

Project SEARCH FAQ's



This is a great program – how do we start a Project SEARCH program in our community?

First, make sure you have all your partners represented and on board to begin the program:

- Education: Local School District, Career Technical School, Educational Service Center, several school districts, etc.
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Community Rehabilitation Partner (provider of job coaching and job development)
- Developmental Disabilities Agency or Mental Health Provider (for follow along services)
- Host Business (could begin planning process before business is identified)

Second, coordinate a local meeting with all the partners represented. Begin with an overview of the Project SEARCH model. Use the meeting to ensure that all partners are committed to implementing the program.

Third, once all the partners are committed, one of the partners needs to sign the Project SEARCH licensing agreement. Contact Tanya Baker-McCue at tbaker-mccue@salud.unm.edu

Fourth, a Project SEARCH International Support team member from Cincinnati can present to your local partners to increase knowledge and generate excitement about the program. (There is a cost for this technical assistance.) This presentation could also include:

- A presentation to the proposed host business and the administration of other partner organizations, such as a school board
- A meeting with all local community partners to provide education about Project SEARCH and generate buy-in

At this stage, technical assistance from the International Support Team can continue, as needed, to facilitate the implementation of a Project SEARCH program in your area. You will receive all Project SEARCH materials and documents once the licensing agreement is signed.

How long does it take to plan and implement the Project SEARCH program?

Once the business partner is identified, it takes about six to eight months. It is ideal to have one year for the planning team to work together for a successful implementation. Most programs begin operation in late August so a team should start meeting, at the latest, by January of the year they want to begin. We suggest that you identify an Advisory/Planning Team that meets

at least monthly. All partner organizations should be represented (especially the host business) on the Advisory Team. The Team could also include a parent, a young adult with a disability, and other community members such as the WIA Board, University Center for Excellence, etc.

Who funds the Project SEARCH program or who pays for what?

Partner	Personnel and Supports	Source of Funding
Education	Instructor, curriculum, supplies (sometimes a Teacher’s Assistant or paraprofessional)	FTE for each student from state and local funding. (need 8 – 12 students to pay for instructor)
Vocational Rehabilitation	Sponsors students to support job coaching and job development.	State/Federal funding – Students must be eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation.
Community Rehabilitation Partner	Provides job coaching and job development	Vocational Rehabilitation, Medicaid, etc.
Developmental Disability Agency (Long-Term Service Provider)	Provides long-term employment support for retention and career advancement	Possible sources: Medicaid Waiver DD Support CMH Board Ticket-to-Work
Business	Business Liaison (10% FTE); onsite classroom/training room; internship sites; hosting of some marketing events, such as open houses	In-Kind Human Resources

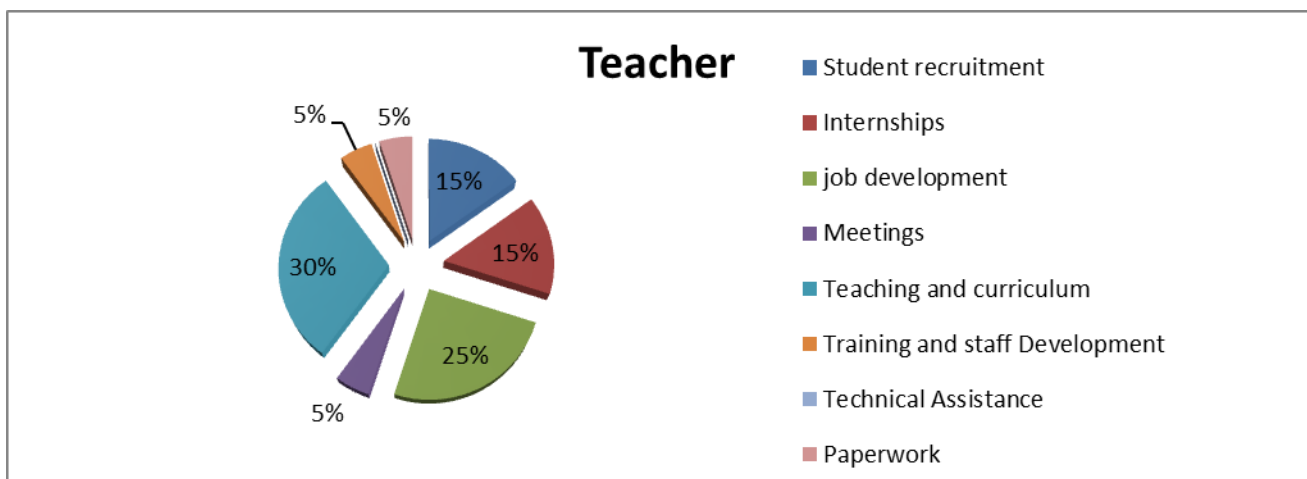
Does the instructor need to be there all day? What does s/he do besides teach class?

