

Life  
After  
School

Canadian  
Business  
**SenseAbility**

**Educator Toolkit**  
High School



## About Canadian Business SenseAbility

Canadian Business SenseAbility is Canada's only national, bilingual business network dedicated to helping private and public sector organizations become more accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities. We connect employers to the resources, tools and expertise needed to welcome people with disabilities as customers, employees and investors.

## Why this program is important

Life After School is a program created to meet the needs of employers who understand the value of, and are seeking a pathway to hire youth with a disability. Life After School is a customized platform and experiential work pilot where students demonstrate that they have the skills needed to perform a job. Every student who successfully completes the badges required for a position is given an interview. Students with a disability, who often face additional barriers when looking for their first job, now have access to employers seeking diverse talent.

“

You don't learn to walk by following rules. You learn by doing, and by falling over.”

---

Richard Branson

# Contents

- |           |   |           |   |
|-----------|---|-----------|---|
| <b>4</b>  | <b>Why Life After School works for students... and schools</b>  | <b>11</b> | <b>Communicating with parents</b>             |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>Who's involved?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Canadian Business SenseAbility™</li><li>- Abilities Centre</li><li>- Employers</li><li>- High schools and students</li><li>- The Life After School portal</li></ul>              | <b>12</b> | <b>Life After School responsibility chart</b> |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>Life After School's components</b>   | <b>14</b> | <b>Questions?</b>                             |
| <b>7</b>  | <b>The student journey</b>  | <b>15</b> | <b>Thank you to our Advisory Committee</b>    |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Life After School a roadmap for schools</b>  |           |   |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Workplace must-have skills</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Being organized</li><li>- Managing your time</li><li>- Getting along with people</li><li>- Following rules and being safe</li><li>- Showing your enthusiasm</li></ul> |           |   |



# Why Life After School works for students... and schools

Never has the job of schools been more challenging. We live in an era of unprecedented change and technological innovation. Lifelong learning and adrenalized adaptability are constants in this turbocharged environment. How then to prepare today's students to be tomorrow's creators, producers and citizens?

Part of the answer is experiential learning. Experiential learning (EL) has been called the "future of learning" for good reason. By embracing EL, schools are giving students a head start in applying their education to the workplace, enabling them to accelerate their learning. Students have the opportunity to practice skills like communication, analysis and problem-solving in the 'real' world. They have a chance to gain experience to add to a résumé and start building a network for future job searches.

Research shows that the simplicity of the experiential learning cycle makes it appropriate for students of all ages and abilities. By simply adjusting the complexity, focus, and depth of the process it can be adapted to suit the developmental needs of all students.

Ryerson University's Best Practices in Experiential Learning paper has identified certain groups of students that have the most to gain from experiential learning. These groups include "minority" students who traditionally have not participated in internships or co-ops.

According to Statistics Canada, the employment rate of Canadians with disabilities is 49% compared to 79% for Canadians without a disability. In addition to the benefits of EL, the importance of early work experience, especially for students with disabilities, cannot be overstated. People with disabilities are still marginalized in employment.

The Life After School program has been designed to provide EL opportunities to students with disabilities. The Life After School partners - the Abilities Centre, Canadian Business SenseAbility, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Government of Ontario and a network of inclusive employers - are combining resources with schools to offer students with disabilities, who often have greater difficulty securing a first work experience, high-quality EL experiences.

Life After School offers students a first step towards employment. By introducing this pilot to students with disabilities while still in high school, we hope to break down barriers and open doors to the world of work.

Thank you for participating in the Life After School pilot!

<sup>1</sup>Turcotte, Martin. Persons with disabilities and employment. Statistics Canada, 2015. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/75-006-x/2014001/article/14115-eng.htm>

# Who's involved?

Close to 1 in 5 Canadians have a disability. They are customers, employees, suppliers and investors and make up a population segment much too large to ignore. People with disabilities are a great source of talent, but face barriers to employment. Life After School is designed to help address this gap.

## Who's involved?

### **Canadian Business SenseAbility™**

SenseAbility is Canada's only national, bilingual business network dedicated to helping private and public sector organizations become more accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities. SenseAbility will offer employers support for the program's duration.

