

Community-Based Learning Policy

Effective Date: May 2022

1. Policy Statement

Community-based learning engages students with community partners to explore career interests, develop the skills required for success in the workplace, and make connections between school-based learning and the community/workplace. Community-based learning may include field trips, co-operative education courses, job shadowing, mentoring, service learning, short-term placements, and safety and workplace readiness certifications, amongst other opportunities.

This policy is intended to define components and requirements for various community-based learning experiences and to clarify responsibilities for all participants.

2. Definitions

certified tradesperson: A person who holds a certificate of qualification in a designated trade or a certificate recognized by the director pursuant to applicable regulations.

Commitment Agreement: A document that lists the expectations of students registered in co-operative education courses and requires the signatures of the student and parent.

community-based learning: A teaching strategy that brings together academic learning with community engagement; this approach can see students demonstrating learning and skill development with partners in the community or can bring community engagement into the classroom.

community host: The individual in the workplace or community organization who works with the teacher to plan, develop, and supervise the student co-op learning experience.

competencies: The attitudes, skills, and knowledge that prepare learners to successfully participate in lifelong learning and life–work transitions.

compulsory certified trade: A designated trade that is specified in the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Act as requiring a license, certificate, or apprentice/trainee status to work.

co-operative education: A planned learning experience requiring a long-term community or worksite placement for which eligible high school students earn credit. Students must be at least 16 years of age or be 15 and in grade 11. All community-based learning risk assessment requirements must be applied.

department: Refers to the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD).

experiential learning: Refers to learning through experience. Experiential learning requires students to reflect upon their learning and how the skills and competencies they develop through their academic studies can be applied to real life experiences that are structured as part of the learning experiences.

field trip: Refers to taking the students outside of the school for learning experiences and activities that support curriculum.

informed consent: Written informed permission 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.

Pre-placement Instruction in Co-operative Education: The portion of the co-operative education course that prepares students for their community placement and confirms student readiness.

internship: A paid placement opportunity offered to a student by an employer for a fixed period of time that allows students to explore a particular work environment related to the student's area of interest. A student must have completed a minimum of one co-op placement in the field of interest and have demonstrated a clear career focus in their career pathway (e.g., submitted an application to a post-secondary institution in a related field).

job shadowing: Independent observation for a period of no more than 8 hours at a community placement by students who are 13 years of age or older. All community-based learning risk assessment requirements must be applied.

Learning Agreement: A document completed by the student, family, community host, and teacher as agent for the Regional Centre for Education (RCE) or Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) that outlines the responsibilities of each partner in the placement. This agreement lists and describes the responsibilities of all parties in the co-operative education partnership.

mentor: An individual who may represent a company or community organization who offers their expertise to support student career exploration.

parent: Includes parents, guardians, and people acting in the place of a parent (*loco parentis*).

Pre-apprentice: A student who participates in an approved summer sector program, receives exposure to the skilled trades, and is registered as a pre-apprentice with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency.

Pre-placement Assessment: A safety review of a worksite that must be completed before the start of a student's co-op placement.

reflective practice: The ability to reflect or think on what you do (action), why you have done it, and what you can learn from it.

risk assessment: A safety review of community locations that support a range of experiential learning opportunities for students.

Seasonal Work Experience Credit: A unique opportunity that recognizes the development of career readiness and employability skills gained through the engagement of students engaged in work experience in seasonal-related industries.

service learning: A structured learning experience that integrates meaningful community service with classroom instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience and skill development. All community-based learning risk assessment requirements must be applied.

short-term placements: These placements are intended to provide community or workplace exposure for shorter periods of time than a co-op placement; students make connections between classroom learning, skill development, and a workplace or community organization; maximum total of 25 hours. All community-based learning risk assessment requirements must be applied.

student: Any student enrolled in a Nova Scotia public school program.

Student Learning Plan: A document that shows evidence of self-assessment, learning goals, skill development, and experiences while a student is preparing for and engaging in a co-op placement; this plan is developed by the student in collaboration with the teacher and community host.

youth apprentice: Students between the ages of 16 and 19 who are working in a designated trade, under the supervision of a certified tradesperson. These students undergo a registration process to become a youth apprentice through the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency.

3. Policy Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to ensure that all Nova Scotia students have equitable access to Community-Based Learning opportunities that are culturally and linguistically responsive, accepting, and respectful in supporting and valuing their learning and diverse abilities.

