



Ontario
College of
Teachers

Ordre des
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de l'Ontario



FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Standards *In Practice*: A Resource for Educators

Dear Colleagues

It is with pleasure that we provide this standards Resource Kit to you. The purpose of this professional resource is to assist you in further integrating the standards into your practice.

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers recommended the development of this standards Resource Kit to deepen understanding and promote the vision of the standards as:

- a conceptual framework
- a shared language to talk about practice
- a description of the mastery of skills, knowledge and values of our teachers
- a platform for reflection, discourse and learning.

As a reflection of members' practice, the standards represent and reflect the work of teachers across the province. Your own professional context will determine how the standards look in your educational environment.

This Resource Kit contains carefully chosen and crafted components that will serve as a catalyst for further inquiry into your professional practice through the standards. The collaborative development of the resources within this kit with members of the College is a living example of the standards *in practice*.

The College wishes to thank the many contributors to this Resource Kit, whose work to educate College members about the standards in various venues has extended knowledge in practice. Many members have also contributed their time and expertise to the development and validation of these resources, and to them we offer our thanks for sharing their professional knowledge and demonstrating their deep commitment to the students of Ontario.

In order to concretize the words of the standards and show how they might look in practice, the College has facilitated Case Institutes at which teachers have written about their practice, capturing the dilemmas faced by educators across the province. These narratives have been provincially, nationally and internationally endorsed and validated. A casebook entitled *Cases for Teacher Development: Preparing for the Classroom* was published in 2005. The College has developed a *Casebook Guide for Teacher Education* to complement the casebook. We encourage you to use these additional resources as you continue to integrate the standards of practice into your practice.

Wishing you continued success in your professional practice,



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Standards *In Practice*: Fostering Professional Inquiry

Standards In Practice: Fostering Professional Inquiry is a Resource Kit created by teachers for teachers. The purpose of these resources is to deepen understanding and integration of the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* into practice. The standards represent the knowledge, skills and values exemplified in the practices of Ontario teachers. The standards were developed with the input of educators whose exemplary practice is reflected in the words of the standards. However, more than a description of “what it means to be a teacher in Ontario,” the standards also convey a vision for growth and development for the profession.

Engaging in Professional Dialogue

The purpose of this Resource Kit, prepared for you by the Ontario College of Teachers, is multi fold. These resources provide you with a catalyst for discussion and a way to bring meaning to the standards – individually, with colleagues, with educational partners or with members of the public. Created by educators like you, the standards represent the work and behaviour of Ontario’s exemplary teaching collective. The cases included in this package make visible:

- *what* the standards are
- *where* they are visible in professional practice
- *how* they might be deepened and enhanced.

The College is committed to consulting with you and listening to you. To ensure that the standards represent the evolving nature of the profession, we need your input. Now we extend an invitation to you: to enter into dialogue with the College and consider how your work is reflected in the standards, and how the standards reflect a vision for the teaching profession.

Professional Inquiry through the Case Method

For too many years, there has been a separation between theory and practice. Cases are unique because they bring the two together; making principles of practice observable through narrative description of lives lived in the classroom. The Ontario College of Teachers invited teachers from across the province to Case Institutes and asked them to participate in writing and discussing events from their professional practice. This practitioner-based research is the foundation for the professional learning resources in this standards Resource Kit.

As scholars of their own practice (Richert, 1991), Ontario teachers wrote narratives of their teaching experiences, reflected on their experiences and shared them with their colleagues. They established a culture of inquiry (Fullan, 2001) and, through discussion, identified how entwined all the standards are in every aspect of their practice.

Since the process of case writing focuses on dilemmas and difficult situations that will appear in every teacher's practice, participants learned that solutions depend on contextual information and that there is never only one answer to any one problem. The teachers involved in these sessions possessed insider knowledge, as educators familiar with the tensions, demands and needs that must be addressed on an hourly or even minute-to-minute basis. Often assumptions held for many years were re-examined and new strategies or decision making stimulated fresh ways of dealing with dilemmas in practice

Instead of an expert or theoretician telling teachers what works and should be carried out in practice, case participants were able to revisit scenarios in their own classrooms, draw on their experiences of success or failure and share expertise from a variety of perspectives. By creating a forum for discussion in a safe and supportive environment, the College encouraged teachers to reflect on practice and look at the

standards for reinforcement or guidance before they encountered similar situations in their own classrooms. Each practitioner was fortified and prepared to reflect on practice before being in practice. Cases extend a “reflective practicum” for professional development (Schon, 1987) in which colleagues participate in a virtual world where “safe experiments” can occur with no impact on actual classroom practice.

