Presenters

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  • M.S. Special Education, Saint Vincent College

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Pennsylvania State Univ.

Bearcat B.E.S.T. program

• What is the Bearcat B.E.S.T. program?

• How did it come about?

• How long have we been in operation?
Transition

“Transition” has been commonly described as the crucial task of moving from the protected life of a child to the autonomous and independent life of an adult. Individuals vary substantially in their experiences and the rate at which they transition (Foley, Girdler, & Leonard, 2012).

Need Analysis – Why Transition Programs?

Projecting forward from Pennsylvania Department of Education’s Special Education Statistical Summary for 2015-2016

• Approximately 1,802 Westmoreland County students (ages 18-21) needed transition services during 2018-2019 academic year.

• Of these, 160 students in this age range have been identified as having an intellectual disability, with another 163 having a developmental disability or autistic spectrum disorder. Another 323 students will be eligible for services under the category of Other Health Impairments.
Need Analysis

• The unemployment rate for adults with disabilities is 10.5%, which is more than twice the national average of all employable adults nationally (4.4%) and locally (4.9% - PA). (Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor, 2016).

• The poverty rate among individuals with disabilities approaches 25%, as compared to the national average of 13.5% and PA average of 12.9%. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). The poverty rate among working age individuals with disabilities in PA is estimated at 26.7% (2015 Disability Status Report in the State of Pennsylvania, Cornell University).

• The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act enacted in July, 2014 requires extensive pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities that are geared toward successful acquisition of competitive integrated employment.

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Employment – The State of the Problem

Internal Challenging Factors

• Challenging Behaviors (Chung et al., 2013; Hendricks, 2010; Tetzlaff et al., 2014; Webman et al., 2014)
• Social Difficulties (Hendricks, 2010; Patterson & Ruffrey, 2001; Chung et al., 2013)
• Comorbidity (Illenstedt et al., 2013; Cederlund et al., 2003; Tetzlaff et al., 2009; Hoehn et al., 2000, 2004, 2005)
• Educational Level (Welwood et al., 2012; Lamor et al., 2019; Maguire et al., 2012)

External Challenging Factors

• Employers’ Attitudes (Harshbarger et al., 2013; Wiersgall et al., 2013; Lopez & Kerman, 2014)
• Vocational Services (Hosicka 2011; Lago et al., 2010; Patterson & Ruffrey, 2001)
• Disability-Related Benefits (Maguire et al., 2012)

In a study of health risk factors, Krahn & colleagues found that adults with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and that this serves as a detrimental factor affecting overall health.

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Independent Living – The State of the Problem

• DiGennaro Reed and colleagues, reporting in Behavior Analysis in Practice (2014) report on barriers to independent living for adults with disabilities and seniors.

Table 3
Frequency and percentage of respondents specifying the living arrangements of a person with a disability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent's home</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independently in his/her own apartment with no staff supports</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foster care (adult or child)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported living in a home apartment with some or few people</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group home with support and four to eight individuals living together</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential facility with five or more people</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing care (skilled nursing or nursing home)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (specify)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family teaching model home</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apartment with visiting support staff once a day</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community facility</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported living center</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICF-SRR COD</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Independent Living – The State of the Problem

Top Barriers according to DiGennaro Reed and colleagues

This argues for the importance of appropriate instruction during transition to adulthood in these independent living skills

