



# BRIDGER CHARTER ACADEMY

*Proficiency-Based Learning Program*

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## BCA Student Handbook 2022-2023

Bozeman High School's core purpose is *to inspire students to thrive at school and throughout life*. As a program within the high school, Bridger Charter Academy endeavors to create *a student-centered learning approach* with the same core purpose.

### Bridger Charter Academy Mission Statement

To ensure academic, personal, and social growth of every learner by providing personalized pathways to rigorous standards and opportunities for learning that extend beyond the walls of the school.

### Bridger Shared Vision

In the Bridger community and in life, Bridger students empower themselves through strong character, genuine learning, and hard work.

### BCA Core Beliefs

- All students can learn and thrive.
- Students may need a different approach to attain the academic, social, and emotional skills necessary for their success.
- Proficiency in rigorous academic standards and cognitive skills is necessary for great success.
- Learning is an active collaboration between students, teachers, families, and community.
- Learning is a lifelong process with intrinsic value and relevance to all life experiences.
- We have a responsibility to our community to be the best we can be.
- Students learn best in a respectful, stable, inclusive, and flexible environment.
- Any student who is in trouble or crisis needs our help and support in continuing to work toward success.
- The individual and group are responsible for providing community service for the betterment of all.

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## BCA Program Overview

Bridger Charter Academy is an alternative program that operates within Bozeman High School. The program offers core (and some elective) course credit through proficiency-based instruction in a smaller learning community. BCA is not an online program. Students attend both BCA and BHS to meet graduation requirements.

## Key Program Features

### I. Proficiency-Based Education

Bridger offers a proficiency-based pathway to graduation. We have teamed up with the national Summit Learning program for our learning management system and proficiency-based teaching philosophies. Components include:

- **Rigorous Standards.** Courses have the same rigor and goals as BHS/GHS, but we assess students based on the specific content and cognitive skills for a course, rather than grades per assignment, quiz, etc.
- **Project-Based Learning.** Courses are project-based, with room for student voice, choice, and differing needs. Course design emphasizes quality over quantity; that means finishing and/or revising every project or test.
- **No Ds or Fs, but Incompletes.** If a student does not master all skills by the end of the semester, they will have an “I” (incomplete) on their transcripts until they do so. The “I” does not impact their GPA until it becomes a letter grade.
- **Differing Paces.** Students sometimes need less or more time depending on the skill. Teachers help students develop self-directional skills to manage their time based on educational needs. If a student already has strong skills or previous knowledge, they can demonstrate proficiency and move more quickly. That means a student can even finish a course before the end of a semester or make up missing credits, if they have the drive to do so.

### II. Climate & Culture

#### A. Community Environment

BCA community works to create a safe, supportive, engaging and healthy school environment that promotes collegial relationships among students, parents/guardians, and staff. As a program, we focus on developing students' self-awareness, independence, and habits for success by striving to offer:

- small class sizes (15:1 student-teacher goal ratio)
- a school counseling program that supports social/emotional, academic, and career-planning programs;
- a mentoring program focused on behavior, social, emotional, and career readiness competencies;
- BCA community activities and events;
- trauma-informed prevention and intervention strategies;
- positive rather than punitive approaches to behavior management; and
- family outreach.

#### B. Community Expectations

BCA staff and students follow all BHS rules and policies, as outlined in the larger BHS Student/Parent Handbook (available on BSD7 website).

