



OCEA e-NEWS@ ~ APRIL 2025 EDITION

Ontario Cooperative Education Association | Stay Connected | oceacon.ca

Facilitating and Supporting the Exchange of Ideas Among Experiential Learning Professionals



Pathways to Success

2025 OCEA SPRING CONFERENCE

REGISTER ONLINE TODAY! – Registration Closes on April 17, 2025.

Sheraton and Best Western Parkway Toronto North Hotel
600 Highway 7, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 1B2
April 27th, 28th and 29th, 2025



The conference planning team, made up of dedicated York Region DSB educators, is hard at work organizing an unforgettable event for this year's sessions that are set to take place on April 27th, 28th, and 29th, 2025. Their collaborative efforts are focused on bringing innovative ideas, engaging sessions, and a touch of magic to ensure that every attendee has an enriching and memorable experience. Their commitment to excellence promises to make this year's conference one to remember!

Here are some important timelines you will need to know...

- ⇒ **Conference Registration is NOW Open – Registration Closes on April 17, 2025.**
- ⇒ **Hotel Reservations Extended: Book by April 14th, 2025.**
- ⇒ **The conference program is packed full of informative and inspiring workshops!**

FEDERAL ELECTION MONDAY, APRIL 28, 2025:

To vote, you must be a Canadian citizen, at least 18 years old on election day, and provide proof of identity and address. Plan ahead and choose the voting method that works best for you. There are multiple options available, allowing you to vote at different times.

Advance polling stations are open for four days, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Check your [voter information card](#) or use the [Voter Information Service](#) to find your polling station.

VOTE ON ADVANCE POLLING DAYS

Friday, April 18
Saturday, April 19
Sunday, April 20, or
Monday, April 21





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OCEA AT-YOUR-SIDE: NAVIGATING CO-OP PLACEMENTS WITH CONFIDENCE THIS SEMESTER

Now that you are fully immersed into the second semester, remember that OCEA is here to support you every step of the way. Be sure to access the resources available for planning your pre-placement, integration, and co-op programs to ensure a smooth and successful experience for both you and your students.

OCEA has your back as you work through these important aspects of the program—you're not alone in this journey!

Additionally, don't forget to consult the Ethical Guidelines and Legal Issues resource which can provide valuable guidance when navigating difficult issues or challenges that may arise during work placements.

The following OCEA resources are available in the [Members Only](#) section of our website (www.ocea.on.ca) and will also be offered as workshops during our 2025 OCEA Spring Conference, April 27-29, 2025 – be sure to attend the conference and join these workshops!

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

- ⇒ ***Designing for Success 2020©***
- ⇒ ***Ethical Guidelines and Legal Issues for Cooperative Education, Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP), and Other Forms of Experiential Learning 2022©***
- ⇒ ***Pre-placement Lesson Plans for Cooperative Education 2023© (Co-op Classroom Component)***

RECAP: PSW ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY PROJECT BY CESBA

OCEA was invited as a stakeholder to participate in the wrap-up of the Personal Support Worker (PSW) Engagement Strategy Project on March 26th, 2025. The Engagement Strategy launched on September 24th, 2024, and concluded March 31st, 2025.

This initiative, funded by the Government of Ontario and led by The Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators (CESBA), aims to raise awareness about the PSW profession as a viable career option in the healthcare sector. The project provided promotional toolkits for high schools, collaborated with guidance counselors and SHSM leads to deliver presentations and hands-on learning experiences about PSW training and funding opportunities. The project also involved engaging community stakeholders through school job fairs and conferences.

The most inspiring part of the wrap-up day was hearing from six PSWs about their journeys, speaking to high school students across Ontario. After the PSWs spoke with the students and attended the presentations at their schools, the students gained a deeper understanding of the PSW role. They were able to challenge initial stigmas, became more hopeful that taking the pathway of becoming a PSW provided accessible education and livable wages, and saw a clear path forward, with the possibility of becoming a PSW and later an RPN. Additionally, students had the opportunity to earn three certificates Medical Terminology, Feeding and Infection Control and Presentation (IPAC) that can be applied to their SHSM Diploma.

Thank you, CESBA, for inviting OCEA to be a part of the Wrap-up day on March 26th of this amazing project. We appreciate the work your team has done in capturing the engagement and excitement of our youth, highlighting the many ways our youth can make a difference in the healthcare sector.

For more information...