Table 5
Percentage (frequency) of respondents indicating the consideration serves as a barrier to independent living (separated by group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Individuals with disabilities</th>
<th>Senior citizens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% (n)</td>
<td>% (n)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal safety</td>
<td>94.7 (56)</td>
<td>70.0 (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with household skills</td>
<td>94.7 (56)</td>
<td>63.3 (38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with medications</td>
<td>88.6 (58)</td>
<td>76.7 (46)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistance with daily living skills</td>
<td>76.3 (29)</td>
<td>70.0 (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire safety</td>
<td>86.8 (33)</td>
<td>61.0 (36)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dementia</td>
<td>88.4 (26)</td>
<td>78.7 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations</td>
<td>72.9 (27)</td>
<td>58.3 (35)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Running or wandering away</td>
<td>55.3 (21)</td>
<td>81.7 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe weather safety</td>
<td>87.8 (23)</td>
<td>41.7 (23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical condition</td>
<td>52.6 (20)</td>
<td>70.0 (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility difficulties</td>
<td>47.4 (18)</td>
<td>90.0 (54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory loss/decline</td>
<td>47.4 (18)</td>
<td>95.0 (57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incontinence</td>
<td>40.3 (15)</td>
<td>52.5 (30)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bold font denotes top three barriers for each group of respondents

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State of the Problem – Social Networks

- Adults with intellectual disability have fewer social networks and less genuine friendships than those without intellectual disability, and often the networks and friendships that do exist are closely linked to family relationships, peers with similar disabilities and service providers (Gilmore & Cuskelly 2014).

- Many of the adults with intellectual disabilities wish to connect and belong socially, but often lacked the functional skills to bring this about independently therefore needing targeted support (Wilson et al, 2017).

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The State of the Problem – Social Networks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Integration Outcomes Post-School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- NLISS-2 Findings (Nowakowski et al, 2011; Bril & al, 2013):
  - Less likely to be employed (especially at min wage)
  - Less likely to be engaged in postsecondary education
  - Nearly half report non involvement in survey items related to community activities in past year
  - Over one-third not registered to vote

- Of those receiving services, vast majority remain in sheltered employment, nonwork services, or day program (Buttroseh et al, 2011)
- Over half of young adults report at least one activity limitation (Van Yserte & Huys, 2009)
- Limited friendship networks, often including staff members
- Risk for loneliness, estimates of up to 50% report feeling lonely (Sackett & al, 2017) & often related to absence of a partner (Mendy & al, 2016)
- Social support and peers rated as lowest aspects of QOL (proxy) (Speer & Carter, 2016)
- Leisure pursuits are typically isolated activities (Speer & al, 2015)

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Sung et al. (2016).
The State of the Problem – Social Networks

- In their review of literature, Chiang & Wineman found that challenging behaviors can interfere with personal relationships but that QoL of the adults with ASD could be enhanced by having adults with ASD receive appropriate interventions to decrease their behavior problems.
- Participation in leisure activities was positively associated with QoL of adults with ASD.
- Participation in employment is critical in improving QoL of individuals with ASD.

According to the National Longitudinal Transition Study – 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Percent Socially Isolated in Past Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autism</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual disability</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech/Language impairment</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional disturbance</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning disability</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bearcat B.E.S.T. Development – Time Line

July 2014 – Grad Class researches best practices in transition programming and develops 4-pillar framework. Develops grant proposal for start-up costs.

December 2014 – Letter mailed to Special Ed Directors and Superintendents of Westmoreland County School Districts.

October 2014 – Grant submitted to potential funder for start-up costs totally approximately $87,000.

January 2015 – School Districts begin to visit Saint Vincent College for presentation on the program.

March 2015 – Applications sent to school district. Received grant approval.

May 2015 – Acceptance decisions made. Staff positions posted.

June 2015 – Interviews and hired teachers; Ordered furniture and supplies.

July 2015 – Hired classroom aide; set up Bearcat Center.

August 27-28 – Student Orientation

August 30 – Welcome Picnic for families.

August 31 – 1st day of school.
Bearcat B.E.S.T Program Goals

1. Increase the level of functional independence for all students in the program.
2. Prepare each program participant for an integrated, competitive or supported, if appropriate, employment environment.
3. Maximize independence in activities of daily living to empower each participant to live in the most independent setting possible.
4. Assist students in creating a family/community support system utilizing self-advocacy skills appropriate to their disabilities.

