

>> Without further ado, I'm thrilled to introduce LeeAnn Guido, who is our social worker, and Bill Ament, who is one of our Bridge teachers.

>> Thanks, Heather. Good afternoon. We're really excited to be here. Bill and I have been working together at the high school I'd say 9 or 10 years now. And we, you know, in education, we're all about setting high expectations. But I want to lower your expectations right now. If you came here thinking you were gonna hear some really dynamic, awesome speakers, you're in the wrong room. But if you're here to learn about a really awesome, dynamic program that you can take back and implement in your high school, then stick around because I think you're gonna be really happy with what we have to tell you about. So this is our course description of what the Bridge Program is about. Oh, sorry. And it's an academic support program designed, as Heather said, specifically for regular education students. We have a lot of supports available for our special ed population. But we have a growing number of kids who, they're average to low-average ability. They're earning Ds, a couple of Fs on their report cards. And we were referring them. And they were being tested. And the school psychologist is saying, "They're just low-average performers. They're low-average learners." And what are we gonna do to help support them and help them rise about those D and F-laden report cards? So the Bridge Program started out as alt ed. And it has grown, probably over the last 15 years, to what we have today, which I think is a really fabulous, very inclusive program. So how do we identify students to be on the Bridge? Well, first, we like to keep our numbers small because in order to be able to really help the students in the program, our class size can't be more than 10, really. I don't think we have any classes that are ...

>> Six.

>> Six? Well, Bill likes six. But sometimes we push it and we'll put 10 kids in a classroom 'cause we are about helping students achieving. But they have to be failing a couple of classes. They go through our SAP program. The SAP program at our high school is kind of our screening tool for all higher-tier interventions that we offer. So they have to be referred through SAP. Sometimes we have students who have entered into our school district. They've been very transient. You know, in the last 7 years, they have 10 different schools on their transcript, and they're really kind of behind academically. So we try to offer them extra support by putting them in the Bridge. But like we said, it's only for regular education students.

>> Yeah. Go ahead, sure. The next thing we have is who actually staffs the program. At the high school, we have ... Well, now we actually have four different teachers that teach the Bridge Program. We have myself who works with the 9th and 10th graders, who is at full-time. That's all we do is work on that. I also have another colleague that does the 11th and 12th grade program. We're all in the same room. It's the same exact program all the way through. We just decided that this way, I could work with the 9th and 10th grade teachers. He can work with the 11th and 12th grade teachers. Over the past couple years, we've had a really big influx of 9th graders coming into the program and just ... or coming into the high school and just wildly unprepared. So what that did, it necessitated getting a couple more -- additional help for us. We now have two part-time teachers that both help us out. They both do 9th and 10th grade. It kinda equals another whole teacher, I guess we could say, because we have about two periods each for each one of them. What we also have is a classroom aide. The classroom aide is very crucial, especially for the whole keeping in contact with the parents. Eventually as we're going through, we'll tell you more about what we do, actually, in the program. But the classroom aide, each week, she sends out progress reports to the parents each week, going through Edline. We get different information from different teachers. And she relays all that stuff to the parents as well to keep everybody on the same page. Like I said, we'll go over more of that a little bit later. And the last thing,

and probably one of the more important things, is support from the entire school. I can't tell you how helpful it is to have some of the regular ed teachers give us any support that we can. Each day what we do is I actually e-mail all the teachers each morning and say, "Hey, what homework do we have today? What tests are coming up? What's the big project of the week?" Different things like that. And thankfully, for the people I work with, I probably have 95 percent response every day, just saying, "Hey, math problems today are page 12, numbers 5 to 10 odd." Okay. So that is so crucial and so helpful. And it really saves us from playing the whole game of, and you guys probably already know this, the, "You know, I just really don't have any homework to do today." Okay. Yeah. That's why ... I know who you are. But for the most part, it helps out tremendously whenever we have things like that. Criteria for the teaching and staff: I myself, I have an English degree. I had no intentions of doing this whenever I came out of college, it just kinda fell into place for me. I went for an English job, I didn't get it. The superintendent at the time, Dr. Lee, called me up the next day after I didn't get the English job, and he says, "Hey, would you like a job?" I said, "Of course. Why would I not want a job?" I was like, "Is it contracted?" "Sure." I was like, "What am I gonna be doing?" And he's like, "Well, you're 6-4, 300 pounds." He's like, "Could you scare some kids for me?" I'm like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. What do you mean by scare? What are we talking about here? How are we gonna do this?" And it just snowballed from there. I actually couldn't think of going back into the regular classroom after doing this. It's my 11th year here. It's been a lot of fun. However, so I have an English degree. The guy I teach with that does the 11th and 12th grade version, he has a social studies degree. The two people that are now part-time, one is a phys ed teacher. The other is a special ed teacher. So there really is no criteria, as in what you need to have educationally for it. You just have to, I guess, just be ready to work is pretty much what it comes down to.

>> I think, in addition to an incredible work ethic, which I see in all four of the men that work in that program, they really care about the kids. So I think the personality is probably one of the most important factors of having a successful Bridge Program. These, you know, it takes a special person to motivate an unmotivated student. And we have a room full of unmotivated students who are failing multiple classes. And how do you get those kids to actually care enough to do their work and to turn it in and get credit for it? So personality is really important. Teaching, certification, not so important, personality, being a little bit loud, being able to have fun, a little bit obnoxious but also not backing down whenever the students are refusing is really key. And we have that in all four of our teachers. So that's a really big part of it when you're looking to staff your own Bridge classroom.

>> Are you guys full-time [INAUDIBLE]?

