

VOICES OF TOMORROW

BACKGROUND

Voices of Tomorrow is a youth led initiative based in Windsor and Essex County with the goal to promote inclusive employment for **ALL** youth!

PROBLEM

Youth of all abilities often face several barriers and lack the voice to represent what it means to find meaningful employment.

PURPOSE OF SURVEY:

The youth leads designed and conducted a survey to understand youth experiences around employment. They also wanted to learn from employers and educators in their community about their attitudes towards inclusive hiring practices.

PARTICIPATION OF SURVEY:

The survey had **143 RESPONSES** from the community. 116 high school students in Windsor-Essex aged 13-21 participated in the survey along with employers and educators.

1 Barriers and challenges to youth finding meaningful employment

A. The main challenges that students of all abilities face are:



Transportation



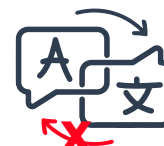
Lack of guidance and support



Covid-19 restrictions



Lack of options



Language barriers

WE FOUND THAT

49.5%
of the high school students

&

60%
of the post-secondary students

surveyed affirmed that it is difficult for youth of all abilities to find employment today

B. High school students and post-secondary students tell us the importance of hiring people of all abilities.



Allows for an upbringing and progression to the workplace. Working together overcomes adversity and helps to achieve desired goals.

Everyone deserves the chance to gain experience, contribute to society and be part of a community.

WE FOUND THAT

We found that **57.9%** of the students who do not have a disability and are working reported they do not have co-workers who have a disability.

WE WANT



- To create a more inclusive hiring practice by addressing these challenges.
- To ensure that opportunities are available for youth of ALL abilities to benefit from employment experience.

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Employers' perspectives on meaningful employment for youth with a disability

THINGS THAT EMPLOYERS WORRY ABOUT:



- It would cost more to accommodate their needs
- They don't know how to support someone with a disability
- Staff don't have time to provide support

BENEFITS OF PROMOTING AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE:



- Helping the development of my community
- Being an example of inclusiveness in my community
- Bringing a better experience for my customers

BUSINESSES THAT PROVIDE SUPPORT TO WORKERS WITH A DISABILITY NEED:



- Working with external employment agencies
- Providing accommodations, adjusted schedules, job coaching and check-ins

WE WANT



- Employers to take the necessary steps to make it easier for ALL youth to receive support for employment opportunities.
- Youth receive guidance and benefits necessary to enjoy a meaningful employment experience.

3

Educators' perspectives on meaningful employment for youth

A. INCLUSIVITY OF CO-OP PROGRAMS:

- More opportunities should be available for students with disabilities
- Broaden the scope of opportunities in partnership with employers
- More support required for some students to find successful co-op placements

We found that

60%

of the educators who took our survey think co-op programs are inclusive to students of all abilities, while 25% felt otherwise.

D. EDUCATORS BELIEVE THE FOLLOWING WILL HELP STUDENTS OVERCOME BARRIERS:

- More community partnerships and engaging platforms to connect with employers and businesses for co-op opportunities.
- Transportation costs covered by the school for those who need it
- More knowledge needed on the importance of co-op within the business community
- Resources required to teach co-op students essential job skills
- Increasing awareness of co-op opportunities available in the community

B. VARIETY IN CO-OP PLACEMENTS FOR STUDENTS OF ALL ABILITIES:

- No options for special education STEPS students with multiple disabilities
- Not enough information on whether variety of placements exist in the community
- Not enough support available for all students to explore variety of placements

C. TOP THREE CHALLENGES THAT EDUCATORS ENCOUNTER WHILE TRYING TO FIND CO-OP PLACEMENTS FOR STUDENTS:

- Lack of transportation
- Finding a business/ employer that provides co-op opportunities
- Maintaining relationships with businesses for ongoing partnerships

WE WANT



- To ensure that educators and organizations are able to create long-lasting partnerships in their communities.
- Educators are provided with tools and resources to find co-op placements for their students and provide the best guidance accordingly.