



Mission
WEST VIRGINIA

THE BRIDGE PROGRAM

2023-2024 SCHOOL YEAR

OUTCOME REPORT

The Bridge

A Program of Mission West Virginia



About Us:

Since 2017, The Bridge has been a beacon of support for high school students facing exceptional family circumstances, including foster care, kinship care, or homelessness. The program focuses on consistent Mentorship and setting specific goals with each child, leading them to academic success.

Our Why:

West Virginia has over 6,000 children in foster care, the highest per capita rate in America, not including those in informal care. In 2023, the high school graduation rate in WV for youth in foster care was 71%, compared to the statewide average of 90% for all students. The work we do is to answer this call and to advocate for students who have proven time and time again that they can and will achieve greatness despite the odds stacked against them.

I've always heard every kid is one caring adult away from being a success story and our Mentor has proven over and over again that this is accurate.

-Kanawha County School Partner



Our Reach

Number of Students Served
During the 23-24 School Year:

339

Student Demographics
23-24 School Year:

13%
Foster Care

38%
Formal Kinship Care

32%
Informal Kinship Care

17%
McKinney Vento
(Legally Homeless)

Locations:

Boone County

- Sherman High School
- Scott High School

Clay County

- Clay County High School

Kanawha County

- Riverside High School
- Herbert Hoover High School
- Nitro High School
- Sissonville High School

Putnam County

- Putnam Career & Technical Center
- Hurricane High School

Wood County

- Parkersburg High School



“The Bridge Mentors have seamlessly integrated into our school community, becoming trusted and respected members of our educational team. Their presence has enriched our schools, and their contributions have been deeply appreciated by students, staff, and families alike.”
—Boone County School Partner

Evidence-Based Practices

Our methodology is rooted in a researched and proven dropout prevention model called Check and Connect, ensuring that every intervention is backed by proven strategies for success.

All participants are in foster or kinship care, with efforts focused on improving **attendance, behavior, grades, and post-secondary planning.**

Results:



66%

decrease in
absences



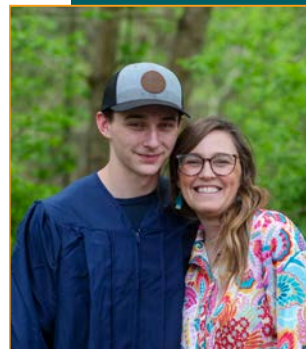
89%

decrease in
suspensions



99.6%

advancement to
next grade level



Graduation Success:

COMPARE

Average graduation rate among youth in foster care in West Virginia.

71%

CONTRAST

Graduation rate of all Seniors in the Bridge Program during the 2023-2024 school year.

98.6%



Post Secondary Success:

Mentors work yearlong to ensure that each Senior is set with a plan after graduation that is feasible and in place with limited barriers. Through consistent coordination with their Mentors **74 graduates** accomplished the following:

-  **Work Force: 23%**
-  **Technical School: 23%**
-  **4 Year College: 47%**
-  **Military: 5%**
-  **Job Corps: 1%**

100%

of graduates completed school with firm plans in place for their futures

More than:

\$500,000

earned by Bridge Students in scholarships & grants

* State graduation rates provided by WV DOE, [ZOOM WV](#)

Why it Works

During the 2023–2024 school year we spent more time than ever connecting with schools, families, and students on a consistent basis:



Student Meetings: 8,914

Amongst 339 students this year Bridge Mentors connected with participants on 8,914 occasions. This comes out to about 24 visits during the school year per student. Such a high number of interactions is exactly what it takes to be seen as a trusted adult in a child's life. This number is proof that showing up and putting in the work every day with a student can and will lead to great things.



Family Engagement: 2,339 interactions

Just like with students, it's important to build trust with caregivers, too. Bridge Mentors connected with foster parents, grandparents, and caregivers through various means like in-person conversations, phone calls, emails, letters, and text messages to ensure everyone has a place at the table when it comes to each student's education. The bond between home and school enabled Mentors to quickly address needs, provide academic updates, and prepare the entire family for post high school planning.



School Collaboration: 2,404 interactions

Across 5 counties the Bridge Team connected with school personnel 2,404 times to discuss student progress and collaborate to keep students on the right track. Without our relationships within the schools and learning from those who are most knowledgeable about each child's education, the work would not be possible.

“ I truly don't think that I could have made it this far into high school without you being right behind me every step of the way, pushing me to be the person you knew that I could be. -- Bridge Graduate, Class of 2024 ”

Filling the Gaps

We understand that there are barriers making it difficult for students to do well in school. Our team is there to identify and address these obstacles, providing unique support and resources to make sure that every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Essentials:

Without basic necessities students cannot be successful in school. This year, we provided essential items such as: back-to-school clothing, school supplies, daily snacks, copies of birth certificates, and photo IDs for students to apply for jobs, college, and standardized tests. Additionally, we were able to aid students and their families with groceries and gas gift cards during unforeseen losses this school year.



Special Occasions:

Our work offers us the opportunity to pause and give special care to moments big and small. During the 2023-2024 school year we worked with the community to distribute Christmas/holiday gifts to every single student in the Bridge Program. Most special is that each gift was specific and exact to what each child asked for.



