

Ontario  
College of  
Teachers  
Vignettes  
from Practice

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# Introduction

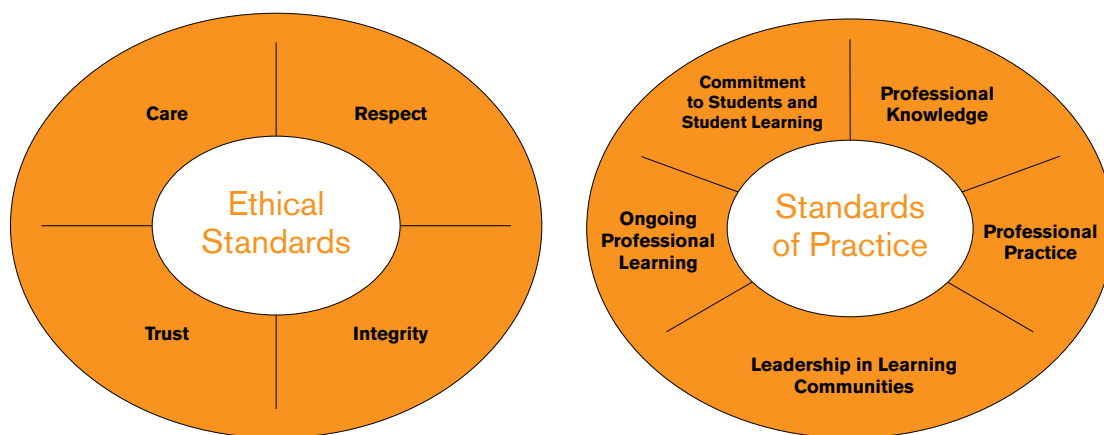
The *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* are the foundations of professional practice. Along with the Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession, they comprise the *Foundations of Professional Practice (FOPP)*.

Members of the Ontario teaching profession apply professional knowledge and skills as they meet the responsibilities inherent within professional practice. They are called on to be leaders in their classrooms, schools and district school boards. They recognize that their ongoing professional learning is connected to student learning. They understand that the ethical principles of *Care, Trust, Respect* and *Integrity* are fundamental to effective professional practice.

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers were invited to contribute their reflections on professional practice during a series of sessions hosted by the College. The intent of these sessions was to provide examples of how the ethical standards and standards of practice are “lived out” in the daily practice of educators.

Teachers, principals, superintendents and directors of education wrote short vignettes that could be shared with colleagues and the public. They hoped that these vignettes of their experiences might inspire their colleagues to consider how their own practices were reflected in the ethical standards and standards of practice. They envisioned that their vignettes might spark or stimulate conversations and discussions about the standards. These educators honour their commitment to students, learning within their professional practice.

Each of the vignettes included in this document highlights the holistic nature of the four domains of the ethical standards and the five domains of the standards of practice. The vignettes also highlight the interdependence of the standards and how they are reflected in various roles.



# Teachers' Reflections on the Standards in Their Practice

## Reflection from Practice

It's so important that the learning environment I create is one that engages children by tapping into their learning styles. We have to look at each child as an individual. I've become a strong believer in differentiated instruction. This means that I try to ensure that students are given many options such as using technology, music, art, drama or construction when completing tasks. I've found greater success when students recognize their own potential and are encouraged to identify their own growth. It is all so very rewarding!

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

## Reflection from Practice

I familiarize myself with the curriculum and the expectations of a particular subject for my Grade 8 class. I also make sure I know the curriculum and the expectations for the previous grade so that the flow of learning is continuous and that I'm aware of the concepts and skills the students have acquired before coming into my class. Once I have taught a lesson and the expectations for that lesson have been established, I observe students to make sure they have clearly understood what was taught. If students are having difficulty, I review the lesson with small groups using different teaching strategies. I also provide individual reinforcement to help clarify a concept or skill. Assessment takes place on a daily basis – through my own observations and my anecdotal records, through the use of checklists and through reading student notebooks and journals. Using a range of assessment activities to evaluate student progress helps me ensure that each student masters the curriculum content and skills.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

### Reflection from Practice

Last week, my Grade 10 students in applied math were wondering where in their life outside of school they were going to use similar triangles. I asked, “Are any of you planning on applying for a summer job at the municipal offices or at construction sites?” Several responded in the affirmative. I explained that some students might be applying their knowledge from this lesson to use an instrument called a level that engineers work with on construction. I also set up a follow-up lesson to be presented by the local engineer who showed them how to use grades and levels and stressed the usefulness of mathematics in this kind of job.

