



# OTF/Affiliate Position on the New Transitional Certificate of Qualification





# Preamble

The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) is the professional voice representing all teachers employed in the publicly funded schools of Ontario. In addition to the approximately 160,000 teachers who are statutory members of the Federation, teacher candidates at publicly funded faculties of education across Ontario are statutory associate members of the Federation.

From the outset, OTF has had a decisive voice on all matters pertaining to teachers' qualifications. Over the years, the Federation and its Affiliates—l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO), the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA) and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)—have served as key and critical partners in Ontario's teacher preparation and certification regimes. OTF members provide essential mentorship to teacher candidates (TCs). In this role, they support the development of indispensable, hands-on skills by beginning teachers during their all-important practicum placements at preservice programs at the province's Faculties of Education.

While we acknowledge the importance of routinely reviewing Ontario's Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs, such reviews should always be undertaken in consultation with the teacher Federations. We were therefore disappointed that the Provincial Government recently chose to implement substantive changes to Ontario's ITE programs through *The Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act, 2023*, without due consultation with OTF and its Affiliates.



# OTF Policies and Positions on Teacher Education

OTF Policy 4.1, Teacher Education, clearly states that:

- 4.1.1 the development of the teaching profession through teacher education be a priority of OTF;
- 4.1.2 OTF has both the right and the responsibility to participate in all deliberative structures related to teacher education, with the government, the Ontario College of Teachers, other agencies, teacher education institutions and the school boards;
- 4.1.4 teacher candidates not be offered positions of employment before faculty and associate teacher evaluations of their teaching potential have been completed.

These policies, among others, establish unequivocally the right and priority of the Federation to engage deliberatively in teacher education matters.

It is accordingly the firm position of OTF and its Affiliates:

1. That the professional preparation of Ontario's teachers at publicly funded faculties of education is a necessary and essential first step in professional certification.
2. That teacher candidates should not be awarded an Ontario Certificate of Qualification until they have completed all components of an accredited ITE program, except in the case of approved high-needs, multi-session programs (i.e., French First Language, French Second Language, Technological Education, Indigenous Languages) that are specifically constructed to enable this.
3. That any and all changes to Ontario's ITE programs and teacher certification be anchored in, and based upon, clear research evidence.
4. That any and all changes to Ontario's ITE programs and teacher certification be undertaken ONLY following explicit consultation with OTF and its Affiliates, as the legitimate representatives of the teaching profession in Ontario.
5. That Ontario's long-standing practice of preparing teachers in two specific divisions and in specific subject areas at the Intermediate and Senior levels has served students and the K-12 education system well. Under no circumstances should this practice be changed.



# Advice to Teacher Candidates regarding the New Transitional Certificate

OTF and its Affiliates urge Teacher Candidates (TCs) to:

- Remember that the Transitional Certificate is optional. You are not compelled to apply for a Certificate before you complete all aspects of your professional preparation.
- Ensure that you are sufficiently prepared before applying for a Transitional Certificate and accepting a teaching position.
- Think carefully before giving up on practicum days in favour of occasional teaching—you will never again in your career have an opportunity to receive professional supervision and feedback of the kind you do during your practicum placements.
- Be aware that holding a Transitional Certificate means you will be subject to Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) discipline for your actions, whether you accept a teaching position or not. Like all other OCT members, you will become subject to complaints for your actions both inside and outside the classroom.
- Make sure to communicate clearly with your Associate Teacher (AT) if you are taking on work as a teacher.
- Once you are holding a Certificate and are employed as a teacher in a publicly funded school, you are considered a full member of the Federation, with both the same rights and responsibilities as other teachers. As such, you should take steps to ensure that you are well informed and cognisant of Federation rules and expectations, including those pertaining to professional relationships, boundaries and labour action.
- Take time to familiarize yourself with the position of the teacher Federations on the Transitional Certificate.



# Advice to the Ministry of Education

The Federation is appropriately concerned about the multiple negative outcomes that will result from the introduction of the new Transitional Certificate. These include, but are not limited to:

- The potential to dilute the high standards of the professional preparation that parents and the public expect from Ontario teachers.
- The potential to exacerbate the retention of beginning teachers due to incomplete professional preparation.
- The potential to increase complaints against beginning teachers who are not adequately prepared to face the many challenges of today's classroom environments and realities.
- The potential to reduce the number of teachers willing to serve as Associate Teachers and NTIP mentors to teacher candidates who begin practicing prematurely.

Public trust in the profession and excellent teaching standards are amongst our top priorities as a Federation. We would expect that the Ontario Ministry of Education

shares our desire for excellence in publicly funded education. We are therefore urging the Ministry to:

1. Press pause on the new Transitional Certificate to allow for meaningful consultation with the Federations and other education stakeholders to take place on this matter.
2. Commit to, and follow through on, the work that needs to be undertaken to find the underlying reasons for the perceived teacher shortages and, in turn, await the outcome of the joint OTF/Ministry of Education Action Table on Teacher Supply and Demand. This work should be completed before enabling additional Teacher Candidates to become prematurely certified in the absence of any clear evidence that they are needed by our schools.
3. Work collaboratively with the teacher Federations to conduct a review of teacher preparation in Ontario, with the goal of determining optimal structure, length and delivery modes for Ontario's ITE programs.