

# Ensuring High Professional Standards in Ontario Education

A RESPONSE TO THE TEACHER TESTING PROPOSAL



# ETFO Positions With Respect To Ensuring High Professional Standards In Ontario Education

1. Students have the right to the highest quality teaching.
2. Effective pedagogy engages students in the learning process.
3. ETFO opposes written competency tests for Ontario teachers.
4. The Ontario government should provide Curriculum Implementation Days within the existing school year calendar, during the instructional day, to facilitate teacher in-service related to the curricula.
5. The only prescribed professional development for teachers should be that related to the curricula, student assessment and effective pedagogy. It should be provided by school boards within the existing school year calendar, during the instructional day, on a consistent basis and be adequately funded by the provincial government.
6. School boards alone are responsible for evaluating teachers and providing opportunities for prescribed learning.
7. As lifelong learners, teachers engage in ongoing professional development on a voluntary basis by assessing their own learning needs and developing individual growth plans.
8. The Ministry of Education should develop core guidelines and principles for a Supervision for Growth Model in partnership with teacher federations and school board, supervisory officer and principal associations.
9. School administrators who evaluate teacher competence should be trained to assess teachers with respect to implementation of the curricula.
10. The Ministry of Education should implement and fund a province-wide mentoring program to assist beginning teachers in their first two years in the profession.
11. The Ontario College of Teachers has a role to advocate on behalf of Ontario teachers with respect to ensuring there are sufficient and appropriate opportunities for ongoing professional learning.

# Ensuring High Professional Standards in Ontario Education

a response to the teacher testing proposal

## Summary

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) has developed a position paper to respond to the announcement by the Ontario government that teachers will be required to perform written competency tests and to pass recertification examinations every three to five years. While ETFO acknowledges the government's desire to demonstrate to the public that there are accountability measures to ensure high professional standards in Ontario education, the Federation believes that the proposed teacher testing scheme would fail to achieve that objective. No other province in Canada is proposing that practising teachers be required to perform competency tests in order to maintain their certification.

A number of American states have experimented with various forms of teacher testing. The vast majority of states which have testing programs focus on teacher candidates. In forty-four states, students enrolled in faculty of education programs must write tests to meet certification requirements. In the mid-1980s, Arkansas and Texas each implemented a one-time teacher testing program. In both cases, the testing programs cost millions of dollars and resulted in very few teachers not passing the tests. There is no American precedent for testing practising teachers on a regular basis. More importantly, no research from teacher testing indicates that written tests can effectively assess teacher competency. As the position paper outlines, the key aspects of teaching go beyond what a knowledge-based test can assess.

Rather than implement a teacher testing scheme in Ontario that would fail to address teacher compe-

tency effectively and that would be a waste of taxpayers' money, the ETFO position paper proposes some constructive strategies that would meet the objective of ensuring high professional standards and that would be welcomed by the teaching profession and the public. While there are important accountability measures already in place in Ontario education, ETFO believes that there are ways to increase the transparency of that accountability and to provide some provincial standards to ensure best practices across the province.

**ETFO does not believe that teacher testing will meet the government's stated objective of ensuring high professional standards in Ontario education.**

ETFO proposes that the Ontario government focus on three strategies: enhancing teacher professional development; developing a provincial model for teacher evaluation and professional growth; and implementing a mentoring program for beginning teachers. If the government were to embrace positive strategies for enhancing teaching practice and teacher professional growth, these measures would be supported by the profession. They would also be much more effective than a teacher testing program in achieving the objective

of ensuring high professional standards in Ontario education.

Teaching is a highly supervised profession. While there is significant accountability in the Ontario education system, ETFO welcomes the opportunity to bring public focus to accountability issues and to suggest means by which the best practices in teacher professional development and evaluation can be extended throughout the public education system. The primary goal of teacher professional development and evaluation is to enhance student learning.



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## Photos:

Photographs of teachers in this document are of Ontario elementary teachers participating in professional development workshops.

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## The Issue

In April 1999, in anticipation of an election call, Premier Mike Harris announced that the government would be implementing a program to test Ontario teachers and that all teachers would be required to pass recertification examinations every three to five years. The proposal came as a surprise to all concerned as there had been no discussions about the issue within the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ontario College of Teachers or with the teacher federations. It was clear at the time that the testing proposal was perceived by the Premier's office as one which would be attractive to core government supporters and to the broader voting public. The testing proposal resonates with those who believe that there needs to be greater accountability and "quality assurance mechanisms" in public education.

