

Home Connection: Career Academy/Pathway Interest

*Bridgeton High School
Bridgeton, New Jersey*

Bridgeton High School wants its students to focus on their futures – and to create bright and promising visions for themselves. Beginning in the fall of freshman year and continuing through senior year, the school helps students plan and prepare for post-secondary endeavors and to turn their visions into reality.

“We are working to develop career academies and pathways that offer courses that focus on the interests and strengths of our students while encouraging them to develop educational plans to achieve goals following high school graduation,” said the school’s organizational facilitator.

This year, Bridgeton’s motto was “Get connected. Together we can make a difference!” The Action Team for Partnerships (ATP) did just that. It used information from the ATP training workshop to create a Home Connection Activity called Career Academy/Pathway Interest to involve ninth-graders and their parents in students’ decisions about academy placements.

As a Talent Development High School, Bridgeton has a Freshman Success Academy and three Career Academies for Grades 10-12: Arts and Humanities; Math, Science and Medical; and Business and Industrial Technology. In the fall of ninth grade, students take Freshman Seminar, a course focused on the transition to high school, that includes setting goals for the future in high school and beyond. As part of Freshman Seminar, students take the Holland Inventory and the Self-Directed Search (SDS) Career Exploration – two reflective tools that help them identify their career interests. The ATP felt that students and families needed to be well-informed about these assessments and about the process and options for choosing a Career Academy.

Working with the Freshman Seminar teachers, the school’s ATP developed an interactive homework assignment to encourage

students and their families to talk about the choice of a Career Academy and future career plans. The homework assignment included information about the student’s areas of interest from the SDS Career Explorer and the Career Academy Pathways and the Career Academy choices.

Guidance counselors used the information from the interactive homework assignment, which was also translated into Spanish for the school’s growing population of English Language Learners (ELL), to help place students in a Career Academy cohort that matched their interests. The assignment also assisted the Freshman Academy in developing partnerships with parents for other activities.

More than 200 students and 200 parents, 80% of the freshman class, participated in the Home Connection activity. A ninth-grade student remarked: “I think the homework assignment was a good idea. I probably would have talked to my parents about my plans for picking an academy anyway, but I don’t know if I would have explained the information about my Holland Inventory Codes.”

“I think it was a good way to let parents know about the Career Academies,” added a Freshman Seminar teacher. “It was the first time parents received information about what the students were planning to select.”

During report card conferences held shortly after the interactive homework assignment, a majority of students were able to articulate their goals. Next year, to boost participation even higher, Bridgeton High will use its new, automated voice messaging system to notify parents about the homework assignment.

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