

# Cooperative Education

## Reach Every Student

*Student Success is about meeting the individual learning needs of each and every student. Schools are providing students with more opportunities to customize their high school experience and build on their strengths and interests through a variety of new and enhanced learning options.*

## What Is Cooperative Education?

- Cooperative education is a program that allows students to earn secondary school credits while completing a work placement in the community.
- A student's co-op program consists of the cooperative education course, which is monitored by a cooperative education teacher, and the related curriculum course (that is, a course in any discipline, such as business studies, mathematics, or technological education). Every student in a co-op program must have a Personalized Placement Learning Plan (PPLP), which shows how the student's related curriculum course is being applied at his or her co-op placement.
- The cooperative education course consists of a classroom component and a placement component. The classroom component includes 15 to 20 hours of *pre-placement instruction*, which prepares students for the workplace and includes instruction in areas of key importance such as health and safety, and *classroom sessions held at various times during and after the placement*, which provide opportunities for students to reflect on and reinforce their learning in the workplace.
- Cooperative education allows students to participate in valuable learning experiences that help prepare them for the next stage of their lives, whether in apprenticeship training, college, community living, university, or the workplace.
- Co-op placements are arranged for students by their school and must follow Ministry of Education policy and guidelines.

*"Students gain from hands-on experience in our world-class facility."*

*Co-op Employer*

## How Does Cooperative Education Benefit Students?

Cooperative education gives students the opportunity to:

- make connections between school and work and to "try out" a career of interest before finalizing plans for postsecondary education, training, or employment;
- see the relevance of their classroom learning in a work setting;
- develop the essential skills and work habits required in the workplace and acquire a direct understanding of employer and workplace expectations;
- gain valuable work experience to help build their résumé for postsecondary programs and future employment;
- experience authentic and purposeful learning outside a traditional classroom setting.

*"It's great to be able to take courses to find out what you're really good at, before you have to decide where you're going next. I firmly believe lessons learned beyond the classroom are equally, if not more important than the ones learned within."*

*Cooperative education student*

## How Are Cooperative Education Programs Being Delivered?

- Cooperative education placements are available in many kinds of work settings, reflecting the wide range of student interests and abilities. Placements vary in length, depending on the number of credits students are earning through their co-op program, and may involve work outside the designated hours of the school day, depending on the nature of the program and the placements available in the community.
- Cooperative education programs are available through the regular school program, specialized school and board programs, and summer and night school programs. Virtual cooperative education (“e-co-op”) programs are also available, allowing students to access workplaces beyond their communities.
- Schools and boards are encouraged to seek assistance from local business education councils or training boards when working with employers to establish student co-op placements that meet ministry policy and guidelines.
- Access to a cooperative education program is based on student readiness and program availability.
- For further information, go to <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/subjects.html>, or visit the Student Success website at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/studentsuccess.html> and the website of the Ontario Cooperative Education Association (OCEA) at <http://www.ocea.on.ca>.

## How Does Cooperative Education Help Students Meet Diploma Requirements?

- Cooperative education credits may be used to meet up to two of the 18 compulsory credit requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).
- Students must also earn 12 optional credits for the OSSD. There is no limit on the number of optional credits that may be earned through cooperative education courses.
- Under the ministry-approved framework for the new Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) designation within the OSSD, students must earn a minimum of two cooperative education credits as one of the five required components of a SHSM. Cooperative education credits are also a required component of other specialized programs, such as school-to-work and school-to-apprenticeship (OYAP) programs.

“Every student should have a co-op learning experience where it is appropriate.”

*Ben Levin, Deputy Minister of Education*

## How Do I Find Out More About Local Opportunities?