Since the re-election of the Harris government, the responsibility for delivering the promise to impose teacher testing has moved from the Premier's office to the Ministry of Education. The Education Minister continues to articulate the commitment to implement a teacher testing program but has indicated that the concept is multifaceted and that it will not be simply a "pen and paper test." The October 1999 Speech from the Throne states that the testing plan will include:

"regular testing of teachers' knowledge and skills through written and other assessment methods. Remediation will be offered to those who fail assessments, and decertification will result if remediation is unsuccessful."

At the same time as making these pronouncements on teacher testing, the government has promised to consult widely on the issue, including with the teacher federations.

It is clear that teachers across the province are deeply offended by the test proposal and teacher leaders, including the ETFO President, have taken a clear position in opposition to the concept of teachers writing a knowledge-based test to evaluate their competency. This position was reinforced by a resolution passed by the Canadian Teachers' Federation in July 1999 which rejected mandatory teacher testing in favour of voluntary professional development programs.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of teacher testing, to review how teacher testing has been implemented elsewhere, and to propose alternative mechanisms for achieving the government's goal of ensuring high professional standards in Ontario education. ETFO believes that there are alternative, more constructive means to achieving this goal that would be welcomed by teachers and the public. Requiring teachers to undergo written tests to evaluate their competency would be ineffective and a waste of taxpayers' money.

**ETFO proposes that the Ontario government focus on three strategies: enhancing teacher professional development; developing a provincial model for teacher evaluation and professional growth; and implementing a mentoring program for beginning teachers.**

# Background

No other Canadian province or territory has a mandatory teacher testing program. Like many recent government policies, the testing proposal has its roots in some of the American states, in particular where Republican state governments have attempted to impose an educational reform agenda. Most American teacher testing schemes, however, focus on teachers entering the profession, not practising teachers.

## TESTING PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES

### Certification Tests

Forty-four states currently require teacher certification tests, known as the Praxis Series of tests. These tests are developed by the National Testing Service, based in Princeton, New Jersey and follow earlier tests, known as the National Teacher Examination (NTE). Each state is free to set its own pass-fail score, so there is no single standard. In some states, the tests are required only for students entering education faculties who haven't attained certain grade level averages; other states require all students to write the tests as a condition of certification.

The tests are written examinations and assess a candidate's knowledge of reading, writing and mathematics. Teacher candidates with a subject speciality such as biology, mathematics or social studies are also required to take a pre-professional skills test related to their subject area. Finally, there is a performance appraisal component where evaluators, who are certified teachers, observe and assess a beginning teacher's classroom performance.<sup>1</sup>

In the State of New York, teacher candidates are required to take three standardized tests. One evalu-

ates knowledge in liberal arts and science, a second written test assesses teaching skills and a third is designed to assess knowledge of a teacher's subject speciality. This last test is largely a multiple-choice test. Newly licensed teachers then have nine years to prepare for the next level of certification which involves writing an Advanced Content Specialty Test and undergoing an Advanced Assessment of Teaching Skills. This latter assessment is conducted by a principal and two external evaluators and includes portfolio assessment, teaching observations, diagnostic sessions and career plans. In order to keep their licences, teachers in this state will regularly undergo evaluations by a similar panel.

### Tests of Practising Teachers

In 1983, the State of Arkansas introduced legislation requiring teachers to write a competency test in order to fulfil requirements for licence renewal. The test, which was implemented in 1995, was a one-time exercise. Only a very small number of teachers failed to pass the examinations.

