

Centrepiece

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"Soft" skills are high on employers' wish list

Landing that first job is one thing. Keeping it is another. Today's vocational programs also focus on the "soft" skills new graduates need to advance in their careers.

Training and experience still count for a lot, says **Mariane Villemure**, regional director for Montreal with the recruitment firm **Adecco**. "But when competencies are equal, the person who shows commitment and an eagerness to surpass expectations will likely get the job. Companies are willing to wait a little longer to find the right person with a positive attitude," she adds. "They may even accept someone with a little less experience if they have the right attitude."

Recognizing this need, the *Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport* has identified **five transferable competencies** applicable to all vocational training programs, explains **Susan Oliver**, a member of the project team responsible for promoting this initiative. "We're proposing that the first module of every DVS program – *Introduction to Trade and Training* – would be the ideal

time to introduce the transferable competencies to students," she says. "We are encouraging all program teams to begin implementing at least one of the competencies by next fall."

Susan is also an education consultant with the **Société GRICS**, a non-profit organization that offers technological services to the school boards. She and her colleague, **Maria Carrera**, are providing training on "Using Rubrics to Assess the Transferable Competencies" for the English sector. Her organization will also supply any interested school board with free open-source portfolio development software that students can use to record examples of how they are developing their soft skills. For more information, contact Susan Oliver at **(514) 251-3700** ext. **3755** or oliverss@grics.qc.ca

5 transferable competencies

The five transferable competencies for vocational training listed below can have a significant impact on a person's employability. They closely align with the Quebec Education Program's cross-curricular competencies, as well as the employability skills profiles of the Conference Board of Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, and the Board of Trade of Greater Montreal.

- 1 Communicates
- 2 Solves problems
- 3 Is able to adjust to new situations
- 4 Exercises sense of responsibility
- 5 Uses creativity

Heading for Success.com

Where career prospects are good

With information on 160 trades with good employment prospects, headingforsuccess.com is the place to go for young people seeking a career with a future.

The annual HeadingForSuccess.com campaign is back, with an updated version of its information-packed website designed for high school and college students, as well as those looking to change careers.

Answers to your questions within 24 hours

An online aptitude test gives young people an insight into a variety of fields that could correspond with their personality and interests. With just a few clicks, they can then get details on salaries, regional employment

profiles, job descriptions, training programs, admission requirements and loans and bursaries. And new this year, HeadingforSuccess.com offers an online forum where individuals can pose their own questions about vocational and technical training and receive an answer back within 24 hours from a career orientation advisor.

Between now and 2012, Emploi-Québec estimates that over 710,000 jobs will have to be filled in the province, many of which will require vocational

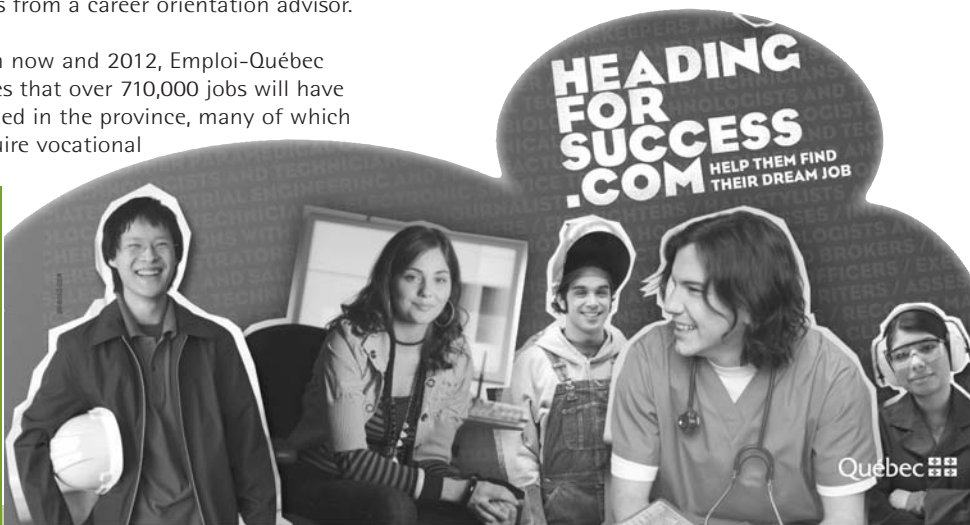
or technical training. Approximately two-thirds of those openings will be positions vacated by retiring baby boomers.

All the signs are there—and so is the information—at headingforsuccess.com.

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CENTREPIECE



Skills Training Certificates fill urgent need for qualified workers

Recognized by both industry and the MELS, these short, highly specialized programs are starting to appear in the English sector.



This winter, the **Pearson Adult and Career Centre** is offering a new category of vocational training program that is a first for the English-speaking community. The **Dental Secretary** program I am referring to leads to a Skills Training Certificate (STC) or *Attestation des études professionnelles (AEP)*.

