

# Longitudinal Outcomes of Project SEARCH™ in Upstate New York

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## Abstract

Project SEARCH™ is a successful job readiness program for high school students with disabilities, ages 18-21, and is recognized for its innovative approach and collaborative efforts between business, education and vocational rehabilitative services. Project SEARCH™ employment outcomes far exceed the national average rate of employment for people with disabilities, with a 68% success rate in transitioning students from high school into competitive employment. However, little is known about the long term employment outcomes for the young people who have completed the training program. This study, that includes longitudinal data collected from three Project SEARCH™ sites in Upstate New York that have an impressive 83% success rate overall, provides the first longitudinal analysis of the impact of Project SEARCH™. Data collected as part of this 5-year evaluation project indicate promising trends; and support the notion that the Project SEARCH™ model is successfully preparing young students with disabilities with the skills necessary to both obtain and retain employment in integrated work settings. While these findings are promising, further research is needed to substantiate the reported outcomes.

## Sample

124 students with IDD\* who participated in one of three Project SEARCH™ high school transition programs in Monroe County, NY between 2009 and 2014.

Table 1: Description of Sample (N=124)

	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	68	54.8
Female	56	45.2
<b>Race</b>		
African American	40	32.3
Asian	2	1.6
Caucasian	82	66.1
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic	18	14.5
<b>Disability Classification (primary)</b>		
Autism Spectrum	17	13.7
Blind / Visually Impaired	1	0.8
Deaf / Hearing Impairment	3	2.4
Emotional Disturbance	1	0.8
Intellectual Disability	47	37.9
Learning Disability	15	12.1
Multiple Disabilities	16	12.9
Orthopedic Impairment	1	0.8
Other Health Impairment	14	11.3
Speech or Language Impairment	7	5.6
Traumatic Brain Injury	2	1.6
<b>Eligible and Receiving Services from</b>		
Vocational Rehabilitation	124	100
Developmental Disabilities	93	75

\*IDD: Intellectual and developmental disabilities



## Method

- Demographic data was collected each September, at the start of the program year
- Employment outcomes data was submitted by the partner Supported Employment provider for each site upon program completion each June, and at 6-month intervals for up to 48 months post-exit
- All participant data was de-identified and entered into a Microsoft Excel database for descriptive analysis

## Summary of Findings

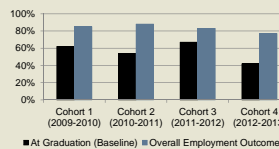
- The average completion rate across all cohorts was 86%
- Almost half (48% of completers) were employed upon completion of program (baseline)
- At hire, graduates work an average of 23 hours/week at \$8.65/hour (NY minimum Wage: \$8/hour)

Table 2: Program Completion Rates and Baseline Employment Outcomes

	Total	Cohort 1 (2009-10)	Cohort 2 (2010-11)	Cohort 3 (2011-12)	Cohort 4 (2012-13)	Cohort 5 (2013-14)
# of Participants	144	14	31	29	33	37
# Completing Program (86%)	124	13 (93%)	24 (77%)	24 (83%)	31 (94%)	32 (86%)
# Employed at Graduation (baseline) (48%)	59	8 (62%)	13 (54%)	16 (67%)	13 (42%)	9 (28%)
# Hired by Host Business (% of completers)	30	6 (51%)	7 (75%)	11 (69%)	8 (62%)	4 (44%)

- The overall rate of employment across all four cohorts was 83%

Figure 1: Comparison of overall Monroe County, NY employment outcomes by cohort.



- There was a steady increase in both hours worked per week and average wage/hour over time

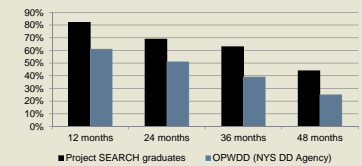
Figures 2 and 3: Average wage and hours worked, reported over time



## Summary of Findings, cont.

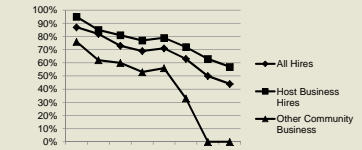
- While job retention diminished over time, Project SEARCH™ graduates maintained employment at a higher rate than reported as typical for people with IDD in NYS

Figure 4: Comparison of rates of job retention for Project SEARCH graduates in Monroe County, NY versus the typical supported employment job retention rates reported by the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD).



- Graduates hired by a Project SEARCH™ host business maintained employment longer than those hired elsewhere in the community.

Figure 5: Comparison of job retention rates over time between (a) participants hired by a Project SEARCH™ host business, (b) participants hired by another community employer, and (c) all participants who obtained employment.



## Contact Information

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