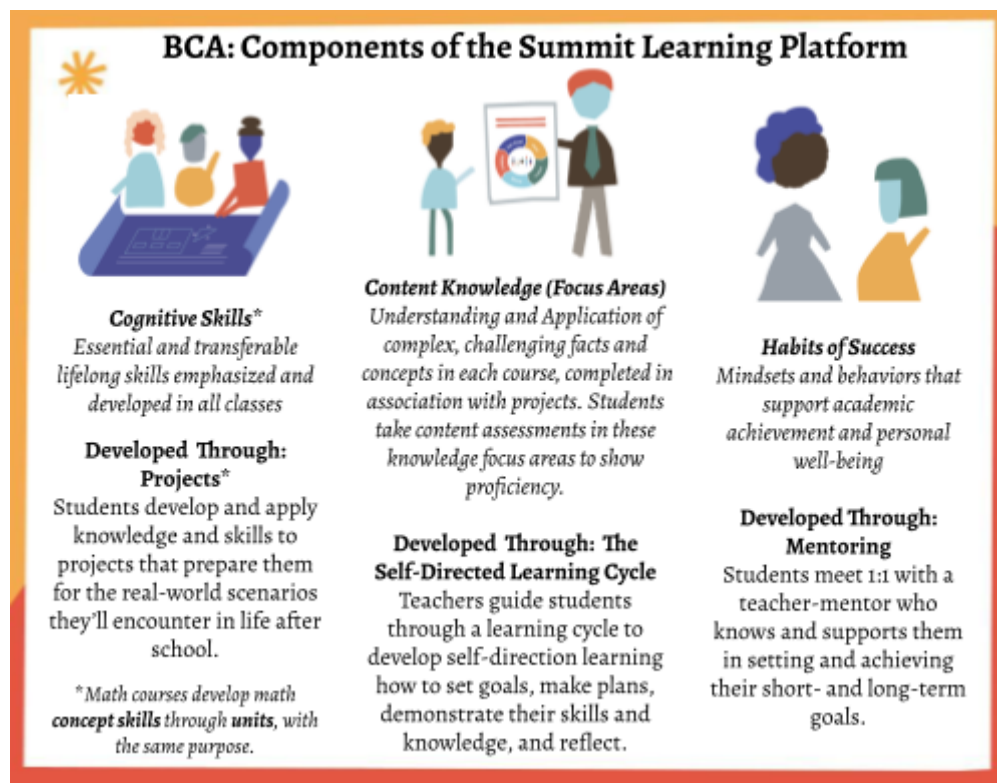
The Bridger community asks students to hold themselves to the following expectations, in support of all other habits of success: Be kind, be honest, be safe, be respectful, be responsible, and be resilient.



### III. Bridger & The Summit Learning Platform

In order to facilitate their personalized approach to learning, BCA courses use the Summit Learning Platform ([www.summitlearning.org](http://www.summitlearning.org)). The platform supports classroom instruction, differentiation, transparent grading and feedback, and collaboration between teachers and students. BCA is not an online school; rather, we use technology to support personalized, proficiency-based education. Students (and their parents/guardians) will have access to the platform.

#### A. Platform Components



The Summit Learning Platform supports the 3 components essential to the learning emphasized in BCA classes:

- **Cognitive Skills**, which are developed and assessed through **projects**,
- **Content Knowledge**, which is developed and assessed through **focus areas**, in conjunction with the **Self-Directed Learning Cycle**
- **Habits of Success**, which are applied in coursework and developed through **mentoring**.

#### B. Self-Directed Learning

Emphasized during self-directed learning time in class, when students choose their path of learning, particularly with content knowledge (focus areas), the SDL Cycle (shown right) includes the following: reflect, set a goal, make a plan, learn, show evidence of that learning, and continue the cycle for continued knowledge development.



## C. Benefits of Mentoring & Developing Habits of Success

In mentoring, **teachers:**

- meet with each mentee individually at least once, for about 10 minutes, every two weeks;
- aim to be a trusted figure with whom a mentee is ready to reflect and share;
- help hold students accountable with deadlines and outside world expectations;
- provide scaffolds for habits of success until mentees are ready to build their own systems.

In mentoring, **students:**

- prepare for their weekly check-ins by responding to the prompts their mentors share and by reflecting on how they met or struggled to meet their goals;
- come to the check-in ready to connect with their mentor so that they are comfortable sharing what is supporting their success and what is causing any gaps;
- remain open to feedback and challenges presented to them in order to, over time, internalize the structures of mentoring and build habits of mind into their own systems of goal-setting and problem solving.



## BCA Program Admission

### I. Program Availability

All high-school-age students in the Bozeman community are welcome to attend BCA. However, space is limited. Students will be registered for BCA courses based on order of student request and seat availability.

In order to maintain the learning community spirit, students must be enrolled in a minimum of two BCA core classes to be considered official members of the BCA program, and to thus be eligible for its additional program components, such as mentoring. Junior year, the American Studies combo course counts as two core courses.

## II. Student Fit

BCA is a strong fit for students seeking:

- A small learning community within a larger high school (15:1 student/teacher class ratio)
- A focus on academic, personal, and social-emotional growth
- Strong, positive teacher/student and student/student relationships
- A desire to develop self-motivation and habits for success in a supported but self-driven work environment
- Progression through coursework based on proficiency, not time

Students do best in Bridger when they want to become independent, self-disciplined learners: you want to set goals, make plans, and reach new academic heights, or push yourself to change strategies when what you're doing isn't working. However, students do better in traditional classes when they prefer or learn best with explicit teacher-led instruction, mandates on time usage, or strict deadlines.

