Cork, Ireland
Grant Period: 2005 - 2008

International business-education partnership sparks global interest.

In 2005, Johnson & Johnson launched its first Bridge to Employment (BTE) program outside of the United States in Cork, Ireland. BTE-Cork was designed to foster a positive attitude in the science industry for students and create pathways for students to enroll and succeed in Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) and the University of Cork College (UCC).

BTE-Cork, Ireland initially hosted hands-on programs for 160 students and parent information sessions. The Johnson & Johnson Companies in Cork, DePuy, Janseen Biologics (then known as Centocor), and Janssen Pharmaceutical, partnered with three schools in the Northside of Cork City, while engaging student leaders to help design the program. Over time, select BTE students participated in intensive job shadowing experiences, exposing students to the work of work and a roadmap to attain those careers.

While BTE-Cork’s corporate grant ended in 2008, local partners have sustained the program. In October 2014, BTE-Cork, Ireland will launch its third cycle and is now supported by Cork City and the Johnson & Johnson companies in Cork. In fact, the program has expanded to nine additional schools.
Every principal is approached to create new and innovative programs for their students. Tony Walsh, principal at Mayfield Community School, helped guide the first BTE-Cork students in his school. The first cycle was a proven success. Walsh describes its application to his school as “one of the most successful programs we have ever participated in.” He sees the BTE program as a great opportunity for students, creating a direct link between industry and students. It also gives students a concrete incentive to work hard at school and do well on examinations.

Buy-in from principals like Walsh is critical. Students need to be given the opportunity to participate in programs like BTE, but administrators need to pave the way for these opportunities.

The BTE-Cork, Ireland’s impacts speak for themselves:

- **Increased higher education enrollment by students:** BTE students, a significant portion of which were first-generation college students, progressed to higher or further education at a higher rate than a comparison group. For example, at one school 85 percent of BTE students enrolled in higher education as opposed to 56 percent of the comparison group.

- **More interest in science by students:** BTE students exhibited higher rates of enrollment in science courses than comparison groups. At one school 43 percent of BTE students enrolled in biology courses, as opposed to 22 percent of students in the comparison group.

- **Professional development for Johnson & Johnson employees:** Employees reported gaining valuable skills in working with others, especially around leadership development and communication.