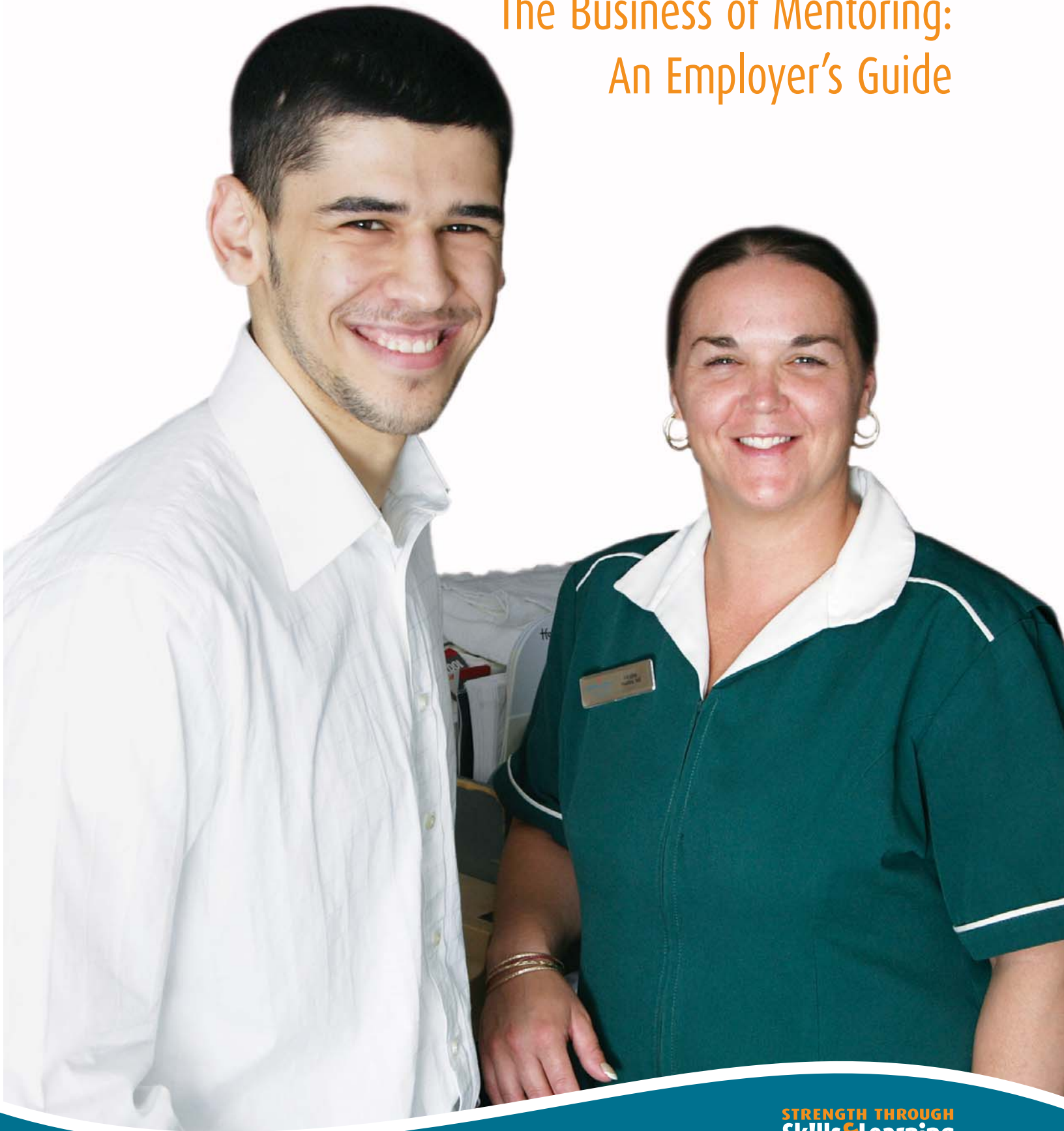


# Invest in Youth

The Business of Mentoring:  
An Employer's Guide



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[www.investinyouth.ca](http://www.investinyouth.ca)

# An Introduction to the Business of Mentoring

Achieving the balance between running a business today and planning for tomorrow is a challenge every employer faces. Planning for new markets, new products, and other innovations requires a renewable workforce. You need knowledgeable, skilled employees to replace retirees and accommodate new growth. Loyal, productive, and committed employees will keep your business strong.

Nova Scotia's youth are your greatest resource. They are the future workforce for you and our province.

We are inviting you to 'Invest in Youth' by sharing your knowledge, experience, and skills with youth aged 15-24 who are eager to be part of the workforce.

