



ONTARIO PUBLIC
SCHOOL BOARDS'
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR SKILLED TRADES AND APPRENTICESHIPS

The program/strategy/initiative must have been in operation for a minimum of one year

School Board: Toronto District School Board

Contact Person and Email Address: Ron Felsen, Centrally Assigned Principal: ron.felsen@tdsb.on.ca

Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy: STEP to Construction (Specialized Trades Exploration Program)

Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:

<https://www.tdsb.on.ca/About-Us/Innovation/TrendingAtTDSB/trendingAtTdsb-Article10-STEP>

http://oyaptdsb.com/UploadedFiles/files/STEP%20Brochure2_Jan_23_2018.pdf

Description of Program/Initiative/Strategy

STEP to Construction (Specialized Trades Exploration Program) is an immersive, semester-long, co-operative education program during which students work with one of Ontario's largest developers/builders/general contractors to explore multiple construction trade career options. Students spend one to two weeks with every trade on a site with the ambition of finding that trade that fits them. The program is delivered centrally through the TDSB, based out of Northview Heights SS and is led by two teachers. STEP is open to all TDSB students and is a powerful way to make education more equitable, particularly for students who may not click with the traditional academic path. Nearly 1/3 of TDSB secondary schools were represented in the program this year. Many partnerships exist and make STEP unique, including those with Ontario's largest developers (Tridel/Deltera, Mattamy, Daniels, TMG, Minto, Tucker, Skygrid, Menkes, AspenRidge Homes, Accel, Greenpark, Accel, LASH), seven of Ontario's largest construction trade unions (LiUNA Locals 183 and 506, Sheet Metal Local 285, IBEW Local 353, Carpenters and Allied Trades Local 27, Plumbing Local 46, and Hydro One/Power Workers Union), corporate sponsors Stanley/Black & Decker tools, Work Authority, and organizations such as George Brown College and Toronto Community Housing.

Success indicators include: more than 500 alumni over 14 years, 75% of most recent graduated class entering Apprenticeship pathway through OYAP and/or direct employment with a trade-based employer met through STEP (of the remaining 25%, many students returned to school to pursue their Grade 11/12 courses with the objective of graduating and pursuing an apprenticeship); numerous students who choose to pursue an apprenticeship with little or no previous Technological education; STEP program doubling in size in 2018.

What has been the impact on Student Learning Student Retention and Pathway Decision Making?

STEP is a powerful way for students to connect with an exciting career path. For most students, STEP is a driver of academic reengagement (as seen through punctuality, attendance, academic evaluations and the pursuit of a post-secondary education), a hopeful vision for the future of both themselves and their families, and a powerful sense

of belonging and importance in society. Many students who previously were not arriving at school for a typical 8:45 am start are consistently at work on their high-rise site daily by 6:45 am; speaking to an excitement and dedication to education not previously seen before enrolling in the STEP program.

In a quotation from a 2019 alumnus, Max Saraikine, now employed full-time as a first-year Plumbing apprentice: “Before STEP, learning was a task I wasn’t ready to commit to, but when I was introduced to the hands-on option of school through STEP, everything changed...Programs like STEP are important because of all the students that were like me that learn easier working hands-on...STEP gave me a reason to show up to class early, listen and to strive for greatness. This led to me getting great marks and succeeding on my way to the next step of life”.

The STEP model has proven successful for current senior-level students, early leavers, and also for recent graduates who are keen to enter an apprenticeship, but who previously lacked the interest or experience to confidently enter into a multi-year apprenticeship pathway.