



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: Simcoe County District School Board

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Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy: Simcoe Muskoka Skilled Trades Expo

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

Description of Program/Initiative/Strategy

The Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) is committed to promoting the skilled trades as a viable post-secondary pathway. In fact, the SCDSB piloted what is now known provincially as the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP). Over the past five years, the SCDSB has made significant financial investments in our technology classrooms and teacher training to ensure we have a robust, accessible and engaging technology program that encourages students to pursue careers in the trades.

The SCDSB believes in exposing students to the trades early and often by providing hands-on learning opportunities. Through OYAP, the SCDSB has developed multiple partnerships with industry and community organizations to gain insight into local labour market demands and employment trends. In Simcoe County, large employers report that they are turning down contracts because of the lack of human capital. While short-term measures are underway, the need for a longer-term community approach was recognized. Working collaboratively with the Economic Development division with the County of Simcoe, Georgian College, the Workforce Development Board and municipalities, the community committed to hosting a large-scale Skilled Trades Expo for Grade 8 students.

Where: The Simcoe Muskoka Skilled Trades Expo is held at an arena in a central location in Simcoe County.

Who is responsible: The Simcoe Muskoka Skilled Trades Expo committee, made up of multiple partners, is responsible for planning, executing and monitoring the success of the expo.

Target: 3,000 Grade 8 students from Simcoe County and Muskoka. This target group was intentionally selected in hopes that exposure to the trades through attendance at the expo would lead to the selection of technology courses and cooperative education in high school.

Community partnerships: The success of the event is attributed to the strong partnerships established with community organizations and local industry employers. The expo committee depends on the industry partners to provide highly engaging, hands-on workshops to ensure

student participation and learning. Local employers representing over 30 skilled trade occupations participate in the expo and run workshops on everything from painting, equipment operation and electrical installation to landscaping, hairstyling, cooking, baking and horse grooming.

Staffing and budget implications: The OYAP Coordinator takes the lead in planning the event for the SCDSB. County of Simcoe Economic Development Officers, college faculty and Workforce Development staff meet bi-weekly to support planning, employer recruitment, marketing and financial accounting. Each of the partners contribute financially to the event. OYAP contributes significantly to the overall cost and provides student transportation. Finances are managed by the Workforce Development Board.

Success indicators: Now in its fifth year, an indicator of success has been identified by the continuous growth of the event, combined with student/teacher and industry employer feedback. Industry employers recognize the need to expose students early, and feel their investment is important in assisting students with career decision making. Students and teachers report that they are better informed of the career opportunities in the trades and the courses to take in high school in order to gain additional exposure. The event has also gained provincial, national and international awards - including recognition by the International Economic Development Council's Excellence in Economic Development Awards in their Special Events category.

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

As a long-term strategy, the Simcoe Muskoka Skilled Trades Expo is intended to increase the number of students who pursue a career in the trades. With that objective in mind, the expo is intended to:

- 1: engage students in learning about opportunities in the trades;
- 2: inform students and teachers about pathway options and courses/programs available in high school (Co-op, OYAP, technology courses and SHSM); and,
- 3: promote the trades as a viable post-secondary career option.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that students who participate in this and other experiential learning opportunities are more likely to select courses that further their exposure to the trades.