



Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

Fédération des enseignantes et des
enseignants de l'élémentaire de l'Ontario

ADVICE ON BEING AN ASSOCIATE TEACHER

Congratulations!

You have chosen to become an associate teacher for a candidate at a Teacher Education Faculty. We thank you for accepting this voluntary professional role. Your expertise in mentoring a teacher during a practicum is invaluable. We believe and our members have told us that both associate teachers and practicing teachers benefit from this relationship. This brochure will provide you with some information on how to make this practicum a rewarding and wonderful time for both of you.

Topics include:

- Benefits of being an Associate Teacher
- Role of an Associate Teacher
- Teacher Candidate Evaluation
- Professionalism in The Workplace
- Procedures for Addressing Concerns
- Honorarium
- Relevant Bylaws and Policies
- Associate Teacher Checklist

Becoming an associate teacher is an incredibly rewarding experience as it involves mentoring and leadership. The members of The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) recognize that having a teacher candidates in classrooms can greatly enhance teaching practices.

Each school year thousands of teacher candidates arrive in our schools, eager to learn the ins and outs of how they too can become truly great teachers. The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) has a comprehensive [policy](#) on the practicum and associate teaching.

Among other things, the policy states associate teaching as a voluntary undertaking that is the professional responsibility of teachers. The policy goes on to outline all of the features that provide for well supported associate teachers who can deliver successful practice teaching experiences to teacher candidates.

ETFO Associate Teacher Policy

9.0 Associate Teachers – 2008

- 9.1 That the participation by a member as an associate teacher be voluntary.
- 9.2 That associate teacher positions be posted.
- 9.3 That the selection process for associate teachers be developed through consultation with members on the staff at the school.
- 9.4 That associate teacher candidates have a minimum of five (5) years of successful teaching experience.
- 9.5 That appropriate remuneration be paid directly to a member serving as an Associate Teacher.
- 9.6 That one associate teacher be assigned to each teacher candidate per placement and that there be a maximum of two (2) placements per year.
- 9.7 That a member serving as an Associate Teacher be provided with professional development by a faculty of education during the instructional day.
- 9.8 That professional development on the relationship between associate and teacher candidates, responsibilities, and evaluation procedures be provided to associate teachers.
- 9.9 That planning, supervising, and conferencing time be provided during the instructional day for a member serving as an associate teacher.
- 9.10 That when a member acts as an associate teacher, priority be given to candidates enrolled in teacher education programs at publicly funded Ontario universities.

Source: <http://www.etfo.ca/AboutETFO/Governance/PolicyStatements/Pages/default.aspx>

ETFO has also developed a policy on associate teachers. In this policy, ETFO has addressed issues such as the voluntary nature of associate teaching, how the associate teacher is selected, the honorarium, and the ratio of student teacher to associate teacher, etc.

As an associate teacher, your role is to create a positive learning environment where the teacher candidate can grow and learn. Your role is a multi-dimensional one and encompasses the following three areas:

- Mentoring;
- Facilitating; and
- Evaluating

Mentoring

“Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.”

John Crosby

As an associate teacher, you are a mentor, coach, and advisor. You model innovative and successful teaching practices and help the teacher candidate to develop new skills in classroom management, differentiated learning, assessment, lesson

planning, and establishing equitable classrooms. Your role is to demonstrate, break new tasks down into stages, provide time and space to practice, and share or suggest resources. You engage the teacher candidate in dialogue, challenge assumptions, and promote reflective practice as an essential component of ongoing professional growth. The relationship between the associate teacher and teacher candidate is based on trust.

Your classroom becomes the site for learning as the teacher candidate gets to know and understand the breadth and depth of teaching through the daily classroom experiences you provide. The teacher candidate needs to observe you teaching. Multiple and diverse opportunities for classroom observation will provide great learning opportunities.

If possible, the observation of other teacher colleagues will help the candidate expand her/his repertoire of teaching skills. You have the opportunity to help the candidate blend theory and practice. Discussing with teacher candidates how you develop instructional goals, plan lessons, identify objectives, and creating assessment tools will greatly benefit his/her understanding. Assisting teacher candidates to develop problem solving skills is essential.

Although, the teacher candidate is responsible for delivering lessons, and/or planning units, it is important to note that during the entire practicum, a teacher candidate is never to be left alone in the classroom. Legally, you are responsible for your class and you cannot relinquish that responsibility. Your presence is required with the class at all times.

Teacher candidates are not qualified teachers and, as such, may not have any legal protection should anything occur which could involve allegations of assault or negligence while they are alone with a class. Such an instance could result in ending her/his teaching career before it begins.

The associate teacher may also be the subject of criminal legal action and/or investigation by the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) for having left the classroom without proper supervision. Teacher candidates are neither to be used as “on-call” teachers nor as occasional teachers.