Program Description

- **Structure:** The Bearcat B.E.S.T. Program operates on a full-time basis, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., according to the academic calendar of the Greater Latrobe School District.
- **Enrollment:** Sponsoring school districts may make application on behalf of their students. Limiting the capacity to service 21 students enables the Bearcat B.E.S.T. program to design an individualized program of studies for each student based upon a careful assessment of his/her needs in each of the core, “pillar” areas.
- **Cost:** Tuition for 2019-20 is approximately $31,000 per year per student.
Program Structure

Systematic reading and mathematics instruction tied to the Pennsylvania Core standards.

Examples include:
- SRA Reading Mastery program;
- TouchMath and other math programs as needed to support financial literacy:
  - Count money and make change;
  - Manage savings/check accounts;
  - Maintain a personal budget;
  - Make responsible expenditure decisions; and
  - Use measurement skills in applied settings.
- Other skills as needed to facilitate growth in the literacy and computational skills necessary to support independent living and vocational training opportunities.

Academics

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Independent Living Skills

Using the Council for Exceptional Children’s evidence-based Life Centered Education curriculum prepares students to live successfully and competently in a variety of environments. Training in the skills of independent living will facilitate the students’ abilities to:

- Exhibit proper grooming and hygiene;
- Raise, prepare, and consume food;
  - Purchase food and plan meals
  - Clean food preparation areas
  - Store food properly
- Prepare meals, read labels, and follow recipes
- Demonstrate appropriate eating habits
- Plan and eat balanced meals;
- Perform housekeeping tasks, including laundry skills;
  - Wash clothing
  - Purchase clothing
  - Demonstrate knowledge of prices and sales
  - Iron, mend, and store clothing
- Demonstrate use of dry cleaners and the laundromat
- Use public transportation;
- Make choices to enable community participation and recreation.
Applied Behavior Analytic teaching strategies

- Curriculum is guided by the CEC’s Life Centered Education curriculum, which provides standards-based materials that align with our 4 Pillars very well.
- Additionally, SRA’s Corrective Reading, which has an evidence base to support it and is based in the principles of operant conditioning.
- For Vocational and Independent Living skills instruction, we make use of task analytic instruction, Direct Instruction and Video Modeling.
- For Social Skills instruction, we use modeling, role play, and behavioral contracting.

Task Analytic Instruction

- A task analysis is an instructional methodology rooted in the science of applied behavior analysis and reliant on the basic principle of **chaining**.
- Chaining refers to various methods for linking specific sequences of stimuli and responses to form new (and usually more complex) performances or responses.
  - Forward/backward/total task presentation
  - Teaches complex skills that allow individuals to function more independently
- A way to add new behaviors to an existing behavioral repertoire
- Can easily be combined with other procedures (prompting, instructions, reinforcement)
Constructing a Task Analysis

• Sequence one individual may use to perform skill may not be the same as another individual
• Must be individualized according to
  • Age
  • Skill level
  • Disability
  • Prior experience
• Some task analyses have a limited number of steps, but these steps may be broken down into subtasks

Task Analytic Instruction

Rinse strawberries
Dry strawberries
Remove top of strawberries
Slice strawberries in half
Functions of a Task Analysis

- Identification of the teachable component parts
- Steps serve as a basis for data collection & system of measurement in evaluation of behavior change
- Steps set occasion for the way the task is taught (application of chaining procedures). Link between curriculum & methods
- Allows more than one person to work with students
- Saves teaching time
- Can be used as a home-school communication tool

Behavioral Contracting to Teach Social Skills

- Technical Definition: A document specifying a contingent relationship between completion of a specified behavior and access to, or delivery of, a specified reward.
- Contracts are based on:
  - Positive reinforcement
  - Negative reinforcement
  - may work because they may serve as a setting event.
- Contracts consist of
  - Task – who does what, when and how well;
  - Reward – who does what, when and how much.
  - Details – signatures, start & stop dates
  - Task Record (optional) – a place to record progress toward completion of the contract. Can be useful as a cue/prompt and/or as an intermediate reward.

