Summary of Results

The Relationship between Participation in Project SEARCH and Job Readiness and Employment for Young Adults with Disabilities

The Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation (JVR) recently published an article by two Ivymount School staff, Dr. Eve Müller, Coordinator of Program Evaluation, and Rebecca VanGilder, Program Coordinator for Project SEARCH. The article is titled, The Relationship between Participation in Project SEARCH and Job Readiness and Employment for Young Adults with Disabilities.

Although there are currently more than 200 Project SEARCH programs throughout the U.S., evidence supporting the program’s efficacy remains limited. Müller and VanGilder’s study examined the relationship between participation in Project SEARCH, a business-led transition program, and job readiness and employment rates of 10 young adults with disabilities.

Baseline and end-of-year data were gathered on participants’ job readiness skills using a 29-item Job Readiness Assessment Tool (JRAT) developed for this purpose. Interviews with key stakeholders were conducted in order to identify perceptions regarding areas of growth for participants, as well as ongoing challenges.

Based on JRAT scores, participants demonstrated significant growth overall, as well as demonstrating significant growth in a majority of specific entry-level job skills (e.g., filing, using email, data entry, delivery) and workplace behavior (e.g., communicating with co-workers and supervisors, maintaining a professional appearance, punctuality). Sixty percent of participants were offered permanent jobs within three months of the program’s conclusion. No significant differences emerged between job coach/instruction evaluations and supervisor evaluations, and end-of-year JRAT scores were significantly higher for participants offered jobs than for those not offered jobs.

In light of these findings, it appears that the Project SEARCH model holds promise for increasing participants’ job readiness and employment rates. Further, the JRAT may offer a useful means of predicting job readiness for Project SEARCH participants.