Creating Pathways to Success

A Preview for Grades 10 to 12 of the New Education and Career/Life Planning Program for Ontario Schools

This document presents key elements of a comprehensive Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education and Career/Life Planning Program designed to support students in becoming competent, successful, and contributing members of society. It focuses on the program as it applies to Grades 10 to 12, to support planning that enables students to complete secondary school in four years and make a successful transition to their initial postsecondary destination. The policy outlined in this document complements related provincial policies outlined in Section 2.4 of Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2011. The comprehensive Education and Career/Life Planning Program for Kindergarten to Grade 12 will be set out in a new policy document, planned for release in spring 2013, that will replace Choices Into Action: Guidance and Career Education Program Policy for Ontario Elementary Schools, 1999.
In the late twentieth century, career development theories suggested that with access to accurate information and some guidance, individuals would independently acquire the skills they needed for effective career planning. More recently, research has indicated that to make sound career decisions people also need to develop tools for processing the information. Traditionally, career development practice has operated on yet another assumption – that only some students require support and that they will seek out assistance as they need it. The reality is that the challenges and opportunities faced by students in this century are unlike those of any previous generation, and that all students today require specific knowledge and skills in education and career/life planning to support them in making sound choices throughout their lives.

An Education and Career/Life Planning Program to Support Student Success

What students believe about themselves and their opportunities, and what their peers and the adults in their lives believe about them, significantly influences the choices they make and the degree to which they are able to achieve their goals. The new education and career/life planning policy for Ontario schools is based on the belief that all students can be successful, that success comes in many forms, and that there are many different pathways to success. The policy is founded on a vision in which all students leave secondary school with a clear plan for their initial postsecondary destination – whether it be apprenticeship training, college, community living, university, or the workplace – and with the confidence that they can revise their plans as they, and the world around them, change. This vision sees students as the architects of their lives.

Program Goals

The goals of the Education and Career/Life Planning Program are to:

✦ ensure that students develop the knowledge and skills they need to make informed education and career/life choices;
✦ provide classroom and school-wide opportunities for this learning; and
✦ engage parents and the broader community in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the program, to support students in their learning.

Program Framework

The framework of the Education and Career/Life Planning Program is a four-step inquiry process based on four questions linked to four areas of learning – Who am I? (Knowing Yourself); What are my opportunities? (Exploring Opportunities); Who do I want to become? (Making Decisions and Setting Goals); and What is my plan for achieving my goals? (Achieving Goals and Making Transitions). The steps are not necessarily sequential – throughout their school years and throughout their lives, students will continually explore, assess, and reassess their knowledge of themselves, their opportunities, their goals, and their plans for achieving their goals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry Question</th>
<th>Area of Learning (Knowledge and Skills)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who am I?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Knowing Yourself</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>To help answer the question “Who am I?”, students will:</td>
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<td>✦ identify the characteristics that describe who they are, and create and maintain a personal profile that reflects those characteristics (e.g., interests, strengths, intelligences, accomplishments, values, and skills, including the learning skills and work habits evaluated on the provincial report cards and the Essential Skills described in the Ontario Skills Passport);</td>
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<td>✦ identify factors that have shaped who they are and that are likely to shape their profile over time;</td>
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<td>✦ reflect on how the characteristics described in their profile influence their thoughts and actions, and how those thoughts and actions may in turn affect their development as a learner, their relationships, and their education and career/life choices.</td>
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<td><strong>What are my opportunities?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Exploring Opportunities</strong></td>
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<td>To help answer the question “What are my opportunities?”, students will:</td>
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<td>✦ explore the concept of “opportunity” and how the choices they make can open pathways for them;</td>
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<td>✦ identify co-curricular and community-based opportunities (e.g., recreational, social, leadership, volunteer, part-time employment);</td>
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<td>✦ investigate a variety of fields of work, occupations, and jobs, as well as the potential impact of local and global trends (e.g., demographic, technological, economic, social) on the opportunities available to them;</td>
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<tr>
<td>✦ investigate the preparation required for a variety of co-curricular and community-based opportunities, occupations, and jobs (i.e., acquiring the necessary experience, education/training, and specific skills, including the Essential Skills and work habits documented in the OSP) and how this preparation can be obtained.</td>
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<td><strong>Who do I want to become?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Making Decisions and Setting Goals</strong></td>
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<td>To help answer the question “Who do I want to become?”, students will:</td>
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<td>✦ identify the demands, rewards, and other features of the various opportunities they have explored, and reflect on the fit between those features and the characteristics they have described in their personal profile;</td>
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<td>✦ based on the connections they identify, use a decision-making process to determine personal and interpersonal goals as well as education and career/life goals;</td>
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<td>✦ review and revise their goals in light of any changes that may arise in their personal profile and in the opportunities that are available to them.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What is my plan for achieving my goals?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Achieving Goals and Making Transitions</strong></td>
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<td>To help answer the question “What is my plan for achieving my goals?”, students will:</td>
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<td>✦ create a plan that identifies in detail the steps required to achieve the goals they have set;</td>
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<td>✦ identify the resources required to implement their plan;</td>
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<td>✦ identify potential obstacles and challenges they may encounter in implementing their plan, and devise possible solutions.</td>
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Individual Pathways Plan (IPP), Grades 7 to 12