Facilitating

As an associate teacher, you are key to ensuring the teacher candidate integrates into the school culture. You should introduce the candidate to:

- the ETFO steward, the administration of the school, and/or other teachers;
- support staff who assist teachers in the classroom and/or other support staff; and
- the local ETFO president/executive.

You should also help the teacher candidate understand the inner workings of the school and the Board including policies, rules, and regulations.

The teacher candidate should experience all aspects of the teaching profession including: supervision duties; staff meetings; curriculum nights; school meetings, and parental interviews, if allowed. Your teacher candidate should also be invited to attend any professional learning activity in which you take part.

Offer to take the teacher candidate to a local union meeting during the time of her/his practicum. Many locals host a recognition evening for associate teachers and their candidates. Encourage your candidate to attend the meeting. Check first with the local to ensure that the meeting would be open to teacher candidates.

Evaluating

After a period of observation, it becomes time for the teacher candidate to take on greater responsibility in the classroom. This period of time may be pre-determined by the faculty. If not, you can negotiate the timing of this next step with the teacher candidate.

Through the gradual release of responsibility in various areas of teaching, the candidate will assume more responsibility for planning and executing the lessons. Your role now becomes one of both formative and summative evaluator. In a formative role, you observe the candidate’s teaching and provide constructive feedback.

You encourage the candidate to take risks and to expand her/his instructional repertoire. You question the candidate on choices made and suggest alternatives.

You provide support and guidance. You ask deep questions as to values and beliefs about teaching and learning. Remember that the teacher candidate is most likely a novice at teaching and your expectations should be reasonable, particularly at the beginning of the practicum experience. Over a period of time, it should be evident that the teacher candidate has grown in all aspects of teaching.

You are also responsible to provide a summative evaluation of the candidate. This is the only circumstance in which an ETFO member can evaluate another teacher.

Schedule important conferencing time during which you can provide timely and constructive feedback, establish new expectations, help design a learning plan, and provide guidance. You may wish to develop a rubric or evaluation form to use during the observations and conferencing. Above all, be honest and candid. Help the teacher candidate understand what has worked well and where there is room for growth.

To prevent any miscommunication, it is suggested that you provide both oral and written feedback on a regular basis so that there is a record of these very important discussions. In some cases, the faculty has forms to help you in this role.

Ensure that you meet all faculty time lines. Familiarize yourself with the faculty policies that govern the practicum. It is important to understand the role of the faculty advisor, and your role in the practicum and in the evaluation of the teacher candidate.

If the teacher candidate is experiencing difficulty, use all your resources to help design a plan for success. Access the expertise of other colleagues, professional learning resources, and opportunities. In the event that the teacher candidate is unwilling to listen to your advice and there is insufficient or no improvement, make immediate contact with the faculty advisor to determine how to proceed.

A Note on Professionalism

The role of associate teacher is an extremely important one. You are mentor, guide, coach and above all, role model. You must exhibit, at all times, a high degree of professionalism.

Professionalism is at the core of our being as teachers. Professionals support each other and approach problems with the attitude that they can work together to solve their concerns. Maintaining professionalism should be foremost in the way you conduct yourself in the workplace. Respecting the ETFO [Code of Professional Conduct](#) will inform and guide your actions in relation to your colleagues, your union, and your profession.

You ensure a professional working environment. You advocate for social justice and equity. You model professional conduct at all times and engage in respectful relations with colleagues, the administration, support staff, and parents. The teacher candidate will fashion her/his

behaviour from the cues you give, your actions, and the words you speak.

It is also very important that you establish and respect the professional boundaries that frame your relationship with the teacher candidate.

Your role is to mentor and support the teacher candidate during this important learning journey. You are neither friend nor confidante. It is important to honour the role that you play and to leave no room for misinterpretation.

Honorarium

Although associate teaching is voluntary in nature, some faculties of education provide honoraria for their associate teachers. The honorarium can take the form of monetary remuneration given directly to the teacher or provided to the school for time-release.

Other faculties may designate funds to the school or the department. Sometimes the faculty will give the associate teacher a tuition discount. Please refer to the faculty handbook for details.

Note: if the honorarium is paid directly to the associate teacher, it must be declared as income for tax purposes, whether the faculty provides a T4A form or not.

Teacher Candidate Issues and Concerns

Most faculties of education have procedures for addressing incompatibility or conflict between associate teachers and teacher candidates. Addressing issues early is important.

Familiarize yourself with the faculty of education handbook. It is the responsibility of the faculty to have established procedures on harassment and conflict. An associate teacher who feels harassed by a teacher candidate should identify harassment correctly. Use the ETFO [Human Rights Statement and Harassment Policy](#) as a guide.

