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Experiential Learning
**April 4, 2018**

Ontario

Purpose

This deck:

- explains the relationships between experiential learning and key ministry policies and initiatives.

- provides a definition of experiential learning;

- explains the key drivers of experiential learning for children, youth and adult learners; and,

- explains the contributions made by various stakeholders to the design, delivery and evaluation of experiential learning activities.
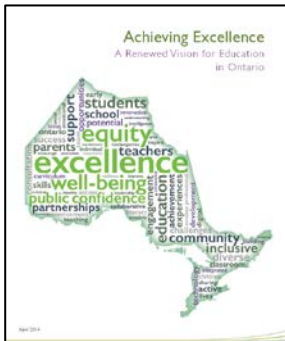
Mission Statement

Ontario is committed to the success and well-being of every student and child. Learners in the province's education system will develop the knowledge, skills and characteristics that will lead them to become personally successful, economically productive and actively engaged citizens.
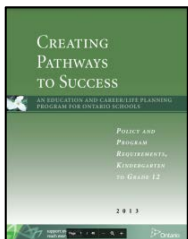
CREATING PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS
Career Development for the 21st Century

When schools deliver comprehensive education and career/life planning programs, students leave secondary school with:
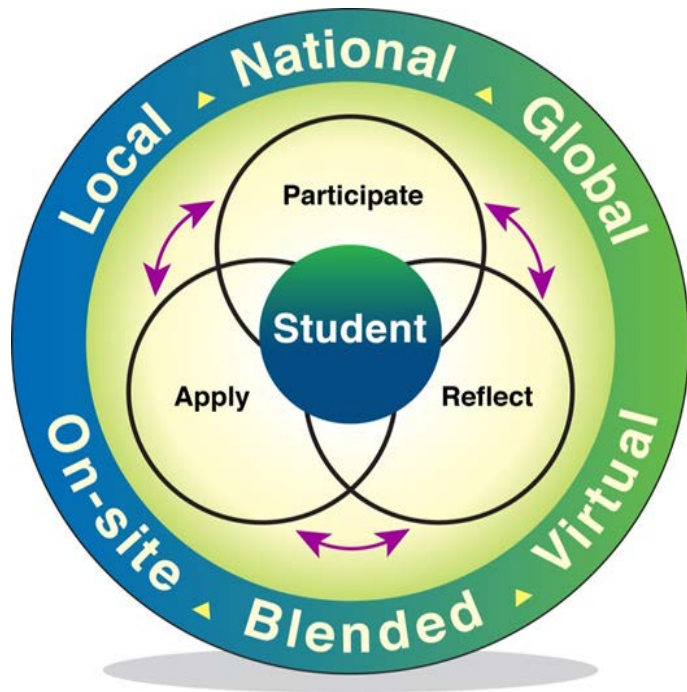
- a clear plan for their initial postsecondary destination,

- confidence in their ability to implement and revise their plans throughout their lives,

- a positive sense of self/spirit, and

- hope for a promising future.
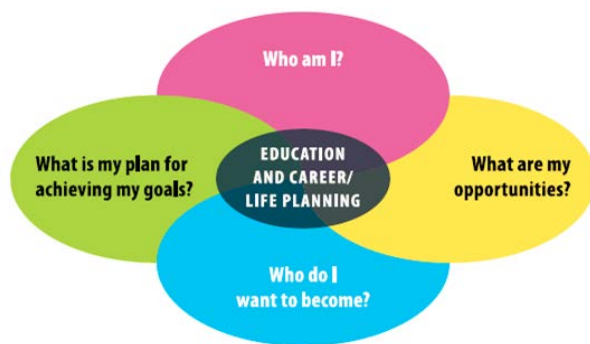
"Experiential learning is particularly helpful in developing self-knowledge and awareness of opportunities – two areas of learning in the education and career/life planning framework – which are critical steps that precede setting goals and making plans."

Creating Pathways to Success, p. 30

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Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is an inquiry-based, pedagogical approach that provides opportunities for students to co-construct their learning by:

- **participating** in rich experiences connected to a community outside of school;

