

A Win-Win Situation



Chuck Daly is the Cooperative Education Coordinator at St. Pius X High School, where he administers the largest co-op program in Ottawa.

Based on his experiences with the close to 40% of senior students at St. Pius X who are involved in experiential learning, Daly has some pointers to share on making the best of the school-to-work transition.

Tips for Students



Explore co-op & apprenticeship

At St. Pius X High School, Grade 9 students in the Destination Employability Program get five days to explore different sectors. "This works well for us," says Daly, "when our students tour a dealership, they see employment opportunities in repairs, marketing, sales and painting."

Cash in on opportunities in sectors that interest you the most

Employers tend to remember students who have previously come for a mini co-op placement, which serves as an advantage to these students. "With so much ongoing emphasis on experiential learning, we don't have to use employers as a testing ground for students to find out what they want when it comes to the actual co-op placement in Grade 11."



Advice to Employers

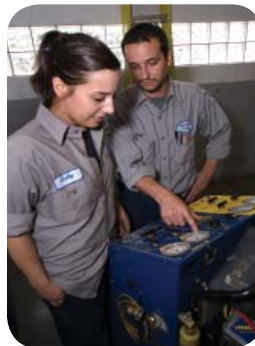


Engage Students

Students are very perceptive. They can tell if a teacher or employer genuinely cares about them. If you can demonstrate a real interest in the students and guide their professional development, you "have the potential for a long-term partnership with individuals students, teachers and co-op programs."

Teaching is an important part of the training

Some students who are really disengaged in the classroom really come around when someone takes the time to explain things and show them the value of doing things in a particular way.



Handpick the mentor

Take the time to choose the individual who is going to supervise your co-op student. Being a skilled technician does not necessarily make an individual a good mentor.



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(continued)

Tips for Students



It's never too late

Students don't have to have classroom or previous co-op experience to have a placement in their area of interest. It does however, limit the tasks which can be assigned to them. Typically, when these students express an interest in a motive power placement, they are placed with oil change shops. "They get to work with tools and cars, and they get a sense of whether they like the garage environment." Students with a Destination Employability Program,

OYAP or shop class background tend to get the dealership or small shop placements.

Make an impression

"If students do well in shop class and the shop teacher gives them a good ranking, then we send them out," says Daly, attributing the successful co-op record at St. Pius X to the shop teacher's judgement.



Build a portfolio of related hands-on experience

"That way, students without a school background in shop classes can demonstrate their experience and convince employers of the passion they have for the trade."

Advice to Employers

Take the time to connect

For young people to be called into the supervisor's or shop owner's office to chat about what they are doing, goes a long way to building a relationship. It indicates that you are taking an interest and provides a chance to give the students some positive reinforcement.



Keep the bigger picture in mind

Even though shops and dealerships are driven by the bottom line, in the end, it serves everyone well to train well-rounded individuals to begin with, rather than pigeonholing them into a specialty right away.

Put them to the test

Students like to feel challenged. Many are very capable and would thrive given the opportunity to demonstrate that they can do more than oil, lube and tire work.

Value people, if you value your shop

Treat people as the investment they are, not a cost.



When co-op placements work, it's a win-win situation for everyone involved: the Employer, the Student and the Educator.



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