



# TRENTON, NEW JERSEY

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 Bridge to Employment (BTE) Program in Trenton, New Jersey was a partnership between Trenton Central High School West (TCHSW), The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), and Johnson & Johnson Worldwide/Janssen Pharmaceuticals. The school's population is majority Hispanic or African American and low income. The program was anchored on two main goals: increasing the number of students pursuing higher education and increasing the number of students interested in health or science disciplines.

The BTE Trenton program aimed in particular to help middle-achieving students. As one partner explained, "In Trenton, if you're really high achieving, there are resources and programs for you. And if you're really struggling and need support, there's a lot of resources. But the students who are caught in the middle who need help kind of get lost in the sauce."

BTE is designed specifically to provide 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 Trenton program began in 2017 with 46 TCHSW students who met the criteria of having a GPA greater than 2.0 and a school attendance rate above 90%. On June 2020, 32 students graduated from the three-year BTE program.

The program focused on two central components:

- Providing students with academic support and enrichment activities, including college preparation activities.
- Offering activities aimed at career exploration and development delivered through mentoring of BTE students by science, healthcare, and business professionals.

One unique aspect of the program was its "collaboration model" in which Bonner Scholar students from TCNJ helped to run and orchestrate the program and served as mentors to the BTE students. The Bonner Scholars worked weekly with the BTE students and are closer in age to them—this helped lead to bonds between the Scholars and students. While the BTE partners said that working with the Bonner Scholars added an "element of

## SITE PROFILE

### Location

Trenton, NJ

### Grant Period

2017 - 2020

### Sponsor

Janssen Pharmaceuticals

**Coordinator:** The College of New Jersey

**Community Partner:** Trenton Central High School West

**Volunteers:** 16

**Students Directly**

**Served:** 46

**Completion Rate:** 70%

complexity” because they had another group with which to coordinate, they agreed that the collaboration was well worth it.

## Impact of BTE

Of the 46 students who started BTE in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, 32 (70%) completed the program in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. All (100%) of those 32 graduated from TCHSW. Twenty-six of the 32 BTE students (81%) enrolled in a higher education program; out of the remaining six students, two were not eligible to enroll in a U.S. college or university. Most students applied and were accepted to more than one school. The most common schools included:

- ❖ Mercer County Community College (16 students)
- ❖ Rowan University (7)
- ❖ William Patterson University (6)
- ❖ The College of New Jersey (3)
- ❖ Rider University (3)
- ❖ New Jersey City University (3)
- ❖ Delaware State University (3)
- ❖ Kean University (3)
- ❖ Lincoln Technical (3)

Ten of the 32 students received scholarships of up to \$10,000.

Academic data showed some statistically significant differences between BTE students and the Comparison Group (though due to differences between the groups these findings should be interpreted with caution). BTE students consistently outperformed Comparison Group students in English by statistically significant margins. In Year 3, the BTE group’s average was 8.9 percentage points higher than the Comparison Group. BTE students had statistically significant lower average absence rates than the Comparison Group students at all points in Years 1, 2, and 3. In addition, from Baseline to Year 3, the BTE group increased their average math grade from 71.1 to 83.8.

Through dual enrollment courses, 39% of BTE students obtained college credit or a certification while attending high school. Eighteen percent of BTE graduates opted to pursue a career in the STEM field.

Partners commented that the hands-on component of career exploration activities such as J&J site visits was key for students—learning what different jobs were, what they entailed, and the machinery/equipment they involved. BTE students heard guest speakers tell their stories of where they went to school and how they wound up in their current role. One partner added that it’s important for kids to “see people who look like you” in professional roles. Partners also emphasized that visiting college campuses on trips enabled students to see schools beyond TCNJ and gave them the opportunity to “compare different environments” when determining the right fit.

## STUDENT OUTCOMES

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

**81%** of the BTE students applied to an institution of higher education

**87%** of eligible BTE students enrolled in college

**90%** of BTE students were accepted to a college of their choice

**10** BTE students received scholarships

**39%** of BTE students received college credits during high school

BTE students’ math grades increased from Baseline to Year 3

## Sustainability

To continue the momentum that was created by the BTE program, the BTE Trenton partners are discussing a shortened 2-year version of the program with a smaller number of students—approximately 20. The partners are working collaboratively to determine the workshops and the aspects of the program they believe are essential to continue.