Nova Scotia's education system offers a variety of partnership opportunities among youth, schools, and employers. You can choose the level of commitment that works for you:

- Classroom visits, career fairs, workplace tours, job shadowing
- Consultation on curriculum and standards
- Community service projects
- Short-term work placements
- Co-operative Education Placements
- Options and Opportunities Program
- Workit Youth Apprenticeship initiatives

Getting involved is easy. Visit [www.investinyouth.ca](http://www.investinyouth.ca) today and join other employers who support the future of our youth and our province.

"Students get an idea of what's expected in the workplace and gain skills."

James Henderson, employer, Atlantic Superstore

"I recommend it to get experience and to see what's out there in the world." Naomi Young, student



## Why Invest in Youth?

When you invest in Nova Scotia's youth, you are contributing to the economic prosperity of your business and our province.

**Renew your Workforce:** Train youth today for the skills and knowledge you need in your workforce. The size of Canada's labour force is shrinking as the population ages and more people retire. It takes time to train new employees properly.

**Build a Strong Economy:** Help Nova Scotia secure a skilled labour force—one we need to build a strong economy. Help increase career development opportunities for youth and start preparing them for their future in Nova Scotia.

**Be a Good Corporate Citizen:** Open your doors to youth and build a profile as an employer who cares about the sustainability and strength of your community.

## Say Yes and Invest in Youth

Visit [www.investinyouth.ca](http://www.investinyouth.ca) today and indicate your interest in becoming part of the 'Invest in Youth' database. This secure database hosts information about employers who are supporting Nova Scotia's youth. Schools and select staff members of the Department of Education will use it to identify opportunities for students to link their learning in school to a workplace.

Once you indicate your interest, we will contact you to complete your profile, share additional information, and answer any questions.

# How You Can Invest in Youth

There is more to education than getting a high school diploma. While the diploma is important, it is equally important for students to graduate with the skills they need to succeed in work and life. An education shows students what they can achieve when they try their best. It introduces them to the world of possibilities that exist for a career. It gives them the skills they need to take the next step in their lives, whatever that may be.

That is why it is so important for every student to complete high school.

One way we can help every student graduate is by offering a variety of ways to learn. That's where you come in.

By becoming a mentor and investing in youth, you can offer students experience rooted in the real world. You can inspire them to choose their future career. And who knows? You may hire one of these students one day!

## Did you know?

Students who stay in school and find meaningful employment strengthen our communities.

Recent studies show that students who worked up to 15 hours per week during high school were more likely to finish high school than those who didn't work. Programs that connect the world of work with the world of learning keep students engaged with learning and encourage them to get their diploma.

## Short-Term Opportunities

Short-term opportunities, lasting a day or less, give students insight into your business. Students are interested to hear about real experiences. It helps them weigh their options and assess their interests and values. These opportunities also introduce you to the benefits and responsibilities of bringing students into your workplace. After providing one of these short-term opportunities, you may be interested in a longer-term commitment.

There are two categories of short-term opportunities:

