

The Bridge builds self-empowerment, confidence and knowledge to unlock kids' full potential.

Through intentional collaboration with the student, schools, caretakers, social workers and community organizations, we meet the students' needs and remove barriers to success. Students in grades K-12 currently in out-of-home care or were in care within the past year are eligible for any of The Bridge's services:

- Educational Advocacy
- Academic Success Mentoring
- Student Enrichment Opportunities
- Post-Secondary Education Planning and Funding



**Educational Advocacy** Every child has a right to an education. The Bridge works with schools, social workers, foster families and foster youth to remove barriers to school success and resolve difficult issues such as special education needs, behavior management and transitioning to a new school.

**Academic Success Mentoring** Our work is guided by the concept of ABC Plus, which summarizes seven factors that lead to student success. The first three are tracked by schools:  
A is for regular class attendance  
B is for appropriate behavior  
C is for adequate course completion  
The "Plus" refers to additional critical attitude and engagement measures that research and practice have uncovered as critical elements we must also support for foster children's overall success:  
1) meaningful participation in an extracurricular activity;  
2) a mind-set of persistence and perseverance;  
3) a student-centered plan for the future;  
4) independent living skills.

**Student Enrichment Opportunities** Students need opportunities to flourish outside of the classroom. These experiences bring classroom concepts to life and establish a new future horizon on which students in foster care may focus. The Bridge will provide opportunities such as student enrichment workshops, field trips, internship and mentoring opportunities and educational experiences.

**Post-Secondary Education Planning and Funding**  
The Bridge's goal is to build the confidence, skills and supports youth impacted by foster care need to take charge of their lives and futures. We work with youth to create a personal plan to graduate high school and pursue their dreams.  
It is a fact that, for students in the foster care system, one of the main barriers to finishing their post-secondary aspirations is the lack of funds to support them throughout their education. The Bridge provides two college funding opportunities that Mission West Virginia's Frameworks program provides through fundraising for children in foster care: a scholarship competition and Smart529 college savings account with funds to give it a start. These funds are able to go towards education-related expenses that may occur throughout their post-secondary education career.



Children in foster care are some of the most vulnerable members of our society, representing the "invisible gap" when it comes to educational achievement. Consider the following:

- West Virginia has over 4,000 children in foster care.
- More than 1 in 5 foster children who "age out" will become homeless.
- Only 58% will graduate high school by age 19 (compared to 87% of all youth 19 years of age).
- By the age of 24, only half are employed.
- Fewer than 10% will attempt a college degree; fewer than 3% will earn a college degree by age 25.
- 1 in 4 will be involved in the justice system within 2 years of leaving the foster care system.

Besides the personal impact that children in foster care experience—the societal cost of children that have had a system fail them is astronomical. These children need and deserve help.

The Bridge is devoted to serving foster children in West Virginia by offering meaningful and effective support to be successful in school and beyond. When students are successful, we create wealth not only in the life of the student, but also in our communities.

**"We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today."**  
**--Stacia Tauscher**

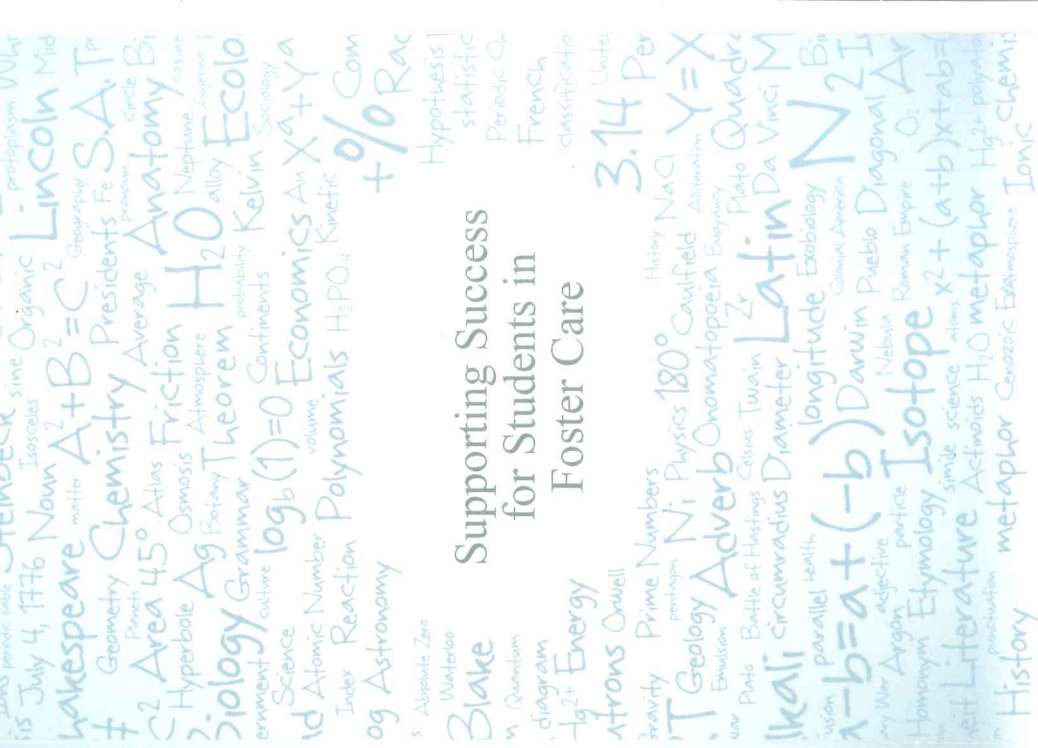
### Referrals for Service

The Bridge is available for students in grades K-12 that are currently in out-of-home care or were in care within the past year.

Contact Amanda Davis at 304-562-0723 or [adavis@missionwv.org](mailto:adavis@missionwv.org) for more information.



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