

# Bridge to Employment Site Reflection

## BTE Site Reflection

São José dos Campos, Brazil

March 2025



### Why BTE?

Considered a leader in industry and research in Latin America, São José dos Campos, Brazil, is home to a population of 700,000. Despite ranking 12<sup>th</sup> in the country's Municipal Economic Competitiveness Scale, the city has long faced challenges related to economic disadvantage. Serving students from all across the city, the BTE program came to São José dos Campos in 2022. In close partnership with Johnson & Johnson, JA Worldwide, and JA Brazil, the program provided grade 10-12 students from under-resourced areas with the necessary tools to succeed in their post-secondary education journeys. The program connected with students facing economic hardship to support them in building brighter futures.

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

In its initial year, BTE São José dos Campos recruited 45 students in partnership with Fundhas, with more than half being female. Throughout the first two years of the program, students explored different career paths, reflected on their own skills and knowledge, and connected with dedicated J&J volunteers who were eager to show students what a career in STEM<sup>2</sup>D could look like.

BTE São José dos Campos started the program on a solid note, with a lecture about neuroscience by local J&J volunteers that showed students one of the many routes they could take when pursuing a degree in STEM<sup>2</sup>D. “Students were delighted to have such a new and interesting topic to learn from,” reflects BTE Site Co-Coordinator Amanda Cornelio.

During the program, students also had the unique opportunity to visit Gerdau, one of the largest engineering companies in the area, as well as the local Johnson & Johnson facilities. Students and volunteers took site tours, learned about the equipment used at the facilities, and got to ask questions.

In 2022, as a result of J&J’s consumer health division transitioning to Kenvue, the BTE Brazil students received additional mentorship, career guidance, and hands-on learning opportunities through Kenvue volunteers who led a variety of workshops, tours, and helped them to prepare for life after graduation.

One of the most special moments for BTE São José dos Campos, coordinators reflect, was the trip to Canada that students got to take. During this trip, students from São José dos Campos got to spend a full week connecting with each other, collaborating with global BTE youth, exploring a new country, practicing their English, participating in STEM<sup>2</sup>D activities, and learning from their mentors. “For me, the highlight of it all was the travel to Canada! We spent a full week with students, and it was so special to witness them going through such an amazing and new experience,” reflects BTE Champion Thiago Linguanoto.

During the final year of programming, to elevate cross-site learning opportunities, program coordinators also connected BTE São José dos Campos students with BTE students from Trenton,

### Site Profile

**Location**

São José dos Campos,  
Brazil

**Grant Period**

2022 – 2024

**Sponsor**

Johnson & Johnson

**Coordinator**

JA Brazil

**Community Partners**

Johnson & Johnson Brasil

Kenvue

Fundhas

EE Nilce

New Jersey, where students from both sites got to learn from one another and see the larger, worldwide impact of the program. Students participated in icebreaker activities in order to explore each other's culture, asked each other questions, and shared their experiences. They also exchanged videos that showed unique aspects of their daily lives and cultures—students from São José dos Campos filmed a traditional Brazilian food market and made a video explaining the significance of Brazilian music, offering Trenton students an insight into Brazilian life. Additionally, students from both sites were required to give a presentation about an important current issue in their country. Overall, this exchange helped students to not only see the program's impact outside of their own site, but to also learn fun and meaningful things about another country!

## IMPACT OF BTE

The BTE São José dos Campos program directly impacted 65 young people from the community throughout its 3-year implementation. During its final year, the site faced challenges that required the leadership team to revisit the strategic planning process, allowing them to reassess program goals, refine collaborative strategies, and identify new opportunities for growth and impact. One of the key outcomes of this adaptive approach was the establishment of a new partnership with EE Nilce—a local secondary school that proved to be a pivotal step forward for the program. This collaboration not only aligned with the global mission, but it also enabled the team to successfully recruit an additional 19 students. This achievement is a testament to the program's resilience, adaptability, and commitment to fostering meaningful opportunities for students. Out of the 19 students recruited for the one-year program in its final year, 17 (85%) successfully completed it.

According to program coordinators, one of the most significant and impactful outcomes of BTE São José dos Campos was the students' professional development throughout their journey. Lucilene Rocha, from JA Brazil, reflects on this transformation: "Their professional behavior compared to when they began was remarkable—seeing the way they presented themselves and adapted to formal settings was very rewarding." A core goal of the program was to equip students with the confidence and

## Student Outcomes

46% of BTE graduates plan to pursue a career in STEM<sup>2</sup>D.

66% of BTE graduates have plans to attend a post-secondary education institution.

54% of BTE graduates have applied to a post-secondary education institution.

85% of BTE graduates feel prepared to achieve their career goals.

skills needed for life after graduation, exposing them to professional environments that fostered adaptability, maturity, and a clearer path toward post-secondary education.

One of the most inspiring student stories, Thiago shares, was that of a participant who had previously faced behavioral challenges at school before joining the BTE program. With encouragement from his school principal, who recognized his potential and guided him toward the opportunity, he embraced the program's support. By the end of his journey, teachers, volunteers, and coordinators alike observed his growth, noting his increased enthusiasm, commitment to learning, and engagement in the program. "It was nice to see the impact the program had on him. I know it's only a small part of his life that we're seeing, but the positive change was felt by all the coordinators, volunteers, and mentors. So, it was very meaningful," shares Thiago.

Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive throughout the program. Lucilene recalls, "One student told me he had only one complaint—he wished the program had lasted longer!"

## Sustainability

When asked about the future of the site, coordinators from BTE São José dos Campos expressed their strong desire to see its efforts continue and thrive in the years to come. They are actively working to advocate for the site's sustainability, with particular focus on leveraging the support of the Impact Network, which plays a vital role in overseeing social and diversity programs. While the final decision is still pending, there is a sense of optimism as these efforts progress.

As the site reflected on these experiences, they celebrated the success of the new partnerships and remain deeply grateful for the lessons learned. These insights will continue to guide them in building stronger, more impactful collaborations in the future.

Overall, BTE São José dos Campos was a tremendous opportunity for students from disadvantaged areas to expand their career horizons and learn that they could pursue a degree in STEM<sup>2</sup>D. Through its partnerships and commitment to education, BTE São José dos Campos provided students with the resources, guidance, and experiences needed to navigate their futures. In a city known for its innovation yet marked by economic challenges, the program played a vital role in equipping young people with the skills to pursue higher education and career opportunities.