1. You Go to the Students
2. Students Come to You

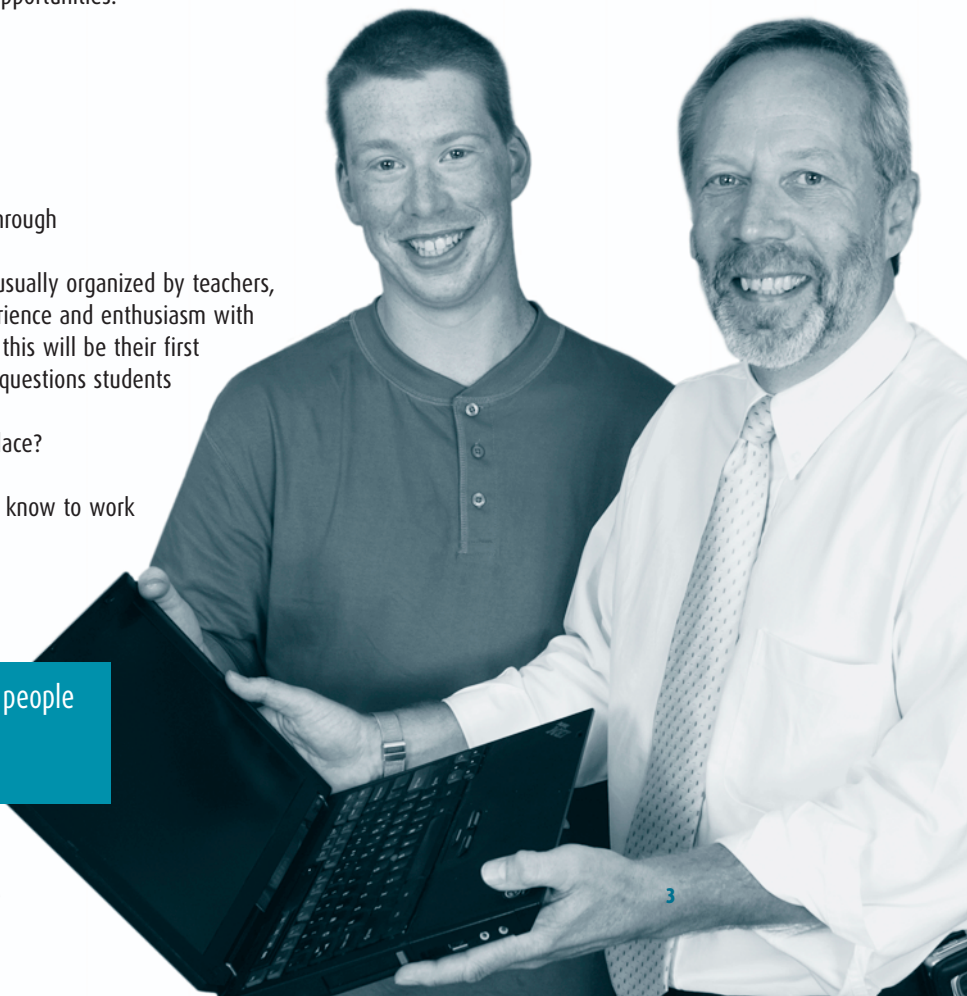
### 1. You Go to the Students

In these opportunities, you participate through

**Classroom Visits** – These informal talks, usually organized by teachers, are your opportunity to share your experience and enthusiasm with a group of students. For many students, this will be their first glimpse at a work environment. Typical questions students may have are:

- What does it look like in your workplace?
- What do people really do all day?
- What does a person actually need to know to work there?

"My idea of the workplace changed by working with people who love what they do." Scott Fisher, student



**Career Fairs** – These give students the opportunity to learn about several different careers at once. You and other employers bring displays and information to a school to share with students. It is your chance to represent the world of work you have chosen. Your knowledge and passion will help students create a useful understanding of work.

**Consulting on Curriculum and Standards** – Are you interested in influencing the way industry standards are portrayed in schools? There are opportunities to work with a consultant from the Department of Education to help develop new curriculum for programming to help address labour market needs.

## 2. Students Come to You

In these programs, students visit you on

**Workplace Tours** – Students, with their teacher, come to your workplace for a first-hand view of where you work and what you do. You and the teacher set the guidelines for the tour. Before the students arrive, ask yourself, ‘What do I want students to understand about this organization? What do I want them to say about my business to their family and community? What am I proud of here?’ These tours inform both students and teachers about the workplace.

**Job Shadowing** – Invite a student to spend a full school day in your workplace. The student is usually assigned to one person and spends the day learning about that person’s work. Teachers may contact you for job shadowing opportunities for students. It is all based on the student’s interests.

You may be familiar with ‘Take Our Kids to Work Day.’ This is a job-shadowing program for grade 9 students. Parents bring their children to work so they can learn more about their parents’ jobs. It makes the students proud and gives their parents a new perspective on their own work.

Crystal Stewart thought she wanted to be an architect. But during a co-op classroom period, her teacher talked about how he had changed his mind about his career choice after having an experience in an entirely different field. He later talked to Crystal about a co-op placement at the Nova Scotia Hospital, and she decided to try it. This experience showed her a whole range of options she could consider in health care, from recreational therapy, to nursing and psychiatry. As a result Crystal is seriously considering working in health care and is excited about psychiatry as she finishes high school.

## Long-Term Opportunities

These programs last from 5 to 100 hours and fall into five categories:

1. Community Service Projects
2. Short-Term Work Placements
3. Co-operative Education Placements
4. Options and Opportunities (O<sub>2</sub>)
5. Workit Youth Apprenticeship Initiatives

### 1. Community Service Projects

Students work in the non-profit or service sector and perform some service to the community, such as working on a community service organization’s bicycle safety awareness drive, or in the office at a seniors’ residence. Students spend time learning all aspects of the work rather than performing a specific task. They choose projects that reflect their interests, concerns, passions, and values. A teacher supervises the project.

These types of projects help students develop a sense of social responsibility and gain personal and social rewards while doing real, meaningful work. The program provides volunteers to the community and fosters a culture of volunteerism.