This policy provides clear, consistent direction for processes to be followed by all users. This will be achieved by

- defining responsibilities associated with community-based learning
- designating who is responsible for
 - preparing students for the community-based component of their course/program
 - providing informed consent for student participation
 - monitoring students at each stage of their community-based learning experience
- defining components and requirements
- differentiating between compulsory and optional procedures of community-based learning
- designating the roles and responsibilities of EECD, RCEs, CSAP, schools, teachers, students, parents, and community hosts

4. Guiding Principles

- Engagement in community-based learning provides students with valuable educational experiences through which they apply their developing knowledge and reflect on their learning in collaboration with community partners.
- Every student can benefit from community-based learning experiences.
- Community-based learning experiences are planned intentional experiences that support the development of skills and competencies.
- Community-based learning experiences should align with the diversity of the school population.
- When participating in any community-based learning experience the safety and security of the students must be first and foremost and due diligence must be exercised to mitigate risks.

5. Application

This policy applies to all students attending a public school in Nova Scotia and their families as well as all teachers, school administrators, and Regional Centres for Education (RCEs)/Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP) personnel who are engaged in or have responsibilities for oversight of community-based learning.

6. Policy Directives

- 6.1 Students may take co-operative education (co-op) 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.
- 6.2 Students must complete an application and interview process before being registered in a co-operative education course. Application does not guarantee acceptance into the course.
 - 6.2.1 When a student has not been accepted into a co-operative education course, the student must be notified of the reason. The application and interview records must be retained for a period of one year after the school year for which the student has applied to take the course.
- 6.3 Community-based learning may take place during or outside of school time, on weekends, or during vacations, and must be in accordance with RCE/CSAP policies. All community-based learning risk assessment requirements must be applied.
- 6.4 All students must demonstrate workplace readiness and meet safety outcomes before being placed in the community for a co-op placement.
- 6.5 A co-operative education course must include pre-placement instruction, ongoing weekly classroom instruction and reflection, and a placement in the community. Students completing 40 hours at a placement are eligible to earn a half credit while students completing 80 hours are eligible to earn a full credit.
- 6.6 Schools must work with the RCE/CSAP Youth Pathways Consultant to ensure insurance requirements are being met.
- 6.7 Before entering the community-based placement, students must be at least 16 years of age or be 15 and in grade 11; students must achieve the pre-placement instruction outcomes and meet readiness criteria.
- 6.8 Students who take additional co-op courses must continue to demonstrate workplace readiness and complete a refresh of the pre-placement instruction.
- 6.9 All co-op forms requiring a signature or supporting documentation must be completed and submitted as required:
 - 6.9.1 Before starting a placement, the following forms must be completed and stored in the student's co-op file at the school:
 - Commitment Agreement
 - Placement Readiness
 - Pre-Placement Assessment

- Learning Agreement
 - Student Learning Plan, Part A: Employability Skills and Self-Assessment
- 6.9.2 During and after the community work placement, the following forms must be completed and stored in the student's co-op file at the school:
- Student Placement Log
 - Placement Contact Record
 - Community Host Evaluations (mid placement and end placement)
 - Student Learning Plan: Part A (mid placement and end placement)
 - Student Learning Plan: Part B
- 6.10 Application forms and documents outlined on the Co-op File Checklist must be stored securely for six (6) years from the student's course completion date to satisfy insurance requirements.
- 6.11 Students must immediately report injuries that occur while on a co-operative education placement to the community host and the co-operative education teacher. The school and teacher are responsible for following insurance reporting processes.
- 6.12 Students must follow the provincial *School Transportation Policy* and any related regional procedures; students will not transport other students to and from co-operative education placements.
- 6.13 Students must not attend co-operative education placements when schools are closed due to inclement weather.
- 6.14 Students may participate in work placements in the compulsory certified trades only when under the direct supervision of a certified tradesperson for that trade; specific tasks associated with this trade will be identified by the certified tradesperson.
- 6.15 Students are not paid for hours they complete while at a co-operative education placement unless
- 6.15.1 they are registered as a Pre-apprentice or Youth Apprentice with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency
 - 6.15.2 they are taking part in an EECD approved sector program
 - 6.15.3 they have been approved as an intern by their RCE/board or EECD
- 6.16 The co-operative education teacher must contact the community host a minimum of four times at regularly scheduled intervals during a student's placement. Two of the contacts are in addition to the pre-placement assessment visit and must be on-site visits between the teacher, student, and community host.