## III. GHS Transfer Information

If you are an interested GHS student, please read and agree to the following:

1. If your admission to Bridger requires a transfer from the GHS district, you must first fill out the [BCA Interest Form for GHS Students](#). This form is a required first step. Please fill it out as soon as possible if you are interested in BCA. You do not have to be certain of your interest before completing the form. You will need to log in with your BSD7students account to complete the form.
2. To transfer to BCA/BHS, you are required to enroll in at least two core courses with BCA.
3. Please read and agree to all statements written below (part IV: Bridger Student Agreement).
4. If you decide after transfer that BCA is not for you, you will return to your attendance school, GHS. You may choose to request a new [transfer application](#) to stay at BHS.

## IV. Bridger Student Agreement

If a student wishes to attend Bridger Charter, they agree to comply with all components of the BCA program outlined in this handbook, including acknowledgement of the following general statements, provided here to dispel misconceptions about Bridger and its opportunities:

- Bridger is not an online school. Attendance is expected and necessary for course credit.
- Bridger cannot currently offer a full-schedule alternative to BHS or GHS. Bridger offers mostly core courses required for graduation; other courses will be completed through BHS.
- There is no typical Bridger student. Students of all abilities, starting skill levels, interests, backgrounds, identities, individualized needs, or present/future goals are welcome.
- The Bridger community thrives on a desire for all students to become self-sufficient, intelligent, empowered humans that can do anything we put our minds to, if they remain hardworking and resilient. This program is designed for students who are interested in developing that level of responsibility and potential.
- Bridger is not an “easy credit” program. Earning grades takes grit and effort to grow. Through hard work and dedication, it's possible for students to recover deficient credit more quickly than in a traditional model.
- Students are not penalized for late work because it is not part of the standards. Simultaneously, students do not learn unless they take time to understand and revise. Self-paced means working with the class and teacher to learn together and find extra time as necessary to master skills and content. Teachers will not accept last-minute, non-proficient work for credit. Review the [BCA Timeliness Expectations](#) for more information.
- Bridger students agree to be positive contributors to the Bridger community and abide by the community expectations: be kind, be honest, be safe, be respectful, be responsible, and be resilient.



# Understanding Proficiency-Based Learning, Grading, & Earning Credit

The following information applies to all BCA courses that are in Summit. Health Enhancement is not included.

## I. Demonstrating Proficiency: Assessment & Accountability

In order to ensure Bridger graduates are college and career ready, the program implements a system of skills assessment including standardized rubrics and department and statewide assessments in order to monitor individual learner growth and achievement, evaluate the quality and efficacy of the program, and provide transparency to all stakeholders.

BCA is based on the philosophy that proficiency (see [Grade Conversion](#) chart below for definition) in rigorous standards is necessary for success. Therefore, the staff is committed to helping students demonstrate proficiency in academic standards (called “focus areas” in Summit), transferable cognitive skills, and deeper mathematical concepts. BCA courses are organized around the standards, and student performance is evaluated using those standards. Students work toward demonstrating proficiency through personalized learning time and engaging class projects.

## II. Pacing & Late Work

Students can move ahead faster with skills and concepts that they easily grasp, or slow down when the skills or concepts become more challenging. Through timely, differentiated support, students will have a customized learning experience. Simultaneously, BCA students are expected to make steady academic progress on course standards, finding extra time for coursework when they need it, so that they can take advantage of whole-class learning engagements that engender curiosity, communication, and in-depth understanding rather than just “getting it done.”

### A. BCA Student Timeliness Expectations

To encourage student proficiency and discourage procrastination, students may submit late work as old as the previous project. Work that is two projects old or older will not be accepted until Bridger Days, at the end of each semester.

- For example: When you start Project #3, you may still submit work from Project #1, but your teacher will not review it until Bridger Days, unless you are 100% current on all other work.
- Bridger Days are the last 5 days of each semester. If you are caught up on all your coursework during this time, then you earn the privilege of participating in Bridger Days activities.
- If you do not finish your work during Bridger Days, then you will not earn credit for the course, and you will receive an "I" for the semester.
- The purpose of this is to reward students who are "on pace," encourage students to submit work closer to when they learn the relevant content instead of working on overdue assignments, and offer an opportunity for teachers to provide more individual support at the end of each semester.

## III. BCA Core Courses & PowerSchool

For information regarding core BCA course grades in PowerSchool (science, math, English, and social studies), look for up-to-date grade information on Summit Learning - **not** on PowerSchool. If you need Summit Learning access, contact your student's teacher(s).

