What is the Program?
UPMC Project SEARCH is a high school transition program for students with disabilities designed as a combined education and work experience program which prepares for competitive employment. The cornerstone of Project SEARCH is total immersion in a large business. Students report to the host business, learn employability skills in a classroom and marketable job skills, while participating in 3 job-training rotations during the school year.

Who Does the Program Serve?
UPMC Project SEARCH is for students with disabilities, grade 12 or higher, who have completed their high school academic requirements, but have deferred taking a diploma. It provides work site opportunities for up to 12 students per school year.

How Does the Program Benefit Participants and the Community?
Project SEARCH is a unique collaboration between UPMC, Goodwill, school districts in Allegheny County, the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), and Allegheny County Department of Human Services, Office of MR/DD. Project SEARCH brings about positive cultural change within the work site organization by removing stereotypes and teaching employees to see students with disabilities as unique individuals that can make real contributions to the business and the greater community.

A Personal Story:
At a recent Individualized Education Program meeting at Natalie’s school, Natalie’s Mom and school personnel all learned of Natalie’s achievements in only 9 short weeks in Project SEARCH. Everyone was very impressed as they listened to Natalie explain UPMC Project SEARCH and her piece in that program. “I am in anesthesiology,” she said and everyone’s eyes widened with excitement. Natalie’s School Vice Principal told her how proud he was of her and how much she had matured and grown. “You are one of our success stories,” he proclaimed with a smile. Natalie and her Mom beamed back, both having a great reason to smile as well.

Special Program Accomplishments
Since Project SEARCH started September 2008, 100% of the participants have graduated from the Project. UPMC and Goodwill were also recently honored for implementing Project SEARCH by the Hospital and Health System Association of Pennsylvania for excellence and innovation in health care.