

Life After High School

Life After High School is an innovative pilot program funded by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU). Starting in October 2011, this program will provide Grade 12 students at selected Ontario schools with practical support applying for post-secondary education and financial aid. In three facilitated workshops, students will be guided on-line through the process of selecting a post-secondary program of their choice, applying for a place in that program, and applying for financial aid. The cost of either the OCAS or OUAC application fee will be covered by the program. The project seeks to learn whether supporting all Grade 12 students at a school in making real applications for post-secondary studies and financial aid increases later enrolment in further education.

Who is implementing Life After High School?

The Social Research Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) is the Canadian non-profit research firm engaged to develop and test the Life After High School program, along with Professor Phil Oreopoulos of the University of Toronto. SRDC and Prof. Oreopoulos have also been conducting a similar project in British Columbia. SRDC has considerable experience testing new educational programs in Canada, including the BC AVID pilot project and Future to Discover in New Brunswick and Manitoba. In Ontario, Life After High School is funded by the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU), working in collaboration with the Ministry of Education.

Who will participate in the project?

Life After High School's 60-70 minute workshops are held during class hours to allow all Grade 12 students at participating schools to attend. The pilot project will involve 75 Ontario high schools, including eligible schools from public and Catholic, English and French schools. The eligibility criteria identify high schools that, historically, enrol higher proportions of students able to benefit from the program. Half of the 75 schools will be able to offer Life After High School, while the other half will act as a

comparison group, based on a random draw. Schools in the program group will have the option of having their own counselling staff trained to deliver the workshops or facilitators hired by SRDC deliver them. Training will be provided locally, and additional costs (e.g., for replacement staff) will be covered by the project. Schools in the program group will also need to schedule sessions so that all Grade 12 students attend. Schools in the comparison group will have no additional activities on their premises. The impact of the program will be calculated using administrative data.

How could the program benefit students?

Many students face barriers to post-secondary education, including financial and academic barriers, lack of information, and challenges with decision-making. Life After High School addresses many of these barriers: it teaches students about the benefits of further education; it helps them choose a program based on their interests and marks and apply for a place in that program; and it removes the potential barrier posed by the OUAC/OCAS application fees, while providing tools to help prepare an application for student financial aid.

For Grade 12 students who intend to go on to post-secondary studies, Life After High School provides support to follow through with that intention; those who might not have decided to go on could be persuaded to do so by the arrival of an acceptance letter. Even those who might not have considered post-secondary education will have gained practical knowledge and skills about the application process that may benefit them later on. Schools in the comparison group play a hugely valuable role in testing the program by showing whether Life After High School makes a difference for students, increasing their enrolment in post-secondary education.

Information

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