

Life
After
School

Canadian
Business
SenseAbility

Student Toolkit
College



About Canadian Business SenseAbility

We are Canada's only national, bilingual business network dedicated to helping organizations become more accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities. Our members are businesses who want the benefits of a diverse work force. They want to attract youth with employable skills who also happen to have a disability – people like you.

Why this program is important

Life After School is a program created to meet the needs of SenseAbility's members and to help young adults with disabilities get a job placement with an inclusive employer. There is an online portal that matches your skills with internship opportunities. The portal is open only to students with a disability.

“

Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work.”

Thomas A. Edison

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What is Work-integrated Learning?

What makes it good for me?

Work-integrated learning, or 'WIL', is "learning by doing". As you attend college you learn by attending lectures, completing readings, conducting science experiments, and writing papers or reports. Applying this knowledge to life out of school is the bigger challenge. Like any WIL program, you will be taking the education and skills you have acquired at school, and you'll apply them to a job, but in an inclusive workplace.

Life After School guarantees you an interview

Your college WIL application period is hectic. It's a challenge to apply to all the jobs you want to during the short period when postings are open. The difference with Life After School is that it guarantees you a job interview for any position where you have demonstrated the required skills necessary for the position. You may receive multiple job interviews, depending on the skills you demonstrate and the positions you apply to.

Why participate in WIL?

- ▶ Apply your education and skills in the workplace
- ▶ Discover your strengths and weaknesses
- ▶ Develop your soft skills – communication, teamwork, listening, leadership, conflict resolution
- ▶ Gain valuable work experience to add to your résumé, enhancing your future employment prospects
- ▶ Develop awareness of workplace culture, behaviours and expectations
- ▶ Learn the value of making mistakes
- ▶ Begin to build your professional network

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



An overview

Looking for a job is not a popular or easy task for most people. For students with disabilities there can be additional challenges. Life After School, with its skill challenges, offers you a way to demonstrate to employers that you have the skills needed to be successful at work. Like a traditional WIL program, your Field Placement Advisor is available for help if you need it.

Work-integrated learning prep

- Complete the college in-class WIL preparation
- Learn research, job search and interviewing skills
- Understand workplace expectations
- Review WIL parameters

Employer

- Employers interested in offering an opportunity to a student with a disability post a position on Life After School

Life After School

- Student reviews Life After School postings
- Student completes skill challenges to qualify for an interview
- Students interview with employers
- Successful candidates are offered WIL position

Training

- Employers complete Rethinking Disability training
- Students complete onboarding training
- Field Placement Advisors support with onboarding and training (if needed)

Support

- Field Placement Advisors offer ongoing advice and support to students when needed
- SenseAbility offers employers support as needed

WIL placement

- Students acquire work skills and experience
- Employers benefit by learning how to manage diverse employees
- Students provide feedback about the WIL placement online

How it works for you

Most people use a résumé to apply for jobs. The individual with the most experience or education (keywords), gets an interview. Life After School is different. Your initial internship interview is based on what you can do, or what you know - not on your résumé. The employers participating in this program are less interested in keywords or looking at a traditional résumé, and more focused on whether you can do the job.

Complete the Life After School online skill challenges to demonstrate what you can do. The challenges (also called skill challenges) show employers you have the skills needed for the WIL placements. All students who successfully complete the necessary challenges will receive a job interview(s). Skill challenges can apply to multiple postings on the portal.

The company will not review your résumé until the job interview.

20% of Canadians have a disability. That's Canada's largest minority group.



There are eight easy steps

1. Create a profile
2. Search for available job postings
3. Complete the required skill challenges
4. Apply to the WIL job posting
5. Interview for the WIL placement
6. If you are hired, complete onboarding and company training
7. Complete the WIL placement
8. Evaluate the pilot program



How work is different than school

Employers expect you to contribute

As a college student you've already learned to be self-sufficient in many ways. You are responsible for completing assignments on time, showing up for class and getting on with your education. For example, the college probably doesn't call you if you miss a class, and you'll just ask a friend for notes to catch up. This type of behaviour is not going to work during your placement. Generally, employers want you to be where you are supposed to be, on time. No excuses. Work is expected to be completed when it's due. No excuses. You'll be expected to communicate professionally with supervisors and co-workers, and tackle problems you may never have encountered before.

To an employer, the work-integrated learning placement is a job. You'll be an employee, part of a team that depends on each other. You may not like everyone you work with, and you may not like your boss. You need to learn how to manage workplace relationships. And you will begin to build a network for the future.