Arkansas teachers are no longer required to write competency tests to have their licences renewed. Teacher licences are renewed on recommendation from the teacher's local school authority on the basis of performance appraisal. Teachers with a bachelor's degree have their licences reviewed every six years; teachers with a master's degree renew their licences every 10 years. Following the testing initiative, the State of Arkansas moved to a state-wide model for professional growth and evaluation. Within the last two years, local school authorities have been given jurisdiction to develop their own models. The emphasis of the models is on teacher professional development and professional growth.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[http://ghc-www.ghc.ou.edu/CATS/tests\\_info/praxis.html](http://ghc-www.ghc.ou.edu/CATS/tests_info/praxis.html) and <http://www.teachingandlearning.org/licensure/praxis>  
<sup>2</sup>Arkansas Educators' Association

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In 1984, the State of Texas introduced legislation requiring a similar testing program for practising teachers. The legislation required that all practising teachers perform a one-time test. The test, entitled the Texas Exam of Certificated Administrators and Teachers, was administered in the spring of 1996. Approximately 97 per cent of those who wrote the test passed it. The initiative cost the state about \$5 million (U.S. funds). Following the test's implementation, it became part of the state's certification process. The test is also used for anyone certified prior to 1986 who was not teaching when the test was implemented and who is seeking to re-enter the profession.<sup>3</sup>

In 1997, the State of North Carolina introduced the Excellent Schools Act to require teachers at schools that were "low-performing" according to student test results to write a competency test. In June 1998, 247 teachers from 15 schools were told they would have to write the test. Teachers who failed the test three times would lose their teaching licence. The state government planned to expand the test to teachers in all "low-performing" schools, not just the lowest 15, beginning in the 1999-2000 school year.

The North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE), joined by two county school boards, filed a class action suit to block the new state tests. Prior to the case coming to court, the state legislature amended the law and withdrew the test proposal. In place of the test, the state imposed a performance appraisal program where the teachers in question would be evaluated and required to write a test if identified to

be weak in their teaching practice. The performance appraisals were conducted by an "assistance team" consisting of a principal and three or four teachers. As the result of this process, no teacher was required to write the test.<sup>4</sup>

## Other Challenges to Teacher Testing

In Alabama, in the mid-1980s, African-American teachers, backed by the Alabama Education Association (AEA), brought a suit against the Alabama Initial Teacher Competency Test. The association charged that the tests were biased. Following an out-of-court settlement, the test was thrown out and replaced by better selection mechanisms. In Rhode Island, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a coalition led by the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Urban League mounted a campaign against the National Teacher Examination (NTE). The coalition ultimately got the state legislature to pass a law saying that failure on the NTE could not be used as a sole factor to deny anybody a licence.

**There is no research from teacher testing that indicates written tests can effectively assess teacher competency.**

## RESEARCH ON TEACHER TESTING

There appears to be no evidence that requiring teachers to write tests results in an accurate determination of who is a competent teacher. Bob Schaeffer, Public Education Director of the National Center for Fair and Open Testing, for example, argues that the Educational Testing Service, the manufacturer of the NTE, has no data to demonstrate that the tests "can tell who is or is not capable of being a minimally

<sup>3</sup>Texas State Teachers' Association

<sup>4</sup>Fair Test Examiner, Spring 1998 and the North Carolina Association of Educators

competent teacher.”<sup>5</sup> Schaeffer’s organization is an advocacy organization based in Cambridge, Massachusetts which is devoted to monitoring and researching the teacher testing issue in the United States. Schaeffer also points to a study conducted a decade ago in Tennessee where the authors examined the relationship between NTE scores and principals’ rating of teachers in the classroom. The study found that there was no connection. “High scores did not necessarily produce good ratings; low scores, not necessarily bad ratings.”<sup>6</sup> The authors concluded that tests measured the ability to take tests, not necessarily the skills it takes to be a good teacher.

The National Research Council, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences, has launched a study of teacher testing. The study will take 20 months, costing \$1.8 million. The Council plans to issue an interim report by February 2000 outlining the measures that states now use to license teachers. The second phase of the study will explore possible alternatives. Linda Darling-Hammond, a member of the committee conducting the study and a professor of education at Stanford University, has stated, “There’s not much evidence that most of what’s used has a strong correlation with ability to teach.”<sup>7</sup> This position has been echoed by Richard Murnane, a professor at Harvard University’s graduate school of education: “The relationship between scores on those tests and teaching effectiveness is very, very tenuous. If you want to see how well teachers are teaching, there is a much more effective way of judging that.” Professor Murnane proposes rigorous evaluations as the proven alternative.<sup>8</sup>

**Key elements of teaching, like classroom management, rapport with students, developing a collaborative learning environment, and the ability to communicate with parents, cannot be assessed in a written test.**

The lack of research supports teachers’ instinctive reaction to the Ontario testing proposal that it is impossible to design a written test that could effectively assess teaching competency. Key elements of teaching, like classroom management, rapport with students, developing a collaborative learning environment, and the ability to communicate with parents, cannot be assessed in a written test. Further, Ontario teachers have asked legitimate questions about how tests could be designed to assess teachers who teach classes like special education, English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) and library resource.