Starting in Grade 7, students begin to document what they learn in the Education and Career/Life Planning Program in an Individual Pathways Plan (IPP). The IPP becomes the primary planning tool that students use as they proceed through school towards their initial postsecondary destination. Ongoing development of the IPP provides students with a valuable archive of their learning and a catalogue of the resources they need for planning.

Although the student is responsible for establishing and maintaining his or her Individual Pathways Plan, the school board must ensure that all schools with students in Grades 7–12 have a web-based IPP and a clearly delineated process in place to support students in establishing their plan and reviewing and revising it at least twice a year.

The IPP provides the structure for students to document evidence of their ongoing inquiry and development in the four areas of learning. For each area of learning, students report and reflect on what they did, the skills and knowledge they used, what they learned, and how they applied or plan to apply what they learned. By developing their Individual Pathways Plan, students take responsibility for their learning and for planning their future. Developing their IPP increases students’ awareness of their strengths and interests and of the related opportunities for learning and work. It also enables them, in collaboration with teachers, parents, and peers, to make decisions, set goals, and develop and implement the steps needed to successfully complete elementary and secondary school and proceed to their initial postsecondary destination.

Students review their IPP a minimum of twice a year in collaboration with a teacher and/or guidance counsellor, their parents (in student-led conferences or by electronic means), and their peers, where appropriate. Through this collaborative review of the IPP, parents and teachers gain insight into the options students are considering, the challenges they face, the learning opportunities they have identified, and the plans they have started to develop. It also gives parents and teachers a chance to actively support the student and to contribute ideas about learning opportunities that could be made available to the student.

In Grades 8 to 10, schools are encouraged to incorporate one of these required IPP reviews into the annual course selection process; in Grades 10 to 12, they are required to do so as part of students’ secondary to postsecondary transition planning. Linking the IPP review to course selection will help students choose courses and programs that support their education and career/life planning goals.

The IPP serves as a record of student learning and an effective resource for facilitating parent interviews and student-led conferences, illustrating where the student has been and where he or she is going. In addition, the Individual Pathways Plan helps students develop a fuller understanding of the education and career/life planning inquiry process and the value the process will have for them in their postsecondary planning and throughout their lives.
Secondary to Postsecondary Transition Planning

As students move into the senior grades, they enter an exciting yet challenging period of transition that requires special consideration and support.

To ensure that all students are prepared to make a successful transition from secondary school to postsecondary endeavours, they are required to include the following in their IPP:

- their initial postsecondary goals
- a detailed plan to acquire the courses and experiences needed to achieve these goals
- strategies to support the plan, overcome obstacles and challenges, and access the resources and assistance required

The IPP must include evidence of the student’s investigation (e.g., information, artefacts) in the four areas of learning that supports the student’s choices, plans, and strategies. The evidence will have been gained through a variety of opportunities, such as classroom learning, school-wide activities, and special projects; experiential learning; presentations about postsecondary education and training by experts, postsecondary students, and workplace representatives; information interviews; and their own reflection.

