

# *Teaching Real Work: Evidence Based Skill Building in Project SEARCH*

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# Meet Us!

*We have been changed for GOOD!*



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# Agenda

1

Icebreaker Question &  
Discussion

2

What is Project  
SEARCH?

3

Fastest Growing  
Trends for  
Employment

4

Soft Skills in the  
Workplace

5

Work Training Tasks,  
Effective Transition Programs,  
& Building Partnerships

# Audience Interaction

- ✓ Scan the QR Code to answer the question:
- ✓ What was your first job where you earned a paycheck?

*Thank you for your participation!*



# Our Philosophy



Our Interns are Unlimited!

# What we are, What we do



Project SEARCH is a unique, one year, intensive unpaid internship program hosted by a local business.

Partners between a school district, community resource provider, host site, and vocational rehabilitation.

Program designed for students who have completed their high school requirements, post high school.

Transportation is not provided by the school district to the host site.

Goal of obtaining competitive, community-integrated employment.



Project | SEARCH®



# *Internship Experiences*

## **All realistic work tasks:**

Environmental Services EVS (custodial)

Cafeteria/Dietary Services

Starbucks (Barista)

Stocking

Supply Chain

Order fulfillment

Maintenance

Project SEARCH provides students with a combination of work skills and interpersonal soft skills instruction. Functional curriculum is included to support the instructor through daily lessons.



# Tailoring our Internships



1

Multi-departmental experiences

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2

Locate, use and be familiar with a variety of supplies

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3

Expanding Responsibilities

*"Some things I cannot change, but 'til I try I'll never know".*

# Growing Skill Set and Stamina

- 4 hour work shift
- Highlighting already present skills
- Monthly employment meetings to discuss progress
- All students are provided with a checklist and tasks are gradually added
- Intensive job coaching that fades, but never do work for student



