

Building career education in PEI schools

by Gloria Welton

There are many roads to take to arrive at an occupation of choice. Making informed decisions along the way helps to avoid detours and ruts in the road that can be frustrating and costly.

“Over the past two years, the **PEI Department of Education and Early Childhood Development** has worked on a comprehensive career education framework,” says **Kathy McDonald**, Student Service Coordinator, who was part of the team which developed the plan. “This framework will ensure that all Island students have opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed decisions about their options.”

“Many wonderful career education initiatives are already offered in PEI schools,” says **Cathy Montgomery**. “We intend to further develop what we have, build in more opportunities, and make career education available to all students.”

Three of the five strategic goals of the PEI Department of Education and Early Childhood Development are as follows:

- to improve student achievement and lifelong learning
- to improve access to and participation in post-secondary training
- to increase the capacity of the education system to respond to labor market trends and to better prepare learners for the labor market.

“With these goals in mind, planned learning experiences in educational and training settings will help our students make informed decisions about future options in their working life,” says Cathy. “The global economy is evolving from resource-based to knowledge-based. Also, demand is increasing for a skilled and knowledgeable workforce with strong essential skills and, in some cases, a form of specialized education.”

Here are some career education initiatives currently offered in PEI schools:

LifeWork Portfolio is a document that can provide a broad picture of an individual’s growth from courses, extracurricular involvement, and community-based learning experiences. Items are purposefully selected for this document to prove learning outcomes and skills which have been acquired through these experiences.

In grades 7, 8 and 9, the components of the Portfolio are introduced in the health education curriculum. In grade 9, students begin to create records of their personal growth and achievement as they plan, develop, and document pathways to successful careers. In senior high school, the LifeWork Portfolio is used in career-related courses such as **Career Futures**, **Cooperative Education**, and **Transitions**.

Career Futures is a one-credit high school elective which is available in high schools across the Island. This course focuses on examining career directions, making informed choices, exploring the workplace, and developing employability skills. The course helps students to develop a broad-based foundation for job, occupation, and career planning. Students complete interest inventories, develop workplace skills, and explore post-secondary opportunities and occupations of interest.

Transitions is a two-credit career exploratory course offered in some high schools in conjunction with Holland College. The purpose of the program is to encourage, motivate, and inform senior high students about post-secondary options.



Career Education team moves the plan forward

Six staff members are now developing specific steps to get the framework moving. The newly-formed Career Education Team are as follows: (from left)

René Hurtubise, Curriculum Support Specialist, French Programs: **368-4671**

Mike Leslie, Career Curriculum Specialist, English Programs: **368-4636**

Cathy Montgomery, Career Education Support Specialist, Student Support Services: **368-4813**

Mitch Murphy, Career Education Consultant, Western School Board: **438-4017**

Kevin MacLeod, Career Education Consultant, Eastern School Board: **368-6963**

Albert Arsenault, Career Education Consultant, La Commission scolaire de langue française: **854-2975**

Students registered in Transitions attend Holland College each day for half a school day during one semester, rotating every three weeks through a different career module. Students also participate in community exploration experiences and tours relating to their career interests. This program creates an environment where learners are mentored, guided, and supported.

Cooperative Education is available at most Island high schools to grades 11 and 12 students who have a wide variety of abilities, skills, and career interests.

Cooperative Education relies on a partnership among students, schools, and the community. It combines classroom studies with learning through community work experiences that are related to the student’s academic or career goals. Students benefit from the expertise, talent, and resources of community-based service organizations, agencies, businesses, industries, citizen groups, entrepreneurs, and parents. They gain opportunities to apply and enhance the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired through their school work.

This one- or two-credit course consists of two components. During the 30-hour **classroom component**, students hone their skills in self assessment and career planning and grow in their understanding of labour market information, employment requirements, health and safety issues, and the links between the knowledge, skills and attitudes they are acquiring in school and their future plans.

During the **placement component**, a personalized learning agreement outlines the specific goals for working and learning in the community.

PEI Trades Strategy The provincial trades courses and programs offered in Island schools are currently undergoing a major revision. Development of new courses in **Automotive Technology**, **Carpentry Technology** and **Welding Technology** has begun. Elements of the new curriculum are currently being piloted and field tested in many of our schools. Students may explore a variety of trades or hone their skills in one particular field. These programs offer students a clear career pathway into the exciting and ever-changing world of the skilled trades.

Agriculture and Tourism Certificate Programs emphasize experiences and activities inside and outside the classroom. In addition to completing the regular high school curriculum, students specialize in either tourism or agriculture. When they graduate from high school, they earn a certificate which recognizes the knowledge and skills achieved in agriculture or tourism through in-school and community-based learning components.

New initiative in place this year

Career Cruising is an interactive career resource designed for people of all ages. This computer-based resource helps users to explore different career options or plan future education and training. “This resource is available to all schools in Atlantic Canada, and we are really excited about it,” says Cathy. “Many teachers have received the training to guide the student through and we see that this resource has tremendous potential.”

Check out **Career Cruising** at www.careercruising.com

For more information about **Career Education**, contact **PEI Department of Education and Early Childhood Development** at **368-4636**.