>>> I myself, in the 9, 10, am full-time. I have five teaching periods. My cohort, the 11th and 12th grade version, same thing, he has five teaching periods. The other two people, they are not. Allen has two Bridge classes and he has three learning support English classes, I believe. And then Mr. Rosenwald, he has two Bridge classes as well, but then he has three phys ed classes. So I guess we'll go off this. It would be very hard if you were just doing this part-time because I don't know how you would be able to split it up between your phys ed and Bridge support. With the two part-timers, I collect all the work. I try to get everything for them so they don't have to worry about it as much. They can focus on the other stuff. So I guess that's pretty much where we stand on that one. All righty, so typical day on the Bridge. A couple of my friends at the high school, they like to make fun of me a little bit because I don't have an actual lesson plan each day. I take it how it is, and I just go from there. However, they will say things like, "Oh, well, all you do is just monitor a study hall." I wish I just monitored a study hall. All right. I have a giant list of some of the things that we do each day. First and foremost, I guess we should say, we talked about the amount of kids per class. We do like to try to keep the class small. The reason being, and as

we keep on going through there, a lot of times there's just not six or seven kids in that class period. We have kids coming down from different class periods. Let's say they're in their cultures class, and during cultures, they are doing an in-class assignment. All right. Well, I work with a lot of kids that have ADD. So what they do is they're not gonna be capable of working in that environment, up there in the room. So they come down, bring all their stuff with me, and they'll go down and work with a smaller environment. Throughout the day, that happens probably each period. So we could have up to 10 to 15 kids in there working on different things at different times. It can get a little chaotic, obviously. You're trying to juggle 15 different kids all with different emotional problems, all with different ADD. But it is, like I said, it's entertaining. But it's also something that I don't know if I could switch back to do. Checking homework, that's probably one of the more important things that we do each day. When we start class, we start class the same way each time. I walk in. I check their agendas. Each kid has an actual agenda purchased by the school. On the agenda we ask them just to write in all of the assignments they have throughout the day. Like I said before, I receive all the homework beforehand from the teachers. So when a kid comes up and says, "Hey, for Mr. McDermott's class, I don't -- I really don't have anything to do today." It's like, "Well, I know you're working on civil rights right now, so how about we get the timeline out that you guys are doing in class and we can start working on that." And eventually, probably about October, they just decide that they can't get it by on me, so we go that route. Yes?

>> Is this built into their schedule for ... Is it one period during the day?

>> Yes. Yeah, each kid gets one period throughout the day. Over ...

>> [INAUDIBLE]

>> Yes, yes.

>> It's a very ... That's exactly what it is. We say it all the time.

>> Bill gets angry whenever ... I sometimes will say it's like a study hall on steroids or it's, you know, and he gets very mad. He's like, "It's so much more than a study hall, LeeAnn." Which is it so much more than a study hall. But, yes. So it's built in. And that's the benefit to having ... Well, with multiple teachers at the 9, 10 level, all nine periods of the day, there is a Bridge classroom available that we can put a kid into. For the 11 and 12th graders, they only have five periods a day to choose from, but we have them spread out pretty well. But, again, part of the personality is that these teachers are really flexible so, on occasion, I've had a 12th grader who, something has happened in their life that focusing on school is just not their priority anymore, but, "Geez, you're only two credits from graduating. We're not throwing it away right now." And their only study hall, or maybe if they're failing an elective, we'll say let's drop your elective. Let's put you in the Bridge class because that's gonna help you pass all your core classes, which is what you need to graduate. But they only have that class fourth period. Mr. Klinefelter doesn't have a class fourth period, so I'll go to Mr. Ament, and I'll say, "Mr. Ament, I have a 12th grader who needs some support." And they're always open to being a little bit flexible with the grade level. Yes? Yeah.

>> Do you have the same thing that [INAUDIBLE] the students use or a class for the ...

>> We do. Yeah. So the question was, "Do we have a class like this for the learning support?" Can I say out loud it's not as good as the Bridge Program? But we are working on tweaking that. Really, I mean, we've spent a lot of time and effort. They have a study skills class. And we have, over the years, been

trying to change what's happening in study skills and making it more like this and helping ... We're changing some things with special education to make it model more like the Bridge Program. But yes, we have study skills available for special education students, among a bazillion other supports for special ed.

>> Are there any [INAUDIBLE] students that wish they could be in the Bridge?

>> Yeah. We can talk about that a little bit. Sometimes we'll identify students as learning support after they've been on the Bridge. And we really have to work to sever the tie to the Bridge classroom. In some cases, it's been pretty bad. Learning support teachers a little bit irritated that their kids wanna go to the Bridge classroom instead of come to their classroom because it's really about relationships. I preach that all the time. Success for students is about relationships. And in the Bridge classroom, it's about building relationships. It's about bridging that gap that kids ... I mean, that's how we came up with the name. So it has been good. Yes?

>> Do they get a grade?

>> They do get a grade. Yes. And we'll talk about that a little bit.

>> [INAUDIBLE]

>> I'm gonna answer one more question and then we're gonna just keep going for ... Maybe write your questions down because we might address it.

>> That's fine.

>> Is that okay? Okay.

>> Awesome. Thank you. So we come through each day, we check their agenda. We find out what it is. It helps us get organized. I will go right into the grading question actually 'cause that's exactly where I would be next. Yes, they do get a grade for this class because they are learning something. They're trying to learn organizational skills for, well, life, actually, not just high school. So we have to grade them. And we decided to just grade them each day. How we grade them, obviously, is a little, I mean, it's really grading a study hall. So we had to find something to grade them for. So we grade them on the agenda. We give you three points for doing an agenda each day, if it's filled out. The way we describe ... How we give them between the one, two and three, it varies. A lot of times kids will just put "no homework" or "none." We just give them one point for that. That's great that you wrote that real quick, but we wanna know actually what you did that day. We wanna know that you walked into math class, we worked on fractions, and we have no homework. So that's what I want you to write down. I just don't want them to put "none" or "no homework" or just the homework down. The one point is just for being respectful in class, doing what you're supposed to be doing, working on what you were supposed to be working on. The other point is for being in your seat on time before the bell rings. A lot of the kids that we have are ... Mostly they have academic issues. Like we said, they're all C, D student type things. Not very many behavior issues that we have much anymore. But we'll get into how we filter that out shortly. Organizing binders, book bags, it's as awful as it sounds. Dumping some high school kid's book bag on the table and just trying to find out which one's math, which one's science, it's not fun. A "quiet" test environment, I put quiet there in quotes because obviously we still have to go around and talk to each of the kids. I'm not sure if the kids that come down to take their tests, if it's for an actual quiet area

