



PHOENIXVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

BTE Success Stories

BRIDGE TO EMPLOYMENT

Launched in 1992, Bridge to Employment (BTE) is a Johnson & Johnson initiative that prepares youth for brighter futures. For more information about BTE, visit www.bridge2employment.org

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Why BTE?

The BTE-Phoenixville program was designed to prepare underrepresented (low-income, low race/ethnicity representation) and moderately performing students to attend and persist in college and understand career options available in the health sciences and STEM fields. According to the Pennsylvania School Performance Profile, 98.9% of Phoenixville Area High School (PAHS) students graduated from high school but just 86% planned to attend college. BTE Phoenixville aimed to close this gap.

In addition, the BTE Phoenixville program worked to increase students' college readiness levels. Before the program, assessment tests showed that less than half of all PAHS 9th grade African-American, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian students scored at grade-level in both Evidence-Based Reading and Writing and Math. According to the College Board, not meeting this key benchmark indicates that students are not on-track to succeed in select first-year, credit-bearing college courses. The BTE Phoenixville partners wanted also to increase students' Academic Behaviors and Contextual Skills & Awareness scores, particularly for at-risk groups including first-generation college students, low-income students, English language learners, underrepresented students and students with disabilities. Two-thirds of the initial BTE cohort belonged to one or more of these at-risk groups.

BTE is designed specifically to provide these types of college and career readiness exposure to students. Working together, Johnson & Johnson, secondary and postsecondary schools, and community organizations develop programs that feature academic enrichment, career readiness and exploration activities, and higher education preparation. They aim to increase the number of students enrolling in higher education and pursuing careers in STEM²D (science, technology, engineering, math, manufacturing, and design) or health care.

BTE: A Catalyst for College & Career Aspirations

The BTE program at Phoenixville High School sought to select a group of 45 rising sophomore students to become participants in the program. Selection criteria included enrollment in College Prep or Accelerated College Prep courses, with most students having GPAs in the range of 2.0 to 3.2. Some students with higher GPAs were also eligible due to their status as a potential first-generation college

SITE PROFILE

Location

Phoenixville, Pennsylvania

Grant Period

2016 - 2019

Sponsor

DePuy Synthes
Johnson & Johnson
Diabetes Solutions
Companies

Coordinator

Montgomery County
Community College

Community Partners

Phoenixville Area High
School (PAHS)

Volunteers

77 volunteers
1,687 total hours

Directly Served

38 students
41% female
79% completion rate

student and/or not having a supportive home environment, as defined by the school guidance counselors. A pool of 78 eligible students were invited to a BTE-Phoenixville assembly introducing the program, and interested students were asked to apply. As a result of this recruitment effort, 38 students were selected to participate (59% male; 41% female), and the program kicked off in September 2016.

The Phoenixville BTE program focused on higher education preparation and career exposure. Students were exposed to professions and disciplines within Johnson & Johnson DePuy Synthes as well as other healthcare professions. Student participants engaged in curricula that involved cutting edge technology and real-world applications. Student participants also became more confident in communication skills, both written and oral. The program included community service opportunities, as well as off-site educational opportunities.

In order to improve students' *academic achievement*, BTE Phoenixville focused on activities designed to increase students' engagement and motivation. All BTE students met individually with their designated PAHS Guidance Counselor three times during each school year to discuss their academic performance course selection at PAHS, and future plans.

To encourage students to *consider pursuing higher education*, the program offered two dual enrollment classes, three college-prep workshops and several college visits. During the visits, students toured campuses, learned about college admissions, met students and professors, and sat in on classes.

To assist students in *exploring their education or career paths*, the program included career coaching, hands-on labs, career exploration and preparation workshops, job shadowing, and visits to partner sites.

Impact of BTE

Of the 38 students who started BTE in the 10th grade, 30 (79%) completed the program in 12th grade. All but one BTE participant (97%) graduated from PAHS. Ninety percent of BTE students were accepted to colleges—compared to only 68% of the Comparison group. The remaining BTE students were either employed (two students; 7%) or enrolled in the military (one student; 3%). Students planned to attend institutions including:

- Montgomery County Community College
- Delaware County Community College
- Pennsylvania State University – various campuses
- University of Pittsburgh
- Immaculata University

BTE had a huge impact on my higher education decisions. The college visits with BTE allowed me to form my own opinion about what college experience I wanted.

- A BTE-Phoenixville student

Through the BTE program, I developed abilities to appreciate different cultures/circumstances and understand how a younger generation, who will eventually be in the workforce, handles professional activities.

- A J&J employee

Almost all BTE students (96%) agreed that they are aware of health careers—and more than half (58%) plan on a career in health or science. A large majority (85%) agreed that the BTE program prepared them to achieve their career goals.

When students were asked what was most beneficial for them about the program, the most common response was the college visits. Students discussed how these visits showed them opportunities that were available to them and gave them ideas for where they could potentially apply to college. One BTE student said, “BTE had an impact with the college visits because it allowed me to form my own opinion about what college experience I wanted.” Students also talked about how they built their public speaking confidence through an Improv Workshop. One student remarked that it pushed him “out of my comfort zone and improved my communication skills.” In addition, students described the strong relationships they formed with their career coaches and how much they appreciated spending one-on-one time with them. Students who took part in a career study project valued what they learned and talked about how it helped them figure out potential college majors and/or careers.

J&J employees volunteered an average of between 20 - 80 hours per year on the BTE Phoenixville program. Roles included career coach, workshop facilitator, field trip chaperone, program planner, job shadow host, guest lecturer and informational interviewee. All (100%) of the 14 volunteers who responded to a survey agreed that the BTE program is a great way for the local company to demonstrate the J&J credo, it was a worthwhile experience for the students, it was worthwhile experience for them personally, and that they feel they made a difference in a young person’s life by participating in BTE. One volunteer stated, “Through the BTE program, I have further developed abilities to appreciate different cultures/circumstances and understand how a younger generation, who will eventually be in the workforce, handles professional activities.” Another said, “BTE gave me the opportunity to develop my leadership and communication skills.”

STUDENT OUTCOMES

97% of BTE students who completed the three-year BTE program graduated from PAHS.

BTE students’ confidence in goal setting skills increased from 71% at baseline to 85% in year three.

85% of BTE participants agreed or strongly agreed that the BTE program had prepared them to achieve their career goals.

96% of BTE students agreed that they are aware of health careers (up from 66% at baseline).

77% of BTE students agreed they are aware of the knowledge of the skills needed for a health career (up from 54% at baseline).

58% of BTE students report that they plan on a career in the health or science field (compared to 16% of the Comparison group students).

90% of BTE students were accepted to colleges (vs. 68% of Comparison group).