's strengths. ▪ Use other kids in the school as mentors. Can use ESL teacher for support/advice. ▪ The school team needs to be involved. ▪ Teach new teachers what to do and especially bring kids to the school team. ▪ Document in your daybook even something strange. Be aware of any patterns. ▪ Communication log – phone numbers, forms, issue, result, follow-up. ▪ What services and community supports have been accessed for the family?

New Understandings

SYNTHESIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What insights can be obtained from this vignette about the experience of a beginning teacher? ▪ What implications does the vignette have for the induction of beginning teachers and for the professional learning of mentors? ▪ Comment on the analysis made by the beginning teachers and mentors. ▪ Identify the professional knowledge and skills of the mentor teachers. ▪ How are the ethical standards and/or standards of practice reflected in the vignette, reflective insights or collective analysis?
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Vignette IV

Beginning Teacher Vignette

EXPERIENCE

As the first game began, I noticed that this class was fairly competitive in physical education. Some of the male students were extremely competitive. This was visible in the frustration shown when they were eliminated from the game. Some of the students started trash talking with negative comments about the others' abilities.

Colleague's Reflective Insights

REFLECTION

Beginning Teacher Reflections

The new teacher needs to consider stopping the activity to change or manage the level of energy. – BEGINNING TEACHER

Mentor Teacher Reflections

Suggest regaining control of the group (class). Have the classroom teacher speak to the students about mutual respect and fair play. Although they may be competitive, the object of the game is to have fun and actively participate. If the behaviour were to continue I would suggest that the teacher speak privately with the students. Perhaps there are other underlying issues (care, respect). – MENTOR TEACHER

Consider integrating collaborative games, that is, low organizational team games, into the physical education program. Build team and play. Skill drills – relates with emphasis on personal development. Talk to individuals involved. Reflection paper for individuals, complete with self-improvement. Reverse trash talking – positive strokes – model the behaviour for the students. Make competition less important – focus on skill development and teamwork. – MENTOR TEACHER

Colleague's Collective Analysis

	Beginning Teacher Analysis	Mentor Teacher Analysis
ANALYSIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I agree with the responses, as the strategies align with my own. I think that in addition to speaking privately with continued offenders, they should be removed from the game. Excellent ideas! I think that team-building activities would be excellent for building trust, teamwork and co-operation among teammates and improving the self-esteem of players. I think that modelling ideal behaviour is a good proactive approach. I agree that the game needed to be stopped and the issue dealt with immediately. Good alternatives. De-stress competition. Positive comments modelled by teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> De-escalating/diffusing a potential problem is an important skill for effective teaching. Character education is an integral part of the curriculum. It is crucial to address bullying – name-calling may occur at other times in the school day. Proactive steps are important. To avert the problem in the future it would be wise to start with rules and expectations as well as team-building activities for self-esteem and co-operation. Programs can be implemented, for example, TRIBES. The rules include mutual respect, active participation.

New Understandings

SYNTHESIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What insights can be obtained from this vignette about the experience of a beginning teacher? What implications does the vignette have for the induction of beginning teachers and for the professional learning of mentors? Comment on the analysis made by the beginning teachers and mentors. Identify the professional knowledge and skills of the mentor teachers. How are the ethical standards and/or standards of practice reflected in the vignette, reflective insights or collective analysis?
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Vignette V

Beginning Teacher Vignette

EXPERIENCE

Thankfully, I was blessed with working alongside an amazing staff. All 10 of us care so much about the students and about the job that we're doing as teachers. Teachers back each other up and discipline is consistent. In any other part of town things would most likely run smoothly 98 per cent of the time. Unfortunately, in this school, every day brings a new behavioural challenge in one class or another. In my case the behaviour demonstrated in one class of students is my daily challenge.

Colleague's Reflective Insights

REFLECTION

Beginning Teacher Reflections

I think it's excellent that they have staff support and consistent discipline. Perhaps they need to strengthen parent support. – BEGINNING TEACHER

Disadvantaged community. Staff support seems strong. Maybe more interactive student/teacher rules created as a community. School/kids are assumed to be trouble beforehand.
– BEGINNING TEACHER

Mentor Teacher Reflections

Encourage the teacher to go back to the basics of building a community in her classroom. Teach and model to the students respect for oneself and others. Sometimes students don't know what appropriate behaviour is. Assume they know nothing and start from there. Show a commitment to the students and their learning is essential. Every opportunity is a moment to learn something new.
– MENTOR TEACHER

Dialogue. Enable the person to come to her/his own conclusion. What is happening in the other classes that is positive and productive? Can you channel those successes to the challenging class? Maybe this class needs greater structure, a different learning style – visual versus hands on. Consider adjusting your teaching style with this class. Adjust the seating plan – individual or group? Who is with whom? Is it the class, the subject (comfort level)? Try to identify the source. Is it classroom management (seating plan, desk arrangement, class movement, rotary)? Is it class learning style (adjust structure of lessons, time left at end of class, when challenge takes place, for example, whole class at end of class)?
– MENTOR TEACHER

Colleague's Collective Analysis		
	Beginning Teacher Analysis	Mentor Teacher Analysis
ANALYSIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The problem is classroom behaviour. Induction programs should include tips for managing an efficient classroom. For example, having a seating plan and having structured routines. Also, tips for managing classrooms on rotary should be included. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The mentors are trying to empower the beginning teacher by encouraging her/him to identify her/his own conclusion.
New Understandings		
SYNTHESIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What insights can be obtained from this vignette about the experience of a beginning teacher? What implications does the vignette have for the induction of beginning teachers and for the professional learning of mentors? Comment on the analysis made by the beginning teachers and mentors. Identify the professional knowledge and skills of the mentor teachers. How are the ethical standards and/or standards of practice reflected in the vignette, reflective insights or collective analysis? 	

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Conclusion

This collection of reflections from practice illustrates the experiences and wisdom of educators and provides a resource for supporting induction and the development of teacher leaders.

The beginning and mentor teachers' written reflections and analyses serve as a supportive learning resource to help educators mediate the issues, practices and professional knowledge inherent in teaching. These narrative mechanisms can foster teacher development and provide an insider's view of the complexities associated with becoming a teacher.

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Appendix I

The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession

The *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* represent a vision of professional practice. At the heart of a strong and effective teaching profession is a commitment to students and their learning. Members of the Ontario College of Teachers, in their position of trust, demonstrate responsibility in their relationships with students, parents, guardians, colleagues, educational partners, other professionals, the environment and the public.

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

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

The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession are:

Care

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

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.



The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

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

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

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

The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession are:

Commitment to Students and Student Learning

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

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.

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.

The authors of these teaching vignettes describe experiences they encountered as new teachers. Other beginning teachers and mentors reflected on and responded in writing to the vignettes.



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Apprendre à partir de l'expérience : Appuyer les pédagogues débutants et les mentors.
3^e livret : *Capsules : explorer l'exercice de la profession avec des pédagogues débutants et des mentors.*