### **Abilities Centre**

The Abilities Centre is an internationally renowned, innovative community hub where people of all ages and abilities enrich their lives by engaging in social, health and cultural programs. The Abilities Centre offers a pioneering Therapeutic Recreation training, working with the students and high schools, to teach students the skills needed to be resourceful and resilient in a work environment.

### **Employers**

Participating employers are dedicated to hiring a diverse workforce. Some already employ people with disabilities in their organizations. They are interested in accessing the next generation of workers.

They are also interested in developing the competencies of their managers and employees in working with diverse candidates. The pilot offers employers the opportunity to address these goals.

### **High schools and students**

This is you. Your participation is vital. We look to your expertise in developing and delivering this pilot. The high schools and students participating in this pilot come from Durham, London, Ottawa and Toronto. The program will be delivered through your Special Education high school classes.

SenseAbility understands the importance and the role of families in any endeavour involving students. We want to engage families and have literature on the program for them. We are also prepared to provide workshops or an information evening if participating schools deem that necessary.

### **The Life After School portal**

The portal is a customized online platform that matches students' abilities to the needs of employers. It is a striking departure from the 'résumé-first' and experience-based approaches currently used. It incorporates job descriptions based on actual outputs and skills challenges (also called badges) and provides students with visual career pathways so they can see how an entry-level job leads to a career.

# Life After School's components

## Therapeutic Recreation (TR)

- TR and/or high school staff deliver training to students
- Students learn to build self-confidence and resilience

## Employer

- Identifies EL opportunities with their company
- Posts EL opportunities on Life After School portal
- Assess students' applications based on skill matches
- Invite matching candidates for interviews

## Life After School

- Job postings identify skills matches, not experience or education
- Students complete badges and apply for jobs
- All students receive an interview if they complete badge sets

## Training

- Senseability trains employers in disability confidence
- TR and/or high school staff support the employer during student onboarding and training

## Support

- TR and high schools offer on-the-job support to students if needed
- SenseAbility offers employers support as needed

## Experiential Learning (EL)

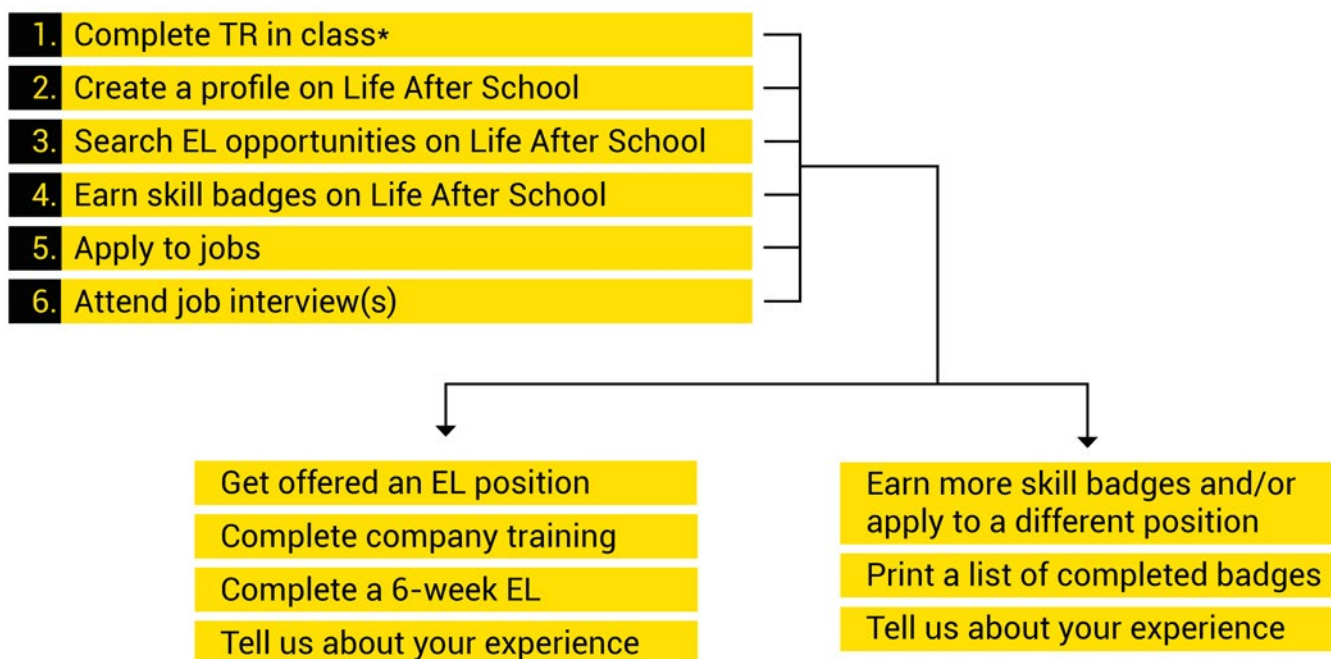
- Students acquire work skills and work experience over 6 weeks
- Students report on their experience in class
- Pilot is evaluated by all parties

