



# **It's Their Future: A Pan-Canadian Study of Career Education**

**Executive Summary**

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## **Executive Summary**

In November 2012, The Learning Partnership hosted the *Summit on the Future of Education in Canada* with education and business leaders as well as senior government officials. While summit attendees were left with the impression that Canada has one of the world's best education systems, there was consensus that Canadian society is changing rapidly while at the same time Canadian educators are being asked to do more with less. Business leaders expressed concerns over Canada's looming "skills and labour shortage" and all participants agreed that Canadian students faced unprecedented challenges due to rapidly evolving technologies and ongoing shifts in Canada's economy and demography. Consequently, Summit attendees expressed an interest in understanding more about how Canadian schools prepare students for the world of work.

Canadian schools have always played a vital role in ensuring students have the skills, knowledge and competencies they will need throughout their working lives. For the past several decades, the focus has been on raising post-secondary educational attainment, an admirable and necessary goal in light of our increasingly complex society. Yet due to Canadian society's many challenges, this direction may no longer be sufficient.

Increasingly at the forefront of this dialogue about Canada's future is a vigorous debate about whether the skills our children need are being developed. Canadian students face an uncertain future that is radically different from the world their parents and educators were raised in.

Canadian educators are aware of the issues that Canadian students face and they are always at the forefront of finding better and more innovative ways of improving students' learning. However, there has been little national analysis of education policy relating to the full range of career education and workforce preparation programs (including career education courses, experiential learning, and technical training programs) in Canada's education systems.

As a result, there are two significant questions that this paper will raise:

- 1) What are the approaches to career education and technical training programs across Canada?**
- 2) What are the policy changes that would improve the effectiveness of career education and students' ability to plan for their future careers, and thereby awareness of education pathways?**

The Learning Partnership has undertaken a national scan of curriculum and a limited scan of policy initiatives focusing on school-to-work transitions. This paper presents the various approaches to developing the workforce preparedness of Canadian students through Canadian public schools. While not necessarily comprehensive, we believe that this paper clearly outlines how the Canadian education system seeks to prepare students for the world of work.

Our research has led us to several conclusions:

- *There is some outstanding and innovative work taking place in pockets of the***

*country, and there is tremendous benefit to sharing successful practices across provincial boundaries.*

- *Students face significant challenges as they plan their transitions to the world of work and their education pathways.*
- *There is no consistent Canadian approach to educating students about their future careers.*
- *Educators may be undertrained and under resourced in the area of career education.*

As a result, The Learning Partnership has formulated a series of recommendations that may prove helpful in developing new approaches in supporting school-to-work transitions, as well as approaches to career exploration and development in Canadian secondary schools:

**Recommendation #1:** Strengthen school and business/community partnerships.

**Recommendation #2:** Federal and provincial/territorial governments should consider a more consistent and robust approach to tracking students through the public education system, including through post-secondary education, and into their careers.

**Recommendation #3:** Increase opportunities for students to engage in experiential learning – including job tasting, job shadowing, and career exploration – outside the classroom and the school year.

**Recommendation #4:** Canada needs to strengthen and increase the number of career education opportunities available to parents. Parents have a tremendous influence on the educational and career decisions of their children. They play a key role in student choice, so it is important that they are well informed to assist their children in making good decisions.

**Recommendation #5:** More attention must be given to career education programs in faculties of education, pre-service teacher training, and in professional development opportunities for current teachers. They are a key source of information for students, yet they are not properly trained or resourced to provide current information.

Preparing students for work and careers is not the sole responsibility of public education. However, preparation for the workforce is an important outcome of education; career planning and workforce preparedness are vital life-skills that give students the ability to thrive and succeed. In recent years there has been a great deal of discussion about the types of skills students will need, the labour market for Canadian youth, and if Canadian workers currently possess those skills. As a result, we must be able to properly educate our students to enable them to take pathways that lead to meaningful careers. The Learning Partnership believes that there has not been sufficient analysis of the wide variety of Canadian approaches to career education in Canadian public school systems – this paper is an initial attempt to fill the knowledge gaps in that area.

It is our opinion that this paper presents a compelling argument for a more consistent national approach to workforce preparation; any successful strategy to help our youth must involve the Canadian public education system.

## About The Learning Partnership

The Learning Partnership is a national, charitable organization (*Charitable Registration Number 140756107RR0001*) founded in 1993 to support, promote and advance public education in Canada. We do this by bringing together business, government, school boards, schools, teachers, parents, labour, and community organizations across Canada in collaborative partnerships. Through these partnerships, we deliver innovative programs for students, executive leadership opportunities for educators, and policy initiatives and knowledge exchange to engage the all Canadians. The Learning Partnership also regularly recognizes those individuals who are making a significant difference in the lives of our young people and to publicly funded education in Canada.

