



ONTARIO PUBLIC  
SCHOOL BOARDS'  
ASSOCIATION

Leading Education's Advocates

## EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FOR SKILLED TRADES AND APPRENTICESHIPS

The program/strategy/initiative must have been in operation for a minimum of one year

**School Board:** Renfrew County DSB

**Contact Person and Email Address:** Alex Harris [harrisa@rcdsb.on.ca](mailto:harrisa@rcdsb.on.ca)

**Name of Program/Initiative/Strategy:** Options Skilled Trades Career Fair and Skills Competition

**Hyperlinks to Documents or Website(s) Describing this Program/Initiative/Strategy:**

<https://www.algonquincollege.com/pembroke/options/skills-competitions/>

<https://twitter.com/hashtag/options2019?vertical=default&src=hash>

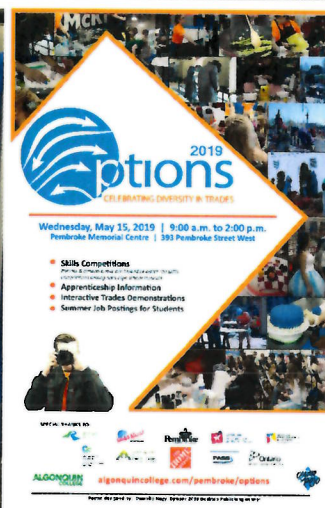
### Description of Program/Initiative/Strategy (max 200 words)

The focus is on practices that excite, engage and increase student, confidence, achievement and well-being. Programs that have increased attendance and pathway decision-making are of particular interest. In the brief description please provide answers to the following questions: Where the program/initiative/strategy is delivered (school/board locations)? Who is responsible for delivering and monitoring the program/initiative/strategy? Who is the target audience? Are there any community partnerships involved? Are there any staffing or budget implications? Are there any special resources required? What are your indicators of success, etc.?

RCDSB has several initiatives that are designed to increase awareness of and build excitement about opportunities in the skilled trades. Some initiatives happen inside our elementary and secondary schools, some at our local colleges, and others occur as part of programs like SHSM. The initiative that engages the largest audience for us is our annual skilled trades career fair and competition called *Options*. *Options* has been running consecutively for 17 years. *Options 2019: Celebrating Diversity in Trades* brought together students, employers, post-secondary institutions, unions, local businesses, uniformed and civilian members of the Canadian Forces, virtual reality trades simulation providers, RCDSB staff members and MTCU staff to name a few. We host this large event at a local arena and use both inside and outside spaces.

RCDSB partners with our local Algonquin College and the other DSB's in Renfrew County to deliver this large-scale event. We host thousands of student and general public visitors, and bus students in from all of our secondary and many of our elementary schools. Student visitors are exposed to hands-on trades activities to increase their awareness of courses/pathways in secondary school or, if they're older, opportunities in the apprenticeship pathway. Student

competitors (senior students) showcase their skills in a variety of competitions. The event is really the major 'Olympics' for the skilled trades in our area. Students can access so many resources related to apprenticeship and opportunities in the skilled trades all in one space. As mentioned, this is just one of our initiatives. It has a large footprint but some students may benefit more from a targeted messaging campaign or individual direction (such as in-class events or presentations).



We use a large part of our OYAP *special events* budget to run this event, and funding comes from the College and some from other DSB's too (RCDSB provides the largest staff allotment and largest funding envelope).

To measure success we look at the numbers of students selecting technological education courses in secondary schools and the number of students in co-op in apprenticeable trades and the number of Registered Training Agreements signed each year.

We have several meetings in advance and after the annual event that also serve as monitoring tools and allow us to calculate broader impact. Our relationship with community partners



deepens with each year of participation they can offer, and that also results in phone calls to the DSB where employers are looking to recruit apprentices directly through OYAP.

**What has been the impact on Student Learning Student Retention and Pathway Decision Making? (max 200 words)**

We are always trying to shed the lingering perception that pathways for students are in a hierarchical order. We have found that the Options event is a great venue for students to hear from actual tradespersons and that a fresh voice can pay dividends in terms of students choosing the apprenticeship pathway.

We also host events where we target parents and attempt to sway their perception of skilled trades careers as less desirable than other pathways and related careers. We've found that some parents can be swayed while others remain steadfast. By focusing on the student experience we can direct attention to opportunities in the skilled trades that they may not be exposed to by their parents.

Students talk about the event and it's an honour for them to compete. Elementary student visitors may not be as aware of the event as senior students, but we trust that their exposure whets their appetite for the courses, programs, and pathways that technological education can deliver.

Please submit to [jnyman@opsba.org](mailto:jnyman@opsba.org) by **July 31, 2019**, including any relevant supporting documents.