- **reflecting** on those experiences to derive meaning; and then,

- **applying** their learning to influence their decisions and actions in various aspects of their lives.
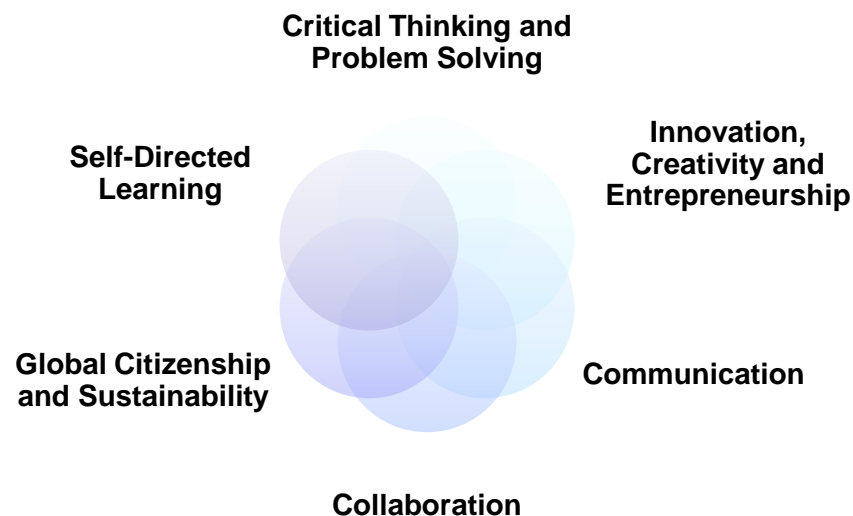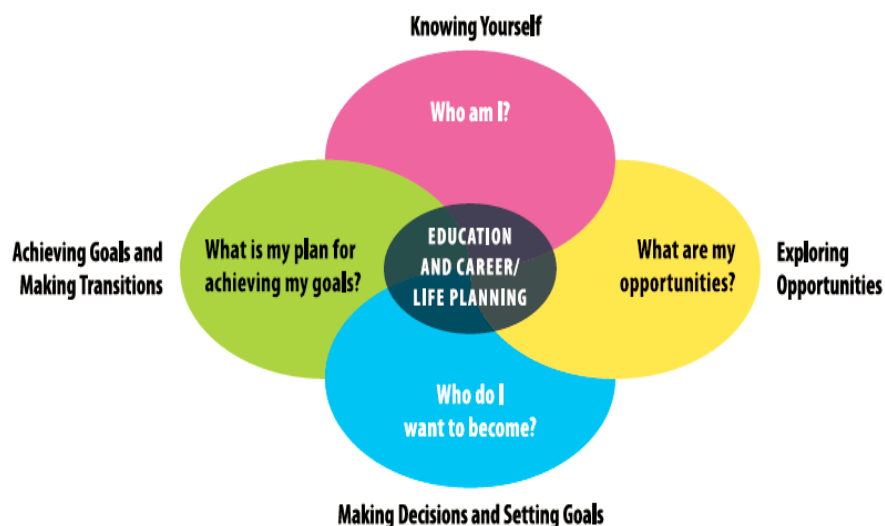
The experience can involve local, national, or global communities and:

- being physically present (an *on-site* experience);
- being present through the use of digital tools and technologies (a *virtual* experience); or,
- a combination of the two (a *blended* experience).

The Experiential Learning Cycle

At its core, experiential learning is a student-centered, inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning that helps students develop the habits of reflecting, questioning, wondering and deliberating to inform action.

Knowing Yourself

Who am I?

Achieving Goals and Making Transitions

What is my plan for achieving my goals?

EDUCATION AND CAREER/ LIFE PLANNING

What are my opportunities?

Exploring Opportunities

Who do I want to become?

Making Decisions and Setting Goals

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Self-Directed Learning

Innovation, Creativity and Entrepreneurship

Global Citizenship and Sustainability

Communication

Collaboration

Sample Foci/Themes

- **Arts & Culture**
  - Indigenous Cultures
  - Performing & Fine Arts
  - Heritage & Faith-Based

- **Civic Engagement**
  - Service Learning
  - Activist Education

- **Inquiry**
  - Problem-Based Learning
  - Project-Based Learning

- **Nature & the Environment**
  - Outdoor Education

- **Transitions / Pathways**
  - Reach Ahead Activities

Common Forms of Experiential Learning Activities:

- Clinic
- Conference
- Field Trip
- Field Study
- Mentorship
- Overnight Excursion
- Workshop

Common Forms of Experiential Learning with a Pathways Focus in Grades 9-12:

- Job Shadowing / Job Twinning
- Work Experience
- Cooperative Education
- Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program
- Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM)
- School-Work Transition Program

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Civic engagement refers to individual or collective action that is designed to make a difference in the life of one's community. This includes:

Service Learning: Service learning is designed to improve the quality of life of individuals and contribute to the building of dynamic and healthy communities. Students identify an authentic need and work with members of the community to develop their understanding and address that need. Students may develop a product, design a process, or provide a service in response to the identified need.

Activist Learning: Activist education brings to life ideas regarding power, fairness, democracy, and hope. It is an approach to learning that explores these concepts to help students identify, name and address root causes. In this way, they see themselves as agents of transformational change. When framed around activism, experiential learning helps students develop into active citizens capable of affecting change for social and ecological justice.

INQUIRY

Inquiry-based learning is an approach to teaching and learning that places students' questions, ideas and observations at the centre of the learning experience.

Project-Based: Project-based learning focuses on designing and/or creating a tangible product - such as developing a physical, digital, or conceptual prototype - that provides a solution to a real-world problem or societal need.

