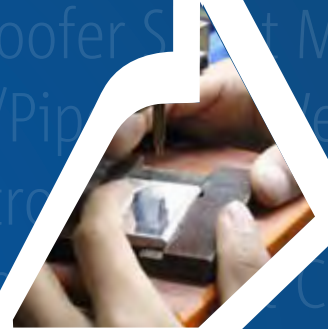


High School to Apprenticeship Transition:

# Identifying and Sharing Best Practices



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## KEY FINDINGS

**Communicate, communicate, communicate** to youth, parents, educators, guidance counsellors and employers the benefits of participation in high school to apprenticeship transition programs. Consider identifying a local champion to share the message

**Recognize learner achievements** to encourage completion of the transition program and support entrance into a full-time postsecondary apprenticeship program

**Get buy-in** from school boards, administration and industry to maintain and grow high school to apprenticeship transition programs

**Enhance flexibility and adaptability** of high school to apprenticeship transition programs to better accommodate learning methods, cultural situations and fluctuations in the economy

**Do more work** on measuring the performance of high school to apprenticeship transition programs—participants agreed it is an important, but relatively untouched area

## INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum – Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage (CAF-FCA) is the only inclusive national body that brings together all the players in Canada's apprenticeship community. A not-for-profit organisation, CAF-FCA works under the guidance of its Board of Directors who represent stakeholders in apprenticeship including business, labour, education, provincial/territorial apprenticeship boards, and equity-seeking groups.

In February 2010, CAF-FCA hosted the forum “High School to Apprenticeship Transition in Canada” to bring together (1) jurisdictional officials who administer high school to apprenticeship transition programs, (2) school to work transition coordinators, and (3) other key apprenticeship stakeholders from across Canada. The objectives of the forum were to provide the participants with an opportunity to share program strengths and lessons learned, and to identify areas for enhancing high school to apprenticeship transition programs in Canada.

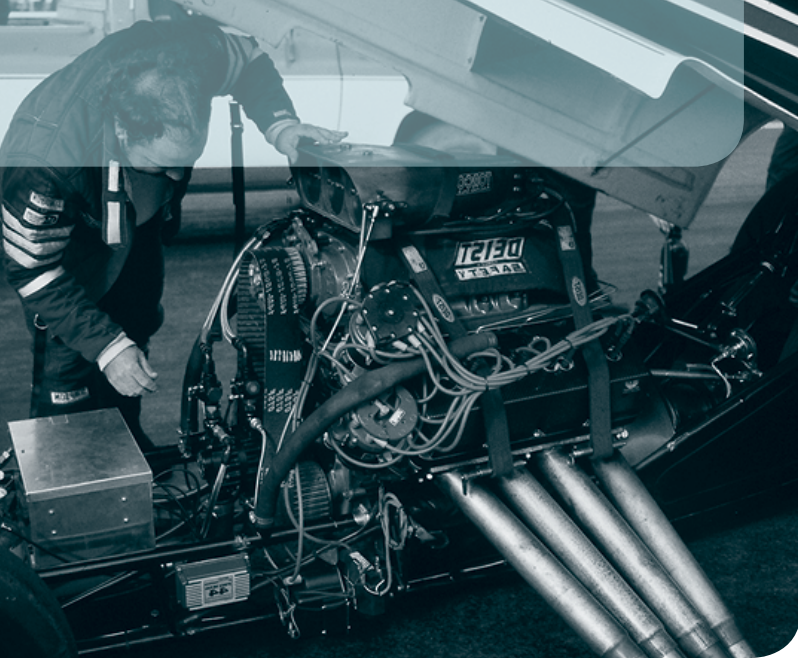
Participants discussed and brought to light a number of best practices in this important area of school to work transition that has the potential to play a major role in introducing youth to apprenticeship as a postsecondary option. The CAF-FCA gained insight into recommendations for enhancing the high school to apprenticeship transition process and the programs a number of provinces and territories already have in place. The forum was held in Mississauga, Ontario, and included nearly 40 representatives from across Canada, including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, the Yukon and Nunavut. For a list of provincial and territorial secondary school transition programs, please see Appendix A.