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/become-personal-support-worker>

<https://ontarioschoolboardpsw.ca/>

<https://cesba.com/programs/>



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2025 OCEA ELECTIONS: CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The final date to submit nominations for the 2025 OCEA Elections is April 20, 2025.

CALLING ALL STATUTORY OCEA MEMBERS!



Do you have a passion for Cooperative Education? Do you like to stay connected with the latest news in Cooperative Education? Are you a team player? Would you like to expand your leadership, professional development, and networking opportunities? If you answered yes to those questions, then we are looking for you to join our team!

OCEA is currently seeking nominations for the Board of Directors and Provincial Representatives. The positions listed on the nomination form are to be filled by Election at OCEA's 2025 Annual Business Meeting (ABM) being held on April 27, 2025, during the 2025 OCEA Spring Conference in Richmond Hill, Ontario.

Bylaws:

4.1 Only STATUTORY MEMBERS in good standing with the Ontario College of Teachers holding a minimum of AQ Part I in Cooperative Education shall have the right to run for and hold office as a member of the OCEA Leadership Team.

5.4.3 Elected positions that do not receive any on-time nominations shall be re-posted in writing to the membership, and nominations shall remain open for the seven (7) calendar days leading up to the ABM.

5.4.3.1 The Elections Committee Chairperson shall declare nominations for re-posted positions closed at the opening of the morning of the ABM.

5.4.3.1.1 In the event that only one (1) nomination is received for a re-posted position at the close of nominations in accordance with Bylaw 5.4.3.1, the Elections Committee shall declare the sole nominee acclaimed to the position.

5.4.3.1.2 Nominations from the floor of the ABM shall only be accepted for positions where still no nominations have been received after the close of nominations for re-posted positions in accordance with Bylaw 5.4.3.1.

5.4.3.1.3 The Elections Committee Chairperson shall cause the names of all the nominees, including on-time, re-posted, and from-the-floor nominees, to be published electronically, by the end of the day that the ABM is held.

5.5 The chairperson of the Elections Committee shall cause the list of on-time nominees to be published electronically three (3) days prior to the ABM.





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CAPTURING THE STUDENT VOICE©

Do you have a student who would like to share their success at a placement? We are always looking for stories in the following areas:

- ◆ Dual Credits and Co-op
- ◆ Successful OYAP / Co-op
- ◆ Successful SHSM / Co-op
- ◆ Successful Special Ed. Co-op (non-earning credits)
- ◆ Successful Co-op

The [OCEA STUDENT CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT](#) for COOPERATIVE EDUCATION and / or EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING are available on-line ONLY in the **RESOURCES+ Members' Only** section.

The certificates are provided in an interactive PDF format. OCEA members can download the PDF file from the Members' Only Resource section, insert the student's name, add the date and print to present to their student. OCEA members are instructed to print (2) two copies per school year.

Please note, however, that THESE STUDENT CERTIFICATES OF ACHIEVEMENT ARE NOT AWARDS and should not be represented as such to post-secondary school officials, students, parents and/or placement supervisors. Rather, the Student Certificates allow you, the educator, to acknowledge exemplary student success in their secondary school Cooperative Education and/or Experiential Learning program in a formal manner.

OCEA e-NEWS© CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The Association invites innovative ideas, original stories and relevant publications on a variety of topics related to Cooperative Education and other forms of Experiential Learning from teachers in Ontario and the rest of Canada, in English and French. Let's inspire our colleagues by sharing our successes and innovative work!

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION REFRESHED WEB PAGES

[Cooperative education \(co-op\) courses](#)

[Skilled trades in Ontario schools](#) (OYAP-FAST)

ADVERTISING ON OCEA'S WEBSITE

We are thrilled to present advertising possibilities on OCEA's website. Our website offers a way to connect with educators from across Ontario who are engaged in Cooperative Education and Experience Learning, including programs such as SHSM, OYAP, and Dual-Credit. At OCEA, we deeply appreciate the synergy between the business and education sectors. You can explore three distinct participation levels on the OCEA website: Bronze, Silver, and Gold.

The Ontario Cooperative Education Association (OCEA) is a not-for-profit professional organization of Ontario Cooperative Education and Experiential Learning Professionals. It strives to provide the leadership and vision needed for optimal professional development of its members. The Association also develops and facilitates access to information, resources and other supports relevant to OCEA members and other Experiential Learning Professionals in the province of Ontario, while supporting excellence in the education of all students in Ontario.