**Mindset: Every  
Student is Employable**

**No Labor is Unskilled  
Labor**

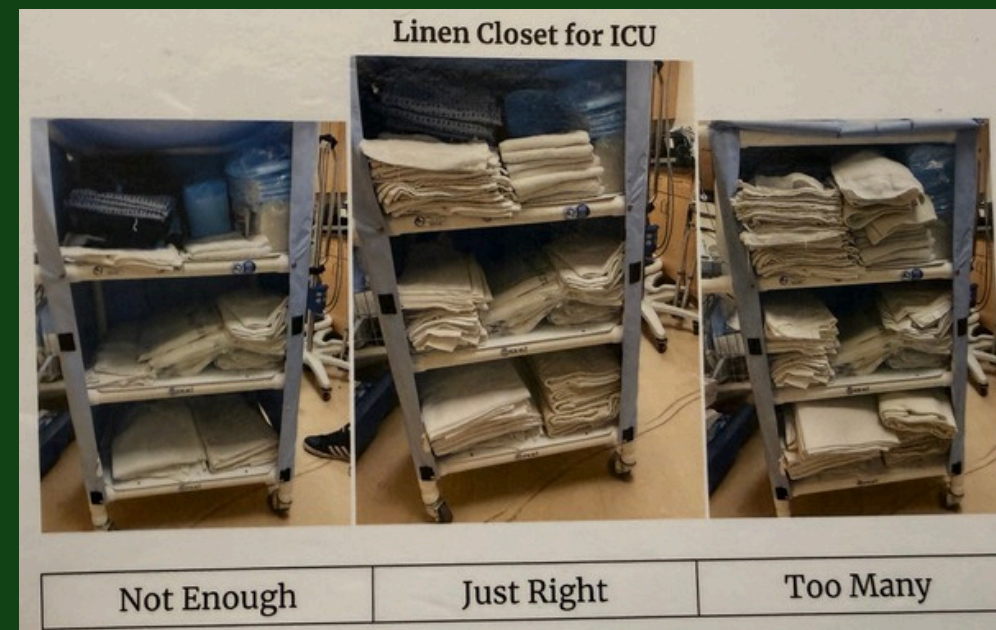
# Student Checklists

## Dining Services

Time Frame	Cafeteria:
9:00 AM	Start Work in Cafeteria:
(Red Bucket & Splash of solution) Stock= ADD Clean Tables/ Counters (Red Bucket) Clean Chairs (Green Bucket) *New Task = New Gloves No Breaks!	<input type="checkbox"/> Wipe down ALL tables - No Bucket? Make one *Squeeze rag until NO drips come out* <input type="checkbox"/> Sweep Broom & Dustpan (not too loud) <input type="checkbox"/> Stock Silverware (Knives, Spoons & Forks) <input type="checkbox"/> Stock Napkins <input type="checkbox"/> Stock Condiments (Ketchup, Mustard, Mayo, Hot Sauce, Honey Mustard, BBQ Sauce, & Salt/Pepper) <input type="checkbox"/> Stock Grocery Bags <input type="checkbox"/> Wipe down countertops (red bucket) <input type="checkbox"/> Wipe down Condiment counter (move items out of the way and then put them back) <input type="checkbox"/> Stock Coffee items (Honey, Lemon, Sugars, Half and Half, Cups, Straws, Stirrers & Hot Cocoa) <input type="checkbox"/> Wipe down Coffee Area <input type="checkbox"/> Change Garbage (add bag to can before putting can back) <input type="checkbox"/> Clean Chairs (Green Bucket) <input type="checkbox"/> 10AM Stock Drinks (Use Cart) <input type="checkbox"/> 10AM Stock Chips (Push cart into Kitchen & fill neatly)
Complete all tasks? Perform tasks again, starting with wiping down tables	Wear Gloves: <input type="checkbox"/> Wipe Highchair once per day unless used (Scrub to remove all scum) <input type="checkbox"/> Wipe inside Microwave (Scrub to remove all scum, roof and sides use plastic knife if needed interior & exterior)
10:55	STOP working, use bathroom & wash hands with soap & water
11:00-11:30	LUNCH
11:35-2:00pm	Perform same tasks as above
Supervisors: Mitchell, Jonathan, Tia, Isabelle *Wear gloves when working- Gloves & Masks are optional	

Nathan MONDAY  
EVS Internship #2

Time Frame	Task
8:30 AM	Arrive at Department <input type="checkbox"/> Dust Cafeteria Windows <input type="checkbox"/> Dust Starbucks Windows <input type="checkbox"/> Supplies: Duster <input type="checkbox"/> Switch out sticky stuff?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dust Main Lobby <input type="checkbox"/> Supplies: Duster <input type="checkbox"/> Sanitize Tables <input type="checkbox"/> Supplies: Virex and Rag
	<input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum Main Lobby Carpets <input type="checkbox"/> Vacuum Carpet outside Classroom



## Project SEARCH Work Internship Medical Surgical Unit Intern- Caleb Amos

	<b>*Before leaving classroom bring with you:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> This Checklist & Marker <input type="checkbox"/> Large Garbage Bags <input type="checkbox"/> Put headphones into backpack
	9:00 AM Start Work: 1. Locate department Cart & Tie large garbage bag onto handle 2. Stock Isolation Cubbies - 2632* Fold empty boxes from gloves, gowns & masks and put into garbage bag on cart
<b>*DO NOT go inside patient rooms</b> <b>*Working Not Talking</b>	<b>*Put Gloves On</b> 3. *Use cart* Move Used Trays to Soiled Utility Room 
	<b>*Put Gloves On</b> 4. Change large Garbages Bring to Soiled Utility Room 5. Stock Linen Carts *Use printed photo for visual* 
<b>*Use your Checklist</b> <b>*Call Megan or Jessica if you need help!</b>	
11:00-11:30	Eat lunch, check in with Jessica & Megan
11:35-2pm	Work

# Evaluation Tool

Social Behavior		Job Performance	
Emotional Regulation		Follows Directions	
Makes Eye Contact		Completes Task Accurately	
Appropriate Social Interaction		Arrives on time for work and leaves on time	
Admits Mistakes		Attendance	
Accepts Praise		Follows Rules and Regulations	
Cooperative and Curteous		Works well with Coworkers	
Positive Attitude		Works at appropriate rate	
		Follows Chain of Command	
		Initiates New tasks	
		Attends to job tasks consistently	
		Accepts Constructive Criticism or Feedback	
		Work Stamina	
		Daily Problem Solving	
		Completes Work Independently	
		Corrects Mistakes Efficiently	
Communication			
Listens and Pays Attention			
Expresses Personal Needs			
Respects the Rights and Privacy of Others			
Self Advocacy			
Communicates Adequately			
Appearance			
Body Hygiene			
Maintains Clean Appearance			
Dresses Appropriately for the Job			