## BACKGROUND

The path from secondary school to employment is non-linear for many Canadian youth. In Statistics Canada's *Education-to-Labour Market Pathways of Canadian Youth* report, which examines findings from the Youth in Transition Survey, this trend is attributed to the increasing need for more schooling and the expansion of higher education.<sup>1</sup> The Organisation

<sup>1</sup> Darcy Hango and Patrice de Boucker, *Education-to-Labour Market Pathways of Canadian Youth: Findings from the Youth in Transition Survey*, Statistics Canada, November 2007, p.14. Accessed at: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/81-595-m2007054-eng.pdf>





for Economic Co-Operation and Development reported in May 2008 that while Canada has a fairly well-performing youth labour market, more work is needed to enhance the overall school to work transition.<sup>2</sup>

One form of school to work transition is closely linked to apprenticeship. Provincial and territorial high school to apprenticeship programs include secondary school apprenticeship programs that may provide credit towards a registered apprenticeship. While these apprenticeship transition programs all promote apprenticeship trades training, each is unique to the province or territory in which it operates.

According to research published by the CAF-FCA in 2008, however, only a small percentage of apprentices surveyed indicated that they had used high school to apprenticeship transition programs as a way to enter into apprenticeship training.<sup>3</sup> These findings suggest that high school to apprenticeship transition in Canada could be enhanced to better promote apprenticeship as a postsecondary option and to increase the ability of apprentices to maximize their return on their investment in training. An analysis of Statistics Canada's 2007 National Apprenticeship Survey (NAS) (cited below) provides additional data to support this suggestion.

The NAS gathered information on the demographics, challenges and barriers, and labour market experiences

of apprentices across Canada. A random sample of 30,572 people who were registered as apprentices with their provincial or territorial authorities during the period of 2002 to 2004 participated in the telephone survey. To get a better sense of the percentage of individuals entering a registered apprenticeship program through a high school to apprenticeship transition program, the CAF-FCA engaged R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. to analyze the data. The findings are summarized below.<sup>4</sup>

## GENERAL

Just over seven percent of apprentices responded that they had participated in a youth apprenticeship program before leaving high school, while 22 percent said they had participated in a technical training or other trade-related program. The large majority (71 percent) of apprentices did not participate in either a youth apprenticeship or other trade-related program prior to registering as an apprentice. Overall, participation in high school to apprenticeship transition programs is higher among females (8.6 percent) than males (6.9 percent), though males are more inclined to participate in other trade-related programs prior to registering as an apprentice. Apprentices in the Atlantic provinces are less likely to participate in transition programs than apprentices from the rest of Canada.

## VISIBLE MINORITIES<sup>5</sup>

More than eight in ten apprentices (83 percent) who belong to visible minorities indicated that they did not enrol in a high school to apprenticeship program before leaving school. Still, apprentices identified as members of visible minorities are more likely to participate (11.6 percent) in transition programs than members of non-minorities (6.7 percent).

## APPRENTICES WITH DISABILITIES

The large majority (84.9 percent) of apprentices with disabilities did not participate in a high school to apprenticeship transition program before leaving high school. However, a larger percentage of apprentices with disabilities participated in these programs than did other apprentices.

<sup>2</sup> OECD, Jobs for Youth/Des employ pour les jeunes, Canada, May 2008, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> See CAF-FCA and Association of Canadian Community Colleges' report *Apprentices Enrolled in Classroom Training at Canadian Colleges and Institutes: Profile, Investments and Perceptions* and CAF-FCA's *Apprentices Enrolled in Classroom Training at Private Institutes: A Comparative Analysis with the Experience of Apprentices at Publicly Funded Colleges and Institutes*.

<sup>4</sup> R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd., January 2010.

<sup>5</sup> While the NAS does collect apprenticeship data separately from among landed immigrants, this cohort was not part of R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd.'s analysis. That said, it is understood that visible minorities and landed immigrants are not mutually exclusive, and that a **landed immigrant from among a visible minority group** would be included in the analysis pertaining to visible minorities. Further analysis would be required to determine the share of visible minority apprentices who are also landed immigrants.

