

*Ministerial Order (#016/97)*  
*Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the  
 Provision of Basic Education in Alberta*

1 Pursuant to Section 25(1)(f) of the *School Act*, I approve the following as the Teaching Quality Standard which shall apply to teacher certification, professional development, supervision and evaluation, and which is supported by descriptors of selected knowledge, skills and attributes appropriate to teachers at different stages of their careers:

(1) Teaching Quality Standard

Quality teaching occurs when the teacher's ongoing analysis of the context, and the teacher's decisions about which pedagogical knowledge and abilities to apply result in optimum learning by students.

All teachers are expected to meet the Teaching Quality Standard throughout their careers. However, teaching practices will vary because each teaching situation is different and in constant change. Reasoned judgment must be used to determine whether the Teaching Quality Standard is being met in a given context.

(2) Descriptors of Knowledge, Skills and Attributes Related to Interim Certification

Teachers who hold an Interim Professional Certificate must possess the Knowledge, Skills and Attributes Related to Interim Certification (Interim KSAs), and apply them appropriately toward student learning. During their first two years of teaching, teachers should use the Interim KSAs to guide their teaching, reflect on their practice, and direct their professional development in collaboration with their supervisors and evaluators.

As situations warrant, teachers who hold an Interim Professional Certificate are expected to demonstrate consistently that they understand:

- a) contextual variables affect teaching and learning. They know how to analyse many variables at one time, and how to respond by making reasoned decisions about their teaching practice and students' learning;
- b) the structure of the Alberta education system. They know the different roles in the system, and how responsibilities and accountabilities are determined, communicated and enforced, including the expectations held of them under the Certification of Teachers Regulation, A.R. 261/90 as amended and their school authority's teacher's evaluation policy;
- c) the purposes of the Guide to Education and programs of study germane to the specialization or subject disciplines they are prepared to teach. They know how to use these documents to inform and direct their planning, instruction and assessment of student progress;
- d) the subject disciplines they teach. They have completed a structured program of studies through which they acquired the knowledge, concepts, methodologies and assumptions in one or more areas of specialization or subject disciplines taught in Alberta schools;

- e) all students can learn, albeit at different rates and in different ways. They know how (including when and how to engage others) to identify students' different learning styles and ways students learn. They understand the need to respond to differences by creating multiple paths to learning for individuals and groups of students, including students with special learning needs;
- f) the purposes of short, medium and long term range planning. They know how to translate curriculum and desired outcomes into reasoned, meaningful and incrementally progressive learning opportunities for students. They also understand the need to vary their plans to accommodate individuals and groups of students;
- g) students' needs for physical, social, cultural and psychological security. They know how to engage students in creating effective classroom routines. They know how and when to apply a variety of management strategies that are in keeping with the situation, and that provide for minimal disruptions to students' learning;
- h) the importance of respecting students' human dignity. They know how to establish, with different students, professional relationships that are characterized by mutual respect, trust and harmony;
- i) there are many approaches to teaching and learning. They know a broad range of instructional strategies appropriate to their area of specialization and the subject discipline they teach, and know which strategies are appropriate to help different students achieve different outcomes;
- j) the functions of traditional and electronic teaching/learning technologies. They know how to use and how to engage students in using these technologies to present and deliver content, communicate effectively with others, find and secure information, research, word process, manage information, and keep records;
- k) the purposes of student assessment. They know how to assess the range of learning objectives by selecting and developing a variety of classroom and large scale assessment techniques and instruments. They know how to analyse the results of classroom and large scale assessment instruments including provincial assessment instruments, and how to use the results for the ultimate benefit of students;
- l) the importance of engaging parents, purposefully and meaningfully, in all aspects of teaching and learning. They know how to develop and implement strategies that create and enhance partnerships among teachers, parents and students;
- m) student learning is enhanced through the use of home and community resources. They know how to identify resources relevant to teaching and learning objectives, and how to incorporate these resources into their teaching and students' learning;
- n) the importance of contributing, independently and collegially, to the quality of their school. They know the strategies whereby they can, independently and collegially, enhance and maintain the quality of their schools to the benefit of students, parents, community and colleagues;

- o) the importance of career-long learning. They know how to assess their own teaching and how to work with others responsible for supervising and evaluating teachers. They know how to use the findings of assessments, supervision and evaluations to select, develop and implement their own professional development activities;
- p) the importance of guiding their actions with a personal, overall vision of the purpose of teaching. They are able to communicate their vision, including how it has changed as a result of new knowledge, understanding and experience; and
- q) they are expected to achieve the Teaching Quality Standard.