## 2. Short-Term Work Placements

Students spend five to 25 hours working either in a regular workplace or as a volunteer in the community. The jobs they do link to the courses they are taking at school and usually connect to a skill that can't be learned without seeing it in action. For example, they may work at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography while studying oceans or work at a museum or hotel while studying tourism.

These short-term placements can help you decide if you would be interested in participating in longer-term placements.

## 3. Co-operative Education Placements

This highly structured and supportive opportunity matches students 16 and older with employers and community hosts. The work is based on what the student is already studying or on skills specific to a particular career or occupation. The teacher, the student, and the employer all work together to develop a work plan or work contract. The student's work is evaluated against this plan or contract. Students earn school credit for the work they do during their co-op placement.

The teacher will spend time at the work site—a minimum of one visit for every 25 hours the student works. You do not pay students for work they do during school hours; however, if work is done outside of school hours, you may pay the student. Please note that any hours a student works outside of school hours are not covered by school insurance.

Your role in co-op education is to help a student grasp the realities of the workplace and meet his or her work placement goals. The school's role is to help the student succeed at this valuable hands-on learning experience, to build a relationship between your business and the school, and to guide you and the student through the process. The student's job is to respect all of your policies and those of the school program.

The *Shambhala Sun*, an international magazine, hosted a co-op student two afternoons a week. The student performed all of the tasks associated with running a magazine. The staff that supervised her felt that her teacher, John Cochrane, was key to the success of the program. He had prepared the student well and guided her through every step of the program including providing feedback forms and advice on how to make the placement a great experience.

## 4. Options and Opportunities (O<sub>2</sub>)

Engaging and preparing students for a sophisticated labour market and helping them make better-informed career choices are at the heart of Options and Opportunities (O<sub>2</sub>). With 58% of high school graduates across Nova Scotia entering the workforce, it has become increasingly important to help students connect what they're learning in school to post-secondary programs and work.

The O<sub>2</sub> program offers an alternative opportunity for high school students who may not be meeting their academic potential because they are not engaged with their school program. Focusing on career development, the program matches students with qualified employers to give them opportunities to gain real experience in a real workplace.

It takes a broad approach, offering meaningful, hands-on learning experiences, both in the classroom and the workplace. Through course offerings and community/work placements, schools focus students on one or more of the following sectors of the economy:

- Arts, culture, and recreation
- Business
- Health and human services
- Hospitality and tourism
- Information technology
- Trades and technologies

Students in O<sub>2</sub> not only earn their high school diploma, they also graduate with work—ready skills and a plan for the future. By participating in this program, students will be better prepared to take advantage of the opportunities Nova Scotia has to offer.

## 5. Workit Youth Apprenticeship Initiative

By the year 2020, Canada could be short approximately a million skilled workers. (Source: [www.careersintrades.ca](http://www.careersintrades.ca)) You can help ensure the future of your own business—and this province’s economy—by hiring a youth apprentice now.

The Workit Youth Apprenticeship Initiative is here to help you get a young person started on the path to becoming a certified journey person in one of the 55 designated trades in Nova Scotia.

Workit provides information on the apprenticeship training system to youth, parents, educators, and employers across the province. Youth who are 16 or older can explore a designated trade and earn credit toward a future apprenticeship by participating in a co-operative education or Options and Opportunities work placement. Once they decide they are ready to commit to training in a particular trade and an employer is willing to hire an apprentice, he or she can begin his or her apprenticeship on-the-job training while completing high school.

### How can Workit Help Your Student and You?

By investing in youth apprentices, you are greatly increasing your opportunities for retention of valuable employees. Providing apprenticeship training encourages loyalty in younger employees and develops skills such as mentorship in more experienced technicians. Here are some other advantages of taking apprentices into your business:

- You have access to a pool of employees who are young and local. Research shows that young, local employees are the most likely to stay.
- You can introduce a youth apprentice to a positive culture of training in your workplace. Research also shows that access to training is one of the top reasons an employee stays with an employer.
- You can train your employee to your standards. This allows you to maintain consistency, quality, and reliability.

If you have a co-operative education student in your workplace in one of the designated trades, and you would like to hire him or her as a youth apprentice, check out our website at [www.workitns.ca](http://www.workitns.ca) or call 1-800-494-5651.

After having trouble staying engaged with school, Dan applied for the co-op program in the fall of grade 12 and asked to try boat building. He was placed with a company that sold boats internationally. His shift ran from 7:30 am to noon.

Dan began to change. His time management skills improved, his attendance was excellent at work and afternoon classes, his schoolwork showed a marked improvement, and his self-confidence began to grow. When the co-op placement ended, Dan and the employer used the Workit resources to allow Dan to begin his apprenticeship as soon as high school ended for the summer.

