

Aim Higher 2004

Western Quebec School Board



Business Document

Creating Workplace Learning Opportunities for Students

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Contacts

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Aim-Higher

Our Mission statement:

“The “Aim Higher” initiative has been developed to raise educational standards by building alliances of mutual benefit between education, business and the wider community. The program aims to equip students with the information and employability skills needed to make successful transitions from High School to Post-secondary education and/or the workforce”.

Introduction

The “Aim Higher” work place learning initiative will provide all Western Quebec senior school students with opportunities to participate in a variety of workplace situations. These experiences will help prepare students for the transition to a work/post-secondary education environment as they leave high school. Workplace learning experiences will also provide students with opportunities to:

- Apply the competencies learned from school with the skills and knowledge required in the workplace and society in general.
- Experience both theoretical and applied learning linking what is learnt in the classroom to the workplace.
- Explore a number of career directions while they are in school.

The purpose of this initiative is to enable students to gain experience through a variety of workplace learning opportunities. The type of experience will be negotiated between the participating business, school community animators and schools involved. The “Aim Higher” initiative will make career development an ongoing process throughout a student’s school life. The students will integrate personal, family, school, work and community experiences to facilitate their career and lifestyle choices.

The school community animator will establish connections with local businesses. In turn the “Aim Higher” initiative encourages you “the business” to:

- Present your business to students in the classroom/school.
- Offer field trip opportunities to students.
- Offer job shadow opportunities to students.
- Offer Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) programs to students.
- Offer work experience opportunities to students.

Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) or Work Experience

Two of the “Aim Higher” workplace learning components include Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) and work experience. Through SWL students will be expected to spend designated hours per week (to be negotiated between the business and community animator) working with a company building knowledge, competencies and key skills (see below). Work experience however, gives a student chance to observe employees to get

a general taste of the world of work through a brief period (one or two days) in a workplace.

Competencies/Key Skills Developed through SWL

While on work placement, students will build up a portfolio and develop **competencies** that complement the schools existing curriculum. These will include:

- **Individual Competencies**

- Communication and literacy
- Organizing and analyzing information
- Problem solving
- Using technology
- Completing activities

- **Team Competencies**

- Professionalism
- Interacting with others
- Understanding all aspects of the industry

- **Personal and Professional Development**

- Taking responsibility for career and life choices
- Participation

Other **key skills** that will be addressed through the “Aim Higher” initiative include: critical thinking skills, information processing skills, enquiry skills and self-evaluation skills. The workplace supervisor (that will be identified by the business) will be responsible for evaluating the competencies/key skills achieved by each student. A simple check mark evaluation sheet will be provided by the community animator, for each workplace supervisor to use. Businesses will also be asked to identify what field of work (career cluster) they are to be matched with. Career clusters include:

Career Clusters:

Agriculture & Forestry

Construction

Manufacturing, Retail & Trade

Transportation & Warehousing

Information & Cultural Industries

Financing & Insurance

Real Estate

Professional Scientific & Technical Services

Management Companies & Enterprises

Administrative & Support

Educational Services

Health Care & Social Care

Arts Entertainment & Recreation

Hotel & Food Services

Business/School Responsibilities

- Interviews will be given by the business and community animator to identify whether the student is eligible.
- There will be a signed contract between the student, the school and the employer.

- This contract will state hours, expectations, areas of competence to be achieved, how the competencies/key skills will be achieved and assessment requirements for the “Aim Higher” initiative.
- The school coordinator (to be identified by the school) of “Aim Higher” will have ownership and a vision for each student.
- The coordinator will need to provide guidance, purpose and support for each of the students to achieve success.
- A clear evaluation will be set for each student participating in the program by the community animator.

What is Expected of the Student/Business?

- The student will be required to plan, structure and make the framework for his/her own placement. They will need to be able to justify why workplace learning will benefit them.
- The student will be responsible for obtaining a Social Insurance Number (SIN).
- The student will provide the community animator with a placement interest (student research).
- The student will be interviewed by the community animator in order for them to be accepted for the “Aim Higher” initiative.
- The student and the community animator will then attend an initial interview with the employer.
- The student will provide a résumé to the potential employer prior to the interview.
- When the student is accepted for the work placement the community animator and the employer will negotiate a contract for the student.
- The student will participate in a formal workshop prior to the commencement of the work placement in preparation.
- The community animator will set the evaluation standards for the employer, student and the school.
- The students must complete all requirements in their contract to achieve credits or recognition for the “Aim Higher” initiative.

Support Structure

- A school coordinator and a workplace supervisor will be appointed to each student.
- A formal workshop will be given before the beginning of the placement to prepare the students for the workplace learning experience.
- Student, community animator, school coordinator, workplace supervisor and principal need to know and work towards the same goals.
- A support system will be in place throughout the work placement for the students.
- The student will be well informed of the program’s expectations and how he/she can achieve success.

Benefits for Businesses

Employers play a vital role in deciding the standards for the “Aim Higher” initiative. It will give you, the business, the opportunity to provide training, which can be more specifically targeted to your own needs. Employee skills are becoming increasingly important in the face of globalization, technological change, trade liberalization, deregulation and other external pressures, therefore:

Students

- Will gain marketable skills needed in today’s workforce.
- Partnership provides students with the opportunity to meet positive role models.
- Gives you first hand knowledge of the attitudes and buying habits of young people.

Company Image

- Partnering with “Aim Higher” will improve your image as an organization – you will be seen as actively involved in the quality of the community as a whole, therefore providing public relations exposure.
- Partnering will increase local networking opportunities for you influencing the community.
- Educators will be made aware of your interests and expectations.
- You will be showing commitment to young people.
- Many businesses owe their success to the efforts of education. A partnership with a school is a perfect way for you to show recognition and appreciation.

Recruitment for the Future

- Participating in “Aim Higher” Structured Workplace Learning will give you first hand knowledge of any exceptionally talented students. Giving you access to the skills, values and attitudes of potential employees.
- Providing you with the opportunity to invest in training your future workforce.
- Giving you access to a pool of potential employees at a lower cost than traditional recruitment methods.

Benefits for Students

- Students will be given the opportunity to develop competencies relevant to the workplace, and required at entry level to the work force
- Students will gain knowledge and understanding of employer’s expectations in relation to recruits.
- Students will be provided with an opportunity to test ‘career choices’ before leaving or completing school.
- Students are exposed to the real world.
- Students will gain confidence, and enhance communication skills through learning in an adult environment.
- Students may experience increased enthusiasm and motivation for other studies in school.
- Students completing a workplace learning experience (or components of such) receive education and industry recognition, providing credit transfer to a range of post-secondary education and training options.
- Students will be better prepared, making more informed decisions for their future in education and training.

This program will teach students to become life long learners and be responsible for their own learning.

Evaluation of the “Aim Higher” Initiative will be Based on the Following Aspects:

- Student interest
- Reduced drop out rate
- Number of Industrial and small business partners
- Higher employment rates
- Number of schools involved
- Better informed/prepared students to make decisions for their future

Conclusion

The “Aim Higher” initiative will raise educational standards. It will build on excellence through developing new approaches to teaching and learning supported by professionalism and development in the workforce.