### Reflection from Practice

I remember with gratitude the help and advice that I received in my early years of teaching from more experienced peers. From others, I have learned how to effectively deal with discipline issues, develop programs and interact with students. My professional growth has been a never-ending process. I feel that I can always learn to be a more effective teacher by observing and talking to others. I am aware that my years of experience have provided me with a different perspective and that I can now be helpful to beginning teachers. I realize that I can offer them support and advice that can help ease the pressures of being new in this profession.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?



### Reflection from Practice

I try to be involved in many aspects of school life and supportive of a variety of activities. My main area of involvement is through coaching and organizing house leagues. Seeing students come together and progress towards a common goal in sports, drama or academic ventures are some of the most positive aspects of my career. These experiences are also the most successful at building a strong sense of community. This year we had a 10-year-old visually challenged boy participate with the school cross-country running team. He ended up competing in a Special Olympics race. It was very rewarding to watch the Grade 8 students acting as his guide runner and teaching him to stretch and prepare for practice each day. There was a group of them waiting to “high five” him at the finish line. Several were sincerely moved and as excited about his race as they were about their own.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

### Reflection from Practice

I use a design-down model so that students know the expectations and are given the rubrics at the beginning of our unit. This helps students work with the end in mind as we tackle our subtasks and the culminating tasks. Throughout this process, I include authentic assessment such as portfolios, conferencing and student self-evaluation.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?



### Reflection from Practice

In my Grade 12 course, I needed a way to put novels into context in order that students could understand character motivation. I decided to ask for volunteers to provide interactive presentations on the historical, political, religious, geographic and artistic background of the African setting. My students selected their own focus and created game shows, mini dramas, dialogues, maps, brochures and even videos. Four students collaborated and transformed themselves into various characters in order to share their visions of Africa. With the student contributions to setting the story context, I knew that the stage had been set for meaningful lessons that would expand their knowledge beyond the words printed on the pages of the novel.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

### Reflection from Practice

My role as the Enhanced Learning Strategies Teacher (ELST) for secondary schools has really broadened my perspective on how students learn and the ways in which we as teachers can facilitate student learning. My aim every time I model a strategy is to help the classroom teacher reach out to one more student. I was in a classroom this past week where the students were willing to try another more challenging task simply because I said how proud I was of their work. Later, I had one student approach me and ask for help in another class. When I asked her why she chose me she said: “It was because I could tell that you cared.”

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?



# Principals' and Vice-Principals' Reflections on the Standards in Their Practice

## Reflection from Practice

Always reach out to the community. Make those calls. Just talk to people. Half the time, parents of students just want to feel that their concerns have been heard. It's not that they are expecting miracles. They know their sons and daughters. They just want to have an open line of communication. We really encourage that communication. I think that communication with parents is part of our role in education as principals and teachers. I also believe in collaboratively setting goals for the school. I like mission statements and graduate outcomes. When we wanted to be able to describe the kind of student growth that we hoped to develop in this school, we went through a consultation process involving the students, the parents and the community.

## → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

## Reflection from Practice

I have always believed that the student should be made to feel more important than the textbook. I think that my professional behaviour and my activities must convey to the students that what they are feeling or what their needs are in their own personal development is my priority. That is something that I have always championed. It is the frame of reference within which I have always tried to work.

## → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?



### Reflection from Practice

This past summer, I attended a two-day seminar on science. I felt that I needed to be present. I needed to collect some information from those workshops so that I would be better prepared when I went to program leader meetings. I also realized that I needed to be willing to keep up with the literature. I needed to read. I know how hard it is sometimes to find half an hour or even 10 or 15 minutes to pick up a document that you know you should be reading. However, I also know that it contains things that are relevant to my everyday professional responsibilities. I also realize that when I acquire new ideas that I should be sharing them with my staff. Now at every meeting, I devote 20 or 30 minutes to professional development of our staff.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

### Reflection from Practice

One of my goals is to make sure that the school makes everyone feel welcome. It should be a place where students can come in and feel quite at home. That is really important to me. The school should also be part of the community. We highlight community events and try to become aware of the local customs. Our community holds mid-winter ceremonies and our school honours this practice as well.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?



