



BEARCAT B.E.S.T.
Building Excellence through Skills Training

SAINT VINCENT COLLEGE

Need Analysis

- Unemployment rates were much higher for people with a disability than for those with no disability across all educational attainment groups. The unemployment rate for people with a disability was 7.2 percent in 2023, about twice that of those with no disability (3.5 percent). (Bureau of Labor Statistics, US Department of Labor, 2023).
- The poverty rate among individuals with disabilities approaches 25%, as compared to the national average of 11% and PA average of 11.8%. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). The poverty rate among working age individuals with disabilities in PA is estimated at 26.7%
- 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.

Program Structure



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., utilizing a hybrid calendar of a public school district and Saint Vincent College. The college has approximately 140 days of education, but a public-school student is required to have 180 day of education.
- **Enrollment:** Sponsoring school districts may make application on behalf of their students. A request for a submitted application can be made by the school, parent or student. Limiting the capacity to service 24 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 is approximately \$40,000 per year per student.

Academics





Bearcat B.E.S.T. Curriculum Map

BEARCAT B.E.S.T.
Building Excellence through Skills Training
SAINT VINCENT COLLEGE

Fall Semester

Spring Semester

Year 1

BB101LA: Language Arts Skills I or BB103LA: Survey of Literature I
BB102LA: Personal Writing I
BB101MA: Basic Computation I or BB103MA: Advanced Computation I
BB102MA: Intro to Real World Measurement
BB101IL: Intro to Independent Living
BB102IL: Intro to the Contemporary Kitchen
BB101SS: Building Healthy Relationships
BB102SS: Social Skills Practicum I - Fitness Activities
BB103SS: Current Events & Problem Solving
BB101VT: Employment Skills
BB100ID: Orientation Seminar
BB101ID: Study Skills & Organization I

BB104LA: Language Arts Skills II or BB105LA: Survey of Literature II
or BB106LA: Genre Studies I: Mystery & Suspense
BB107LA: Expository Writing through Professional Documents
BB108LA: Research & Public Speaking
BB104MA: Basic Computation II or BB105MA: Advanced Computation II
BB106MA: Personal Finance & Banking Basics
or BB107MA: Intermediate Banking & Personal Finance
or BB108MA: Advanced Banking & Personal Finance
BB103IL: Personal Health & Hygiene
BB104IL: Kitchen II - Recipe Recipes
BB104SS: Emotional Regulation
BB105SS: Social Skills Practicum II - Continuing Fitness
BB106SS: Project Based Community Service
BB103VT: Vocational Skills II
BB104VT: Employment Skills Practicum
BB102ID: Study Skills & Organization II

Year 2

BB201LA: Genre Studies II: American Humor
BB201MA: Integrated Math Applications I
BB201IL: First Aid & Community Safety
BB202IL: Appliance-based Cooking
BB201SS: Introduction to Self-Advocacy
BB202SS: Social Skills Practicum III- Continuing Fitness
BB201VT: Vocational Skills III
BB202VT: Basic Computer Applications
BB203VT: Employment Skills Internship I
BB201ID: Study Skills & Organization III

BB202LA: Genre Studies III: Historical Fiction
BB201MA: Integrated Math Applications II
BB204IL: Household Management
BB205IL: Oven-based Cooking
BB203SS: Community Relations
BB204SS: Social Skills Practicum IV- Continuing Fitness
BB201VT: Vocational Skills IV
BB202VT: Computer Applications in the Workplace
BB203VT: Employment Skills Internship II
BB202ID: Study Skills & Organization IV

Year 3

BB301LA: Genre Studies IV: Contemporary Realistic Fiction
BB301MA: Applied Practical Math I
BB301IL: Consumer Nutrition
BB302IL: Transportation & Safety
BB301SS: Advanced Self-Advocacy
BB301VT: Employment Externship I
BB302VT: Vocational Seminar I

BB301LA: Genre Studies V: Expository Texts
BB301MA: Applied Practical Math II
BB303IL: Balance Meal Preparation
BB302SS: Human Sexuality
BB301VT: Employment Externship II
BB302VT: Vocational Seminar II
BB301ID: Transition Seminar

Legend: Academic Skills Independent Living Skills

Social Skills

Vocational Skills

Interdisciplinary Skills

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.
 - Self-advocacy
 - Banking apps and education
 - Pet care
 - First aid and safety
 - Permit preparation



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**.



Using **Recreational Facilities** and **Engaging in Leisure Activities**



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.
- Students will have 5 internships, 3 on campus and 2 off campus during their time at B.E.S.T.



Inclusive Opportunities

- Bearcat B.E.S.T. students enjoy access to the same opportunities as their neurotypical peers, including fitness facilities, game rooms, on campus dining, sporting events, APB activities, clubs, dances, and campus events. Students also are required to present at the academic conference and commencement where they will receive a Certificate of program completion from B.E.S.T..
- **Academic Opportunities:** participation in undergraduate classes on an audit or non-credit basis. This participation is supported by a neurotypical Saint Vincent student in a one-to-one relationship. Some courses that have been audited are Children's Literature, Astronomy, Introduction to Engineering, Biology, Accounting, Introduction to Mass Media, U.S. History and more. Some of those courses could contain a study abroad component.



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.



Ongoing and Longitudinal Assessment

- 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 quarter, 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.
- Parent surveys are sent out yearly to maintain accurate information about employment.



- 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.



Graduation Ceremony



Contact Information



Email: bearcatbest@stvincent.edu

Phone: 724-805-2765

 Bearcat B.E.S.T. Transition Program

 @BearcatBEST

 @Bearcat_BEST

Website: <https://www.stvincent.edu/academics/experiential-learning/community-outreach/bearcat-best-program.html>