

# Bridge to Employment Success Story

## BTE Success Story

Tswelopele, South Africa

Spring 2023



### Why BTE?

Tswelopele Secondary School is located in an urban ward in close proximity to the cities of Johannesburg and Tshwane. The area consists mainly of informal settlements and shacks, some of which have no water or electricity. The community also struggles with issues such as drug and child abuse, gender-based violence, unemployment, poverty, and teen pregnancy, all of which make it challenging for children to focus on schooling. The BTE Tswelopele program was designed to support Tswelopele students by providing them with academic enrichment, mentors, exposure to post-secondary education options, company tours and job shadowing, life skills, and education on social entrepreneurship. The goal was to expand the students' universe of possibilities. The students also engaged in numerous community service activities over the course of the program, where it reinforced their learning and understanding of the importance of giving back and being responsible citizens.

One BTE partner explained that the partners sought to make a positive change to inspire

the students: “With the right inspiration, right motivation, right guidance, they can aspire to be doctors, to be lawyers... possibilities that can exist for them if they work hard enough. And, you know, they were determined to succeed.”

BTE is designed specifically to prepare students for their postsecondary journeys. Working together, Johnson & Johnson (J&J), secondary schools, post-secondary education institutions and other community organizations and partners develop programs that feature academic enrichment, post-secondary education preparation, and career exploration and readiness activities. They aim to increase the number of students enrolling in post-secondary education and pursuing careers in STEM<sup>2</sup>D or healthcare.

## BTE: A Catalyst for College & Careers

The BTE Tswelopele program invited interested students to submit an application and also considered students’ academic and disciplinary records. In 2020, 58 BTE students enrolled in the program.

In order to improve students’ *academic achievement*, BTE Tswelopele provided peer tutoring. To encourage students to consider pursuing *post-secondary education*, the program offered information on education options, application assistance, and bursary support. To assist students in exploring their *education and/or career paths*, the program included career assessments, guest lectures, company tours, job shadowing and several lessons on entrepreneurship. In addition, the program also focused on the social and emotional wellbeing of its students, through social and emotional learning (SEL) workshops and motivational sessions; understanding that there must be a holistic approach to supporting students as they prepare for their respective post-secondary education journeys.

Because the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine occurred during much of the BTE

## SITE PROFILE

### Location

Tswelopele, South Africa

### Grant Period

2020 - 2022

### Sponsor

Johnson & Johnson

### Coordinator

NICDAM (National Institute Community Development and Management)

### Community Partners

Tswelopele Secondary School,  
Department of Basic Education  
(Gauteng Province)

### Volunteers

23 volunteers  
203 Total hours

### Students Directly Served

58 students  
48% completion rate

Tswelopele program years, the BTE partners worked creatively to redesign certain aspects of their program model. Where students could not leave their homes, the program added some activities that each student could do at home as BTE assignments. These activities were designed so that they could engage and benefit the BTE students' families. One such activity was "Make Your Own Mask," where students created masks at their homes with old t-shirts. Another at home activity was "Make Your Own Garden," where students learned about sustainability during the COVID-19 pandemic and how to make kitchen gardens out of various recyclable materials. These two activities were well-received: students found them engaging and families welcomed how these activities and new knowledge directly translated to savings for the household.

## Impact of BTE

Of the 58 students who started BTE in the 10th grade, 28 (48%) completed the program in 12th grade. Of these, 86% (24 of 28) graduated from their respective high schools.

At the time of exit from the BTE program, all BTE students (100%) reported that the BTE experience had motivated them to work harder. Their average GPA scores steadily rose each year. All (100%) BTE students who completed the program agreed that they felt confident to attend a post-secondary education institution, and 96% agreed that they felt confident to apply.

One of the BTE partners shared that a key area of growth for BTE students was learning the importance of teamwork. Through the social enterprise model, BTE students learned to work as a team to achieve the objectives in different groups. In addition, a BTE partner reported seeing growth in BTE students' confidence, public speaking abilities, and decision-making skills.

BTE students reported appreciating the opportunity to engage with other BTE students from across the world during the annual Alliance Building and Training Session (ABTS). A BTE partner also shared that J&J mentors were an important connection for BTE students. He said, "They liked the fact that they could speak to someone who they

## STUDENT OUTCOMES

**86%** of BTE students who completed the three-year BTE program graduated from high school

**100%** of the BTE graduates agreed that the BTE experience had motivated them to work harder

**100%** of BTE graduates reported planning to attend further education

**92%** of BTE graduates reported planning to attend a 4-year post-secondary institution

BTE students' average GPA rose, consistently outperforming the comparison group

could look up to, who came from a similar background. That just inspired the students... to know that it is possible to move on [from their community] to work for a large multinational healthcare company.”

J&J employees volunteered an average of 68 hours per year on the BTE Tswelopele program and engaged in a total of 203 hours, even with restrictions of COVID-19 pandemic and strict protocols.

## Sustainability

At the time of our interview, the BTE partners did not have any formalized plans for sustaining the BTE program. However, they agreed that BTE could benefit more students, and hope to consider certain elements of the program on a smaller scale in the future.