Every Department Expecations	
Not Distracted by Phone	
Work in Designated Area	
Phone in Pocket	
App Convo w/ Public	
Repeat Tasks as Needed	
App. Use of Supplies	
Department Specific: EVS	
Sanitizing	
Stock Cart	
Garbage Collection	
Mop & Sweep	
Dusting	
Locate Supplies	

Specific to Department Supply Chain	
Sanitizing	
Stock Cart Efficiently	
Organize Stock Room	
Use Box Cutter Safely	
Sweep Shop	
Remember Codes	
Locate Supplies	

Specific to Department Nutrition	
Stocking	
Portioning	
Remember Codes	
Intentory	
Locate Supplies	

Specific to Department EVS	
App Use of Supplies	
Sanitizing	
Linen	
Sweep & Mop	
Remember Codes	
Follow Time Increments	
Locate Supplies	

# Fastest Growing Trends or Entry Level Employment

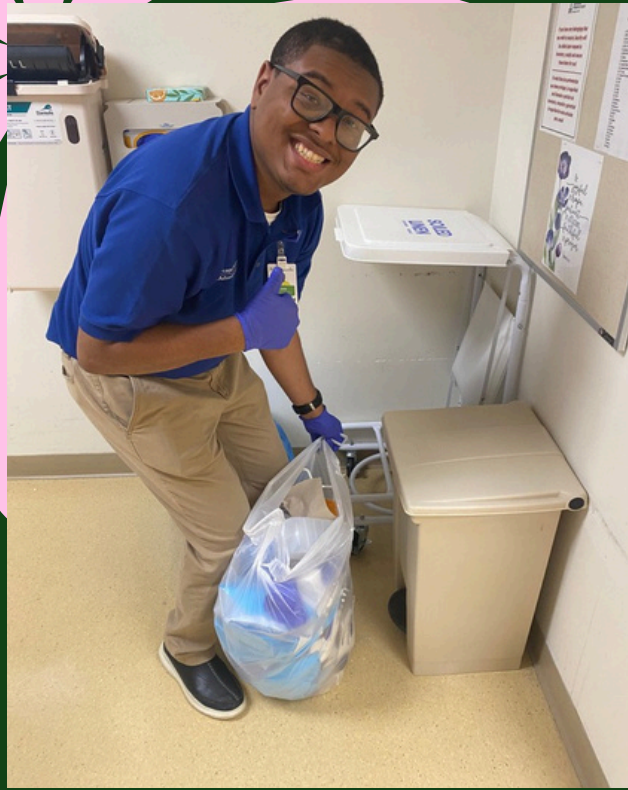


Top 10 In Demand Statewide: High School Diploma/GED or Less

Occ. Code	Occupation Title	2023 Jobs Estimated	2030 Jobs Projected	Unempl. Rate	3 Year Growth	Total Exits	Total Transfers	3 Year Total Demand	Annual Demand	Entry Level Wages, Annual	Median Wages, Annual	Experienced Wages, Annual	Entry Level Wages, Hourly	Median Wages, Hourly	Experienced Wages, Hourly	Entry-Level Education Requirements
35-3023	Fast Food Workers	131,101	128,557	8.6%	-2,545	81,775	68,253	147,483	29,497	\$30,300	\$33,700	\$36,500	\$14.59	\$16.19	\$17.57	None
53-7065	Stockers and Order Fillers	132,846	130,552	9.0%	-2,294	65,349	38,556	101,611	20,322	\$33,900	\$40,500	\$45,500	\$16.31	\$19.47	\$21.89	High school diploma or equivalent
53-7062	Laborers Material Movers, Hand	163,582	160,526	9.6%	-3,056	67,551	36,992	101,487	20,297	\$34,300	\$41,700	\$48,700	\$16.49	\$20.05	\$23.40	None
41-2011	Cashiers	121,285	109,625	10.2%	-11,660	55,684	51,184	95,208	19,042	\$29,600	\$32,100	\$35,500	\$14.24	\$15.46	\$17.06	None
