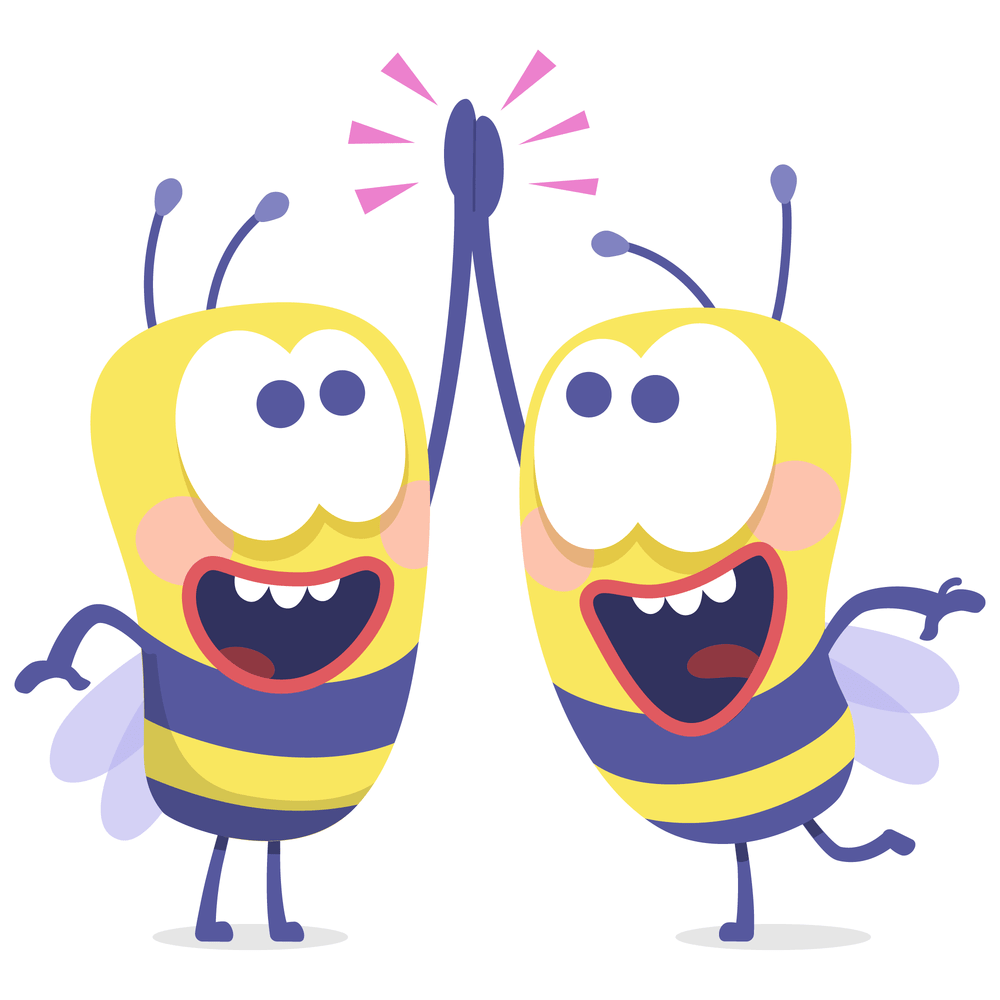
BESB PreEts Buzzzzzzz



**April 2024 Quarterly Edition**

Attention BESB students, families, educators and staff!

Our quarterly newsletter is filled with past and upcoming events going on in our department articles from students, comments from parents, , resources for families, creative writing, and a few puzzles and games. This newsletter is intended to be a coordinated project to share ideas, thoughts, and news, from everyone who is part of our Pre-Ets crew. Anyone that is interested in participating in writing the quarterly newsletter please let me know. Any and all ideas are welcomed.

**What is Pre-Ets?**

Pre-Ets stands for Pre-Employment Transition Services- This program provides 5 core services to students ages 16 through 22. These core services include 1- Job Exploration 2- Work Based Learning Experiences 3- Counseling on Post-Secondary College Planning 4- Workplace Readiness Training including social and independent living skills 5- Instruction on Self Advocacy and Peer Mentoring. These core services are provided to the students in a variety of ways.

