

BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DATE: February 14, 2006
TO: **BOARD OF EDUCATION**
FROM: Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent
SUBJECT: **BRIDGE CENTER REPORT**
ORIGINATOR: Dr. Joe A. Hairston, Superintendent
RESOURCE
PERSON(S): Barbara Cheswick, Principal, Bridge Center

INFORMATION

That the Board of Education is provided an update on the Bridge Center.

Attachment I – Executive Summary
Attachment II - PowerPoint™ Presentation

Bridge Center Report – Executive Summary 2005-2006

Bridge Center officially opened its doors on April 4, 2005. Bridge Center was specifically designed to provide short term academic, behavioral, and therapeutic intervention for secondary age students who are at risk for academic failure due to interruptions in their education. Because of the preponderance of group homes and agency placements in the NW/SW areas of the county the decision was made to create Bridge Center in this area specifically to meet the needs of these students. Students who attend Bridge Center are new to Baltimore County Public Schools or were previously enrolled in Baltimore County Public Schools. Students who attend Bridge Center must reside in the northwest or southwest areas of Baltimore County. The Center acts as a “bridge” for these students into their comprehensive school. Through the instruction and preparation received at the Center, students will be ready to achieve academic success – when they enroll in their neighborhood schools.

History

Bridge Center represents a new concept for Baltimore County, one that is marked by a close partnership between Baltimore County Public Schools and Baltimore County government. Under the leadership of both BCPS Superintendent Dr. Joe A. Hairston and County Executive Jim Smith, Bridge Center developed as a response to a longstanding issue connected with the large number of children coming into the system from group homes, foster homes, and other agency placements. Often, a number of factors hinder the academic achievement of such students: interruptions in their education, multiple school placements, behavioral or academic difficulties, or a lack of school records. Bridge Center was devised as a way to meet the requirements of these students, an example of Dr. Hairston’s commitment to ensuring that every student receives the services and educational opportunities they need. This commitment to ensuring a foundation for success is detailed in the Blueprint for Progress and the Master Plan.

Program

Bridge Center is an intensive three week full day academic program focused on the whole child and specifically designed to prepare students to enter their community school ready to meet with success. Students are referred to Bridge Center by the home school pupil personnel workers based on specific risk factors. At Bridge Center, students receive direct services in a small, supportive, and structured setting. To prepare them for the transition to the community school, students receive comprehensive assessments and counseling as well as intensive and focused academic instruction in English/language arts, reading, and mathematics. Students also participate in skills classes that cover such topics as: personal development, social skills, technology skills, study skills, drug education, and wellness education. The Wellness Center, staffed by a nurse practitioner, provides comprehensive health care to the students enrolled. An educational support plan is developed that addresses each student’s specific academic, behavioral, and therapeutic needs. This plan provides the “bridge” into the comprehensive school. The key to the plan is the itinerant teacher and social worker assigned to each student. The itinerant staff facilitates registration into the home school, provides records gathered while the student attended Bridge Center, provides direct instructional

support, monitors attendance and academic performance, supports the comprehensive school staff needs, and facilitates open communication among the student, caregiver, and home school staff. Also noteworthy is the collaboration of the itinerant staff with the AVID teachers in the community high schools resulting in several students entering the AVID program in the community school. The educational support plan developed at the Center details the student's academic, behavioral, and therapeutic needs. The support plan is implemented and monitored by the itinerant teacher and social worker assigned to the student. Because of the partnership with Baltimore County Department of Social Services counseling services and programming continue during the summer months to maintain therapeutic relationships and to provide ongoing opportunities for students to learn social skills and participate in team-building activities. Bridge Center also offers an after school GED preparation for the community.

Data

For the school year (04-05), 305 students received itinerant services in the twenty two middle and high schools in the NW/SW areas. Since opening its doors on April 4, 2005 Bridge Center has provided direct instructional support at the Center and itinerant services to 98 students. 45% of the students served this school year have had agency involvement (DSS and/or DJS). We also recognize that we have been able to also serve 55% of students who were not agency placed but also at risk for academic failure. It is because of the collaboration between our itinerant staff and the comprehensive school administrators and guidance departments that we have been able to identify and provide support for these students. While most students are referred for multiple reasons, the largest percentage has been due to behavior problems, not being age appropriate for grade level, and out of school for 6 months or more. It is important to note that these students would have entered their community schools unprepared to meet the academic and behavioral demands without the services provided by the Bridge Center staff. 83% of this year's students have entered their community schools upon leaving Bridge Center as opposed to possibly dropping out of school.

