

Review of Teachers' Qualifications in New Phase

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Do Ontario educators want to put their own stamp on the qualifications for entering the teaching profession and acquiring further qualifications?

It is more than 25 years since the last comprehensive revision of the Teachers' Qualifications Regulation and there is widespread agreement that it is time to make changes that reflect the needs of students, teachers and education leaders in the 21st century.

That is why the College of Teachers, over the past two years, led an intense consultative effort with all our partners in the education sector to conduct a comprehensive review of the qualifications for being certified as a teacher in Ontario.

Our work produced 66 recommendations for regulatory and procedural or policy changes that represent what the education sector believes is needed to ensure that the teaching profession keeps pace with our rapidly changing educational system.

However, there is still work to be done to ensure our work bears fruit. The recommendations for regulatory changes have been forwarded to the Minister of Education. She will now decide whether to take them any further. Whether the Minister puts these recommendations on her legislative agenda or not, will be influenced by what she hears from all the participants.

The teachers' qualifications review (TQR) had extensive input from an external advisory committee that represented classroom teachers, school and school board officials, parent and student groups, and the Ministry of Education. Hundreds of individual members of the College and the public attended discussion groups and submitted views on what needed changing.

The organizations and individuals that participated in the TQR or who believe that it is time the teaching profession led the way on setting our professional qualifications can reinforce with the Minister that the recommendations she has received represent a sector-wide consensus.

The message should be clear that the participating organizations want to see these changes made, and that the teaching profession in Ontario is mature enough and has consulted widely enough to be trusted to have arrived at regulations that will serve our students well.

We are recommending regulatory changes that include:

- increasing the length of the practicum from 40 to 60 days;
- making special education a required component of initial teacher education;
- making Special Education part I a prerequisite for enrolment in the Principal's Qualification Program;
- extending the length of teacher education programs from eight to 10 months;
- adjusting prerequisites for admission to some additional qualification courses to enable more members to enrol.

You will be able to see all the recommendations shortly in a report on the College website at www.oct.ca → Teacher Education → Teachers' Qualifications Review.

The College is also moving forward on a number of the TQR recommendations that will continue the dialogue in the sector on initial and continuing teacher education.

We will move forward on program guidelines and an effective practices document to identify initial and continuing teacher education practices that have a positive impact on teacher education. We have taken first steps in holding a colloquium to explore the role of the associate teacher and of the faculty advisor in the delivery of the practicum component in the program of professional education.

We expect these initiatives will build on the collaborative work the education sector has done on the TQR. However, we cannot be complacent about the recommendations that have been forwarded to the Minister.

If principals expect to see these changes reflected in regulation, we must all continue to voice that expectation. It is in the best interests of our students, our current and future colleagues, and education in Ontario.