



## Experiential Learning Encouraged

Students are being encouraged to seek out opportunities to visit a variety of workplaces. These visits can take many forms:

- ❖ A class field trip
- ❖ Job shadowing an employee for a few hours or a day
- ❖ Job twinning- accompanying another student to his or her co-op placement
- ❖ Short term experiential learning opportunities

You may be able to assist your teen by arranging for them to visit workplaces of friends, relatives or business associates. If they have a particular career interest but do not currently know anyone working in that field, you may assist them with making phone calls or writing letters of inquiry about the possibility of a workplace visit.

### Making the School to Workplace Connection

One of the goals of all of these experiential learning opportunities is to help students connect what they are learning in school with what employees actually do on the job. A framework that helps to make these connections explicit is the Essential Skills Resource prepared by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

These employability skills are categorized into 9 areas:

1. Reading Text
2. Document Use
3. Numeracy
4. Writing
5. Oral Communication
6. Working with Others
7. Thinking Skills
8. Computer Use
9. Continuous Learning

You can learn more about these skills by visiting the HRDC website at [www.hrdc-rhdcc.gc.ca/essentialskills](http://www.hrdc-rhdcc.gc.ca/essentialskills)

### Learning More about Essential Skills

In their career studies classes, students are learning about how those skills are defined and how they are typically applied in the workplace. They may investigate job profiles for specific careers for information about the level of competency in each of these areas required for entry-level positions.

When students visit workplaces, they also record observations and ask questions about the role of the essential skills. They may have observation sheets/charts or interview guidelines that help them to gather information which will then be shared back in the classroom. They may also be writing personal reflections or reports on their learning.

### Sharing Artifacts from your Workplace

With this information about the focus for a student visit, you can think about how you might enhance your teen's learning about the Essential Skills. Here are some items to gather from your workplace:

- ❖ samples of written communication: form letters, memos, agendas, minutes of meetings, etc.
- ❖ a chart identifying workplace functions that have been computerized and the application programs that support them
- ❖ manuals, reference materials used to support training
- ❖ sample forms and other documents
- ❖ graphs, drawings, blueprints
- ❖ telephone message forms
- ❖ copies of speeches
- ❖ spread sheets, budgets, financial statements
- ❖ calendar of social events
- ❖ workplace safety posters

When you share items like these, your son or daughter can see evidence of how academic, personal management and interpersonal skills contribute to success on the job. They will also have some ideas about what to look for when they visit the workplace.

### Interviewing the Employer or Workplace Host

The workplace visit may also be an opportunity for students to interview their hosts. You may want to rehearse this interview with your child so that he or she can practice the skills of asking questions, listening attentively and taking notes. It's also an opportunity to share your thoughts about your own career.

## Meeting the Workplace Host

Your teen may have an opportunity to interview your host during his/her job shadowing day. He/she could use the following questions to learn more about their host's job. Encourage your teen to record his or her responses on the questionnaire provided below. If he or she has additional questions, ask these as well.

1. Why did you select this type of work?
2. What do you like most about your job?
3. Tell me a story about a day or an event that really stands out in your memory as a high point in your career.
4. What skills do you have that contribute to your success in your job?
5. How did you learn these skills?
6. How do you continue to learn on the job?
7. When you think about career and imagine yourself in 3 or 4 years, how might your job have changed?
8. What advice would you give to a young person wanting to enter this field?

## Sharing Goals and Experiences

Students may also be asked to complete an information sheet for their host. They may have an opportunity to talk about their:

- ❖ career interests
- ❖ work experiences
- ❖ volunteer activities
- ❖ interests and hobbies
- ❖ educational goals

You can assist them with completing the form or help them to think ahead about what they would like to share if they have an opportunity for an interview.

## Planning and Reflection Enhance the Learning Experience

Students will get the most benefit from their workplace experiences if they have done some pre-thinking and planning about the day. They also benefit from opportunities to debrief the experience and certainly that will happen back at school. However, if you schedule some time at the end of the day to talk to them, this will provide an immediate opportunity for them to summarize their impressions of the day.

Here are some questions that you might use for that debriefing conversation:

1. Tell me a story about the most interesting experience you had at the workplace.  
  
What was happening?  
What were you doing?  
Who else was involved?  
How were you feeling?
2. What did you learn about yourself today?
3. If you had an opportunity to visit another workplace, what 3 wishes would you have for that next visit?

## Mutual Appreciation

Students are encouraged to write a letter of thanks to their host. They will also benefit from hearing from you the value you place on their initiative in organizing or planning for the visit. It's great for them to hear too what you've learned from their sharing of the day.

Here are some ways to start that conversation:

"I liked it when.... (describe the student's actions)  
I admire you for... (describe the quality)  
I feel (name the emotion) when (describe the student's behaviour)

Receiving that kind of positive feedback from an interested parent will contribute to a memorable experience for any student taking part in a workplace visit.

Thanks!