

Bridge Builders® CONNECT – Executive Summary of Evaluation

Fiscal Year 2017



BRIDGE BUILDERS

Program Overview: Youth from across the MidSouth are able to participate in BRIDGES programming through one-time CONNECT events and workshops. This program allows students to experience some of what the

Outcomes Indicators	FY16 All Connect Workshops	FY17 All Connect Workshops
I learned that young people can be leaders in their community.	80%	75%
I gained confidence in my ability to work in a team.	70%	67%
I learned that one person can make a positive change in their community.	75%	67%

N = 3679

N = 3206

Bridge Builders COLLABORATE students go through while engaging in meaningful curricula through experiential learning. CONNECT workshops may be delivered on-site at the BRIDGES Center but they are typically delivered off-site at the school/organization requesting the workshop. Students may go through one or more of the six legacy CONNECT workshops which include:

Leadership, Community, Educational Justice, Economic Justice, Environmental Justice and Racial Justice. YOUunified Memphis, an abbreviated workshop which combines elements from the Community and Leadership workshops is also offered as an option. Two newer workshops are available and include: Who Are We: Creating a YOUunified Class and Our Class: Reaching Beyond. This year, Addressing Conflict, was modified and re-piloted. CONNECT program staff also developed a formal partnership with Team BRIDGES, specializing in team building experiences through the use of high and low-ropes activities. The newer workshops allow students to participate in activities and dialogue that address topics relevant to what youth experience each day. Most workshops include up to four hours of experiential learning and intense discussion around the specific topic. *Note: a complete report and list of recommendations are available upon request.*

Methodology: After the CONNECT workshops, students complete a retrospective post survey to assess the knowledge and attitudes gained about the specific workshop content. Each survey asks students to respond to three questions that are the same across all workshop types. The questions ask students to assess whether or not they have gained knowledge or skills as a result of their experience and if they will take action in their community. Teacher surveys are also distributed after each CONNECT experience, allowing teachers to provide feedback about the quality of the program, as well as the observable changes they have witnessed in the classroom as a result of the workshop. Interviews were conducted among all full-time AC Service Members and the Episcopal Service Corps Fellow to determine the effectiveness of workshops and evaluate their professional and learning experiences. Information collected from these interviews will be used to make improvements to the AC training process in future years and provide feedback to their supervisors. In the spring of this year BRIDGES underwent a strategic planning process, to determine the trajectory and goals for the organization and its programs for the next three to five years. During the planning processes, BRIDGES staff, board members and program participants came together to provide insight and suggestions for improvement in the coming years, which includes revisions to the outcomes moving forward.

Student Action Commitments	All CONNECT Workshops
PAY ATTENTION and LEARN MORE	78%
EDUCATE others	63%
SUPPORT local efforts around the justice area(s) in which they participated.	62%
GET INVOLVED in a community project in their home, school, neighborhood and/or city.	61%
LEAD their own project around a particular justice area or for community improvement.	47%

N = 3206

Outcomes Data: This year 29 different schools participated in one or more of the CONNECT workshops. The types of schools served include charter schools, public and private schools primarily in the Greater Memphis. This year nine schools, 31% of all schools served, participated in more than one CONNECT experience. The tables above summarize the cumulative results of the three questions that are consistent across all workshops as well as what actions students will

take as a result of their CONNECT experience. As the action commitments become more intense, fewer students select those options.

Outcomes Recommendations: Students who participate in CONNECT workshops are positive about their experiences and feel that they learn important skills and gain new knowledge. **Overall, 60% (1908: 3182) of students indicated with a score of eight or higher that they would like to participate in another CONNECT experience.** Action commitments made by students are comparable to previous years. While scores remain high, they have decreased in most cases this year. The newer workshops like Our Class and Who Are We, as well as the legacy racial justice workshop proved to be exceptions, producing higher scores. Scores for these workshops may be higher because of more recent and relevant curricula and/or it more closely aligned to the needs of the students.

- The program coordinator has previously indicated an **increased demand for experiences that are highly active and address content relevant to what students experience daily.** Each year BRIDGES staff and AmeriCorps Service Members revise existing workshops and develop new experiences in order to address this desire, which may lead to an increase in scores. **Data collected from workshops should continue to be used to update and improve experiences in FY18 and inform what new content may need to be piloted moving forward.**
- For FY17, ACs stated that curriculum trainings were more regular and hands-on at the beginning of the year. Lack of training will impact the quality of experiences delivered. Therefore, ACs have requested that time be allotted to allow for a **full walkthrough of the workshops and/or they should be able to lead themselves through the workshop and ask for assistance from full-time staff as needed.**
- Additionally, in interviews conducted at the end of the year ACs requested **more training and support for how to handle sensitive conversations, specifically politics.** As the political climate has changed this year many students have strong opinions and a desire to cover this topic.