An initiative of the *Fédération des commissions scolaires du Québec*, STCs are specialized programs that have been developed by a coordinating group of school boards, in cooperation with industry. They are designed to be short (minimum 240 hours, maximum 720) and to meet specific and urgent staffing needs expressed by employers.

The quality of the training is high, with up to 60% of the content drawn from one or several modules of the most closely related Diploma of Vocational Studies program. Graduates receive

their attestation from the school board in which they are enrolled.

In these tough times, STCs provide an interesting alternative for those 18 years and over who feel they can't afford the time to complete a longer program. Moreover, should they decide at a later date to enroll in the related DVS program, they would get recognition for any modules already completed.

All in all, I'd call that a winning formula. Stay tuned for more developments!

Carole Arsenault

Carole Arsenault
Services to the English-speaking community – MELS

For admission requirements and additional information on Skills Training Certificates, visit www.inforoutefpt.org/aep

A program with teeth!

The **Pearson Adult and Career Centre** introduced its 720-hour **Dental Secretary** Skills Training Certificate in January 2009 at the request of local dentists. "Because we already offer a 1500-hour DVS program in **Dental Assistance**, we work with many local dentists to arrange 'stages' for our students," says centre director, **Rick Oliver**. "They have been telling us how difficult it is to find good dental secretaries, which led to our decision to launch this specialized program." The 13 students enrolled will be ready to enter the job market this coming June.

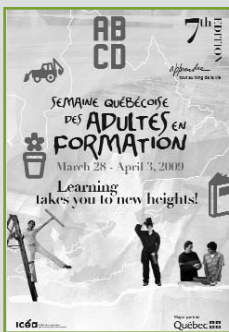


These students are enrolled in the new 720-hour Dental Secretary program.

Adult Learners' Week

March 28–April 3, 2009

Various activities are being planned across the province to celebrate the many adults who commit to bettering themselves through lifelong learning. For information, see: www.semaine.icea.qc.ca



In welding and any other trade, you have to be able to listen to others and get your own ideas across.

Local partners welcome "employability skills card"

The New Frontiers School Board and its local business partners believe this small card will carry a big message.

Claude Hamelin owns **Boham Gaz**, a small Chateauguay business that distributes gases and welding supplies. When hiring someone new, he often has no more than five minutes to evaluate the person and make up his mind. "Sometimes, you get surprises," he says.

He is one of several community partners working with the New Frontiers School Board to develop a wallet-sized card that vocational training graduates can carry with them when they go to interviews. "The idea is that those students who can successfully demonstrate their ability to communicate, work in a team, solve problems, and be safety conscious, among other transferable skills, will receive a card signed by their program coordinator, attesting to their competencies," explains **Anita Duwel**, coordinator of adult and professional education.

This spring, the board will pilot this initiative with its incoming cohort of **Secretarial Studies** students in Ormstown and its **Welding and Fitting** students in Chateauguay. Program coordinator **Brian Burton** is a big supporter because he has seen skilled welders let go from a job because they lacked the necessary soft skills. "I don't think students are aware of the importance of these skills," he says. "Communication is a big one: how you communicate information to lead hands or the foreman; the way you talk to other employees; how you log information and share it with others. You have to be able to work within a team."

This card is geared to saving time for employers.

Danielle Lapointe, senior advisor, human resources, with **CMP Advanced Mechanical Solutions**, is another local partner. "Without good communication, you get conflicts and misunderstandings that affect productivity," she notes. "Even if you normally work alone on a machine, there are times when you have to work with others to resolve problems. You need to be able to listen to their ideas, get your own ideas across, ask questions and propose solutions."

The employability skills card is intended to help students get "a foot in the door" when they're ready to test the job market. And Claude Hamelin thinks it will: "You'll know what you're getting from the get-go. This card is geared to saving time for employers – that's why I like it."



Symphony in chocolate



Josephine, with teacher Vi Mihn Tran, proudly displays her winning entry.

Congratulations to **Josephine Bigman-Lazarus**, a recent **Pastry Making** graduate of the **Pearson School of Culinary Arts (PSCA)**, who placed first this past fall in a chocolate-sculpting competition sponsored by the Belgium-based chocolate manufacturer,

Belcolade. "Ten students from six Quebec cooking schools entered this gruelling competition," says **Ardis Root**, PSCA's assistant-director. "Participants had to produce a chocolate sculpture up to a metre in height with a musical theme."

Josephine's entry, which included an intricate figure of a young woman carved out of solid white chocolate, won her an all-expenses-paid trip to Belgium to attend classes in chocolate making, explains Ardis. "To create the piece, she put in hundreds of extra hours of work and was coached throughout by teacher, **Vi Mihn Tran**, who has won many competitions and was a member of the Canadian team in the 2005 *Coupe du Monde de la Pâtisserie*."

