

Answers to Frequently Asked Professional Growth Plan Questions

1. I have a permanent certificate and a continuing contract. Do I need to have a professional growth plan?

Yes. Every teacher employed by a school authority or ECS operator:

- a. under a probationary contract or continuing contract, or
- b. under other provisions of the *School Act* if required by the policy of the school authority or ECS operator, is responsible for completing during each school year an annual teacher professional growth plan.

2. Can I change my professional growth plan during the school year?

Yes. Unexpected changes in your assignment may necessitate changes in your professional growth plan. For example, you may be transferred to another school or assigned to teach a different grade. In such cases, you may need to change goals or goal strategies. You have a responsibility to keep your school principal informed about changes.

3. I supervise student teachers. Do I need a professional growth plan?

No. An annual teacher professional growth plan may consist of a planned program of supervising a student teacher or mentoring a teacher. The key principle that applies in this situation is that the program is planned. This mentoring plan can take the place of the annual professional growth plan. However, if you are supervising a student teacher for a short time only, your administration may require you to add a component to your growth plan.

4. Can my principal send my professional growth plan to central office?

No. The teacher making the plan owns the plan. It would be reasonable for the school principal to copy the plan and hold it in the school office as a ready reference when discussing the plan with the teacher. However, a copy should not be sent to, nor filed at, central office. The principal is responsible for staff supervision. Therefore, sending the professional growth plan beyond the school serves no purpose. All copies of the professional growth plan must be returned to the teacher after the year-end review.

5. What happens if I don't do an annual professional growth plan?

If teachers do not develop an annual professional growth plan and submit it to the principal according to school authority policy, they may be subject to the discipline procedures of the school authority. Teachers should be aware of timelines and other responsibilities outlined in the school board's policy.

6. Can I keep my professional growth plan?

Yes. The teacher making the annual professional growth plan owns the plan. The principal may keep a copy of the plan as a ready reference for discussion purposes, but the teacher needs the plan as a working document throughout the school year. All copies of the plan must be returned to the teacher following the year-end review.

7. I am a first-year teacher. Are the descriptors of the Teaching Quality Standard different for my teaching?

Yes. The Teaching Quality Standard descriptors are different for those entering the profession with interim certification. The difference recognizes that teaching practice changes throughout the teacher's career. The context in which the teaching and learning takes place also changes. Teachers' annual professional growth plans need to demonstrate a relationship to the Teaching Quality Standard, which, in your case, are the Knowledge, Skills, and Attributes Related to Interim Certification (Interim KSAs).

8. What should my plan look like?

A plan can be formatted in many ways. Some teachers prefer a linear plan, while others prefer a mind map or web format. Some school staffs have adopted a format that fits their unique needs. Whatever format is chosen, however, the plan should include the following components: goals, strategies, timelines, meaningful measures and required resources.

9. How many goals do I need?

It's not the number of goals that is critical but the quality of the goals. Goals need to reflect the teacher's self-assessed learning needs, demonstrate a relationship to the Teaching Quality Standard and take into consideration the education plans of the school, school authority and the government (or the program statement of the ECS operator). As a general rule, a growth plan should have fewer than five goals.

10. Do I need to have “personal” or “wellness” goals?

It depends. The policy calls for an annual teacher "professional" growth plan. Personal or wellness goals may make you a better person, but the focus of the plan must be on professional as opposed to personal growth. The provincial policy specifies that the teacher's goals reflect the Teaching Quality Standard. However, some school districts ask teachers to include one wellness goal on their professional growth plan. If this is the situation, teachers should include a wellness goal.

11. Do I need to align the school and district goals with my professional growth plan?

No. However, teachers need to consider the education plans of the school, the school authority and the government (or the program statement of an ECS operator). The key word is “consider,” which does not imply that these goals must be included. Teachers should not only have a well-developed rationale for all goals that they have included in their professional growth plan but also be prepared to explain why they have excluded other goals.

12. What happens if I don't finish my professional growth plan?

If a teacher fails to complete a professional growth plan through a lack of effort, the teacher may be subject to whatever disciplinary action is outlined in the school board's policy. However, if the plan has not been completed because the nature of the plan makes completion impossible (for example, a goal may require further study) or because of extenuating circumstances, the plan may be restructured as a multi-year plan. Multi-year professional growth plans must, nevertheless, contain timelines specifying the components that must be completed during each school year.

13. Can the school principal recommend changes to my professional growth plan?

Yes. The principal can recommend changes to the plan if it does not reflect the Teaching Quality Standard. Furthermore, if, through supervision, the principal believes that the teacher's practice does not meet the Teaching Quality Standard, he or she may initiate an evaluation. Through the evaluation process, the principal can develop a remediation plan that replaces the teacher's annual professional growth plan. The teacher is then obliged to use the remediation plan. Teachers might also be asked to provide a rationale for the goals and/or strategies that they identified in their professional growth plan.

14. Can my professional growth plan be used for my evaluation?

No. The provincial policy states that the content of an annual teacher professional growth plan must not be part of the evaluation process.

15. Can the principal "reject" my professional growth plan?

The regulations governing professional growth plans state that the professional growth plan is submitted “for review or approval.” School authority policy may give the principal the authority to approve the professional growth plan, in which case the principal can reject it if it does not meet the three criteria stated in the regulation. In other words, the professional growth plan must be based on the self-assessed learning needs of the teacher, must demonstrate a relationship to the Teaching Quality Standard and must consider the education goals of the school, district and the government.

16. I remember having an evaluation every three to four years. Has that changed?

Yes. Routine evaluation (summative and formative) is a thing of the past. Evaluations can be initiated in the following circumstances:

- a. at the written request of the teacher,
- b. to gather information related to a specific employment decision (permanent certification, continuing contract),
- c. to assess teacher growth in specific areas of practice and
- d. when a principal, through the process of supervision, has reason to believe that the Teaching Quality Standard is not being met.

17. Can I have the same professional growth plan for more than one year?

The professional growth plan can be a multi-year plan. However, the plan needs to be divided into school year blocks. Otherwise, it cannot be considered an "annual" teacher professional growth plan.

18. Can my peers serve on a committee to review my professional growth plan?

Yes. However, regulations specify that the professional growth plan is submitted for review or approval to:

- a. the principal, or
- b. a group of teachers delegated by the principal, if such delegation is provided for in the school authority policy.

In some schools, the professional development committee or the teacher's collaborative team may be authorized to review the plan.

19. Should I use provincial student achievement data as a measure for my professional growth plan?

No. Provincial student achievement data is one type of data that teachers should use for professional reflection. This data is subject to more than just teaching practice and can vary considerably from day to day as the context of the classroom changes. Provincial student achievement data can be valuable if it is analyzed so as to take into account such other factors that may affect student achievement as attendance, fluency in English and socioeconomic status. You should consider, however, what can be learned by analyzing a wide range of student achievement data over time in relation to the goals outlined in your professional growth plan. The provincial achievement data is not available before the end of the year. Therefore, teachers will need to use a variety of other classroom assessments to meaningfully measure changes in student learning.