At school and at home you have flexibility around when you tackle your responsibilities and when you take a break. That's not the case at work. You have to be committed to finishing your work even if you'd rather be doing something else. You'll have to resist the urge to sleep in, or, call in sick if it's a beautiful day out. That's part of being a good employee.

Everyday is a learning opportunity

You'll be asked to take on responsibilities you've never had before and will be expected to figure out how to overcome new challenges. That's the best part of an internship – stretching yourself and learning more. Ask questions – that's where a lot of your learning takes place. You still won't enjoy all the tasks you'll be asked to do, but that's just part of any job. Your WIL placement is a short period of time, where you can learn what you like and what you don't like.



SUCCESS STORY

Anjali doesn't drive, but her college internship is only a half hour commute. She considers herself organized and was happy to figure out exactly how long it took her to get to work. But she didn't factor in unexpected surprises. Road construction meant her bus was 15 minutes late her first day. Which meant she was 15 minutes late for the start of the workday. Her employer was not amused. Anjali learned she had to prepare for the unexpected, and give herself extra time for her commute, even if it meant she arrived to work 30 minutes early most days.

Workplace must-have skills

There are soft skills your employer will expect you to be aware of before you start the WIL. It's difficult to be successful in any workplace without them. They say that employers hire for 'hard skills' (experience and ability), but fire for 'soft skills'.

Time management

- Be punctual and dependable
- Demonstrate efficiency in task planning and task management
- Meet deadlines
- Advise supervisor in advance of uncompleted work, absences and/or late arrivals

Organization

- Ensure you have appropriate materials and support for task completion
- Share information with co-workers to coordinate task completion
- Prioritize tasks based on urgency and/or importance
- Schedule tasks efficiently to ensure timely completion

Teamwork

- Be polite and professional
- Accept feedback on how to improve your work from colleagues and supervisors
- Develop conflict resolution plan/skills
- If you don't understand, ask questions and take notes

Workplace expectations

- Follow guidelines regarding the use of phone, computer, email, etc.
- Wear the appropriate clothing for your workplace
- Adhere to all safety rules

Motivation

- Maintain a pleasant and professional demeanor
- Take the initiative to find how else you can contribute
- Volunteer to assist on tasks outside of your learning plan, time permitting
- Address any problems or issues with your supervisor or Field Placement Officer



Getting to work on time

As a college student, the issue of transportation is not new to you. You've already worked out the best system to get from home to school. Starting a new job, however, raises new transportation challenges. And getting to work every day, on time, is one of the most important requirements of any job. Your education and skills aren't worth much if your boss and co-workers can't depend on you to be there.

Here's what to remember:

- When you apply for a job, make sure there is a way for you to get there
- Research and map out the best route, ask for help from others if needed
- Figure out how long the commute will take
- If you take public transportation, give yourself extra time to get to work. Unexpected delays happen often
- Stick closely to your transportation schedule
- Consider taking a practice trip to your job before it starts to see if your travel time estimates are correct

Private accessible transportation

Is it possible for a parent or a colleague to help provide transportation to your job? Consider the full range of options available to you.

WheelTrans/accessible public transportation

If you need accessible transportation, plan carefully. Order it 24 hours in advance. Consider how long it takes to get there and that the driver may be early or late. This requires careful planning before you start your job. Ask for help if you need it.

You may want to consider using services like UberWAV or Lyft with accessible vehicles - it costs more, so you may have to prepare a budget for transportation. It might be worth the investment if it means you are able to take advantage of a meaningful job experience.

“

I've always believed that if you put in the work, the results will come.”

Michael Jordan

Asking for help

Asking for help is an important part of any job. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to ask. As a student, it is expected that you won't know everything. Asking co-workers and supervisors for help is often where you learn the most and can benefit from someone else's previous mistakes. Your Field Placement Advisor, or if your college offers one, your Accessibility Consultant will also be available to talk with you about any issues that arise during your work placement.



SUCCESS STORY

Zach is enjoying his new job placement as an event coordinator assistant. He loves the energy and creativity that goes into making an event successful. His supervisor assigned him a variety of tasks, and he's found that his favourite is planning and organizing the decor. He's good with colour

and scale and spends a lot of time learning about table settings, fabrics, and lighting. When his supervisor asks him about the updated staging budget due to be presented to the client tomorrow, Zach draws a blank. He realizes he hasn't even looked at the staging list or contacted anyone to

confirm pricing. Zach's boss explains that the client is more concerned about costs than the colour of the napkins. Zach has learned that it's a bonus to be passionate about certain parts of your job, but that the tasks you don't enjoy as much may be the priority and need to be addressed first.

Asking for a workplace accommodation

During your WIL placement, you may need to ask your supervisor for a change to a procedure or to the physical environment, more time to finish a task, or an assistive device to help you do your job. This is called an accommodation.