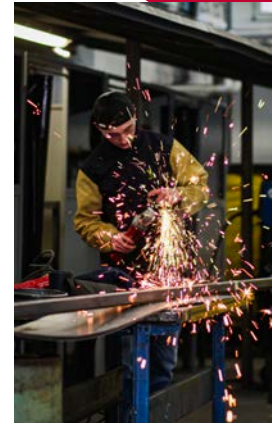
Post-Secondary Assistance:

Recognizing that small obstacles can hinder achievements after high school, we provided essential items like campus parking passes, SAT/ACT prep books, testing fees, college books, nursing test fees, and even a laptop for a student taking online college courses this fall. We were even able to cover the cost of a student who was accepted to the St. Mary's School of Nursing.



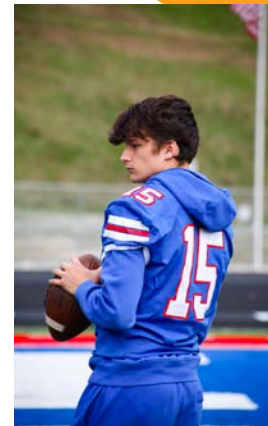
Work Force Assistance:

This year we assisted more students than ever as they took steps towards the work force. This included the purchase of a food handlers' card for a student who accepted a promotion in the culinary world; providing a new bicycle, helmet, and safety gear for commuting to work; purchasing a professional welding hood, work uniforms, and steel-toe boots; covering the cost of Electrical Certification at the Technical Center; funding attendance at the National Cosmetology Convention; and a culinary class field trip. We even got to cover the fees of a student to compete in a national competition at Skills USA and her hard work has led her to Bridge Valley to continue her education.



Extracurricular Assistance:

Nothing should stand in the way of allowing youth to make memories with their peers during high school. In following specific interests of our students, we were able to cover dance team and volleyball team fees, wrestling shoes, National Honor Society membership fees, Future Leaders Program fees, homecoming tickets, and prom attire.



Graduation Assistance:

Graduation is the ultimate goal, and it's our job to ensure students are celebrated in a way they deserve. This school year, we provided cap and gown sets, professional senior photos, honors stoles for graduation, senior class field trip fees, graduation clothing, graduation gifts and in school graduation parties to all 74 graduates, and more than \$2,000 in credit recovery fees to help students redeem required credits to graduate.

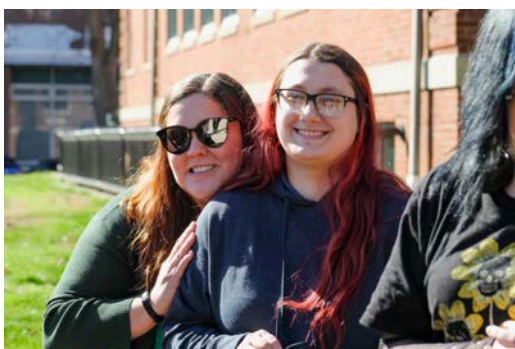


Field Trips

This year the Bridge Program organized and funded a field trip for 30 students to visit Marshall University. This trip was intentionally planned for specific resources related to first generation college students. The day included an opening speech from one of our very own Bridge Graduates who is now a Sophomore at MU, a presentation from the Office of Recruitment, a campus tour, lunch in the dining hall, a mock lecture to simulate a real college course, and a presentation from the Trio program.



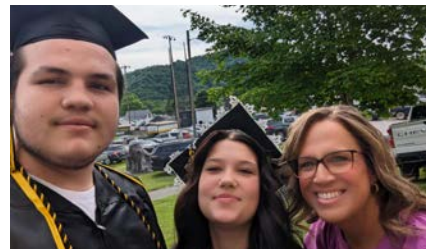
“My favorite thing about this trip is how much I could see myself here as a college student. -Bridge Participant”



As a result of this experience, four students applied to attend MU and will be college Freshman there this fall. This trip highlights the Bridge Program's ability to prepare students for life after high school. Thank you to the university for an unbelievable experience.

Looking Ahead

Mission West Virginia believes that all students in foster and kinship care deserve the opportunity to learn, grow, and become the best version of themselves through Bridge mentoring. This commitment drives our goal to expand our reach. During the 2024-2025 school year, the Bridge Program will grow to serve more than 60 new students in the state. We continue to explore opportunities for further growth to ensure more students can benefit from mentorship.



Thank you to our 2023-2024 Stakeholders:

Thank you for believing in the potential of West Virginia youth to achieve greatness. Your generous funding and support are essential to our mission, enabling us to make a meaningful impact. We couldn't do this work without you.

- WVDOE Schools of Diversion and Transition
- WVDOE Federal Programs, Student Support, & Well Being
- Milan Puskar Foundation
- Good Samaritan Mission Services
- Bernard McDonough Foundation
- Moms on a Mission, GLAM Gala
- River Ridge Church – Foster WV
- Papa John's Foundation
- Putnam County Bank
- Public Defenders Services
- Encova
- Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation – CC Dickinson
- WV American Water
- Teletech
- Toyota
- Community Members & Local Donors





For More Information:



Office:
(304) 562-0723



Email Address:
mww@missionwv.org



Mailing Address:
**168 Midland Trail, Suite 1
Hurricane, WV 25526**