

BESB Pre-ETS Buzzzzzzzz



April 2025 Quarterly Edition

Happy Spring to BESB Students, Families, Educators, and Staff!

Welcome to our quarterly Pre-ETS newsletter. In this newsletter you will find information about past and upcoming events going on in Pre-ETS. You will find 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 Pre-ETS.

What is Pre-ETS? - summarized for new Pre-ETS members

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 which you will learn about in this newsletter. For more information, please contact Charlotte Copenhaver, Pre-ETS Educational Projects Coordinator at BESB.

Past Events:

This quarter we held 2 college prep workshops for students who are considering college. We have done this workshop each year for students, virtually. This was

our first year running the workshop in person. Our first workshop was held at Central CT State University in early April and the second one was later in April at Norwalk Community College. In this workshop we were able to bring in staff from the colleges to discuss the Disability office, admissions, and financial aid. We also had a panel of BESB students who have either graduated from college or are students in college to talk about their experiences in college and answer questions from the attendees. In addition, BESB VR staff presented BESB policy around college support for our students. Please notify Charlotte Copenhaver if you were not able to make it and would like information about college supports from BESB. Since we run this group each year if you want to be sure you attend next year, please contact Charlotte Copenhaver.

Work Experiences- This term has seen many of our Pre-ETS students actively involved in so many great work experiences. We have had students who have been working in the community in jobs such as retail stores, restaurants, and delis. We have had many students who have completed the virtual work-based learning experience through LEAP, and others who have participated in the virtual career exploration workshops.

Skys the Limit-For our Spring term virtual workshop through Skys the Limit, we completed a 5-session Self Advocacy workshop. Students who participated, were able to play out various role-playing situations to practice how to self-advocate in their schools, with friends, or with others in their communities.

Youth Advisory Board: This year we have had a lot of interest in participating in the Youth Advisory board through CPAC (Connecticut Parent Child Advocacy- more information about CPAC in the Resources section of this newsletter). Working with CPAC, our students are practicing speaking on a panel to talk about how students can play a more active role in their own education plans. We currently have 5 students who are signed up as Youth Advisory Board members and they are looking for new student leaders all the time. Several of our Youth Advisory Board students have presented at local conferences and workshops both in person and virtually.

Mentor program- This past term our mentors who have completed the LEAP Vermont mentoring training workshop, have put their skills to work with our student mentees and running their own mentoring workshop virtually. Some of

them then were hired to help run the in-person retreat in Vermont in early April. We also have several of our mentors who have been chosen to work at Leap in Vermont over the summer in their mentoring program. We have had several new mentors register and have openings if any student is interested in having a mentor. Please contact Charlotte Copenhaver, EPC for more information about this.

Upcoming Pre-ETS activities and events to watch for

LEAP: Pre-ETS at BESB works in collaboration with LEAP in Vermont to help students build work skills and develop transition goals. LEAP has started taking applications for summer virtual programs. For the upcoming summer programs please visit their website [OOS Summer Promo 2025.pdf](#). Keep up to date with this website for other offerings throughout the year as well. Please speak with your counselor if you are interested in any of these programs.

Carroll Center for the Blind in Newton, MA is another program that we work with to help students with transition skills as they move on from high school into the world beyond. They are currently taking applications for their summer programs. Please review the information on the website and if you are interested, speak to your counselor about applying. The links below have information about all their programs and the application form:

[Carroll](#)

[Center 2025 Summer Admissions Form](#)

Visions in Spring Valley New York- BESB Pre-ETSS has recently started working with Visions in Spring Valley. Visions is another program for students who are blind or visually impaired. At Visions, students can learn about work skills and independent living skills in this residential program. They have started taking applications for their summer youth programs. Please visit the link below for more information. If you are interested in this program, please contact your VR Counselor.

