

# Bridge to Employment Success Story

## BTE Success Story

Puebla, Mexico

April 2024



### Why BTE?

The BTE Puebla program was officially launched on October 8, 2020, with an intention to increase the number of students enrolling in post-secondary education and pursuing careers in STEM<sup>2</sup>D sectors. The initiative is a collaboration between Servicios a la Juventud, AC (SERAJ), a non-profit organization that served as the coordinating entity; the Colegio de Bachilleres del Estado de Puebla Plantel 18 (COBAEP 18), the secondary school

that BTE students attended; the Popular Autonomous University of the State of Puebla and the Technological University of Huejotzingo, the post-secondary institution partners; and local Johnson & Johnson operating agency. During the three years of its implementation, BTE Puebla focused on academic support and strengthening, preparation of students for post-secondary education, knowledge and exploration of career paths, student workshops, community building workshops, teacher orientation, educational/company tours, having guest speakers, and job shadowing.

The BTE Puebla site is located in Huejotzingo municipality in the state of Puebla, Mexico. Poverty is high in this area and the municipality is considered particularly dangerous due to active gangs and high rates of illicit substance abuse. There are also high dropout rates among secondary school students. Nearly half of the population has not completed primary education. Hence, the BTE Puebla program was specifically designed to help prepare students in secondary education have a successful journey through high school and a successful transition into post-secondary educational institutions.

## BTE: A Catalyst for Post-Secondary Education & Careers

The BTE Puebla program launched with 48 students in the program. To be eligible to participate in the program students had to meet the following criteria: be a first-year student at the time of selection, be on the morning shift at school, and submit an application for participation. A total of 81 applications were received, out of which 48 students were accepted and enrolled to participate in the program and 33 remaining students formed a comparison group.

The main activities of BTE Puebla were grouped under the strategies of academic strengthening, knowledge and career exploration, approach to post-secondary education, professional and life plan advice, and community construction. Preparation courses for university entrance exams; mentoring by J&J volunteers and job shadowing; workshops to strengthen life skills and employability; visits to three universities, a science museum, J&J facility and a STEM<sup>2</sup>D laboratory; participation in a science fair and other community activities were offered to the students to help improve students' achievement. The first year of programming was conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic while the second year activities followed a hybrid model and most of the third year activities were in-person.

A key factor in design and execution of the program was to support the students in achieving their academic goals as well as their non-cognitive skills. Communication, teamwork, emotional wellbeing, self-esteem, future orientation, socialization, problem-solving, and decision-making were among some of the skills students focused on developing. Despite several challenges and limitations due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the changes in the students' skills were evident, indicating that the BTE Puebla program has had very important impact on students, the positive results of which may extend beyond the program for the graduates.

### SITE PROFILE

**Location**  
Puebla, Mexico

**Grant Period**  
2020 - 2023

**Sponsor**  
Janssen Cilag of Puebla  
and Johnson & Johnson  
Mexico

**Coordinator**  
Servicios a la Juventud,  
AC

**Community Partners**  
Colegio de Bachilleres del  
Estado de Puebla  
University of the State of  
Puebla  
The Technological  
University of Huejotzingo

**Volunteers**  
51 volunteers

**Students Directly Served**  
48 students

## Impact of BTE

Out of the 48 students who started BTE in 2020, 38 students graduated from BTE program (79%). Of the graduates, 34 applied to post-secondary education and all were accepted and enrolled (100%). 14 students enrolled in a STEM<sup>2</sup>D or health degree post-secondary program. The students made notable progress in developing a set of skills important for success in future education and employment, including communication, teamwork, management of emotions, self-esteem etc. The students demonstrated positive attitudes towards the program and commented on the effects on their communication skills as well as socialization. Students reported that preparation for post-secondary education with other peers and support from mentors through the BTE program were key aspects of their experience. Students also reported a range of positive impacts including improved teamwork, communication skills, motivation, and goal setting, as well as feeling confident in decisions about their future education and careers as a result of participation in the program.

University visits were very popular among students. As students shared, the visits helped them compare careers and schools as well as learn about facilities, admissions, scholarships, and campus life in general. Students also loved their science fair because it provided them with an opportunity to learn about STEM careers. Mentoring was another popular activity among students. Mentors seemed to have a lasting impact on the students as they guided them through career choices and shared real-life experiences from their education and work lives. In addition, tutoring for mathematics and science helped students prepare for admission exams to post-secondary education institutions. Sharing about the impact of the program, one of the students shared, “I did not have an easy time making decisions, which now in the last year I can do without difficulty. My self-esteem increased both academically and personally.” Another student shared how the relationship between self-confidence and their career choices has changed since participating in BTE. The student explained, “...[I] had not planned to continue studying but the program motivated me to continue, just as mentoring helped me be clear about what I really wanted to study.” They added they hadn’t wanted to study because they were afraid of failure, but the program taught them to have confidence in themselves.

## STUDENT OUTCOMES

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

**100%** of BTE graduates who applied for post-secondary education were accepted.

**89%** of BTE graduates were accepted for higher education (specifically, a college or university).

**37%** of BTE graduates have enrolled to pursue STEM<sup>2</sup>D or health careers.

*"I remember before BTE I was a person who got carried away by life, I did not value what was happening around me. I carried out my work and activities because they asked me to, I did not try harder than necessary, and I was accepted my results. I didn't ask myself questions about my future. Now, after participating in the program, I consider that I am a person who truly cares about my future and the things one does to achieve their goals...I try to look for paths that lead me to achieving my goals and I make an effort to eliminate my negative attitudes."*

*- BTE participant*

## Sustainability

The BTE Puebla site is continuing a customized version of the program in partnership with Johnson & Johnson (J&J). During an exit interview, one of the staff shared that they were excited to have the possibility for J&J mentors to accompany young BTE Puebla and Mexico City graduates to strengthen their life plan and goals in their academic, professional, and personal lives. The team designed a 6-month planning period, where the focus was on methodology development and volunteer recruitment on the first month. The remaining time was focused on developing a plan to work with students directly. The program will be run by volunteers from J&J. Monitoring of the students will be done via phone and social networks. BTE Puebla's plan is to implement a virtual session each month for 5 months where students get to work on soft skills and employability skills. The overall goal is to offer a plan for students so that they can set their short- and medium-term goals and identify their strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats.