41-2031	Retail Salespersons	136,058	129,842	6.5%	-6,216	53,738	41,286	68,808	17,762	\$30,600	\$35,600	\$44,400	\$14.73	\$17.10	\$21.37	None
35-3031	Waiters and Waitresses	85,379	81,892	7.3%	-3,487	51,185	33,435	81,134	16,227	\$29,900	\$32,400	\$39,600	\$14.39	\$15.56	\$19.06	None
31-1122	Personal Care Aides	93,870	98,494	4.9%	4,624	31,342	35,681	71,647	14,329	\$32,600	\$37,300	\$39,400	\$15.66	\$17.92	\$18.96	High school diploma or equivalent
37-2011	Janitors and Cleaners	102,652	99,745	6.5%	-2,907	37,072	32,563	66,738	13,346	\$32,200	\$38,700	\$44,400	\$15.46	\$18.59	\$21.33	None
43-4051	Customer Service Representatives	111,677	104,516	5.9%	-7,161	42,989	27,067	62,895	12,579	\$35,300	\$46,000	\$55,100	\$16.98	\$22.12	\$26.48	High school diploma or equivalent
43-9061	Office Clerks	105,289	98,200	4.8%	-7,089	31,450	26,957	51,319	10,264	\$33,900	\$45,900	\$54,900	\$16.29	\$22.05	\$26.41	High school diploma or equivalent

Resource: Illinois Workforce Demand

# Matching Skills to Work Training



**Fast Food worker:** sanitize tables, garbage collection, sweep, stock, food prep, inventory, cashier,

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**Resturant (dish/bussing):** lift up to 50 lbs., standing long periods, attention to detail, dexterity, decent eye sight, knowledge of chemicals, safety awareness with knives/tools

*"Listen to me, you can do this, you can do anything." – Elphaba*

# Matching Skills to Work Training



**Stocker/ Order Filler:** recognize numbers & text, organize, select items, be able to withstand cold or hot temps.

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**Cashier:** Count money, customer service skills, speed, physically stand, dexterity, lift up to 25 lbs

# Matching Skills to Work Training



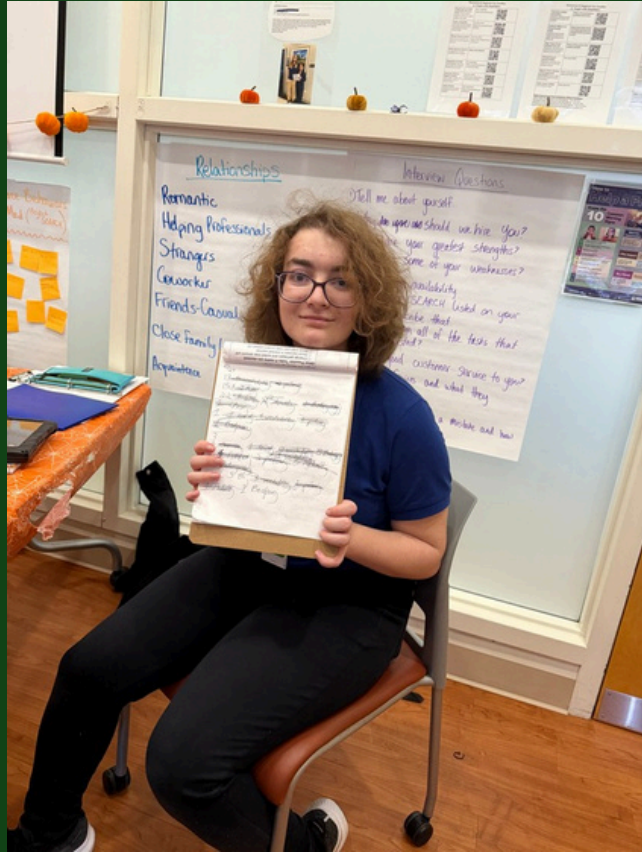
**Laborers/ Material Movers:** Pushing Carts & Bagging or online grocery pick-up