## ABORIGINALS

More than 82 percent of Aboriginal apprentices indicated that they did not enrol in a youth apprenticeship program before leaving high school. Similar to other underrepresented groups, Aboriginal apprentices were somewhat more likely to participate (8.7 percent) in high school to apprenticeship programs than non-Aboriginals (7.0 percent).

## CONCLUSION

While apprentices in underrepresented groups are more likely to participate in high school to apprenticeship transition programs than other apprentices, participation in these programs overall is still quite low.

## APPROACH

Forum participants shared examples, lessons learned, and best practices on five priority areas in high school to apprenticeship transition programs through participation in small group discussions. These areas were identified by the project's working group as key topics for consideration at a national gathering of jurisdictional representatives given their cross-border relevance. They included the following:

- Implementing and maintaining high school to apprenticeship transition programs
- Measuring performance in high school to apprenticeship transition programs
- Retaining youth in high school to apprenticeship transition programs
- Tracking youth outcomes
- Administering high school to apprenticeship transition programs in the schools

## DISCUSSION FINDINGS – THE CHALLENGES

The challenges across all five areas of discussion fell into four broad categories:

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The diversity and number of postsecondary options available to youth make it challenging to share and promote all opportunities equally, particularly if the responsibility is left to one individual in a school environment, such as a guidance counsellor.



Further, it is suggested that guidance counsellors do not view high school to youth apprenticeship programs as their responsibility. Indeed, in Ontario, for example, transition programs have largely become the responsibility of the subject teachers. Caution is warranted, however, since there is a perceived disconnect, or lack of communication, between departments within high schools. Math and science teachers, for example, may be unaware of what is being taught in the technical training classes.

### WAVERING SUPPORT?

Participants expressed concern that support for maintaining high school to apprenticeship transition programs can be vulnerable to changes in administration. A lack of follow-through to sustain the programs in the schools can result in reduced funding for the programs, which may mean a lack of equipment for training and/or reduced infrastructure to support the programs. Furthermore, the implementation of career development practices can vary from school to school, and in rural and remote areas in particular, it may be challenging to support the existence of apprenticeship transition programs where participation numbers are relatively low.

### RETAINING AND TRACKING YOUTH

Early high school leavers may not stay in school long enough to be exposed to transition programs, which could also leave





## DISCUSSION FINDINGS – PROMISING, BETTER, AND BEST PRACTICES

The promising and best practices across all five areas of discussion fell into four broad categories:

### GET ‘BUY-IN’

In discussions around implementing and maintaining high school to apprenticeship transition programs and in-school administration of the programs, participants agreed that getting commitment and support from all those involved—school administrators, employers, teachers, guidance counsellors, youth and their parents—is a major factor in a program’s success. Indeed, participants suggested that counsellors be encouraged to act as the link between the learner and the employer. Participants emphasized that getting buy-in from employers is a big factor since placements can be hard to find, and that part of this process involves identifying *what* drives buy-in, and locating the entry points.

Efforts to get employer buy-in have been met with success in provinces such as BC and Nova Scotia. At the forum, it was estimated that between 30 and 50 percent of new employer sponsors in BC come through the province’s youth-oriented transition programs: Youth Exploring Skills to Industry Training (YES 2 IT), Secondary School Apprenticeship (SSA), and Accelerated Credit Enrollment in Trades Training (ACE IT).<sup>6</sup> These avenues help develop the necessary links with employers before learners graduate from high school and enter into an apprenticeship program full-time.

The Building Futures for Youth Program<sup>7</sup> in Nova Scotia is reported to have led to more employers wanting to become involved in the program after having seen and heard about its success. Designed to increase the number of youth exploring careers in the construction industry, this program was developed by the Construction Association of Nova Scotia in partnership with the Department of Education, Department of Labour and Workforce Development, the Nova Scotia Community College and local school boards. Industry representatives also provided input.

them unqualified to become an apprentice since a high school diploma is a common requirement for registering in a full-time postsecondary apprenticeship program. Related to this situation, participants noted that the lack of a common language around literacy and essential skills (LES) may make it challenging for some learners to recognize the benefits and opportunities such upgrading could provide.