**Meet the staff:**

**Charlotte Copenhaver-** Educational Projects Coordinator

Coordinates work based experiences in local communities and special group and individual projects and programs for students throughout the state

[Charlotte.copenhaver@ct.gov](mailto:Charlotte.copenhaver@ct.gov) or cell (860)692-4251

**Stacey Ann Lewis**- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Stacey-Ann.Lewis@ct.gov

Covers individualized caseload and transition planning for Pre-Ets students in the Northern region of the state.

**Paula Rivers** Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Paula.Rivers2@ct.gov

Covers individualized caseload and transition planning for Pre-Ets students in the Southern region of the state.

**Some of our partners and services:**

Leap Resource Vermont- LEAP provides blind and visually impaired youth, virtual and in-person programming opportunities to gain the skills needed to become independent, confident, and productive with the outcome of increased employability. Many of our students have participated in Leaps paid virtual work-based learning experiences throughout the year as well as their residential work based learning program over the summer. They also have weekend retreats in the fall, winter, and spring.

The Carroll Center for the Blind Serves individuals of all ages who are blind and visually impaired. Many of our students have also attended Carroll Centers youth programs in Newton MA. This is a residential program for students and adults who are blind and visually impaired to learn skills and strategies for work and independent living.

Youth Leadership Forum – Every summer the Youth Leadership forum is held at UConn in Storrs. This is a residential program for students with disabilities who show some leadership potential, to participate with other students from around Connecticut, towards group work for projects which serve the greater good in the community. This program is open to any student who is interested and recommended by a teacher or counselor.

Skys the limit- Pre-Ets has contracted with Dave Denotaris who has provided our students with wonderful programming for our students. Dave provides with engaging, fun group activities, both virtually and in person that fulfil our 5 core services

Work based experiences and businesses in your community- many of our students have also opted to work in paid work experiences in their own communities. We have the ability to work with students who want to work in their own communities to give them work based learning experiences.

College Planning Workshop- Each spring I partner with our college coordinator to provide the disability services person at a local community college and several successful college students to provide a 4 session seminar for students who will be attending college. This is open to any junior or senior preparing for college. We review services offered by BESB for college students, and talk about the disability services that are offered to college students.

**Upcoming Pre-Ets activities and events to watch for**

STEM Astronomy camp at UConn- This summer we are partnering with San Jose University and with Skys the limit to provide a week long summer camp that will focus on Astronomy and STEM Careers. Students will be building 3D printers and using them to learn about astronomy, taking field trips, tours of the campus. The evenings will be more social and kids will have a chance to get to know other BESB students from around Connecticut. This program will be held on the Storrs campus June 23rd- June 28th, and the students attending will stay in the dorms and eat in the dining halls to get a true college experience while they are there.

Mentorship opportunities /program- Over the course of this school year, our mentor program has taken off. We have BESB college students and adults who have completed BESB programs and are successfully employed who have applied and been accepted to our mentorship program. If you are interested in having a BESB mentor or being a mentor please contact a pre ets staff member.

Leap Summer virtual work based learning Leap is currently accepting applications for their summer virtual paid work based learning program which takes place July 1- August 9 2024; their Independent Living Immersion program- July 21-24; and their Residential work immersion program June 29-July 19th. See your counselor for more information

*All PreEts program offerings will be made available to you through your VR Counselor or by calling Charlotte Copenhaver, EPC*

**Resources for families and students**

**CT 9th Annual Secondary Transition Symposium- Please join us on May 10th at CCSU Go to the link below for more information and registration (students attend free)**

[2024 Transition Symposium flyer\_Final.pdf](file:///C:\Users\copenhaverc\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\PI1BGMII\2024%20Transition%20Symposium%20flyer_Final.pdf)

**Hadley school for the Blind** has loads of free resources for individuals who are interested in help and support for blind and visually impaired individuals. They have workshops, audio podcasts, and live chat discussion groups. They can help you with daily living, adjusting to vision loss, recreational activities, technology, braille, and work. Go to [Hadley Vision Resources | 100 Years of Empowering Adults with Vision Loss (hadleyhelps.org)](https://hadleyhelps.org/) to learn more about them.