Skills: Assess fragilibility & durability of items, ability to withstand weather, assess reasonable amounts, push carts, safety in parking lot

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*"Unlimited, My future is Unlimited." Elphaba*

# Matching Skills to Work Training



**Retail sales person:** Communication, sorting, hanging items, using a tag gun, matching like items, colorizing and sizing, product knowledge, folding, matching items to a department

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*"I'm through accepting limits 'cause someone says they're so." – Elphaba*

# Soft Skills in the Workplace



Needed for all: accuracy, work at appropriate rate, problem solving skills, customer service skills, take direction/feedback, stamina, work appropriate conversations, personal hygiene, remain in designated areas, working as a member of a team, interacting with the public, basic customer service skills

*"It's time to trust my instincts, close my eyes and leap." – Elphaba*

# Social Skill Development



U.S. Department of Labor: Soft Skills: The Competitive Edge

**Networking:** Verbally talking with others, approaching people you do not know, introduce yourself, responding appropriately to others (bosses and customers)

**Enthusiasm:** Positive attitude, willing to learn, engaged during an interview, taking initiative, complete tasks without being asked

**Professionalism:** Dressed to impress, arrive on time and stay productive during work hours, stay off cell phone, interact in a respectful way with anyone you come into contact with (coworkers, customers, supervisors, etc.), act professionally when you are “onsite” & take initiative

*These skills are ones for which our students require explicit instruction and structured opportunities for practice.*

# Social Skill Development



U.S. Department of Labor: Soft Skills: The Competitive Edge

**Communication Skills:** greeting others, knowing when and how to express your opinion, notice when others are busy, listen to others, asking questions & confirming what you heard

**Teamwork:** be a good teammate, knowing when to lead and when to follow, positive interactions, asking for help, responding appropriately when told what to do, following directions

**Problem Solving and Critical Thinking:** Use understanding of the workplace to problem solve in the moment, realize you are a worker and not responsible for making changes.

*These skills are ones for which our students require explicit instruction and structured opportunities for practice.*

# Transition Program Essentials

- Mindset of ALL staff: Every Student can Work
- Model appropriate professional work behavior
- Do activities to gauge student's skillset
- Build Rapport to encourage growth & confidence
- Get students into the community!
- Mimic tasks of realistic employment
- Give honest feedback
- Have conversations with parents about realistic employment opportunities
- Do not discourage college but encourage part-time employment to build skills first



- Encourage Students:
  - to be open to various employment opportunities
  - Student independence
  - Work Stamina (4 hour shift)
  - to make connections with one another
  - to take risks and try new things

# Ineffective Work Tasks

- ✔ Office tasks: Shredding, filing, stuffing envelopes, data entry or clerical work, phone calls, taking notes
- ✔ Arts & Crafts: Hobbies not work tasks, assembling jewelry, coloring, cutting, busy work, etc.
- ✔ Classroom only life skills with no real application: mock-job applications, writing resumes, reading about job experiences, budget worksheets, group projects that don't mirror real work environments,
- ✔ Unindividualized: activities that don't reflect student interests or goals, career exploration that ignores student preferences

# Building Partnerships

Community Resource Mapping- ICTW video

Establishing Work Site Training Agreements- ICTW video

- “What work can our students do to alleviate labor from your workers?”
- Assure business that students will be coached
- Frequent communication with business to ensure students are supported
- Disability training for staff working with our students
- \*Transition Programs should be time for career exploration **and** time to build work training\*

*“Everyone deserves the chance to fly!” – Elphaba*

# Partnering with Local Businesses

1

This may take time and convincing (it may be difficult)

2

What businesses already support your school district?  
What connections to parents have?

3

Take student interest in mind, where do your students shop?

