



Charleston County School District
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Media Release

CCSD's Project SEARCH Transitions to MUSC

Charleston, SC (December 2, 2025) – Charleston County School District (CCSD) has long recognized the success of Project SEARCH, a seven-year-old program offered by CCSD, which has served over 50 students. [Project SEARCH](#) is a collaborative partnership between the Charleston County School District's Department of Exceptional Children, MUSC, and South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation. Together, these partners provide students with disabilities a year-long, immersive internship experience that builds real-world job skills. This collaboration ensures strong training, supported employment opportunities, and a smooth transition from school to competitive work.

The program is further enhanced by the collaboration and support of additional community partners, including the Family Resource Center, AccessAbility, and the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD).

The Project SEARCH program is designed for students with disabilities who have completed four years of high school and want to gain real-world work experience and transition into competitive employment.

The program, formerly operated out of Embassy Suites in North Charleston, transitioned to the Medical University of Charleston (MUSC) this year. Six interns from Charleston Charter School for Math and Science, James Island Charter, R.B. Stall, Wando, and West Ashley high schools have completed their first rotation at MUSC in three departments - linens, food service, and central supply.

Mary Stahl, CCSD Director of Secondary Exceptional Children Services and Supports with the Department of Exceptional Children, said CCSD is excited to partner with MUSC, where students receive authentic work experience in a hospital setting.

"We really see a great value in the opportunity that Project SEARCH presents," said Stahl. "In Charleston County School District, our goal is to increase job readiness skills for students and to focus on college and career readiness, and this opportunity provides that in a supported environment."

In addition to hands-on work across the hospital, Project SEARCH provides a comprehensive classroom approach. Students can apply skills such as communication, problem-solving, and other academic skills in a real-world environment.

Shykeria King, Program Coordinator for Adult and Ambulatory Programs and Volunteer Services with MUSC, said the collaboration was a great opportunity to further tap into the community, and it aligns very well with MUSC's overall mission.



"We're always finding ways to innovate and to enrich the communities that we serve," said King. "Project SEARCH is an excellent opportunity to provide employment opportunities to students right here in our own backyard."

Taught by instructor Robert Veronee, the intensive, year-long experience requires interns to complete three 10-week rotations in different areas of MUSC's main hospital. Chris Evans, the Vocational Rehabilitation skills trainer, offers daily hands-on, individualized job-skills coaching to support interns in developing workplace readiness.

"Our goal is for each intern to gain transferable, real-world skills that lead to competitive employment," said Veronee.

The interns are treated like actual MUSC employees, and in just a few short months, the students have won the affection of department staff.

"Day to day, it is great for our departments to have those extra hands," added King. "It has also been meaningful to the employees who work in the areas our interns are serving in. The feedback has been wonderful, but most importantly, it opens doors to job opportunities to a population who may not have been on the radar. Many of the supervisors in each area are ready to offer these interns a job."

Intern Aaron Burison is a graduate of James Island Charter High School and has big dreams of pursuing a career in film or TV production. He said the program is helping him to learn skills that will prepare him for his future.

"The experience has helped me to become a hard worker and has helped me build strong relationships with other people," explained Burison. "I am learning how to do tasks correctly, and my favorite part of Project SEARCH is getting to meet new people."

Xavier Toomer is a West Ashley High School graduate, and he enjoys the program because he is learning new things.

"I have learned new skills such as active listening, paying attention, and remembering how to do things," said Toomer. "I am really proud of learning to do things right. Project SEARCH is helping me to get the skills I will need to work in a grocery store one day."

Veronee said Project SEARCH is giving these young adults opportunities and experiences they might not otherwise receive, experiences that prepare them for meaningful, long-term careers.

"During our time at MUSC, I've seen departments and staff truly embrace our interns, even asking about interns who have already moved on to their next rotation," explained Veronee. "It's incredibly rewarding to watch the interns grow so much in such a short window of time; their confidence, independence, and skill development often exceed even their own expectations. Our interns bring an added sense of community to each department, and teams naturally come together to support, encourage, and celebrate their growth and success."

Rhonda Keenan is a parent of a Project SEARCH Intern. Her son, Ben, is a graduate of Wando High School. She said her son has become significantly more self-confident and has established numerous new relationships with MUSC staff.

“He has gained meaningful skills from this experience, such as the importance of punctuality, showing up, and doing his best on any task he is given,” said Rhonda. “The staff and the job coaches have been amazing. They do a great job of communicating, and we are always updated on his progress. His IEP is supported, accommodations are made as needed, and I feel like I can always reach out if I have questions or concerns.”

Rhonda called the project SEARCH experience a reassuring one.

“As a parent of a special needs child, you always worry about what is going to come after high school,” said Rhonda. “The opportunity to be involved in this program allows him to make that transition from school to work, which is all we could ever want for him.”

Ben said his goals are to be employed at Top Golf, and he feels that Project SEARCH has enabled him to work independently and transition into the workforce.

“We are so grateful to all of our partners who make this possible for our students,” said Stahl. “This program highlights all of the skills our young adults need to become successful in the community. We are grateful for the opportunities that are provided in the hospital setting for our interns and the collaborative partnership we have developed with MUSC.”

For more information, contact the Office of Communications at (843) 937-6303.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally accredited school district committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves approximately 50,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse portfolio of educational options and specialized programs delivered to the students of CCSD through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools and programs. Rich educational opportunities for students include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM); music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; military; dual credit; and many more.