

PROJECT SEARCH FEDERAL MODEL US DEPARTMENT OF LABOR



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR



DC DEPARTMENT ON
DISABILITY SERVICES



Project SEARCH

Key Concepts

- Collaboration with a host business, education, vocational rehabilitation (VR) and developmental disabilities (DD) or mental health (MH) services
- Braided funding
- Training and preparation in real work settings
- Low risk, low cost for business
- Continuity in service provision
- Hiring students who are “good fit”

All with the goal of employment



Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is doing more than providing valuable work experiences for students. It is massaging and changing corporate culture and the receptivity of workplaces to employ people with disabilities.

Diversity World Magazine, November 2006



Project SEARCH

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Program Description

- Program lasts one school year
- Up to 12 students
- Students have a variety of disabilities
- Students are in their last year of high school eligibility
- They rotate through 3 unpaid work experiences
- They receive continuous feedback from consistent adults

All with the goal of employment!



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Benefits of Project SEARCH

- Universal design helps all employees.
- Increase their ability to attract talented employees.
- People with chronic illnesses and disabilities represent the fastest growing market segment in the US, so that there are benefits to having the workforce representing all of the diversity in the community.
- For organizations that serve the public, they can mirror the public.
- Performance and retention in some high-turnover, entry-level positions has increased dramatically.
- Reduced recruitment costs.
- Improved attendance and punctuality.



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So far, Students are Mastering Reception
& Phone Skills, Data Entry, Office
Management and more



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Benefits of Project SEARCH for School Districts

- Focus on preparation for employment -- IDEA goal.
- Intense level of supervision from education, rehabilitation and business.
- Career exploration for those with little work experience.
- Partnership with agencies and business = shared cost + improved results.



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Benefits for Students

- “Post-secondary” training and work experience (at no cost).
- Opportunity to work in high-status organizations.
- Develop areas of strength; build maturity and confidence; master transferable skills.
- Work toward independence in many areas -
- transportation, daily living skills, etc.



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Research shows

- **Work-based learning promotes:**
 - **Problem Solving**
 - **Adult Thinking processes**
 - **Team work**
 - **Social relationships**
- **Students who finish school without work experience are likely to be unemployed as adults, & vice versa**



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Program Description

- One school year program
- 12 students
- Students with a variety of disabilities
- Last year of HS eligibility
- Rotation through unpaid work experiences, with continual feedback and reflection
- Focus on the outcome of employment



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Eligibility Guidelines

- 18 – 21 years old
- Appropriate hygiene, social and communication skills
- Ability to take direction and change behavior
- Ability to access public transportation
- Ability to pass drug screening, background check, immunizations
- **Desire to Work!**



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Application Process

- Attend Open House
- Complete Application
- Tour Project SEARCH Program
- Selection Committee completes Eligibility Rubric
- Develop Plan
- Eligibility for VR and DD/MH services
- Willingness for Travel Training



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School Day

- 45 minutes--Employability Skills
- 2 hours--Worksites
- 30 minutes--Lunch
- 2 hours--Worksites
- 30 minutes--Review, Plan, Reflection/Journaling
- Depart



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Student Role

- Identify area of interest
- Write cover letter to departments
- Send letter and resume
- Interview for positions
- Accept offer from department
- Notify teacher & department of absences
- Engage in continual assessment/maintain journal
- Give two weeks notice
- Participate in exit interview/department evaluation
- Write thank you letter
- Update portfolio



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Challenges

- High expectations of all students by all
- Maintaining a strong business liaison
- Behavior and maturity of students
- Adequate planning with partners
- Identification of challenging work experiences that teach marketable, transferable skills
- Clarifying the role of job coach
- Maintaining sustainable funding
- Employer education/staff confidence
- Technology/accommodations
- Maintaining on-going communication



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Responsibility and Funding: School

- Instructor
- Curriculum
- Supplies
- Additional staff and services as required



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Responsibility and Funding: Department of Labor

- **Classroom:**
dedicated space preferred
- **Business liaison:** minimum 10 %
- **Providing work experiences with supervisors and mentors**
- **Marketing**



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Responsibility and Funding: Vocational Rehabilitation

- Job Coaches
- Assistance with Job Development
- Accommodations
- Additional support as required
- Support for job independence and independent living



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Funding: DDA or DMH

- Ongoing liaison with host business for follow along support for changes in employment and mandatory education
- Ongoing accommodations
- Maintaining trust with all partners
- Dealing with change!



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Evaluation / Outcomes

- Employment
- Wages
- Hours
- Benefits
- Students Trained
- Continuing Education



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For more information

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