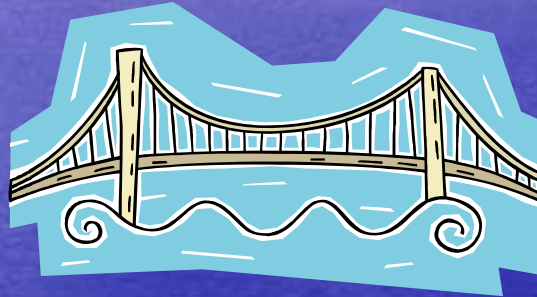
Conclusions/Recommendations

Since Bridge Center is a new program we are in the process of collecting baseline quantifiable data relative to measuring the effectiveness of the services provided. External partners were involved in the initial establishment of Bridge Center's program and continue to be involved in evaluating the program. The evaluation plan monitors data after students have been enrolled in the comprehensive school for at least one full quarter. Data points include grades, attendance, suspension data, and customer satisfaction surveys. The Evaluation Committee represent a collaborative effort among the administrative team at Bridge Center, Executive Director of Student Support Services, Coordinator of Psychological Services, Coordinator of Pupil Services, Supervisor of Research, and the Director of Center for Prevention of Youth Violence from Johns Hopkins University. Qualitative data collected in the form of customer satisfaction surveys from students, caregivers, and comprehensive school staff indicates that we are effective with the services we are providing.

Challenges

Initially, we were challenged with increasing our enrollment. We have addressed this challenge by providing outreach to our feeder schools in the form of open houses, newsletters, and presentations to a variety of audiences. With the beginning of enrollment of students receiving special education services in December and the continued outreach to our feeder schools we have seen a steady rise in enrollment. Another dilemma we face revolves around the issue of collecting data to measure effectiveness. While there are many ways to measure success, how do you measure the intangible of what you prevent? Finally, we have been faced with a growing number of 17 and 18 year old students who have few or no high school credits but desire to enter high school and earn a high school diploma. We are facing this challenge by exploring with our students any and all options for these students. Some of the alternatives include GED preparation programs and evening and Saturday school.

Bridge Center Report



Barbara Cheswick, Principal

February 14, 2006

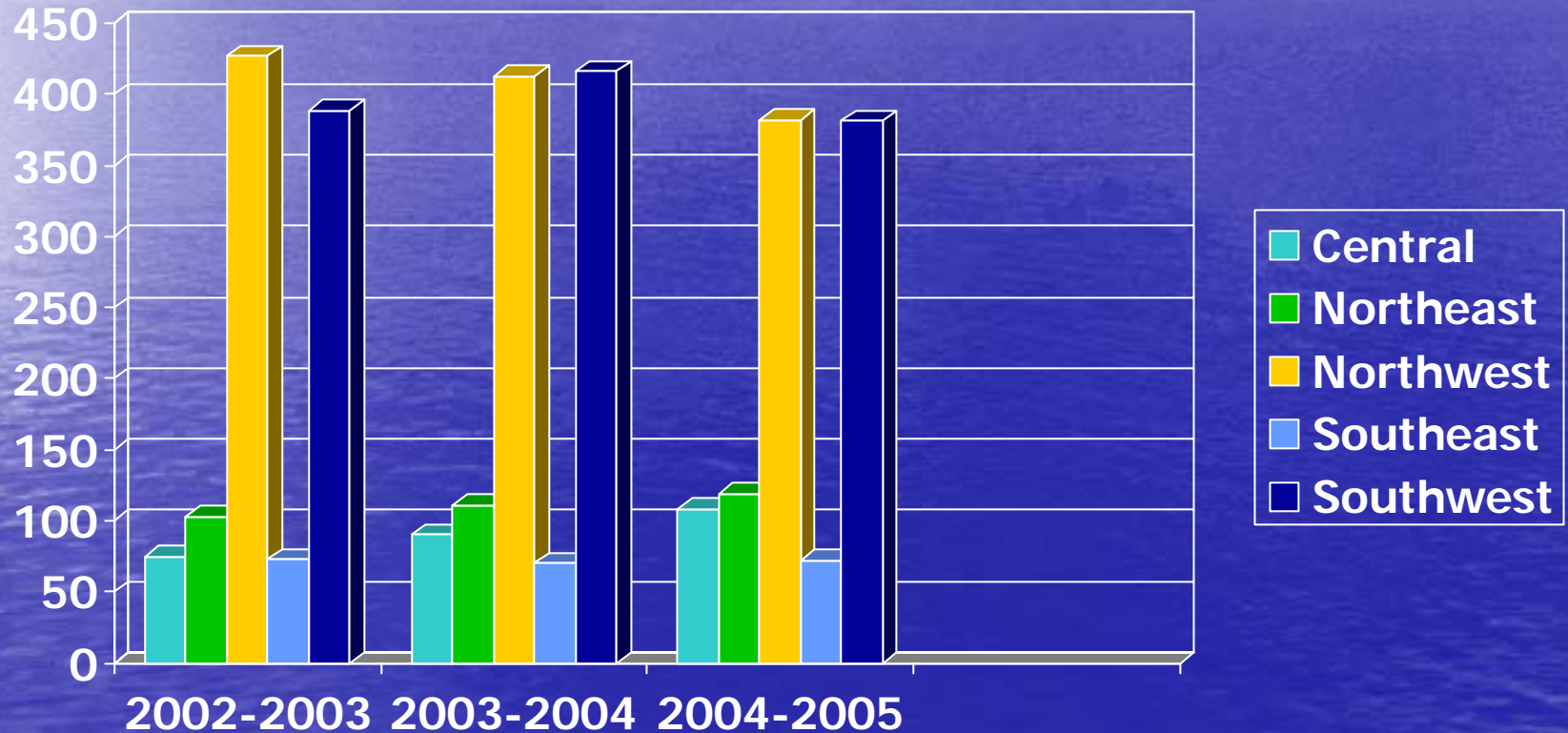
Why do we need Bridge Center ?

