

**NDPS Certification Program Field Project Report**

**Bridge to Success Program for Over Age Students**

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## Bridge to Success Program for Over Age Students

### Funding Sources

General funds  
Federal funds  
SAI funds

### Project Cost and Budget Narrative

The budget for Bridge to Success was outlined based on eight satellite sites with approximately 100 students at each of the seven sites and 250 students at one site. Based on the district's staff allocation model, the dollars listed represent allocations and not actual salaries.

#### School-based Staff – General Funds

Position	Number of Staff	Allocation	Total Funded
Basic & ESE Teachers	80	\$64,5000	\$5,160,000
Principals	2	\$127,000	\$254,000
Assistant Principal	8	\$84,000	\$672,000
Guidance Counselors	4	\$68,500	\$274,000
Clerical	4	\$32,200	\$128,800
Security/Paras	11	\$32,200	\$354,200
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$6,843,000</b>

#### Contracted Partners

Vendor	Number of Staff	Funding Source	Total Funded
Bridge of Northeast Florida	6	Federal Funds	\$260,000
Communities in Schools (CIS)	9	Federal Funds	\$490,500
I'm a Star Foundation	5	Federal & SAI Funds	\$240,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$990,500</b>

### Project Description

The project scope serves students in 4<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade that are 2-3 years over age. Over age is defined as students who have been retained, held back, or under credited in comparison to students in the same kindergarten cohort. This project is being implemented on four middle school campuses and four high school campuses. The school operates as a 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade combination school with eight satellite sites on the campuses of traditional middle/high schools in the district. At each of the eight traditional campuses, an area of classroom space is designated for the Bridge to Success program to operate. The Bridge to Success program has its own staff independent of the traditional school.

**Staffing Pattern:**

District Administrator – the program is supported at the district level by the Executive Director for Dropout Prevention.

School-based Administrators: The combination alternative school has two principals – one for the elementary/middle school grade levels and one for the high school level. There are also assistant principals at each of the eight satellite sites.

School-based Staff - The staff allocation model for this program consists of 7-10 teachers for each of the campuses. The staff is comprised of one teacher for each core subject area: Math, ELA, Science, Social Studies. Each site also has an ESE, Elective, and Reading teacher. The staff allocation is based on the notion that each Bridge to Success site will enroll approximately 100 students – 25 students per grade level.

**Population Served**

The Bridge to Success (BTS) program serves over age students in 4<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The ages range from twelve to nineteen years of age; average age is 16 years old. During the 2016-2017 school year, there were 600 students enrolled across 8 BTS sites. The enrollment is comprised of 98% African American students. Students choose to attend the Bridge to Success program through an application process. Middle school students submit an application, participate in an interview and are selected based on their interest in and commitment to the program. High school students submit an application as well. The high school applications are scored using a rubric. The admissions team reviews high school transcripts and admits students who are under credited. The BTS program is an option for students who otherwise would have dropped out.

**Project Origination:**

The Bridge to Success program began five years ago to address the significant number of over age students in our district. In review of our data trends across the district, select traditional middle and high schools were identified as having higher numbers of over age students on their campuses. As a result, these schools were selected to serve as host campuses for the Bridge to Success program. The recruitment process allowed over age students within the traditional school priority to enroll in the BTS satellite site on their campus. Each of the satellite sites were designed to enroll 100 students with an instructional staff of 6-7 teachers, an assistant principal, and a security guard. Community partners were identified to provide contracted social services to support improving attendance, decreasing disciplinary incidents, and connecting students with mentors.

**Issues Addressed:**

Students that are over age for their current grade level is an on-going issue. Across our district, schools at the elementary, middle, and high school levels struggled with supporting large numbers of over age students in their buildings. Many of the attendance and behavioral challenges were generated by over age students. Additionally, elementary schools needed a response to 12-13 year old students on their campuses and likewise 15-16 year old middle school students on middle school campuses. The Bridge to Success program targeted over age students; removing them from the traditional setting and giving them access to an accelerated program model. A model wherein they could acquire credits, promote, and an opportunity to advance two

grade levels in one year. Some students are able to catch up and return to their traditional school while others remain enrolled until they graduate.

**Desired Outcomes and Measurable Objectives:**

The desired outcomes consisted of the following:

- Increase credit acquisition
- Increase the number of students who promote/graduate
- Increase the average daily attendance
- Decrease the number of disciplinary incidents

**Strategies and/or Interventions:**

- Accelerated credit acquisition – students have the opportunity to advance 2 grade levels in one school year
- Small classroom instruction
- Social-emotional support from community partners

**Project Timeline:**

The project began during the 2013-2014 school year. The 2017-2018 school year is the beginning of the fifth year of the Bridge to Success Program.

