

It's a privilege

The privilege of self-regulation in teaching recognizes the discrete skills, knowledge and experience that Ontario teachers possess and the maturity of the collective to determine and abide by ethical standards and standards of practice.

In 1996, the Ontario government created the Ontario College of Teachers to oversee that privilege to self-regulate.

Simply stated, the College:

- certifies teachers to work in Ontario publicly funded schools and school systems
- accredits the programs that prepare teachers to teach and additional qualification courses that help them to remain current and relevant throughout their careers
- receives and investigates complaints concerning those who breach provincial regulations for conduct in teaching.

In meeting its objects, the College, under the governance of a 37-member Council (23 elected and 14 appointed) has a duty to serve and protect the public interest.

It's the College's responsibility to ensure that its members are certified, qualified and competent to teach and supervise Ontario students. The public record of all Ontario Certified Teachers resides at oct.ca > Find a Teacher. The status of a member (there are 239,000 at present), their qualifications to teach, the year they were certified to teach and any conditions or disciplinary notations on their teaching certificates are available for public viewing at any time.

Only qualified teaching professionals who have been certified by the College can use the abbreviation OCT – Ontario Certified Teacher – next to their name. OCTs have met the standards for acceptance into Ontario's teaching profession. They possess the academic and experience credentials expected of all teachers in publicly funded schools and school systems. Though rare in teaching, such designations are the norm across regulated professions such as engineering and nursing.

In rare instances where there are alleged acts of professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity, the College oversees a process to receive and investigate complaints against members. Disciplinary hearings are open to the public and the decisions from those proceedings are available for public viewing from the College's website afterwards.

Setting the Standard for Great Teaching

At the heart of the College's enterprise is respect. Respect for parents and the public. Respect for students. Respect for teaching professionals. Respect for quality learning.

Respect is fundamental to the Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession and the Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession that teachers, school administrators and system leaders developed and aspire to.

Respect along with the fundamental principles of care, trust and integrity comprise the ethical standards that guide Ontario's teaching professionals.

The standards of practice provide a framework of principles that describe the knowledge, skills and values inherent in Ontario's teaching profession: a commitment to students and student learning; leadership in learning communities; ongoing professional learning; professional knowledge and the application of knowledge and experience in professional practice to promote student learning.

A mandate for our times

As teaching and learning evolve in the 21st century, so does the way in which the College regulates Ontario's teaching profession in the public interest.

The College reflects and responds to Ontario's diverse stakeholders, involves them in discussions about professionalism in teaching, and remains transparent, fair, impartial and accountable in its policies, processes and procedures.

To communicate with members to provide information and advice, we need to engage them. To assure the public that our members are current and competent, we provide direct links to professional knowledge – by accrediting initial teacher education and additional qualification courses. To inspire confidence in the professionalism of teaching, we highlight aspects of professionalism on our website, in our magazine and wherever appropriate.

A simple mandate – plus extraordinary effort and commitment

The College does not advocate for individual teachers. Its mandate is simply to serve and protect the public interest. The path towards that singular goal is paved in provincial legislation. The College serves the public interest by following 11 objects set in law. They are:

1. To regulate the profession of teaching and to govern its members.
2. To develop, establish and maintain qualifications for membership in the College.
3. To accredit professional teacher education programs offered by post-secondary educational institutions.
4. To accredit ongoing education programs for teachers offered by post-secondary educational institutions and other bodies.
5. To issue, renew, amend, suspend, cancel, revoke and reinstate certificates of qualification and registration.
6. To provide for the ongoing education of members of the College.
7. To establish and enforce professional standards and ethical standards applicable to members of the College.

8. To receive and investigate complaints against members of the College and to deal with discipline and fitness to practise issues.
9. To develop, provide and accredit educational programs leading to certificates of qualification additional to the certificate required for membership, including but not limited to certificates of qualification as a supervisory officer, and to issue, renew, amend, suspend, cancel, revoke and reinstate such additional certificates.
10. To communicate with the public on behalf of the members of the College.
11. To perform such additional functions as are prescribed by the regulations.

The College's business is public. Its meetings and hearings are open and transparent. Operating in an open manner helps build public trust and confidence in the teaching profession.

Through its annual budget process, including comprehensive briefings for Council members and debate at public Council meetings, College resources are accounted for in a transparent and accessible manner.

The College serves the public interest by regulating the teaching profession as a whole. Its role is comprehensive and its responsibilities are complex. As the teaching profession evolves, so must the College's work, so that it continues to serve and protect Ontarians.