

***Creating Pathways to Success: An Education and Career/Life
Planning Program for Ontario Schools***
Policy and Program Requirements, Kindergarten to Grade 12, 2013

Creating Pathways to Success sets out the new career development policy for Ontario schools. This policy involves the implementation of a comprehensive Kindergarten to Grade 12 education and career/life planning program. The program is designed to help students achieve their personal goals and become competent, successful, and contributing members of society.

To promote success in school and life beyond school, it is essential for Ontario schools to provide opportunities and support for all students to plan their individual pathways through school and to make a successful transition to his or her initial postsecondary destination. As reflected in the ministry resource document *School Effectiveness Framework (SEF), K–12: A Support for School Improvement and Student Success*, schools that adopt “pathways thinking” enhance every student’s outlook for success by supporting students in identifying their personal interests, strengths, needs, and aspirations and in using this knowledge of themselves to inform their choices of programs and learning opportunities and also by providing a range of diverse and engaging learning opportunities, courses, and programs, both in and outside the classroom, that meet the interests, strengths, needs, and aspirations of the students and honour all postsecondary destinations, whether it be apprenticeship training, college, community living, university, or the workplace.

The education and career/life planning program presented in this document succeeds when the entire school community is informed about it, engaged in it, and committed to it.

Career development theories in the late 20th century suggested that with access to accurate information and some guidance, individuals would independently acquire the skills needed for effective career planning. More recently, research has indicated that to make sound career decisions people also need to develop tools for processing the information.

Traditionally, career development practice has operated on another assumption – that only some students require support and that they will seek assistance as they need it. The reality is that the challenges and opportunities faced by students in this century are unlike those of any previous generation, and that all students today require specific knowledge and skills in education and career/life planning to support them in making sound choices throughout life.

The term *career* has several meanings. It can refer strictly to a person's occupational history in a particular field or, more broadly, to the sum of a person's experiences in a variety of roles throughout life. In the second sense, everyone has a career, which includes work, learning, community engagement, and relationships with family and friends. *Creating Pathways to Success* focuses on the second meaning of the term and makes that meaning explicit by using the term *career/life*.

Education and career/life planning refers to a process that assists in the development and application of the knowledge and skills needed to make informed education and career/life choices.

Creating Pathways to Success responds to the realities of a complex, rapidly changing world. It is based on the understanding that education and career/life planning is a lifelong process that requires all learners to be flexible and able to adapt to changes in themselves and in the world around them. This program recognizes the need to place greater emphasis on helping students develop knowledge and skills in this area from an early age and throughout their school experience.

Over the last several years the Student Success Strategy has introduced various policies and programs that have significantly broadened our view of what it means to be successful. *Creating Pathways to Success*, and the education and career/life program that it describes, reflects this view of student success and is built on the understanding that:

What students believe about themselves and their opportunities, and what their peers and the adults in their lives believe about them, significantly influence the choices they make and the degree to which they achieve their goals. *Creating Pathways to Success* is based on three core beliefs, that all students can be successful, that success comes in many forms, and that there are many pathways to success.

Creating Pathways to Success is founded on the vision that all students will leave secondary school with a clear plan for their initial postsecondary destination, whether in apprenticeship training, college, community living, university, or the workplace, and with confidence in their ability to implement, and revise or adapt their plan throughout their lives as they and the world around them change.

This vision sees students as the architects of their lives.

If students are to become the architects of their lives the program must assist them to develop the skills and knowledge to make informed education and career/life choices throughout their lives, through the effective use of the inquiry process. To this end, the program must provide opportunities for students to learn and apply their learning both

inside and outside the classroom and involve parents and the broader community in creating those opportunities.

To achieve these goals, every elementary and secondary school, under the direction of the principal and with the assistance of key staff and students, will develop, document, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive education and career/life planning program based on the policies in *Creating Pathways to Success*.

This commitment to a comprehensive program is supported by research that indicates when students who are exposed to a structured career development program, one that begins early, is embedded in the curricula and life of the school, and involves all staff, parents, students and the broader community, they become confident, self-reliant lifelong career/life managers who make informed choices about their lives.

For an education and career/life planning program to be described as comprehensive, several characteristics will be reflected in the program's design and will be evident in the lived experiences of all students and other stakeholders in the learning community.

Each of these characteristics is described in section 2 (pages 9 and 10) of *Creating Pathways to Success*, please pause the session to review this information and press play when you are ready to continue.

This chart provides a high level overview of how the program is structured.

In the left column it shows that students will acquire knowledge and skills in four areas of learning related to education and career/life planning through developing answers to the related inquiry questions.

The middle column emphasizes that the learning can happen in all aspects of a student's life. Students will develop education and career/life planning knowledge and skills through the curriculum, both inside and outside the classroom, through school-wide activities and in the community.

Finally, the column on the right indicates that students demonstrate and document their learning through the development of the *All About Me* portfolio in Kindergarten to Grade 6 and the *Individual Pathways Plan (IPP)* in Grades 7 to 12.

The remainder of this session focuses largely on what is Learned and where it is Learned, with an emphasis on making curriculum connections.

Creating Pathways to Success outlines an inquiry-based conceptual framework and supporting policies and processes to guide schools in developing a comprehensive Kindergarten to Grade 12 education and career/life planning program. The program framework is a four-step inquiry process built on four questions linked to the four areas

of learning in education and career/life planning – Knowing Yourself; Exploring Opportunities; Making Decisions and Setting Goals, and Achieving Goals and Making Transitions.