## **TEACHER ACCREDITATION AND EVALUATION IN ONTARIO**

To be admitted to Ontario’s faculties of education, teacher candidates must first have an undergraduate degree. Faculties of education in Ontario require high levels of academic performance in addition to other criteria. Teacher candidates thus enter the profession meeting high academic standards.

After being certified, teachers face a probationary period of up to two years, during which they are given at least two in-depth evaluations. These gauge their mastery of the curriculum, student assessment, rapport with students, interest in professional development, ability to make accommodation for multiple intelligences and learning styles, and a host of other skills. Subsequent evaluations take place every one to five years, depending on the school board.

<sup>5</sup>Bob Schaeffer, “Standardized Tests and Teacher Competence” *School Voices*, (Fall, 1996).

<sup>6</sup>Another Look at the Concurrent and Predictive Validity of the National Teacher’s Examinations” cited in Bob Schaeffer, *op cit*.

<sup>7</sup>Education Week, June 23, 1999.

<sup>8</sup>Ottawa Citizen, September 22, 1999.

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Teachers who have received their qualifications outside of Ontario are also required to meet stringent standards before receiving Ontario certification. They must provide the Ontario College of Teachers with university transcripts and course outlines from their academic institutions. The College then contacts the relevant universities and ministry of education to confirm the validity of the information provided and to ensure that there are no outstanding legal issues related to the individual seeking Ontario certification. The teacher is then provided with an Interim Certificate of Qualification and undergoes extensive evaluation before receiving a Certificate of Qualification from the College.

Ontario teachers must earn additional certification to teach in other divisional levels or to specialize in other subject areas. Many boards also require them to submit annual “professional growth plans” which outline courses they wish to take and other teaching goals.

## Alternatives to a Teacher Testing Program

ETFO believes that if the objective of the Ontario government is to ensure high professional and academic standards in Ontario education, then the government should be focusing on constructive supports for teachers. These include: specific days during every school year when teachers receive in-service related to the curricula, student assessment and effective pedagogy; consistency, stability and rea-

sonable timelines around curriculum implementation; focused support for beginning teachers; and a provincial model for professional growth and evaluation.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ETFO believes that there are two components to ongoing professional learning. One is “prescribed learning” or what the teacher is expected to do with respect to curriculum implementation, student assessment and effective pedagogy; the other is “personal professional growth” or what the teacher chooses to do as a lifelong learner.

#### *Prescribed Learning*

ETFO believes that:

- In order to be successful in the job, teachers must be current in their knowledge of curricula, student assessment and effective pedagogy.
- Prescribed learning should be: related to curricula, student assessment and effective pedagogy; provided by school boards within the existing school year calendar, during the instructional day, on a consistent basis with adequate resources; and funded by the Ministry of Education.
- The government must provide “Curriculum Implementation Days” within the existing school year calendar, during the instructional day, in order to achieve effective implementation.
- Time is needed for teachers to plan, co-ordinate and dialogue in divisional teams and to deal with issues around classroom management and conflict

**The government should be focusing on constructive supports for teachers.**

management during the instructional day.

- All teachers in the province must have equal access to this type of professional development.

### ***Personal Professional Growth***

ETFO believes that:

- Teachers have a responsibility to engage in on-going personal professional growth.
- Personal professional growth is varied and wide-ranging. It includes formal and informal learning, directly and indirectly related to teacher practice.
- The Ontario College of Teachers must acknowledge the broad spectrum of professional development activities in which teachers routinely voluntarily engage.
- There is a need to recognize aspects of teaching which extend beyond simply teaching the curriculum. The abilities to organize and manage a classroom, interact with students and communicate effectively with parents are crucial to quality teaching.

