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Life Skills Curriculum for Lower Middle School Students at Benton Hall Academy

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Lower/Middle School Life Skills Curriculum for Benton Hall Academy

By: Elizabeth Atkins, OTD/S



Mission & Vision of Benton Hall

“Benton Hall Academy offers a curriculum designed to challenge each student to his or her highest intellectual and creative abilities. The school’s program strives to prepare each student academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally, through individualized instruction, to work to his or her potential and to make a successful transition into the workplace, or into a higher learning experience. The highest priority is given to the development of sensitive, autonomous human beings who relate well with others, know how to learn, and how to make wise choices”

Agency Needs

- Expansion of transition program into middle school grades
- Determination of most pertinent materials for life skills curriculum in middle school, for the population at Benton Hall
- Low-prep materials for teachers to utilize in life skills courses
- Low-cost materials for use in life skills courses
- General tips for encompassing materials developed into high school courses, as appropriate

Literature Review

- Life skills are imperative to successful and independent functioning in adulthood (Cronin, 1996)
- Young adults with disabilities are at higher risk of experiencing unemployment and decreased independence (Bathje et al., 2018)
- The population at Benton Hall consists primarily of young people with neurodevelopmental disorders; literature suggests that this population demonstrates decreased life skills (Bathje et al., 2018)
- Current literature recommends the incorporation of transition related skills into age-appropriate curriculum earlier than the mandated age of 16 years old (Hollenbeck et al., 2015)