Teacher Feedback Data: The chart to the right shows the results from teacher’s responses regarding observed changes among their students. **Teachers observed some significant changes among their students resulting in improvement in comparison to the previous year’s indicators in the chart. Additionally, 50% of teachers observed that their students “express a personal commitment to taking action that promotes justice.”** One teacher stated, *“Our students definitely want to be more involved in the community, and this workshop encouraged them to utilize their leadership skills as they pursue these opportunities in the community. Before, they wanted to participate, but they were not sure of the avenue to pursue. This workshop not only enhanced their awareness of their ability to impact change, but it also provided them with the necessary tools to act upon that ability.”*

Teacher Survey Results - Questions were scored on a scale of 1- “No Change” to 7 - “Significant Change”	FY16 Scores of 6 or 7	FY17 Scores of 6 or 7
Students exhibit openness to learn about diverse groups.	36%	60%
Students identify ways that young people can be leaders for justice in their homes, schools or communities.	36%	50%
Students encourage each other.	41%	45%
Students exhibit the desire to develop their personal strengths.	32%	45%
Students have awareness or curiosity about social justice issues in the Memphis area.	32%	44%
Students listen to opinions/perspectives different from their own with greater respect.	32%	35%
Students listen to each other and exhibit understanding of other opinions prior to responding.	23%	55%
	N = 22	N = 20

Regarding program quality and logistics the data shows that teachers feel that the CONNECT experiences are adequate. However, **only 25% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the activities correlate and/or support their curriculum and/or the Common Core State Standards.** When comparing this year’s data to the previous year teacher’s scores declined significantly on every question about program quality and logistics (see chart on the next page). There are several variables that can affect scores from one year to the next. First, fewer teachers took the survey this year. BRIDGES attempts to incentivize completion of the teacher survey by providing the school’s contact person with student data about their CONNECT experience once the teacher has completed the survey, however this does not seem to increase the number of teachers who take the time to complete it. Teachers who complete the survey each year are not typically the same teachers, nor are they from the same school and seldom do they participate in the same experiences.

While the logistics and quality questions show low scores, the changes that teachers observe among their students are on par with previous years, and comments are positive. One teacher shared, *“They seem to be standing up for their peers more and challenging ideas with conversations based in evidence.”*

Teacher Recommendations:

In order to obtain better feedback from **teachers the**

protocol for distributing teacher surveys two-weeks after their experience must be followed. Also making sure that teachers are aware that the school’s primary contact can receive their student’s data upon completion of teacher survey may encourage more teachers/administrators to complete it. Through the teacher survey, several suggestions for improvement were shared.

- Teachers would like to see **more use of technology** to help students understand and visualize how and where the things discussed during workshops are occurring.
- The desire for **more hands on activities** continues to be requested by teachers and by the ACs during their end of year interviews.
- Some teachers have requested **pre-work to prepare students for the experience** that they will go through and some would like to participate in **training for adults** so that they learn the same thing as the students; however, it is recommended that this be discussed on an individual basis with teachers and administrators at each school. While it is encouraging that some schools would like to have a more in-depth workshop experience, BRIDGES will need to consider staff time and ability to effectively deliver additional requests made by schools.

Classroom management and behavioral issues continue to be a concern shared by BRIDGES staff, teachers, and AmeriCorps who deliver the workshops. Last year 86% of teachers felt that their classrooms were adequately managed by BRIDGES staff but only 31% of teachers shared that sentiment this year. AmeriCorps continue to cite classroom management as one of their greatest barriers to delivering effective programming.

- All facilitators should work in collaboration with BRIDGES full-time staff to **determine what the most common classroom management issues are and how to handle them.**
- **Facilitators should be made explicitly aware that they do have the right and ability to end an experience** if all other classroom management tactics have been employed and no change occurs.

Program Quality and Logistics - Teacher Survey – (Questions scored from 1- "Strongly Disagree" and 7- "Strongly Agree")	FY16 scores of 6 and 7	FY17 scores of 6 and 7
Activities were age appropriate.	95%	43%
The group size was appropriate	91%	36%
The space was appropriate for where the workshop was delivered.	91%	32%
Activities challenged students to think critically and engage in courageous conversations.	91%	34%
The BRIDGES staff effectively managed student behavior.	86%	31%
The activities as delivered correlate and/or support your curriculum and/or the Common Core State Standards.	86%	25%

N=22

N= 18

- Considering the persistent complaints regarding behavioral issues, BRIDGES must be more explicit and consider **adding language into contracts with schools about teacher expectations for support in the classroom and/or removing students from the experience if the student(s) continues to be disruptive.** While BRIDGES does not prefer to remove students from an experience, steps must be taken to remedy behavioral issues that prohibit the rest of the students from participating.

Similar to the request made by ACs to have more consistent workshop trainings they have also requested **more consistent and detailed site coordination training.** Site coordinators are responsible for being the BRIDGES point person for their colleagues and school administrators on the day of the workshop. Site coordinators also assist with troubleshooting activities, gathering materials for the experience, and managing behavioral issues with students.

While ACs appreciate the chance to serve as site coordinators, they often do not feel prepared and/or feel that their role is recognized by the school. Some of the issues ACs encountered include but are not limited to: Not being sure how to deal with inconsistencies on the part of the school (e.g., rooms not as promised) and stated that many administrators ignore them and/or do not follow-up on requests made. Since AmeriCorps members are typically young and in the early stages of their professional careers, they don't always feel comfortable confronting school administrators about issues like those mentioned above.

- **ACs who serve as the site coordinator for a school need to be made aware of this role well in advance of the workshop delivery date. ACs have also requested that post-workshop reflections occur more consistently so that facilitators and coordinators can learn from the experiences of their colleagues.**
- **AmeriCorps Service Members would like in-house scenario based training for how to site coordinate.** Training should include scenarios that challenge ACs to diffuse difficult situations with school administrators and student behavioral issues.
- **This past year ACs were given the opportunity to shadow their supervisors, serving as site coordinators, at a school and would like to continue this practice.** However, since every school is different, shadowing opportunities are limited as to what they may experience on the days that they shadow versus when they site coordinate on their own.

As the CONNECT program continues to grow, updates to the workshops and training for staff and AmeriCorps Service Members will also continue to change. Overall this year's CONNECT programming was successful. Staff who support this program will continue to explore new and innovative ways to address the needs and wishes of the students and schools in the Midsouth.