### ***Maintaining and Renewing Teacher Certification***

In putting forward the concept of teacher testing, the Ontario government has introduced the notion of teacher recertification. ETFO believes that if school boards and the government fulfil their respective responsibilities in providing teacher in-service related to prescribed learning as outlined above, teachers will remain current and competent in their teaching practice. There would be no need to implement a recer-

tification process for practising teachers. ETFO further believes that the concept of recertification should only be discussed with respect to teachers who have left the profession for an extended period of time, have allowed their membership in the Ontario College of Teachers to lapse and have failed to remain current in their teaching practice.

### ***Teacher Professional Development is a Shared Responsibility***

The responsibility for ensuring that teachers are well-trained, competent and professional is a shared one. The provincial government (particularly the Ministry of Education), the Ontario College of Teachers, teacher federations, school boards, school principals and individual teachers are all partners in that responsibility.

### ***Role of Government***

The responsibility of the government is to establish legislative parameters related to the expectations for ongoing professional learning. This framework should address: the professional commitment of teachers to be involved in lifelong learning; the responsibility of school boards to implement a process for teacher professional growth; and the role of the Ontario

College of Teachers to facilitate lifelong learning on the part of all teachers.

The government must provide financial resources to school boards through the funding model and identify specific release time opportunities at the board level for teachers to participate in professional growth opportunities. With recent changes to curricula and the implementation of a standardized report

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card, teachers' workloads have increased dramatically. This factor must be acknowledged through the provision of specific time for teacher in-service, within the existing school year calendar and during the instructional day.

The Ministry must establish partnerships with the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and the Affiliates to provide professional growth activities for all teachers, especially related to the implementation of curricula. "Curriculum Implementation Days" should be established as part of the existing school year calendar and during the instructional day. Additional time and resources must be allocated to train teachers who teach ESL, Special Education and specialized subjects to the entire school population.

## *Role of the College of Teachers*

The responsibility of the Ontario College of Teachers in ongoing professional learning is to advocate on behalf of all teachers. The College should define exemplars which provide guidance regarding professional growth for teachers in various settings and provide assistance to teachers in planning for professional growth.

The College should also report to the government about specific professional learning opportunities required by teachers and identify the financial support required to promote and provide professional learning opportunities at the school board level.

## *Role of Teacher Federations*

The responsibility of the OTF Affiliates is to be involved in planning structures related to learning opportunities offered in cooperation with school

boards, the Ministry of Education, the College of Teachers and others. The OTF Affiliates also deliver professional development programs designed to enhance curriculum implementation. They should monitor current trends and innovations in professional learning and serve as accredited delivery agents of professional learning by offering Additional Qualifications courses and other training programs.

Like other teacher federations, ETFO provides excellent professional development opportunities to its members and other teachers and education workers across the province. These programs provide teachers with opportunities that reinforce effective pedagogy and focus on enhancing student learning. During the 1998-99 school year, more than 6,000 ETFO members participated in ETFO courses. In addition to these programs, ETFO Locals provide a wide range of professional development workshops and opportunities to meet the needs of their members.

Some of ETFO's courses are specifically designed to assist teachers who need support in improving their classroom practice. The "Planning and Programming" course and the Project TEACH and PRIDE courses are particularly helpful to teachers who need assistance in the area of classroom management and organization. Overall, the question of teacher competence relates more often to classroom management skills and developing a rapport with students than to subject knowledge. Written tests cannot assess these key competency factors.

The more than 4,000 Ontario teachers who participated in the Summer Institutes during July and August 1999 and the more than 2,200 who were

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turned away clearly demonstrate the number of teachers who choose to engage in ongoing professional learning. The response also demonstrates teachers' support for courses developed and offered by the federations.

### **Role of School Boards**

It is the responsibility of school boards to provide meaningful in-service for teachers and to provide the opportunities for teachers to access formal and informal professional development during the existing school year calendar, during the instructional day. "Both research and teacher experience indicate that the best professional development of teachers, no matter what their experience or skill levels, takes place in the context of shared planning and problem solving with other professionals."<sup>9</sup>

### **Role of the Teacher**

The primary responsibility of teachers in ongoing professional learning is to determine the kind of professional experiences which best serve their needs and teaching circumstances. To fulfil this responsibility, teachers need to: develop a plan that identifies opportunities for these experiences; maintain a personal record or portfolio of ongoing professional learning during the course of the year that verifies the experience; and submit, if requested, this record or portfolio for review as part of the school board's performance review of the teacher. Part of the plan may be to observe other teachers teaching. William Glasser<sup>10</sup> says that the biggest problem that the best teachers in a school district have is that they're the best they've ever seen. Ideally, the best people should observe the other best

people in the school district. That is the first step in helping teachers become the teachers they want to be.