or if it's just so they don't see everybody else rushing up to turn in their tests. That seems to be more of the stuff that we see most often. We have kids that are a lot of very high anxiety kids that are taking tests. And as they're working, and they're on number three, and they see half of their class walking up and they have 30 problems left. With the teachers, they just put the test in my mailbox. The kids come down. Everyone's fine. They don't even know where they're taking the test, which is one of the things we really strive for. And they just go through there. Collect and deliver work. Review grades. We have Edline, which I know a lot of people probably have the same thing. It's where the grades that are updated almost immediately. At least once a week, if not twice a week, we call the kids up to the desk during that period, and we review their grades with them. One of the things that we had before we could get onto Edline was, "Oh, I had no idea that my kid was really failing this many classes," or, "I didn't have any idea that they had this many missed assignments." If we're reviewing grades with them as much as we can, that's no longer an excuse. You can't just say, "Oh, I had no idea this is where we were. I had no idea where it is." So we try to do that once a week. The contacting parents is another thing that we try to do as much as possible too, for the same reason. It really is a CYA moment because we contact the people each week, the parents each week, and say, "These are your grades. These are the missing assignments. This is the tests that are coming up." We feel that if we get the communication from us and home as much as we can, it really is a coverall. There's no secrets. There's no hidden agendas. There's no surprises whenever progress reports come out. The more invested that the parents are, I mean, you all know this, the more invested that the parents are, probably the better off these kids are gonna end up being. What else do we have? Collecting assignments, talking to teachers. Like I said, talking to teachers is one of the best things that we have going on at Shaler high school. They're very open, as I've been here today, I've received 30 e-mails about what my kids are doing in their class at this moment. This one has not done this project, he's a little behind on the research paper. Without them, the whole thing just doesn't work. So I just have to say, once again, how great it is to work with those things. Weekly parent contact, already did that. School counselors and principals, they love us, is what it pretty much comes down to. We see them way too much. Anytime we have an issue, the relationships that we are building with the kids, they'll tell us more stuff than I want to know, but probably more than they'll tell anyone. And then we usually just beeline it straight to LeeAnn, who's the social worker, or any of the principals and say, "Hey, look. Timmy's having a crap-tastic day. He needs to sit down, talk to you. Please spend some time with him." And they usually let 'em go beeline straight for 'em, which has been awesome. Classroom spot checks, those are always fun. I leave my aide in charge for the room for a couple minutes, go surprise some kids walking into a classroom just to make sure they're doing what they're doing. They don't like that very much. It is very entertaining for everybody, just to walk in and see what they are or are not doing. It just keeps them on their toes, making sure things are moving in the right direction. I guess the last thing, okay, bring kids down from study hall. That's what we said before. All the kids we have are scheduled for a period with me. However, there are some kids that, even with 42 minutes, they're just not getting enough stuff done. We know they're not doing anything at home. So what we'll do is if they have another study hall, I ask them nicely if they would like to come downstairs, and we're gonna work on this together. So even though we're only teaching, technically, five periods, it's pretty much a nine period job. They'll come down, we'll work on projects whenever they can, whenever we can help them doing whatever they want. Monitor attendance and a home base. The home base is really another key thing. We're all in the same room, all four of us teachers. So if any kid does have a problem, like Ms. Guido said, they can easily come down. They can talk to any one of us. And we can direct them to whichever area that they need help with. If they don't feel comfortable talking to me, they can talk to Mr. Klinefelter, or vice versa, the principal, social workers, either way.

>> Great. Thanks. So, as I mentioned earlier, we identify most of our students for the program through our SAP program. And the reason that we had to do that was we have four counselors in the building,

we have four principals in the building, and sometimes kids are, you know, you just get a soft spot for a particular kid. And we would have a kid who maybe was getting in Ds in some of their classes and then, because Ms. Bernie really likes this student she says, "Oh, I think I wanna put Jim on the Bridge." Well, Jim's not failing any classes. And we need to keep the numbers pretty small. And Sally over there is failing two classes, so really we should be finding some other less intensive supports for Jim. Maybe connect him with the tutoring, maybe do a Check-In/Check-Out with a school counselor on a weekly basis. But I don't think we're gonna use a Bridge spot for him just yet. Let's try some other interventions first. So the best way that we could come up with doing that was to streamline it all through SAP. So if anybody wants a child to be considered for the Bridge Program, the first step is a SAP referral. And then the SAP team processes through. And we're actually presenting on our SAP process next session if you wanna hear more about that. But I'm not gonna get into it right now. The other thing that we do is we do save some spots at the beginning of the year for incoming ninth graders because we have found that a lot of ninth graders coming up, especially our male students, I'm not really sure ... It has been interesting to watch that gender difference, but our ninth grade boys are just not quite ready for the expectations of high school. And they're really kind of struggling right off the bat. So we meet with an eighth grade team, the social worker and the school counselor of the eighth graders at the end of every year in June. And they come prepared with a list of kids that they recommend for the Bridge Program. We kinda talk about each of them. We look at their background. We look at their grades. And then we make a determination of who's gonna be starting out in the Bridge. But we do always leave spots available for those kids that are not identified that surface pretty quickly within the first 9 weeks of ninth grade. So this is a lot of information, and we thought maybe it would be the easiest to walk you through a couple of case studies to see exactly how this all plays out and to see some of the different forms that we use because we've really streamlined it a lot over the last few years. So first we're gonna talk about Jim. Jim was struggling in his classes at the middle school. So at that end of the year meeting that we discussed, that I just told you about, he was referred to us. And we decided that we would recommend him for the program. So the first thing that we do is have a parent meeting. We invite the parents to come in. We have the student there, and I'm gonna let Bill tell you a little bit about the purpose of this meeting and also our entrance form.

