

Project LIFE

Commonly Asked Questions

What is Project LIFE?

- Project LIFE is a Job Skills Training Program through a collaborative agreement between the Forsyth County Schools/Special Education, Vocational Rehabilitation and the partnering business. The program services students with developmental disabilities ages 19:8 months to 22 years. Students must be on an Access-Regular Diploma or Transition Diploma. Each partnering business provides real world learning opportunities where students learn and utilize appropriate job skills and work related soft skills throughout the day. The focus shifts from academics experienced in the high school setting to employability training and preparation.

What is the Project LIFE Mission?

- Students will graduate from Forsyth County Schools/Project LIFE with the skills necessary to become a reliable employee who utilizes appropriate social skills, is knowledgeable of the resources available and has the confidence to learn and apply new skills.

What is the referral Process?

- Students are referred the spring that is 1 year prior to LIFE enrollment. During that time, students will be referred to Vocational Rehabilitation, Special Education Records will be gathered, Observations conducted on CBVI's and student information obtained. This information will then be shared with the LIFE committee for review.

Are there prerequisite skills required for Project LIFE?

- We can often teach students a variety of skills, however to learn these skills, we expect students to have good attendance, participate in familiar tasks with minimal prompts or redirection, no disruptive (physical or verbally aggressive) behaviors, comply with rules, and utilize time management.

What types of skills can my student work on now to enhance his/her experience and opportunities at Project LIFE?

- Some of the job specific tasks that often require students to learn or relearn a skill include measuring, alphabetizing to the 3rd letter, transferring and writing numbers or letters within given spaces, inputting data from hard document to excel document, planning the order of steps of a work task, follow multi step instructions (via task list) and increase pace, and reading a map or key to locate people/items.

Project LIFE

Commonly Asked Questions

Must the student be a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Client?

- Yes. VR partners with the school system to identify vocational and work based learning needs prior to graduating. Once VR deems the student eligible for their services (see VR information on the FCS/Special Education/Transition Website), they schedule a work evaluation. This report is then shared with the LIFE committee for review.
- If a student is deemed ineligible for VR services, the school system will meet with the parents to discuss alternate transition services.

How many sites are there for Project LIFE?

- At the moment, there are 3 sites.

Can a parent or student choose the site?

- No. The LIFE committee reviews the information gathered from the referral and makes the selection based on the student's vocational experiences, social skills, partnering business demands and safety factors.

What does a day look like at Project LIFE?

- Students are bused to the business where they gather materials and plan for the day. One might find them "clocking in" checking off their materials list and putting on safety gear, such as steel toed shoes if needed. Students will job train anywhere from 9 AM to 3:00 PM with a 45 minute lunch. At the end of the day, students will gather to reflect and prepare for the next day's work load.

What might be expected of students/interns?

- To increase independence, students are encouraged to plan for their meals the night before (bring money or prepare a sack lunch), charge their cell phones (cell phones are often used for time and texting is one way to reach the teachers when they are on different sides of the building), put clothes and watch aside to prepare for morning routine, bring business badge, etc.
- During the first week, students might have to participate in a drug screening. This is required for the business employees as well as Project LIFE staff and students. Students and parents will need to sign a liability waiver provided by the business and this must be notified. Lastly, students will participate in a week long orientation about safety protocols.

Project LIFE Commonly Asked Questions

Will the student continue to have an IEP once enrolled in Project LIFE?

- Yes. Project LIFE participants are still enrolled in Forsyth County Schools. The IEP will continue until they exit/graduate from the program.

Will the business accommodate for the student's learning needs?

- Project LIFE holds every student accountable to the business industry standards – no less. However, teaching the skill may require accommodations for the student while maintaining the standards (i.e. teacher modeling the task, task analysis that is broken down into smaller steps, color coding, mapping, picture schedule and or task list, cue cards and assistive technology).

How will the teacher communicate information to the parent?

- Communication will be conducted in a variety of ways. If the parent has a preferred form of communication where accessibility is high, this should be discussed with the teacher. Because the teachers are moving throughout the buildings, they often prefer text messages. However, emails and phone calls are another avenue. Progress Reports are sent home every 9 weeks.

How can the parent support the student in Project LIFE?

- Work closely with the teacher in identifying vocational preferences. But also be open to all avenues. The purpose of Project LIFE is to give the student opportunities to problem solve, practice social skills and work related soft skills that can transfer to any job environment. The student may be asked to do a job s/he doesn't enjoy. Not every job rotation is going to be preferred by the student, however all rotations have a number of skills that can be transferred to any work environment. We remind the students that sometimes your boss will ask you to do things you don't enjoy but you still do it to the best of your ability (as long as safety and ethics is not an issue). This teaches excellent employability and marketing skills. Once the task is learned, then a new rotation will be implemented.
- One of the biggest obstacles facing our graduates is transportation. Once the student becomes a Project LIFE intern, parents and students need to discuss and narrow down the form of transportation to and from the job once the student graduates.
- Students need to be reminded that Project LIFE trains students for the world of work. Therefore, Project LIFE's expectations often match the work environment. Good attendance is highly encouraged and this should be supported at home. Doctor's visits

Project LIFE Commonly Asked Questions

(if possible) should be scheduled before or after school. If a student knows of future doctor appointments, then it is expected that s/he report this to the teacher well in advance. Leave forms are provided.

Is there an attendance policy?

- Yes, please review the code of conduct. Students can miss no more than 5 days for the school year.

What happens if my student is not successful at Project LIFE?

- A meeting will be scheduled with the parent, Vocational Rehabilitation and the home school to review the student's needs, concerns and vocational goals. If it is determined that Project LIFE is not appropriate at that time, the student will return to the school and work on IEP goals that may assist him/her to return to Project LIFE in the future or identify additional vocational and independent living supports upon graduation.

How does Project LIFE affect graduation?

- Students accepted into Project LIFE can participate in the senior activities and walk across the stage during the graduation ceremony the spring prior to their participation in the program. Project LIFE students will not receive their actual diplomas until they have exited the school system.
- If a student does not walk across the stage or get senior photos prior to participating in Project LIFE, it is up to that student to follow up on due dates and gathering of information from the school.

Can students participate in extracurricular activities while at Project LIFE?

- This is left up to the school's administrator. Extra Curricular activities should not interfere with the student's daily schedule at Project LIFE on a regular basis.

What if the student obtains employment while at Project LIFE?

- Project LIFE fully supports additional employment. This is another way for the student to learn important job skills in addition to transferring the skills learned at Project LIFE to the current job. Project LIFE will allow students to leave early or arrive later if the job falls within the Project LIFE timeframe. However, the student must provide his/her own transportation.

Project LIFE Commonly Asked Questions

Who provides transportation to the Project LIFE site?

- FCS provides transportation. Students typically pick up the bus (regular or special transportation if in IEP) and ride it to their home school. A shuttle bus will pick them up and take them directly to the site.

Is the Project LIFE calendar different than the school calendar?

- Project LIFE follows the school calendar in regards to student holidays. The only exception is during half days. Anytime the high school has a half day, the students will not attend Project LIFE. Because they are no longer students at the high school (not enrolled in any of the HS courses), they are not allowed on school campuses during these days unless a meeting has been scheduled.