

# EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING GUIDE

**FOR PARENTS  
AND FAMILIES**



**Workforce  
Planning Board  
of Grand Erie**

## **SKILLS FOR THE WORKFORCE**

### **Parents and families**

have an important role in supporting their children in career planning.

When parents become familiar with job exploration and get their children to participate in experiential learning, they help them become more successful in their career planning.

### **WHAT IS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING?**

We learn more by “doing” than by hearing or reading.

In the school system, experiential learning refers to hands-on experiences that help students prepare for future employment.

Examples of experiential learning include a co-op placement, internships, apprenticeships, workplace tours and project-based learning. It involves learning by doing and connects classroom theory to real-life experiences.

## EXAMPLES & BENEFITS

### Examples of experiential learning activities and work placements

#### SHORT -TERM: (UP TO ONE DAY)

**CLASSROOM VISITS**

**WORKPLACE TOURS**

**JOB SHADOWING**

**CAREER FAIRS**

#### LONG -TERM: (UP TO A FEW MONTHS)

#### MENTORING

An employer advises you and acts as role model

#### PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Employer mentors student projects that provide solutions to real workplace problems

#### CO-OP

4 months equivalent to an academic term

#### ONTARIO YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP

#### VALUE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Learners build transferable skills that they can take with them into jobs – skills that relate to workplace terminology and processes and also soft skills like working as part of a team and time management.

Learners understand more about the industries they want to pursue in the future.

They are able to make more informed decisions about their education and career path so they make a successful transition into the job market.

Students are able to gain work experience before they begin a formal job search.



- During workplace placements, students are able to learn about different jobs they may not have been aware of. Students are able to develop business contacts and references for the future
- As they are exposed to a variety of occupations, including the non-traditional, female students often become increasingly motivated in career decision-making



Experiential learning is at the forefront of our educational programming because this is how students make the connections between what they are learning in the classroom and how it will benefit them in work and in life...

*James Merrick, vice-principal at Valley Heights Secondary School, Grand Erie District School Board*



## OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGH SCHOOL

### Experiential Learning Activities at School

- Clubs/Teams
- Field Trips
- Extracurricular Activities
- Industry Tours
- Skilled Trades Career Fair
- Volunteering
- Take Our Kids to Work Day

Launched in 1994, Take Our Kids to Work Day is the most recognized career education event in Canada, with an estimated 200,000 students visiting workplaces every year on that day.

Within The Grand Erie District School Board and the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board, Experiential Learning opportunities include **Job Shadowing** which allows a student to spend time observing a worker in a specific occupation (i.e. Take Our Kids To Work Day), **Job Twinning** which allows a student to observe a co-operative education student in his or her placement, **Work Experience** through placements and **Co-operative Education**. The Co-op program is available to all Grade 11 and 12 students and is the most common type of Experiential Learning.

#### CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION (CO-OP)

Co-op courses combine classroom learning with work experience.

In participating, high school students will:

- Earn up to 2 credits through work experience
- Explore careers they want to pursue after high school
- Develop the essential skills and habits required in the workplace

Students may also use Co-op credits towards programs such as the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program or the Specialist High Skills Major Program.

#### ONTARIO YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM (OYAP)

The OYAP program allows students to pursue a career in the skilled trades.

Students in Grade 11 or 12 can gain training in an apprenticeship trade of interest.

#### SPECIALIST HIGH SKILLS MAJOR (SHSM)

Specialist High Skills Major let students focus on fields like Environmental Studies, Construction or Health and Wellness while meeting the requirements of the Ontario Secondary School Diploma.

The Grand Erie District School Board and the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board, in conjunction with the Ontario Ministry of Education, offer **SHSM** to Grade 11 and 12 students in secondary schools.

#### DUAL CREDIT PROGRAM

Students participate in apprenticeship training and post-secondary courses and earn dual credits that count towards both their high school diploma and their post-secondary diploma, degree or apprenticeship certification.