>> Yeah. Like I said, we've been doing this a while now. This is my 11th year teaching. It's my ninth, or eighth, somewhere, at the high school, something around there. One of the things that we really realized is, okay, let's say ... And we all know these students. We all have these students that ... They're just not working at their potential. And even with my help, they're still not wanting the help. They're still not accepting the help. What we used to is just say, "Hey, this kid's not cutting it. Other kids need this spot. We're just gonna let this person go, and we're gonna bring somebody else in." Where we kinda got a little bit of a gray area is the fact that we didn't ... It was hard to explain to the parents why we were letting them go. So what we decided to do was we decided to make an entrance form for the actual Bridge Program. During the parent meeting, we discuss everything that we want to see out of these students, these children. With that, we let them know like, "Okay. So your grades right now, you're failing four of your main academic classes. All right. Let's set some goals for you. Let's if you can't bring up your history grade to a C. Let's say we can bring your English grade up to a B." All right. We always try to have them set really high. Set the goal as high as you can. I don't wanna say half, but I bet you 25 to 40 percent of the kids that we actually have are highly intelligent kids. I'm talking they could even be ... We have GATE program, like the highest level of program that we could have. They're just not doing their work. They don't have that ambition. So we have kids in there that could put As up there for math, but they're just not doing anything. So if we set these goals, that's something that we can say, "Hey, look. We set these goals at the beginning of the year, and they're just not achieving them. They're still missing assignments. They're still not doing what they need to do." Obviously we'll go on later what

happens whenever we don't achieve those goals. But that's the main reason why we have this entrance form, for that reason. So that's what we have there. And like I said, it just gives us some concrete data about what we can say to these parents the next time we have them. During the entrance form, you just saw the grades. We also have behavior goals as well. We, as a program and as a school district, have kinda decided that we can help a lot more kids that are more academically in trouble than behaviorally in trouble, for the most part. So we have the behavior goals in there as well just to make sure we're all headed in the right direction. It's like, "I follow school rules, respectful to staff and personnel, respectful to classmates and all of the above." The other thing we have in there is attendance. We have an attendance goal, which isn't shown. The attendance goal is the same thing. We had some ... I mean, every school district has their issue with truancy. And we had some students that were really pushing the limit of how many days that they were missing. It's just another data piece that we can say at the year-end meeting and say, "Look, I'm sorry. They just didn't achieve as much as we wanted to. That's where we're at with that." Next.

>> So, a couple of years ago, we decided that we needed to do a better job monitoring the progress of the students in the program. We were having what we were lovingly referring to as lifers. Somebody who had entered the program in ninth grade, and they were still in the program in 12th grade. And that is ... We're obviously not doing our job if they still need the support in 12th grade, if they've needed it for 4 years. We need to take a better look at what's going on. So we developed this progress report. So our team, we meet four times a year, every quarter, about 2 weeks before the end of the 9 weeks because we do wanna be able to give the kids just, "Here's exactly where you stand. We have 2 weeks before the quarter is over." We wanna let the parents know exactly where they stand 2 weeks before the quarter is over. But we meet and we go over all of the goals. So are they attending school regularly, and are they coming to the Bridge class regularly? Are they doing their agenda every day, or at least the majority of the day? Are they turning in their classroom assignments? Are they doing work outside of school that needs to be done? Basically, are they meeting our expectations? So we rate each of the kids. Each kid gets a progress report. We rate them all. And then we review the progress report with the student. They sign it. The teacher signs it. And then we send it home to the parent, so that the parent has ... Do we have the parent sign it?

>> Yes.

>> Okay. We have the parent sign it as well. So everybody is aware of what's going on. And the reason that we did that is because these little four things right down here are recommendations. So, like I said, we were having these kids that were staying in the program for 4 years. And part of it was because they were afraid to fly solo. They were attributing all of their success to the Bridge program and not to the fact that they had developed these skills and they were implementing them on their own. So we thought we need to kinda find a way to force them to take the leap of faith, that they can be successful, and they don't need Mr. Ament or Mr. Klinefelter to be able to be successful. So they have four recommendations at the end of every quarter. They're either working towards their goals, they're doing what we ask them to do, they're coming to school regularly, so they are staying in the program for at least the next quarter. Some students are not doing their agenda. They're refusing to fill out their agenda. And Mr. Ament can't really work with them if they're not filling out their agenda, or they're coming to class and they're saying, "I don't need your help. I got this," and they're sitting there. And they're not accepting the help that's being offered to them. And so those students, if we're seeing that on a consistent basis, we'll put them on academic probation. And we'll call their parents in for a meeting. And we'll say, "Listen. This is what's going on with John. He's not doing his agenda. He's refusing to accept the help. He's not doing any work at home. We can't help him if he's not gonna work with us. We need him to

work with us. So we're gonna give you another 9 weeks. We're not gonna cut the ties right now. But we're gonna meet again in 9 weeks. And if he's still refusing to do his agenda and refusing to accept the help, then we're gonna have to send him out of the program so we can open up a spot for another student who does want to accept the help," because we do often have a waiting list for the Bridge Program. Sometimes students are terminated. And we have terminated a couple of kids this year. We've had multiple parent meetings. Children just haven't changed their behavior, and unfortunately we have to ... And it's really hard for us. I'll be honest, those are probably the most difficult discussions, just within the staff, that we have because, you know, Bill will come to me and say, "This is what's going on. We gotta cut 'em loose." And I'm like, "Oh, can't we just give 'em one more 9 weeks. Let's just -- one more time, let's bring 'em in one more motivational speech." When we finally come to the decision to cut somebody loose, it has been a painstaking process. And then we have this honorable discharge, which is for the students who have been successful. They've been meeting their goals regularly. They're getting good grades, at least Cs or above in all of their classes. And we believe they can do it independently. So for those students, we transition them into what we call our Check-In/Check-Out program. And those students we will put into a study hall, opposite of the Bridge class. So they go, and they do their work independently, but they can still access the Bridge teacher if they need help. If they need that support, they're always welcome to come back into the classroom and seek out help. And then ... Do they meet with you every day or once a week?