Providing and encouraging a forum to talk about teaching through cases allows participants to reflect, analyze, frame and reframe issues from multiple and diverse perspectives. While considering solutions, testing hypotheses and examining consequences of particular strategies and actions in the Case Institutes –outside of the moment of the dilemma – educators have time to think about issues and discuss them in depth. As well, casework carried out in this manner encourages collaboration, multiple points of view. And working with cases support and acknowledge that teachers belong to a challenging, rewarding and vital profession that develops its own experts with knowledge and expertise to provide direction to members.

Case narratives tell stories that attest to the complex and multi-tasked nature of teaching. Cases provide a glimpse into teachers' professional lives as reflected in the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* and the *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*. Supportive of this collaborative approach that uses teachers' work as a source of professional development, Loucks-Horsley Hewson, Love and Stiles concur:

“Study groups [do] provide a forum in which teachers can be inquirers and ask questions that matter to them, over a period of time, and in a collaborative and supportive environment”(1998, 113-14).

When teachers examine narratives of teaching in light of the standards of practice, they observe how theory looks in practice. Mattingly comments on the seamless approach of case methodology that begins with teacher knowledge in practice: “Simply asking practitioners to reflect on stories that they already tell can provide a natural bridge to serious inquiry about the very deepest layers of value and belief that under gird the decisions that they make” (1991, 256).

As Wayne Bacon, a former superintendent in Ontario, has concluded, “Cases have created a professional memory for our profession.” His words suggest that the knowledge that already exists in the teaching profession is valuable, worthwhile and worthy of being passed on because it reflects what is best in teaching. Each story, each case, represents theory in action and exemplifies the ability of educators to live out daily those abstract theories made visible in practice.

Benefits of Case Discussion

- to create a culture of inquiry
- to share multiple perspectives
- to foster collaboration
- to support colleagues
- to acknowledge expertise
- to learn from one another
- to bring together people from diverse roles
- to foster the identity of the collective
- to create a forum for professional learning
- to examine assumptions
- to examine the standards *in* practice
- to identify commonalities that belong to all participants
- to examine strategies for both benefits and drawbacks
- to provide a network of communication
- to listen to diverse assumptions
- to foster professional growth.

Benefits of Case Writing

- to give voice to the professional educator
- to enhance reflective practice within the profession
- to think like a teacher
- to reflect on practice, present and past
- to understand how practice reveals theory
- to engage in serious inquiry
- to extend a way to talk about teaching
- to examine consequences of action and test hypotheses
- to change assumptions
- to provide an opportunity for professional development
- to make explicit teaching practices and beliefs
- to become aware of the extent of one’s professional knowledge
- to revisit personal assumptions.

Integrating the Standards *In Practice*

Standards Resource Kit Components

The items in this kit are intended to invite professional inquiry through engagement in dialogue.

Booklet One: Information on facilitating discussion of cases illuminates how the standards are embodied in the actions of educators. These cases, written by educators like you, will make the standards observable in practice. Reflective questions follow each case to deepen your awareness and understanding of the standards and facilitate reflection and inquiry into your own professional practice with colleagues.

Booklet Two: An inquiry protocol invites exploration of the ethical thinking, actions and decision making of educators.

Booklet Three: A case script suggests an interactive activity.

Booklet 1: Collaborative Inquiry through Cases

The case booklet provides practical ways to understand the standards of the profession within the various contexts of teaching. The cases in this Resource Kit offer an authentic lens through which teachers can continue to learn from practice. The case method fosters professional reflection, discussion and the development of communities of inquiry. The case booklet includes cases written by educators in Ontario, group inquiry processes, and tools for connecting reflective practices to the standards. The case method is a valuable pedagogical technique for pre-service teacher education, in-service teacher education, leadership development, ongoing professional learning and curriculum implementation.

The case approach holds considerable promise for extending and deepening understanding of the complexities of teaching and the professional knowledge of educators. Cases enable the essence of teaching to be illuminated within the anecdotal experiences of educators.

Booklet 2: Exploring Ethical Knowledge through Inquiry

The booklet on ethical knowledge guides educators through a process of making judgements, discerning why they made those judgements, analyzing rationales along with the implications of those choices and, finally, reflecting on those initial decisions. Listening to the thoughts of colleagues opens doors to new ways of thinking about previous challenges but often reaffirms prior decisions. Like the case method, reflection and collaborative group inquiry can enhance ethical decision making. Through this process, participants realize their knowledge of self, comprehend the principles and values that guide their thinking and actions in professional practice and deepen their understanding of the significance of the *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession*.

Booklet 3: Reflecting on Practice through a Case Script

This script recreates a case dilemma written by a principal in one of the College's Case Institutes. In this interactive format, the participants in the script represent real teachers, parents and students. Accompanying the script are reflective questions to guide further inquiry.

Contributors

The following individuals were involved in developing or validating the various resources within this kit. Hundreds of other members had opportunities to participate in the validation process through pre-service teacher education courses, in-service teacher education courses, Principal's Qualification Programs and individual school or board sessions.

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