Participants also raised questions around defining and gauging learner success in the programs. Participants recommended exercising caution when viewing completion as the measurement of success in such programs because completion of the program does not necessarily denote success. Some suggest that success can be shown through other means, such as acquiring skills and building confidence. Moreover, inconsistencies between the various institutions’ tracking methods and databases can limit attempts to harmonize tracking. High schools and colleges track students differently and participants agreed that, in their experience, self-reporting is ineffective. While it is perceived that guidance counsellors have a role to play in tracking students’ progress through the transition programs, it was widely agreed that the counsellors do not consider transition programs to be their responsibility.

### EMPLOYERS AND THE WORKPLACE

With respect to employers and workplaces, participants agreed that finding job placements for youth in transition programs can be challenging. Opportunities for finding placements for youth in transition programs may be limited by the economic climate. Also, employers may not be aware of apprenticeship or high school to apprenticeship transition programs and their practices. Likewise, learners may not know what to expect from the workplace and may become discouraged or disillusioned by the realities of the work environment.

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.itabc.ca/Page19.aspx> for more information on BC’s Youth Programs.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.buildingfutures.ca/> for more information on Nova Scotia’s Building Futures for Youth Program.

## COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE

Research shows that parents are the number one influence on their children's decisions for educational pursuits and choice of occupation.<sup>8</sup> Recognizing that, participants noted that educating not only youth, but also parents, about the benefits of high school to apprenticeship transition programs and how they can lead to next steps for participants by identifying career pathways is a best practice.

In Nova Scotia, the Department of Labour and Workforce Development offers a free program to parents and guardians of high school students that covers such topics as postsecondary options, the labour market, career-building skills and how to connect interests and skills with career options.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, through New Brunswick's Plan to Achieve Career Excellence (PACE) initiative, an hour-long workshop and workbook are provided to parents and guardians interested in helping to support their children's career goals.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to supporting enhanced communication efforts between parents and youth about high school to apprenticeship transition programs through career coaching, the group also sees promising outcomes arising from improved communication between and among parents, youth, high school teachers, guidance counsellors, and employers on the opportunities and expectations of the transition programs. Within the school setting, for example, student interest in school subjects is nurtured by demonstrating practical applications and establishing their relevancy to possible careers.

## RECOGNIZE LEARNER ACHIEVEMENTS

To encourage completion of high school to apprenticeship transition programs, participants agreed on the importance of recognizing learners' achievements. While some jurisdictions offer certificates or passport programs to validate accomplishments, others count hours towards apprenticeship programs, waive tuition fees for technical training and/or offer grants/bursaries/scholarships. All were viewed as effective initiatives. A few examples from various provinces are provided below.

<sup>8</sup> Skills/Compétences Canada, "Survey on Attitudes Towards the Trades/Technologies," GPC Research from Summer 2001, p.31. Access through the following link: <http://www.hrpartnership.ca/images/HR%20Documents/Skills%20Canada%20Attitudes%20to%20Trades.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Nova Scotia's Parents as Career Coaches website can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.parentsascareercoaches.ca/>.

<sup>10</sup> New Brunswick's PACE website can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.setyourownpace.org/Intro.html>.



Students who complete New Brunswick's Youth Career Connections Program<sup>11</sup> receive a Certificate of Completion and are eligible for preferred seating at the New Brunswick Community College, provided they meet the college's minimum entrance requirements. In some jurisdictions of New Brunswick, any student who participates in a trades-related work placement through a school to work program are registered in a "Pre-Apprentice Card Program." This program allows them to count hours toward apprenticeship programs, thus validating their option.

On Prince Edward Island, high school graduates who have completed the Accelerated Secondary Apprenticeship Program (ASAP)<sup>12</sup> are eligible to apply for a \$1,000 youth apprenticeship award, which is a combination of a \$500 tuition credit to Holland College and a \$500 bursary to the student. Learners may also receive apprenticeship credit for the time spent in high school trades courses or co-op education courses. All youth apprentices have the opportunity

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.gnb.ca/0000/progs/curric/youthapp/index.asp> for more details.

<sup>12</sup> See <http://www.gov.pe.ca/ial/index.php3?number=1027794&lang=E> for more details.





to take part in Technical/Safety Training free of charge on an annual basis as well.