>> The Check-In/Check-Out kids that are officially in the program do meet with us every day.

>> Okay. So every day we have this announcement period between fourth and fifth period. It takes about 12 minutes. So during that 12-minute period, they come to the Bridge room. And they just get a face to face with the Bridge teacher to say, "Okay. Let's look at your grades. Things are going well. Keep up the good work. Pat on the back. Off you go." So this was the first year that we did the Check-In/Check-Out of kinda forcing kids to be a little bit more confident in themselves and then still offering them that safety net, just in case. And it has been, I think, very successful.

>> Yeah. This was. This was the first year we tried the Check-In/Check-Out thing. And it really was kinda successful. We have a homeroom period, which is 15 minutes-ish? Something around there, 12, 15, you know how school time works. But it's somewhere around there. So what they do, instead of staying in their homeroom to actually watch the announcements, they come down, they talk to us. And we do the same thing that we would do in a regular Bridge class, except we do it really abbreviated and really fast. We hurry up. We check their assignments. Once a week we'll go through, we'll check their grades. Since it's a short amount of time and we have about 15 or 20 kids coming down to see us, we'll probably do like two or three kids a day, for grades, just to make sure we get them all at the same time. One thing that we forgot to mention on the termination part of the program. When a student is not participating and they are not doing what they need to do, we do not just cut ties right away. The one way that we do it is, it's kinda the same exact way that we do the honorable discharge. We still take them out of my class and we put them in a study hall. But what we tell them and what some people have actually come back to do is we say, "Hey look. Here's your study hall. If you wanna do whatever you're doing. You can work on it alone. That's fine. But if you still need my help, if you still need help with your math test, if you still need help with your English research paper, please come down and find me." Now, most of the kids that we do terminate from the program, they're still not gonna come down and get my help. But there are some that have realized, "Wow, man. I really screwed up." So as they're in the other study hall, they have been coming down. They do end up getting extra help from me. Those kids will sometimes come back in the program, like we said, well, they never really go away. They keep on coming back. So that is one of the main things for that. So that's the termination part of it. And the

Check-In/Check-Out, like I said, it's a work in progress, but I think it's gonna be something that's gonna stay.

>> Yeah. I would agree. I think it's been good. One of the things we don't have on the PowerPoint, but it's in your folder, is our exit form. And we developed that a few years ago as well. Also, it was just kinda to cover our rear-ends, whenever students are leaving the program. We do use it if everybody is in agreement. The parent comes in for a meeting. We have an exit meeting. Yes, John's meeting his goals. Yes, he's been successful. Yes, we all agree that he should not be in the program anymore, we sign it. But we have had to use this form on a number of occasions, at least a few occasions, because parents will call or students will come in and say, "You have got to get me out of the Bridge. I just can't stand being in there. I can't stand having somebody breathe down my neck and tell me what I need to be doing." And it's almost having the opposite effect of what we wanted it to have. We really don't support pulling kids out of the bridge when they need the help. We're, like I said, it's very painstaking for us to decide to pull a kid out who's not meeting their goals. But sometimes kids are just adamant. And we do believe that they have to be ready to accept the help. We can't force them to accept the help. It's just the same way it is with mental health or drug and alcohol. They need to be ready to admit they need some help. So we don't force a kid to stay in the Bridge if their parent is supporting it. So we do, sometimes, use this form to say, "The team is recommending you remain in the Bridge Program, but the parent and the student are insisting that they be removed. So they're being removed." And we make the parent and the child sign it. So at the end of the year, when they fail and have to go to summer school, they can't come back and say, "You didn't do anything to help our child." So we did put that in just to kind of cover our rear-end. So the second student ... So Jim started. He came in as a ninth grader from the middle school. He was in the program for 2 years. We transitioned him out. Check-In/Check-Out for his junior year, doing really well. So we'll keep him. And we haven't really talked about what we'll do for Check-In/Check-Out. Like Bill said, they don't go away. So even if he's not formally Check-In/Check-Out next year, I imagine he'll still come to the classroom because it is his home base. It's kinda like a family back there.

>> And not only that, just to let you know, we just found this out last week. He got accepted to college last week. So that's a really good sign. So he's a junior. He's going to college. That's a win.

>> It is a win. Awesome. Casey was a C, D student in middle school. But she was under the radar. So she didn't make it on that list for eighth graders coming up into the ninth grade that we're gonna put in the program. But when she came up to the high school, first 9 weeks, she was bombing everything. Lots of failing grades on her report card. But also her teachers ... She had been referred to Student Assistance by a teacher for failing class but also just for being very withdrawn and having maybe some emotional concerns. So we addressed both concerns, but we're only gonna talk about the one here. So she went through the process, and it was determined that she would benefit from being in the Bridge Program. So we put her on the Bridge. We follow the same process we follow with every other student. But in our progress review meeting for Casey it was, you know, Bill had said, "She is working really hard. She works 42 minutes when she's there. She's turning in all of her assignments." And we can see, by looking at Edline, she's getting good grades on all of her homework. And then her test scores. She's bombing her test scores or papers, any large assignment, she was just really doing poorly with her large assignments. So we will monitor, and through the feedback of Bill being able to work, or Mr. Klinefelter, being able to work individually with these students, we really are able to identify previously unidentified learning disabilities. And so sometimes we will bring a family in, and we'll say, "Look, Casey is working hard. And she's just not quite getting it. And maybe there's some sort of processing or comprehension or something. We think we should have her tested by the school psychologist." And the parents have been

pretty agreeable to that. And we do keep them in the Bridge Program throughout that process because, as you know, it takes a while. So they'll remain in the Bridge. We don't withdraw that support until the MDE process is over. And then if they've been identified, and, in Casey's case, she was identified, and she was moved into the special ed program, the learning support program, at the high school.

