**Learning Opportunities**

You need to find out about learning opportunities in your school and in your community. These can include part-time or summer jobs but can also include volunteer work, educational, extra-curricular, and entrepreneurial activities.

**Opportunities in High School**

**Exploring Occupations**

Co-operative Education allows you to "test-drive" an occupation without making a lifetime commitment to it.

**Co-op Education** is the most common link to exploring careers that most students in high school are familiar with. The majority know that one can earn high school credits and get practical experience at the same time. You are able to get a taste of an occupation and discover the realities of its workplace environment. Even if you don't like the placement, you still earn credits toward your diploma and take away the knowledge that you will be looking elsewhere for a new occupational pathway.

You might also want to consider a program like OYAP which allows you to put the hours that you have worked in your placement toward the hours required for your apprenticeship papers. Check the [Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program](http://www.oyap.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=homepage&CFID=10800461&CFTOKEN=cd999e8bf263956a-D67F5122-0963-24FF-0F5D3600E8C7CF90) site for more detailed information about this option.

Although co-op seems to be the most obvious solution, there are a host of other opportunities available to you. It is only a matter of taking the time to familiarize yourself with these different options and discovering the rewards of accessing them.

### ****What are**** Extracurriculars****?****

Extracurricular programs include sports teams as well many other groups and clubs. Among the various extracurricular groups and clubs available in many high schools are a debating team, a computer club, a chess club, a student-run newspaper or yearbook, an environmental club, a drama club, and a choir group.

There are so many opportunities available that no matter where your interests lie, there is a club or group suited to you.

### ****Why participate in extracurriculars?****

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| a) Participating in extracurricular activities is a valuable part of the overall high school experience, creating a sense of belonging. b) Extracurriculars provide an opportunity to meet new friends with similar interests to yours. c) Clubs and teams provide valuable life lessons such as teamwork, sportsmanship, self-discipline, self-confidence, and responsibility.  d) Participation in extracurricular activities is often a predictor of later success - in college, a career and becoming a contributing member of society.  e) Extracurriculars keep you actively involved in life. People who are involved and engaged are less likely to become addicted to bad habits, like smoking or drinking. |

(Studies reported by the University Interscholastic League, University of Texas)

### Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteer work can often be found in areas where paid positions do not exist. Hospitals, animal shelters, and community groups often welcome volunteers. Volunteer placements may involve a short work experience or a group service project. While volunteering you will learn a great deal and you may be able to use the experience towards your required community service work hours.

### ****Why volunteer?****

The [Ontario March of Dimes](http://www.marchofdimes.ca/EN/support/volunteering/Pages/Volunteering.aspx) outlines some of the many reasons why so many Canadians volunteer their time and skills to help others:

1. To feel needed and valued
2. To share expertise and to keep skills current
3. For a change of pace, a new activity, or to keep busy
4. To get to know your community or neighbourhood
5. To gain leadership skills
6. To earn academic credit
7. To develop or enhance current skills
8. To broaden your individual network
9. To discover your potential while building on your abilities
10. To make new friends
11. To build your resume
12. To receive support and constructive feedback on your performance
13. To enjoy giving of yourself

**Activity** – Complete the Action Plan on the following page by brainstorming experiences that are currently available in your school and/or community.