

Bringing a Local Success Story to Scale:

A Local Transition-to-Work Program Influencing Statewide Systems Change Efforts

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A Little History:

- ❑ New York late to an employment first philosophy
- ❑ Rochester, NY
- ❑ Institute for Innovative Transition
- ❑ Erin Riehle
- ❑ Project SEARCH™ at URMC

Background: Employment options

Sheltered workshops
Work activity centers

Individual or group
supported employment

Competitive
employment

Fully supported
work environment

Independent
work environment

Project SEARCH™: Key concepts

- Business led collaboration with education, rehabilitation and long term support
- Braided funding
- Immersion and impact
- Training in real work settings
- Low risk, low cost for business
- Hiring students who are “good fit”

Project SEARCH™: Goals and outcomes

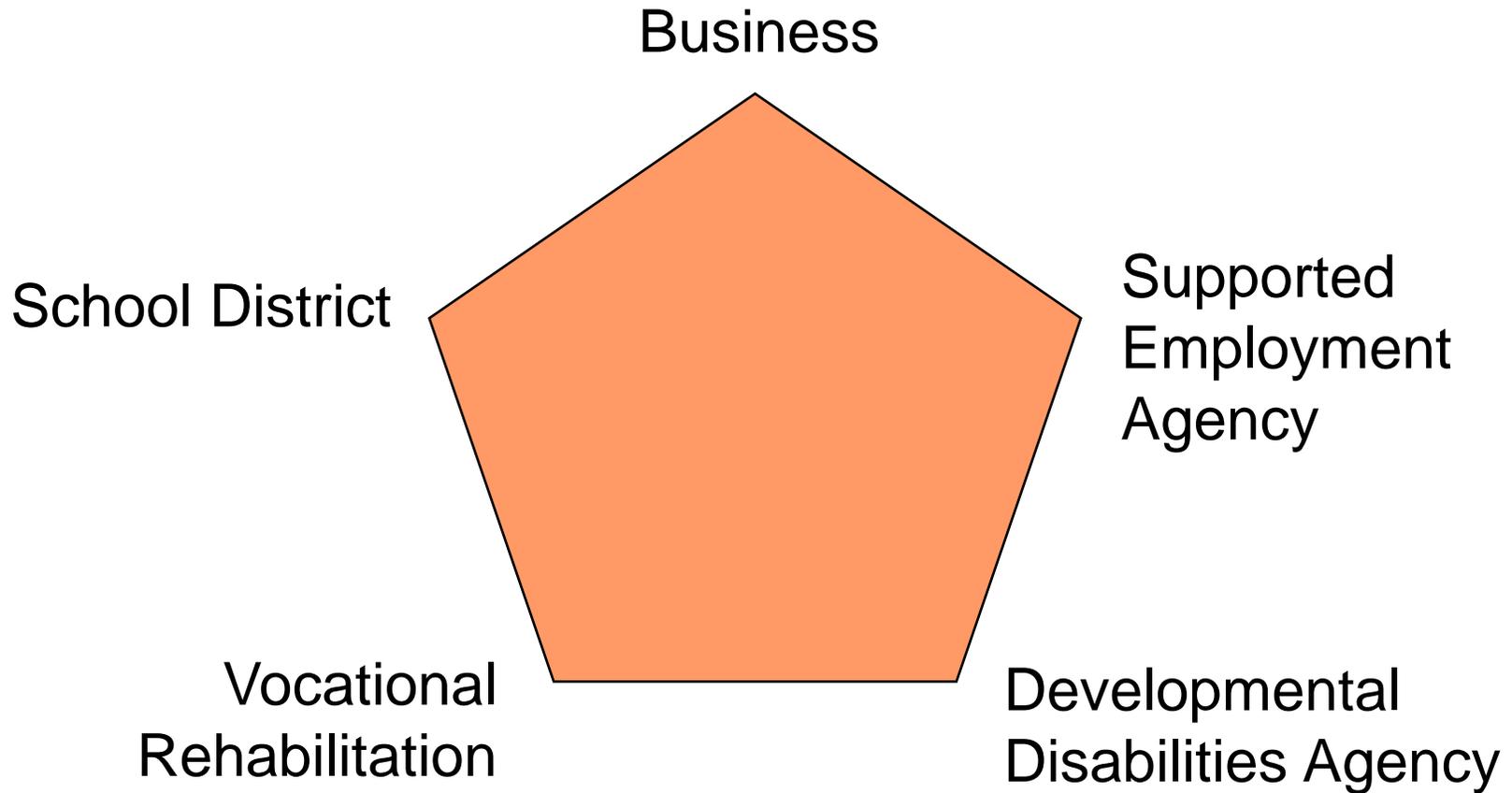
Provide employability skills training to students with significant disabilities through on-site immersion in a business.

- Project SEARCH™ participants obtain and maintain competitive employment in the business or like business in the community.

Provide supports to the business to encourage the hiring of individuals with disabilities

- The business will give consideration for employment to individuals with significant disabilities.

