



The Conference Board
of Canada

CASE STUDY 7

*A core product of the
Employability Skills
Forum, National
Business and
Education Centre*

Program

*Business–education–
government
partnership*

Date Established

1993

Contact

*Mr. Joseph Brennan
New Brunswick
Department of
Education
440 King St., 3rd Floor
Kings Place
P.O. Box 6000
Fredericton,
New Brunswick
E3B 5H1
Tel: (506) 453-2668
Fax: (506) 453-3325
joeb@gov.nb.ca*

Name of Program

*New Brunswick
Department of
Education's Youth
Apprenticeship
Program*

Skills Developed

- Academic
- Personal Management
- Teamwork

Developing secondary school students' employability skills

NEW BRUNSWICK YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Balancing Academic Aspirations with Labour Force Requirements

BY KURTIS KITAGAWA

August 1998

The New Brunswick Department of Education is facilitating the school-to-work and/or school-to-postsecondary transition of secondary students by developing their generic employability skills.

Overview

The New Brunswick Department of Education recognizes that a well-educated and technically skilled workforce is central to the productivity and competitiveness of New Brunswick's businesses and industries in the global economy. The Department also acknowledge the critical shortage of such workers. Accordingly, they have developed the Youth Apprenticeship Program to meet the demand for educated and skilled workers and to facilitate the successful school-to-postsecondary education and/or school-to-work transition of secondary students.

Objectives

- Make careers in high-skilled occupations more appealing and more accessible to youth.

- Encourage co-operation between New Brunswick's business community and educational system, both secondary and postsecondary.
- Harmonize academic aspirations with labour force requirements.
- Give students an opportunity to gain knowledge and work experience in a viable career area of their choice.
- Facilitate the school-to-work transition for secondary school students.
- Provide employers with a talent pool of well-motivated, academically prepared potential employees who possess up-to-date skills and have relevant work experience.

Groups Served

- Students, employers, parents, schools, community colleges and universities.

Activities

The program is a four-phase process that helps develop employability skills, supports the career aspirations of secondary school students, and provides employers with opportunities to participate in the educational process and contribute to training the workforce of the future. The program allows

**National Business and
Education Centre (NBEC)**

Director: MaryAnn McLaughlin

Research Associates:
Michael Bloom
Kurtis Kitagawa
Joanne Mahoney
Douglas Watt

Awards Co-ordinator:
Linda Scott

Program and Research Assistant:
Jean Smith

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students to participate in a regular secondary school program of their choice, and to develop employability and occupational skills by participating in 360 hours of outcome-based instruction and by gaining a minimum of 360 hours of paid work experience.

Students embark on their apprenticeship program in the summer following Grade 10 and move through three progressively more specialized phases of work and study, each consisting of 120 hours of instruction and 120 hours or more of paid work experience. The instruction in each phase is delivered outside school hours largely at evening, weekend and summer workshop and workplace venues (or at a combination of workshop and workplace venues) and through self-directed learning activities. Students fulfil the work experience portion of each phase over the summer months of their Grade 10, 11 and 12 years and at other times outside school hours by mutual arrangement with their employers.

Initially, secondary school students become aware of the Youth Apprenticeship Program through career development and transition planning activities during Grades 9 and 10. Interested students gain access to program details through information meetings in Grade 10. Those wishing to participate are screened to determine whether they have identified an occupational/career area by examining their own interests and aptitudes and by participating in other career development activities. They are also sounded out to assess their willingness to commit themselves to all of the program requirements over a 28-month period. Students whose career interests match with job descriptions communicated to district program co-ordinators by sponsoring employers—which are subsequently posted in all the schools in participating districts—submit résumés and covering letters to the relevant employers. Employers then shortlist candidates for interviews and make their final selections just as they do when hiring for conventional positions.

Phase 1

Successful candidates—defined as those who have been hired by employers—enter Phase 1 and participate in a four-day intensive residential workshop in the summer following their Grade 10 year. At this workshop, students learn about the New Brunswick economy, practise their communications skills, develop workplace health and safety consciousness and are trained to a state of employment readiness that will enable them to thrive in their job placements, which they take up later that summer. Also during Phase 1, which lasts until the following May, students learn about employer–employee responsibilities, receive first aid (including CPR) training, develop their interpersonal skills, and are introduced to workplace computing applications and business/technical writing.

Phase 2

Students start Phase 2 with a workshop in the summer after Grade 11, continue at the workplace through the summer and finish by the spring of Grade 12. In this phase, students devote two-thirds of their instructional time to improving the academic, personal management and teamwork skills emphasized in Phase 1 and using communications equipment. One-third of their time is devoted to developing occupational/career specific skills.

Phase 3

Students move into Phase 3 in April/May of their Grade 12 year with a weekend workshop. They work following their graduation, completing all program requirements in August. During this phase, students devote one-third of their instructional time to further building the generic employability skills learned in phases 1 and 2, and to using computer communications applications. Two-thirds of their time is spent building occupational/career specific skills.

Phase 4

In Phase 4, students who have successfully completed the curricular and work

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We are committed to improving the productivity and quality of life for individuals, organizations and society by enhancing the employability skills of the current and future workforce of Canada.