Yes, the instructor needs to be on site at the host business all day. She is the on-site coordinator and an integral part of the team. Her role would be similar to a case manager for the Project SEARCH students. Her duties include:

- Planning and teaching the Employability Skills curriculum
- Assisting the students with resume and portfolio development
- Coordinating and implementing the monthly Employment Planning meetings.
- Coordinating the Family Involvement Curriculum with the Family Liaison and other family members
- Developing internship sites with the business liaison and job coach
- Ensuring that the students learn competitive, marketable skills and achieve maximum productivity and quality while on their internships
- Developing work accommodations and work aids with the job coach

- Evaluating the student progress and filling out required documentation.
- Providing employer education about disability awareness and supervising people with disabilities.
- Recruiting students for the next Project SEARCH class
- Ensuring that all students are eligible for VR; long-term support; SSI; and other appropriate community, state, and federal supports
- Advocating for and facilitating internal job development at the host business
- Marketing the program within the host business and to the wider community

Below is a graph that shows the approximate amount of time that the teacher will spend on the various Project SEARCH-related activities. The activities and time allotted will vary depending on the time of the year.



Are the students on-site all day?

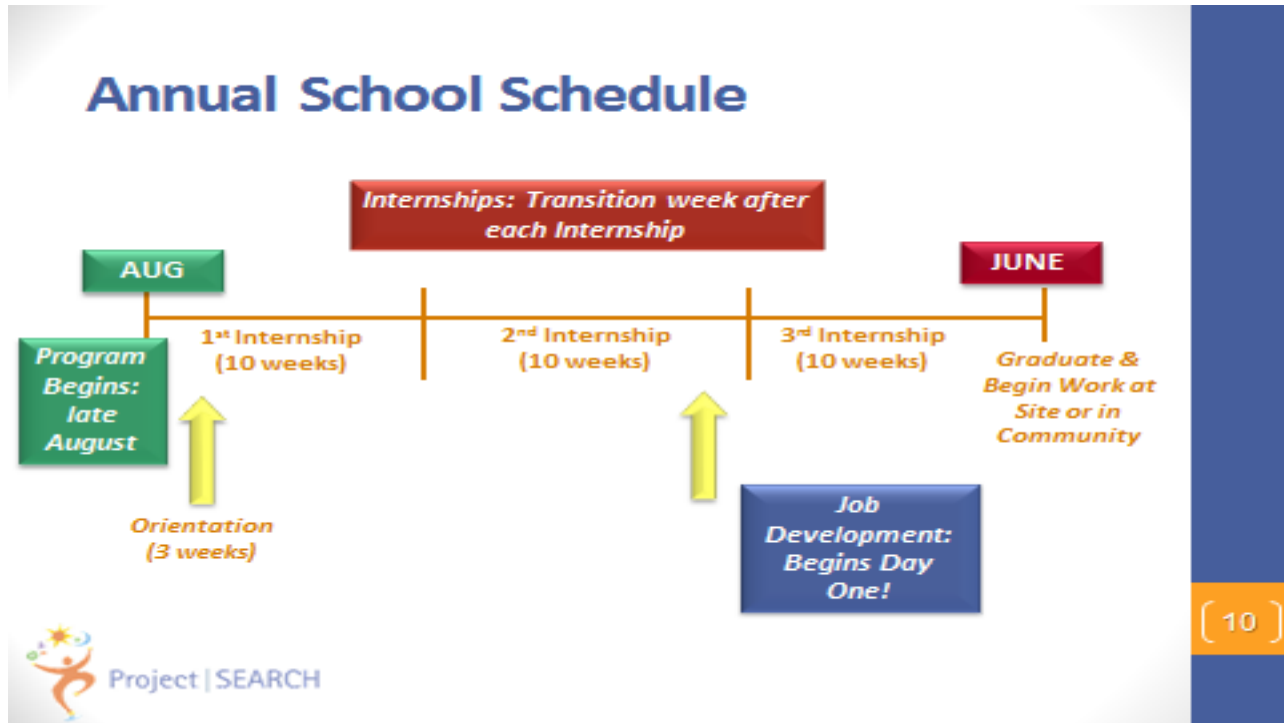
Yes, the students arrive directly to the host business via public transportation (if available in your community) or other independent means (i.e. not a school bus). If possible, they should not report to the high school for any reason. Their school day includes approximately 1.5 hours of Employability Skills curriculum and 5 hours at their internship (including lunch and travel time to the internship sites). To be eligible, the students should be finished with their high school credit requirements for graduation, certification, or completion so that they will be able to focus their entire day on learning competitive and marketable skills.

