

Bridge to Employment Site Reflection

BTE Site Reflection

Ewing, New Jersey, USA
December 2024



Why BTE?

With the goal of giving students at Ewing High School the motivation and tools to succeed in their post-secondary education journeys, the Bridge to Employment (BTE) program in Ewing, New Jersey, USA, began in 2021. In close collaboration with Johnson & Johnson, Janssen, the Bonner Institute for Civic and Community Engagement at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), and Kenvue, the BTE Ewing program identified students who were at the academic middle and designed a series of activities and opportunities, as well as a solid community of support, to inspire them to climb the ladder and reach their full potential. BTE students had the opportunity to visit Johnson & Johnson and

Kenvue facilities and science labs, received tutoring and academic support, and attended events of high value to their future, such as career expos and panels. “I definitely felt like Ewing High School was a community where the program would be well-received, and the kids had that hunger to improve their current situation,” said BTE Co-Champion Ashley Williams. Throughout the duration of the program, organizers continuously strategized to improve ways to keep students engaged and motivated and to create a more structured pipeline between the high school and local colleges.

BTE: A Catalyst for Post-Secondary Education & Career

Starting off with 55 students, the BTE Ewing program not only focused on improving the academic success of BTE students, but also placed great emphasis on practical, everyday aspects of adulthood, such as budgeting, the different avenues to build generational wealth, and other important financial literacy topics. “We had many students from the BIPOC community, and I feel like a lot of BIPOC individuals don’t have this knowledge until they need it later. So, our aim was to get them financially in a better position,” said BTE Site Coordinator Destiny De La Rosa-Santos.

Students who participated in the BTE Ewing program also had the opportunity to connect with additional resources beyond the academic capacity, like finding internships and job shadowing opportunities in their areas of interest.

In terms of academic prep, the BTE Ewing program connected BTE students with dedicated college students who tutored the BTE students on their everyday schoolwork as well as on SAT preparation.

Another unique aspect of the BTE Ewing program was the requirement for students to participate in community service, which kept students engaged in the program and gave them the opportunity to give back to their community.

Site Profile

Location

Ewing, New Jersey, USA

Grant Period

2021 – 2024

Sponsor

Johnson & Johnson

Coordinator

TCNJ Bonner Institute

Community Partners

The College of New Jersey (TCNJ)
Ewing High School
Janssen
Kenvue

IMPACT OF BTE

Out of the 55 students who began the BTE Ewing program, 29 completed the program. Despite the roadblocks of the COVID-19 pandemic, program coordinators saw massive growth in BTE students in terms of academic improvement and interpersonal development skills. Additionally, BTE Ewing students will be pursuing careers in a variety of fields, including nursing, astrophysics, and engineering.

Coordinators of the BTE Ewing program expressed much gratification from how much the program opened doors and opportunities to children who might not have otherwise had them. "I love that opportunity to just expose the students to different experiences, different cultures, and the unsaid rules of society," said Destiny De La Rosa Santos.

Reflections

When it comes to the most successful activities of the BTE Ewing program, site coordinators agreed that hands-on activities best retained student interest, engagement, and overall participation. "Students didn't want to sit down and hear a lecture, they wanted engaging activities like fieldtrips," said BTE Co-Champion Jose Hernandez, who led the initiative in implementing a BTE program in the Ewing community. In terms of student retention, site coordinators placed major emphasis on enforcing participation. According to Hernandez, "The fact that there were so many interesting activities and experiences motivated the students to keep going and finish the program. They got to see that they could have the college experience through the weekly connections they had with the Bonner Institute students."

Overall, the BTE Ewing program equipped its students with the tools and knowledge to improve their academic experience and see continued success in their post-secondary education journeys. The program also showed students just some of the many opportunities—whether conventional or unconventional—that they could choose from in terms of their future. "As people of color, these students might feel like they have limited options, so giving them the power to gain as

Student Outcomes

95.5% of BTE students feel confident in their decision-making skills

77.3% of BTE students feel significantly more confident in their time management skills

100% of Year 3 BTE students graduated high school

91% of BTE graduates were accepted to institutions of higher education

much knowledge as they want in whatever area they want, and that they don't have to say yes to the first opportunity that says yes to them, was important," said BTE Site Coordinator Destiny De La Rosa-Santos.

