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Towards Excellence in Education

Professional Teaching Standards DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION WITH TEACHERS & SUBJECT AND PHASE SPECIALISTS

Teaching is complex work in which teachers create knowledge-rich learning opportunities for the learners in their classes. As professionals, teachers draw on different kinds of knowledge, namely subject, professional and contextual, to make suitable choices for their classroom activities. They need to consider the knowledge of the subjects they teach, and the learners with which they work, to decide how best to enable learning within the context in which they work. Teachers are expected to make wise decisions in situations that are often complex and unpredictable. Their teaching choices and classroom actions must therefore be guided by a moral obligation to act in the best educational interests of the learners they teach. For this reason, committed, knowledgeable and skilful teachers are among the country's greatest assets.

The South African Council for Educators (SACE) is tasked to strengthen the profession of teaching. The Council is responsible for developing a framework of professional standards for the South African teaching profession. Strengthening teaching as a professional practice is widely considered to be a way to enhance the quality of teaching throughout all South African classrooms, and to make the education system work as it should. In this document, SACE presents a draft set of *Professional Teaching Standards* that seeks to promote professional teaching. The Standards focus on what South African teachers

should know and what they should be able to do to provide learners with knowledge-rich learning opportunities. The Standards bring together the professional knowledge, classroom skills and the values that teachers draw on during their professional careers.

The proposed Standards have been clustered into ten principles for professional teaching. These principles apply to teaching across all phases and subject specialisations. While each principle represents a distinct aspect of professional teaching practice, there are many relationships within and between the Standards. This is to be expected in a complex professional practice which is much more than a set of isolated skills. As teachers gain experience and become established in their school communities, as well as develop expertise in their teaching, it is expected that they will build understandings of the different Standards, and grasp the connections between them in increasingly sophisticated ways.

Professional teaching requires that teachers consider how best to create learning opportunities within the limitations and opportunities of the contexts in which they work. The *Professional Teaching Standards* are intended to be useful to teachers across different South African school contexts. Even in challenging school contexts, teachers must remain mindful of their role to enable the learners in their classes to

gain access to literacy, numeracy skills and access to powerful knowledge.

A distinctive attribute of a profession is that its members have ownership of the standards used to ensure the quality of the practice. To build a common understanding of professional teaching for South African classrooms, SACE invites comments on this draft document from practicing teachers and other stakeholders from all parts of the South African education system. All comments received will be carefully considered by the Standards Development Working Group, and will be used to refine and strengthen the draft Standards. Through this process, the document will be produced and owned by practicing teachers. Upon finalisation, it will be endorsed by SACE as guidelines that enable teachers to reflect on their own teaching practices and support one another. These guidelines will also be intended to open up possibilities for professional development. The *Professional Teaching Standards* should inform the development of teacher education programmes and continuous professional development initiatives. These Standards will be used as a framework to strengthen the teaching profession within the South African education system.

On behalf of:
SACE Standards Development Working Group, in collaboration with JET Education Services

2. Teachers collaborate with others to support teaching, learning and their professional development.

- 2.1. The wellbeing of children and their learning requires collaboration between teachers, parents or guardians, school-based colleagues and other professionals in the community.
- 2.2. Teachers involve themselves in ongoing personal, academic and professional growth through reflection, reading, study, research, and participation in professional development activities.
- 2.3. Teachers provide supportive environments for the induction and mentoring of colleagues who are new to their school, as well as pre-service and newly-qualified teachers.
- 2.4. Teachers participate in professional development activities organised by their subject associations, professional learning communities (PLCs) and teacher unions.
- 2.5. Teachers conduct themselves in ways that earn the respect of those in the community and uphold the dignity of the teaching profession.
- 2.6. Teachers involve themselves in educational debates and provide thoughtful comment on educational issues that affect them.



3. Teachers understand that language plays an important role in teaching and learning.

- 3.1. Teachers make appropriate use of the language of learning and teaching (LoLT), and where necessary, draw on other languages to clarify learners' understanding of important concepts.
- 3.2. Teachers introduce learners to the specialist terminology of their subject/s.
- 3.3. Teachers provide learners with ongoing opportunities to decode, interpret, and critique different kinds of written, graphical and visual texts.
- 3.4. Teachers create opportunities for learners to develop their reading and writing skills in the lessons they teach.



4. Teachers promote social justice and the redress of inequalities within their educational institutions and society more broadly.

- 4.1. Teachers are committed to affording every learner equitable and high quality learning opportunities.
- 4.2. Teachers have a moral responsibility to identify, confront and resist the marginalisation and exclusion of learners from accessing quality learning opportunities.



7. Teachers understand how their subjects are best taught and learnt.

- 7.1. Teachers present subject knowledge to learners in a conceptually sound manner.
- 7.2. Teachers devise tasks that give learners opportunities to practise and master new knowledge and skills.
- 7.3. Teachers learn to anticipate what learners find difficult to understand and develop effective ways to address common misunderstandings.
- 7.4. Teachers access, develop and modify teaching and learning resources available within and beyond their school contexts.
- 7.5. Teachers use carefully chosen physical, graphic, digital and text-based resources that enhance learners' access to knowledge.
- 7.6. Teachers use a variety of teaching and assessment strategies to promote learning for all.



8. Teachers interpret the national curriculum to plan systematic sequences of lessons.

- 8.1. Teachers use their knowledge of their subject and the curriculum to plan purposeful and coherent lessons.
- 8.2. Teachers connect the concepts they teach to what learners already know, and build a foundation for what they will learn subsequently.



9. Teaching involves organising, monitoring and assessing learning.

- 9.1. Teachers use assessment tasks that give learners opportunities to show what they have learnt, and what they can do with that knowledge.
- 9.2. Teachers provide learners with feedback that helps them understand what they have done correctly, where they have made mistakes, and how they can improve their work.
- 9.3. Teachers use learner errors as important data for understanding what learners misunderstand, and for thinking about ways to improve their teaching..
- 9.4. Teachers keep accurate records that reflect learner achievement, and can report to stakeholders on the progress of learners.



5. Teachers make judgments that are conceptually informed, responsive to learners and contextually appropriate.

- 5.1. Teachers seek to understand the relationship between theory, research and their classroom practices.
- 5.2. Teachers can justify the teaching choices they make about lesson planning, delivery and assessment to themselves and to other stakeholders.
- 5.3. Teachers reflect on their classroom experiences and use learner performances to think about ways to improve their teaching.



1. Ethical teaching is based on a commitment to the learning and wellbeing of all children.

- 1.1. Teachers hold high expectations of all learners' capacity to learn, work hard, and achieve success.
- 1.2. Teachers understand how children develop and learn.
- 1.3. Teachers understand the different challenges that confront learners and their families, and consider how these issues may affect their learning.
- 1.4. Teachers respect different aspects of learners' identities, and regard diversity as a strength and resource for teaching and learning.



PROFESSIONAL
TEACHING...

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6. Teaching is based on teachers' deep understanding of the subject/s they teach.

- 6.1. Teachers understand the structure and the concepts that make up the subjects they teach. They understand how these concepts are connected.
- 6.2. Teachers know how to use skills to create and verify knowledge in the subject/s they teach.
- 6.3. Teachers understand how concepts in their subjects can be used to address real world issues.
- 6.4. Teachers keep themselves informed of new developments in their subjects.



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10. Teaching requires that well managed learning environments are created and maintained.

- 10.1. Teachers are in class and teaching during scheduled teaching time.
- 10.2. Teachers establish classroom routines to maximise teaching and learning time.
- 10.3. Teachers use fair and consistently applied rules to promote respectful behaviour with all members of the school community.



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