



Guidelines for Using Bridges in a Kindergarten/First 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 adequately meet the needs of kindergartners and first-graders in the same classroom because of differences in school experience and developmental level. In fact, it's not unusual to see these differences reflected in the fact that the kindergartners may attend school only half the day, leaving the teacher with a smaller group of first graders for the other half. On the other hand, you may have all the children full-day. You'll find suggestions for both situations below. No matter what your schedule, you will want access to Kindergarten and Grade One Bridges and Number Corner teacher's guides, blacklines, Work Places, and manipulatives.

Half-Day Kindergarten/Full-Day First Grade

Do the Grade One Number Corner for 15-20 minutes a day with all your students during the time the kindergartners are with you. You may want to reserve some of the longer and more complex Number Corner games, especially those that involve student record sheets for use with first graders only.

Have all students participate in Work Places 2-3 days a week. Begin the school year with the Work Places from Grade One, Unit 1. As you move into Unit 2 and start introducing Work Places that involve addition and subtraction, offer some of the kindergarten counting Work Places (Which Bug Will Win, Beat You to Ten, Count & Compare Butterflies, Count & Compare Pennies) as needed to support your younger learners.

We find the biggest difference between kindergartners and first graders is usually in the strategies they use to count, compare, and compute. Many kindergartners count each item one by one, starting from 1, no matter what the task. Many first graders, on the other hand, begin to count on, count backwards, count in chunks of twos, fives, and tens, and use number facts they have memorized, such as doubles, to perform other computations. Watch carefully for students at both grade levels transitioning into more sophisticated strategies as they visit Work Places and share their thinking during Number Corner. That information alone will help you in selecting the Work Places and whole group lessons you need to support all of the children.

Full-Day Kindergarten and First Grade

If you have both groups of children for a full day and there is more than one K/1 blend in your school, you might have students from both classrooms, both grade levels, meet in a central area 2-3 days a week for half an hour of Work Places. Then you might split the children by grade level for whole group instruction. That is, have one teacher work with all the kindergartners while another works with all the first graders in separate classrooms for 30-45 minutes a day, drawing from grade specific Number Corner workouts and Bridges sessions, and possibly for kindergartners, extended time with Work Places.

What about Reading Levels?

Bridges is not a workbook-based program. All print materials for kindergartners and first graders, including game and activity record sheets, assessments, overheads, and Home Connections are used in whole-group settings or with the support of an adult. The closest thing to a student workbook at either grade level is the Number Corner Student Book for first graders. Because the written instructions in the Grade One Number Corner Student Book are intended to be read by an adult rather than students, this book was not assigned a Lexile measure.



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.