4

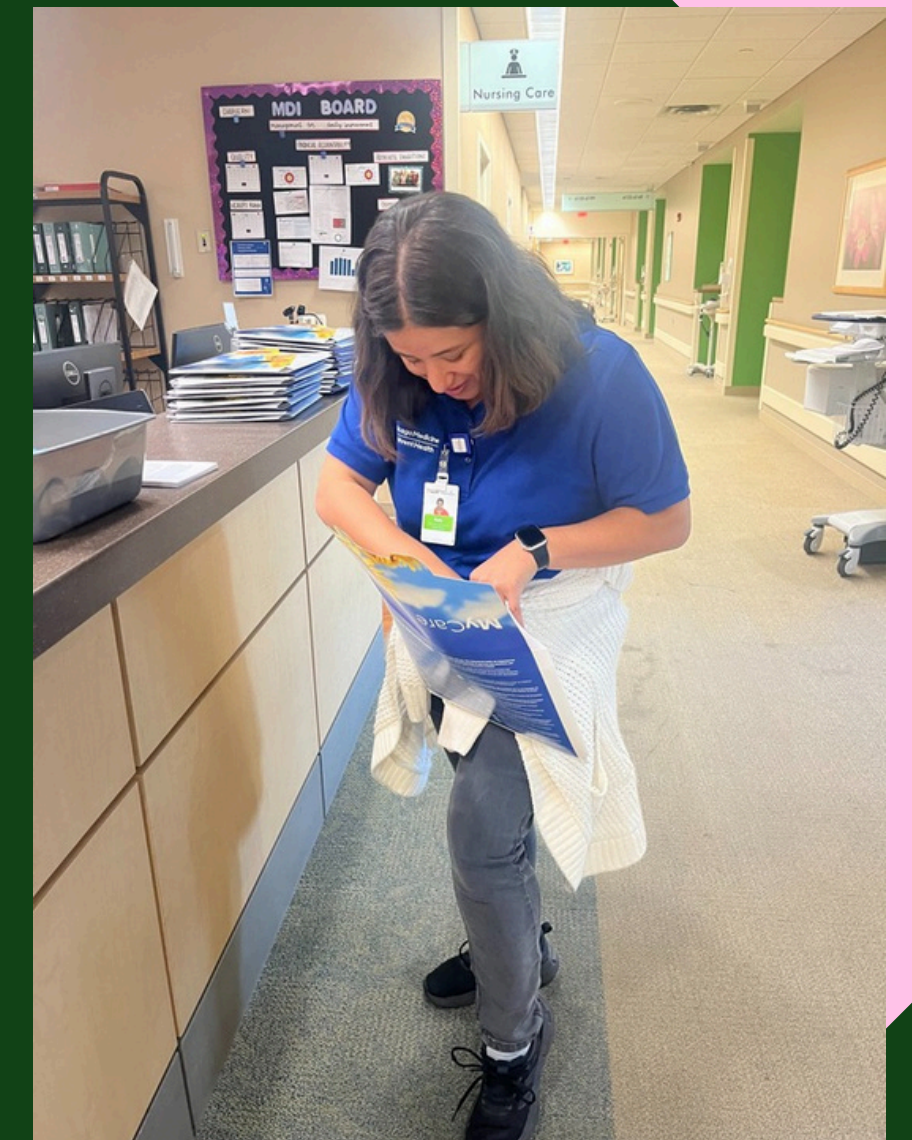
Needed for success: Job coaches, transportation & Support from Administration is needed

5

Connect with Chamber of Commerce, Food Service in your buildings,  
\*Authentic experiences happen outside of school buildings\*

