



Guidelines for Using Bridges in a Fourth/Fifth Grade Blended Classroom

Bridges is designed to meet the needs of a very wide range of learners at each grade level. Concepts are taught in the context of problem solving, instruction is multi-modal, students are grouped flexibly, and assessment is ongoing. As a result, Bridges can be used quite effectively with mixed age groups. Nevertheless, in this context it can be challenging to ensure that state and district expectations are adequately met for each grade level. There are several ways to approach this issue, bearing in mind that Bridges entails 75-80 minutes a day of instruction – one hour for Bridges sessions, and 15-20 minutes for Number Corner.

Alternative Approaches

1. If there is more than one fourth/fifth grade classroom in your school, group the students by grade level for Bridges instruction and conduct Number Corner with your own mixed group. That is, have one teacher work with all the fourth graders while another works with all the fifth graders in separate classrooms for one hour per day during Bridges sessions. Then have each teacher keep his or her own mixed age group for Number Corner, using Grade Four Number Corner the first year and Grade Five Number Corner the second year to provide variety and depth over a two-year span.

Or...

2. Keep all of your own students for Bridges and Number Corner. Select and teach one level of Bridges, probably Grade Five, unless the majority of your students are fourth graders. In order to support your younger learners and adequately cover the fourth grade expectations, teach the Grade Four Number Corner in conjunction with Grade Five Bridges. The Grade Four Number Corner features a sizeable collection of support games and activities, some of which might be used during Work Places to help students of either grade level who need extra support with basic skills. You will probably want to draw resources from both the fourth and fifth grade Home Connections books to provide individualized homework.

Or...

3. If you have access to fourth and fifth grade teacher's guides, blacklines, and manipulatives, you may want to select units from both grade levels, with a somewhat heavier emphasis on the upper grade, to craft a more nuanced flow of instruction for your mixed-age group. The selection can be varied a bit from one year to the next so children who spend two years in a mixed-age setting don't do exactly the same thing both years. (See Table 1 below). In both years outlined below, the Number Corner grade level has been selected to balance the choice of units, augmenting skills instruction at the needed level, and providing variation in instruction from one year to the next. You will probably want to draw resources from both the fourth and fifth grade Home Connections books to provide individualized homework.

What about Reading Levels?

Bridges is not a workbook-based program. Many of the print materials for fourth and fifth grade students, including activity and game record sheets, assessments, and overheads are used in whole-group settings or with the support of an adult. While third through fifth graders work more independently each year, student blacklines are generally used to reinforce and extend thinking rather than introduce new concepts.

Lexile scores for Grades 4 and 5 are summarized in Table 2 below. The Bridges blacklines score relatively high compared to Lexile measures for typical texts at fourth and fifth grade. However, students use most of these sheets after the activities have been introduced to the class. Also,



many pages are record sheets that are repeated several times or more in a single month or over several months.

Additional Support

For personalized advice about using Bridges to meet the needs of the students in your blended/multi-age situation, contact one of our curriculum specialists at MLCsupport@mathlearningcenter.org or 800-575-8130.

TABLE 1: Bridges Instruction for a Fourth/Fifth Grade Blend over a Two-Year Period

YEAR ONE		YEAR TWO	
Grade 5 Number Corner		Grade 4 Number Corner	
Bridges Unit & Grade Level	Sessions	Bridges Unit & Grade Level	Sessions
Grade 4, Unit 1: Multiplication & Division Models	21 Sessions	Grade 4, Unit 2: Place Value & Multiplication with Larger Numbers	21 Sessions
Grade 4, Unit 2: Place Value & Multiplication with Larger Numbers	21 Sessions	Grade 5, Unit 2: Seeing & Understanding Multi-Digit Multiplication & Division	21 Sessions
Grade 5, Unit 3: Geometry & Measurement	22 Sessions	Grade 4, Unit 4: Geometry & Measurement	21 Sessions
Grade 5, Unit 2: Seeing & Understanding Multi-Digit Multiplication & Division	21 Sessions	Grade 5, Unit 4: Multiplication, Division & Fractions	23 Sessions
Grade 5, Unit 4: Multiplication, Division & Fractions	23 Sessions	Grade 5, Unit 5: Probability & Data Analysis	19 Sessions
Grade 4, Unit 5: Probability & Data Analysis	18 Sessions	Grade 5, Unit 6: Fractions & Decimals	19 Sessions
Grade 5, Unit 6 Fractions, Decimals & Percents	19 Sessions	Grade 5, Unit 7: Algebraic Thinking	16 Sessions
Grade 4, Unit 8: Wingspans	19 Sessions	Grade 5, Unit 8: Spinning Tops	12 Sessions
Session Total	164 Sessions	Session Total	152 Sessions

TABLE 2: Estimate of Bridges Reading Level

Bridges Component Title	Bridges Lexile Measure	Interquartile Measures
Grade 4 Number Corner Student Book Blacklines	780L	650L to 850L
Grade 4 Bridges Student Book Blacklines	820L	650L to 850L
Grade 4 Work Place Student Book Blacklines	880L	650L to 850L
Grade 5 Number Corner Student Book Blacklines	840L	750L to 950L
Grade 5 Bridges Student Book Blacklines	850L	750L to 950L
Grade 5 Work Place Student Book Blacklines	940L	750L to 950L