- Problem identified as high number of agency placed students and lack of school records making appropriate educational recommendations and placements challenging for students and schools
- Collaboration between the county school system and government to address these challenges
- Response was a center designed and staffed to provide and support learning for these students
- Establish a bridge between the Center and the home school through itinerant staff



Why NW/SW?

Non-Resident Agency Placed Foster Students (Official Dec. 30 count)



Risk Factors Considered Through the Referral Screening Process



- Not enrolled in school for several months or more
- Multiple school settings (>2 in 1 year)
- Below grade level in reading and/or math (> 3 years)
- Record of consistent academic failure
- Repeated at least one grade
- History of significant behavior problems in school
- Not age appropriate for grade level
- No school records
- Other

Primary Reason for Referral

August 29, 2005 – December 31, 2005 *68 students

Description	Percentage
Behavior problems	29%
Not appropriate age for grade	21%
Multiple school settings	9%
Gaps in education	9%
Out of school 6 months or more	16%
Repeated at least one grade level	3%
Other reasons (health; new group home, home schooled)	10%
Consistent academic failure	1.5%
DSS/DJS/Caregiver concerns	1.5%

Instructional Program/Outcome Mission

- Intensive three week full day academic program to prepare students to meet with academic success in their community schools
- Four 75 minute classes per day (Reading; English; Math; Skills – study skills, technology skills, social skills, personal development, substance abuse education)
- Informal assessment of strengths and needs
- Wellness Center
- Educational support plan developed to address specific academic, behavioral, and therapeutic goals
- Support plan provides the “bridge” into the community school
- Plan implemented by Bridge Center itinerant teachers and social workers
- Bridge Center prepares students to meet with academic success in their community schools

Itinerant Teachers

- Facilitator of registration into home school
- Instructional support for student
- Monitor of student attendance
- Monitor of academic performance
- Communication link among home school, Bridge Center, and caregivers
- Cases individually assessed to determine continuation vs. termination of service, dependent upon established goals

Itinerant DSS Social Worker

- Counseling services and programming continue during summer months to maintain therapeutic relationships and to provide ongoing opportunities for students to learn social skills and participate in team-building activities
- Provide integrated, collaborative services within Bridge Center and the community schools
- Provide support, counseling and social skills students need to succeed in their school, home, and community environments
- Services include individual counseling, family counseling, home visitation, referrals to community resources, and consultation/case management

Data

- August 2004 - March 2005
 - Caseloads determined by identification of students who may have been referred to Center had we been opened
 - 305 students received direct support from itinerant teachers (22 middle/high schools NW/SW areas)
 - 90 students received individual and family counseling from itinerant social workers

Data

- April 4, 2005 – January 6, 2006
 - 98 students received direct instructional support at Center and itinerant services

Bridge Center Data

August 29, 2005 – December 31, 2005

Demographics *68 students

Description	Percentage
Male	63%
Female	37%
African-American	82.5%
Caucasian	16%
Pacific Islander	1.5%
High School	59%
Middle School	41%
NW Area	31%
SW Area	69%

Bridge Center Data
 August 29 2005 – December 31, 2005
Agency Placement *68 students