In PowerSchool, teachers will enter grades at the 6, 12, and end-of-semester marks. At the 6 and 12 week marks:

- For students who are **on pace** and have completed work required up to that point in the course, teachers will enter the up-to-date letter and percentage grade that appears in Summit Learning at that time.
- For students who are **behind pace** or missing work required up to that point in the course, teachers will enter:
  - an I (meaning “incomplete”) and a 50% for students making slow but steady progress towards work completion
  - an I (meaning “incomplete”) and a 0% for students not making any progress toward work completion and credit
- Please note that Incompletes do not impact GPA in any way. They exist only as a form of communication between

teacher, guardian, and student.

- These grades will be removed a week or two after each progress period. They should only serve as a reference, as Summit will have the most up-to-date grade information at any time.

For information on end-of-semester grades in PowerSchool, please see the [Course Completion](#) section below.

## IV. Course Completion

Students **must** proficiently complete all Power Focus Areas and Projects in the course in order to earn credit. A student cannot finish a course “early” without having first met this requirement. If a student does not meet the proficiency criteria by the end of the term, the student will receive an **incomplete** for the semester until he/she masters the remaining standards for the course. (An incomplete can be carried forward for **12** weeks, after which it becomes an F on the transcript except with extreme extenuating circumstances.)

At the **end** of each semester, students will earn credit and letter grades based on the following weighted categories:

BCA English, social studies, and science courses	BCA Math Courses
<b>Projects</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assessed through Cognitive Skills</li> <li>- worth 80% of final grade</li> </ul> <b>Power Focus Areas</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mastery shown through Content Assessments</li> <li>- worth 20% of final grade*</li> </ul>	<b>Units</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assessed through Math Concepts</li> <li>- worth 80% of final grade</li> </ul> <b>Power Focus Areas</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mastery shown through Content Assessments</li> <li>- worth 20% of final grade</li> </ul>
*Additional Focus Areas are worth 5% of this 20%, where applicable. Senior Project (Eng IV): Focus Areas are worth 10% (and projects 90%) for this capstone skills course.	

### A. Grade Conversion

Score Range % and BHS Letter Grade <i>Based on Cog Skills and Focus Area mastery</i>	Score/Grade Meaning
93-100: <b>A</b>	<b>Advanced Proficient.</b> Student demonstrates advanced, in-depth understanding of the concept/skill based on rubric or assessment.
90-92: <b>A-</b>	<b>Proficient Plus.</b> Student demonstrates mastery of concept/skill based on rubric or assessment, with some advanced application.
80-89: <b>B</b>	<b>Proficient.</b> Student demonstrates mastery of concept or skill application based on rubric or assessment.
75-79: <b>C+</b>	<b>Developing Plus.</b> Student demonstrates partial mastery of concept or skill application based on rubric or assessment.
70-74: <b>C</b>	<b>Developing.</b> Student demonstrates understanding of concept or skill but continues to work on knowledge mastery or independent application, based on rubric or assessment.
60-69: <b>D</b>	<b>Emerging.</b> The student demonstrates an understanding of foundational material with help from the teacher, but still struggles when working independently. Traditionally, a student does not receive credit in BCA with this score except when transferring out of the program.
<b>I</b> (no credit)	<b>Incomplete.</b> The student is behind pace and has not completed enough evidence to show level of proficiency in associated course standards. The student needs to catch up on overdue work as soon as possible. The incomplete serves as a placeholder for a student until they complete coursework with proficiency (in lieu of an F or withdrawal).



## BCA Course Offerings

English	Math	Science	Social Studies	Other
English I	Algebra I	Geophysical Science	World Geography	Health Enhancement
English II	Geometry	Biology	American Studies	
American Studies				
English IV				
AP English				

