



CASE STUDY 3

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

Program

Education partnership

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Name of Program

Dufferin–Peel Roman Catholic Separate School (R.C.S.S.) Board's Youth Access to Apprenticeship Program

Skills Developed

• *Academic*

Developing secondary school students' employability skills

DUFFERIN–PEEL R.C.S.S. BOARD'S YOUTH ACCESS TO APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM *Transitions for Non-university-bound Secondary School Students*

BY MICHAEL R. BLOOM , PENNY BRADY & KURTIS KITAGAWA

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Dufferin–Peel Roman Catholic Separate School Board is helping non-university-bound secondary school students make the transition to the world of work by opening up apprenticeship opportunities.

Overview

The Youth Access to Apprenticeship Program (YAAP) is an innovative three-phase approach to providing students with a wider range of career choices after secondary school graduation. It was created in 1995 by the Dufferin–Peel Roman Catholic Separate School Board in partnership with the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board, Apprenticeship and Client Services Branch (now Apprenticeship Department, Ontario Ministry of Education and Training).

By raising the profile of apprenticeship as a postsecondary choice for students seeking to develop their employability skills, the YAAP provides secondary school students with an attractive alternative to community college and university. The Program emphasizes career exploration, education and awareness to ensure that students have a clear picture of their future, whether they choose to enter the

workforce immediately or to pursue their education or training through an apprenticeship or by taking a college or university course. As students gain a clearer picture of their choices and the advantages of each option, they are more likely to choose apprenticeship.

Phase 1, conducted during the 1995–96 school year, was a pilot project. It consisted of two elements: (1) promotional activities that focused on changing attitudes toward apprenticeship and marketing it as a viable postsecondary option; and (2) networking with representatives from business, postsecondary schools and private vocational institutions to find ways of improving apprenticeship and of developing innovative apprenticeship programs to train youth for newly emerging jobs.

Phase 2 consisted of three elements: (1) identifying potential employers in high growth sectors of Ontario's economy, including advanced manufacturing, pharmaceuticals and health care, communications and the electronics/robotics industries; (2) creating partnerships; and (3) developing apprenticeship programs to provide high school graduates with the work experience and employability skills that ease the transition from school to work.

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Phase 3, still under way, partners the Dufferin–Peel Roman Catholic Separate School Board with the Halton Board of Education and the Halton Roman Catholic School Board. The partnership is developing a model and curriculum that can be shared with other jurisdictions in Ontario to ensure a clear and structured school-to-work transition for work-bound youth. During this stage, an advisory committee composed of representatives from business, education and community partners will be set up to administer, oversee and manage the program.

Objectives

The primary goal of the YAAP is to market the concept of apprenticeship to students, schools, parents and the business community in order to:

- improve employers' perceptions of apprenticeship by characterizing it as a means to enhance employability skills,
- encourage employers to identify their apprenticeship needs and to look favourably on Dufferin–Peel and partnering boards' students as potential candidates,
- develop students' awareness of career options that are not based on immediate formal college or university preparation,
- help eliminate misconceptions and existing negative attitudes toward the trades and apprenticeship,
- raise awareness that apprenticeship programs facilitate the transition from school to work, and
- create new areas of apprenticeship and apprenticeship certification through ongoing dialogue with employers and representatives of the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training.

By pursuing these goals, students, educators, guidance counsellors, parents, employers and community members will become aware that apprenticeship programs enhance students' employability skills and prepare them to meet the challenges presented by a rapidly changing economy and new job market trends.

Activities

Phase 1

In this first phase, 821 students voluntarily participated in one of 34 lunch hour workshops at a Dufferin–Peel secondary school.

After each presentation, students were given the opportunity to sign up for further workshops to explore careers in the trades or technical fields. Four subsequent workshops were held for students who wished to further investigate how they could become involved in apprenticeship programs and how these programs could give them the employability skills they needed to build a better future for themselves.