For further information and resources on Grand Erie District School Board Co-operative Education:  
<http://test.granderie.ca/schools/mpss/student-services/co-op>

Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board Co-operative Education:  
<http://www.bhncdsb.ca/page/co-op>

## EVENTS, ACTIVITIES & VIRTUAL EXPERIENCES

### Experiential Learning Activities Elsewhere

Workplace Simulations

On-site Experiences

Social Media Exposure

Virtual Visits



#### WHAT IS A SKILLED TRADES FAIR, INDUSTRY TOUR?

Industry tours bring students into the workplace and let them see what it's like to work in different fields. Students get a chance to speak with professionals who know what education and training is key to job success. Evidence indicates that these tours open students' eyes to new possibilities.

Attending company open houses is another way to gain exposure to the types of occupations and roles that are available.

With over 140 professions classified as skilled trades – many of which are in high demand – companies, unions and organizations also reach out with information about careers in skilled trades through regional job fairs.

#### REGIONAL EXAMPLES – MANUFACTURING MONTH & EPIC JOBS

Each October Manufacturing Month is celebrated in the Grand Erie region. Around 250 high school students, teachers and guidance counsellors get a first-hand look at modern manufacturing as around 20 companies open their doors for tours for one day.

Epic Jobs is an annual community event designed to open the eyes of students to potential careers in the skilled trades. Grade 7 & 8 students from across the Grand Erie region get a chance to try hands-on activities connected to various trades, from using a virtual welder to trying virtual reality goggles to changing race car tires. For many young people, this is their first look at the many cool careers in the trades.



ADVANCE YOUR SKILLS | CREATE YOUR FUTURE

For more information contact the Workforce Planning Board of Grand Erie: 519-756-1116

#### VIRTUAL EXPERIENCES

Other forms of Experiential Learning that support career exploration include virtual workplace simulations. A number of companies give a personal look behind their company doors through social media storytelling or virtual tours accessed through websites.

Websites such as Virtual Career Exploration allow participants to take a virtual reality tour of 25 workplaces across the country with the 360° videos to explore future career paths.

For further information and resources about Virtual Experiences:

<https://www.thelearningpartnership.ca/events/take-our-kids-to-work-day/virtual-reality-workplaces>

**SPECIAL PROGRAMS**



**Summer Company** is a Province of Ontario initiative that provides business opportunities for enterprising youth, 15 to 29 years old, to start and run their own summer businesses. Participants receive hands-on business coaching and mentoring from local community business leaders.

Accepted applicants are eligible to receive up to \$1,500 to put toward start-up costs and up to \$1,500 upon successful completion of the program.

For further information and resources about Summer Company:  
<http://www.brantford.ca/business/SmallBusinessAssistance/Pages/YouthProgramPageContent.aspx>

**The Starter Company Plus** program provides mentoring, training and capital up to \$5,000 for entrepreneurs to start, grow or buy a small business.

Eligible candidates are Ontario residents 18+ years of age, not attending school full time, and looking to start a full-time business.



**BCI-Laurier Program**

A partnership between Laurier Brantford and Brantford Collegiate Institute in which high school students get to work with other like-minded students in an advanced academic and collaborative setting which includes taking a first-year university course.

The program provides a platform for students in the area of Leadership, Teamwork and Presentation.

Questions?  
 Please email Ms. Kate Johnson-McGregor,  
 Laurier Program Director  
[kate.johnson@granderie.ca](mailto:kate.johnson@granderie.ca)



## POST-SECONDARY OPPORTUNITIES

### Grand Erie Post-Secondary

Conestoga College  
519-748-5220 x3756

Fanshawe College Simcoe  
519-452-4430 x4718

Wilfrid Laurier University  
519-756-8228 x5844

Six Nations Polytechnic  
519-445-0023 x7253

Mohawk College  
905-575-2167

Grand River Employment  
and Training  
519-445-2222

### POST-SECONDARY EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPTIONS

Both paid and unpaid post-secondary experiential learning options vary in time requirements and range from professional co-op and skilled trades apprenticeships to practicums.

