



## Project SEARCH

<p><b>System Gap Addressed</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Office of Disability Employment Policy indicates the employment rate for youth with disabilities is significantly less than youth without disabilities (60 - 70 % less).</li> <li>• Work-based learning promotes problem solving and adult thinking.</li> <li>• Young people with disabilities have limited access to many of the venues for teens such as sports, clubs or after school jobs that build employment skills.</li> <li>• Project SEARCH is a unique transition to work program that utilizes partnerships among business, education, vocational rehabilitation, families and community supported employment agencies to teach employment skills and support workers as they learn a new job.</li> <li>• Project SEARCH defines employment as 16 hours or more of year-round work in an integrated setting at a prevailing wage.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Initiative Goals and Timeline</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project SEARCH began as a single site at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center in 1996.</li> <li>• Project SEARCH staff have established almost 400 program sites in the US and internationally.</li> <li>• There are currently 12 Project SEARCH sites in North Carolina that offer the following resources:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training in systematic instruction and effective coaching and teaching strategies.</li> <li>- Training for families to support their knowledge of the transition process and encourage active participation in job development.</li> <li>- A Project SEARCH curriculum, lesson plans, other resources to develop individual employability skills.</li> <li>- Exploration of new ways to partner with the post-secondary educational system to improve the overall knowledge, skill level and life experience of our interns.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Two more sites will start in August of 2017.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Description of Activities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each licensed Project SEARCH site serves 8-12 young people with disabilities each year. Most participants are 18 to 22 years old and have completed their high school credits.</li> <li>• The participants spend one school year rotating through at least 3 internships at a host business. They are immersed in the host business and receive consistent support from an instructor and job coach.</li> <li>• In addition to on-site internships, participants receive classroom instruction at the host business for a portion of the day.</li> <li>• The Project SEARCH team recruits students, engages businesses, provides instruction, and works with partners to support the student during the internship program.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Achievements and Outcomes to Date</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 28 of 51 (55%) graduates from the class of 2015 obtained competitive employment (16 hours per week, non-seasonal, community-based).</li> <li>• 69 young people with disabilities graduated from the program for the school year 2015-16 (an increase from 51 the prior year). 39 of these graduates have obtained employment as of December 31, 2016. Job placement activities continue for all graduates not placed.</li> <li>• 85 young people are currently participating in Project SEARCH sites.</li> <li>• Each program held public awareness events in 2016, resulting in more than 4300 people learning about Project SEARCH and employment for people with disabilities.</li> <li>• Project SEARCH programs utilize Business Advisory Councils (BAC) who connect with other local businesses that have an interest in hiring entry-level workers with competencies acquired by the Project SEARCH interns. In North Carolina, the Business Leadership Network (NCBLN) provides access to business leaders who can facilitate career opportunities for Project SEARCH interns.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Expected Systems Change as Result of Initiative</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase skills acquisition and employment outcomes for young people with disabilities through the implementation of the Project SEARCH model.</li> <li>• Offer new models that can change the business culture to include workers with disabilities.</li> <li>• Create natural opportunities for service systems such as education, vocational rehabilitation, community supported employment agencies, and families to work together to create systems change for employment of individuals with disabilities.</li> </ul>