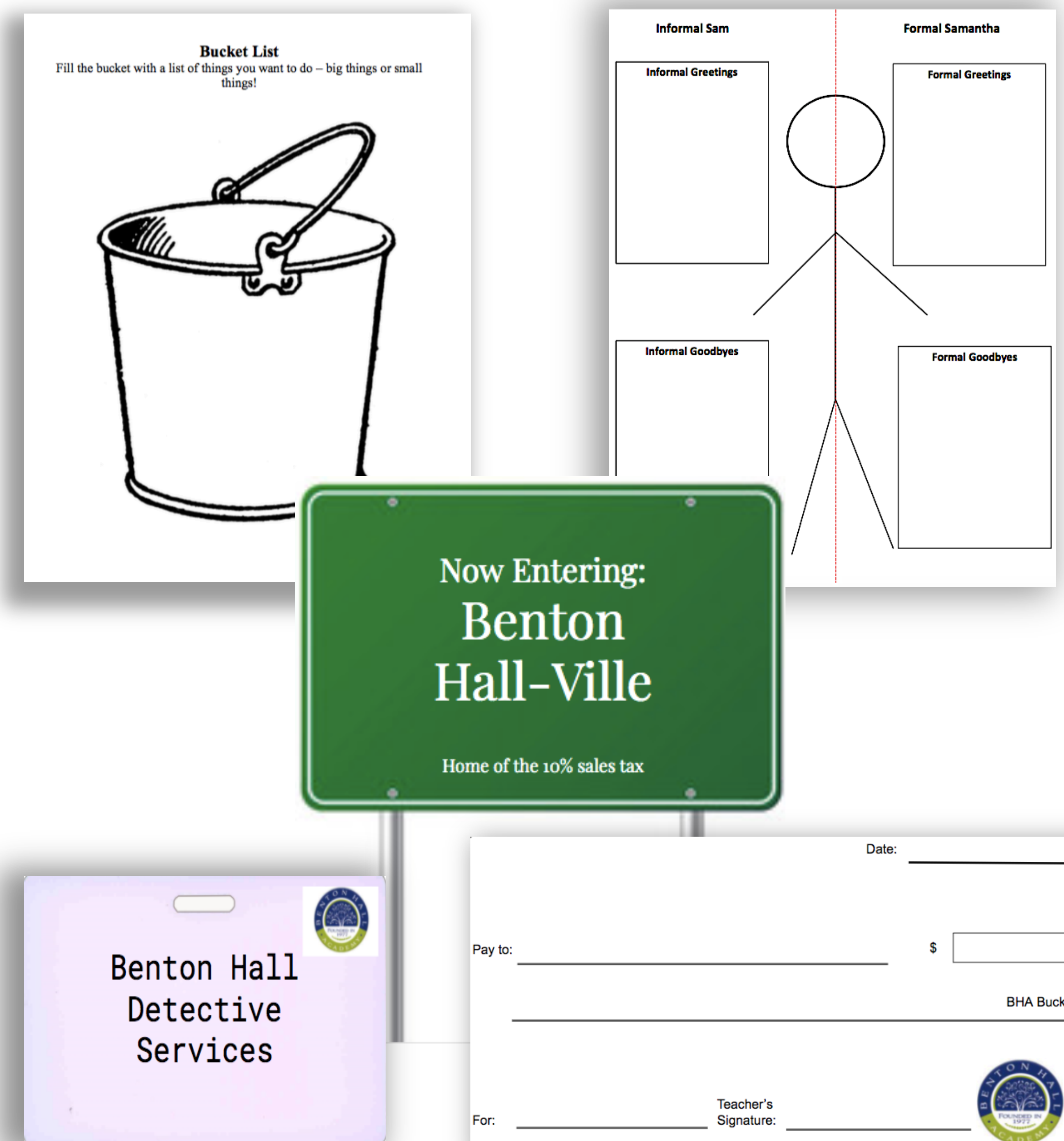
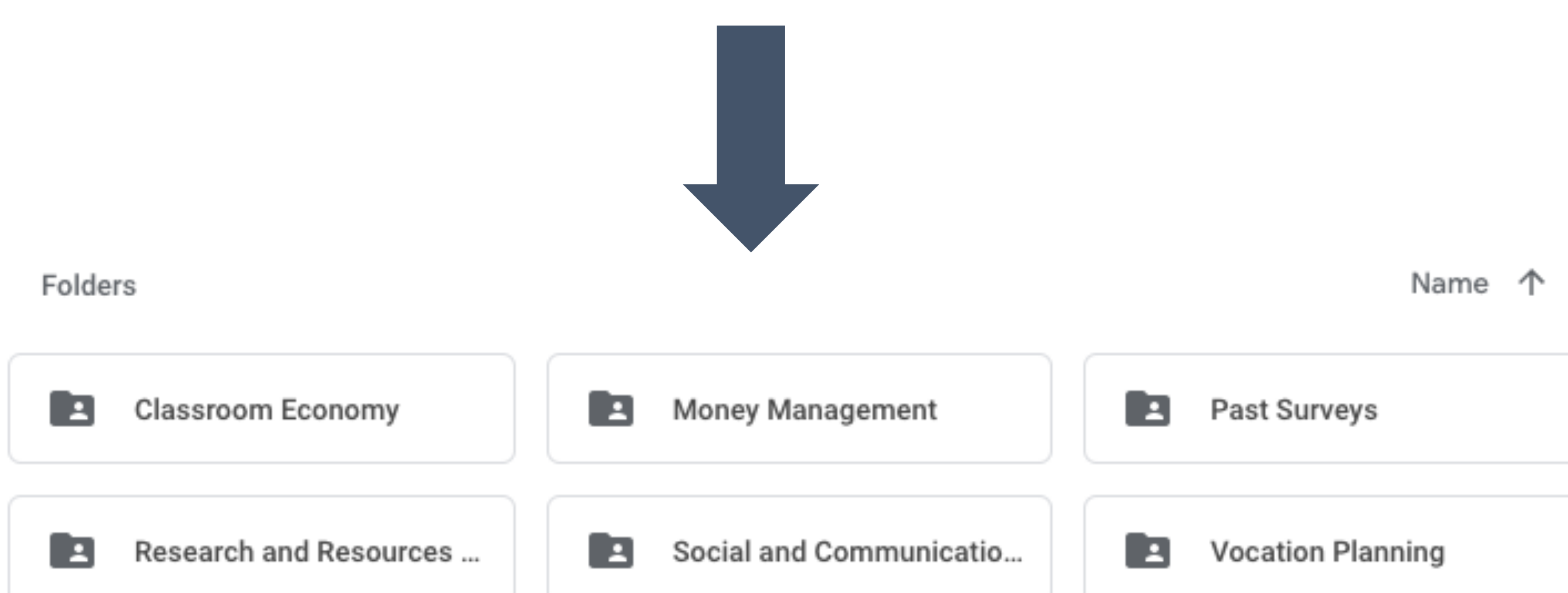
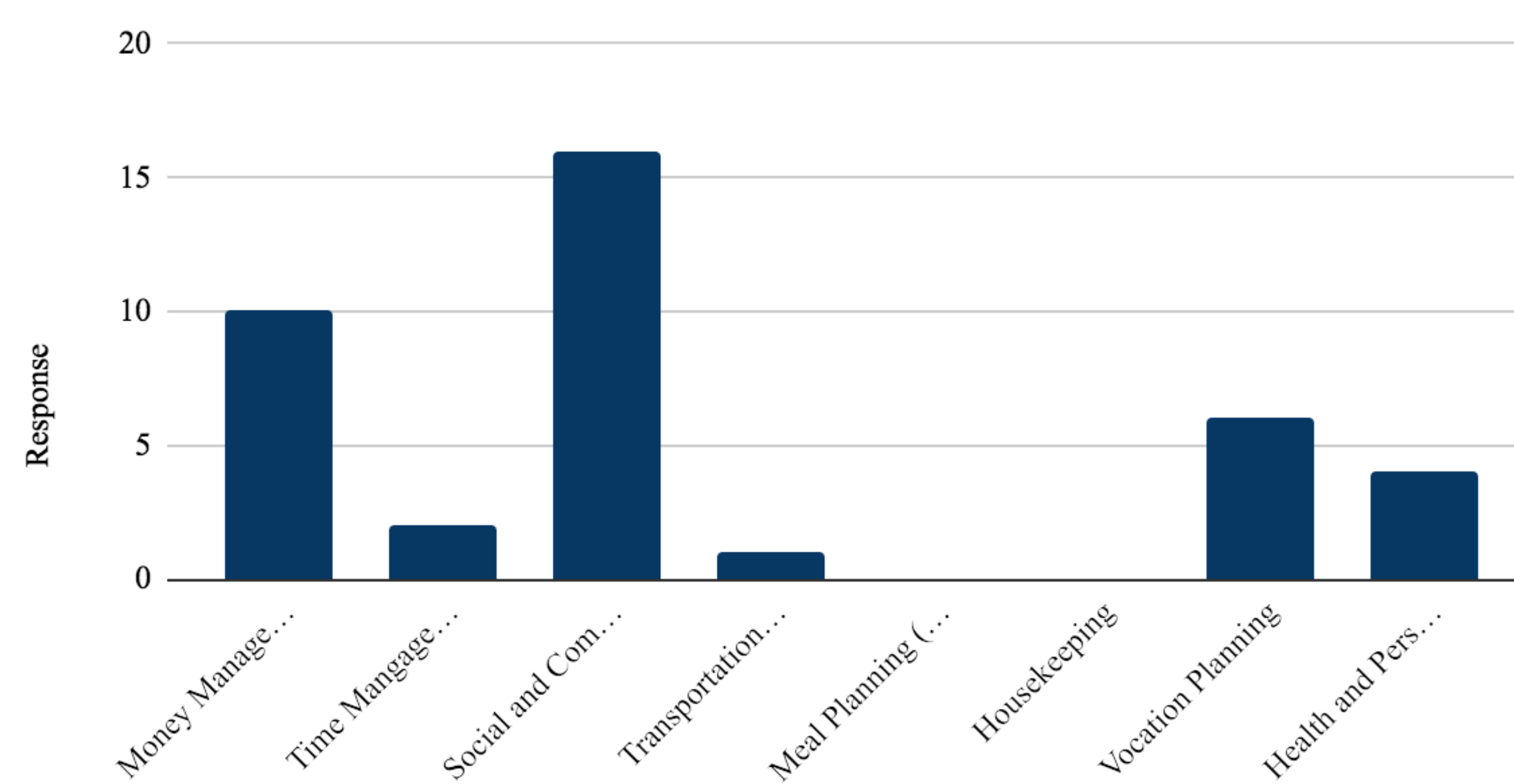
Goals of this Capstone Project

