

# Dr. John Hugh Gillis High School



## Options & Opportunities (O<sub>2</sub>) Program



### What is the Options & Opportunities (O2) program?

Options & Opportunities (O2) offers students a more hands-on learning experience. It is a program focused on career awareness and exploration. It is designed to help students make successful transitions from high school to work, a career path or a post-secondary program.

### What are the expectations of the O2 program?

Students who complete high school through the O2 program will be expected to demonstrate the following:

- Ability to articulate a career plan
- Strong employability and personal skills
- Personal awareness of their skills and strengths
- Basic skills and knowledge specific to multiple occupations
- Ability to transition to work, a career path or a post-secondary program, for example, Nova Scotia Community College or university.
- Choose a post-secondary program with confidence and complete it

### Will O2 students graduate with necessary credits?

All students will be expected to achieve the necessary academic requirements outlined by the NS Department of Education & Early Childhood Development. The O2 program allows for flexibility in design and delivery of the credit courses. Students will be eligible and encouraged to attend a post-secondary program upon graduation from Grade 12. **Provided high school requirements are met, students will receive a high school graduation diploma, and Options and Opportunities certificate, and preferential seating for programming at NSCC based upon their application.**

**How does it work?**

O2 provides multiple opportunities for students to learn in community and workplace settings, link their in-school learning to the workplace, and enhance their employability skills. The effectiveness of learning in authentic settings is well documented. This critical component of O2 will expand opportunities for co-operative placements in workplace and community and provide credits for service learning, volunteering, and community-based programs which focus on leadership. Community learning experiences include unpaid work placements, mentorship, volunteering, and service learning.

**Who should consider the O2 program?**

The program is intended to meet the needs of students who:

- Are interested in a program that combines academics with practical training and on-the-job experience.
- Are interested in increasing his/her opportunities for employment.
- Are interested in a program that prepares him/her for further training in a specific area.
- Are committed to developing positive employability skills.
- Would prefer to extend their learning in a community setting.

**O2 Program Myths?**

- O2 is only for students interested in a skilled trade
- O2 students will not go to university
- O2 students cannot take academic or advanced courses like their non-O2 peers
- O2 does not involve a lot of classroom work; it is all hands-on experiences
- O2 is a program that will “save” students

**Can anyone take this program?**

Any student in Grade 9 can apply to the program. It is customary that the number of applicants exceed the number of positions available. A committee within the school shall make the final decision as to which students would benefit the most from the program.

**The committee shall consider the following criteria:**

- Student must be enrolled at the grade 10 level (minimum). They are chosen in Grade 9 but do not become official O2 students until Grade 10.
- Student must be committed to an enhanced attendance policy.
- Student must have a positive attitude toward work.
- Students must be willing to participate in all aspects of the program (including academic requirements)
- Students must demonstrate responsibility and respect in school and in their community.

**What is the process?**

1. Students are provided a brief in-class presentation about the O2 program prior to receiving an application.
2. Staff may make suggestions about potential candidates.
3. Applications are distributed to identified candidates and others who wish to apply.
4. Completed applications are to be received by Mr. Teasdale.
5. Students will be interviewed by members of the committee.
6. Confirmation of acceptance into the program shall be sent in writing to parents.
7. Course requests for successful candidates will be adjusted by Guidance for the following school year.

### What courses are required for the O2 program?

Students take regular high school graduation required courses along with electives, but they must complete compulsory O2 cohort courses as well:

- Career Development 10
- Community Based Learning 11
- A minimum of 3 Co-op courses

### What are the benefits of the O2 program?

- Smaller class sizes in the cohorts (max 20)
- More individual support
- Project based philosophy with hands-on learning experiences
- Career exposure
- Safety training (i.e. First Aid, WHMIS, OHS, Food Safety, etc.)
- Exposure to programs such as Youth Apprenticeship, Skills Competitions and Building Futures for Youth
- Direct pathway to Nova Scotia Community College

