Bridge Programming Mini-Toolkit

YouthBuild programs and postsecondary partners can engage students in bridge programs through two approaches. The first approach is linking students to existing bridge programs. The second approach is collaborating with partners to develop new bridge programs. In this mini-tool kit, we provide tip sheets, tools, and links to resources to support these efforts.

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Tips for Engaging Students in Existing Bridge Programs

If a nearby postsecondary institution offers bridge programs, you should consider linking students with these opportunities. Bridge programs can be particularly effective when YouthBuild programs partner with postsecondary institutions to provide students with additional supports that increase students’ chances of success. This tip sheet suggests ways that you can identify promising bridge programming opportunities and collaborate with your PSE partner to offer the right support.

- **Identify bridge program opportunities**: Search for bridge program opportunities on the postsecondary institution’s website or within its course catalogue/academic schedule. If you have relationship with instructors or administrators within the postsecondary institution, ask if such courses are offered and if your PSE partner would be willing help you connect students to these opportunities.

- **Look beyond traditional college success courses**: While college success courses could serve as ideal bridge program courses, you can also use developmental or college level courses as bridge program opportunities. For example, Portland YouthBuilders engages current YouthBuild students in developmental coursework (English and Math) at Portland Community College.

- **Connect with the postsecondary person responsible for course delivery and design**: If bridge programs are available, identify the staff person(s) responsible for designing and delivering these courses. Ask this person if he or she would be willing to collaborate with YouthBuild staff to ensure students have access to these courses and additional opportunities to promote overall success. If you already have a relationship with a dean, provost, or other high level administrator, ask this individual if they would be willing to introduce you to the person(s) responsible for the bridge programming work and ensure dedication of appropriate resources and staff.

- **Pitch the value of the partnership**: Postsecondary institutions can benefit tremendously from partnering with CBOs to deliver bridge programing. Possible benefits include: 1) the postsecondary institution receives consistent tuition revenue from YouthBuild students enrolling in bridge/college readiness courses; 2) YouthBuild staff members help increase student retention and success by providing students with wrap-around support during their bridge enrollment; 3) students receive early preparation in their YouthBuild program which increases their chances of success once they officially enroll in the postsecondary institution and; 4) YouthBuild staff and students can offer helpful insights to improve bridge program instruction and student engagement strategies.

- **Involv YouthBuild staff in bridge program design and delivery**: Discuss ways in which YouthBuild staff can be involved in the bridge programming/college readiness course delivery to increase supports and relevance for YouthBuild students (and other students enrolled in these courses). Ask your postsecondary partner if YouthBuild staff can participate in trainings related to the bridge program.

- **Plan student support strategies**: Work with your postsecondary partner to determine how both the YouthBuild program and postsecondary partner will support students to ensure their success in these courses. The tool, “7 Ways to Support Students Enrolled Bridge Programs”, in this resource toolkit suggests ways that you can support students.
Tips for Engaging Students in Existing Bridge Programs (Cont.)

- **Determine how students will pay for bridge program courses:** Some students can pay for these courses with AmeriCorps scholarships and financial aid awards. Some postsecondary institutions offer these courses free of charge through existing student success initiatives.

- **Include proposed Activities in your MOU and work plan:** Be sure to build in proposed bridge activities and responsibilities in an MOU and your work plan (see Chapter 3 for more information on developing MOUs and Chapter 1 for resources to assist your overall planning efforts).
6 Ways to Support Students Enrolled in Bridge Programs

Bridge program efforts are most successful when postsecondary institutions and YouthBuild programs work together to make sure that students have the right system of support. In this tool, we suggest ways that you support students during their bridge program enrollment to increase their chances of success.

1) Offer students tutoring and homework support, particularly right after they finish their daily courses. For example, YouthBuild Operation Fresh Start transports students back to the YouthBuild program after their bridge coursework and helps them with their assignments.

2) Check in with students regularly to see how things are going. For example, the graduate coordinator at YouthBuild McLean County staff text bridge program students every evening asking how their day went and helping them work through challenges.

3) Offer students onsite daycare (at the postsecondary institution or at the YouthBuild program). Some postsecondary institutions offer affordable day care options. Ask your postsecondary contacts if such resources are available.

4) Provide students with meals/snacks before, during, or after the course. This small effort can make a huge difference!

5) Assign students to mentors. Mentors can provide students with encouragement and homework support throughout the duration of bridge program course. Mentors can be former YouthBuild students enrolled in postsecondary students, other enrolled postsecondary students, postsecondary staff, or community volunteers.

6) Offer transportation to and from the bridge program course.
Developing a New Bridge Program with a Postsecondary Partner: 7 Key Steps

You may consider developing new bridge courses in collaboration with your postsecondary partner. This represents the best option for YouthBuild programs whose postsecondary partners may not offer bridge programs or when existing programs do not meet YouthBuild students’ needs. In this tool, we suggest ways that you can collaborate with your postsecondary partner to create a new bridge program aligned with students’ interests and needs.