<https://visionsvcb.org/>

BESB summer career exploration experience at CCSU- For summer 2025, we are currently planning our summer college and career experience week. This summer,

we are planning to do a program on Cyber Security, it will be held June 29th-July 3rd at CCSU in New Britain. This program will give students the opportunity to learn about cyber security. At the end of the week, they will be prepared to go on to take the classes towards certification in cyber security. We will also be having Dave from Skys the Limit providing all evening social activities and overnights on campus in the dorms. Please notify Charlotte Copenhaver if you are interested in this exciting program

Resources for families and students

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.

State Education Resource Center (SERC) - 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

For each newsletter, I ask certain students to write an article about an experience that they have had with a Pre-ETS program over the past quarter. Please let me know if you are interested in writing for our newsletter. I am always taking ideas, articles, games, and news.

College Mentoring experience

By Candy Najera

Taking that big step towards college can be daunting to incoming freshmen, it was for me. A new environment and being away from home can be overwhelming. Through it all I had a helping hand. My mentor made starting my college life so much more comfortable because I knew I had someone I could always turn to. I was able to turn to my mentor for any academic advice and even life advice.

College is a time to learn about yourself and sometimes you're not sure what path to take. Having the opportunity to meet with my mentor quickly turned to just meeting with a friend. Someone to talk to if I needed help picking classes and someone I could discuss similar interests with. I can confidently say I made a life-long friend.

Self-Advocacy workshop with Skys the Limit

By Faith Bravo

The Sky's the Limit self-advocacy workshops were a helpful tool for students like me who are blind and visually impaired to be successful in the future. These workshops were offered to high school students in Connecticut who were in their Junior and Senior year. I loved how each discussion aimed to teach us in a meaningful and fun way. For example, we discussed the importance of note taking, and how we could use those skills in our everyday lives. If everyone took notes and sent them in at the end of each session, one person would be picked to win either an Apple or Amazon gift card. We also had guest speakers, who were also blind and visually impaired, join us to talk about their journey with advocacy, and how they were able to be successful. I also liked that I got to connect with other visually impaired students from all over the state, and getting to meet new people and reconnect with old friends. Overall, it was a great experience that I hope to do again someday and would highly recommend it to someone to learn more about self-advocacy.

Letting Go

Poem written by Lily Watkins

I know the weight of the what-ifs,
the way fear settles into your bones,
how the world feels sharper,
less forgiving when your child walks it differently.

I know the urge to reach out,
to steady every step,
to soften every stumble,
to hold on just a little longer
because what if they fall?
What if they fail?
What if the world is too much?

But what if they fly?

What if that shaky step forward
becomes steady in time?
What if the struggle teaches them
they are stronger than they knew?
What if your hands, always catching,
are keeping them from learning
how to rise on their own?

Letting go is not abandoning.
It is not turning away.
It is stepping beside instead of in front,
offering a hand only when asked,
cheering from the sidelines
instead of steering the way.

It takes courage to loosen your grip,
to watch them choose,
to watch them fall,
to watch them stand again
but isn't that what you've always wanted?
For them to know they can?

So take a breath.
Let them try.
Let them grow.
Let them be more than your fear allows.
Because one day, they'll look back
not just at the love you gave,
but at the space you left
for them to become.

How to sign up for events and activities in Pre-ETS

Please keep your eye out for any activities or events that are being planned in our Pre-ETS program. Flyers and announcements will be emailed to you from Ashley Morgan at BESB. Please be sure that we have an up-to-date email address for you in our system so that you will receive notifications. Please keep an eye on your email. Notifications are also sent to your Teacher for the Visually Impaired (TVI's) and your Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor so you can get information from them as well. As always, please do not hesitate to contact Charlotte Copenhaver or Jonathan Richmond for further information.

Charlotte.Copenhaver@ct.gov

Or call or text (860)692-4251

Charlotte Copenhaver- Educational Projects Coordinator

Coordinates paid work experiences in students' local communities and special group and individual projects and programs for BESB students throughout the state.

Charlotte.copenhaver@ct.gov or cell (860)692-4251

Jonathan Richmond- Counselor Coordinator

Works with the counselors who are assigned to working with our Pre-ETS students individually.

Jonathan.Richmond@ct.gov or cell (959) 282-0387

Next newsletter published in July 2025.