School of the Year

The Bridge Alternative High School

Brighton Area Schools

Brighton, Michigan

A passion for working with students in alternative education is clearly evident in the nomination of The Bridge for MAEO’s 2016 School of the Year prepared by Principal Colleen Deaven. It is also clearly evident that The Bridge “gets it; they understand what it takes to reach students in alternative education and they implement it. “The Bridge helps students to feel safe and supported, not only academically, but emotionally and socially as well. The support comes in many forms.”

Academically, The Bridge offers many options. Among them are differentiated instruction, technology integration into the curriculum, an academic literacy class for all students in their first year at the school to “shore up their skills”, formative assessments, incentives for attendance and academic achievement, requirements aligned with the Michigan Merit Curriculum designed to help students become college and/or work ready upon graduation, and the list goes on.

Socio-emotionally, The Bridge offers small in-person classes with “caring, dedicated, highly qualified teachers”, positive intervention behavior support, the use of restorative justice practices in place of punitive measures, a full time social worker on staff as well as two part time social workers, qand the list goes on. The Bridge makes concentrated efforts toward addressing the needs of their students. “A counselor from Key Development, a licensed substance abuse prevention and treatment provider, comes once a week to provide groups for struggling students.”

Rather unique to The Bridge, especially in terms of alternative education programs in these economic times, The Bridge offers also art classes. Art Teacher, Jake VanNote “has entered student art work in the Homelessness Awareness Week Exhibit for the last two years and The Bridge artists have won top honors both years, including first place and honorable mention.”

The general feeling of being in a safe and caring place and the pride associated with attending The Bridge is obvious in the student comments to support the nomination of their school for the 2016 MAEO School of the Year. Clarissa commented, “I love that there is more one-on-one help here and everyone is a lot closer. It is a whole different experience from the traditional school.” Jeff added, “At The Bridge it’s just a friendlier environment so kids are more comfortable. Never in my academic career have I met a staff that wants you to graduate as bad as you want to and actually HELPS you to achieve that goal!”

In her letter of support Assistant Superintendent Laura Surrey also added her high praise for accomplishments of the staff at The Bridge, “Brighton Area Schools is proud of the work of The Bridge’s staff and students. They have become a shining star in the district and the community of Brighton. It is with pride and gratitude that we support The Bridge’s receipt of the honor of being 2016 MAEO Alternative School of the Year.”

CONGRATULATIONS to The Bridge Alternative High School!