- (3) Descriptors of Knowledge, Skills and Attributes Related to Permanent Certification  
Teachers who hold a Permanent Professional Certificate must demonstrate, in their practice, professional repertoires that are expanded beyond the Interim KSAs.

The following descriptors comprise a repertoire of selected knowledge, skills and attributes from which teachers who hold a Permanent Professional Certificate should be able to draw, as situations warrant, in order to meet the Teaching Quality Standard. Teachers, staffs, supervisors and evaluators should use the descriptors to guide professional development, supervision, evaluation and remediation strategies in order that teachers can meet the Teaching Quality Standard consistently throughout their careers.

- a) Teachers' application of pedagogical knowledge, skills and attributes is based in their ongoing analysis of contextual variables.

Teachers' analysis of contextual variables underlies their reasoned judgments and decisions about which specific pedagogical skills and abilities to apply in order that students can achieve optimum learning. Selected variables are outlined below.

student variables

- demographic variables, e.g. age, gender
- maturation
- abilities and talents
- relationships among students
- subject area of study
- prior learning
- socio-economic status
- cultural background
- linguistic variables
- mental and emotional states and conditions

regulatory variables

- *Government Organization Act*
- *School Act* and provincial regulations, policies and Ministerial Orders
- *Child Welfare Act*
- *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*
- school authority policies
- Guide to Education
- programs of study

school variables

- resource availability and allocation
- teaching assignment
- class size and composition
- collegial and administrator support
- physical plant
- physical plant

teacher variables

- teaching experience
- learning experiences

parent and societal variables

- parental support
- parental involvement in children's learning
- socio-economic variables
- community support for education
- multiculturalism
- cultural pluralism
- inter-agency collaboration
- provincial, national and global influences

- b) Teachers understand the legislated, moral and ethical frameworks within which they work.

Teachers function within a policy-based and results oriented education system authorized under the School Act and other legislation.

Teachers also function within policy frameworks established by school authorities. This includes policies which require: a commitment to teaching practices that meet their school authority's teaching quality standard(s); and that teachers engage in ongoing, individualized professional development.

Teachers recognize they are bound by standards of conduct expected of a caring, knowledgeable and reasonable adult who is entrusted with the custody, care or education of students or children. Teachers recognize their actions are bound in moral, ethical and legal considerations regarding their obligations to students, parents, administrators, school authorities, communities and society at large. Teachers acknowledge these obligations and act accordingly.

- c) Teachers understand the subject disciplines they teach.

Teachers understand the knowledge, concepts, methodologies and assumptions of the subject disciplines they teach. This includes an understanding of how knowledge in each discipline is created and organized, and that subject disciplines are more than bodies of static facts and techniques - they are complex and evolving. Their understanding extends to relevant technologies, the linkages among subject disciplines, and their relevance and importance in everyday life at the personal, local, national and international levels.

Teachers understand that students typically bring preconceptions and understandings to a subject. They know strategies and materials that are of assistance in furthering students' understanding.

- d) Teachers know there are many approaches to teaching and learning.

Teachers appreciate individual differences and believe all students can learn, albeit at different rates and in different ways. They recognize students' different learning styles and the different ways they learn, and accommodate these differences in individuals and groups of students including students with special learning needs.

Teachers understand the fluidity of teaching and learning. They constantly monitor the effectiveness and appropriateness of their practices and students' activities, and change them as needed.

- e) Teachers engage in a range of planning activities.

Teachers' plans are founded in their understanding of contextual variables and are a record of their decisions on what teaching and learning strategies to apply. Plans outline a reasoned and incremental progression toward the attainment of desired outcomes, for both teachers and students. Teachers monitor the context, their instruction, and monitor and assess students' learning on an ongoing basis, and modify their plans accordingly.

Teachers strive to establish candid, open and ongoing lines of communication with students, parents, colleagues and other professionals, and incorporate information gained into their planning.

- f) Teachers create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning.

Teachers establish learning environments wherein students feel physically, psychologically, socially and culturally secure. They are respectful of students' human dignity, and seek to establish a positive professional relationship with students that is characterized by mutual respect, trust and harmony. They model the beliefs, principles, values, and intellectual characteristics outlined in the Guide to Education and programs of study, and guide students to do the same.