Career Exploration Field Trips

- 6.17 Teachers/schools must comply with their respective RCE/CSAP school trip policy, completing all required forms including obtaining informed consent.
- 6.18 A risk assessment must be completed when students are taken on field trips to ensure parents are provided with the information needed to give informed consent; teachers planning field trips must contact the trip destination before the trip to

- 6.18.1 establish a relationship with the community host
- 6.18.2 communicate the purposes of the trip
- 6.18.3 identify potential safety issues and risk management strategies

Job Shadowing

- 6.19 A “Community-Based Learning Risk Assessment Form” form is required when a student is not under the direct supervision of a family member or authorized RCE/CSAP personnel, such as a school administrator, teacher, teacher assistant, or other staff member as approved by the principal.
- 6.20 Students 13 years of age, or older, are eligible to complete a job shadow. All community-based learning risk assessment requirements must be applied.
- 6.21 The informed consent of families is required before beginning a job shadow placement. Schools are responsible for communicating the details of the job shadow to families and community hosts.
- 6.22 Pre-planning and reflection are required components of all job shadows.

Service Learning

- 6.23 A “Risk Assessment for Independent Student-Learning Activities” form must be completed when students are engaged in service learning in the community when the student is not under the direct supervision of a family member or authorized RCE/CSAP personnel, such as a school administrator, teacher, teacher assistant, or other staff member as approved by the principal.
- 6.24 Students who are undertaking service-learning projects independently must be at least 13 years of age.
- 6.25 Informed consent from families is required before students are engaged in independent service-learning projects outside of the school.

Short-Term Placements

- 6.26 A “Risk Assessment for Independent Student-Learning Activities” form must be completed when students are engaged in short-term placements in the community and are not under the direct supervision of a family member or authorized RCE/CSAP personnel, such as a school administrator, teacher, or teacher assistant.
- 6.27 In order to be eligible for a short-term placement, a student must be at least 16 years of age, or be 15 and in grade 11.
- 6.28 Students must complete site-specific safety awareness training before undertaking a short-term placement.
- 6.29 The approval of the principal and the informed consent of families are required prior to the commencement of short-term placements. Schools are responsible for communicating the details of placements to families and community hosts.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Department

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for

- developing the policy, in consultation with school RCEs/CSAP
- communicating the policy to all school RCEs/CSAP
- developing and maintaining the resources to support community-based learning
- updating and communicating guidelines and forms that support community-based learning
- monitoring overall compliance with this policy
- working with regions and CSAP through the Director, Career Pathways, to evaluate the suitability and effectiveness of this policy and ensure that the policy is formally reviewed biennially

RCEs/CSAP

RCEs/CSAP are responsible for

- communicating the policy to schools
- providing schools with departmental documents
- monitoring and ensuring compliance with this policy

Schools

Schools are responsible for

- compliance with the directives and guidelines of the policy in the implementation of community-based learning

Teachers

Teachers are responsible for

- ensuring all requirements related to engagement of students in community-based settings are met
- maintaining communication with students, families, and community hosts/employers
- fulfilling roles and responsibilities as outlined in the directives and guidelines of this policy

Students

Students are responsible for

- completing all forms and other documentation required to engage in community-based learning
- conducting themselves in their placements according to RCE/CSAP and school codes of conduct
- fulfilling all expectations in the Learning Agreement

Parents

Parents are responsible for

- asking questions to gain understanding of community based-learning, goals, and associated risks

- reviewing and completing required forms and documents related to participation by their child in community-based learning experiences
- providing informed consent for students to engage in community-based learning experiences

Community Hosts

Community hosts are responsible for

- providing appropriate supervision of students during community-based learning experiences
- providing safety orientation for students engaged in co-operative education learning
- ensuring the safety of students engaged in community-based learning experiences
- completing assessments of students during and following co-operative education placements
- maintaining regular communication with teachers and students engaged in co-operative education placements, job shadows, and short-term placements

8. Monitoring

Department staff are responsible for reviewing this policy and its implementation in consultation with RCEs/CSAP, schools, partners, and external advisors when appropriate.

9. References

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. 2022. *Community-Based Learning: A Resource for Schools*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia. [https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/Community%20Based%20Learning%20a%20Resource%20for%20Schools%20\(2022\).pdf](https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/Community%20Based%20Learning%20a%20Resource%20for%20Schools%20(2022).pdf).

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Additional Information

For additional information regarding this policy, or to obtain reference documents, contact the Director, Career Pathways, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.