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Need Analysis

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

- Approximately 1,802 Westmoreland County students (ages 18-21) will need 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.

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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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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.

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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 18 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 \$28,000 per year per student.

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Program Structure



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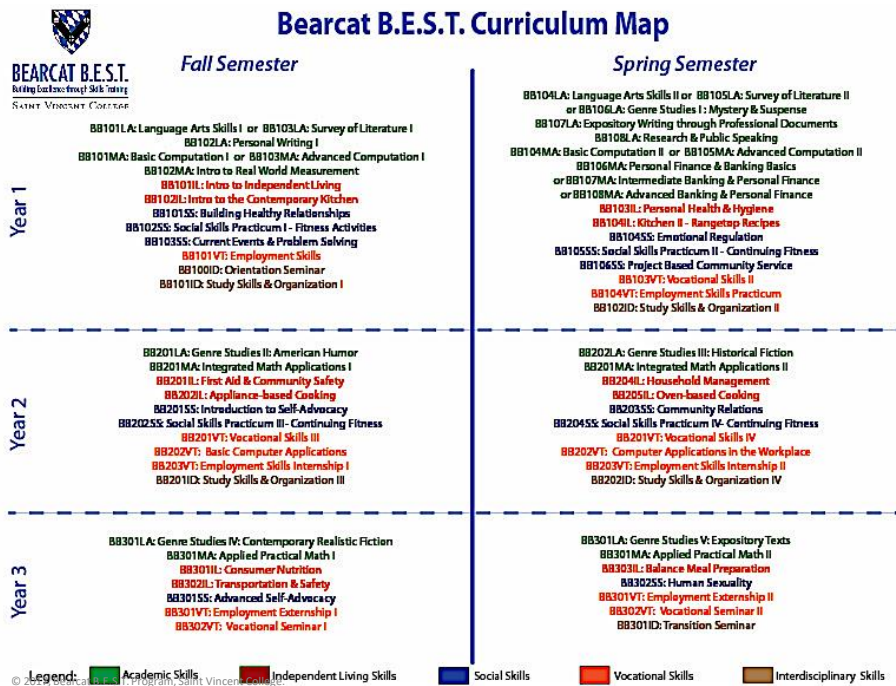
Academics

- 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

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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.

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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**.

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

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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.

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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.

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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.

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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 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.

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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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Graduation Ceremony

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Contact Information

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 Bearcat B.E.S.T. Transition Program

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Website: <http://www.stvincent.edu/community-events/outreach-programs/bearcat-best-program>

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