

Dear Potential New Employer:

Thank you for your interest in becoming involved as an employer in our Co-operative Education program.

Co-operative Education is the fastest growing area of secondary school education. It combines classroom theory with practical experience in the workplace. School credits are awarded to students upon their successful demonstration of learning expectations from in-school curriculum. The student is supported in their learning by their co-op teacher and their workplace supervisor.

Every secondary school in Peel has a co-operative education program. Because each school is unique, programs may vary slightly. In Peel, most secondary schools provide semestered programs which allow students to undertake their work term for four months. Semester one begins in September and ends in January. Semester two begins in February and ends in June. During these months, the students in the four-credit program are in the workplace for approximately four, full-days every week. For schools that provide a two-credit program, the students are in the workplace five, half-days every week.

Please fill in the attached Employer Lead Sheet and return to me. I will then circulate the information about your company to all Co-op teachers in Peel for possible placements for this semester or the following semester.

You, the employer, will interview potential co-op students *before* accepting them into the workplace and the teacher will visit the workplace before the student begins to complete a Placement Assessment.

I am confident that your participation in Co-operative Education will be satisfying and productive for you and your co-op student. Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have questions or concerns about the program.

I can be reached at 905-890-1010, ext. 2348.

Sincerely,

Ann-Marie Pottinger
Experiential Learning/Co-op Instructional Resource Teacher
Peel District School Board
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GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS

The best way to learn about work is on the job. At the Secondary School level, students have an opportunity to work outside school at jobs that match their interests and aptitudes. It's called co-operative education and it's an important part of the school curriculum. Co-operative 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 the workplace.

Co-operative education is a partnership consisting of employers, students, and teachers. All parties play an important 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 the Workplace

- improve public relations by demonstrating good corporate citizenship
- employ a motivated and eager individual in their workplace
- 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

ADOLESCENTS IN YOUR WORKPLACE

Why are school-work 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. School-work 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 themselves.

Learning in the workplace helps students develop good 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 ultimately be future employees. Every work 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 bring their own joys and challenges. The physical, emotional, and social changes they are experiencing make each and every 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 functions include:

- training, e.g., instructing student about safety requirement
- 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 work skills and learning expectations to be pursued at the workplace, and how they relate to classroom learning. Clarify the expectations for the employer, the student, and the school. Communicate with the teacher and the student with regard to how things are going and make adjustments as needed.

Can we involve students with special needs?

Absolutely! Although students with special needs may need additional, 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. You will want to work closely with their teacher(s), spend time getting to know their strengths, and make plans to work with their individual needs to build success.

The classroom teacher will be a key resource for you in the 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

What will this cost us?

Generally, the main costs are time and people. You may need to provide additional meeting and training time for staff who are supervising the student in their learning. Time will also be needed for the supervisor to meet with the teacher on a regular basis. Except for apprenticeships, students are not customarily paid for these activities.

GETTING YOUR ORGANIZATION INVOLVED

Strategies that Work

Getting Started

1. Get visible support from senior management.
2. Share information with staff about possible opportunities for students in your organization.
3. Establish an individual to co-ordinate the various activities and serve as a liaison with schools. Centralized organization ensures careful planning and monitoring and allows for evaluating success and making improvements.
4. Determine which learning opportunities are most appropriate for your workplace and invite employees to become involved.

Making Plans

1. Ensure that all employees thoroughly understand the requirements of the program.
2. Take a safety inventory and decide what training students will need and how it will be provided. Students should only be allowed to undertake activities for which they are properly prepared and supervised.
3. Meet with school staff to discuss program details, student needs, and required support.
4. Detail roles, responsibilities, expectations and accountabilities of all those involved.
5. Provide support, encouragement, and training for employees involved.

Being Involved

1. Maintain ongoing communication among all participants. Make decisions and solve problems together.
2. Provide students with the information they need to fully understand the job requirements.
3. Invite students' questions and comments.
4. Help students complete any related assignments from school.
5. Give students feedback on their involvement, letting them know what would be considered acceptable at your workplace.

Following Up

1. Provide formal and informal means to monitor how things are going with all participants on an ongoing basis.
2. Establish a process for dealing with issues and concerns as they arise.
3. Get feedback from participants and make changes as required.
4. Celebrate your successful involvement.

CO-OP EMPLOYER LEAD SHEET

COMPANY NAME:	
COMPANY CONTACT:	
POSITION:	PHONE:
	FAX:
STREET ADDRESS:	
CITY:	
POSTAL CODE:	
E MAIL:	
WEBSITE:	
PLACEMENT	
DEPARTMENT NAME:	
DEPARTMENT CONTACT:	
OVERVIEW OF THE FUNCTION OF THE DEPARTMENT / BUSINESS:	
SKILLS / ABILITIES REQUIRED TO BE EFFECTIVE:	
SKILLS / KNOWLEDGE STUDENT WILL GAIN BY END OF PLACEMENT:	
LOCATION (USING Hwy 10 and Hwy 401 to create quadrants check the location):	
<input type="checkbox"/> south west <input type="checkbox"/> south east <input type="checkbox"/> north west <input type="checkbox"/> north east	
<input type="checkbox"/> east of Peel (Toronto) <input type="checkbox"/> west of Peel (Oakville) <input type="checkbox"/> north of Peel (Simcoe)	

Please e mail or fax completed form to Ann-Marie Pottinger, annmarie.pottinger@peelsb.com or FAX: 905-890-6939.