>> And that's one of the main reasons why we have the Bridge Program. We service about ... I think we figured out it's about 12 percent of the population that we have at the high school. With that, we use it as a buffering process. I mean, if a kid struggling, and I'm working with him and all of a sudden I go to LeeAnn and be like, "Hey look. I had her read a chapter to me, and it's kinda rough. She really is struggling reading. I'm not sure how much she's actually getting." We're one of the filters to find out if we can go into that special ed classroom. Some of the stats that we do have, like I said, we have about 75 kids just in the 9th and 10th grade program, which is about 12 percent or so of those two classes. Out of the regular ed population, we have probably about 600 or so 9th and 10th graders, I would say somewhere around that. So it's a good group. One of the nice things about the program is a lot of the people that we do service are the kids that are really not gonna get identified in any way. And they're gonna just kinda slip through the cracks. It's kinda nice that we can actually see them and try to help them and save some of them. Like we said, a lot of them, I mean, throughout the years, I think ... I said this is my 11th year. I can think of three different kids that actually didn't graduate high school. And we've seen a lot of kids that were struggling. So to only have three out of all those kids is pretty darn good for us so far. This year, like we said, just this year for 9th and 10th grade, we've had nine kids, out of the 75 that we've seen, get identified for special ed. Now, some of those came from the district and got moved on through the district. But a lot of them came from out of district. We've had a couple kids that are coming from different city schools or different areas and, like we said, some of the transient population. And you can tell, within a couple weeks working with them, that there's obviously something that we need to help them more. Something that I can do is just not enough, we need to have something else other than that. Five kids we had went to our Shaler Academy. I guess we can plug them a little bit.

>> Sure.

>> All right. We'll plug them a little bit. The Shaler Academy, it's actually like our own little, I guess I'll go with our own little cyber-school. More or less.

>> Yeah. It's a hybrid school. It's a hybrid.

>> Hey, come on.

>> I'll talk about it. So the Shaler Academy is a blended school environment. They have an adjusted day to their schedule. We bring them in at the end of third period. So their school day goes from 9:20 until the end of the day. Their core classes and health and phys ed are in a self-contained classroom. So the students stay within the same two joint classrooms. The core content teachers filter into the classroom. It services mostly our students that have extreme anxiety or school avoidance issues. It's capped at 20 students. And it is a blended-school environment because two of our classes, it's really teacher preference, math and ... Well, social studies is only a little bit blended, are online-based curriculum. And there's a teacher in there to help facilitate that. But English and science are very hands-on instruction by the teacher. And then the students leave after sixth period, after seventh period, and they do eighth and ninth period in electives outside. So we have had a few students who were in the Bridge. We maybe amped it up, gave them two periods of Bridge, still they were not having success, still they were not

coming to school. What are we going to do? Well, let's go ahead and refer them to the Academy. Maybe they need that even more supportive environment to be successful. And they have been more successful in that environment.

>> So the Academy is a step below special ed program but more support than the Bridge Program.

>> Correct.

>> Yeah.

>> It's much more support than the Bridge.

>> 'Cause they're maintaining just one class the whole time. Like, my kids, they're all regular ed kids, they're all out in the world. These kids are all contained.

>> I do have one other thing to say. And it's really not for the ... The Academy, also, is not ... We don't service a lot of special education students in that program because we don't have a full-time special ed teacher staffed in there. We have a special ed teacher who's in there two periods of the day, only. But because some of the work is online and it's a little bit more self-motivated, the students that need that really intensive academic support aren't quite as successful. We do have some emotional support students who are in there, who are kinda just more anxious. And it's that that's preventing them from coming to school. And they don't need so much of the academic support, more the emotional support.

>> [INAUDIBLE] there are a lot of 504s in the Academy.

>> Yes, we do service a lot of our 504 students in the Academy.

>> In the Bridge.

>> And in the Bridge.

>> We have a few of those, more than a few. Just a couple things from experience. We left some time because we really want you guys to ask us questions because we think this works, and we really want you guys to ask and really supplement this into your own programs. But one thing I do wanna say because, like I said, this is my 11th year doing this. When I first started doing this. When I first started doing this, it was really hard for me to have kids that just didn't succeed right away. I just wanna let you know, please give them time. Take the little successes. Sometimes you may have a kid that's failing four classes, and guess what, he passed one. Hey, that's a win, man. Take it, go do whatever you want. Take that and run with it for as much as you can because, yeah, it's gonna make you feel better. But, I'll tell you what, for the kid that's finally passing a class, dude, he thinks he's on top of the world at that point. I mean, he just passed a regular class in high school. He had no extra help needed. And that's where he was. So just make sure you do that. So I guess that's one of the big things I wanted to say. Just it's not, like, we always joke around ... Yeah, we always joke around and say, "I don't have the magic wand." Like, I don't just sit there and be like, "All right. You now turn your homework in." All right? They actually have to put through the effort. But just give them time. Be patient with it.

>> Great.

>> Sound good?

>> Yeah. So does anybody have any questions?

>> So you have two teachers in the room at the same time.

>> Mm-hmm. Sometimes we do have two teachers in the room, yeah, plus the aide.

>> Oh. But still only 10 kids, five or six is ...

>> Oh, no, no, no. Per teacher.

>> Per teacher, yeah.

>> There's about 1,500 kids in your high school?

>> Correct.

>> Yeah.

>> Do you happen to know your graduation rate, just generally?

>> I have it in my notes for my next presentation.

>> I think it's ... You can tell me what it is?

>> It's high.

>> I think it's 89 percent.