- Review literature and observe students to identify typical population needs, in reference to life skills
- Determine most pertinent life skills to address in life skills curriculum, based on data gathered from parents and students
- Create life skills curriculum that is both easy to use and low cost, to fit the needs of Benton Hall
- Create all associated materials, as well as materials to grade lessons up and down, based on population’s typical needs
- Educate and train faculty on life skills curriculum, for effective use
- Provide tips for incorporating developed materials into high school courses, as appropriate

End Products

- Conducted population survey to determine which life skills were most desired by parents and students to be included in a life skills curriculum. Top 3 results included: social and communication skills, money management and spending, and vocation planning
- Conducted literature review to determine typical barriers and supports to each life skill for this population
- Collaborated with faculty to determine barriers and supports observed in the classroom for the life skills mentioned
- Developed curriculum into 3 separate units, totaling 13 individual lessons
- Created lesson plans, activities, and all supporting materials for each lesson
- Educated and trained faculty on curriculum design and use
- Gathered feedback on usability of each unit via created survey and made changes to curriculum, as appropriate
- Created basic classroom economy to simulate real-world life skill use
- Generated and dispersed tips for incorporating developed curriculum into high school courses
- Compiled and dispersed literature, pertinent to life skills for this population, to faculty

"Which of the following skills would you like to see most in a life skills course at Benton Hall?"



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