Senior Years Apprenticeship Option (SYAO)<sup>13</sup> program participants in Manitoba keep track of their on-the-job training hours in their Apprenticeship Record Book, which allows them to receive apprenticeship credits for hours worked. They can also earn up to eight supplemental academic credits for graduation based on 110 working hours per credit. The Government of Manitoba is seeking to offer new financial incentives of up to \$150 per credit for graduates of SYAO who transition into a full-time postsecondary apprenticeship program as well.

Participants in the Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship (SYA) program have their \$150 apprenticeship registration fee waived, their first level of technical training tuition fee waived, and receive trade time credit (100 hours/level completed). There is also the Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Industry Scholarship program that awards selected eligible graduates who have completed SYA and who will be pursuing a career in the skilled trades a scholarship valued at \$1,000.<sup>14</sup>

BC's SSA program<sup>15</sup> offers \$1,000 scholarships to deserving, eligible apprentices and allows learners to earn up to 480 work-based training hours towards their trade while completing their high school diploma. Participants in BC's ACE IT program<sup>16</sup> receive free tuition as they earn high school credits for graduation and college credits towards their trade. The Industry Training Authority (ITA) funds the school districts to pay for students' technical training through this program. Additionally, depending on the trade, it may be possible for students to be registered in both programs at once, allowing them to work on both their technical training and work-based training.

### ENHANCE PERFORMANCE

As a promising practice, participants emphasized the importance of enhancing the performance of high school to apprenticeship transition programs by increasing flexibility and adaptability, where possible. Areas for consideration include program delivery methods and cultural accommodations, as well as responses to fluctuating economic situations. All parties involved in the transition programs should be made aware that transitioning programs are a process and participants will experience greater success if their learning preferences are honoured. Another suggestion was to better coordinate support mechanisms for program participants and to keep track of regional trends in the labour market. It was also noted that in various cultural situations, some members of underrepresented groups may be more comfortable remaining within their communities to complete training, which may result in higher levels of success. Likewise, administrators should recognize the limits of rural/remote areas and what the programs can reasonably provide to learners—greater flexibility may be required.

<sup>13</sup> See <http://www.gov.mb.ca/tce/apprent/future/syao.html> for more details.

<sup>14</sup> See page 19 via the following link for more details: [http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/siteimages/SYA/High\\_School\\_To\\_Apprenticeship\\_2010\\_FINAL\\_Feb5'10w\\_bookmarks.pdf](http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/siteimages/SYA/High_School_To_Apprenticeship_2010_FINAL_Feb5'10w_bookmarks.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> See <http://www.itabc.ca/Page37.aspx> for more details.

<sup>16</sup> See <http://www.itabc.ca/Page36.aspx> for more details.



## NEXT STEPS – FURTHER WORK, AREAS FOR ACTION, AND TARGET GROUPS

### MEASURING PERFORMANCE

Participants agreed that more work needs to be done on measuring the performance of high school to apprenticeship transition programs. While acknowledged as important, it is a relatively untouched area. To get started, participants suggested identifying clear objectives, such as aiming for a certain number of learners to register in a transition program. From there, the program participants' outcomes could be tracked, possibly through assigning numbers. Participants recognized, however, that given the differences between provincial/territorial transition programs and full-time postsecondary apprenticeship programs, and the opportunities for program participants to move between regions, this is a challenging area that requires additional discussion.

### ACTION AREAS

At the end of the forum, participants were invited to fill out an anonymous evaluation survey and in it, participants indicated the actions they felt they could commit to as a result of the learning and sharing that took place at the forum. Five options were provided and each received high marks. The action areas included (in order from most to least often selected):

- Share other jurisdictions' best practices/lessons learned with colleagues
- Communicate information to policy makers / decision makers
- Enhance counselling/guidance efforts to promote high school to apprenticeship transition programs
- Implement and promote implementation of other jurisdictions' best practices in high school to apprenticeship transition programs
- Inform employers about what was learned

### TARGET GROUPS

When asked who would most benefit from receiving information on high school to apprenticeship transition programs, participants who filled out the forum survey indicated that provincial and territorial government officials would greatly benefit from the information, closely followed by policy makers and high school teachers. Guidance counselors and employers came next. In the "other" option, some survey respondents indicated parents/youth, provincial HR associations, and all stakeholders in general.



