

## Options and Opportunities (O<sub>2</sub>) Policy

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### 1. POLICY STATEMENT

Options and Opportunities, referred to informally as O<sub>2</sub>, is a program designed to help students work toward a career or occupation in learning contexts that respond to their learning needs and that provide linkages to the workplace and other post-secondary destinations. This policy is intended to define program components and requirements and to clarify responsibilities of all participants.

### 2. DEFINITIONS

**career academy**—A “school within a school” in which academic course work is integrated with career-related material with a particular focus.

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

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

**department**—Nova Scotia Department of Education.

**differentiated instruction**—Varying and adapting instructional approaches, strategies, and resources to meet an individual’s needs and abilities, thereby maximizing each student’s growth and success.

**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.

**individual program plan**—A program developed and implemented for a student for whom the public school program learning outcomes are not applicable or attainable.

**intake process**—The process by which students are selected for the Options and Opportunities program, including program promotion, identification of potential candidates, application, interview, selection, and orientation.

**learning agreement**—A document—completed by student, family, and teacher as agent for the school board—that outlines the responsibilities of each partner in a student’s Options and Opportunities program.

**Options and Opportunities cohort**—The student group designated to participate in the Options and Opportunities program.

**Options and Opportunities Lead Teacher**—The teacher in a school designated to be responsible for the coordination of the Options and Opportunities program.

**post-secondary options**—Students’ potential destinations after high school graduation, including apprenticeship, community college, military, private career college, university, or workplace.

**project-based learning**—A student-centred instructional approach built on authentic learning activities whereby students work alone or in groups on a project of substantial length and complexity.

**student**—Any student enrolled in any public school in grades 10 to 12.

### 3. **POLICY OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this policy are to

- define the program components that are necessary to help students work toward a career or occupation in learning contexts that respond to their needs and that provide linkages to the workplace and other post-secondary destinations
- outline program delivery in the areas of
  - student intake
  - scheduling
  - cohort size
  - support
- differentiate between the compulsory and optional criteria and procedures of the Options and Opportunities program
- define student requirements for completion of the Options and Opportunities program
- designate the roles and responsibilities of the Department of Education, school boards, schools, teachers, and students

#### 4. APPLICATION

This policy applies to all teachers, school administrators, and school board personnel responsible for the development and delivery of an Options and Opportunities program, and to all students enrolled in an Options and Opportunities program.

#### 5. POLICY DIRECTIVES

- An Options and Opportunities program shall include all of the following components:
  - community learning partnerships—partnerships that support the expansion of opportunities for community-based learning and the achievement of learning outcomes
  - integrated career education and planning—access to career education within credit courses
  - skills for the workplace—development of employability skills and workplace readiness
  - flexible design and delivery—focus on flexible course scheduling; for example, career academies
  - instructional teaming—targeted staffing and professional development to facilitate delivery of Options and Opportunities programs
  - expanded course options—provision of a range of career-oriented courses
  - head start in a career—opportunities to access career-related experiences and further career education
  - connecting with families—provision of opportunities for family support for Options and Opportunities students
- Entry to the Options and Opportunities program is available only at the grade 10 level. Students will not be permitted entry to an Options and Opportunities cohort after their grade 10 year.
- Schools are expected to establish a yearly grade 10 cohort of 20 students.
- School boards shall provide professional development for Options and Opportunities teachers as required.
- Options and Opportunities designated schools shall
  - adhere to the processes and procedures described in Department of Education documents related to Options and Opportunities and Community-Based Learning (see References)
  - incorporate differentiated instruction, experiential and project-based learning, and a career and employability orientation into the delivery of all courses for Options and Opportunities students
  - interview and select students to establish a grade 10 cohort by using the criteria and intake process provided by the department
  - support the development of LifeWork Portfolios as described in *LifeWork Portfolio: A Teaching Resource* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2008)

- designate an Options and Opportunities lead teacher and provide as part of his or her teaching assignment a scheduled block each semester, with time equivalent to a course assignment, to fulfill the lead teacher responsibilities
- establish an Options and Opportunities team and ensure that all staff working with Options and Opportunities students meet regularly
- ensure that a range of career-related courses is offered
- establish dedicated sections of Career Development 10, Career Development 11, Community-Based Learning 10, and Workplace Health and Safety 11 for Options and Opportunities students only
- provide a dedicated section of English 10, Français 10, and other courses, if required, for Options and Opportunities students only
- provide a minimum of four co-operative education courses, one of which may be Community-Based Learning 10, to each Options and Opportunities student
- ensure that current copies of the documents in the reference section of this policy are available in the school and are referenced where clarity and detail of this policy are required
- ensure that confidential documents acquired during the intake process are not made part of the student’s permanent record
- Staffing resources provided for the delivery of an Options and Opportunities program shall be deployed as outlined in *Options and Opportunities: A Resource for Schools* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2012).
- Students must achieve the outcomes stated in public school program curriculum documents in order to graduate with a Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma, although those outcomes may be arrived at through different learning experiences.
- Students shall be fully scheduled in each of grades 10, 11, and 12.
- Options and Opportunities Certificates of Achievement shall be awarded to graduating students enrolled in the Options and Opportunities program who
  - complete a minimum of four co-operative education courses, one of which may be Community-Based Learning 10
  - develop a LifeWork Portfolio
  - complete Career Development 10, Career Development 11, and Workplace Health and Safety 11

## 6. POLICY GUIDELINES

- Where possible, schools should assign more than one Options and Opportunities course to a teacher in order to promote the development of good student/teacher rapport.
- Schools should strive to provide students enrolled in Options and Opportunities with the greatest possible access to technological resources to facilitate their skill development and career exploration.

- The percentage of students on an individual program plan in Options and Opportunities sections or courses should be no greater than the percentage of students on individual program plans in the school.
- When required to take courses with students outside the Options and Opportunities cohort, Options and Opportunities students should be scheduled to attend as a group to provide support for one another.
- Schools should develop procedures to involve families in school events promoting Options and Opportunities programs and celebrating the successes of Options and Opportunities students.

## 7. **ACCOUNTABILITY**

The **Department of Education** is responsible for

- communicating the policy to each school board
- developing the objectives of the policy, in consultation with school boards
- developing and maintaining the documents supporting the Options and Opportunities program

**School boards** are responsible for

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

**Schools** are responsible for

- following the directives and guidelines of the policy in the implementation of the Options and Opportunities program

**Teachers** are responsible for

- attending to the eight components of the Options and Opportunities program
- fulfilling roles and responsibilities as outlined in the directives and guidelines of this policy
- ensuring that the co-operative education credits are in compliance with the Community-Based Learning Policy

**Students** are responsible for

- fulfilling the terms of their Learning Agreement, and acknowledging that not doing so will affect their continued participation in the Options and Opportunities program

## 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 Youth Pathways and Transitions, shall monitor this policy, working with the 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. 2012. *Community-Based Learning: A Resource for Schools*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia Department of Education. 2012. *Co-operative Education: The Community Is Your Classroom: A Resource for Schools*. 2012. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia Department of Education. 2012. *Options and Opportunities: A Resource for Schools*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia Department of Education. 2008. *LifeWork Portfolio: A Teaching Resource*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia.

**Enquiries:** For further information regarding this policy or to obtain reference documents, contact the Coordinator of Youth Pathways and Transitions, English Program Services, Department of Education, at (902) 424-7123.