

THE BRIDGE TO EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE



A Decade of Promising School-to-Career Partnerships

BTE helps young people build solid futures by introducing them to a variety of careers in health care and providing them with real world experiences.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1992, Johnson & Johnson launched the Bridge to Employment (BTE) initiative in an effort to support education by communicating to at-risk students that learning can be meaningful, engaging, and relevant. BTE helps young people build solid futures by introducing them to a variety of careers in health care and providing them with real world experiences. Each BTE partnership-which consists of a local Johnson & Johnson operating company, one or more local schools, an institution of higher education, and an intermediary organization-is granted flexibility in developing customized approaches that best meet the needs of local students and school systems. The success of these unique partnerships stems from the use of a common core of scientifically sound school-to-career principles: maintaining high standards of academic learning for all students; providing opportunities for contextual learning; creating links with institutions of higher education; and connecting students with adults in the workplace.

More specifically, the BTE initiative:

- builds long-term partnerships among businesses, educators, community groups and parents to have a meaningful impact on students' future success in the workplace;
- prepares at-risk young people to meet the challenges and requirements of the health care industry and today's complex society;
- reinforces parental involvement as a critical link between young people and their schools; recognizes and advances community efforts in locations that are exemplary in helping young people to begin building careers; and
- assists in connecting students to institutions of higher education and training.

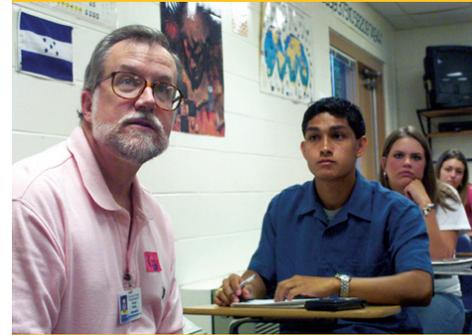
This report provides insight into promising practices in school-to-career partnership-building and sustainability by closely examining seven key elements of the BTE initiative that appear to be particularly responsible for its success. In the process, the report documents attempts to institutionalize these kinds of partnerships through resource management, curriculum development, and professional development. Finally, the report concludes with recommendations to schools, businesses, and funding agencies on how to effectively initiate, build, and sustain school-to-career partnerships.

In developing this report, the authors relied on information provided by site coordinators from the 24 current and past BTE partnerships, and the three BTE evaluation teams who work with the partnerships. This information included observations by students, career coaches, teachers, and administrators. In addition, quarterly and annual reports, evaluation reports, site visit summaries, student survey results, and other materials from the sites provided further quantitative and qualitative information about each of the partnerships.

Successes and Outcomes of the BTE Initiative

It is evident that Bridge to Employment partnerships make a powerful difference in the successful development of the students, schools, businesses, and communities involved. The data gathered for this report show that BTE not only affects students, which are its primary target group, but also the individuals and organizations that comprise each partnership. This influence can be seen through: increased student engagement and academic achievement; the development of new school curricula, career centers, and science labs; increased productivity and job satisfaction among Johnson & Johnson employees participating in BTE activities; and increased communication and collaboration among local high schools, universities, companies, and community-based organizations.

While each BTE partnership is different in design and implementation, they are alike in their goal of effecting positive effects on the students, schools, businesses, and other organizations involved. A survey sent to



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the site coordinators of the current and past BTE partnerships, and the three evaluation teams, revealed that the different activities and personalities associated with the partnership yielded varying degrees of success. With respect to BTE's effect on students, site coordinators and evaluators agreed that BTE had a moderate-to-high positive impact on young people in four key areas: increased academic engagement; pursuit of and/or exposure to higher education; increased focus on career development/knowledge of health care; and positive youth development. The full report also examines the partnerships' effects on schools and business partners.

Lessons Learned After a Decade

All BTE site coordinators and evaluators indicated that a successful BTE partnership—one that is transforming to all partners—must have significant collaboration and buy-in from all of the parties involved. Each of the BTE partnerships funded to date has experienced unique successes and challenges, yet BTE site coordinators and the site evaluation teams agree that there are key elements that must be present if a partnership is to be successful. These elements include:

- Strong partnerships and collaboration
- Effective management and leadership
- Structured work-based learning opportunities
- High expectations and accountability
- Links and exposure to higher education
- Evaluation and continuous improvement
- Institutionalization and sustainability

The full report discusses the key elements of successful BTE partnerships as identified by the BTE site coordinators and evaluation teams. These elements are inextricably linked to one another. When one dimension of the partnership is strong, it has a correlative effect on other aspects of the partnership. The same is true in cases where there are weaknesses. “Spotlight pieces” interspersed throughout the report provide an illustrative glimpse into the dynamics of the key elements of success within the context of actual BTE partnerships.

The report concludes with remarks and recommendations geared toward schools, business, and funding agencies interested in becoming involved in BTE and other school-to-career initiatives. As a synthesis of the data combined with observations from BTE site coordinators, evaluation teams, and the technical assistance teams from the AED National Institute for Work and Learning, and the Johnson & Johnson corporate headquarters, these recommendations share some of the knowledge gained over the last ten years of work on the BTE initiative.



**The Bridge to Employment Initiative:
A Decade of Promising School-to-Career Partnerships**
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Copies of the full report may be ordered for \$5.00 prepaid,
including postage and handling from:

AED National Institute for Work and Learning
BTE Promising School-to-Career Partnerships
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