Nova's RV facility provides a unique setting

To announce an upcoming career and training fair in the region, **Emploi-Québec** wanted to hold a press conference in an educational facility with direct links to the labour market, reports **Nova Career Centre** director, **Jean Bouchard**. He and his team jumped at this chance to show off their Chateauguay facility to representatives of local business, government and the media. "The only location we had big enough to host between 100 and 200 people was our brand new RV Maintenance and Repair garage—which as a potential venue intrigued **Emploi-Québec**," says Jean. "The unique setting added to the event's attraction and provided a great opportunity for us to chat directly with key players in our business community."

Speeches and canapés shared the spotlight with a shined-up, 40-foot fifth wheel that students use for their training.



Food for thought

A recent editorial in the *Montreal Gazette* (Feb. 11, 2009) commented on the worsening dropout rate, particularly among boys. It also noted that in Finland, where the dropout rate is only four per cent, "vocational schools take in a robust 47% of students." Coincidence? Or a statistic worth a second look?

English-sector investments are bearing fruit

Since 2005, the Quebec and federal governments together have invested \$26 million in English-language vocational training facilities.



Access Career Centre staff at the facility's official opening in January.

The **Access Career Centre** in Saint-Lambert is the latest facility to celebrate the official opening of its \$4.1 million vocational training wing. With this new construction, the Riverside School Board has a permanent home for its vocational programs in a bright, modern facility equipped to meet the highest standards of vocational training.

In Gatineau, construction of a \$5.7-million expansion of the **Western Quebec Career Centre** started last fall. The additional space will house programs in **Welding and Fitting**, **Commercial and Residential Drafting** and **Industrial Drafting**, reports centre director, **Margaret Turcotte**. "We expect to welcome students to these new facilities in September 2009."

Infrastructure investments in other English-language vocational training centres are already bearing fruit in terms of increased visibility, growing enrollments and expanded program offerings. These include the **Pont-Viau Competency Development Centre** in Laval, the **Nova Career Centre** in Chateauguay, **The Anchor Adult and Vocational Education Centre** in New Carlisle, the **Brome-Missisquoi Campus** in Cowansville and the **Pearson Electrotechnology Centre** in Lachine.

Accredited for CCQ training

The **Pearson Electrotechnology Centre** has received accreditation to offer up to 900 hours of skills-upgrading training annually to the member-electricians of the *Commission de la Construction du Québec*. That accreditation will give the new centre the opportunity to introduce its high-tech facilities to several hundred established tradespeople in any given year.



Bright classrooms with floor-to-ceiling windows are a feature of the new Access facility.

New in the English-sector ...

The following programs are newly available in these centres. *

PROGRAM	CENTRE	SCHOOL BOARD	STARTING DATE
Carpentry**	Wakeham Adult & Vocational Education Centre	ESSB	In progress
Assistance in Health Care Facilities	CDC Pont Viau	SWLSB	Late March 2009
Home Care Assistance	CDC Pont Viau	SWLSB	Late March 2009
	Access Career Centre	RSB	March 2009
Dental Secretary (Skills Training Certificate)	Pearson Adult & Career Centre	LBPSB	In progress
Accounting	Listuguj Centre	ESSB	In progress
Food & Beverage Management	Pearson Adult & Career Centre	LBPSB	March 2009
Northern Building Maintenance	Nunavimmi Pigiursavir (Inukjuak)	Kativik School Board	In progress
Interior Systems	Nunavimmi Pigiursavir (Inukjuak)	Kativik School Board	In progress

*Conditional on sufficient enrollment ** By agreement with NFSB

Centre People

Resourcefulness in the Gaspé



Wakeham Carpentry teacher, Dave Letemplier, and student Marjorie Langlais, hold a banner thanking LM Glasfiber.

So the **Wakeham Adult and Vocational Education Centre** was particularly pleased when local business partner, **LM Glasfiber Canada**, donated a supply of wood pallets for use in the centre's new **Carpentry** program.

"This gesture ensures the pallets are recycled and saves us the equivalent of one-tenth of our total program budget for materials," says centre coordinator, **Debbie Adams**.

Centres that serve a dispersed, primarily rural population wrestle with the challenge of providing their communities with enough training options to be able to work and thrive in the region.

An open house with a twist

In January, some 300 Secondary III, IV and adult education students descended on the Brome Missisquoi campus to attend hands-on workshops with the centre's students.



Students pre-registered for two workshops in the trades of their choice.

The visiting students from Massey-Vanier High School and Brome-Missisquoi's adult education section arrived prepared. Each one had pre-registered for two 45-minute workshops during which they would perform actual tasks required of vocational training students. "We asked ourselves: 'How can they know if a trade interests them if they don't see it in action?'" says assistant centre director, **Deborah Valdez**. "The workshops allowed us to give the students a more authentic experience."

With help from representatives of the English Montreal, New Frontiers and Lester B. Pearson School Boards, Brome-Missisquoi was able to expose its visitors to 18 different training programs available in English either in the Eastern Townships or the Montreal or Montérégie regions.

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Contact
Doris Kerec at LEARN.
Telephone: 1-888-622-2212
or e-mail
dkerec@learnquebec.ca

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