Problem-Based: Problem-based learning focuses on solving real-life problems and acquiring knowledge and skills. Students consider the context and/or the situation in which the problem exists to propose solutions.
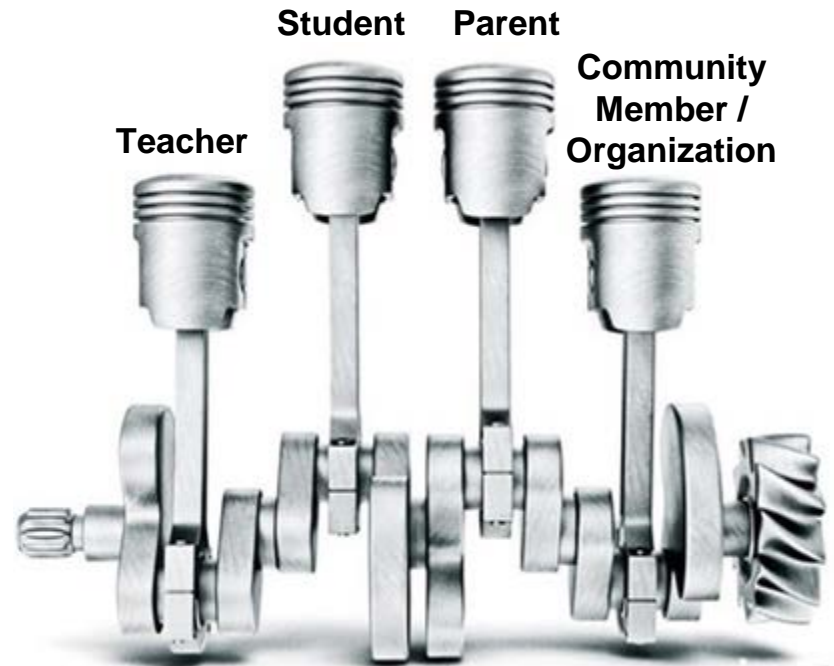
Key Drivers of Experiential Learning

When children, youth and adult learners are provided with opportunities to participate in experiential learning - *early and often* - they develop:

- a deeper understanding of expectations from the Ontario curriculum and the Kindergarten Program;

- each of the global competencies and an appreciation of their interconnectedness; and,

- the skills, knowledge and habits of mind to become competent and confident education and career/life planners;

- a positive sense of self and spirit as reflected in a sense of personal identity, belonging, self-worth and hope for a promising future.

A Shared Responsibility

All stakeholders have an important role to play in the design, delivery and evaluation of safe and effective experiential learning activities.

Student   **Parent**

Community Member / Organization

Teacher

Student Engagement to Support the Design and Delivery of Experiential Learning Activities
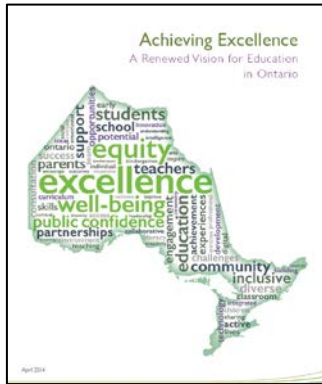
Achieving Excellence speaks to the need to help students develop the skills, knowledge and habits of mind to reach their full potential, regardless of their individual circumstances, by providing "more flexibility and ownership" in their learning. (p.6)

When students are actively involved in the design, planning and evaluation of their learning experiences, they:

- identify with the learning;
- develop a sense of belonging to a community;
- have a sense of ownership for their learning; and
- experience enhanced well-being.

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Student Engagement to Support the Design and Delivery of Experiential Learning Activities

When students collaborate with their peers, teachers and community members to co-construct experiential learning opportunities:

- students' questions, ideas and observations are at the centre of the learning experience;

- planning is more likely to take the whole student into account, recognizing that, for every student, success is influenced by many factors (e.g., cognitive, emotional, social, physical);

- potential barriers to full participation and active engagement are more likely to be identified and addressed;

- the learning experience is more authentic, dynamic and relevant to student's educational and life needs;

- the learning is more likely to be personalized, differentiated, age - and developmentally- appropriate and respectful of differences; and,

- the ability to move beyond the transmission of information to focus on helping students grow and reach their potential is greater.

Community Members / Organizations ...

- help educators identify opportunities, contexts and issues that are authentic, relevant, current/future, and engaging.

- suggest areas of focus (i.e., challenges and opportunities) that may include general themes or specific issues that may be economic, social, health or environmental in nature.

- provide insights and suggestions on opportunities to:

  - personalize the experience to reflect the full range of students' interests, needs and aspirations; and,

  - provide welcoming and inclusive environments for students who might require additional supports.

- play a key role in identifying and addressing potential health, safety and well-being concerns.

Collaboration with community members ensures that experiences are engaging, healthy, safe, culturally-responsive and age- and developmentally appropriate.

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QUESTIONS?   COMMENTS?   CONCERNS?