



RENFREW COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

MEDIA RELEASE

CLEARER PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT

The Renfrew County District School Board is proud to offer students at every secondary school pathways to future employment. Public board high schools are providing students with more opportunities to customize their school experience and build on their strengths and interests through a variety of new and exciting learning options. One of those options is through the new Specialist High Skills Major.

A Specialist High Skills Major is a Ministry of Education-approved, specialized program that allows students to focus their learning on a specific economic sector while still meeting the requirements for the Ontario Secondary School Diploma. This special diploma smoothes the transition from secondary school to apprenticeship training, to the workplace, and to college or university. This fall, the Renfrew County District School Board is offering 17 specialist high skills major programs in its seven secondary schools. The sectors include Arts and Culture, Business, Environment, Forestry, Health and Wellness, Hospitality and Tourism, Manufacturing and Transportation.

Students who enrol in a Special High Skills Major will take a “bundle” of six to twelve courses in their area of interest and will participate in recognized certification in CPR, First Aid and other courses specific to the area of employment, such as WHMIS. These students will participate in “reach ahead” experiences connected with the student’s chosen postsecondary pathway, key to developing essential skills and work habits required for successful employment in the sector. Successful completion will lead to the student receiving a special diploma with a red SHSM seal and an additional transcript outlining for employers and/or postsecondary institutions all of the job sector-related coursework and experiences they have undertaken.

Thirty RCDSB secondary school teachers and administrators attended SHSM orientation sessions offered by the Ministry of Education in Toronto last spring so staff is well prepared to offer these courses throughout the County. “It is our hope that students involved in these programs will gain confidence in their ability to succeed, and see the connections between their current studies, the world beyond high school, and their future careers” said Gayle Bishop, Student Success Leader for the Renfrew County District School Board.

The Renfrew County District School Board is establishing advisory councils including representatives from Algonquin College and Renfrew County employers in the County so that local school-to-work connections are strong. The councils will provide vital links between local public high schools and business and industry partners, and create a better understanding of the standards of practice and employability skills and opportunities within each sector. This liaison will also provide students with the opportunity to establish relationships and networks with employers in their chosen field.

“This is an exciting time to be a secondary student in the Renfrew County District School Board” said Board Chair, Dave Shields, “the door is open to prepare for your future in a way that has not been possible before.”

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