## **SUPERVISION FOR GROWTH MODEL**

All school boards are required to implement supervision and evaluation procedures at the school level. To ensure consistent, province-wide standards for teacher performance appraisal and to establish a positive framework for teacher professional development, ETFO supports the concept of developing a Supervision for Growth Model. A provincial model would ensure that all teachers in the province have equal opportunities for professional growth and that evaluation of teachers is based on "best practices" currently in place. The Federation further believes that such a model should be developed in a partnership consisting of the Ministry of Education, the federations, and the school board, supervisory officer and principal associations. Part of the implementation process should include a pilot project phase.

There are other examples of this concept already in place in Canada. The province of Alberta has recently implemented a policy entitled "Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy" which was developed in partnership with the Alberta Teachers' Association. In New Brunswick, a teacher evaluation and professional growth model entitled "Professional Growth Process" is being pilot-tested in three school districts.

ETFO believes that a Supervision for Growth Model must include four distinct components:

**A provincial Supervision for Growth Model would ensure that all teachers in the province have equal opportunities for professional growth and that evaluation of teachers is based on "best practices" currently in place.**

<sup>9</sup>Royal Commission on Learning, *For the Love of Learning*, Vol. III, Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1995, p.3.  
<sup>10</sup>William Glasser, *The Quality School*, Harperperennial, 1998.

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- i) **Evaluation of beginning teachers** - This would be done on a regular basis during the probationary period by the school administrators to assist and improve teacher performance and to highlight strengths and best practices.
- ii) **Growth** - Once they have completed the probationary period, teachers would continue to pursue professional development and growth throughout their careers. Teachers would also be subject to performance reviews on a cyclical basis. If the performance review identified an aspect of a teacher's practice which was weak or deficient, that teacher would move to the "improvement track."
- iii) **Improvement** - Teachers who are identified for this strand would be required to put forth a concerted effort to change in an area deemed to be weak or deficient. If, after a teacher received support and was given a reasonable defined period of time to improve, improvement was not evident, the school board could place the teacher under review.
- iv) **Under Review** - Teachers who are experiencing serious difficulty in performance may be placed under review which could lead to termination of contract. This formal process with prescribed procedures and requirements is intended to bring about positive change in substandard performance.

Every member of the Ontario College of Teachers, who is employed by a school board, should participate in the Supervision for Growth Model. Modifications to the process described above would have to be made for occasional teachers, principals, vice-principals and supervisory officials.

A Supervision for Growth Model would engage and support teachers in activities that: utilize their skills to acknowledge and accommodate multiple intelligences and learning styles; encourage them to venture into new learning environments; and

encourage them to take risks and explore areas that are unknown to them.

Teachers presently spend a considerable amount of time each year in these activities. The outcome is very positive and rewarding for teachers and positively affects the children in their care.

A Supervision for Growth Model would empower teachers to:

- assess their own learning needs and develop growth plans for the year;
- develop individual plans that could include attending curriculum meetings, expanding personal computer skills, reading educational journals, undertaking an action research project, reflecting on practice and recording observations in a journal, serving as an associate teacher, mentoring/coaching a new staff member, instructing a course, taking a course that will improve classroom practice, serving as a workshop presenter, designing a program for teachers' use, writing curriculum, chairing an in-school/board committee, and shadowing a colleague; and
- keep a record of their experiences as written documentation of their ongoing professional learning experiences.

School boards evaluate beginning teachers and teachers who are in difficulty to ensure that they achieve an expected level of competency. Once the board is assured that a teacher has achieved that level of competency, the focus of any supervision should be on ongoing growth and development.

Once a Supervision for Growth Model has been developed, it would be presented to school boards for implementation. The provincial framework for teacher professional development and evaluation should be an organic one which evolves over time in

response to an assessment of its implementation and to changes in the student learning environment. The model would be subject to regular assessment and review by the stakeholders.

