Project SEARCH is a unique business-led transition program for students with disabilities. It provides students who want to work a chance to explore careers and develop transferable job skills. The ultimate goal: independent adults working in a competitive environment.

Designed as an internship program, Project SEARCH places students in real-world situations where they learn all aspects of gaining and maintaining a job. Large organizations—such as banks, hospitals, or universities—host the program. This process of immersion facilitates the teaching and learning of new work skills on-site.

Individualized job development and placement occurs based on the student’s experiences, strengths, and skills. A series of job rotations lasting up to 10 weeks allow students to seek positions that best suit their interests and skills. They receive support with accommodations, adaptations, and on-the-job coaching.

Students who have completed all academic requirements for graduation from high school may apply for enrollment in Project SEARCH. Participants may be 18 to 21 years old.

East Dakota provides Project SEARCH through a partnership with Avera McKennan and Division of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired.

**Possible Internship Opportunities**

- Materials Management
- General Store
- Respiratory Therapy
- Supply Stocker
- Food Service
- Central Sterilization

**Current Project SEARCH host site**

Avera
Project SEARCH

A typical day’s schedule

- School day: August through May, Monday through Friday, 8:15 am to 2:45 pm.

- 8:15-9 a.m.—Students attend employability skills class at the job site. Lessons are based on daily living such as check writing, nutrition, and resume writing.

- 9-11:30 a.m.—Students participate in non-paid job rotations throughout the location.

- 11:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.—Lunch

- 12:00-2:15 p.m.—Students return to job rotations.

- 2:15-2:45 p.m.—Students return to classroom for journal writing/reflection.

Job rotations

- Job rotations last about 10—12 weeks.

- Students are matched to the most appropriate job site based on interest and skills.

- A job coach works with the student until the tasks assigned can be performed independently. The time and instruction is individualized.

- Students are evaluated by the job coach, the instructor, and the department supervisor.

Job placement

Job placement is the final goal of the program. Students can be employed at any time throughout the school year and continue in Project SEARCH. The IEP team—which includes the student, family, Project SEARCH instructor, affiliated school representative, and vocational rehabilitation counselor—meets regularly to discuss performance at work sites. The team assists each student in defining a career goal.

Eligibility criteria

- 18-21 years old

- Current Individual Education Plan

- All academic requirements for high school graduation met

- At least second grade reading and math skills

- Basic communication skills

- Appropriate social, grooming, and hygiene skills

- Independent toileting and feeding skills

- Passed drug screening and background checks

- Updated immunizations

Contact:

**East Dakota**
(605) 322-5071 or (605)-367-7680 x102