In Canada the employment rate is 79%, for people with disability the employment rate is 49%



# The student journey

Most people use a résumé to apply for jobs. Life After School is different. It matches students to entry-level experiential learning opportunities with companies that are looking for diverse candidates. No résumé is required. With Life After School, students simply demonstrate they have the skills to do the job. It's a simple process.



[Link to full description of the above flow chart.](#)

## Therapeutic Recreation (TR)

Students learn work-related skills through the Ability Centre's Therapeutic Recreation (TR) program. This program uses social recreation, fitness, arts, and life experience to build workplace resiliency skills (confidence, competence, character, coping, self-worth, etc.).

## Experiential learning (EL)

Students use the skills learned in TR, or their high school program, to earn skill badges. All students will be invited to a job interview(s) if they successfully complete the required badges. Students can also use skill badges to apply for other jobs or print out a copy of all the badges they have earned to add to their résumé.

As a teacher participating in this program, your role is:

- let families know about the program – you may want to book a SenseAbility parent information session
- encourage students to sign up on the portal
- answer questions regarding skill badges (but never complete the badge for the student)
- encourage students to apply to positions
- assist students with interview preparation
- attend interviews with students (if required)
- assist with student onboarding and employer training programs (during school hours) or assist the TR staff with student onboarding and employer training programs (outside of school hours)
- encourage school staff to book a SenseAbility's Rethinking Disability information session to learn more about employers and disability (we'll come to you)
- evaluate the pilot



## Life After School

### A roadmap for schools

**SenseAbility will work with all participating schools to ensure a successful EL. Here's how it works:**

#### **STEP 1 / Preparing for Life After School**

Ensure parental involvement in the Life After School pilot

- Send parents a copy of the parent section of the student toolkit (via link or hardcopy)
- Ask SenseAbility to conduct a Parent Information session, if needed
- Answer parents' questions as they arise

Students learn work-related skills needed to participate in Life After School

- Incorporate TR into school programming OR
- Focus on building work-related skills within existing curriculum
- Emphasize a connection between skills training and EL opportunities



## STEP 2 / The Life After School portal

- Assist students to register on the Life After School portal
- Facilitate students' skills challenges (earning of skill badges)
- Help students prepare for interviews, by answering questions and role-playing
- Prepare students to disclose needed accommodations during the interview
- Review students' interview experiences in class, facilitating group learning

## STEP 3 / Prepare students for EL

Coordinate interviews for the EL student (i.e., store number or department) through TR specialist or SenseAbility

If needed, communicate with employer about the new hire – strengths, need for accommodation(s), etc., a schedule for check-ins, questions and emergencies

## STEP 4 / The experiential learning placement

Most EL will have TR support both during and after school hours. We will respect your school and your union agreements. Establish the responsibilities of TR and/or staff prior to the EL for the following elements:

Assist with student onboarding

- Review the EL goals with the employer
- Participate in students' on-the-job training, if necessary

Provide job coaching and on-the-job support

Check in with student and employers during placement to review progress, successes and address ongoing issues

Provide in-class time for students to discuss work placements and "compare notes"

- Include students who didn't get hired by reviewing their experiences earning additional skill badges or applying to other jobs

Complete pilot evaluation



In the middle  
of difficulty lies  
opportunity."

Albert Einstein

# Workplace must-have skills

Employers have identified the skills candidates need in the workplace. Skill badges in the Life After School portal mirror these skill sets.

Students should be aware that they will likely need to “transfer” their skills to unfamiliar or unexpected situations. They should be prepared, and not be afraid, to make mistakes – this will be expected as they familiarize themselves with a new environment. Mistakes are a valuable learning tool, and students’ skills, adaptability and performance will improve with experience.