Teachers work, independently and cooperatively, to make their classrooms and schools stimulating learning environments. They maintain acceptable levels of student conduct, and use discipline strategies that result in a positive environment conducive to student learning. They work with students to establish classroom routines that enhance and increase students' involvement in meaningful learning activities. They organize facilities, materials, equipment and space to provide students equitable opportunities to learn, and to provide for students' safety.

Where community members work with students either on-campus or off-campus and where students are engaged in school-sponsored off-campus activities, teachers strive to ensure these situations also are secure and positive environments conducive to students' learning.

- g) Teachers translate curriculum content and objectives into meaningful learning activities.

Teachers clearly communicate short and long range learning expectations to students, and how the expectations are to be achieved and assessed. They engage students in meaningful activities that motivate and challenge them to achieve those expectations. They integrate current learning with prior learning, and provide opportunities for students to relate their learning to the home, community and broader environment.

Teachers apply a broad range and variety of instructional and learning strategies. The strategies vary in keeping with contextual variables, subject content, desired objectives, and the learning needs of individuals and groups of students. The strategies are selected and used to achieve desired outcomes, primarily the expectations outlined in the Guide to Education, programs of study and other approved programs.

- h) Teachers apply a variety of technologies to meet students' learning needs.

Teachers use teaching/learning resources such as the chalkboard, texts, computers and other auditory, print and visual media, and maintain an awareness of emerging technological resources. They keep abreast of advances in teaching/learning technologies and how they can be incorporated into instruction and learning. As new technologies prove useful and become available in schools, teachers develop their own and their students' proficiencies in using the technologies purposefully, which may include content presentation, delivery and research applications, as well as word processing, information management and record keeping.

Teachers use electronic networks and other telecommunication media to enhance their own knowledge and abilities, and to communicate more effectively with others.

- i) Teachers gather and use information about students' learning needs and progress.

Teachers monitor students' actions on an ongoing basis to determine and respond to their learning needs. They use a variety of diagnostic methods that include observing students' activities, analysing students' learning difficulties and strengths, and interpreting the results of assessments and information provided by students, their parents, colleagues and other professionals.

Teachers select and develop a variety of classroom assessment strategies and instruments to assess the full range of learning objectives. They differentiate between classroom and large-scale instruments such as provincial achievement tests, administer both and use the results for the ultimate benefit of students. They record, interpret and use the results of their assessments to modify their teaching practices and students' learning activities.

Teachers help students, parents and other educators interpret and understand the results of diagnoses and assessments, and the implications for students. They also help students develop the ability to diagnose their own learning needs and to assess their progress toward learning goals.

Teachers use their interpretations of diagnoses and assessments as well as students' work and results to guide their own professional growth. They assist school councils and members of the community to understand the purposes, meanings, outcomes and implications of assessments.

- j) Teachers establish and maintain partnerships among school, home and community, and within their own schools.

Teachers engage in activities that contribute to the quality of the school as a learning environment. They work with others to develop, coordinate and implement programs and activities that characterize effective schools. They also work cooperatively with school councils.

Teachers strive to involve parents in their children's schooling. Partnerships with the home are characterized by the candid sharing of information and ideas to influence how teachers and parents, independently and cooperatively, contribute to students' learning.

Teachers seek out and incorporate community resources into their instruction, and encourage students to use home and community resources in their learning. Teachers make connections between school, home and community in order to enhance the relevance and meaning of learning. Home and community resources are utilized to make learning meaningful and relevant, and so students can gain an increased understanding of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to participate in and contribute positively to society.

k) Teachers are career-long learners.

Teachers engage in ongoing professional development to enhance their: understanding of and ability to analyze the context of teaching; ability to make reasoned judgments and decisions; and, pedagogical knowledge and abilities. They recognize their own professional needs and work with others to meet those needs. They share their professional expertise to the benefit of others in their schools, communities and profession.

Teachers guide their actions by their overall visions of the purpose of teaching. They actively refine and redefine their visions in light of the ever-changing context, new knowledge and understandings, and their experiences. While these visions are dynamic and grow in depth and breadth over teachers' careers, the visions maintain at their core a commitment to teaching practices through which students can achieve optimum learning.