

Information for Community Partners

The best way to learn about work is on the job. At the Secondary School level, students have an opportunity to earn credits at placements in the community that match their interests and aptitudes. It is called cooperative education, and it is an important part of the school curriculum. Cooperative education prepares our youth for the transition from school to work; it helps them make education and career choices; it develops knowledge, skills and attitudes expected in a workplace.

Cooperative education is a partnership consisting of community partners, placement supervisors, students, and co-op teachers. All parties play a significant role in the program. Each must commit to the goals of the program, and each is responsible for achieving those goals to the best of their ability. The success of the program depends upon clear expectations and shared responsibilities.

Benefits for YOUR Workplace:

- improve public relations by demonstrating good corporate citizenship
- a motivated and eager individual in their placement
- source, assess, and recruit potential employees
- involve employees in a rewarding experience with young people
- influence young people's attitudes toward work and school
- develop training, supervisory, and communication skills of current employees

Related Costs

The main costs are time and people. You may need to provide additional meeting and training time for staff who are supervising the student at the placement. Time will also be needed for the supervisor to meet with the teacher on a regular basis. Students are not customarily paid for co-op, but Paid Co-op is an option in certain situations.

Workplace Safety Insurance Coverage

Students in work experience and cooperative education programs are covered under the Workers' Compensation Act as part of the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Durham District School Board (except where students receive remuneration as part of a Paid Co-op).

Program Details: The program runs from July 2 to August 1, 2026. Students should be scheduled at placement Mon – Fri – (no weekends) and between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm. Specific details or modified schedules can be discussed with the co-op teacher. The course is 220 hours of combined classwork and placement experience to obtain 2 credits. Students will have pre-placement dates for the first 3 days of the program where they will not be at the placement. More details will be provided by the co-op teacher when they complete a placement assessment before the student joins your workplace.

You can help our future workforce by:

- providing a safe working and learning environment,
- designating one employee to be responsible for supervising and evaluating each student,
- providing students with written or oral feedback after an employment interview as part of the learning experience,
- helping to develop personalized placement learning plans by identifying duties to be performed,
- providing orientation and workplace health and safety training,
- providing meaningful learning experiences that will develop personal growth and career goals,
- helping students function as an integral part of a team.

For more information, please visit our website at www.dce.ca (under Summer School) or contact:

Dan MacDonald, Curriculum Lead - Credit Programs – 905.436.3211 or daniel.macdonald@ddsb.ca

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Community Partners – Frequently Asked Questions

Why are community-based learning opportunities important for young people?

As adolescents go through the transformation from child to adult, they spend a lot of time exploring future roles and careers. Experiences at this age can lay the foundation for successful employment and a productive life in adulthood. Community based learning experiences provide students with access to the skills, knowledge, and attitudes they need in the workplace. As a result, students are better able to set realistic and obtainable goals for their future.

Learning at a community placement helps students develop their employability and citizenship skills and behaviours. Some of these competencies include effective resource management, working co-operatively, acquiring, using, and managing information, understanding organizations and how they function, working with different technologies, and strategies for problem solving.

Does my organization have anything to offer?

Every organization has a great deal to offer students who could be future employees. Every learning experience can influence a student's confidence, educational goals, career choice, or commitment to stay in school.

Will teenagers fit into my organization?

There is no doubt that teenagers and even young adults bring their own joys and challenges. The physical, emotional, and social changes they are experiencing make each one of them a unique entity with unique characteristics and needs. They may be highly energetic, active, outspoken, and impulsive. They are also enthusiastic, and eager to please, anxious to learn, and excited about new experiences and interacting with other people. Their preference for active over passive learning means you can engage them fully in appropriately designed learning activities.

Working closely with their teacher will help you to understand the characteristics of the age group, any specific student needs, and how to plan a meaningful learning experience.

How can we provide a meaningful learning experience for the students?

You and your employees have a multitude of relevant skills to share with students. This is an opportunity to refine those skills and develop some new ones. Some common placement supervisor benefits include:

- training, e.g., instructing students about safety requirements
- mentoring, e.g., advising individual students
- supervising, e.g., overseeing student performance
- co-ordinating, e.g., organizing work schedules

In advance of the experience, talk with the teacher to ensure that you have all the information you require about the co-op program. Identify the learning opportunities to be pursued at the placement, and how they relate to classroom learning. Clarify the expectations for the placement, placement supervisor, the student, and the co-op teacher. Communication with the student and co-op teacher is important to the learning process and adjustments can be made as needed.

Can we involve students with special education needs?

Absolutely! Although some students learning may require accommodations or personalized attention when it comes to planning and monitoring their involvement, there is no doubt that they have the makings of reliable and loyal employees. Supervisors will work closely with the students and teacher. Spending time getting to know the student's strengths while developing accommodations to help the student build success.

The co-op teacher will be a key resource for you in this area. In general, all adolescents benefit from: - positive social interaction with adults and peers - structured and clear boundaries, and expectations - opportunities for creative expression - meaningful participation in small groups - activities involving some choice.

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