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Social Skills

Social skills training utilizing research-based curricula assists each student to enhance self-awareness, acquire self-confidence, develop self-advocacy skills, and exhibit responsible citizenship.

Vocational Skills

• Vocational training is directed toward the goal of competitive employment for all program participants and enables students to:
  • explore occupational possibilities;
  • select and plan occupational choices;
  • exhibit appropriate work habits and behavior;
  • seek, secure, and maintain employment.
**Vocational Experiences**

By the time students complete the program, they have circulated through 3 on-campus and 2 off-campus placements, each lasting approximately 14 weeks and all in varied settings.

Each placement meets the federal definition of competitive employment: students are integrated and earning at least minimum wage.

Students are paired with an undergraduate peer job coach who assist the students in learning required job skills.

*Spring Semester Year 1 Employment Skills Practicum*

2-3 hours, 2 days per week

*Year 1 4 hrs/wk*

*Year 2 9 hrs/wk*

*Year 3 18 hrs/wk Off-Campus Employment*

*Both Semesters Year 2 Vocational Internship 1 & 2*

3 hours, 3 days per week

*Both Semesters Year 3 Vocational Externship 1 & 2*

6 hours, 3 days per week

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**Externship**

- In third year each semester students complete an externship.
- Sites have included (so far)
  - Pizza Sienna
  - Gift Shop at Latrobe Hospital
  - Brookdale Nursing Home
  - Giant Eagle Supermarket
  - Eat-n-Park Restaurant
  - Springhill Suites Hotel
  - Kinderschull (pre-school)
  - My Fitness Kitchen (fitness center)
  - Keystone Foam
  - Bethlen Homes (nursing home)
  - Haircraft Salon
  - Christ the Divine Teacher School
  - Applebee’s Restaurant

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Externship Evaluation

• Each semester externs are evaluated by their on-site employer
• Supervisors are asked to complete a survey including:
  • 21 Likert scale items rating student work behaviors
    Ranging from 1 = seldom or never to 4 = Always
  • 3 yes/no questions
    1. If you had a position available in your organization, would you be willing to hire this student?
    2. Would you be willing to give the student a positive recommendation/reference to present to another employer?
    3. Would your organization be willing to host other Bearcat B.E.S.T. extern students in the future?
  • 5 open-ended questions
    1. The student excels at:
    2. The student needs to work on:
    3. In what ways was working with the Bearcat B.E.S.T. program a positive experience for your organization?
    4. In what ways can we improve the externship program?
    5. Additional comments:

Externship Evaluation Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Skills</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student asks pertinent and purposeful questions.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student seeks out and utilizes appropriate resources, including assistance from others.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student accepts responsibility for mistakes and appears to learn from experiences.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening &amp; Oral Communication Skills</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student listens to others in an active and attentive manner.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student effectively participates in meetings or in group settings.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student is able to make his/her ideas clear using speech.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional &amp; Career Development Skills</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student exhibits a self-motivated approach to work (does not require significant amounts of prompting).</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student demonstrates consistent work performance.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student demonstrates a willingness to work.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpersonal &amp; Teamwork Skills</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student accepts criticism and/or correction with willingness.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student contributes to a team atmosphere.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student advocates for him/herself when appropriate.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizational Effectiveness Skills</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student fits in with the norms and expectations of the organization.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student works within appropriate authority and decision-making channels. S/he does not overstep bounds.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student demonstrates initiative.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Work Habits</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student reports to work as scheduled and on time.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student exhibits a positive and constructive attitude.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student’s dress and appearance are appropriate for this organization.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Attributes</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student behaves in an ethical manner.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student respects coworkers and customers/clients.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The student behaves appropriately in the work setting.</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note: For Likert item data which is by its nature presented on an ordinal (ranked) scale, median values (as opposed to means) are reported in order to comply with standard statistical analysis.
Undergraduate Student Involvement

Undergraduate students are involved in the program in a number of ways, including ...