Typical Project SEARCH Daily Schedule

- 7:50 Arrival at host business site
- 8:00 Employability Skills Curriculum
- 9:00 Internships – learning competitive, marketable skills
- 11:30 Lunch
- 12:00 Internships (continued)
- 2:00 Return to classroom, review of day, journaling,

2:30 Adjournment for day

Below is an annual timeline that notes the major components of the program.



How old do the students need to be to begin the program?

Students need to be at least 18 years old to be considered for the program. Most students are between the ages of 18 and 22.

What if the students need more classes to fulfill their graduation requirements?

Students should have their necessary classes completed. If students need one or two classes and the Project SEARCH Instructor is “highly qualified” to deliver the academic credit within the Project SEARCH program, school districts might make an exception.

Can high school graduates and/or adults be in the program?

The program is designed for transition-aged youth. Many communities would also like to extend this training opportunity to young adults who have graduated but are not working. Project SEARCH classes typically include 10 to 12 students. Young adults who are beyond high school eligibility could fill any open spaces. These individuals may be sponsored by Vocational Rehabilitation, WIA, or a DD agency, or they could pay privately. Adult candidates need to go through the same application process as the students, including interviews, assessments, etc.

Can the students be employed before the school year is over?

The goal of the program for each student is competitive employment. A student can accept a job offer during the school year if a good job match is found (at the host site or elsewhere in the community) and the IEP team is in agreement. At this time, the student becomes an employee and assumes an employee's schedule. For reporting and insurance purposes, the intern can maintain student status for the remainder of the school year.

Do the students have to rotate to other internships if they like the first one?

Project SEARCH is designed to give students the opportunity to have a variety of work experiences, to explore different careers, and to learn competitive work skills in a wide range of settings. This process helps to refine each student's career goal and to prepare each student for employment. However, if a student can gain additional marketable skills *and* if there is a strong possibility of being offered a competitive job, it is often productive for a student to do multiple rotations at a single internship site.

How do the students get to the program?

Wherever public transportation is available, Project SEARCH programs should take advantage of this resource. Vocational Rehabilitation and the school district can work together to provide travel training before the program begins. Some students may be eligible for a para-transit system. Even though students with disabilities are entitled to school transportation, Project SEARCH strongly recommends that students use this transition year to learn to navigate the public transportation system independently. For families that need assistance, the schools can purchase the bus fare. In rural communities, the school may need to provide busses to the host business.

How many students are employed at the host site and what happens to the ones who are not hired?

Our research has shown that about a quarter of the students may be hired at the host business. The other students will need to find employment in the community using the skills they learn from their internship experiences. The program partners—the school, Vocational Rehabilitation, families, and the Community Rehabilitation Partner (CRP)—should work together during the planning process to design the job placement procedures. The Project SEARCH instructor will be able to find jobs for students who are a good job match for the host business. The CRP often takes the lead in the job searches for the remaining Project SEARCH interns.