How is your District Building Career and Skills Training Programming Capacity?

Use the resources and suggestions in this guide and the [on-line toolkit](#) to implement career and skills training programs at your school.

Introduction to Career Development Education

A life-long approach to career education is needed to make sure that students effectively connect to their future. Instead of offering guidance through one unit or course in a curriculum, make learning about careers and trades a fundamental component of ongoing student development. From a young age students must be given every opportunity to be exposed to the range of careers available so they contextualize their learning and plan for their future.

The youth of today will require the career development concepts and strategies embodied in an infusion approach to career education so they can live productively, successfully, and happily in the world of tomorrow.

Career development education is important, so much so that it is one of the three goals of education in the British Columbia Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system.

Goal 1: Intellectual Development

Goal 2: Human and Social Development

Goal 3: Career Development

To prepare students to attain their career and occupational objective; to assist in the development of effective work habits and the flexibility to deal with change in the workplace.

It is key that students development the competencies associated with career development that enable them to undertake the lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure, and transitions in order to move toward a personally determined and evolving preferred future.

Districts that work towards a clearly articulated vision, measureable goals, and integration into day-to-day learning lay the foundation so staff can ensure that the career development needs of youth are met. Career Development Education Programs are based on career awareness, exploration and engagement activities and/or programming. They also reflect regional and provincial employment opportunities. Students should be engaged in the following three areas:

1. Career Awareness experiences help students build awareness of the variety of careers available, the skills and competencies need to be successful, and the postsecondary education expected for these careers.

2. Career Exploration provides students with the opportunity to explore career options in a way that contributes to motivation for learning and informs students' decisions about further experiences and career and educational options.

3. Career Engagement Experiences are learning experiences that can occur both in the classroom or worksite and link student's learning and skill development to the world of work and learning beyond high school. Programs such as SSA and ACE IT provide real life work and learning experiences allowing students to engage with people working in the field within their local economy.

Careers and Skills Training Self Evaluation

The Careers and Skills Training self-evaluation checklist reflects the most common components found in a district that has mature career development programming. Districts have a clear strategic vision and offer a wide range of career development education activities and programming that help students build their vision of a positive referred future.

The Careers and Skills Training self-evaluation checklist can be used to undertake a progress review against the ideal. A district, school administrator or educator can look at and reflect upon their own practices based on the outcomes of their assessment. Some districts will find they have great programming available at the senior years, but are missing purposeful programming at the junior grades. Others may be wishing to develop more robust programming but lack the knowledge to move their vision forward.

There are three sections in the self-evaluation checklist each that support the development and operations of successful careers and skills training programming. Use the resources and suggestions in this toolkit to implement career and skills training programs at your school. Support resources are available online at the Careers and Skills Training Toolkit to help build capacity in areas where districts want to improve or refine their career and skills training program. Resources include information about the section, tips for developing programming and examples of successful practices.

A. Creating Successful Programming

Career Development Education Strategy

School Districts that build capacity to help youth connect to their future clearly realize that career education is moving away from addressing careers as a single choice in time, or one unit or course in a curriculum, to a pervasive, life-span focus. Infusing career education into all subject areas can make this approach a reality. As a result, students will learn to view careers as dynamic and to view change as an indispensable element in their future work.

Similar to the development process districts use to develop district wide strategic plans or student achievement plans, career educators and school districts can develop a strategic plan that has a long delivery horizon and clear outcomes. Tapping into the expertise of those who develop strategic plans at the district level would assist districts to ensure that a meaningful plan for Career Development Education is produced.

A comprehensive Career Development Education plan would include a vision, goal and plan, and take into account the operational, staffing and funding plus communication requirements. As well, a plan should develop a strategic goal for each of the career development areas below and includes options and opportunities for youth from K-12.

Developing Career Education Programming through Student engagement

Students Engagement is key to helping students develop their career development skills and competencies and help them to be reflective, critical and purposeful in relation to the development of their plans for the future. These activities allow students to become aware of, explore and engage in how others view and construct their life and career.

> **Career Awareness** experiences are those that help students build awareness of the variety of careers available with particular attention to local, regional and provincial labour market needs. It builds awareness of the skills and competencies needed to be successful, and of the high school courses and post-secondary education expected for these careers.

Career Exploration provides students with the opportunity to explore career options in a way that contributes to motivation for learning and informs students' decisions about further experiences and career and educational options.

Career Engagement experiences are learning experiences that can occur both in the classroom or worksite. These experiences link student's learning and skill development to the world of work and learning beyond high school, and pay particular attention to local, regional and provincial labour market needs.

B. Operating Successful Programs

Operations

Career and Skills Programming are educational programs that the Boards of Education in each school district are responsible for and normally include in their strategic plan and budget forecast. These programs should reflect the reality of the local labour market and forecasted demand for occupations. A school district determines who is responsible for the operations of these educational programs and may assign responsibility to personnel dedicated to this task. How this is done will vary from district to district depending on a number of factors including: student population, post-secondary and community/industry involvement, and the number and type of program responsibilities to coordinate and manage.

Most districts will have operational considerations to support these three educational programs. The first two would be in planning and running career awareness and exploration activities and events such as Maker Days and Yes 2 IT. Developing and running career engagement programs require planning and coordination, such as trades training programs (ACE IT) and Career Prep programs. No matter how small or large a program the following should be considered:

Communications

Communications is integral to ensuring all stakeholders are aware of and informed about career and skills training programming. To build district capacity to offer successful and coordinated Career and Skills activities and programming, it is optimal to have a district-wide communications plan that ensures essential information is accessible for all stakeholders. The key recipients of the information needs to understand their options and opportunities to be involved in career awareness, exploration and engagement activities and programming.

Using a variety of communications mediums such as social media, print, on-line and face-to-face communication will ensure that all audiences are reached. A communication plan should be developed that identifies the audience, medium and purpose for the communication and channels to be used to disseminate information.

Community Engagement and Learning Partnerships

To build the ability of districts to extend learning into the community engagement is sought to support specific activities where learning activities relate to learning about the world outside the school walls. Learning Partnership are developed between school districts and community entities such as public or private post-secondary education institutions, or industry groups to formalize the roles and responsibilities each has in relation to providing career and skills training programming for students.

Interacting with people in the community allow students to become aware of, explore and engage in how others view and construct their life and career.

Taking Action

Taking action – to improve or start your career development education program – there are a number of resources available on the Educator's Toolkit including examples of successful programs, "how to guide" and links to useful programming by school districts and government career planning websites