

Ontario College of Teachers Professional Advisory on Addressing Hate and Discrimination

To: Presidents and All Members

From: Joel Duff, Associate General Secretary – Professional Services

For Information

The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) recently released the **Professional Advisory on Addressing Hate and Discrimination**. The Advisory applies to all Ontario Certified Teachers (OCTs). All OSSTF/FEESO members, who are also OCTs, are required to know of this Advisory and its content since it applies to them in schools, private institutions, and non-school roles.

The Advisory is available as **Attachment 1** or as a PDF and in audio format online at [OCT Advisory on Addressing Hate & Discrimination](#).

The purpose of the Advisory is to:

- Equip OCTs to recognize and respond to hate and discrimination in learning environments;
- Promote awareness of professional, ethical, and legal obligations to prevent discriminatory conduct;
- Reinforce the need for safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environments; and
- Clarify that OCTs' actions inside and outside the learning environment, in-person and online, must align with professional standards.

The term “**learning environment**” is used broadly to describe all aspects of the learning community and involves relationships with and among educators, support staff, students, parents, families, Elders, and community partners. It is influenced by mindsets, beliefs, prevalent ideologies, pedagogical approaches, written/unwritten rules, school climate, online spaces, power dynamics, and communication practices.

The College prepared an Appendix of Case Studies for the Advisory which work in conjunction with the Advisory during professional learning opportunities. The Case Studies are in **Attachment 2** and available, in both PDF and audio format, via [OCT Appendix of Case Studies](#).

Each case study scenario is based on actual College cases and is written from the point-of-view of an OCT member. All scenarios are organized into three (3) key areas:

- **Addressing the incident** by recognizing and responding to acts of hate and discrimination within learning environments;
- **Building awareness and understanding** of professional, ethical, and legal obligations to avoid discriminatory conduct and foster safe, equitable, and inclusive learning environments; and
- **Knowing your role** through increased understanding of professional expectations and how your actions inside and outside the learning environment, both in-person and online, must reflect professional standards and ethical conduct.

Each scenario, as shown in the chart below, provides an action or a statement done by an OCT member that resulted in a College complaint. The detailed analysis of each scenario, found in **Attachment 2**, provides guidance to all OCT members on:

- how to best address a similar situation as described in each scenario;
- how to build an awareness and understanding of appropriate ways to approach an incident that respects the professional, ethical, and legal obligations of OCT members; and
- what to know about your expected role should a similar event occur in your learning environment.

Content warning: The content in this advisory may be sensitive for some individuals. Please note that the terms and approaches used in this document were current at the time this advisory was released. (Excerpt from the Appendix for the OCT Professional Advisory on Addressing Hate and Discrimination)

Theme + Audio Link	Case Study Scenarios to Address Hate & Discrimination
Freedom of Expression	"I can say what I want on social media and other online platforms. It's called freedom of expression. I'm interested in current affairs, and I want to say what I want to say."
Sharing Political and Personal Beliefs	"As an OCT, I should be able to share all my beliefs with my students and colleagues. I believe that some races are more prone to violence and pose a threat to safety. Those who identify as 2SLGBTQIA+ put family values at risk. Students need to learn about the risks to safety and society."
Addressing Microaggressions with a Colleague	"My racialized colleague teaches art. I told them their talents are wasted and that they should, instead, be teaching math because their culture is known for excelling in math. My colleague seemed upset by my comment."
Using Culturally Inappropriate Resources	"I teach at an elementary school and am at a loss for finding resources to teach Social Studies. I would like to use something age-appropriate like the movie Pocahontas. I think it would be a great teaching tool, especially since I can also rely on my Indigenous student, even though he doesn't look like one, to share his lived experience to help the rest of my class better understand Indigenous issues."
Diverging from the Curriculum	"I feel it is wrong to teach my Grade 8 students about gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation as indicated in the health and physical education curriculum. As an OCT, I can decide what is appropriate to teach to my students."

Theme + Audio Link	Case Study Scenarios to Address Hate & Discrimination
Making a Bad Joke	"I connect with my students by making them laugh, and they usually appreciate my sense of humour. During a lesson on Canada's Food Guide, we started discussing different food choices. Some students mentioned that their families don't eat certain foods for religious reasons. Wanting to keep the mood light, I joked, 'I don't think I could ever give up bacon – I'd probably change my religion before I gave that up!' It was a harmless joke. However, the next day, my principal spoke with me about a concern raised by a family who found my comment offensive and dismissive of their beliefs. I was shocked – I never meant to insult anyone. I just thought I was being funny."
Hate Symbols in a Learning Environment	"Someone placed a swastika and a hateful comment on the walls of one of the washroom stalls."
Treating Students with Exceptionalities Differently	"My colleague said they are purposefully and more often disciplining students who have been identified as exceptional (i.e., behaviour, communication, intellectual, physical, or multiple). They believe students with exceptionalities need more discipline and must be pushed harder to succeed in life. My colleague also does not provide accommodations identified in the students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and refers to these students using derogatory names."
Dismissing Acts of Hate and Discrimination	"During yard duty, I saw a few students making fun of a student because of their socio-economic status and skin colour. This has occurred several times in the past few weeks. They also posted a few things in our online classroom. It was just good-natured fun, and the student impacted was not overly upset and did not seem too affected by it."

The College has prepared a "Case Studies Facilitator's Guide" related to the Advisory on Addressing Hate and Discrimination which is accessible via [OCT Facilitator's Guide for Case Studies](#) or in **Attachment 3**.

They have also created a Facilitator's PowerPoint available in **Attachment 4** or through the following link: [OCT Addressing Hate & Discrimination Facilitator's PowerPoint](#).

If you require further information, please contact Marc Robillard at marc.robillard@osstf.ca.

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Attach 1, 2, 3 & 4