“Co-op has given me a hands-on approach to learning and has helped me choose my career path.” Student, Co-op program

# How Mentoring Works

When you choose to be a mentor and get involved with a student's education you are demonstrating how to be a successful and responsible working adult.

Here are some points to help you be a good mentor:

- Remember your mentors; ask yourself what difference certain people made in your life and how can you pass that on
- Consider the example you set; convey to your student why you do things certain ways, not just how you do them
- Keep in mind that mentoring may take only a short period of time, yet make a lifelong difference
- Don't worry about mistakes: think of them as an opportunity to show the student how to learn from them

As with any relationship, there are phases to a mentorship. Early on a student often holds the mentor in high esteem and may feel uncomfortable and awkward at times. Later on students gain more confidence and may want to stretch their wings. At this stage the mentor needs to offer more encouragement and support.

## The Two Types of Mentoring

### Informal

If your workplace is small and you are directly supervising the student, you are the mentor. If your organization is larger, you may ask a member of your staff to be a mentor. The teacher will know the student's learning style and personality. This information will help you choose a good mentor match for the student.

### Formal

If you have been part of a formal process, through government agencies such as Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) or your own career associations, you may have developed good ways to work with protégés. Bring this up with the teacher to see if these formal structures would be helpful.

"The experience has helped me find new opportunities."

Samantha Powell, student



“For most jobs, you need experience to get the job, and you can’t get experience without a job. This is a chance to get that experience.” Student, Co-op program

## What Are your Responsibilities?

Your job is to provide a high-quality learning experience for the students.

As a mentor, you should be willing to

- share your experience and enthusiasm
- mentor and supervise students
- work with the school and student to develop a work plan and maintain records, as per the work plan/contract
- support the development of workplace skills, including job-specific skills and team work, personal management, and communication skills
- communicate regularly and honestly with the teacher and student
- discuss the student’s progress with both the teacher and student and offer the student positive and constructive feedback on a regular basis

You should also be able to

- provide a safe and positive work experience. Safety is a larger concern in non-office workplaces and may include proper use of safety equipment and accident-reporting procedures, Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) training, etc.
- provide an opportunity to observe all aspects of the business
- allow students to assume a variety of job tasks and responsibilities
- assign duties that require more skills, when appropriate

What are the student’s responsibilities?

If a student is in a mentoring relationship with an employer, whether it’s short or long-term, he or she should be willing to

- learn
- exhibit a positive attitude
- work with the employer and school to develop a work plan
- perform required tasks

Students are not meant to permanently replace a regular employee.

### How Mentoring Benefited a Community

The Chester Playhouse and its sister organization, the Chester Theatre Council, have a long history of working with youth. Emily, the daughter of long-time theatre volunteers, tried her hand at everything from ticket taking to backstage work to running the bar. One day Bob Elliot, a professional lighting designer who volunteers with the Playhouse, took Emily under his wing. Emily now makes her living in theatre and is often hired by the Chester Playhouse and other theatres in the region. She is one of many local young people who made a career out of their passion, and continue to enrich the community that enriched them.

## Are There Any Costs?

There are no hard costs or fees to become involved with any of these opportunities. The only cost is the time and resources required to orient, train, and supervise the student.

The school provides

- insurance for students while they are at the workplace
- safety training such as First Aid, WHMIS, and other programs, if they are needed in your workplace

# How to Host a Student

## Preparing the Workplace

Prepare your employees for the student's arrival. Let them know what the student's role is, and what the staff's roles are in relation to the student. Now is the time to identify any issues and talk about how to address them.

For example, decide who will supervise the student and discuss how that may affect other people's routines. Let your staff know now who can help the student, and give them ideas on ways to offer useful criticism. Everyone may feel he or she has good advice to share with the student—but too much advice may leave the student confused. Be sure to set guidelines for how to demonstrate tasks, procedures, etc..

## First Meeting: Getting Off On The Right Foot

Once an interested student is matched with your workplace, you will have a meeting with the student and the teacher to set up a work plan or contract. Use this opportunity to build a relationship with the student, to find out where the student's strengths and weaknesses are, and to let the student know your processes.

Remember: this may be your student's first work placement. Here are some considerations to keep in mind:

- start the meeting by setting a time limit, and stick to it
- don't try to cover all the details in this first meeting; it is more important to connect with the student
- give the student the basics; let him or her learn more rules and procedures as he or she goes

## Questions to Ask

### Questions To Ask the Student

- Is this your first job?
- What are you looking forward to in this job?
- What do you really like doing?
- How can I help you do well here?
- What kind of work would be ideal for you? Why?
- Are you used to working with other people? Do you prefer working alone?
- How do you like to get information or feedback? (Directly on the spot? Privately? etc.)
- What questions do you have about working here?