### **Role of School Boards**

ETFO acknowledges the role and responsibility of vice-principals, principals and supervisory officers in the evaluation process. The Federation also believes, however, that evaluators need to be trained in their supervisory role. One of the problems with teacher evaluation is that little time is spent training administrators. It is essential that appropriate criteria be established and that these be applied consistently by the evaluators. School boards are responsible for ensuring that vice-principals, principals and supervisory officers are provided with appropriate training in supervisory and evaluation procedures and that they are sufficiently familiar with the curricula, student assessment and effective pedagogy. The ability to perform these functions should form part of these educators' own performance appraisal.

Individual school boards would be responsible for implementing the Supervision for Growth Model proposed in this document. The appropriate process must be followed including thorough documentation, clearly defined expectations, support and assistance and reasonable time to improve. If, at the end of the process, the teacher is unsuccessful in carrying out his or her duties to the level of competency required, the school board could report this to the Ontario College of Teachers. This option is presently available to school boards through the *Ontario College of Teachers Act*.

### **Role of the College**

The Ontario College of Teachers would be aware of the Supervision for Growth Model, including the model's expectations and criteria for assessing the competency of Ontario teachers. The role of the College is to serve and protect the public interest by ensuring that competent teachers are providing quality education to students.

While it is the role of school boards to implement the model and to evaluate teachers, a school board can make a report to the College "where in the opinion of the board the conduct or actions of a member who is or has been employed by the board should be reviewed by a committee of the College."<sup>11</sup> The College, upon receiving a report, can initiate an investigation of alleged incompetence through the investigations and discipline procedures currently in place at the College.

### **Role of the Federation**

The Federation supports and assists members by protecting their rights and ensuring that teachers are treated fairly according to due process. When a teacher endeavours to improve his or her practice, the school board should provide support, encouragement and recognition.

Professional learning and performance reviews are closely related and demonstrate the need for active participation and co-operation of all those responsible for professional learning.

**Teachers welcome accountability strategies that are effective, fairly implemented and achieve meaningful objectives.**

<sup>11</sup>Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996, Section 47 (3).

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## TEACHER MENTORING PROGRAM

Implementing a teacher mentoring program across the province for beginning teachers would be a far more constructive and effective investment of resources than establishing an expensive teacher testing program with questionable relevancy to the issue at hand: ensuring high professional standards in Ontario teaching.

A teacher mentoring program, where an experienced teacher would volunteer to be released for part of the school day to monitor and coach a beginning teacher, would provide invaluable support to a teacher at the most critical point in his or her career. Mentoring would enable the associate teacher to reinforce the positive learning styles of a new teacher and to provide professional guidance and assistance. Giving beginning teachers a positive start in their career would be a significant contributing factor to ensuring high teaching standards in the province.

To work effectively, the provincial government would have to allocate specific funds in the education funding formula to support the costs of releasing the associate teacher for a specified period of time to work with a beginning teacher.

## Conclusion

ETFO recognizes the importance of high professional standards and high academic achievement in Ontario education. The Federation believes that teachers are committed to providing quality programs and that they are accountable for their professional practice. Teachers welcome accountability strategies that are effective, fairly implemented and achieve meaningful objectives. Mechanisms for ensuring accountability in teaching are not uniform across the province and this paper has identified ways in which provincial accountability standards can be developed and implemented on a consistent and effective basis.

While the Ontario government has introduced the concept of implementing a teacher testing program for teachers, ETFO believes that the government can better achieve its goal of ensuring high professional standards in education by implementing the constructive proposals recommended in this paper. Students, teachers and public education would all be far better served if the government proceeded with constructive policies to support teachers in their classrooms. To do so would be accomplishing the same stated goal of ensuring that Ontario is served by competent, highly skilled teachers committed to excellence.

**NOTES:**

# The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) represents 70,000 teachers and education workers in elementary public schools across the province.

ETFO members work in 37,000 classrooms in over 2,500 schools. They teach, support and inspire more than 920,000 children ranging in age from four to fourteen years.

ETFO and its predecessor organizations - the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario and the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation - have represented elementary teachers in public schools in Ontario since the early part of this century.

ETFO is built on the following priorities:

- To protect the collective bargaining rights of public elementary teachers and educational workers.
- To defend publicly funded education.
- To serve the needs of the membership.
- To provide for the professional development of members.
- To promote social justice in the areas of anti-poverty, non-violence, and equity.



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