The four questions in the framework – Who am I? What are my opportunities? (Note: highlight/zoom in) Who do I want to become? and What is my plan for achieving my goals? – are relevant at any age or stage of development; only the context and emphasis changes as students progress through school, from Kindergarten to Grade 12. The education and career/life planning process is ongoing and cyclical, with students regularly returning to the four questions, equipped with a greater knowledge of themselves and their opportunities and a growing understanding of how they can successfully shape their future.

The program framework provides a starting point and a process for ongoing program development and student learning. In order for the program to succeed, students, teachers and guidance teachers/counsellors, administrators, parents, and community partners need to be familiar with the framework. Educators are encouraged to draw on it when developing learning activities and communicating with students and others about these activities. The inquiry process and the related knowledge and skills must be explicitly taught.

A central goal of the program is for students to learn how to use the inquiry process and make a habit of applying it, so that they can become confident, independent, and effective education and career/life planners throughout their lives.

Regular use of the framework across the curriculum and throughout the school experience helps students see the connections between their learning in school and their lives beyond school, and creates a culture supportive of education and career/life planning within the school.

The framework is flexible in terms of both the emphasis that may be placed on different areas of learning at different stages of development and the activities involved. For example, in the early grades, students are actively learning about themselves and exploring their world. At this stage of development, the question “Who am I?” offers a natural point of entry into the cycle of education and career/life planning. Teachers can encourage young students to become conscious of what they most love to do, what they do best, and how they feel when they are engaged in various activities. Teachers can pose questions and guide students towards opportunities for exploring their passions and talents, taking them into the second area of learning in the framework – Exploring Opportunities. The various activities that engage students in the early grades offer a myriad of opportunities for the kind of reflection that can give them a good start on the cycle of planning rooted in self-knowledge.

The chart on page 15 of *Creating Pathways to Success* describes in greater detail what students will know and be able to do related to each area of learning. The knowledge and skills described are relevant to all ages and stages of development. What changes, as students develop, is the learning context, the teaching and learning activities, and the ways students demonstrate their learning.

Please pause the session to review this material and press play when you are ready to continue.

A comprehensive program supports students in developing the knowledge and skills of education and career/life planning by providing learning opportunities in the classroom, school, and community. Research has shown that the education and career/life program becomes most powerful when it is deeply embedded, infused, in the curriculum across all subjects, courses, and learning activities. The remainder of this session will focus on making those critical curriculum connections.

One of the key places the learning takes place is in the classroom through the explicit embedding of the education and career/life planning program in the curriculum in all subject areas and classrooms. Direct curriculum connections can be found in the front matter, strands, overall expectations, specific expectations, teacher prompts in all curriculum documents.

All of the revised curriculum documents since 2013 have a section in the front matter, entitled *Some Considerations for Program Planning*, that includes a statement regarding the infusion of the education and career/life program.

For example, the Social Sciences and Humanities curriculum document states that, *“Classroom teachers support students in education and career/life planning by providing them with learning opportunities, filtered through the lens of the four inquiry questions, that allow them to apply subject-specific knowledge and skills to work-related situations; explore subject-related education and career/life options; and become competent, self-directed planners. The curriculum expectations in social science and humanities courses provide opportunities to relate classroom learning to education and career/life planning that will prepare students for success in school, work, and, life.”*

Other curriculum documents, for example, Grade 9-12 Science, identify entire strands and specific learning expectations related to education and career/life planning. In this case they address the question, “What are my opportunities?”

In many other instances, teacher prompts are provided to broaden student learning related to the specific expectation and encourage further inquiry.

The skills and knowledge that are fundamental to a comprehensive education and career/life planning program are first introduced in the Full Day Kindergarten program as expressed in this overall goal and particularly in learning activities that promote reflection and self-awareness.

Section 6 of *Creating Pathways to Success*, entitled Program Development, Implementation, and Evaluation provides a process for creating a comprehensive program including specific direction for making curriculum connections. Teachers are encouraged to review the process and their curriculum documents to identify the many opportunities to embed education and career/life planning expectations in their programs.

As students document and reflect on their experiences and learning, and consider their options for next steps, their competence in education and career/life planning grows. The *All About Me* portfolio in Kindergarten to Grade 6 and the *Individual Pathways Plan* or IPP in Grades 7 to 12 provide structures for, and serve as a record of, this learning process.

Students capture evidence related to the four areas of learning for their portfolio or IPP in all their subjects or courses at school and in various activities at home and in the community.

Schools must have in place a process to support students in documenting their learning in a portfolio or IPP. This process must include the opportunity for students to review and share evidence of their learning with a teacher and, where possible, their parents at least twice a year.

Both the portfolio and the IPP can be used to inform parent interviews and student-led conferences at which students share and reflect on their learning.

The portfolio and IPP also serve as vehicles through which students can provide valuable feedback about the kinds of experiences and learning activities that have been most helpful to them. This feedback is a source of 'student voice' with respect to the effectiveness of the program and should be taken into account in evaluations of the school's education and career/life planning program.

Creating Pathways to Success puts students at the center of their learning. Students are encouraged to discover who they are, explore opportunities, pursue their passions, and design personal pathways to success. They are encouraged to express their insights in individual ways and to keep track of what they discover about themselves and their opportunities over time.

Creating Pathways to Success reflects the belief that when students are empowered to design and plan their own lives, they are engaged, they achieve, and they find themselves applying their learning to their daily lives. In an environment that encourages such learning, students develop confidence in knowing that their school programs are created with them in mind, that the world beyond school has something to offer them, and that they have something to offer the world.

A comprehensive education and career/life planning program has the potential to make students the architects of their lives.