When you ask for an accommodation:

Do talk about what you can do.

Do talk about the things you need to do your job well (accommodations).

Don't talk about what you can't do.

Because you may not have worked in your field of study before, you may not know at the start of your placement what you need to be the best employee you can be. Your Field Supervisor may be able to offer ideas to help you. The goal is to come up with a solution that works for both you and the employer.

How to ask for an accommodation: Consider any problems you currently have at school, and that may also arise in the workplace. Think of possible solutions that may help you. Ask people who know you and how you work, like your Field Supervisor, your friends, or your parents for suggestions.

Write a list of possible accommodations.

Practice asking for an accommodation before asking your work supervisor. You can ask your Field Supervisor, a friend, or parents to help you practice.

Remember, the reason you are asking for an accommodation is not because you can't do your job, but because you need to do your job in a different way or you require a tool that will help you to do your job. For example, you can say things like:

I learn a bit differently than most people, so it helps me to use an electronic calendar to record key dates.

It helps me to work if I have a snack every couple of hours. I will need to take 4 short breaks instead of 2 long ones. Does that work for you?

I noticed that the workplace is open concept. Occasionally, maybe once a week, I may need to work in a quieter space. Is there a part of the office I could work from, or perhaps tele-commute one day a week?

After you have practiced, and you feel ready, meet with your supervisor to speak to him/her about an accommodation you need to help you do your job better.

When you're speaking answer questions honestly and calmly – you are working on a solution together.

After you have spoken to your supervisor, thank him/her for meeting with you.

Disclosure

Life After School is for students with a disability. We encourage you to disclose what you need to do your job to the employer during your job interview. Unlike other employers, with Life After School you know this is an employer who is comfortable hiring people with disabilities. This is an ideal place to practice asking for accommodations.

When you are applying for jobs outside of Life After School, you may not always want to disclose. This decision is always up to you. You may want to ask the people who know you and how you work (career counselors, professors) whether they think it is a good idea to disclose. One of the reasons you may want to disclose is if you require an accommodation. There is no best time to do this, though many people choose to disclose after a job offer.

Anything you disclose about your disability to an employer is private and confidential.



Here are some things to remember about disclosure:

- Disclose what you need to do your job, and if you need an accommodation
- You don't have to tell the employer what your disability is, and they should not ask you what it is (they can ask for information on your limitations and restrictions)
- Conversations you have with an employer about your disability or an accommodation are private and confidential
- If you disclose your disability, always focus on your skills and what you're good at, NOT on your disability
- The employer can provide an alternate accommodation to what you are requesting. Be flexible – you both want you to succeed on the job
- You may make a different decision about disclosing, and when to disclose, for every job you apply to

You are ready to get started. Good luck. We hope that you will share your experience with us after the program.

For Parents

Support your student to take this important step

To successfully participate in the Life After School pilot, your student will need your support. And while it may seem unusual, we ask you to support them by allowing them to take this important step towards adulthood, on their own.

Independence leads to persistence, self-discipline and resilience

As the parents of a child with a disability you have been, by necessity, devoted advocates for your child – who is now a college student. It is understandably difficult to see your student become more autonomous and start to make independent decisions. But your student's independent participation in a work-integrated learning opportunity will build persistence, self-discipline and resilience in the workplace.

Skills employers are looking for

The pilot has been designed to help students with disabilities gain work experience and support a successful, post-graduation transition into the workplace. Our inclusive partner employers know what skills they are seeking in successful candidates. They have articulated these to us, and the pilot is built around students demonstrating these skills.

A crucial step towards life-long employment

Life After School offers students a chance to practically apply their classroom curriculum and learning in an inclusive workplace. The importance of early work experience for students with a disability cannot be overstated. The program offers a first step towards employment in the student's field of study. Although not all students will be successful in securing a WIL placement under the program, all will receive an interview if they demonstrate the needed skills; the process itself will better equip them to understand what employers are looking for.

Safety in the workplace

The employers participating in the Life After School pilot are committed to working with people who have disabilities. Student's health and safety are a top priority. Employers and workplaces have been reviewed for adherence to safety standards, and all students will receive designated onboarding and safety training for the job.

“

The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary.”

.....
Vince Lombardi

Ways parents can offer support

- 1. Providing the independence that your student will require in the workplace**

- 2. Interacting with your child (NOT the employer) with questions**

You can support this program, which has been designed to help your student acquire work experience and skills, by taking a hands-off approach. Although this may take you both outside your comfort zone, it is a crucial step toward your student's workplace independence.



Thank you to our Advisory Committee

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