1. Serving as paid job coaches;
2. Serving as unpaid job coaches who assess the Bearcat B.E.S.T. students' skills, develop and implement an instructional plan to train the students in their job placements, and collect data concerning skill acquisition as a part of their coursework in Special Education.
3. Conducting Functional Behavior Assessments, developing Positive Behavior Support Plans, and implementing those plans across 10 weeks to improve a socially or vocationally important behavior identified by the program staff. This is also a part of their Special Education coursework;
4. Serving as paid peer assistants, who accompany Bearcat B.E.S.T. students to those regular undergraduate classes that they are auditing. These students are identified through review of the courses’ rosters to find a peer assistant who is already enrolled in the course on a credit basis.
5. Engineering Design class students work with the Bearcat staff to design innovative solutions to circumvent Bearcat B.E.S.T. students’ motor limitations to enable them to perform job tasks more efficiently.

Inclusive Opportunities

Bearcat B.E.S.T. students enjoy access to the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers to the extent determined to be appropriate by their district-based IEP team, including:

Academic: participation in undergraduate classes on an audit or non-credit basis. This participation is supported by a non-disabled Saint Vincent student in a one-to-one relationship;

Examples of courses for Bearcat B.E.S.T. students to audit include:
- Young Adult Fiction;
- Intro to Sociology;
- Astronomy;
- Life-Span Development;
- Introduction to Mass Media.

Extra-Curricular: participation in student clubs, and admission to campus events like special lectures, films, art shows, dramatic productions, music and sporting events.
Parent Satisfaction

• Measured annually via survey
  • 31 Likert-type items in 3 groupings (1 = strongly disagree; 4 = strongly agree):
    • Part 1: Quality of Environment
    • Part 2: Quality of Educational Program
    • Part 3: Quality of Staff interactions
  • 3 Open-ended questions:
    1. What aspects of the Bearcat BEST program have been most beneficial to
       your student (e.g., activities, social interactions, instructional activities,
       etc.)? Please be specific.
    2. If you recommend the Bearcat BEST program to other parents, what do
       you tell them about the program?
    3. Please tell us three things you like about the Bearcat BEST program and
       three things you would like to see improved. Please comment on any of
       the survey statements above for which you indicated Disagree or Strongly
       Disagree so that we can better improve the program
• Based upon parent feedback through Likert items and open-ended
  comments, changes are made to programming.
• Results, including parent comments, are presented in our annual
  report to the Bureau of Special Education.

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### Parent Survey Data (reported as median values)

#### Part 1: About the Bearcat BEST Program’s environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015-16</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Bearcat BEST program has high standards for my student’s achievement.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The program provides a caring and nurturing experience for my student.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The program provides a safe environment for my student.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can easily get answers to my questions about the program from staff.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get a prompt response to my requests for information or clarification.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a parent, I feel welcome at the Bearcat Center.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bearcat Center looks and feels like a place where learning occurs.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bearcat Center is clean and well-maintained.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I believe the Bearcat BEST program is a good place for my student to learn.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please note: For Likert item data which is by its nature presented on an ordinal (ranked) scale, median values (as opposed to means) are reported in order to comply with standard statistical analysis.

### Parent Survey Data (reported as median values)

#### Part 2: About the Bearcat BEST Educational Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015-16</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My student is being effectively prepared for life after school by the Bearcat BEST program.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My student is effectively learning reading skills in the program.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My student is effectively learning writing skills in the program.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My student is effectively learning practical math skills in the program</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My student is receiving appropriate vocational instruction for my student.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My student is learning social skills in the program that are necessary for integration and vocational success.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My student is provided activities and assignments that are meaningful for him/her.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My student is provided meaningful inclusion experiences with typical undergraduates.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My student has learning and social opportunities that s/he would not have at his former educational placement.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My student has a meaningful and trustworthy relationship with at least one adult at the Bearcat BEST program.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The activities in the Bearcat BEST program support the goals I have for my student’s development and learning.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I am satisfied with my student’s academic progress.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that the Bearcat BEST program has made a meaningful improvement in my student’s life.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Parent Survey Data (reported as median values)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 3: About the Bearcat BEST program staff</th>
<th>2015-16</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Bearcat BEST staff manages the learning environments effectively.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bearcat BEST staff motivates my child to learn.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have confidence in the Bearcat BEST staff’s competence to teach my student the subject matter.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bearcat BEST staff is sensitive to my student’s individual learning style.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bearcat BEST staff is sensitive to my student’s emotional needs.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bearcat BEST staff knows whether my student has mastered the topics covered in class.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bearcat BEST staff encourages my student to develop his/her potential.</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bearcat BEST staff communicates with me appropriately about my student’s progress.</td>
<td>3.60</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I am satisfied with the way the staff at the Bearcat BEST program serves my student.</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outcomes

