

Community-Based Learning Policy

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Community-based learning places students with community hosts/employers to explore career interests, discover the skills required for success in the workplace, and recognize the connections between their school-based learning and community/workplace.

Community-based learning includes co-operative education courses, job shadowing, job twinning, mentoring, service learning, short-term placements, and volunteering. This policy is intended to define eligibility for the various community-based learning programs and to clarify responsibilities for all participants.

2. DEFINITIONS

community-based component—The portion of the co-operative education course that includes the out-of-school experiential learning opportunity.

community-based learning—Career exploration opportunities that the community provides to students through experiential learning programs.

community host—The person in the workplace or community organization who works with the teacher to plan the experiential learning for the student and who monitors the student during the placement.

consent—Written informed consent provided in advance by a family member or guardian for students under the age of 19 or by students themselves if 19 years of age or over.

co-operative education—A planned learning experience requiring a long-term community/workplace placement for which a high school student receives a credit or half-credit.

department—Nova Scotia Department of Education.

experiential learning—Learning acquired wholly or in part through practical experiences.

family—Parent or parents, or other family members or guardians acting in place of parents, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, or adult siblings.

in-school component of co-operative education—The portion of the co-operative education course that includes the pre-placement orientation outcomes and the reflective learning outcomes.

internship—A placement opportunity within the co-operative education program for students who have already completed at least one co-op experience. It is provided to students who have a clear career focus and who wish to develop specific skills related to that career. Student interns may receive pay for their work.

job shadowing—Spending a brief period of time (eight hours, for example) observing an employee in his or her workplace.

job twinning—Two students connecting for the purpose of sharing the same experiential learning opportunity in the workplace/community.

learning agreement—A document—completed by student, family, community host, and teacher as agent for the school board—that outlines the responsibilities of each partner in the placement.

learning plan—A document developed by the student with the assistance of the teacher and community host, that includes details of the student's self-assessment done prior to the placement and articulates the learning outcomes the student achieves during the community-based component.

locally developed course—A credit course developed at the school board level to meet specific local needs not served by department-authorized courses, characterized by grade-appropriate learning outcomes and assessment strategies, and approved by the department for implementation.

mentoring—A mentor, such as an employer, employee, or member of a community organization, offering advice and guidance to a student, based on personal experience.

pre-apprentice—A student who participates in a high school co-op program intended to provide exposure or experience in the skilled trades, and who is registered as a pre-apprentice with Apprenticeship Training.

placement assessment—A required review of the safety aspects of the student's assignment for a co-op placement.

risk assessment—A required review of the safety aspects of a student's community-based learning experience.

service learning—A structured learning experience integrating curriculum with active voluntary service opportunities in the community so that service experiences are directly connected to learning outcomes and in-school learning.

short-term placements—Students spending 5–25 hours learning in a workplace or as a volunteer with a community organization.

student—Any student enrolled in any Nova Scotia public school program.

volunteering—Working as volunteers in community organizations or workplaces as part of a service learning program.

youth apprentice—A youth aged 16–19 years employed in a designated trade and working under the instruction of a certified journeyperson in the youth apprenticeship program, for which the youth can receive credit toward high school graduation.

3. **POLICY OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this policy are to

- define responsibilities for community-based learning programs
- designate who is responsible for
 - preparing students for the community-based component of their program
 - providing consent for student participation
 - monitoring students at each stage of their community-based program
- define program components and requirements
- differentiate between compulsory and optional procedures of community-based learning programs

4. **APPLICATION**

This policy applies to all students attending a public school in Nova Scotia and all teachers, school administrators, and school board personnel responsible for Community-Based Learning program delivery.

5. **POLICY DIRECTIVES**

Co-operative Education

- A student must be at least 16 years old and have met placement readiness requirements as established by the Department of Education and defined in *Co-operative Education: A Resource for Schools* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2013) before entering the community-based component of a co-operative education course.
- Students may take co-operative education courses in grades 10, 11, and 12 as either full credits or half credits, each of which may be counted as an elective to fulfill graduation requirements.
- Prior to entering the community-based placement, students must successfully complete the in-school component of co-operative education, a minimum 25-hour module preparing students for their placement. Students are not required to repeat this module if they enrol in subsequent co-operative education courses.

- Students participating in a co-operative education course must complete an application form that indicates how they will be transported to and from their community placement. Application does not guarantee acceptance into the course.
- A co-operative education half-credit course must include a community-based component of a minimum of 50 hours, for a total of 75 hours. A full-credit course must include a 100-hour community-based component, for a total of 125 hours.
- Students must complete a learning agreement prior to commencement of the community-based learning component of a co-operative education course.
- Prior to the commencement of the community-based component of a co-operative education course, the teacher must complete a placement assessment of the proposed student workplace.
- Students must submit to their co-operative education teacher a log form indicating the hours of placement. The form must indicate tasks the student performed, changes to the student's learning plan, and the signature of the community host verifying the student's participation.
- A co-operative education course is jointly supervised by the teacher and the community host. The teacher must, at a minimum, make one site contact every 25 hours of placement, with a minimum of two site visits for the entire placement.
- A student must have a learning plan developed by the student in conjunction with the co-operative education teacher and community host.
- Community-based learning experiences must include student reflection on the learning and related documents, such as the journals, logs, and portfolios that students must maintain while participating.
- Students may undertake the community-based component of a co-operative education course during or after school hours, on weekends, and during vacations, in accordance with school board and school policies.
- Students are not paid for any part of the community-based component of a co-operative education course unless they are registered in pre-apprentice or youth apprenticeship programs, or unless the teacher/school identifies their placement as an internship.
- Students may perform tasks of a compulsory certified trade only when they are under the direct supervision of a certified journeyperson. Students are directly supervised when the journeyperson is on site and readily available.
- Students must immediately report injuries if they occur while participating in a community-based placement. Injuries are reported to the community host and the co-operative education teacher. The teacher then completes the appropriate insurance reports.
- A student's final grade for the co-operative education course is based on the achievement of the identified learning outcomes. While the community host's evaluation must contribute to the student's grade, the final grade is the supervising teacher's responsibility.