Parents and community members were also invited to participate in their own series of workshops at a Dufferin–Peel secondary school. At these facilitated evening workshops, parents had the opportunity to explore how their children could benefit—both financially and in terms of the employability skills they stood to gain—from being involved in an apprenticeship program.

Two guidance counsellors or co-op teachers from each secondary school in the Dufferin–Peel Roman Catholic Separate School Board participated in the students' workshops as in-service training. They discussed the importance of apprenticeship programs as a vehicle for providing students with opportunities to earn money while learning employability skills. After this training, these counsellors and teachers returned to their schools, where they were better able to provide in-service training for all other teachers who would be informing students about apprenticeship as a viable route to a meaningful career.

Phase 2

To build employer support and involvement, school board representatives met with employers in high growth sectors of the economy—advanced manufacturing and telecommunications—

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to discuss how apprenticeship programs could be improved to facilitate students' school-to-work transition and enhance their academic, personal management and teamwork skills.

Phase 3

In the third phase, the three school boards, three pilot schools and over 20 industry partners will combine with business community partners to design an in-school and an on-the-job curriculum aimed at developing key employability skills through a Skillstart program.

Once this has been accomplished, students will be able to participate in the work-based portion of the program, exploring the world of work through classroom activities in Grade 10, gaining industry exposure in Grade 11, and receiving workplace training in a specific occupation in Grade 12. Students will receive academic credit for the in-school and on-the-job portions of their training.

Educators will be able to participate as learners in workplace internships, which will help them develop applied and contextual learning approaches that will provide effective bridging for their students as they make the transition from school to work.

Resources Required

Over a two-year period, the following staffing is required to oversee project design, promote the project, ensure funding is in place, conduct workshops, and work with and find new employers:

- senior school board officer—20 days;
- school board co-ordinator—100 days; and
- workshop facilitator—full time.

From start-up to the end of the marketing phase, a program of this type costs between \$75,000 and \$100,000 to implement.

Achievements/Outcomes

This program has been highly successful in opening up a dialogue between students and teachers about apprenticeship as a viable route to a career. After participating in the initial series of workshops, 164 students

signed up to attend subsequent workshops devoted to career exploration, including the trades and other technical occupations.

Benefits

Students

- Helps all students make knowledgeable career choices.
- Broadens the career horizons of the 70 per cent of secondary school students who do not attend university.
- Gives students access to programs that will help them to develop their employability skills.
- Prepares secondary school students for the challenges of a rapidly changing labour market.

Educators

- Keeps educators in touch with the ever-changing variety of career paths potentially available to their students.

Employers and the Community

- Provides a skilled and employment-ready pool of students for community employers to hire.
- Encourages the local community to be involved in the education of future earners.
- Ensures that secondary school graduates' employability skills match workforce requirements.

Parents

- Helps their children to make informed career choices as they make the transition to the world of work.

Innovation

The YAAP provides students, starting in Grade 10, with a unique opportunity to explore a broad range of career options so that they can make informed decisions about their future. It also helps to change the perceptions of students, parents, educators and employers about the reality of apprenticeship training and the need to encourage Canada's youth to seriously consider the apprenticeship

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Our grateful thanks to our interviewee:

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option when making their career choices. The “earn and learn” model on which the YAAP is based may be applied to a wide range of occupational sectors, not just technical skills placements, thus opening up the possibility of a broad range of professional and other internships.

Keys to Success

- Having a clear understanding of the newly emerging needs of a rapidly changing Canadian economy.
- Using an expert in the field of apprenticeship, school-to-work transition and employability skills to facilitate workshops.

- Securing broad-based local or regional school board support.
- Gaining the support of the local business community.

Greatest Challenge

- Channelling students into apprenticeship programs after they have participated in workshops.
- Eliminating the negative connotations associated with apprenticeship.
- Expanding the range of available apprenticeship programs.
- Building a broad-based consensus about the need to sensitize youth to present and newly emerging apprenticeship opportunities.

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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