

Cincinnati Arts & Technology Studios

Bridging the Gap

What is Bridging the Gap?

Bridging the Gap is a workforce development program that helps urban, mostly at-risk teens succeed after high school graduation. It extends the pre-graduation support that CATS provides through its arts program, to help the teens succeed in the workplace or college. Bridging the Gap is different from other workforce programs in that it partners with employers to train the students for positions that are ready and waiting for those who complete the program. Then, supports continue for a year or more to ensure the teens are firmly established in their careers or higher education.

Bridging the Gap has proven that with the right kind of supports for a relatively short period after graduation, students can be established successfully in a career, often with tuition assistance for higher education and access to a world of options from there.

Goals:

- Help urban teens succeed beyond graduation from high school
- Provide skilled workers in industry sectors where there is a current or anticipated shortage.

Brief history:

Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and the Cincinnati Arts & Technology Center created the program in 2006, giving CATS high school seniors an opportunity to apply for positions at Cincinnati Children's, with career potential and full benefits including tuition assistance.

In 2010, Leadership Cincinnati Class #33, looking to address a severe projected shortage of health care workers, worked with CATS and Cincinnati Children's to increase the scalability, sustainability and positive outcomes of the program.

In 2011, formalized life skills training was introduced to help ensure students are trained not only in the skills of their profession but in the work and lifestyle habits essential to success in any career.

In 2011 the program earned a three-year grant from the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky Social Innovation Fund.

In 2012 the program added manufacturing and banking as career paths.

In 2017, certifications in technology were made available to interested students.

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How Bridging the Gap works

CATS selects candidates for the program from a pool of students who self-identify. Motivation and other success factors are considered.

A rigorous application process is followed by life skills training, job-readiness workshops, state-certification and other industry-specific training, testing, hiring screens, and job interviews. Program supports are standardized for efficiency but allow for customization to meet individual student or employer needs. For example, the program continues to support Bridging the Gap students who go on to pursue careers in industries that are not part of the program's primary career pathways.

Assignment of an on-the-job mentor is one of many essential components. Tuition assistance for higher education is available through many employers and students are encouraged to continue their education.

Results

- ❑ Since 2006, 79 CATS graduates employed.
- ❑ 89% job retention rate (in position for one year or longer.)

Bridging the Gap partners

- ❑ **Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center**, other health care providers; and other employer-partners offering career pathways in fields such as manufacturing, banking, retail, and food service.
- ❑ **A Unique Place Enterprise** provides State Tested Nursing Assistant (STNA) training approved by the Ohio Department of Health, as specified by the Nurse Aide Training and Competency Evaluation Program (NATCEP). Students gain the skills to assist as nurses' aides, in long-term and assisted-living facilities, home healthcare and hospitals.
- ❑ **TriState Easter Seals** delivers Manufacturing Skills Standards Certification (MSSC) training and certification for advanced manufacturing positions.
- ❑ **Per Scholas** offers training in computer maintenance, installation and troubleshooting, networking and security concepts.
- ❑ **PNC Bank** offers on-the-job training for tellers and call center representatives.
- ❑ **Cincinnati Works** helps teens develop their employability skills and provides access to area employers, job readiness training, other support services and a lifetime membership with Cincinnati Works.

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<http://cincinnatiartsandtechnologycenter.org/student-programs/bridging-the-gap/>