"It's shown me the value of hard work." Faris Ghanem, student

## Questions the Student May Ask You

*(And Ones You Should Answer Without Being Asked)*

- Where are the rest rooms, the lunchroom, a telephone, the coat rack, and other important sites?
- How much time can I spend on my break?
- What does company time mean? Personal time?
- What should I do if I can't make it to work?
- What happens if I'm late or absent?
- Who depends on the work I do?
- What is the protocol if I have a schedule conflict?
- What are the confidentiality rules and issues?
- What health and safety protocols are in place?
- What is the value of working quickly?
- Can I count on you to protect me from racial discrimination, sexual harassment?

"Students have a chance to find not just a pathway, they have an opportunity to find their pathway." John Cochrane, Co-op teacher

## Introducing the Student

Your student is about to come in and meet a group of strangers. He or she will probably have "starting anxiety"—who would not? So find a good time and place to introduce your student to the staff. If you already have someone on staff close to the student's age, try to set that person up as a "buddy."

If you are not working with the students yourself, give them a "go-to" person. Look for an employee who likes to work with students—that's a better choice than one who is highly knowledgeable but lacks patience.

### **Then ... Get Started!**

The best way to get your student started is to have a task ready so the student can get working right away. This moment requires trust on both your parts. You have to trust the process that brought the student to your workplace, and the student has to trust that you will let him or her do the job.

## Work Plans and Contracts – The What, Why, and How

A work plan or contract is essential for ensuring that the placement is a positive experience for both you and the student. In it, you and the student will agree in plain terms to what services the student will provide you, what you will provide the student, and what goals you both expect to reach.

The teacher has experience writing these contracts and can guide you as to what to include.

For example, in the plan or contract, you may agree to provide the student with some specific types of training, a chance to take on more work as the student progresses, and the possibility of paid work in the future.

The student may agree to provide you with a commitment to work specific days and times of the week, to follow the workplace rules and safety regulations, to take on certain tasks, to maintain confidentiality, and to take an active part in accepting wise counsel.

You may both agree to an ongoing relationship as mentor and protégé, if appropriate.

Once the plan or contract is finished, and all parties understand it and agree to it, you, the teacher and the student will sign it. You will all receive a copy for your records.

## SMART Goal Setting

- S = Specific
- M = Measurable
- A = Attainable
- R = Realistic
- T = Timely

**SMART goal setting** is a way to help students set and achieve goals so they can be prepared to take on more responsibility.

Here's an example of SMART goal setting: A co-op student in a small alternative health clinic wishes to become comfortable in the tasks involved in answering the company phone. Tasks include directing calls, taking messages, and scheduling client appointments.

**Specific** – Help students focus their efforts and clearly define what they are going to do.  
*The student wants to become proficient on the telephone.*

**Measurable** – If the student can accomplish the goal, it is measured as a success. There are usually several short-term or small measurements that can be built into the goal.  
*This goal can be measured by the student's own reporting and the mentor's observations.*

**Attainable** – When students identify goals that are important to them, they begin to find ways to reach them.  
*The student recognizes that communication skills are vital in the workplace; this goal can be accomplished.*

**Realistic** – A realistic project may push your student's skills and knowledge, but shouldn't break them.  
*Others have done this and succeeded.*

**Timely** – Work with the student to set a clear timeframe for his or her goals: next week, in three months, in five years.  
*A week is a reasonable time to acquire these communication skills.*

## Encouraging the Student

As you know, work is a combination of hard, technical skills, and softer skills, such as attitudes and attributes. How can you help a student learn all that?

**Model** – You model by your actions whether you intend to or not. If you want the students in your workplace to be respectful, trustworthy, diligent, and enthusiastic, then that is what you need to model.

**Give Direct Instruction** – Give clear instructions of what you want done and why. Most people want to know the principles behind the actions. Be specific and use examples. Help the student see how what he or she's doing fits in with the bigger picture.

**Reflect** – We learn as we reflect. After a task is done, listen to the student reflect on how it worked for him or her. You may want to build this into a weekly meeting: "How do you feel about the way you handled...?"  
"What would you do if...?"

**Observe** – Let the student observe yourself or others. Let staff know that when the student is observing, staff need to be patient, to go slowly, and to describe out loud what they are doing.

**Encourage** – When you see the student doing something right—positively reinforce the behaviour by letting them know right away. Let students take on more responsibility as they learn; give them a chance to challenge themselves and learn new skills.