TRADE DAY FRIDAYS – MADE IN HAMILTON

FOR YEARS, AARON GORKA, President of LuckyAce Business Solutions has worked towards the dream of bringing skilled tradespeople into Hamilton high schools to expose students to the great opportunities available in the construction industry. An idea that has endured a global pandemic, the sale of Aaron's family business, AIRON HVAC & Control to BGIS and the launch of Aaron's personal business, his dream came true earlier this year with the launch of the **Trade Day Fridays** pilot at Bishop Ryan Catholic Secondary School.

"I've been working on the Trade Day Fridays concept for about eight years and its really gratifying to see

it finally come to life," said Gorka. "I had to learn to manage my ambition and start small, with one high school, the largest high school in Hamilton. Eventually I'd like to see the program roll out across the city, the province and the country."

Working closely with Pat Piro, a co-op teacher at Bishop Ryan CSS and former Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) Coordinator with the Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic School Board, they developed a framework for Trade Day Fridays that brings trades workers into tech classes most Fridays for a hands-on activity and the chance for students to ask questions to volunteer presenters and coordinators who work in the field.

The winter 2024 semester included sessions on HVAC Construction, Mechanical/Heavy Plumbing, Sheet Metal, Heavy Electrical as well as General Contractor presentation. A core group of companies comprised of BGIS, Besseling Mechanical, Lancaster Group, Landon Mechanical, Fairway Electrical Services, Control HVAC, Mattina Mechanical and Ira McDonald Construction participated in the first semester of the pilot.

When the call went out for contractors willing to participate in the pilot, companies were quick to volunteer. "Taking part in the program made perfect sense to our company. Trade Day Fridays has allowed us to build a connection with other businesses and the school board and promote careers in construction. As an industry we need to bring opportunities to young people who might not be exposed to construction otherwise," said Haley Seguin, Office Coordinator with Landon Mechanical. "We have a Bishop Ryan co-op student working with us right now, a direct result of this program. Our shop staff takes pride in educating young apprentices and we hope this program inspires more interest in the trades. We're proud to support the program, it's been a great experience."

It was evident that the experienced professionals and journeypersons thoroughly enjoyed presenting, demonstrating and mentoring eager high school students and student response to the program has been positive. The workshops are engaging, and students gain confidence from successfully completing the hands-on practical activities.

Student remarks:

- This was fun, I really want to do this
- I want to go into the trades
- I'm going to take co-op and want to do HVAC or plumbing or electrical



Trade Days Fridays are an effective way of raising awareness of the skilled trades careers and as a result, students are encouraged to take the next step through cooperative education courses at Bishop Ryan CSS. Cooperative education courses offer students authentic work experiences while completing their OSSD credits and forming a pathway to apprenticeships.

According to Piro, "Cooperative education is an amazing course that provides students with an authentic learning experience. The trade days have increased course enrollment significantly. For years, experiential learning has been a passion of mine because **it works!** I enjoy seeing our students get excited about these careers and watch them grow because of the opportunities they received."

In recent years the Ontario government has recognized the need to bring more young people into the industry, investing heavily in the construction sector. Educating students, in a meaningful, hands-on way allows them to make informed decisions about potential career paths.

"I think there is a role for government in educating students and their parents but there is also an important role our industry and local construction associations (LCA) can play," said Gorka. "Associations like the HHCA need to build relationships with our local school Boards, co-op teachers and OYAP coordinators. No one can communicate better than we can about what a career in construction can mean for a young person's future."

The 2024 fall semester has already started, and Trade Day Friday is back at Bishop Ryan CSS. A new addition to the program is an introductory presentation in the auditorium each semester to provide more context for the workshops and generate interest. The group of volunteer presenters are also back, confident that their efforts will benefit their companies and the construction industry.

Aaron Gorka is still dreaming, of expanding to more schools, providing a template that can be used by other



LCAs and watching an idea become a movement across Canada.

"I've met with staff from the Canadian Construction Association about what's happening in Hamilton and there was interest," said Gorka. "Obviously we aren't the only association that has developed a program. But sharing what we're doing, providing an idea or a

framework might help another association that doesn't know where to start."

Trade Day Fridays is a pilot program managed by Aaron Gorka and a dedicated group of local construction companies with the support of the HHCA. If your company is interested in getting involved, please send an email to info@hhca.ca. ■■