

**The Bridge to Success Academy at West Jacksonville:
The Opportunity not a Punishment**

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Key words: Double Promotion, Credit Acquisition, Middle School, Accelerated Learning, Over-Aged, Retention

Funding Sources:

Title 1 Funds
General
Funds SAI
Funds

Project Cost and Budget Narrative:

The Bridge to Success Academy Middle’s budget is generated in the form below. An allocation model has been created per the number of available seats (students) where state funding is generated to cover the cost of managing such project. The allocation model is

School Based Staff – General Funds or Title 1 Funds

Position	Number of Staff
Basic/ESE Teacher	41
Administratio	5 Total
n Principal	1
Asst. Principals	4
School Counselors	2
Paraprofessionals	2
Security	4

Contracted Services

Agency	# of Staff Members	Fund Source
Communities in Schools	6	Federal Funds

Project Description:

The scope and setting of this project is to assist students who are identified as over-aged the opportunity to accelerate their learning by completing two years’ worth of academic instruction within in one school year. Students who are over-aged may have been retained two or more years previously and desire to earn grades/credits to accelerate back to their original graduation cohort before retention was received. The school serves students in grades 4th – 8th grades at the West Jacksonville campus (Main Campus), and it serves students in grades 6th – 8th grade on three district middle school campuses as a school within a school. However, there are four actual campuses; one Principal who monitors the successes and growth of each campus separate from the satellite host campuses where BTSA Middle may reside governs all.

Staffing Pattern:

The staff allocation model listed below is to cover 500 students that attend four different campuses. Each campus has a designated Exceptional Student Education, ESE, teacher and a shared counselor. The model is designed to accommodate our students with class loads of no more than 22 students per class.

District	School Admin	Behavioral Instructional Support	ELA	MATH	Science	SS	Elective	ESE
Regional Superintendent	1 Principal	2 School Counselors	10	10	7	5	3	6
Executive Director	4 APs	1 Reading Coach						

Population Served:

BTS Site	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18
JWJ	96	137	200	198	265	300
Arlington		38	75	82	63	50
Gilbert		58	82	88	78	89
Stuart					61	78
Northwestern		29	50	56		
Butler		111				
Total	96	414	333	424	467	517

The Bridge to Success Academy Middle level program is comprised of students who were previously retained and/or considered to be over-aged than students in their entry year of school. Students choose to submit an application and participate in an interview process with their parents/guardians. Once students are selected and given the opportunity to attend the school, students receive an acceptance letter. BTSA is a place of choice by which students realize that we offer them an opportunity and not punishment for failed experiences. 95% of our students are African American and a rising 4% ESOL students. Many of our students may have decided to forgo staying if not for BTSA.

Project Origination:

The BTSA program began six years ago. The development of the program was due to a growing number of students who were over-aged and consistently retained for various reasons. To decrease the number of students who were dropping out of school, BTSA began with hopes of alleviating the high population of students who were considered over-aged in elementary and/or middle schools and subsequently were not completing high school on time. BTSA is an accelerated, academic alternative program for students in grades 4th-8th who are deemed over-age. The programs provide the four academic core subject areas and some electives. The curriculum model allows students to earn two grade levels in one academic year. Students who successfully earn all their credits by the end of a school year will double promote to the next year.

Issues Addressed:

Students being over-aged is an issue that continues to plague our district. Students who struggle with attendance and discipline are among the group of students who need the opportunity BTSA offers. BTSA targets the students and recruits them to a place that is all their own. Being removed from a comprehensive setting affords the students the chance to truly take advantage of their second chance. BTSA assists the district with removing students who are 16/17 years old

from a traditional middle school to a school of their peers. Having a large over-age population is not unique to our district, however having a program model that addresses the academic, discipline and attendance concerns that may contribute to how and why the retentions take place is one to be modeled.

The needs and/or issues that's being addressed are:

1. Academic Proficiency
2. Discipline Concerns
3. Attendance Issues

Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:

The desired outcomes for our big bucket was to ensure that students successfully double promote each year. Doing so will prove that students earned the necessary credits to promote to the next level. Another desired outcome of the program was to decrease discipline concerns that many of them had when entering the program. Students are expected to decrease discipline infractions thus giving them the opportunity to be in school to earn credits needed for promotion.

Additionally, students who attend BTSA are there due to having serious attendance issues.

Students are also expected to attend school at least 90% each quarter. Students who are having concerns with attendance while attending BTSA gain assistance from our wrap around services through Communities in Schools and other agencies that assist in ensuring the students break negative trends that keep them from being proficient and promoted.