**Be Flexible** – Most people use a combination of learning styles, so use a combination of teaching styles.

*Auditory Style* – This is for people who remember what they hear. They usually have a good vocabulary and like to talk. Tell them what you want them to know.

*Visual Style* – This is for people who like instruction books with diagrams or pictures. Give them these, or hand-draw simple diagrams, for anything that you need them to learn.

*Tactile or Kinesthetic Style* – This is for people who understand how to do a task when they get to do it for themselves. Give them hands-on examples.

## Feedback and Evaluations

### Give Regular Feedback

Your student is at your workplace to learn skills and responsibilities and to experience the social structure of work. Be sure to give informal feedback regularly so the student knows how he or she is doing. Make it ongoing, even if you only have five minutes a week. Also, it is helpful to check in with all employees that work with the student regularly to get their opinions and see how they are doing. Always begin your feedback by noting what is going well.

### How To Give an Evaluation

Your student's school will have forms and procedures for the evaluation. Take the time to understand these forms. Refer to the goals and agreement you established with the student and teacher as you give the evaluation.

## Transitions

### Hiring the Youth, Saying Goodbye, Moving On...

How you say goodbye to a student is every bit as important as how you said hello. Formalize the ending; consider having a small gathering with the staff, or take the student aside and let him or her know what it has meant to have him or her in your workplace.

Complete the evaluation that is part of the student's placement. Make sure you include how you and your workplace were enriched by the student's involvement.

Sometimes, at the end of a work experience, you will want to hire the student. This could be a natural transition from a co-op program to a summer job or youth apprenticeship.

What if the student hopes to be hired but this is not possible? If the reason is not performance-based, explain that to the student. Offer to give a strong reference and some possible job leads. If the reason is performance-based, make that an honest, but encouraging, part of the evaluation.

# Other Helpful Information

## Students with Disabilities

### When You Hire A Student with a Disability, How Can You Support the Student?

You can support a student with a disability in many ways:

- Learn as much as you can about the disability
- Identify the student's strengths and build on these strengths to support the student in your workplace
- Encourage self-advocacy on the part of the student
- Match the student with a supportive workplace mentor
- Develop open lines of communication between the student and his/her supervisor
- Provide an orientation outlining roles, responsibilities, expectations, and routines

### What Do You Need To Know When You Hire a Student with a Disability?

Someone who has had to figure out different ways to cope and learn can enrich your workplace. These are some points to consider when hiring a student with a disability:

- Acknowledge your concerns to the student
- Find out the facts about the disability in question; the more you know, the better the work experience will be for everyone
- Direct your other employees to take their lead from you
- Let the student guide you; he or she knows how the disability affects his or her work
- Ask if there is anything that he or she would not be able to do
- Take the time at the first meeting to talk about capabilities and limits
- Trust him or her, as you would any student, to do a job he or she feels ready to do

A few other pointers:

- Resist helping without being asked
- Resist lowering your expectations
- Treat a student with a disability the same as you would anyone
- Make sure the student feels free to ask for help at any time

Above all—let the student take responsibility for the work! That's what this learning experience is all about.

Dave Pineo, of Fairley & Stevens Ford Dealership, hosted a young man who had undergone multiple surgeries to regain mobility in his hands. Gerald\* was very shy and withdrawn at the start of his co-op placement. Despite his shyness, Gerald learned quickly. He soon became adept at shipping & receiving, storage systems management, and parts delivery. Dave made a real effort to draw Gerald out, making sure he talked to him each day and assuring Gerald he was a welcome addition in the workplace. After the placement was over, Dave received a thank-you letter from Gerald – confirmation that they had both succeeded in the program.

*\*Not his real name*

“The benefits of student involvement are huge. It's a win-win-win situation for our organization, the students, and our residents.”

Employer, Karrie Scribner, Nova Scotia Hospital



## Preventing Problems

One of the best ways to prevent problems is to be clear in the beginning about what is important, acceptable, and unacceptable at your workplace. Keep in mind, the student may not have had the benefit of learning the social “ins and outs” of a workplace. Try to share as much of it as possible early on.

For example: if being on time is crucial, make sure the student knows that—and knows why. If the dress code is not important, don’t focus on it.

You might not remember to cover every little detail, or you may give too many details for the student to remember. In those cases, have a plan to respond quickly to unacceptable situations so they don’t get out of hand.

### Ways To Respond:

- Take the student aside
- Do not lecture or use sarcasm
- Help the student find the source of the problem: is it a power struggle, a misunderstanding, a cultural issue?
- Use a problem as a chance to help the student learn problem-solving techniques; Ask, “What would you do if you had a deadline to meet and an employee who . . .”
- Focus on what is working, what is going well

### While You Respond:

Keep in mind that the student may behave inappropriately for a number of “normal” teenage reasons, such as needing to express him or herself, get attention, feel some sense of control over his or her environment or his or her situation, distract attention from people looking at their work, or to find out if the boundaries are real and where they start.