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experience phases enter the workforce or embark on a course of postsecondary training or education. Through formally negotiated articulation agreements, graduates of the program are guaranteed placement in related programs offered by the New Brunswick Community College and have preferred admission status to the University of New Brunswick and the University of Moncton.

Resources Required

Start-up

A \$1.25 million cash investment was required for the three-year pilot project, which delivers 360 hours of instruction to each participating student. This works out to approximately \$55 per student per day (or less than 1.5 times the cost of delivering regular classroom instruction). The primary funders were the New Brunswick Department of Education and Human Resources Development Canada. Other monies were made available under a Co-operation Agreement on Entrepreneurship and Human Resources Development. In-kind contributions of human resources and services were provided by the New Brunswick Department of Advanced Education and Labour and the New Brunswick Chamber of Commerce.

Human Resources

Twelve school district co-ordinators were hired on a full- or part-time basis for a total of \$300,000 per annum.

Material

Material costs included those for 10,000 promotional pamphlets and a promotional video. Costs were cut by reducing the duration of residential workshops from five days to four. Computer- and Internet-based training delivery models are being investigated to further cut the cost of delivering the curriculum. The Youth Apprenticeship Program also relies on in-kind contributions from sponsoring employers, partners and interested groups such as

St. John Ambulance, the Department of Advanced Education and Labour and the Workplace Health and Safety Commission, which undertake some instructional responsibilities.

Achievements/Outcomes

- A survey of the first and second graduating classes of youth apprentices, parents, and employers in 1995 indicated high levels of satisfaction among all three groups.
- A total of 918 private sector organizations have actively participated in the program.
- Sixty per cent of program graduates were offered admission and were admitted into postsecondary training courses.
- Eighty per cent of those who did not opt for postsecondary training were employed.
- The program integrated more closely the world of education and the world of work, which is vitally important to enhancing productivity and increasing competitiveness in a global economy.

Benefits

The Youth Apprenticeship Program directly benefits students and employers.

Students

- Improve their employability skills, become more aware of career opportunities, enhance their career focus and think more concretely and systematically about choosing and working toward a career and developing a sophisticated occupational skills base.
- Earn money during their formative high school years without closing down avenues to postsecondary education.
- Take ownership of their education, training and job experience in important ways by linking substantial time commitments on their part with the acquisition of valuable skills.

The Conference Board of Canada

255 Smyth Road
Ottawa, Ontario K1H 8M7
Canada
Tel: (613) 526-3280
Fax: (613) 526-4857
Internet:
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca>

The Conference Board, Inc.

845 Third Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10022 U.S.A.
Tel: (212) 759-0900
Fax: (212) 980-7014
Internet:
<http://www.conference-board.org>

The Conference Board Europe

Chaussée de La Hulpe 130, bte 11
B-1000 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: (32) 2.675 54 05
Fax: (32) 2.675 03 95

Our grateful thanks to our interviewee:

Joseph Brennan

- Learn workplace responsibility since it is up to them to ensure that their competence in all curricular areas is signed off by appropriate people.

Employers

- Benefit from an arrangement that draws them into closer involvement in the educational system.
- Profit from the information technology strengths of the students they sponsor.
- Have the advantage of continuity of service from their youth apprentices over three summers.
- Contribute to the development of the workforce of the future.

Innovation

The single most innovative feature of the program is that it complements *any* secondary school program, enabling *all* students, regardless of their academic course load, to participate in an earning and learning apprenticeship program. For students who do not pursue formal postsecondary education or training, the Youth Apprenticeship Program provides effective school-to-work transition. For those who do embark on formal postsecondary training or education, it is a stepping stone to admission into community college or university courses; it also prepares them to finance their education or training through work. More generally, the generic employability skills and the sophisticated occupational skills base all students develop provide them with a marketable work history, a definite advantage in today's labour market.

Other innovations include the articulation of secondary education, workplace training and postsecondary education:

graduates of the Youth Apprenticeship Program are guaranteed placement in related programs at New Brunswick Community College and have preferred admission status at the University of New Brunswick and the University of Moncton.

Keys to Success

To get the most out of the Youth Apprenticeship Program, prospective students should already have:

- obtained the competencies of the Department of Education's comprehensive guidance and counselling program and participated in career development activities for Grades 6 to 10,
- made an informed career decision, and
- demonstrated that they are interested in, capable of and willing to undertake the required additional training and development activities.

Greatest Challenge

The greatest challenge in ensuring the success of a program like this is to increase the number of employers participating in the program and to maintain the support of those who subscribe to it (for other examples of how employability skills development programs build community capacity, see case studies 14 and 15). Employers must be made aware of the benefits they gain from participating, especially of the value of the longer term investment that they make in developing the workforce of the future when they maintain their support for the program over several years. This can be difficult where the economic base of the community is weak and youth apprentices are seen as competing for already scarce jobs.

NBEC Publications Relating to Employability Skills Development and Assessment

Employability Skills Profile

Science Literacy for the World of Work

Best Practices in Assessing and Developing Employability Skills—20 Case Studies (Sept. 98)

The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy in the Workplace, 206-97 Report.

Enhancing Employability Skills: Innovative Partnerships, Projects and Programs, 118-94 Report.

Linking Teachers, Science, Technology and Research: Business and Education Collaborations That Work, 144-95 Report.

1998 100-Best Partnerships IdeaBook

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