

Project SEARCH

Hamilton



Project | SEARCH®
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What is Project SEARCH?

Project SEARCH is a school to work training program for young people with an intellectual or communication disability. The program takes place entirely at the workplace. Through daily instruction, job coaching, and real-life work experiences, Interns gain the skills, independence and confidence to make a successful transition into the world of work. At the completion of the program, Interns are connected with local Employment Service Providers to help them find competitive, complex, and rewarding jobs.

Competitive employment is:

- integrated employment (co-workers with and without disabilities work alongside each other)
- year-round employment (not seasonal)
- 20+ hours of work each week
- paid the prevailing wage

Employment Training

- Interns spend the month of September engaged in new employee onboarding, learning employability skills and familiarizing themselves with the business environment.
- Throughout the year, Interns continue to enhance their employability skills with daily classroom instruction and hands-on work experiences at the business site.

Three Internships

- Three, 10 to 12 week internships are provided by the business site.
- Interns work daily from 10 am - 2 pm learning specific, relevant, and transferable skills.
- Interns work in existing positions alongside staff employed by the host business.
- Teachers, skills trainers and department mentors support, collaborate, and provide feedback on the Intern's skill development.

Job Placement & Community Connections

- Employment is based on the Intern's experiences, strengths, interests and skills.
- Interns are connected with the March of Dimes Canada to support the transition to employment and adult life.
- Job coaching and long-term follow along support are arranged following graduation and dependent on the chosen employment service provider.

Who participates in Project SEARCH Hamilton?

- Students with intellectual or communication disabilities who are at least 18 years old.
- Intern selection is based on information from an application, skills assessment, and interview.
- Each site is staffed by a teacher and skills trainer.
- Ongoing collaboration with the business site liaison and department mentors takes place to identify internship placements, necessary skill development and to support Intern success.

Who does Project SEARCH benefit?

Students

- Participate in a variety of internships.
- Acquire competitive, transferable and marketable job skills.
- Gain independence, confidence, and self-esteem.
- Obtain work-based individualized coaching, instruction, and feedback.
- Develop community connections to employment service providers.

Businesses

- Serves as a visible expression of a commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- Creates opportunities for staff to learn about diversity and inclusion as well as gain skills and experience to support a diverse work environment.
- Dupont study reports: employees with disabilities are hard workers, reliable and are loyal to employers.

Our Community

- A new diverse talent stream with skills that match labour needs.
- Interns and employees with disabilities serve as role models.
- Promotes acceptance and understanding of diversity.
- Removes financial dependence on community and government supports.
- Improves overall mental health and community engagement.

Project SEARCH was launched at the Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Centre in 1996. Currently there are 780+ Project SEARCH sites worldwide. The program reports that approximately 70% of students find gainful employment within a year of graduation.

The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB) has been a leader in bringing Project SEARCH to Canada. In 2020, HWDSB opened its first Project SEARCH site, the fourth site in Canada. Project SEARCH continues to grow and expand across Canada and the world. The HWDSB now supports two sites at the YMCA/YWCA and the Ron Joyce Children's Health Centre/ Hamilton General Hospital.

HWDSB

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