### Examples of Preventing and Responding

Situation: Lateness, absenteeism, missing deadlines

*Prevent it from happening by*

- making it a major topic in your first meeting
- explaining why it is important to be on time
- giving concrete examples to show what happens when someone is late or absent or misses a deadline: outline what happens with the work as opposed to what you will do if it happens

*Respond if it happens by*

- taking the student aside and asking why he or she has been late or absent
- trying to understand why a student has missed a deadline: Is the job too difficult? Does the student know what to do? Did he or she misunderstand the instructions?
- expressing your concern first, then your disappointment
- reminding the student of importance of meeting deadlines

#### Active Listening

Try this proven method to improve communications:

#### Mirror feelings. “You look worried.”

- Show concern and acceptance
- Help the student feel encouraged, not judged

**Restate words.** “I hear you say that I was giving instructions too quickly.”

- Confirm what the student said
- Encourage more communication
- Show respect

**Summarize major points.** “You feel nervous when you don’t hear or understand instructions, and then you have a hard time getting started.”

- Check for common understanding

**Paraphrase the student’s words.** “You feel frustrated when you can’t keep up.”

- Clarify what the student means
- Show that you understand and are concerned

**Pause before speaking.** “ . . . ”

- Give both of you time to rethink a situation

Situation: Inappropriate dress

*Prevent it from happening by*

- stating dress expectations clearly in the first meeting
- giving the rationale for the code: health, safety, clientele expectations
- looking for ways to be sensitive to lack of money or cultural differences, and, if necessary, talking with the teacher about these issues
- complimenting students when they do dress well/appropriately

*Respond if it happens by*

- taking the student aside
- reminding the student of the dress code in your workplace and the rationale
- finding out, tactfully, if there are outside reasons why the student isn't dressing appropriately

Situation: Poor communication skills

*Prevent it from happening by*

- giving the student prepared scripts to use on the telephone, front desk, or when dealing with customers
- explaining that every employee represents the company and should take pride in doing so
- pointing out that the ability to deal with the public is one of the most valuable skills a person can learn
- making sure the student knows the steps involved in taking a message: "Would you spell your name, please?" "When is a good time to call you back?"
- role playing; start with the student making the call and you answering it
- letting the student listen in on someone else who performs this job effectively

*Respond if it happens by*

- taking the student aside and explaining your concerns
- reminding the student that communication is an important part of every job
- giving immediate positive feedback when he or she does something well

## Busy Times and Slow Times

Your workplace probably has a rhythm. It is helpful to plan to have your student there during both busy and quiet times so he or she experiences what it is really like in the workplace.

*During slow times:*

- You can answer questions and go over more complex tasks
- The student has time to digest what has been learned so far
- The student can read about things he or she needs to know for the job
- Other employees can get to know the student and make him or her feel more like a part of the team

*During busy times:*

- The student will learn the routines quickly and get plenty of practice
- The real demands of the workplace and the job will be obvious

*During a special event or training session:*

If the training session is suitable for the student, it may be a good way to introduce the student to your employees and your work. It will also give the student a sense of the bigger picture of your work.

# Resources, References, and Acknowledgements

## Resources

Department of Education Website: [www.ednet.ns.ca](http://www.ednet.ns.ca)

Invest in Youth Website: [www.investinyouth.ca](http://www.investinyouth.ca)

Options and Opportunities Website: <http://www.ednet.ns.ca/02/>

Workit Website: [www.Workitns.ca](http://www.Workitns.ca) or call the Workit Initiative Office: 1-800-494-5651.

## References and Acknowledgements

*Supervisor's Guide for Student Placements.* Auburn Drive High School, Dartmouth, NS.

*Mentoring Youth for Success.* Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Madison, WI, ISBN 1-57337-059-2

*Mentoring and Supervising Teenagers.* The Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Toolkit, Massachusetts Office for School to Career Transition, Department of Education, Malden, MA.

"Employers with this program are getting a whole new perspective on what they do.  
The students are keen and see the job in a whole new way." Employer, Co-op program



For additional information about opportunities  
to connect with youth, visit:

[www.novascotiacaareeroptions.ca](http://www.novascotiacaareeroptions.ca)

[www.workitns.ca](http://www.workitns.ca)

[www.ednet.ns.ca/02](http://www.ednet.ns.ca/02)

[www.investinyouth.ca](http://www.investinyouth.ca)