>> Yeah, it's 89.

>> I think it's 89.

>> And that's for kids that start from the beginning of ninth grade and go ahead all the way to senior year.

>> Thankfully, I know it's on the last page of my next presentation. Our graduation rate is 89 percent. And our SPP score is 80.7, which puts in the top 25 percent of schools in Pennsylvania.

>> Woo-hoo.

>> Woo. Yes?

>> Is the Bridge class, does that take the place of an elective?

>> Correct.

>> Yeah.

>> It's an elective credit.

>> They actually do get an elective credit for it.

>> Yeah.

>> Yes. And we have it broken up into semesters because some students are only in it for a semester. We also are flexible. Some students have a full schedule, and they're taking a science with a lab. And they only have a 3-day-a-week study hall. And they love their band class. And they don't wanna drop out of band. And they love their foreign language. And they don't wanna drop out of foreign language. Although, most of our kids are not in foreign language because if you're failing all of your core classes, we do not need to be adding foreign language on top of it right now. But if they're ... Or if they go to Beattie, that's our career and technical center that we are associated with, so if they wanna go to Beattie and they have a lab, they only have three periods a week to work with, then we will put them in the Bridge only three periods a week. We don't find it to be quite as successful, but it's better than nothing.

>> Yeah.

>> And does your high school schedule [INAUDIBLE] so they get an elective credit for this. But can get they ... How many elective credit can they get in a year?

>> Well, we have four regular credits, four or five depending on the year. Once they hit 10th grade, their science level ends up taking two classes. So we have five spots for that, a lunch, which would make it six. So technically they could have about ...

>> Health and phys ed.

>> Yeah, oh, then health and phys ed. So there are about two to three class periods or electives that they could probably get. Yes?

>> Me being a school psychologist in high school ...

>> Gotcha.

>> Do you have a lot of kids that, they don't qualify for special ed, they're in the 80, 85 IQ kinda kids, where, you know, they're just slow at getting things.

>> We have many, yeah. And another thing that helps with that, and once again I'm gonna go back to the teachers on this, they've been really flexible with kids like that. But, I mean, they're low-IQ kids that are gonna struggle no matter where you put them. The teachers have been very accommodating, like giving extended time for those different things. Oh, I didn't talk about any of that stuff. I guess that's a lot of the stuff ... Do we have a little bit? Okay. So we'll work with the teachers and if kids need a little extra time, they'll come down work with me. And a lot of those kids that you're talking about is gonna be who gets the extra time and stuff like that.

>> And do you have anything like this in the elementary and middle ... I think of, you know, we identify kids in high school for learning disability. I think, "Okay, why haven't they done that earlier?"

>> About that, I started off in the middle school. That's where I ... When I started working, I had the program running in the middle school. My middle school principal at that time, Mrs. Fauter. She is now an elementary teacher. She wants me to do this in elementary ... principal, yes. She wants me to come down and do this in the elementary building.

>> So you're identifying kids for potential ...

>> Oh, I think it's a fantastic idea. I think it's something definitely should ... I should definitely not run that program. I do not believe that I would be capable of doing that. But, yes, we've talked about this for a while now, that we think that this is something that should be from start to finish.

>> Anybody else? Mm-hmm?

>> And you also have alternative ed program?

>> No. This used to be our alternative. It started out as alternative ed, but we've morphed it into the Bridge Program because we would sometimes call parents and say, "We'd like to refer Johnny to the alt ed program." "I don't want him in a room with a bunch of bad kids." That's what they'd always say to me. It's not a bunch of bad kids. Plus, he's already in a room with those bad kids in all his other classes, so why does it make a difference, you know? Well, they didn't like it. So we talked about it. And we came up with the Bridge name because, again, we're bridging a lot of things. We're bridging the gap between what's happening in the core classes and then getting support in study hall. But we're also bridging that connection between home by having more parent contact.

>> And your PBIS logo is a bridge.

>> And, yes. Our PBIS logo is a bridge because we're all about bridging. And it also leads a lot of jokes. You know, people get thrown off the bridge, all kinds of stuff is happening.

>> So you don't have any behavioral [INAUDIBLE].

>> We still get a lot.

>> Oh, yeah. I mean, our kids have a lot of discipline write-ups in the Bridge Program, but I will say that ... We will talk about with students, when they wanna come into the Bridge Program. So, for example, if we have a student who's referred to SAP, and they are using drugs, and they're openly admitting that they're smoking marijuana, you know, a couple of times a week or whatever, we will discuss all of the needs with the parents. And we will be very clear to them to say, "You know, if John's still gonna be smoking five times a week, it doesn't really matter how much we're supporting him here in school. This behavior is gonna have to change too. So do we have your buy-in to get involved with some treatment? Can we refer you to the treatment piece that we have to offer here as well?" And usually we can convince the kids, you know, they need to be able to help your whole person. So we do have students that have behavior concerns, but we're addressing them on the other side of the spectrum. And we also, because we're developing this relationship with the teachers and the other staff members, they feel more comfortable to come to us before a problem escalates to where it can't be resolved.

>> On that same note, we do still have kids that are, I'm assuming, exactly the kids that you're talking about. We still go through that. I'm gonna say one of my faults is I have trouble saying no, which is mainly the reason why I'm standing here in front of a camera doing this. But we never say no to any kid that needs the help. Now, they may not last long, you know what I mean? They may go through the process. They may not be doing anything that we ask them for. But at least we can say we tried.

>> How do you handle grading a student if you terminate them?

>> Well, once we get through with them and they're no longer a part of us, we treat that just as if they dropped any elective course. If any student drops an elective course at the high school, they do take the F.

>> But that's part of the reason that we have broken into semester grades. So it's a half of a credit for the first semester and half a credit for the second semester. So you only lose half of a credit as opposed to a full credit. Yes?

>> [INAUDIBLE] in the beginning you said that what you're offering here, which is really great support for students, is better than what is actually ...