Desired Outcomes:

- Increase Attendance
- Credit Acquisition - Earn Credits needed to Double Promote
- Decrease Discipline Issues
- Grow to being Proficient and Promoted

Results (Outcomes and Achievements):

BTSA offers our students an individualized approach. With having small classrooms and services to meet their academic and behavioral needs, our students have consistently shown growth over the years toward their promotional status. We received the 2nd highest rating from the state with a rating of Maintaining. Our 6th grade students will remain and complete their 8/9 grade year then move on to their high school of choice and back to their original graduation cohort.

Table 1 shows the improvement over time in the percent of our students who earned credits for promotion.

Table 1: Percent of Students Earning Credits Toward Promotion

Grade Level	1213	1314	1415	1516	1617	1718	Change
4					58%	100%	+42
5					90%	100%	+10
6	74%	72%	97%	76%	92%	95%	+3
7	66%	78%	95%	76%	94%	98%	+4
8	4%	57%	87%	71%	94%	98%	+4
2017-18 BTSA Total – 490/500 98%							

Strategies and/or Interventions:

- Accelerated Learning: Students have the opportunity of completing two years in one. Students enter as 6th grade and complete a full year within semester 1. Those same students begin 7th grade until completion to the end of the year, beginning the next year as an 8th grade student and advancing two grade levels in one year.
- Small group instruction
- Specific curriculum design to meet the needs of individual students.
- Instructional design to meet the needs of each individual student directly correlated to the district curriculum but focused on the specific areas of growth per student.
- Community support through Communities in Schools who provide services to all students addressing attendance, discipline and credit acquisition.

Project Timeline:

The program began during the '12-'13 school year. The program is now completing its 6th school year.

Special Conditions and/or Expertise Required to Carry Out the Project:

The support needed:

- District staff who were willing to financially support a program for at-risk or over-aged students.
- District instructional staff to support the program model. This support is, but not limited to, instructional support, behavioral specialists, school social workers, technology support, and content area specialists.
- Identification of qualified staff who were willing to commit to working with at-risk students.
- Commitment from community partners with resources, human capital, and mentors to support the needs of the at-risk students.

Outcomes Related to School Completion, Dropout Prevention, and/or Graduation Rates:

Attendance: Attendance for the past few years has been averaging between 89% to 92% for our ADA. It shows that our students come to school and attempt to come to school regularly.

Discipline

Below shows the decline in discipline infractions from 2016-17 school year to 2017-18 school year. BTSA had decreases of the following discipline infractions per level.

Decreased by:

184 Level 1 Offenses (Minor Infractions)

191 Level 2 Offenses (Intermediate Infractions)

12 Level 3 Offenses (Major Infractions)

Current Status of Project:

The status of the project is ongoing. The Bridge to Success Academy will be beginning its 7th year in our county.

Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:

As an NDPS certification program participant, my role is and has been the privileged principle for the Bridge to Success Academy Middle for the past 5 years. Being appointed to BTSA has been a great achievement for me as I continue to learn effective strategies to engage parents and at-risk students. During my tenure as a school principal, my first appointment was to our DJJ Programs and Schools. After serving with DJJ for one year, I was elevated to be the Principal of BTSA. Over the past 6 years, I have been heavily supporting at-risk students and working with our local and state agencies to ensure that our students retain the opportunity to promote.

Principal/Coach

There are four Assistant Principals who were new to working with our population of students. We meet weekly to discuss and monitor our goals and objectives. In those discussions, we review data and make decisions of how we are to proceed for groups or individuals of students and teachers. Classes are monitored daily and lesson plans are reviewed. Individual meetings with teachers are held to discuss glows and grows for continual improvement. Teacher Leaders are encouraged to assist in the mentoring and training of novice teachers.

We provide meaningful experiences for our students such as:

- College Field Experiences
- Student Government Associations
- Student Ambassadors
- Peer Tutors
- Field Experiences related to Curriculum
- Prom
- Collaboration with local HS for student mentors
- Real world experiences students may not have participated in at their former schools.

Community Partners

We meet with partners on a weekly basis to conduct home visits and set up mentor sessions. We make recommendations and changes as needed in those meetings and create incentive plans for students around discipline and attendance with our partners.

Lessons Learned:

Know the vision and stay focused on the vision. Ensure the message of the program is clearly given to all stakeholders. The right human capital is key for this area. Having the right candidates in every area is so necessary for such a fragile group of students.

Stay consistent with what the initial plan was and only make changes for growth and not for comfort. Be accountable and assertive with a sweet spirit. Develop a tracking system for students once they leave the program to ensure that the work is continuing once they leave and go to their comprehensive high schools. The vision is high school graduation with a diploma. More importantly, it does not happen overnight.

Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:

- Design your program with the students in mind.
- Knowing the population helps when sitting at the table making requests.
- Build your team of qualified individuals who have the desire to learn and grow in this area.
- Pace yourself and make annual goals to complete. Monitor often.
- Keep the brand consistently progressing forward.
- Stay connected to professional arenas that will keep you informed and engaged in assisting the students who need you the most.