# Consequences of not challenging our students...

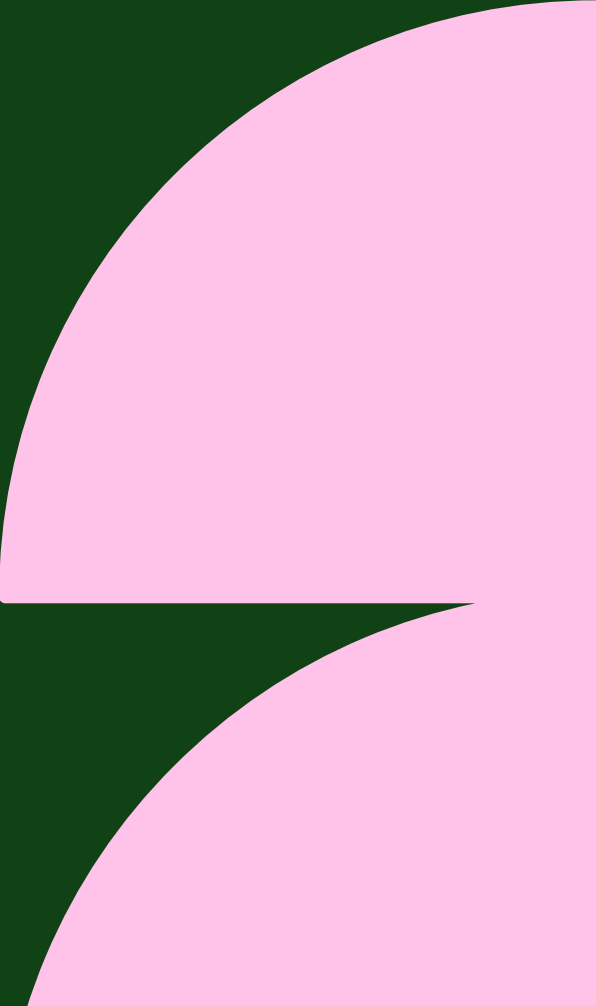
- ✓ Irregular Emotional Regulation
- ✓ Close Minded & Ableist
- ✓ Inability to maintain employment
- ✓ Low Stamina
- ✓ Expecting “sit down job”
- ✓ Not prepared for the workforce



