

Cooperative Education

A Career Connection for Students

Cooperative Education is a structured method of instruction combining classroom-based education with on-the-job training experiences to help students prepare for or explore their occupational objectives. It is paid employment directly related to the classroom instruction and provides credit toward graduation for the structured job experience.

All applicable Career and Technical Education (CTE) program areas have identified courses eligible for the Cooperative Education method of instruction. Local school divisions decide if the method will be used and which of the identified CTE courses will be designated for the method.

Students enhance their knowledge, skills, and attitudes by participating in supervised experiences that are not easily replicated in an educational setting. Student employment conforms to federal, state, and local child labor laws and regulations.

Cooperative Education . . .

- ◆ *Links the employer and the school in an effort to assist students in becoming well-rounded citizens and employees;*
- ◆ *Teaches students about the business/industry community;*
- ◆ *Provides businesses/industries with well-trained employees; and*
- ◆ *Creates a stronger partnership between schools and the business/industry world.*

Organization of Cooperative Education

Instruction is developed and conducted in consultation with employers who voluntarily work with the school and have skills in and considerable knowledge of the occupational field represented by the student's career objective.

The licensed teacher-coordinator provides related classroom instruction and Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) co-curricular participation. The classroom training is coordinated with students' workplace assignments. Training station supervisors also share occupational expertise and instruction with students.

Co-op students are guided by a formal, individualized, written training plan that defines specific academic and workplace skills to be mastered for the 11–15 hours per week of work experience.

Formal and informal evaluations of student progress, including feedback from employers, are completed to assist learners in improving their work performance and providing an additional credit toward graduation. Students must be concurrently enrolled in a course directly related to the job placement.

Students participate in this arrangement with the mutual approval of parents, school personnel, and employers at salaries comparable to those earned by other entry-level employees.

The Role of CTE Student Organizations in Cooperative Education

Student organizations reinforce the students' work experiences because they

- ◆ *Develop meaningful business partnerships;*
- ◆ *Promote human resource development through personal growth, team building, cooperation, and competition;*
- ◆ *Enhance employability through career exploration and occupational skill development;*
- ◆ *Provide life-long learning by effectively processing and applying new information; and*
- ◆ *Develop decision-making, creative-thinking, and problem-solving skills.*

Benefits for Students

Students benefit because Cooperative Education programs

- ◆ *Provide paid job placements to acquire knowledge, awareness, perspective, and confidence relevant to the workplace;*
- ◆ *Combine a high school course with preparation for employment while giving the student the opportunity to earn an additional credit toward graduation;*
- ◆ *Reinforce classroom instruction through real-life applications;*
- ◆ *Provide a stronger transition to further education or to a career; and*
- ◆ *Establish a strong broad base of knowledge of the business operation, including management, finance, wellness, and safety.*

Benefits for Employers

Employers benefit because Cooperative Education programs

- ◆ *Provide students a thorough understanding of job-related theory and knowledge;*
- ◆ *Reduce training costs by facilitating student transition from school to career;*
- ◆ *Enable employers to contribute to the technical education and orientation of their future employees*
- ◆ *Develop better communication between the school and community; and*
- ◆ *Prepare students for occupational life and adult citizenship.*

Benefits for Communities

Communities benefit because Cooperative Education programs

- ◆ *Introduce local employment opportunities to students;*
- ◆ *Encourage students to seek employment in their own communities;*
- ◆ *Provide constant labor resources; and*
- ◆ *Provide better community-school relations.*

Sample Employment Opportunities

Cooperative Education allows students to receive on-the-job experience that helps them to move from the entry level to the professional level in less time than the inexperienced graduate.

A successful cooperative education can prepare students for future employment in a variety of career clusters in Virginia:

- ◆ *Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources*
- ◆ *Architecture & Construction*
- ◆ *Arts, A/V Technology & Communications*
- ◆ *Business Management & Administration*
- ◆ *Education & Training*
- ◆ *Finance*
- ◆ *Government & Public Administration*
- ◆ *Health Science*
- ◆ *Hospitality & Tourism*
- ◆ *Human Services*
- ◆ *Information Technology*
- ◆ *Law, Public Safety, Corrections & Security*
- ◆ *Manufacturing*
- ◆ *Marketing*
- ◆ *Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics*
- ◆ *Transportation, Distribution & Logistics*

Your Local Contact for CTE Cooperative Education Information

Your State Contact for CTE Cooperative Education Information

Virginia Department of Education
Office of Career and Technical Education Services

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Contact CTE specific program area specialists for curriculum-related cooperative education questions.

Web site:
http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/career_technical/cooperative_education/index.shtml

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Career and Technical

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Virginia Department of Education
Commonwealth of Virginia
Richmond, VA