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Media Release

For Immediate Release

## Project SEARCH Hamilton Partners with HWDSB, YMCA and YWCA

**Hamilton, Ontario – June 27, 2022:** Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board (HWDSB), the host of [Project SEARCH Hamilton](#), is thrilled to announce a partnership with YMCA Hamilton Burlington Brantford and YWCA Hamilton that will support employment for young people with disabilities.

Project SEARCH is a business-led, one-year, school-to-work transition program for young people with developmental, intellectual or communication disabilities. The main objective is to prepare students for employment with job skills training through a unique combination of classroom instruction and hands-on career training. This program takes place entirely at the workplace.

The new partnership will see interns in September 2022 taking part in a variety of internships in the YMCA and YWCA in downtown Hamilton.

HWDSB has been a leader in bringing Project SEARCH to Canada. Since September 2020, students have been placed in internship positions at the host site, the HWDSB Education Centre.

The singular goal of Project SEARCH is competitive employment for every program graduate. Students are supported during their placements by a teacher with special education training and two skills trainers. After graduation, employment service providers provide personalized employment support to help interns secure employment.

### Quotes:

#### **Sue Dunlop, Interim Director of Education, HWDSB:**

“It is a joy seeing Project SEARCH interns at our Education Centre each day, knowing the program is empowering them to reach their full potential. We strive to enhance our collaboration with community partners to give youth more opportunities. This new partnership with the YMCA and YWCA will help Project SEARCH prepare even more talented young people for future employment.”

#### **Manny Figueiredo, President and CEO, [YMCA of Hamilton Burlington Brantford](#):**

“The YMCA is committed to ensuring that all young people, of all abilities and backgrounds, have equal opportunities to succeed in life. Any opportunity for us to give young people meaningful work experiences and facilitate a pathway to employment is so foundational to what we stand for at the Y. Project Search is an exceptional initiative and speaks to the power of belonging. This is an example of inclusion in action. We're proud to be a partner and excited to see how the youth utilize their experience to build skills and put them on a pathway to success.”

**Denise Christopherson, CEO, [YWCA Hamilton](#):**

“Representation in the workforce matters, and it needs to be prioritized. Along with our partners at HWDSB and YMCA, we’re proud to help ensure that students with developmental or intellectual disabilities feel empowered, engaged, and equipped to start their careers.”

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**About Project SEARCH**

In 1996, Project SEARCH was launched at the Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Centre. The founder and Director of Cincinnati Children’s Emergency Department, Erin Riehle, felt that since the hospital served individuals with developmental disabilities, it should commit to hiring people to work in the business. She trained people with exceptionalities to work in high-turnover, entry level positions that involved complex and systematic tasks. Erin presented her ideas to Susie Rutkowski, the special education director at Great Oaks Career Campuses, and together they launched Project SEARCH.

Since its inception, [Project SEARCH](#) has grown from a single program site at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital to a large and continuously expanding international network of sites. Currently, there are 650+ Project SEARCH sites worldwide. The program reports that approximately 75% of the Intern graduates find gainful employment. Learn more at

Project SEARCH can be found throughout Ontario and Canada. Project SEARCH Hamilton, hosted by HWDSB, is the fourth site in Canada. Other sites in Canada include Toronto, Halton, North Halton, Winnipeg and PEI.