## CLOSING THOUGHTS

For those who decide to pursue a career as a skilled tradesperson, high school to apprenticeship transition programs provide an advantageous head start. Participants agreed, however, that in addition to getting youth off on the right foot on their career pathways, high school to apprenticeship transition programs are also valuable for providing youth with opportunities to perhaps find out what they do not want to do. A career in the skilled trades is not for everyone. When opportunities to explore various career directions and to become aware of one's own interests and aptitudes are offered, however, learners are better equipped to make the right personal choice, which will help support more direct school to work transitions.

## APPENDIX A

While not all provinces and territories offer high school to apprenticeship transition programs, most have a high school to work transition program in place. To the knowledge of the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, this list was accurate and complete as of March 2010. If you notice any errors or omissions, however, we encourage you to contact us at [info@caf-fca.org](mailto:info@caf-fca.org).

### Nova Scotia

Workit: <http://www.workitns.ca/>

Options and Opportunities(O2): <http://www.ednet.ns.ca/o2/>

### New Brunswick

Youth Career Connections Program:

<http://www.gnb.ca/0000/progs/curric/youthapp/index.asp>

### Prince Edward Island

Accelerated Secondary Apprenticeship Program (ASAP): <http://www.gov.pe.ca/ial/index.php3?number=1027794&lang=E>

### Newfoundland & Labrador

Skilled Trades Jump Start Your Life:

<http://www.jumpstartnl.ca/>

### Quebec

Quebec offers vocational and technical education programs under the apprenticeship system, which are run jointly by Emploi-Québec and the Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. Please see the following link for more information: <http://www.inforoutefpt.org/home.htm>

### Ontario

Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP):

<http://www.oyap.com/>

Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program:

[http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/tcu/apprentices/pre\\_apprent.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/tcu/apprentices/pre_apprent.html)

Co-op Diploma Apprenticeship Program:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/tcu/apprentices/coop.html>

### Manitoba

Senior Years Apprenticeship Option (SYAO):

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/tce/apprent/future/syao.html>

### Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship (SYA):

[http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/YOUTH\\_APPRENTICES/](http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/YOUTH_APPRENTICES/)

### Alberta

Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP): [http://www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca/index.html?page=working\\_in\\_alberta/learning\\_rap.html](http://www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca/index.html?page=working_in_alberta/learning_rap.html)

Youth in Transition to Apprenticeship (YITTA):

[www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca/index.html?page=working\\_in\\_alberta/yitta.html](http://www.tradesecrets.gov.ab.ca/index.html?page=working_in_alberta/yitta.html)

### British Columbia

Secondary School Apprenticeship (SSA):

<http://www.itabc.ca/Page37.aspx>

ACE IT: <http://www.itabc.ca/Page36.aspx>

YES 2 IT: <http://www.itabc.ca/Page38.aspx>

Leading Youth to New Careers (LYNC) :

<http://camosun.ca/learn/lync/programs-courses.html>

### Nunavut

Nunavut Early Apprenticeship Training (NEAT):

<http://www.gov.nu.ca/education/eng/css/curr/10-12/NEAT/NEAT%20handbook%20update%20Nov07.pdf>

### Northwest Territories

Schools North Apprenticeship Program (SNAP):

[http://nwtfsa.gov.nt.ca/SENIOR\\_SECONDARY\\_HANDBOOK\\_06/SENIOR\\_SECONDARY\\_HANDBOOK\\_09/Chapters/C38-SNAP%20Intod-V1.pdf](http://nwtfsa.gov.nt.ca/SENIOR_SECONDARY_HANDBOOK_06/SENIOR_SECONDARY_HANDBOOK_09/Chapters/C38-SNAP%20Intod-V1.pdf)

### Yukon

Yukon Secondary School Apprenticeship Training:

<http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/advanceded/apprenticeship/yssap.html>

Yukon Government Apprentice Program (YGAP):

<http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/advanceded/apprenticeship/ygap.html>