

## Project SEARCH and UNC TEACCH Autism Program: Transition from Secondary School to Employment for Young Adults with ASD.

The Project SEARCH model for school-to-work transition features total workplace immersion to facilitate the teaching and learning process through continuous feedback and application of new skills. The Project SEARCH High School Transition Program is a one-year, worksite-based school program that provides training in independent living, employability skills, and specific job skills; job placement assistance; job coaching; on-the-job support; and career advancement opportunities. While in the program, students spend their entire school day at the workplace learning in an onsite classroom and experiencing a variety of non-traditional jobs at sites throughout the workplace. The cornerstone of this program is a customized career exploration package for each student. The goal for each student is competitive employment upon graduation. Project SEARCH goes beyond the traditional “easy” jobs, such as food or environmental services, and targets nontraditional, complex but systematic jobs that allow people with significant disabilities to maximize their potential in independent work settings. In addition, the presence of Project SEARCH in workplaces encourages positive institution-wide changes in attitudes about hiring people with disabilities and the range of jobs in which they can be successful.

The UNC TEACCH Autism Program joined with Project SEARCH in 2012 and added tools and accommodations specifically geared for students with ASD. By incorporating tools such as the TTAP (TEACCH Transition Assessment Profile) for pre-assessment work, goal setting, daily data collection, post assessment work and recording of learned skills, and Structured TEACCHing accommodations, students who have ASD have had the opportunity to benefit and thrive within the Project SEARCH model. The TTAP also involves assessment, goal setting and teaching of skills in other areas important for successful adult outcomes, including leisure skills. Students graduating from this program experienced a more seamless transition from Secondary School to employment and the adult world.