- A co-operative education course has the status of a locally developed course. The principal or school board staff must approve co-operative education courses in accordance with school board policy.

Field Trips

- A risk assessment of a community setting is required when a student is not under the direct supervision of authorized board personnel, such as a school administrator, teacher, teacher assistant, or a family member.
- Teachers planning field trips must contact the trip destination prior to the trip to
 - establish a relationship with the community host
 - communicate the purposes of the trip
 - identify potential safety issues
- Teachers must ensure that the field trip complies with their school board’s guidelines and policies.

Job Shadowing

- A risk assessment of a community setting is required when a student is not under the direct supervision of authorized board personnel, such as a school administrator, teacher, teacher assistant, or a family member.
- Students aged 13 years and younger must be accompanied by a teacher or family member and the community host.
- The informed consent of families is required prior to commencement of the placement. Schools are responsible for communicating the details of the job shadow to families and community hosts.
- Pre-planning and reflective writing are required components of all job shadows.

Mentoring

- A risk assessment of a community setting is required when a student is not under the direct supervision of authorized board personnel, such as a school administrator, teacher, teacher assistant, or a family member.
- All forms of mentoring must be approved by the teacher and the student’s family.
- Teachers must ensure that mentors comply with school board guidelines and policies.

Service Learning

- A risk assessment of a community setting is required when a student is not under the direct supervision of authorized board personnel, such as a school administrator, teacher, teacher assistant, or a family member.
- Service learning experiences must be directly connected to public school program learning outcomes and in-school learning.
- Pre-planning and reflective writing are required for service learning experiences.

Short-Term Work/Community Placements

- A risk assessment of a community setting is required when a student is not under the direct supervision of authorized board personnel, such as a school administrator, teacher, teacher assistant, or a family member.
- A student must be at least 16 years old to participate in short-term work/community placements.
- Short-term work/community placements are 5–25 hours in length.
- Pre-placement planning and post-placement reflection are required.
- The approval of the principal and the informed consent of families are required prior to the commencement of placements. Schools are responsible for communicating the details of placements to families and community hosts.

6. POLICY GUIDELINES

- Students whose applications for co-operative education courses were not approved should be given the reasons.
- All students applying for co-operative education courses should be interviewed. Information on the application form will be used during the interview process.
- Students may enrol in and receive credit for an indefinite number of co-operative education courses.

7. ACCOUNTABILITY

The **Department of Education** is responsible for

- developing the policy, in consultation with school boards
- communicating the policy to all school boards
- developing and maintaining the resources supporting the community-based learning programs

School boards are responsible for

- communicating the policy to schools
- monitoring and ensuring compliance with this policy
- providing schools with department documents supporting the program

Schools are responsible for

- following the directives and guidelines of the policy in the implementation of community-based programs

Teachers are responsible for

- providing students with clear procedures and timelines, depending on the particular community-based learning program
- maintaining communications with students, families, and community hosts/employers
- fulfilling roles and responsibilities as outlined in the directives and guidelines of this policy

Students are responsible for

- completing any forms or other documentation necessary for specific community-based learning programs they enter into, as designated in the directives and guidelines of this policy
- conducting themselves in their placements according to school board and school codes of conduct

Families are responsible for

- becoming informed about community-based learning programs and the risks associated with community settings
- completing any forms or other documentation necessary for specific community-based learning programs

Community hosts/employers are responsible for

- maintaining appropriate supervision of students during their placements
- ensuring the safety of students in their placements
- completing the required assessments of students during and following their placements
- communicating with the teacher as required by the specific community-based learning program or as deemed necessary if issues should arise regarding the placement

8. MONITORING

- The Deputy Minister of Education is responsible for monitoring overall compliance with this policy.
- The Superintendent of each school board is responsible for monitoring compliance with this policy.
- The Principal of each school is responsible for compliance with this policy.
- The Department of Education, through the Coordinator of Community-Based Learning, shall monitor this policy, working with school board community-based learning consultants. This responsibility includes evaluating the suitability and effectiveness of this policy and ensuring that the policy is formally reviewed biennially.

9. REFERENCES

Nova Scotia Department of Education. 2013. *Community-Based Learning: A Resource for Schools*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia.

———. 2013. *Co-operative Education: A Resource for Schools*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia.

Enquiries: For further information regarding this policy or to obtain reference documents, contact the Coordinator, Community-Based Learning, English Program Services, Department of Education, at (902) 424-3953.