Description	Percentage/(Number)
DSS: Baltimore County Baltimore City	29%/(20) 15%/(3) 85%/(17)
DJS: Baltimore County Baltimore City Other MD counties or other states (DC, NY)	16%/(11) 10%/(1) 45%/(5) 45%/(5)
* <u>Non-agency placement</u>	55%/(37)

Bridge Center

August 29, 2005 – December 31, 2005

Residential Status *68 students

Description	Percentage
Living with Parent(s)	37%
Living with Relative(s)/Guardian(s)	26%
Living in Group Home	28%
Living in Foster Home	8%

Nurse Practitioner Data

August 29, 2005 – December 31, 2005 *68 students
(in partnership with Baltimore County Health Department)

Description	Percentage
Vaccinations ordered/administered	63%
Comprehensive physicals	67%
Comprehensive screenings	40%
Diagnosis/Treatment of acute /chronic illnesses	19%
Sports Physicals	4%

Substance Abuse Counselor Data

August 29, 2005 – December 31, 2005 *68 students

- 4% assessments completed during this period
- 95% received Education classes (session 1)
- 95% received Education classes (session 2)
- 91% received Education classes (session 3)

In partnership with Baltimore County Department of Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse

Placement Upon Leaving Bridge Center
August 29, 2005 – December 31, 2005 *59 students

Description	Percentage
Entered Comprehensive School (home school)	83%
Entered Alternative School	3.5%
Other programs (Job Corps)	3.5%
Moved out of Baltimore County	5%
Withdrawn from Bridge Center	5%

DSS Social Worker Data

August 29, 2005 – December 31, 2005

(in partnership with Baltimore County Department of Social Services)

Description	Number
Students receiving social work services	67
Individual counseling sessions	533
Family counseling sessions	74
Home/Group Home visits	73
Collaborative meetings with staff in home schools	252
Collaborative meetings with professionals outside the Bridge Center (DSS, DJS, etc.)	171

Some Student Accomplishments

August 29, 2005 – November 30, 2005

- All As and Bs at Lansdowne High
- Enrolled in Honors classes at New Town High
- Lead role in school play at Lansdowne Middle
- Officer in SAAD Club at Southwest Academy
- Two students returned to city, interviewed at St. Francis Academy and received full scholarships
- Several students enrolled in AVID (Achievement Via Individual Achievement) at Woodlawn High, wait list at Lansdowne High
- On JV football team at Catonsville High

Evaluation Plan

- Monitor and analyze data collected after students have been enrolled for at least one full quarter
- Data points
 - Grades
 - Attendance
 - Suspension rates
 - Customer satisfaction surveys

Qualitative Data Survey Responses

- Students
- Caregivers
- Comprehensive School Staff

Comments by Caregivers

2005-2006

- "Excellent staff of caring people. Everyone embraced my son and made him feel like he belonged. I can see the change in his spirit in this short period of time. The Bridge Center is a great asset for this short period of time. My son was fortunate to be a part of their program. They have so much more to offer than just academics. I couldn't have asked for a better opportunity for my son."
- "I was pleased with the program, the staff, and the careful attention given to students."
- "I think the Bridge Center program is an excellent program for today's children."
- "This program needs to be extended to 6 weeks, better, a full quarter...."

Student Comments 2005-2006

- "...helped me with reading fluency that helped me read better."
- "...counselors to help you with your problems at home."
- "... at the Bridge Center I have done a lot of growing in many ways, such as: academically, socially, and personally."
- "... learned new things about Edgar Allen Poe, expository writing,..."
- "... it came to my mind that the Bridge Center was my second home."
- "... got a physical... made sure I was healthy and treated me like a real medical patient..."
- "... learned how to interact in positive ways with other students."
- "... teachers showed respect for my problems..."
- "... when I am in a bad space...social workers helped me calm down..."
- "... helped me get back in my right grade..."
- "... helped me to work on achieving my goal to be a chef..."
- "... made me feel like I had a family..."
- "... helped me realize I was intelligent..."
- "... when I graduate I'll call the Bridge Center and say thank you."

Comments by Comprehensive School Staff

- Math teachers at Lansdowne High appreciate the way students from Bridge Center fit right into the current lessons.
- "... I thank you for all you are doing for all the kids. It's hard work ... but only people with the truest of character can accomplish what you do."
- "The two teachers that you have at Woodlawn HS from the Bridge Center, Donna Shockett and Sheri Glasser are not only tremendously helpful, but they are making a great difference in the students' lives, and making our school more efficient and successful."

Where?

SW Area

1740 Twin Springs Rd.
Baltimore, MD 21227
410-887-6832

Visit our school web site
<http://bridgecenter.bcps.org>