>> I knew that was gonna come back to bite me.

>> [INAUDIBLE]. Why is that the case?

>> I can tell you exactly why it's the case. So she's asking why this support is better than what our special education teachers are offering in their study skills class ...

>> Oh, that's touchy.

>> And that ... No, it is touchy. But that goes right back to what Bill was saying at the beginning about how a part-time Bridge teacher isn't going to work because our special ed teachers have to teach five periods a day, so they're making lesson plans. And our special ed teachers aren't necessarily planning one lesson for all five classes. They're sometimes planning two or three lessons for a day. So they're doing all that lesson planning. They're doing all that instruction. And then they have their study skills class, which is their 42 minutes a day to connect with the kids. And then they have their prep period and their lunch period. So they don't have quite the flexibility. I think one of the take-homes is the reason the program works so well is because both of our teachers are in the same classroom and because they have the classroom aide. So even in a class period where Bill is teaching, he can say to Mr. Klinefelter, "Keep an eye on my kiddos, I've gotta run up and talk to Mr. Williams about so-and-so's research paper. I'll be right back." And he can leave the classroom for 2 minutes. And he can run up and talk with Mr. Williams so that he can come right back and give that kid direct feedback from the teacher. Our special education teachers, the way it's set up right now, can't do that because they're instructing. So they can't leave their instructional periods to go talk to other teachers. I mean, so it's just the way they're ... So when I say we're changing it, and I don't even know that I'm allowed to talk about this, but my recommendation, this is all I'm gonna say, my recommendation to our director of special education is that we should just have a special education teacher who has study skills classes. That's their only job is to have a study skills class, just the same way Mr. Ament's only job is to have a study skills class. And their only responsibility is to monitor these 50 kids or whatever because then they can go out and talk to

the regular ed teachers and they can really have time to talk to their special education students too and give them direct feedback.

>> You have the structure in place, you know, now you just ...

>> Oh, we know. We're fighting that battle.

>> You're right.

>> We got it.

>> I mean, listen, we're making progress. We are moving in the right direction but, you know, sometimes you gotta be squeaky for a few years before people listen.

>> Yes? Yeah, go ahead.

>> Oh, I'm sorry.

>> That's all right.

>> You mentioned grading the [INAUDIBLE] when they use the planner and with their homework and such. Looking back to your program description, do you also have a curriculum you use where you're teaching life skills or leadership skills or career, goal skills.

>> We do have a syllabus at the beginning of the year, and it explains all the different things. It's a rubric that we have. On the rubric it explains how we grade each of the agendas and whatnot.

>> But is there a specific curriculum you use or have ...

>> Oh.

>> [INAUDIBLE] to teach those skills?

>> Not really, no. The curriculum that we use is actually the teachers that we have. Each period, I have no idea what I'm going to do when the kids walk in. They'll come in and one day I'm teaching algebra two, the next kid I go to, I'm reading "Romeo and Juliet." And then I'm trying to figure out some type of biology after that. So it's fun 'cause it's random, I guess, is pretty much what it comes down to. I mean, I started off trying to be a math teacher. I got to calc four, and my head exploded. So I had ended up doing English 'cause that's what I liked. So in retrospect this is, kinda, I guess, what I've been trying to do for a long time. Anyone else?

>> It sounds like you're meeting the students where they need the help, you know what I mean?

>> Yeah.

>> It's not like you set up a program and ... It's like you're developing a program to meet them where they sit.

>> Oh, yes definitely. I mean, flexibility is probably big thing number one, I guess is probably what it has to be. Well, I mean, everyone knows here, I mean, not all students are the same. I mean, everyone's different. And you can have to be strict with one kid one second and be the father figure to another one the next second. Anybody else?

>> Well, thank you for your time.

>> Thank you very much. Also, before we go ... Hey, if anybody wants any of this information, my e-mail is right up there: amentb@sasd.k12.pa.us. I can give you guys any of the forms, anything that we've already had, the rubrics, any of those things. Just shoot me off an e-mail. I'm pretty good at responding to e-mail. I have it up all the time because of teachers mostly. But if there's anything we can do to help, any questions, if you think of anything else, please feel free to send us an e-mail and I'll get back to you as soon as I can. Oh, yeah, sure.

>> I [INAUDIBLE] so I pretty much do this.

>> I feel you.

>> But how did you get all of the teachers in the building on board to let you know what's going on? Were you getting [INAUDIBLE] ...

>> I am very persistent. I literally have an e-mail list that I just click out right away. And I think that they've realized that us working with the kids is gonna make their job easier, so 95 percent of them have been more than willing to help us out.

>> I think that is definitely the case. Whenever we enter a student into the Bridge Program, we'll send out an e-mail to all of that student's teachers and we'll just say, "So-and-so is going to be now working with Mr. Ament on the Bridge." And I think it's a huge sense of relief to those teachers because now they have a place to go to get extra support for themselves to help that student, but, also, they have a place to send Johnny whenever he's cutting up in the middle of whatever, you know, "Why don't you just go see Mr. Ament." You know, so it really is a help for the teachers as well. And it didn't happen immediately, but they've really seen the success. I mean, part of the problem that I sometimes have is that I will have a parent call me and say, "Hey, Mr. Yeckel suggested that I call you about getting my kid on the Bridge Program." I'm like, "Oh, did Mr. Yeckel tell you about the Bridge Program," because once a parent knows about a support, how am I supposed to say, "Your kid can't be in it"? I can't. But that goes back to the whole ... So I'm trying to train my teachers to say ... If you think the kid could benefit from the Bridge, tell me, but just say to the parent, "I'd like to refer your child to our SAP program. I think they have some supports that could really be helpful to your kid." And then we can go through the process that way 'cause really it could be one of those kids who's getting all Cs and one D, and we've got other levels of intervention that would be more appropriate for them. Great, thank you. Have a good afternoon.

>> Sweet, thanks, guys.