

Bridges to Academic Success

Providing educational services to newcomer students who enter US schools with limited academic skills, including low levels of literacy in their home languages.



A project of the Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society (RISLUS) and the Center for Advanced Study in Education (CASE)
The CUNY Graduate Center
365 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3300
New York, NY 10016
212.817.1853

Context & Mission

Among the larger population of adolescent English language learners (whom we term *emergent bilinguals*, following O. Garcia, 2009) are newcomers who enter New York state high schools with very limited academic skills and content knowledge. This group, which includes Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) and SIFE with Developing Literacy (SDL), is reported to have among the lowest graduation and highest drop-out rates in New York City (Advocates for Children Report, May 2010), reflecting a nation-wide trend. **Our mission is to advocate for Newcomers and SIFE by providing curriculum, resources and training to educators.**

Since 2011, the team at Bridges has worked to develop and implement a one-year, transitional program for newly-arrived 9th grade emergent bilinguals, supported with professional development (PD) training. We developed the Bridges program to better prepare SIFE and SDL for success in their regular high school classes, and to help them on the road to graduation and beyond. **Our vision is for all immigrant youth with developing literacy to thrive in school and to participate meaningfully in society.**

What We Do

In the Bridges program, we provide teachers with **an instructional model and curriculum resources** that offer an additional, accelerated, rigorous year at the beginning stages of students' secondary schooling in the U.S., rather than limiting extensions of their schooling to a time later on, when many are already discouraged and often drop out. In addition to curriculum and resources, we offer **training** on the resources to support implementation.

Bridges Impact & Accomplishments

The pilot year (2011–2012) took place in four NYC high schools, with one Bridges class in each school. In 2013–2016, we were commissioned by the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to **develop a Bridges/SIFE curriculum in ELA and Foundational Literacy**, which was posted online in summer 2016. The following year, we strengthened and revised the curriculum to better suit the needs of SDL. We also provided **extensive Bridges professional development to SIFE teachers across New York state.**

In addition to broadening our PD services to new school districts with high percentages of SIFE populations, we have also been providing **blended PD to non-Bridges teachers of SIFE**, so that they can use our methodology to reach a wider audience of students with language and literacy needs. Our current work in 2017–2018 focuses on developing, expanding, and improving our PD program. We have increased the number of PD sessions held across NYC and Long Island, and are currently developing a robust **online professional learning community program**. Additionally, we provide **custom school support solutions** and **coaching** for teachers who wish to learn more about Bridges methodology and its implementation in their classrooms.

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