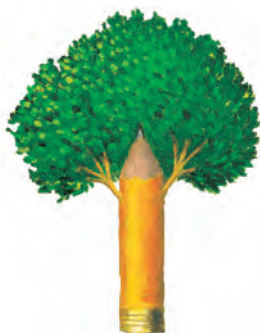


Expecting Success

Bridgeport School District, Bridgeport, Wash.



SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENT

Tracy Zahn

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Justin Avenell
Richard Halterman
Esiquio Martinez
Jacquelynn Workman

SUPERINTENDENT

Gene Schmidt



PROGRAM NAME

College in the High School

Bridgeport students can earn up to 45 college credits while still in high school.

DISTRICT DILEMMA

Many Bridgeport School District students dreamed of attending college. Sadly, for most, dreaming was all they could do because they couldn't afford tuition, fees, or books. Nor was the 150-mile round trip to the nearest college possible. More than 80 percent of Bridgeport students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 87 percent are Latino, and most are prepared to become migrant farm laborers, like their parents. The Bridgeport School Board chose a different career path for them, and, in the process, introduced the College in the High School program.

SOLUTION

When you can't get students to college, you bring college to the students. Bridgeport's solution began in 2003 with the board's approval of two college English classes for three high school students. Introducing a

class for just three students was viewed as an expensive but necessary jump start to the greater goal of having many classes. Board members believed that, if students had the opportunity to experience success in a college course in the safety of their high school environment, they would be encouraged to enroll in other college classes. The board was right: Enrollment has grown to 108 students in college credit courses in 2008—quite an accomplishment for a high school with 182 students.

BOARD INVOLVEMENT

The Bridgeport School Board's leadership has been instrumental in both the introduction and expansion of the program. The board and the district believed graduates could move beyond their limited job expectations with more marketable skills. The board makes sure that adequate resources are budgeted to provide the material and supplies for these classes, and it has paid for re-

lease time for professional development to train staff. The board has shown continued interest in the expansion of the program by creating a spot on the monthly board meeting agenda for updates and progress reports.

RESULTS

The program has expanded to include two composition and two literature English courses, as well as classes in biology, Spanish, psychology, music theory, history, government, microcomputers, accounting, keyboarding, and welding. The board signed agreements with community colleges and the AP College Board for students to receive college credits.

The academic rigor needed to pass such college courses led to a dramatic improvement in overall student achievement, as measured by the Washington State Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). In 2003, only 59 percent of students met the WASL graduation requirements in reading and 53 percent of students met them in writing. All seniors met WASL requirements in 2007 and 2008. Already, 78 percent of this year's sophomores have met the reading requirements and 87 percent have met the writing requirements to graduate.



Scores on state assessment tests have soared since the program started in 2003.

The motto of the Bridgeport School Board is "We Expect Success." Board members, administrators, and teachers believe graduates will leave the district with the academic and vocational skills needed for 21st century jobs. This would not be possible without the creative strategies used to implement the College in the High School program.

The district's high poverty and high minority enrollment were not excuses to fail but opportunities to succeed. The district intentionally chose to ratchet up the academic rigor of its high school programs. Because of the board's vision, students from the past five graduating classes have completed high school with up to 45 college credits. Not only did this save district families thousands of dollars in tuition and travel, but it also gave students exposure to a college experience and the confidence to believe they can succeed.

Many graduates now are attending universities throughout the nation. Another result of the program: The high school was selected as one of America's Best High Schools by *U.S. News & World Report* in 2008.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Superintendent Gene Schmidt at gschmidt@bridgeport.wednet.edu. The district's website is at www.bridgeport.wednet.edu.

BOARD MEMBERS BELIEVED THAT, IF STUDENTS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE SUCCESS IN A COLLEGE COURSE IN THE SAFETY OF THEIR HIGH SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT, THEY WOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO ENROLL IN OTHER COLLEGE CLASSES.



College was out of reach for most Bridgeport students before the school board started this program.