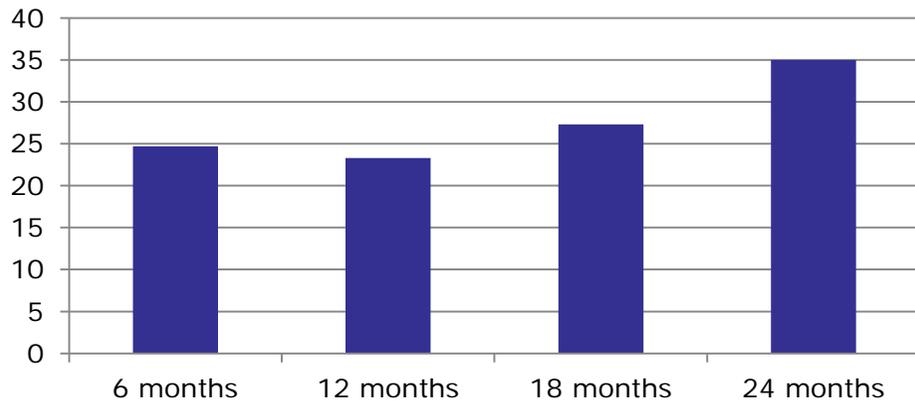
Project SEARCH™: Collaboration model



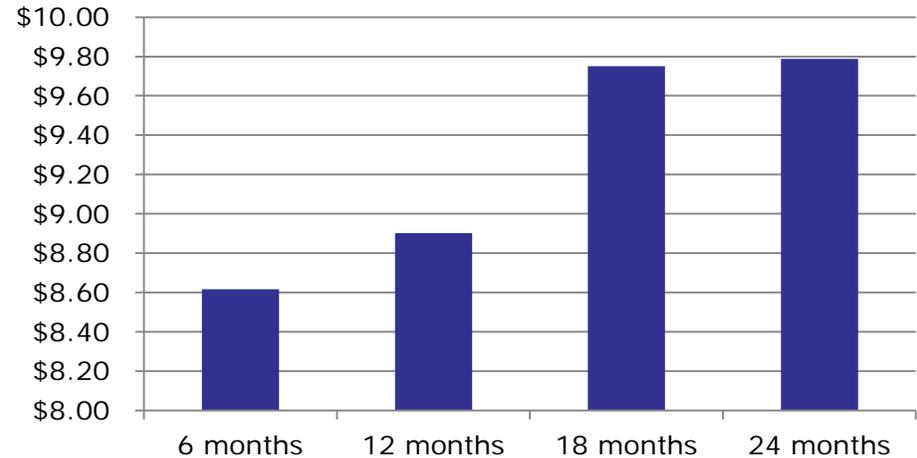
Summary: Outcome evaluation

- Graduates who maintain employment are growing in their positions

Avg. # Hours per Week Employed



Avg. Rate per Hour Earned



Summary: Outcome evaluation

- Promising results in first three years
 - 74 participants
 - Completion rate: 80%
- 85% of program graduates transitioned into competitive, integrated employment
 - 70% hired by partner host business
- Graduates work an average of 23 hours per week at \$8.52/hour at hire (range: \$7.25 - \$12.19)

AIDD's Charge

There is an opportunity and expectation through these grants to encourage states to:

- ❑ ensure leadership that is going to support collaboration;
- ❑ strategically use policy, funding, training and service delivery, and data in a coordinated manner;
- ❑ innovate to address identified challenges.

The ultimate goal is to better prepare students and young adults with I/DD for competitive, integrated employment when transitioning out of secondary or postsecondary services.

Focus on Collaboration

Mandated partners:

- State DD agency
- VR
- Special Education
- DD Planning Council

Success at local level leading to change at NYS level

Implementation of Project SEARCH™ led to:

- ❑ Increased conversation and group learning across systems
- ❑ Earlier referrals to VR and DD
- ❑ Informed readiness to work curriculum in transition classrooms
- ❑ Challenged traditional approach to work study programs
- ❑ Improved connection between adult agencies and area businesses

Bringing collaboration to scale:

- ❑ **Employment First-** belief that employment is attainable for all
- ❑ Need to assess for and train towards least restrictive employment options
- ❑ Integrated, competitive employment as Gold Standard:
 - 20+ hours per week at prevailing wage
 - Fully integrated within work environment, utilizing natural supports

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Informing statewide systems change

- ❑ Success of local programs 
- ❑ Statewide recognition 
- ❑ Collaboration of NYS agencies to develop AIDD employment systems change proposal 
- ❑ Working together to implement NYS's Employment First policy- challenging relationships 

What Have We Learned?

- ❑ Change is hard especially when your governor wants to be President and CMS is saying your state owes them billions of dollars
- ❑ Some people don't like it when you take away services, i.e. sheltered workshops
- ❑ In a state as large and diverse as New York regional efforts are more likely to be successful
- ❑ Success breeds success
- ❑ State agencies actually can work together

Changes in New York:

- ❑ Our DD agency is working to close the door to new enrollment in sheltered workshops
- ❑ Our VR agency is increasing access to funding for agencies to provide job coaching for transition age youth
- ❑ Our Office of Special Education is beginning to see their role in encouraging and supported integrated, competitive employment through the Transition Plan
- ❑ New curriculum and new programs throughout the state



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