The following skills have been identified by employers as must-haves for successful employment:

## Being organized

- Know what to bring to work
- Arrange suitable and reliable transportation
- Identify and complete the steps in a task
- Plan ahead to complete all work assignments

## Managing your time

- Decide which tasks need to be done first
- Think ahead about how long a task will take to finish
- Finish tasks on time
- Inform supervisors of absences, late arrivals or trouble completing tasks

## Getting along with people

- Appropriate workplace behaviours
- Working well with others
- Conflict management
- Accepting feedback

90% of people with disabilities rated average or better on job performance



## Following rules and being safe

- Follow rules about using phones, computers, email, etc.
- Appropriate workplace attire, hygiene and etiquette
- Follow all safety rules

## Showing enthusiasm

- Be friendly and smile
- Volunteer for additional tasks if time is available
- Ask for advice about how to do things better
- Know when to seek support from a supervisor or TR specialist

# Communicating with parents

Parents have never been more involved in their children's education and development than they are today. This is even more true of parents of children with disabilities. By necessity, these parents are involved, committed and passionate. They have been life-long advocates for their children who are now adolescents, and soon-to-be young adults.

It is often challenging for these parents to see their children become more autonomous. The prospect of their child entering a workplace with adult expectations, on their own, is something entirely new for them. Understandably it will produce anxiety, perhaps greater for the parent than for the child.

SenseAbility is here to help schools prepare, communicate, and interact with parents of students with disabilities who are considering participating in the Life After School program. We have extensive experience working with employers to support people who have disabilities in the workplace. Our Life After School partner, the Abilities Centre, has pioneered programs and provided training and support for people with disabilities, run out of their state-of-the-art, internationally renowned community hub in Whitby, Ontario.

## Parent Information Event

If a school requests it, SenseAbility can lead a one-hour Parent Information Event to introduce the Life After School program to parents.

## Content will include:

- The importance of early work experience for students with disabilities, who often have great difficulty securing their first job
- Reviewing the pre-screened employer network offering EL positions
- Identifying the skills that youth with disabilities need for the world of work
- Reassurance that student health and safety is a top priority
- Ways in which they can have their questions answered and be involved

## Parents can offer support by:

- Reinforcing the skills their child learns at school by practising them at home
- Celebrating with their child as they earn skill badges
- Helping their child with reliable transportation\*
- Helping their child record their learning in a chart or journal

This program has been designed to help children acquire persistence, self-discipline and resilience, by taking a hands-off approach. And although this may take parents outside their comfort zone, it is a crucial step in their child's development.

\*Please note, we are endeavouring to ensure there are placement opportunities near the schools that have been identified as participating in the program. We recognize that transportation is often an issue for students with a disability.

# Life After School responsibility chart

	Preparing for EL	Applying to, and completing EL
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn work-related skills through TR or curriculum</li> <li>• Discuss pilot with parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Register on Life After School portal</li> <li>• Review job postings</li> <li>• Complete relevant skill badges</li> <li>• Apply for jobs</li> <li>• Be reliable and productive in the EL opportunity</li> </ul>
High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teach students the work-related skills needed to participate</li> <li>• Provide parents with pilot information</li> <li>• Host a Parent Information Event to discuss pilot (if needed)</li> <li>• Answer parents' questions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist students to register on the Life After School portal</li> <li>• Facilitate students' earning of skill badges</li> <li>• Prepare students for interviews</li> <li>• Coordinate interviews with the TR staff and/or SenseAbility</li> <li>• Prepare students to disclose during the interview</li> <li>• Review students' interview experiences in class</li> <li>• Forward EL paperwork to employers</li> </ul>
Parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read parent information</li> <li>• Attend Parent Information Event at child's school</li> <li>• Direct questions about program to school contact</li> <li>• Reinforce the skills the student is learning at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Celebrate skill badges with child</li> <li>• Assist student to identify reliable transportation</li> <li>• Discuss experiences with child</li> <li>• Support student's journaling</li> </ul>

