

Bridge to Employment Success Story

BTE Success Story

Orange County, California

April 2024



Why BTE?

The BTE Orange County (OC) program launched on September 10, 2020 with a collaboration between the University of California, Irvine, that serves as the coordinating entity, and Valley High School in Santa Ana, California. The program was designed to inspire students and prepare them for post-secondary education and their future. During its three-year implementation period, the BTE OC program offered participating students academic achievement and enrichment, career exploration and readiness, higher education exploration and preparation,

and community engagement activities. Some of the specific activities for students included field trips to local educational institutions and J&J sites; workshops on college, careers, and life skills; coaching from J&J volunteers on college and careers; a fieldtrip to Disney to learn about engineering; a community service activity; and career exposure opportunities such as job shadowing and mock interviews.

BTE is specifically designed to prepare students for their postsecondary journeys. Working together, Johnson & Johnson (J&J), secondary and post-secondary schools, and other community organizations and partners develop programs that feature academic enrichment, career exploration and readiness, and post-secondary education preparation activities. They aim to increase the number of students enrolling in post-secondary education and pursuing careers in STEM²D or healthcare.

BTE: A Catalyst for Higher Education & Careers

The BTE OC program officially launched with 50 10th grade students at Valley High School (VHS) with the goals to 1) increase the number of students who enroll in higher education and 2) increase the number of students interested in STEM²D careers. The students were selected according to two criteria: being enrolled in the Healthcare Academy or Engineering Academy at VHS and completing an application to participate in BTE. The staff recruited students meeting these criteria until 50 students were enrolled in the program. The school coordinator then identified 50 10th grade students who matched the BTE students by academic performance to form a comparison group.

In order to improve students' achievement, the OC team provided workshops on college, career, and life skills topics. The students also received coaching from J&J volunteers on college and career opportunities. Since the first two years of programming were severely affected by COVID-19, the team took the students on a special Year 3 fieldtrip to Disneyland to learn about engineering. Students described this as a highlight of their overall BTE experience. To further assist the students in achieving their academic goals, the OC team connected students to caring adults and the community through meetings with J&J coaches, field trips, and community service activities.

Due to the challenges presented by COVID-19, all Year 1 activities were conducted virtually. Likewise, the fall semester of Year 2 programming was conducted virtually, while the spring semester activities were in person. Year 3 was in person and BTE

SITE PROFILE

Location
Orange County, California

Grant Period
2020 - 2023

Sponsor
Johnson & Johnson

Coordinator
The University of
California, Irvine (UCI)

Community Partners
Center for Educational
Partnerships, UCI

Volunteers
5 volunteers

Students Directly Served
50 students

students had the opportunity to engage in activities such as field trips and workshops.

Impact of BTE

The COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge for the BTE program—BTE partners mentioned that students' academic struggles led to attrition from the program. Of the 50 students who started BTE in 2020, 62% (31) completed the program in 2023. However, of the students who completed the BTE program, 96.8% graduated from high school and 95.7% of the graduates enrolled in a post-secondary institution. The wide variety of supports provided by the OC partners for college application, financial aid, and scholarship application seems to have had a big role in this success rate.

The BTE students reported very positive views of the program. The students expressed that they had gained important knowledge about higher education and careers and increased meaningful connections with peers and with caring adults, including program staff and mentors. BTE students reported higher rates of interest in STEM²D career choices versus the comparison group. BTE partners mentioned that all the students that graduated from the program were accepted to at least one higher education institution. One partner stated that students highly appreciated field trips and college visits. Partners wished they could have provided more of those opportunities since students saw it as a key benefit of the program.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

96.8% of BTE students who completed the three-year BTE program graduated from high school.

100% of students who graduated from BTE applied to at least one post-secondary institution.

95.7% of BTE graduates have enrolled in a post-secondary institution (specifically, a college or university).



“BTE has helped me understand the community in which we live, understand the struggles of our students in school and the difficulty of them continuing to higher education. It made me feel good to coach these students and be their mentor.”

- BTE partner

Sustainability

The BTE partners developed plans to sustain the BTE Orange County program. They reported that the sustainability plans have the potential to further support higher education attendance and completion. They identified BTE as key to filling in existing gaps in the education system. They also shared about a potential BTE extension component with a focus on transition services to students once they are in college. This plan also additionally focuses on recruiting 25 new junior students from Valley High School annually to participate in a two-year program with an aim to achieve positive outcomes in a shorter period.

As of April 2024, BTE Orange County had successfully launched Year 1 of their Sustainability model, recruiting a new cohort of students and beginning site visits, and had five BTE alumni who opted to continue receiving support post-graduation!

