



Response of the Ontario
Teachers' Federation (OTF) to

**ONTARIO'S REGULATORY
REGISTRY: PROPOSED
REGULATORY
AMENDMENTS REGARDING
PROFICIENCY IN MATH**

March 2024

Response of the Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) to Ontario's Regulatory Registry: Proposed Regulatory Amendments Regarding Proficiency in Math

The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) and its four 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) – welcome the invitation from the Ministry of Education (EDU) to review the proposed regulatory amendments related to proficiency in mathematics. In its response, OTF urges EDU to reconsider its decision to reinstate the Math Proficiency Test (MPT) as a certification requirement for graduates of Ontario teacher preparation programs, beginning in 2025.

The Federations have a long-standing commitment to teaching excellence, founded on strong working relationships, ongoing, self-directed professional development, research-driven resources and the teaching profession's unique ability to be self-reflective practitioners. We welcome initiatives that support improvement and success in mathematics education through the investment in fully supported professional learning, appropriate resources for the classroom, and provisions for growing student success in mathematics.

In the current proposal to make regulatory amendments to the *Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996* and *Education Quality and Accountability Office Act, 1996*, EDU has reiterated its belief that the MPT requirement developed in 2019 helps “ensure that new teachers have basic competence in math, with the ultimate goal of strengthening student achievement in math.”

It is the position of OTF and its Affiliates that there is no empirical evidence to support the claim that the MPT as constituted achieves either of these goals. Our key arguments against reinstating the MPT are as follows:

1. A 2019 literature review by the province's own testing agency, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), found no empirical evidence that such tests lead to improved pedagogy and student outcomes.
2. The MPT works counter to the Government's own recent steps to shorten the time needed for entry into the profession. The MPT will only further delay certification and serve as an additional barrier for teacher candidates to begin their teaching careers as soon as possible. Most beginning teachers in Ontario have six years of university education before starting their teaching careers. The prospect of failing a math test at the end of this long journey may discourage aspiring future teachers from even applying to a faculty of education.
3. The Ministry's efforts should be concentrated on providing professional learning and resources that best prepare and support beginning teachers to serve the needs of Ontario students. This is particularly critical at the current time when our system faces a dire shortage of occasional teachers.
4. The MPT as formulated does not assess the ability to teach math effectively. At best, the math content component can only assess a limited selection of math concepts taught in Grades 3–9. As a multiple choice test, the pedagogical component is limited to evaluating the ability of candidates to memorize three background policy documents and does not measure teaching effectiveness.
5. The MPT is performative and an unnecessary and costly hurdle—Almost all candidates who took the test in its final administration window passed

it. The cost to the province of developing and administering the test could be better invested in initiatives that will strengthen math instruction and improve math outcomes for Ontario students.

6. Requiring all prospective teachers to take a test that includes math content from Grades 3 to 9 fails to recognize the divisional and subject specialization structures inherent in teacher preparation in Ontario. Teachers who undertake their preservice programs in Ontario are highly sought out since they are highly qualified in specific divisions and subject areas. Ontario teachers do not normally teach all grades or all subjects. In reality, few teachers with Primary and Junior qualifications will ever teach math beyond Grade 6 and those who have Intermediate and Senior qualifications will not usually teach math unless math is already their area of subject specialization, in which case, they will have had to prove their proficiency at multiple junctures during their post-secondary education journey, enroute to gaining I/S teaching qualifications in math.
7. Research has shown that standardized testing discriminates against people from diverse backgrounds. In the case of the MPT, preliminary data from the initial administration of the test showed that teacher candidates from equity-seeking and minority groups were disproportionately unsuccessful on their first attempt at the test. As an illustrative example, individuals who wrote the French version of the test were 17% less successful than beginning teachers who wrote the English language version.
8. The MPT is not required of teachers certified in other Canadian jurisdictions. The implication is that teachers who undertake their professional programs elsewhere in the country receive better preparation than those who study within Ontario.

For all of the above reasons, OTF and its Affiliates urge the Minister of Education not to reinstate the MPT. This test has no demonstrable positive impact on the quality of math education in Ontario and no measurable efficacy in supporting student learning and success.

We offer instead our assistance to work collaboratively with EDU and education stakeholders to develop measures to strengthen math teacher education in Ontario's ITE programs and to support practicing teachers with professional learning that is proven to improve math instruction and student outcomes.

The Ontario Teachers' Federation is the advocate for the teaching profession in Ontario and for its 160,000+ teachers. OTF members are full-time, part-time and occasional teachers in all the publicly funded schools in the province—elementary, secondary, public, Catholic and francophone.