\*All lead to discouragement due to unrealistic expectations\*

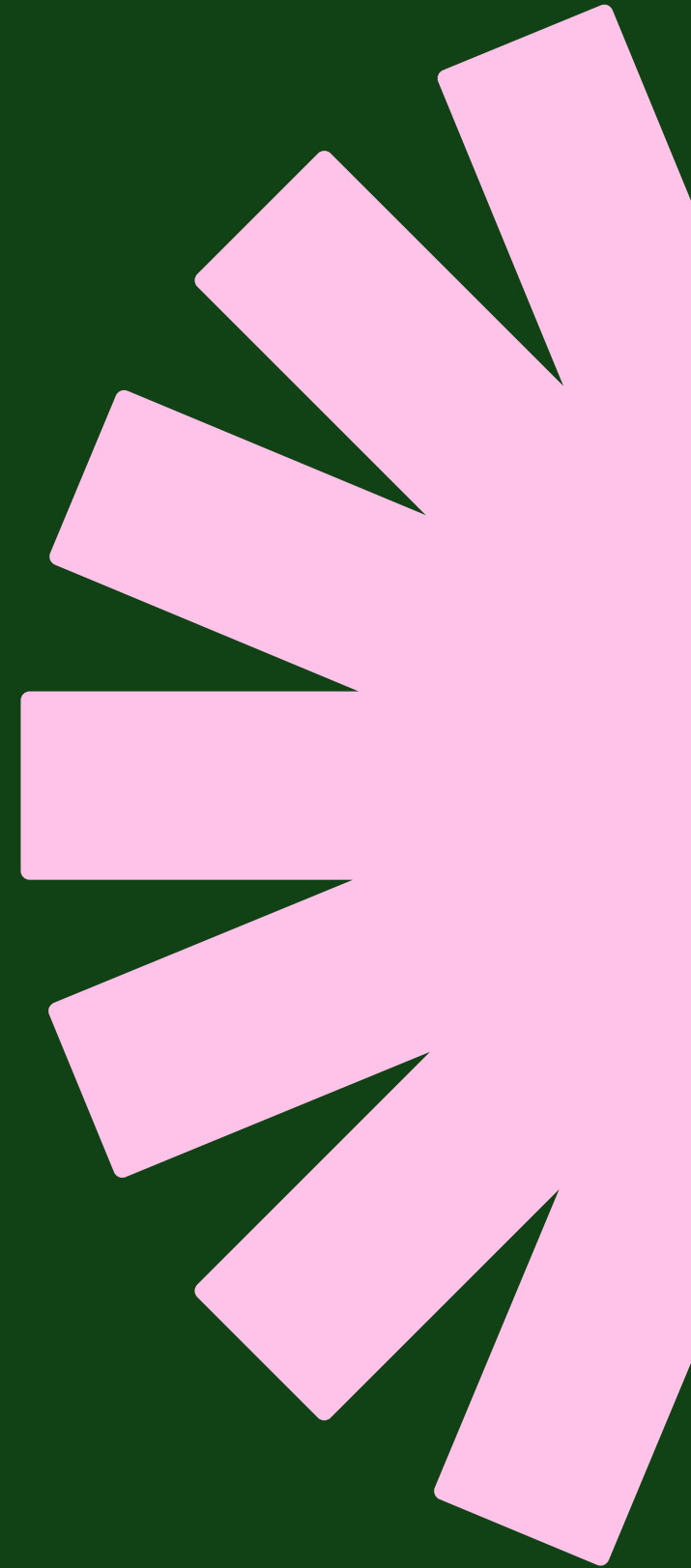


# *Partnering Interagency Collaboration*

- Connect families and students with local CRP
  - Agency provide PD for Job coaches in the School district
  - Agency tours & presentations about services to teachers
  - Canvas local businesses
  - Connect with Chamber of Commerce
  - Utilize DRS as a resource
- 

# Where to Start?

- ✔ Connect with local Community Resource Providers in your area
- ✔ Meet as a transition team to discuss current work training tasks
- ✔ Increase work training shifts to build work stamina
- ✔ Start partnering with local businesses to get your students into the community next school year
- ✔ Contact Joy Burgess about getting a Project SEARCH in your district/area  
email: [joy.burress@cchmc.org](mailto:joy.burress@cchmc.org)





# Success Stories



**Brooke**  
Full Time EVS  
Associate



**Papa**  
Walmart Stocker



**Michael**  
Portilos  
Patio Attendant



# Success Stories



**Megan**  
Goodwill



**Jerry**  
Gym Custodian



**Silvio**  
EVS Floor Tech



# Resources

Illinois Board of Higher Education. (2025). 2024–2029 top 10 occupations in demand: Narrative report.

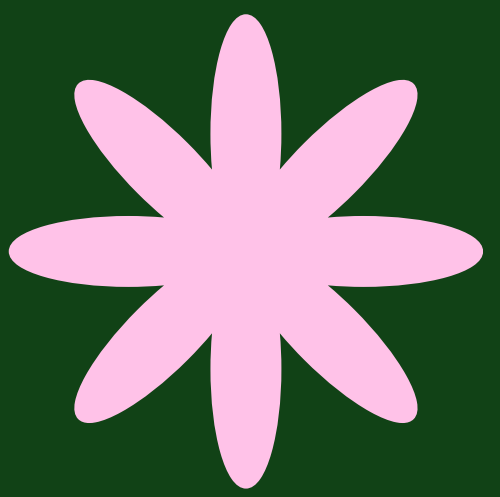
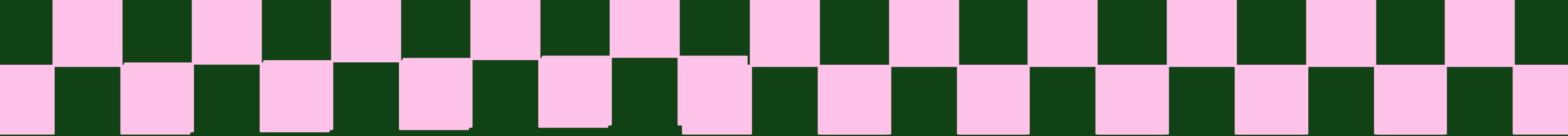
[https://www.ibhe.org/assets/files/Workforce\\_data/2024-2029\\_Top\\_10\\_Occupations\\_In\\_Demand\\_Narrative\\_Report.pdf](https://www.ibhe.org/assets/files/Workforce_data/2024-2029_Top_10_Occupations_In_Demand_Narrative_Report.pdf)

U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy. (n.d.). Soft skills: The competitive edge.

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/publications/fact-sheets/soft-skills-the-competitive-edge>

*"My future is unlimited." – Elphaba*





*Thank  
You*

