Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession
June 2016
Cover note

The cover photo portrays Bruce K. Beardy, 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.
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The Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession was approved by the Council of the Ontario College of Teachers on June 2, 2016.
The Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession

Members of the College refine their professional knowledge, skills, practices and values described in the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession and the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession through ongoing professional learning. The Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession describes some opportunities and processes that support ongoing professional learning for educators. These opportunities have been identified by members of the profession through provincial consultations, surveys, focus groups and written narratives of practice. The Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession is one component of a collective vision of teacher professionalism in Ontario (Figure 1) that was collaboratively created by both the profession and the public.

Professional learning takes a variety of forms. The Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession is one of the ways the Ontario College of Teachers meets its legislated mandate to “provide for the ongoing education of members of the College. It also informs the public of the many ways educators remain knowledgeable and current. The Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession supports the ongoing growth and development of the profession through the identification of a wide range of learning and education opportunities.
Ethical standards, standards of practice and the Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession

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

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

**Standard of Practice: Ongoing Professional Learning**

*Members recognize that a commitment to ongoing professional learning is integral to effective practice and to student learning. Professional practice and self-directed learning are informed by experience, research, collaboration and knowledge.*

—Ontario College of Teachers, 2006

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

**Professional inquiry**

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

- **Identifies a wide range of professional education and learning opportunities available for educators to foster their individual and collective growth.**
- **Acknowledges the commitment members of the teaching profession have for intensive ongoing professional learning to further develop their professional knowledge, skills, practices and values.**
- **Highlights a range of professional learning opportunities that members may consider to critically enhance their practice in the pursuit of enhancing student learning and well-being.**
- **Assists members of the College to identify, reflect upon and celebrate their learning experiences and ongoing growth.**
- **Promotes public trust and confidence in the collective teaching profession.**
- **Affirms the central importance of ongoing learning through the applied contexts of professional practice (teaching, leadership and interprofessional collaboration).**
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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 to professional learning and education helps to support democratic teaching and learning.
Guiding principles

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

**Guiding principles of the professional learning framework**

- The goal of professional learning is the ongoing enhancement of practice. Educator learning is directly correlated to student learning.
- 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 foundation for ongoing professional education and learning.
- The professional learning framework takes into account individual career and personal priorities.
- It outlines professional learning opportunities that are varied, flexible and accessible to College members.
- Professional judgment and ethics are refined through critically reflective adult learning.
- Responsible lifelong learning is continuous learning that is initiated, directed and reviewed by members of the College on an ongoing basis.
- The professional autonomy of educators is a core dimension of self-directed learning.
- The professional learning framework encourages professional collaboration and interprofessional practice.
- It supports ongoing commitment to the enhancement of professional practice both as an individual and collective activity.
- It supports educators’ ongoing commitment to improving knowledge, skills, practices and values, and keeping up to date with new educational research and initiatives.

Figure 4
Self-directed professional learning

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

—Member of the Teaching Profession

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

**Professional learning paths**

Ontario College of Teachers members engage in a wide variety of professional learning 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, the Ontario Teachers’ Federation and its affiliates, principal organizations, supervisory officer organizations, subject associations, professional institutions and community organizations. 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 6) provides a lived theory of action for understanding the complex, holistic, interrelated, self-directed, contextual and evolving nature of relevant and meaningful ongoing professional learning. The lived theory of action of the various forms of professional learning engaged in by the teaching profession is depicted in Figure 6, and is by no means exhaustive.
ONGOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Figure 6
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 7), illustrates some of the contexts and processes that support educators’ engagement in ongoing professional learning. This matrix (Figure 7) lists the top 15 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

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

*Figure 7*
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, 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 8)

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

The pursuit of advanced degrees provides educators with rich professional education and learning opportunities. These educational experiences enable educators to further refine and deepen their professional knowledge, skills, practices and perspectives.
Communicating with the public

Highly knowledgeable, ethical, insightful and skilled educators committed to fostering the growth of all learners support public trust and confidence in the teaching profession. Educators’ ongoing commitment to and engagement in multiple forms of ongoing professional learning serves the public interest.

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

Figure 9
References


RRO 176/10. *Teachers’ Qualifications Regulation* of the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*
Reflections
Foundational Concepts for Professional Learning

Self-Directedness

Collaboration

Professional Autonomy

Critical Inquiry

Transformation of Practice