# Superintendents' Reflections on the Standards in Their Practice

## Reflection from Practice

We work to encourage people to be members of teams. Sometimes we function as team members and sometimes we function as the team leaders. We also try to give our staff opportunities to function as team leaders. We spend a lot of time celebrating efforts and successes. This could be something as simple as sending thank you cards. It could be something more extravagant such as the teaching and support staff awards that our director gives out every year. It could be something like a card or note to thank all of our teaching staff on World Teachers' Day. We always have our first day of the year as a professional development day. It's a day for the entire system and the theme is spiritual leadership.

## → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

## Reflection from Practice

Our principals are all very strong leaders. We work on building trust with students, with their parents and with our community. That goes right from the classroom level through the principal and to the trustee level.

## → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

### Reflection from Practice

The concept of shared leadership is significant to me. In light of that concept, we have done a lot of work around what used to be called building collaborative cultures. Now we talk more about building professional learning communities in our schools. This year we approved in one of our high schools an alternative timetable structure to free teachers to meet together for reflection and planning. Other teachers met for large group curriculum activities.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

### Reflection from Practice

For all of our Grade 7 and Grade 8 teachers, we've been able to schedule common prep times. So there are a lot of good things happening in Grades 7 and 8 because teachers do have that common prep time everyday. In all other areas, we've been able to provide pieces of common time during the year when divisions can get together and do that kind of planning.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?



# Directors' Reflections on the Standards in Their Practice

## Reflection from Practice

As the director of the school board, it's my job working with my superintendents and principals to ensure that we have top-rate teachers. Our system provides high-level professional development so that superintendents, principals and teachers are able to support classroom learning. I also have a responsibility for learning as it relates to the board of trustees. For example, our school district is looking at building a new school and adding on to an existing school. I have asked teachers to share their perceptions of what an outstanding classroom needs in terms of creating a positive learning environment and achieving curriculum expectations. As a result, we have had presentations at the board level to help the trustees understand the complexities of school design and its impact on best practices in teaching.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

## Reflection from Practice

In my first year here, I conducted a survey throughout the community to find out what the needs were and what the community vision was for education. My job is to respond to that information and to develop strategic plans to improve education. I strive to bring in expertise from our community.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

## Reflection from Practice

As director, my responsibility is to provide equal opportunities for our staff – which will ultimately benefit our students – in terms of knowing the student, curriculum, teaching practice and the learning environment. What are the best practices in those areas? We are working on bringing people in to share best practices, provide the modeling, provide the decision-making screens so that our students are given the same opportunities as they are in the rest of the province.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

### Reflection from Practice

Reflection is really important in all that we do. We are encouraging our teachers as well as our students, but our teachers certainly do reflect on what we could do better. We want them to question. What might we be doing differently? Take some risks. Try some things. It's like a child who begins to walk, then falls and gets up again. We really want to have that environment of risk-taking and trying various strategies.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?

### Reflection from Practice

Building trust and helping shape the vision in terms of the board is vital. It requires that as a director I be innovative, that I enlist the support of others, that I model the way and that I recognize individual and group success.

### → Professional Inquiry

Which standards are illuminated in this reflection?



# Conclusion

These vignettes relate the many ways in which the ethical standards and standards of practice are “lived out” in practice. These reflections shared by teachers, principals, superintendents and directors of education in Ontario demonstrate the passion, innovation and commitment of College members to embed the standards in their work.

Along with these vignettes from practice, the College is pleased to provide you with other written and visual resources in *Living the Standards* on the College web site at [www.oct.ca](http://www.oct.ca). These inquiry-based resources are teaching tools for you to share with colleagues or for your own professional learning and reflection.

### **Acknowledgements**

The Ontario College of Teachers would like to acknowledge the many College members who shared their experiences and wisdom in the development of this collaborative educative resource.

Teachers, principals, superintendents  
and directors of education, through  
their professional practice, honour  
their commitment to students and  
student learning.



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