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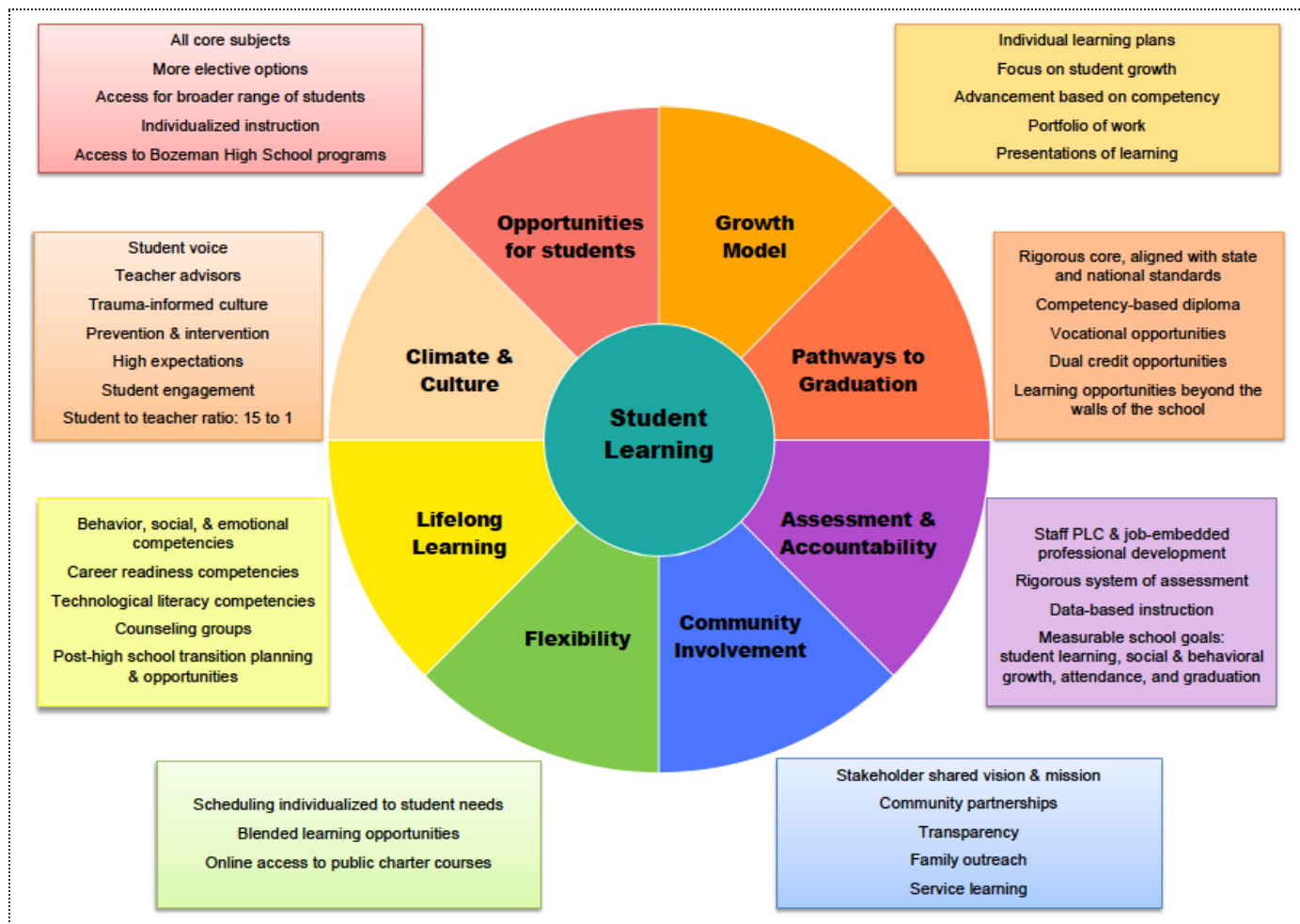
## Bridger Community Events

Additional community-building events and activities are developed as opportunities arise. However, some activities are cherished as tradition, and they contribute tangibly to the development of our Bridger community each year. These include:

- Bridger breakfast, run each Friday by different students and staff, supported by student and teacher donation
  - Community meetings, held once a month to celebrate learner success and discuss upcoming events
  - Bridger homecoming float, designed and operated by volunteer Bridger students
  - Thanksgiving dinner, made and served by Bridger students and staff, with the help of BHS's ProStart and/or other community members and stakeholders
  - Volunteer days at the elementary schools, including field day assistance and book read-aloud circles
  - Volunteer days at the Hawk's Nest, including holiday crafts and book read-aloud circles
  - Dodgeball competitions
  - Board game events
  - Bridger senior class graduation ceremony and celebration (at BHS auditorium, day prior to BHS ceremony)
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## Continuous Improvement Plan: Program Goals

The BCA staff is committed to continuous improvement of our program. The following framework represents our long-term vision for continuous improvement of the charter.



For questions, comments, or requests for more information, please visit our website for the most current contact information for program leader and counselor. Go to <https://bhs.bsd7.org/bridger-charter-academy>, or look for the link on the [BHS](#) website.

*This handbook was last updated October 2022.*