	Preparing for EL	Applying to, and completing EL
Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify EL opportunities within organization</li> <li>• Share opportunities with SenseAbility and the Abilities Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Register on Life After School portal</li> <li>• Provide EL postings</li> <li>• Interview candidates</li> <li>• Complete the paperwork provided including a post program evaluation</li> <li>• Supervise the student EL</li> </ul>
Abilities Centre / TR Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct TR with students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support to students on interview preparation</li> <li>• Support students on skill badges testing</li> <li>• Support students on identifying accommodations</li> <li>• Assist students with interviews</li> <li>• Support students with training and onboarding</li> <li>• Support students during EL</li> </ul>
SenseAbility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oversee Life After School pilot</li> <li>• Recruit employers</li> <li>• If needed, provide information sessions to schools and/or parents</li> <li>• Develop skills badges and Life After School portal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upload employer job postings and match to skill badges</li> <li>• Pre-screen all job applicants</li> <li>• Forward candidates for each job to employer</li> <li>• Provide employers with support</li> <li>• Evaluate the program</li> </ul>

## Questions?

Giving students with a disability the opportunity of an EL experience is something we are all committed to. The success of the pilot depends on everyone reaching out with their questions or when concerns arise. If you have any questions that we have not addressed, please feel free to reach out to us directly.

**Contact** Deirdre Millin, Program Coordinator  
Deirdre.Millin@senseability.ca



# Thank you to our Advisory Committee

Life After School is a pilot program created through the collaboration of the Abilities Centre and Canadian Business SenseAbility and is funded through the Skills Catalyst Fund of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, Government of Ontario.

Life After School would like to thank the following professionals for participating in the High School Advisory Committee:

## **Kristi Barnes**

Human Resources Director  
Performance Culture,  
Maple Lodge Farms

## **Roxanne Chee**

Special Education, Experiential  
Learning Teacher Lead,  
Toronto District School Board

## **Joan Cooper**

Principal, Banting Secondary School,  
Thames Valley District School Board

## **Pinder Da Silva**

Manager, Skills Development &  
Social Innovation, Abilities Centre

## **Joy Dimayuga**

Human Resources Administrator,  
Maple Lodge Farms

## **Ron Felsen**

Centrally Assigned Principal  
Experiential Learning & Student Success,  
Toronto District School Board

## **Darlene Giffels**

Learning Coordinator,  
Thames Valley District School Board

## **Andrea Leatham**

Learning Supervisor / Special  
Education,  
Thames Valley District School Board

## **Pamela MacLeod-Roberts**

Learning Coordinator,  
Thames Valley District School Board

## **Andrea McAuley**

Special Education Officer,  
Durham District School Board

## **Michelle Meraw**

Consultant / Special Education,  
Durham Catholic School Board

## **Kyla Reimer**

Special Education Officer,  
Durham District School Board

## **Normand St. Gelais**

Director of Diversity & Inclusion for  
Canada, Sodexo

## **Anne Ricci**

Manager Occupational &  
Physiotherapy Services,  
Toronto District School Board

## **Christine Vitsentzatos**

Principal, Montcalm Secondary School,  
Thames Valley District School Board

**Produced and distributed by:** Canadian Business SenseAbility  
**Director of Learning Programs:** Lisa Kelly  
**Program Coordinator:** Deirdre Millin  
**Writer:** Margaret Godec  
**Design:** Touchwood Design Inc.

All rights reserved. Copyright note – all pages from the Life After School pilot program may be reproduced for pilot and classroom use.  
© 2018 Canadian Business SenseAbility

Life After School is a pilot program created through the collaboration of:



Funded in part by:



Canadian Business **SenseAbility**  
P.O. Box 61518, Richmond Hill, Ontario L4C 0C9  
info@senseability.ca | [senseability.ca](http://senseability.ca)



## **Description of flow chart on page 7**

An image of a chart showing the 6 steps needed to begin the Life After School student process. Step 1: Complete Therapeutic Recreation in class. Please note, not all high schools will participate in Therapeutic Recreation. Step 2. Create a profile on the Life After School Portal. Step 3. Search for Experiential Learning opportunities on the Life After School portal. Step 4. Earn skills badges on the Life After School Portal. Step 5. Apply to jobs. Step 6. Attend job interviews. Complete these 6 steps and now 2 paths are possible. In one path you could earn more skills badges and apply to a different position, print a list of completed badges and tell us about your experience. Or on the other path you could be offered an Experiential Learning position, complete the company training, complete the 6 week Experiential Learning and tell us about your experience.

[Return to image.](#)