

Co-op FAQs for Students and Parents

1. Does the student get paid?

- A. Co-op students earn high school credits, but do not get paid. Some employers choose to provide a modest honorarium to assist students with work related expenses, however, this is not common and is not expected.

2. Can the student be hired by the employer?

- A. The aim of co-op is to earn credits while obtaining experience in the workplace. Many employers are not in the position to hire students and some employers leave a space open to accept co-op students on a regular basis. If a position does become available, students may accept the opportunity if it does not interfere with the Work Education Agreement which clearly identifies designated co-op hours. Therefore, the student can only be hired outside of co-op hours and they should then be insured by the company during paid employment hours.

3. How does the student get to and from the placement?

- A. Transportation to and from the placement is the responsibility of the student. The GECDSDB recommends public transportation. All travel expenses are paid for by the student.

4. Can Co-op hours be used as Community Involvement Hours?

- A. Co-op and Community Involvement are not the same. Through co-op, students benefit by gaining personal work experience. Community Involvement hours, on the other hand, involve volunteer opportunities where the community benefits. Students cannot count co-op hours toward their Community Involvement diploma requirement. For more information regarding Community Involvement, click on the link [Community Involvement](#).

5. Are students insured?

- A. A Work Education Agreement (WEA) is completed for each student and is signed by the student, co-op teacher, employer, and parent (if the student is under 18 years of age). Through the WEA, students are covered by WSIB (Workplace Safety Insurance Board) while at their placements. Please note that students who are placed at an elementary school, with a certified teacher, are not covered through WSIB, but are instead covered by OSBIE. In addition, parents or students 18 or older may consider purchasing their own insurance.

6. What if the student doesn't like his or her placement?

- A. Prior to attending the placements, all students are interviewed by the co-op teacher in order to match students to placements. In addition, students attend approximately two weeks of pre-placement classes in order to prepare for this endeavour. Students who positively participate, communicate with co-workers, demonstrate on-going initiative and enthusiasm will be most successful in this partnership experience. When students sign the Work Education Agreement, they are making a commitment to this placement. It is very rare for students to be relocated. The co-op teacher will assist wherever possible to maximize learning and personal growth.

7. What if a student isn't fitting in with the placement?

- A. If the student is not adjusting well to placement expectations, the employer has the right to dismiss the student. The aim is to give students a realistic work experience and help them understand what it takes to get and keep a job. The cooperative education program is giving students an opportunity to learn and grow while trying to meet realistic employment opportunities as experienced by all new employees. The co-op teacher, and possibly the principal, will continue to work with this student. If, at this point, the student is unwilling or unable to change his or her focus or behaviour, credits may be in jeopardy. If the student is able to make meaningful adjustments, a new placement may be found if time and circumstances permit.

8. What is expected from employers?

- A. Employers are expected to provide a realistic view of workplace expectations and offer guidance for educational growth. Workplace employees will demonstrate the attitudes and skills required of a successful and responsible employee in a safe and healthy environment. Employers will sign Ministry documents, complete Performance Appraisals, offer a learning environment which includes job-specific health and safety training, and work in partnership with the co-op teacher to outline work expectations.

9. Who ensures student safety?

- A. The co-op teacher is expected to provide general safety awareness training during pre-employment sessions. The employer should provide specific safety orientation and ongoing training. Students have the responsibility to wear safety gear at all times, follow workplace guidelines and practices, and report any injuries or hazards.

10. What happens during a work stoppage, strike, lockout, company layoff, or shutdown, etc.?

- A. In the event of any of the above, students and/or employers will inform the co-op teacher. The co-op teacher will assign alternate work for the students to ensure completion of hours. If the work stoppage is lengthy, the co-op teacher may have to find an alternate placement.