If you feel you are being harassed by your teacher candidate, take the following steps:

- clearly identify the harassment;
- discuss your concerns with the teacher candidate, and try to resolve them together in a professional and collegial manner;
- if the problem persists, contact the faculty of education immediately;
- inform your principal of the problem;
- if they cannot resolve the problem, consult the board's anti-harassment policy, and follow its procedures;
- inform your school steward and the local president; and
- contact a Professional Relations Staff member at ETFO at 1-888-838-3836.

ETFO Human Rights Statement

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario is committed to:

- providing an environment for members that is free from harassment and discrimination at all provincial or local Federation sponsored activities;
- fostering the goodwill and trust necessary to protect the rights of all individuals within the organization;
- neither tolerating nor condoning behaviour that undermines the dignity or self-esteem of individuals or the integrity of relationships; and
- promoting mutual respect, understanding, and co-operation as the basis of interaction among all members.

Harassment and discrimination on the basis of a prohibited ground are violations of the Ontario Human Rights Code and are illegal. The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario will not tolerate any form of harassment or discrimination, as defined by the Ontario Human Rights Code, at provincial or local Federation sponsored activities.

What is Harassment?

- Harassment under the Code is defined as engaging in offensive behaviour or conduct, on a single or repeated basis, against another person when that behaviour is known, or ought reasonably to be known, to be unwelcome or unwanted.
- These actions may relate to, but are not restricted to an individual's position of authority, race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, language, gender, sexual orientation age, record of offences, religion, marital status, socio-economic status, family status, personal health, or disability.

Sexual Harassment:

Sexual Harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- offensive behaviour, comments and/or gestures;
- sexual advances or remarks;
- requests for sexual favours;
- a reprisal, or threat of reprisal, for rejection of a sexual advance or request for sexual favours; and
- the display of exploitive material.

Racial and Ethnocultural Harassment:

Racial and Ethnocultural Harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- ridiculing, degrading or expressing hatred or intolerance, whether verbally, in writing or physically, based on race or ethnic origin;
- displaying offensive or derogatory materials of a racist nature; and
- refusal to work with a person because of race or ethnicity.

Sexual Orientation Harassment:

Sexual Orientation Harassment may include, but is not limited to:

- ridiculing, degrading or expressing hatred or intolerance, whether verbally, in writing or physically, based on sexual orientation;
- displaying offensive or derogatory materials of a homophobic nature; and
- refusal to work with a person because of sexual orientation.

Other Forms of Harassment:

Other forms of harassment may include, but are not limited to:

- Offensive, embarrassing or harmful references to an individual's intellectual or physical capacities, appearance, or family status;
- words or actions that result in feelings of uneasiness, humiliation, discomfort, and distress; and
- an expression of perceived power and superiority over another person, usually for reasons over which the victim has little or no control.

Depending on the circumstances, a member may wish to resolve a problem by doing one of the following:

- discussing it directly with the individual involved;
- seeking assistance to reach an informal resolution; and
- filing a formal complaint.

It is important to document the alleged incident(s), including times, places, and witnesses.

Associate Teacher Checklist

To ensure that the associate teacher experience is a mutually rewarding one, the following check list may be helpful.

Inform your students that you will be having a teacher candidate in the classroom.

Read the faculty of education handbook for associate teachers.

Discuss expectations, time lines, and protocols with your teacher candidate.

Provide an appropriate workspace for the teacher candidate.

Provide a copy of the school's daily schedule and information about the school's layout, routines, including announcements, extra-curricular activities, safety drills, etc.

Provide access to resources: curriculum documents, course outlines, and assessment and evaluation materials.

Plan for the teacher candidate to observe your classes and routines before assuming teaching responsibilities.

Check with colleagues to determine their willingness to have the teacher candidate observe their classrooms.

Provide access to essential board policy.

Provide the teacher candidate with a list of dates of upcoming staff/department meetings, local meetings, federation events, and professional development opportunities.

Introduce the teacher candidate to the support staff, the administration, the ETFO steward, and others.

Review your class lists with the teacher candidate. Schedule mutually agreeable times for planning, observation, feedback, and reflection.

Establish the parameters of the relationship: roles and responsibilities.

Identify a procedure in case of conflict.

Provide clarity on the evaluative nature of the relationship, expectations and indicators of success.

Inform parents that a teacher candidate will be in your classroom.

Note the presence of a teacher candidate in the supply teacher binder.

The best associate teacher - teacher candidate relationships are reciprocal in nature. The teacher candidate views you as a role model of teacher professionalism. The teacher candidate benefits from your experiential knowledge, your understanding of the system, and your familiarity with the routines of teaching. The associate teacher hones reflective and questioning skills, reconnects to the freshness of being a new teacher, and assumes an important leadership role in preparing teacher candidates for their new lives as teachers.



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