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

The project needed:

- The support of district level staff who were willing to invest resources in at-risk students
- Identification of quality staff who were willing to work with students that were already disengaged and in need of a fresh start
- Commitment of community partners with resources and talent to support at-risk students

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

**Results (Outcomes and Achievements):**

**Credit Acquisition**

Through a face-to-face accelerated instruction model, students are able to earn credits and promote to the next grade level. Middle school students complete their initial grade level during the first semester of school and then promote to the new grade level during the second semester. Over 90% of middle school students promote midyear and at the end of the year – hence, double promoting. Many students who enroll in BTS as a 6<sup>th</sup> grader, return for a second year to get on track and advance to high school.

High school students complete two years simultaneously – a ninth grader is enrolled in both ninth and tenth grade courses. Approximately 45% of the high school students promote at midyear.

Table 1

	Average Credits Earned				
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
BTS High School	5.87	5.87	6.26	5.9	6.0
BTS Middle School	7.86	7.65	9.24	9.6	10.5

### Attendance

Many of the students enrolled in BTS struggle with attendance. The average daily attendance for both grade levels is displayed below. The average daily attendance for BTS middle school is comparable to the district-wide average daily attendance for traditional middle schools. An area of opportunity is improving the BTS high school average daily attendance.

Table 2

Average Daily Attendance			
Middle School		High School	
2015-2016	2016-2017	2015-2016	2016-2017
92%	91%	82.01%	79%

### Graduation Rate

The district's graduation rate has improved nearly 11 percentage points over the last six years. The current district grad rate is 78%. Our district benefits from the graduates that BTS produces. This program positively impacts the at-risk population's graduation rate. Prior to the existence of this program, less than 7% of over age students were graduating.

Table 3

	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Grad Rate	14.1%	28.9%	35%	TBD

Table 4

Diploma vs. Certificate of Completion					
	2013-2014*	2014-2015*	2015-2016*	2016-2017*	Total
Diploma	50	70	110	39	269
Certificate of Completion	37	98	69	17	221
Total	87	168	179	56	490

### Discipline

Table 5

Discipline Infractions 1617 thru School Day Number 180				
Total Infractions	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV
1574	732	797	44	1

Table 6

Code of Conduct	Middle School			Code of Conduct	High School		
	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017 **		2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017 **
# of overall incidents	885	1342		# of overall incidents	608	567	
Class I	139	410		Class I	228	230	
Class II	692	898		Class II	331	310	
Class III	54	34		Class III	47	27	
Class IV	0	0		Class IV	2	0	

Discipline comparison based on day 180 across 3 years.

The outcomes were directly related to credit acquisition to assist students with promoting to the next grade level and/or graduating. The existence of this program serves as an avenue for over age students to acquire a high school diploma. Through this program, at-risk students are able to graduate – positively impacting the district’s graduation rate, dropout rate, and increasing students’ chances for post-secondary success.

**Current Status of Project:**

The 2017-2018 school year is the beginning of the fifth year of the Bridge to Success Program.

**Role in Project as a NDPS Certification Program Participant:**

Over the past 5 years, I have been heavily involved in supporting at-risk students in my district. During the first year of the Bridge to Success program, I was the principal. The following year I was promoted to a district level position wherein I worked intimately with developing processes to monitor and evaluate the progress of the program.

**Instruction**

I meet with both principals of the Bridge to Success program to review the implementation of the instructional model to ensure both teachers and students have what they need to be successful. On a weekly basis, I observe classroom instruction, provide feedback and meet with grade level teams to develop plans to improve the quality of instruction. I also meet with the administrative teams of both Bridge to Success and the host site principals. Through these meetings, we discuss the day-to-day operations, review the common expectations, share upcoming events, and troubleshoot any problems.

**Partners**

I meet with the community partners for Bridge to Success on a quarterly basis. Each partner and their team meets with me, along with both BTS principals. We review the contract outcomes, discuss what is going well and make recommendations for improvement. During each meeting we review available data for each of the measureable objectives of the contract. I assist both the school principals and partner teams with developing systems to position us closer to our goal.

### District Administrator

In addition to meeting with principals and community partners, I serve as the district administrator for dropout prevention. Through my work with the Bridge to Success Program, I meet with senior leadership to report on the progress of Bridge to Success as well as to advocate regarding areas of concern. During this span of this project, I have also worked with principals district-wide to assist with placement of over age students.

### **Lessons Learned:**

When implementing a new program, the appropriate messaging of the vision is key. The community's view of the program has evolved over time. In the beginning, the program was not well-received. Over the course of time, the program has developed a brand and a proven track record of helping students advance toward graduation. Lesson learned – it takes time.

### **Advice for Dropout Prevention Practitioners about the Project:**

- It takes time – launching a program is a daunting task. In some instances you will be treading uncharted territory. Although the process may be frustrating, stay the course for the sake of the students who are depending on you.
- Start small – identify a small population of students to test your project idea.
- Narrow your focus – hone in on an area of focus that you can manage and monitor. Expand your project as your resources grow and you experience success with your initial focus.