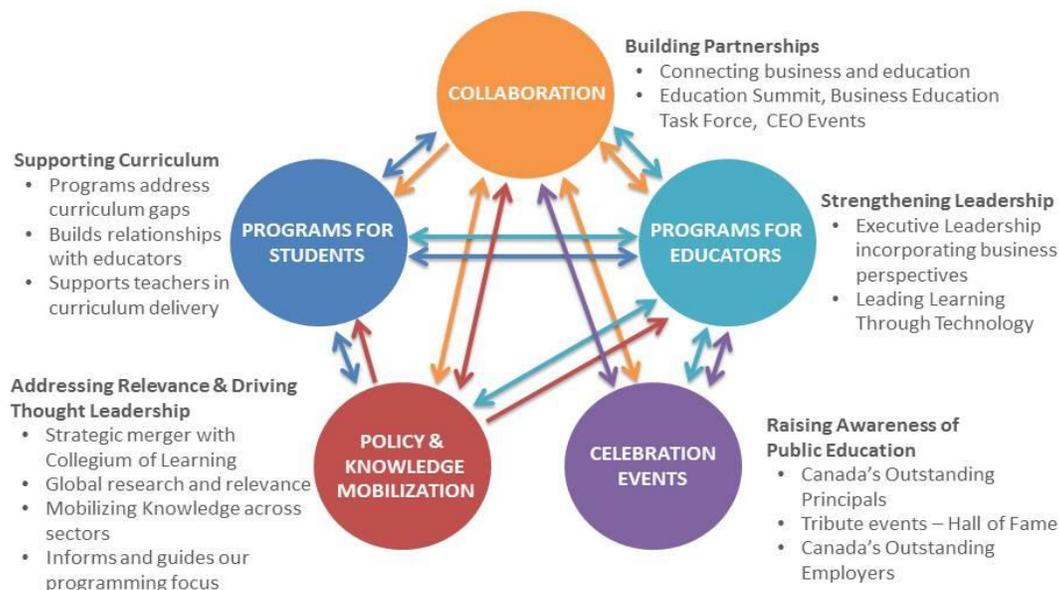
## Our Vision

We believe in a strong, dynamic public education system valued by all Canadians and one that is recognized as the cornerstone of a civil and prosperous society.

## Our Mission

We collaborate with business and other stakeholders to support, promote and advance public education in Canada. We are committed to five key deliverables - innovative student programs, policy and knowledge mobilization, executive leadership for educators, tribute celebrations of excellence and ongoing collaborations across Canada.

### The Learning Partnership Model



## **Our Programs and Initiatives**

The scope of our work, influence and operations is nationwide - our work touches every province and territory in Canada.

Innovative programs and initiatives are the driving force behind the work of The Learning Partnership. We focus on **FIVE** key areas:

1. **Student Programs** - To ensure that students develop healthy attitudes, relevant skills and are empowered to compete successfully in a complex global economy and drive Canada's continued competitive edge.
2. **Educator Programs and Executive Leadership** - To strengthen leadership for principals and senior education officials because great leaders create great schools.
3. **Knowledge Mobilization** - To connect ideas and credible research with stakeholders in education, business and the community by moving knowledge across provincial boundaries and shining light on successful practices in education.
4. **Collaborations** - To build meaningful partnerships with business, industry, education and community stakeholders, so together we can drive thought leadership and make things happen.
5. **Tributes and Celebration Events** - To recognize leaders for their outstanding contributions to advancing publicly funded education in Canada, and together celebrate the success of our students and teachers.

### **Programs for Students:**

The focus of our student programs is to provide hands-on, experiential learning opportunities that are integrated with school curricula across the country. They allow teachers to offer enriched learning experiences in the classroom to enhance the academic achievement of students.

These programs are:

- **Entrepreneurial Adventure**: Teaches essential 21st century skills: communication, collaboration, creative problem solving and critical thinking. The program also helps develop basic business skills and the importance of social responsibility.
- **I<sup>3</sup> - Invent! Investigate! Innovate!**<sup>™</sup>: Helps to instill a passion for science, mathematics and technology.
- **Take Our Kids to Work**<sup>™</sup>: A national program that helps students explore career options and begin planning their future career by staying in school.
- **Turning Points**: A character development and literacy program that challenges students to think about their fundamental values.
- **Welcome to Kindergarten**<sup>™</sup>: Prepares preschoolers for a positive start to their school journey.

### **Programs for Educators:**

Transformative leadership is critical for organizational success in our competitive and complex global economy. We believe that great leaders can also transform our publicly

funded education system. To aid in the professional development of educational leaders, we offer distinct and unique executive leadership programs. Executive leadership programs are delivered in partnership with leading business schools - all other professional development opportunities for leaders in education are delivered from a pedagogical and instructional perspective.

These programs are:

### CEO Level

- **Ontario Directors of Education**: Develops the knowledge, practical skills and strategies required for successful education system leadership.

### Middle Management Level

- **Ontario Supervisory Officer Executive Program on Leadership and Management**: Focuses on leadership development and management issues common to all supervisory officers.

### Principal Level

- **Canada's Outstanding Principals™**: The only leadership training program in Canada specially designed to enhance the skills of senior educators.
- **National Academy of Canada's Outstanding Principals**: Provides outstanding principals mentoring and professional development so they can continue to enhance their leadership skills.

### Teachers and Managers

- **Leading Learning Through Technology**: Allows educators to discuss technology issues and share solutions with other sectors and industries.

The Middle Management and Principal Level programs are offered in partnership with the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, while the CEO Level program is offered in partnership with the Ivey Business School at Western University.





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