

Bridge to Employment Success Story

BTE Success Story

Franklin Township, New Jersey

July 2024



Why BTE?

The BTE Franklin Township program, launched in September 2020 and graduated in June 2023, was designed around the central components of college preparedness activities, career exploration, and academic support. The program was developed as an educational partnership between Franklin Township Public Schools, Rutgers University, and the local Johnson & Johnson facility. The program was designed to support students' planning and preparation efforts and skill-building

needed to access post-secondary education. The site served a racially and ethnically diverse group of Franklin High School students and was the second BTE program in Franklin Township, New Jersey, with the first running from 2010-2013.

BTE is specifically designed to prepare students for their post-secondary 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. They aim to increase the number of students enrolling in post-secondary education and pursuing careers in STEM²D or healthcare.

BTE: A Catalyst for Post-Secondary Education & Careers

The BTE Franklin Township program launched with 50 tenth-grade students who attended Franklin High School. The target population of the program included students who had a minimum GPA of 75% and exhibited good attendance, meaning students who did not lose credit in a course due to unexcused absences. Out of the 50 students, 25 were male and 25 were female. The Franklin Township BTE team designed activities for students with the goal of linking each activity to the program’s objectives: 1) increase the number of youths enrolling in post-secondary education and 2) the number of youths pursuing STEM²D careers.

Throughout the three-year duration of the program, the team developed various activities and methods to enhance students’ academic and extracurricular performance. Understanding the challenges facing the students, the BTE Franklin Township team provided the students with virtual career coaching sessions on community engagement, field trips to a university, a science lab/STEM²D activity, virtual and in-person skill-building workshops, entrance exam and application support, virtual and in-person mentoring sessions, guest lectures, tutoring, and mentoring activities to adequately support their academic achievement. These sessions were critical to supporting improved academic performance among students. Through college-preparedness activities, career coaching, and academic support, the Franklin Township team addressed the needs and requests of the students.

A key part of the BTE Franklin Township model was the emphasis on academic and essential skills, using a mix of theory and real-world experience. Thus, to learn more about careers and develop professional skills, the students participated in a job shadowing experience. To practice their resume writing and interview skills, students engaged in several virtual, hybrid, and in-person coaching sessions in addition to skill-building sessions with J&J volunteers. BTE Franklin Township also included community engagement and youth leadership workshops which supported students’ interpersonal

SITE PROFILE

Location

Franklin Township, New Jersey, USA

Grant Period

2020 - 2023

Sponsor

Johnson & Johnson

Coordinator

Rutgers University

Community Partners

Franklin Township High School and Rutgers University

Volunteers

52 volunteers

Students Directly Served

50 students

skills, teamwork, and professionalism, preparing BTE students to be global citizens. To introduce students to a wide variety of careers in STEM²D and healthcare, the BTE Franklin Township team developed a variety of activities for students. For example, they took students on company tours, to career fairs, and to lecture series; had students receive career coaching from STEM professionals; and provided students with job shadowing and career certification course opportunities.

Impact of BTE

Of the 50 students who started BTE in 2020, 26 of them completed the program in 2023. However, of the students who completed the BTE program, 100% graduated from Franklin High School and 100% of graduates were accepted into post-secondary education institutions.

When asked about BTE activities, the students shared that the career talks from J&J mentors and guest speakers were the most helpful. The time with their mentors guided them through the transition and prepared them for their careers. The real-life examples shared by the mentors were particularly helpful for the students as they prepared for the workforce and post-secondary education. Visiting Rutgers University was also popular among students as it not only gave them an overview of what college life would look like but also several career options they could choose from. Students also mentioned that activities with a focus on community engagement and youth leadership, such as volunteering at a food bank, were very encouraging. These and similar activities helped students develop their essential skills such as time management, problem-solving, communication, and critical thinking.

In an exit interview, the BTE Franklin Township partners mentioned the challenges the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the program and students. Students naturally enjoy and benefit most from in-person activities but for some time during the first two years of the programming, activities had to be conducted virtually. Many students explained that it was

STUDENT OUTCOMES

100% of BTE students who completed the three-year BTE program graduated from Franklin High School.

100% of BTE graduates were accepted to institutions of post-secondary education.

72% of BTE graduates are planning to pursue a career in health or science fields.

85% of BTE graduates felt more positive about their “knowledge of skills needed for STEM²D and health careers.”

difficult for them to engage and focus, which impacted their overall experience in the program. The BTE students reported growth in their work readiness skills, and BTE partners recognized increased student confidence and self-efficacy.

Sustainability

The BTE partners explained that there were conversations about the sustainability aspect of the program at Franklin Township. One of the partners in an exit interview shared that

“First generation students have found the BTE program the most useful, as it provided them with the resources they need to take a step towards a college degree.”

- BTE partner

they had a meeting with the principal and vice principal at the school. At the time of the interview, they were working on themes, scopes, and opportunities to identify the activities that could be sustained for the students. The partners shared that Franklin High School is interested in working with Rutgers University to continue this partnership, however, funding and other resources stand as a challenge as they navigate this process. As of the interview, no specific decisions had been made but several meetings had been conducted to begin the process of incorporating BTE’s model, particularly around career exploration and readiness as well as collaborating with companies and schools, to better prepare students for work life.

