



# NORRISTOWN, 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](http://www.bridge2employment.org)

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## Why BTE?

The BTE-Norristown program was designed to prepare underrepresented (low-income, low race/ethnicity representation) students to attend and persist in college and understand career options available in the health sciences and STEM fields. Student participants engaged in curricula that involved cutting-edge technology and real-world applications. They were exposed to professions and disciplines within Johnson & Johnson Janssen Biotech, Inc. as well as other healthcare professions.

School funding cuts in Norristown meant that students no longer had the opportunity to go on field trips. Through BTE, students attended a variety of trips to local universities as well as to off-site educational opportunities and community service projects.

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 STEM: D (science, technology, engineering, math, manufacturing, and design) or health care.

## BTE: A Catalyst for College & Careers

The BTE program at Norristown High School sought to select a group of 45 rising sophomore students to become participants in the program. Selection criteria included a GPA of 2.0 or higher, no conduct violations above a level 2, and a 90% or better attendance rate. The high school identified a pool of eligible students and introduced them to the program during an assembly. Interested students were asked to complete an application. NAHS staff met one-on-one with any students who did not attend the assembly to tell them about the program. As a result of this recruitment effort, 39 students were selected to participate in the BTE participant group beginning in September 2017. A comparison group of 35 students was also selected.

In order to improve students' *academic achievement*, BTE Norristown implemented curricula with real-world applications and offered dual enrollment courses. The program also focused on activities designed to increase communication skills and motivation.

To encourage students to *consider pursuing higher education*, the program offered a variety of trips to universities and provided students with college-prep and financial aid workshops.

## SITE PROFILE

### Location

Norristown, Pennsylvania

### Grant Period

2017 - 2020

### Sponsor

Janssen Biotech, Inc.

### Coordinator

Montgomery County  
Community College

### Community Partners

Norristown Area High  
School

### Volunteers

47 volunteers  
1,241 total hours

### Students Directly Served

39 students  
77% female  
82% completion rate

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

## Impact of BTE

Of the 39 students who started BTE in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 32 (82%) completed the program in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. All 32 (100%) graduated from NAHS. All of the BTE students (100%) were accepted to colleges of their choice. Institutions included:

- California University of Pennsylvania
- Chestnut Hill College
- Colorado College
- Delaware Valley University
- Drexel University
- Jefferson University
- Kutztown University
- Lincoln University
- Montgomery County Community College
- Northeastern University
- Pennsylvania State University
- Temple University
- University of Scranton
- University of Pennsylvania
- West Chester University

The majority of BTE students (90%) were determined to be college-ready in math, and three-quarters of them (76%) were determined to be college-ready in English. All of the BTE students who completed the online exit survey identified a career they were interested in pursuing.

One BTE partner explained that BTE students also became more confident in communication skills, both written and oral. He explained, “Just for the kids to be able to go into corporate settings and see people that look like them working in these environments. You can't buy that experience of having access to mentors and being able to ask them questions.” Another partner commented that the BTE students gained leadership skills. He explained that students came to see that “They have a voice in our BTE program. We listen to our students and we tried to shape the program each year to what they said they wanted. So, whether or not they took on a specific leadership role, it was more that they have a say in what their life might be.”

While focus groups were not conducted due to COVID-19, students were asked on their exit surveys if what they learned in BTE would help them with their future career. All students agreed that BTE would help them with their future careers, and many students mentioned specific skills they acquired such as

## STUDENT OUTCOMES

**100%** of BTE students who completed the three-year BTE program graduated from NAHS.

**100%** of the BTE students applied to an institution of higher education

**100%** of BTE students were accepted to a college of their choice

**100%** of the BTE students who completed the on-line survey had identified a career they were interested in pursuing

**90%** of BTE graduates were determined to be college-ready in Math

**76%** of BTE graduates were determined to be college-ready in English

**63%** of BTE students reported planning on a career in the Health/STEM2D field.

resume building, interviewing, and networking while others mentioned leadership skills and teamwork. Comments included:

*“BTE helped me look at the workforce with different eyes. Meaning that there are so many things you can do and grow towards.”*

- A BTE Norristown student

*“I am not shy anymore. I definitely feel like I have a voice! I believe in myself more thanks to BTE.”*

- BTE Norristown student

- “The things I learned in BTE will help me in my future because I learned how to manage my time, be more confident, become a leader, and what to expect in a job interview.”
- “BTE helped me look at the workforce with different eyes. Meaning that there are so many things you can do and grow towards, then just one goal. How to prepare for the workforce and life in general is one of the main things BTE has taught me.”

When students were asked if their lives had changed because of BTE, all but two of the 25 students reported that the BTE experience had a positive impact on their lives. Many students discussed better communication skills, more confidence, and being more social as examples of how the BTE experience had changed them. Others discussed having more opportunities because of BTE. Student responses included:

- “I am not shy anymore. I definitely feel like I also have a voice! I believe in myself more thanks to BTE.”
- “I learned to take every opportunity that shows up and to not take anything for granted. I learned there are amazing people out there who truly want to help others and I would like to do the same.”
- “When I first started BTE I wasn’t really focused on myself, I wasn’t confident nor brave enough to talk in front of adults or a crowd. But with the skills BTE taught me I found myself, and I became confident and strong.”

J&J employees volunteered an average of 20 hours per year on the BTE Norristown program and engaged in a total of 1241 hours. Volunteers shared the impact the BTE program has had on them, both personally and professionally.

- “BTE enhanced my ability to work with others and I learned to exercise patience.”
- “I benefited from the leadership training and mentoring opportunities.”
- “I liked the opportunity to give back to the community and affect the future of high school kids. I did not have that support in high school, so it meant a lot to me to provide that for others.”
- “My experience with the BTE Norristown program was amazing. Working with the youth is important to me and to be able to connect with them through a J&J sponsored program was very meaningful. I wasn’t sure what I was signing up for, but I knew I wanted to help. After the very first meeting with the students, mentors and BTE staff I knew I made the right choice. The students weren’t quite sure what they were walking into and neither were the counselors- but over time the students made connections with each other and with all of us. Watching the growth of the students at the beginning of Year 1 to the end of Year 3 has been extremely fulfilling and I am grateful for having had even a small impact on that growth. I’m always proud to say I work for Johnson & Johnson but having had the opportunity to work with the BTE program provides an additional source of pride.”