Practicums are experiences that allow a student to observe and practice how working professionals perform their job responsibilities in fields such as teaching. Internships call for a higher level of involvement on the part of the student with work tasks and plans.

Mandatory professional practice and clinical placements are required for degrees and licenses in certain fields such as law and health sciences.

Industry sponsored student research projects result in useful data or product development for industry. Incubators and accelerators allow industry to sponsor students building a start-up working in a campus-linked incubator.

Conestoga College, Fanshawe College (Simcoe/Norfolk Regional Campus), Wilfrid Laurier University, Six Nations Polytechnic, Mohawk College and Grand River Employment and Training are post-secondary institutions that serve Grand Erie and offer programs which include field placements, practicums and co-op. Hands-on learning is also undertaken in simulation labs and through case study projects.



Through Experiential Learning, students are able to gain work experience before they begin a formal job search. Employers are often looking for candidates who have been in a work environment and have developed the skills needed to succeed in a job.

- Having previous work experience can result in a higher starting wage
- Students are able to learn faster and better retain information when taught in the workplace

## UPGRADING AND TRAINING

### LITERACY & BASIC SKILLS ORGANIZATIONS

Many Literacy & Basic Skills (LBS) agencies run skills training focused on transition to the labour market. Combined with curriculum in the classroom, the hands-on training is specific to occupations that are in high demand.

Examples are warehousing, pre-apprenticeship programs for welding or millwrights, office administration, point of sale training, call centre representative, personal support worker, customer service, housekeeping and dietary aide where participants take part in some type of work placement.

Additionally, programs such as customer service training cover soft skills, communications, basic technology and preparation for a “typical” day.

### PRE-APPRENTICESHIP AND APPRENTICESHIP

Those interested in working in a trade but don't have the skills or qualifications to get a job as an apprentice can apply to a pre-apprenticeship program that helps entrants into the apprenticeship. Candidates can apply for training through colleges or community agencies across Ontario. It is free; costs for textbooks, safety equipment and tools are also covered.

The training goes for up to 52 weeks and starts a number of times per year. Participants receive training in safety for skilled trades, academic skills upgrading and basic level apprenticeship in-school training. The programs include a work placement for eight to 12 weeks.

Upon completion individuals will find a skilled trades company sponsor and enter an official apprenticeship program which takes approximately 3-4 years to complete and involves written exams along with work evaluation.

### Literacy & Basic Skills Organizations in Grand Erie

Brant Skills Centre  
519-758-1664

Bridges to Success  
519-759-0000 x277312

Haldimand-Norfolk  
Literacy Council  
519-428-0064

Ontario Native  
Literacy Coalition  
519-445-1539

For further information and resources on pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship:  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/prepare-apprenticeship>

For further information and resources on the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities:  
[www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/programs/appr.html](http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/programs/appr.html)



**Please check out the following links for more resources:**

Ministry of Education Experiential Learning:

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/job/passport/index.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/job/passport/index.html)

Benefits of Co-op:

[www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/technology/pages/why-co-op-programs-are-a-win-win-for-students-and-employers.aspx](http://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/technology/pages/why-co-op-programs-are-a-win-win-for-students-and-employers.aspx)

Education at Work Ontario Co-op information:

[www.ewo.ca/site/employers](http://www.ewo.ca/site/employers)

“Worker” as defined by the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act:

[www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/worker\\_defn.php](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs/worker_defn.php)

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[www.cewilcanada.ca/about-us-benefits.html](http://www.cewilcanada.ca/about-us-benefits.html)

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<https://elearningindustry.com/8-reasons-experiential-learning-future-learning>

[www.wpboard.ca/experiential-learning](http://www.wpboard.ca/experiential-learning)



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This project is funded by the Government of Ontario. The views expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Ontario. The material in this guide has been prepared by WPBGE and is drawn from a variety of sources considered to be reliable. We make no representations or warranty, expressed or implied, as to its accuracy or completeness. In providing this material, WPBGE does not assume any responsibility or liability.

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