To support students in their transition from secondary school to their initial postsecondary destination, schools provide multiple and varied opportunities and resources to inform the planning process.³

Postsecondary transition planning must be included as part of student learning in the Grade 10 Career Studies course and must be incorporated into the school’s established process for students’ selection of courses, in consultation with their parents, for Grade 11 and Grade 12.

To ensure that all students have a smooth transition to their initial postsecondary destination, schools are required to put in place a process for them to:

- review their achievement to date;
- review information on postsecondary opportunities (apprenticeship training, college, community living, university, and the workplace), including information on securing ongoing planning support;
- investigate information and strategies to support effective financial planning;
- explore employment opportunities and develop job search skills and employment retention skills;
- participate in career exploration and experiential learning opportunities.

³ Section 3.3 of Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Policy and Program Requirements, 2011 outlines the responsibility of the school and the school board to assist students who require additional support in making a successful transition to their initial postsecondary destination.
Where a student leaves school before graduation, the school is required to have a process in place to ensure that the student is provided with:
✦ information about options for completing the requirements for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) (e.g., by attending night school or completing courses through the Independent Learning Centre or e-Learning Ontario);
✦ information about opportunities for returning to school;
✦ information about community agencies that provide support during and after the transition;
✦ strategies for locating employment opportunities, conducting job searches for part-time or full-time work, and developing employment retention skills.

Teaching and Learning Activities to Support Education and Career/Life Planning

All students need support as they work through the four-step inquiry process of education and career/life planning. Teachers, peers, and mentors provide this support at the individual, small group, or classroom level, as well as through school-wide activities. Parents and community partners also play a key role in supporting students in this process.

In secondary school, there are guidance and career education courses that focus specifically on education and career/life planning. The compulsory Grade 10 Career Studies course is a pivotal course for all students. In it, students reflect on and further develop their IPP by consolidating what they have learned in the four areas of learning, exploring a range of education and career/life options, setting initial postsecondary goals, and developing a plan to for achieving those goals.

Students also receive support in programs designed to provide experiences that directly inform career/life decisions – that is, cooperative education programs, dual credit programs, Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) programs, the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), and school-work transition programs.

In addition, secondary school students receive focused individual and/or small-group support in developing and reflecting on their Individual Pathways Plan from the school guidance counsellor and, as required, from the Student Success team (which consists of the Student Success teacher, a school administrator, a guidance counsellor, and, where applicable, a special education teacher; see Ontario Schools, Kindergarten to Grade 12, section 3.2.1).

Connections to the Ontario Curriculum

In every curriculum policy document from Grade 1 to Grade 12, there is a section on guidance or, specifically, career education. In addition, the curriculum in various subjects and disciplines includes specific learning expectations related to education and career/life planning.

Classroom teachers in every curriculum area support students in education and career/life planning by providing them with learning opportunities that allow them to:
> apply subject-specific knowledge and skills to work-related situations;
> explore subject-related education and career/life options; and
> become competent, self-directed planners.

Teachers can help students identify ways in which their knowledge and skills in particular subjects enhance their suitability for a wide range of occupations. Through the lens of the inquiry questions related to the four areas of learning in education and career/life planning, teachers help students make thoughtful and informed decisions.

Starting in Grade 7, students are encouraged to think about their future and the opportunities available to them in secondary school and beyond (apprenticeship, college, community living, university, or the workplace). Teachers help students see the connections between what they are learning in school and what they will encounter in their lives beyond the classroom. These connections help raise students’ awareness of how their future learning and work opportunities might relate to their strengths and interests. Teachers should also provide students with information (e.g., courses and pathways) and experiences (e.g., guest speakers, worksite tours related to the subject curriculum) that will help them develop and document their Individual Pathways Plans.