

Date of Issue: May 31, 2016

Effective: Until revoked or
modified

Subject: COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONALISM

Application: Chairs of District School Boards
Directors of Education
Supervisory Officers and Secretary-Treasurers of School Authorities
Principals of Elementary Schools
Principals of Secondary Schools
Principals of Provincial and Demonstration Schools

PURPOSE

In Ontario, collaborative professionalism is defined as professionals – at all levels of the education system¹ – working together, sharing knowledge, skills and experience to improve student achievement and well-being of both students and staff.

This Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) clarifies a shared commitment of stakeholders to building a culture of collaborative professionalism in Ontario's education system. The core priorities of this commitment include:

- building a shared understanding of collaborative professionalism, and articulating a commitment to working together to further improve student achievement and well-being of both students and staff;
- transforming culture and optimizing conditions for learning, working and leading at all levels of the education sector in alignment with *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*.

BACKGROUND

Collaborative professionalism is foundational to *Achieving Excellence*, Ontario's renewed vision for education. This renewed vision is the product of extensive consultation with all education stakeholders across the province.

Ontario has a world class education system and is committed to building on the successes of the past decade to further improve outcomes for all learners.

1. In this memorandum, the term *education system* encompasses all learners and education professionals in Ontario, including those in early years and elementary-secondary, and continuing and adult education offered by school boards.

Recent studies have shown that collaborative professionalism has the potential to improve learning and working conditions. Research and evidence demonstrate that networks and communities of professionals are necessary to move systems from great to excellent.

Collaborative professionalism takes into account the legal obligations of the participants in Ontario's education system to conform with or implement their roles, powers and responsibilities as may be set out in the *Education Act* and regulations and PPMs made under the act, and in other relevant legislation, including regulatory college Standards of Practice, as well as the need to honour commitments in the provisions of collective agreements and related memoranda of understanding among parties to such agreements.

THE VISION FOR COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONALISM

The following sets out the vision for collaborative professionalism in Ontario's education system.

As part of the transformation process, all education professionals will work together to build on Ontario's solid foundation of achievements through the establishment of trusting relationships that value the voices of all, encourage reflection and support professional growth. As such, collaborative professionalism:

- values all voices and is consistent with our shared responsibility to transform culture and provide equitable access to learning for all;
- takes place in and fosters a trusting environment that promotes professional learning;
- involves sharing ideas to achieve a common vision of learning, development and success for all;
- supports and recognizes formal and informal leadership and learning;
- includes opportunities for collaboration at provincial, district and school levels;
- leverages exemplary practices through the communication and sharing of ideas to achieve a common vision.

SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS AND COMMITMENTS

A culture of collaborative professionalism is grounded in:

- professional learning that supports and enables the conditions for student achievement and student and staff well-being;
- recognition of and building on the strengths of all individuals to support professional growth;
- leadership practices that value the expertise and inclusion of all voices, perspectives and roles;
- a commitment to building professional capacity at all levels;
- professional practice informed by research, evidence and knowledge arising from the strengths, needs and interests of students and education professionals;
- a trusting environment where school, school board, and union leaders and the ministry create the necessary conditions, including consideration of time and resources, that enable teams to learn with, and from, each other;

- an environment that can enhance and influence professional judgement, as defined in *Growing Success: Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting in Ontario Schools*, in supporting effective assessment, instruction, evaluation and reporting of student achievement;
- an understanding that collaborative professionalism is not intended to increase workload.

ROLES AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

Formal leaders have a unique role in fostering the necessary conditions to motivate and enable teams to learn with, and from, each other. This section outlines how the roles and responsibilities of partners can support the implementation of the PPM.

The ministry will initiate and support the establishment of the Provincial Committee on Ministry Initiatives with representation from teacher federations, unions representing education workers, principal associations, and school board leadership. This provincial committee will meet quarterly each academic year to discuss possible, proposed and existing initiatives, including implications for training, resources and timing. It is anticipated that this committee will play an integral role in transforming focus from an initiatives-based perspective to support more coherent approaches. [See Appendix A for Purpose and Parameters of the Provincial Committee on Ministry Initiatives. As the work of this committee evolves, these parameters may be amended.]

District school boards and school authorities will establish a mechanism, or use existing mechanisms², to foster consultation, collaboration and communication with federation and other union locals and associations for the implementation of new and existing initiatives.

All partners, individually and collectively, have agreed to uphold and model the principles of collaborative professionalism identified in this PPM to:

- share a vision of professional collaboration and a clear sense of purpose of the work of all education professionals;
- engage all education professionals at all levels in fostering and sustaining the conditions for collaborative professionalism;
- share ideas for the streamlining and enhancing of initiatives and strategies;
- shift from an initiatives-based approach to a coherent system-wide approach to change;
- mobilize research and evidence on effective practices; and
- engage in ongoing reflective practices.

The French-language sector will seek to foster collaborative professionalism in alignment with the specific mandate of French-language education, as defined in Ontario's *Aménagement Linguistique* policy for French-language education.

2. Examples of existing mechanisms may include, but are not limited to, Joint Staffing Committees and Joint Professional Development Committees.

APPENDIX A: THE PROVINCIAL COMMITTEE ON MINISTRY INITIATIVES

Purpose

The Provincial Committee on Ministry Initiatives (“the committee”) is to provide advice to the Ministry of Education, through a collaborative process, on new or existing ministry initiatives/strategies during development, implementation and review, including implications for training, resources and timing to support improvement to achievement and well-being of all learners.

The committee will be composed of English- and French-language representatives and will meet quarterly.

Parameters of Work

The development of the committee’s review process may include, but is not limited to:

- ongoing review of inventory and status of Ministry of Education initiatives/strategies to make recommendations about next steps;
- understanding that some expectations and practices are no longer relevant in today’s context and may need to be stopped, adjusted or changed while other expectations and practices may need to emerge, leading to recommendations about next steps;
- providing input into the review, development, implementation and evaluation of new and existing initiatives;
- presenting evidence-based rationale when the ministry is launching new initiatives/strategies;
- providing input about guiding appropriate timing and pacing of new initiatives;
- providing feedback during development, implementation and review of new initiatives;
- integrating possible/proposed new initiatives, materials and resources with existing practices and taking into consideration the impact of initiatives on existing demands on teachers, early childhood educators, education workers, professional student support personnel, school and board leaders; and taking into account innovative and/or interdisciplinary approaches to achieve this;
- sharing effective implementation practices of both school board and provincial levels, as well as sharing lessons learned throughout implementation processes;
- discussing training and professional learning requirements to support the implementation of new initiatives;
- taking into account initiatives of other ministries that may have an impact on school staff, and student achievement and well-being; and
- evaluating potential impacts on resources as well as on workload at all levels, throughout the process of consultation.