**CPAC- Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center** The mission of the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center is to educate, support, and empower Connecticut's diverse families of children and youth with any disability or chronic conditions, ages birth to 26, and the professionals who serve them. Please go to [Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center - CPAC (cpacinc.org)](https://cpacinc.org/) to learn more about them

**SERC (State Education Resource Center)** - SERC is a quasi-public agency established under statute to serve the CT State Board of Education in supporting educational equity and excellence. This is done by providing professional development and information dissemination in the latest research and best practices to educators, service providers, and families throughout the state, as well as job-embedded technical assistance and training within schools, programs, and districts. Please go to: [Home - State Education Resource Center (ctserc.org)](https://ctserc.org/)

**Student Section**

BESB Mentoring

by Haley Jackson

3/7/2024

Back in August when I was preparing for my junior year at the University of Connecticut I was introduced to my mentee who was preparing to enter her first year. As we discussed worries, excitements, and logistics it brought back all of the similar feelings I experienced in anticipation of this big transition. When I was approached to be a part of BESB’s mentoring program I grew with eagerness knowing that I now had the opportunity to guide and support someone who is now in the position I once was. The first weeks of college for me were thrilling, nerve racking, and greatly overwhelming. It is difficult going into an unfamiliar place especially when you are immersed with all new people. Becoming a mentor for an incoming freshman at UConn, I hoped to provide that guidance and support that would soothe my mentees nerves and give her more confidence going into the semester.

Since August my mentee and I have bonded over shared experiences related to visual impairment, common interests, and similarities in academic goals. We share very similar vision and it is incredible how many niche experiences we share. Finding commonalities in difficulties, advocating, and living with a visual impairment is comforting as it makes both mentors and mentees feel a sense of belonging and that they are not alone in their struggles. Therefore, connecting with other visually impaired people on campus is something I have made an effort to do alongside my mentee. This allows discussion of possible accommodations and the opportunity to learn new ways to advocate for yourself. I have been so pleasantly surprised with what I have gained from this experience as well. My mentee has exposed me to new and creative ways to accommodate. But more importantly she has provided me with the reciprocal feeling of comfort, knowing that the experiences I have had with my visual impairment are normal and I am not alone in my unique journey.

My BESB Community Based Work Experience

By Amani Pierce

My BESB counselor and I signed up with Marrakech to find me a place in my town where I could work after school. They found me a job at Jordon’s Hot Dog and Macs. I love it there! I get along with my coworkers and joke around with my boss all the time. The tasks that they give me to work on are all pretty fun to me. I get to make banana pudding and lemonade, I get to butter the hot dog buns, I help bag the orders and serve people food. I do a lot of cleaning at the restaurant, all the time. I have to clean the tables and chairs and mop the floor. I like that this is my first job, and I hope I can stay here for a while. I only work about 16 hours during the school year, but I hope during the summer I can do more. I also have job coaches from Marrakech that help me if I need it. They are so friendly and fun to be with, and I enjoy having them with me at work.

**Virtual Work Based Learning at Leap by SB:**

Leap is a fun program. The parts I liked were the staff, making new friends and dine-ins which is a time where you can have fun showing off your talent.

A lot of the information that leap gave was repeated every session, so I felt that I needed more new content. I love that I have made some great connections with friends and peers from LEAP. I liked that I could join either in person and/or virtually. If you have the opportunity to be a part of the Leap program I think you would like it too.

*I am always looking for students to write articles-jokes- funny stories or whatever you would like, for our quarterly newsletter- please submit any articles for the newsletter to:*

[Charlotte.Copenhaver@ct.gov](mailto:Charlotte.Copenhaver@ct.gov)

Or call or text (860)692-4251

Next newsletter published in July