1) **Make sure that a strong partnership is in place:** Developing a bridge program requires high levels of staff commitment, time, and resources from both YouthBuild programs and their postsecondary partners. Therefore, it is important that you and your PSE partner have an established track record of successful partnership activities before engaging in a bridge program. If your partnership is not yet robust, you may want to ask if faculty and staff can deliver smaller-scale workshops/orientations. These workshops can be a great way to build toward an effective bridge-program team.

2) **Pitch the value of the partnership:** Postsecondary institutions benefit tremendously from partnering with community-based organizations to deliver bridge programming. List of possible benefits include: 1) The postsecondary institution receives consistent tuition revenue from YouthBuild students enrolling in bridge/college readiness courses; 2) YouthBuild staff members help increase student retention and success by providing students with wrap-around support during their bridge enrollment; 3) Students receive early preparation in their YouthBuild program which increases their chances of success once they officially enroll in the postsecondary institution and 4) YouthBuild staff and students can offer helpful insights to improve bridge program instruction and student engagement strategies.

3) **Create a design and implementation team:** It’s important that you identify YouthBuild and postsecondary staff and faculty responsible for designing and implementing the bridge program and assign roles and responsibilities. For instance, you may want to consider the follow questions: Who is responsible for designing the bridge curriculum? Who is responsible for teaching the class(es)? Who will provide students with additional support while they are engaged in the course? What additional staff members should be involved in addressing challenges as they arise?

4) **Identify students’ postsecondary-related learning needs:** Before you develop the syllabus, curriculum and structure of your bridge program, it is important to identify students’ learning needs. There are number of ways that you can assess students’ learning needs, which are described in more detail in Chapter 7. You can also engage students directly in the process by asking them about their postsecondary goals and challenges.

5) **Decide how you will deliver the bridge program:** There are a number of structures in which the bridge program can be delivered. Will it be offered at the postsecondary institution or the YouthBuild program? What is the length and duration of the course? Will the college success course be for offered credit or non-credit? Will these courses represent supported gate keeper courses, developmental education coursework or general courses of interest? What are the estimated costs and how will your YouthBuild program/postsecondary partner cover these costs? Jobs for the Future developed a tool that will help you consider various models of bridge program delivery and create one on your own: [http://www.collegetransition.org/Conference-2010/JFFSkillsForSuccess.pdf](http://www.collegetransition.org/Conference-2010/JFFSkillsForSuccess.pdf)
Developing a New Bridge Program with a Postsecondary Partner: 7 Key Steps (Cont.)

6) **Develop Dual credit/dual articulation agreements**: If students enroll in a college readiness course or bridge program while enrolled in YouthBuild, explore the possibility of creating dual credit agreements so that students receive postsecondary credit for all their coursework. (See Chapter 5 of the Postsecondary Partnership Guide for more information in creating dual credit/dual articulation agreements)

7) **Develop a syllabus and curriculum**:
   
a. **Create syllabi**: Many YouthBuild programs have developed syllabi for their bridge program/college courses. Syllabi help instructors clarify expectations to students while also familiarizing students with the structure and use of syllabi, which are commonly used in postsecondary courses. You can find useful resources to help you develop a syllabus at this link [http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/syllabi.html](http://www.celt.iastate.edu/teaching/syllabi.html). You can also locate samples of YouthBuild programs’ and their postsecondary partners bridge program syllabi here at this link.

   b. **Develop Curriculum**: Bridge program goals and curriculum should be well aligned with students’ postsecondary learning needs. For example, if students need assistance with remedial math and English so that they can test into college level courses, then teachers should embed math and English preparation into your bridge program course. You can find curriculum ideas in the tool, “Bridge Program Curriculum and Activity Resources” on page 7 of this toolkit.
Bridge Program Curriculum and Activity Resources

This document lists free and for-purchase curricula, books, and lesson plans to use in your bridge programs. Most of these resources address important postsecondary readiness competencies such as time management, reading skills, note-taking, and test-taking strategies.

The Aspen Institute’s free bridge resources: This rich database offers free lesson plans, curriculum, and activities to supplement bridge program courses.  http://www.aspenwsi.org/resource/c2e-curricula/

Linda Wong’s Essential Study Skills: This for-purchase resource binder offers comprehensive course materials, lesson plans, and class activities addressing essential postsecondary success skills. http://college.cengage.com/collegesurvival/wong/essential_study/5e/instructors/index.html

Skip Downing’s On Course: On Course is one of the most commonly used curriculums/books used in college bridge/orientation courses. These for-purchase materials provide a number of engaging activities and exercises to help students cultivate critical postsecondary knowledge and skills. http://www.oncourseworkshop.com/Skip%20Downing.htm

High School College Readiness Curriculum: College Spark shares free lesson plans and activities that encourage students to explore their postsecondary and career interests and take charge of their postsecondary planning. http://www.collegespark.org/files/documents/Tools_for_Parents_and_Families/NavGr12LessonsRGRev-04-09.pdf

College for Adults: This is a free website providing study skill suggestions, recommendations for career and educational planning, and other activities to help students successfully transition to postsecondary. http://www.collegeforadults.org/

Thriving in the Community College and Beyond: This for-purchase book, written by Joe Cuseo, Viki Sox Fecas, and Aaron Thompson, provides students with concrete strategies for thriving in a variety of postsecondary environments. http://www.thrivingincollege.com/books.html