Through a system of . . .
• classroom instruction,
• supervised practice,
• coached field experiences in various sites on campus, and ultimately, placement in a supervised externship in an off-campus setting,

students are prepared to exit the program to seek competitive employment and maximal adult independence with meaningful participation in their local communities.
## Summary of 4-Year Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Gain</th>
<th>Statistically Significant</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woodcock Reading Mastery Test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Level Equivalent</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Reading Score</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>5.04</td>
<td>6.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Identification</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>5.28</td>
<td>2.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Written</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word Comprehension</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>6.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passage Comprehension</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>2.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Comprehension</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Reading Fluency</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing and Longitudinal Assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A variety of assessments are used to evaluate outcomes of the Bearcat B.E.S.T. program and to monitor student progress on an ongoing basis.

- Bearcat B.E.S.T. provides an alumni Facebook page to communicate with alumni and their families.

- Once a month, we meet with the alumni and their families to engage in a skill review seminar using questions and answers to provide on-going support for transitional and vocational needs.
Employment Data

Within 90 days of completing the program . . .
- 5 out of 5 2017 graduates were employed;
- 3 out of 4 2018 graduates were employed;

As of today . . .
- 4 out of 5 2017 graduates are still employed in their original jobs [one family opted to stop working]
- 4 out of 4 2018 graduates are employed still employed in their original jobs;

7 of these alumni earn more than minimum wage; and
- So far, 3 out of 5 of the 2019 graduates are currently employed.

Skill Refreshers

The Bearcat B.E.S.T. program supports its alumni in a number of ways:
1. On an alumni page on Facebook, we post announcements about events occurring on campus, like Homecoming, dances, and sporting events, as well as community events.
2. We provide on-going support through periodic “skill refresher” events at which social interaction with undergraduates and current Bearcats is combined with a workshop that addresses some vocational or social skills identified by the graduates’ parents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 13</td>
<td>Tools for Success in the Workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct. 16</td>
<td>Housing Options in the Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 14</td>
<td>SSI and Other Social Security Benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 8</td>
<td>Transportation Options in Westmoreland County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 13</td>
<td>Job Interviewing Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 20</td>
<td>Office of Vocational Rehabilitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>Independent Living Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alumni Survey

- The Bearcat B.E.S.T. program follows its graduates on an on-going basis.
- A 25-item alumni survey is collected online through Survey Planet via a link provided on the Alumni Facebook Page gathering information about . . .
  - Employment status
  - Wage rate
  - Employment satisfaction
  - Living arrangements
  - Leisure activities
  - Current financial skills
  - Relationship status
  - Current supports status
- Data is collected at
  - 90 days post graduation
  - 1 year post graduation
  - Annually for 5 years post graduation.
The Bearcat B.E.S.T. Program at Saint Vincent College offers a unique campus-based experience with same-aged typically developing peers that promotes participants’ skill development for maximal adult independence and competitive employment.

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2017 Commencement (1st cohort)

Video by Angela Kirby-Wehr, Director PaTTAN, Harrisburg Office

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What Questions Do You Have?

Bibliography


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Instagram: @Bearcat_BEST
Website: http://www.stvincent.edu/bearcatbest