

Preparing Students in the WOTP for a Successful Work Placement Experience

The following guidelines were developed by Teachers and Technicians in the WOTP at the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board as part of PDIG Project 4203: Effective Support for WOTP Students with Language Disorders. However, the suggestions below will be helpful for all students in the WOTP, whether or not they have a diagnosed speech or language disorder.

It is vital to begin teaching students the conversational skills and specific vocabulary they will require to be successful in the workplace before they begin a work placement. Several WOTP courses are designed to help develop these skills: English Language Arts; Introduction to the World of Work; Preparation for the Job Market; and Autonomy and Social Participation. However, the French Second Language course is the best place to start to support students' successful integration into the workplace in Québec. As a consequence, the FSL teacher should be included as a key member of the WOTP teaching team.

The student's individual training plan developed in cooperation with the student, by using the Directory of Semiskilled Trades (<http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sections/metiers>), will be a necessary reference document. A copy should be provided to all WOTP teachers, work placement technicians /support workers, and parents.

Before the Work Placement Begins:

- Identify and teach vocabulary specific to the students' work environment
- Familiarize students with phrases or instructions common to their work environment
- Teach active listening skills, including how to repeat back instructions for specific tasks
- Practice the appropriate tone of voice to use in the work place with supervisors and co-workers
- Role play potentially challenging situations, for example: how to ask the work supervisor to repeat an instruction, provide a demonstration of a task or the correct use of a piece of equipment, or express concern about the safety of a task
- Practice conversations on neutral topics that are appropriate to discuss on a break, such as sports scores or hobbies.
- View videos of workers on the job: e.g. www.videojug.com
- Teach students stress reduction strategies and anger management strategies
- Prepare students to work safely:
 - CSST videos and activities designed for youth: <http://www.csst.qc.ca/jeunes>
 - Book a visit from *Escouade jeunesse*: <http://www.csst.qc.ca/jeunes/escouade>
 - Have students create projects for the *Défi prévention jeunesse et Sécurité Premier emploi* : <http://www.csst.qc.ca/jeunes/prevention>
 - Use the MELS Safety LES and "fiches" which are matched with specific Semiskilled Trades: <https://www4.mels.gouv.qc.ca/sst/admin/>
 - Username: FormationSST
 - Password: Fé3@lo1

- <http://www.livesafeworksmart.net/> contains free bilingual workplace safety lessons designed for students with special needs.

When Selecting/Beginning the Work Placement

- Ensure a “good fit” between the student and the work placement. Is this an appropriate and welcoming environment for a young worker? Will the student receive adequate supervision and support?
- Discuss the details of the student’s training plan with the workplace supervisor and ensure that expectations are clear for everyone: manager, immediate supervisor and student.
- Ensure that the student receives a thorough introduction to the work environment and is familiar with specific safety equipment and potential safety issues.
- Identify a specific “buddy” or “mentor” for the student at the work site, who the student can approach freely for advice or explanations during the first few weeks.
- Allow the student time to observe complex tasks in the workplace before asking him/her to perform them.
- Consider using all or part of the CSST brochure *Former et superviser les jeunes et les nouveaux travailleurs, c’est payant!* with your employers:
http://www.csst.qc.ca/publications/200/Documents/DC200_989web.pdf
- Visit the student often during the first weeks of the placement. Anticipate potential problems before they arise, and assist the student and supervisor with communication issues and problem solving as needed. Continue to bring vocabulary or communication issues back to the classroom for additional instruction and support.
- Above all, encourage the student!

During the Work Placement:

- Schedule a regular in-class discussion time for students to share their workplace successes and challenges. Students will learn through listening to others, brainstorming solutions and reflecting upon their own experiences.
- Actively track students’ progress towards mastering specific competencies on the training plan. Adjust the training plan and the stage location as needed. Celebrate successes together! For example, build a “Wall of Fame” with photos of students in action at work.
- At the end of the work placement, ensure that students write a formal thank-you letter to the employer, and that the School or School Board recognizes the contribution of the employer as well.