

## Handout 1 Challenges & Solutions

The suggested solutions and tips on this handout come from veteran Bridges teachers and math leaders. Supplement these suggestions with ideas of your own and with the more detailed information in your Getting Started Guide. If you'd like more help, email [MLCsupport@mathlearningcenter.org](mailto:MLCsupport@mathlearningcenter.org), and be sure to include as much information as possible, including the grade level of Bridges you are teaching.

<b>MATERIALS MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>I'm having trouble keeping my manipulatives organized.</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take time to organize your materials at the beginning of the year.</li> <li>• Use good quality plastic bags with good zippers (not the kind with sliders, which fall off) to hold manipulatives (e.g., a bag of pattern blocks for each pair of students).</li> <li>• If you have toolkits (grades 3–5), put a label with an inventory list for the kit on the lid of each box. Have students use these inventory lists to keep manipulatives organized.</li> <li>• If you don't have toolkits, sort manipulatives into separate labeled containers (e.g., a bin for pattern blocks in which you store re-sealable plastic bags that each contain a set of pattern blocks for a pair of students).</li> <li>• Make students responsible for putting away manipulatives and keeping them tidy.</li> <li>• Assign volunteers and classroom assistants to organize manipulatives periodically. Ask students who come in early or stay late to help you keep materials clean and organized.</li> <li>• Designate a location in your classroom for stray manipulatives. Every once in a while, take time as a class to put these lost manipulatives away.</li> </ul>
	<b>I'm spending too much time running photocopies.</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Run the copies for a unit or month of Number Corner all at once. <i>Use the Sharing Responsibilities sheets in the Implementation Guides to divide the work with your grade-level team.</i></li> <li>• Find out whether your district copy center can run large batches of photocopies for you and your colleagues.</li> <li>• Find out whether your school or district can purchase the student books (e.g., Student Journals, Bridges Student Books, Number Corner Student Books). This will greatly reduce the number of copies you have to run.</li> <li>• Ask volunteers or classroom assistants to help with the photocopying.</li> <li>• Use hanging and file folders to set up an organizational system for storing and retrieving all these copies. <i>See the Organizing Your Photocopies sheet in the first Implementation Guide for specific suggestions.</i></li> </ul>
<b>PACING</b>	<b>I'm getting behind in the sessions.</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a calendar to map out specific target dates for beginning and ending each unit.</li> <li>• Note that sessions are often grouped by theme in sequences of three to five sessions. When you read a unit, look for these groups of sessions and see if you can work through them more quickly.</li> <li>• If you have to skip a session, look for individual sessions that don't seem as connected to the other sessions. Your Teachers Guide or Getting Started Guide might also specify which sessions you can leave out in each unit.</li> </ul>

<b>PACING, CONT'D.</b>	<b>When it's time to move on to another session or unit, some students still don't seem to "get it."</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trust that although students do not achieve mastery at the same time, they will have repeated opportunities to master and extend the topics addressed in each unit. A given unit is rarely students' one and only chance to master a particular concept or skill.</li> <li>• You can provide extra practice for students who seem to be struggling by pairing them with volunteers or classroom assistants who can play Work Place games or Support games with them.</li> <li>• Refer to the Skills Across the Grade Levels charts to see which skills should be mastered in a given unit. These charts may also reassure you that a given topic is merely being introduced in a unit and will be revisited for mastery and extension in later units.</li> </ul>
<b>CONCERNS ABOUT STUDENTS</b>	<b>Some students just don't seem to be connecting with the curriculum or the mathematics.</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to identify the source of the problem for each student by looking over their work carefully and talking to them. Is it a lack of confidence? Are they unaccustomed to a math program in which they have to show their work in numbers, pictures, <i>and</i> words? Are they struggling with the math? When you know why each student is struggling, you will be better able to help him or her achieve success.</li> <li>• Use Work Place time and other small-group work time to work closely one-on-one or with small groups of struggling students.</li> <li>• Use the Support Activities (included in the Number Corner for all grades except Grade 2) and Practice Pages to provide more practice for struggling students. Practice Pages for each grade level are available from <a href="http://www.mathlearningcenter.org/resources/materials/default.asp">www.mathlearningcenter.org/resources/materials/default.asp</a></li> </ul>
	<b>How can I help students master their facts?</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be sure to give students plenty of time with the Work Place games and Number Corner games, which provide most of the fact practice in the curriculum.</li> <li>• Use the Support Activities with students who are struggling. You'll find information about Support Activities in the Number Corner Teachers Guides and the game materials in the Number Corner Blacklines. (Grade 2 does not have Support Activities.) Students can use these games with an adult at school or at home.</li> <li>• Have students complete Practice Pages at school or at home. Practice Pages for each grade level are available from <a href="http://www.mathlearningcenter.org/resources/materials/default.asp">www.mathlearningcenter.org/resources/materials/default.asp</a></li> </ul>
	<b>What can I do to curb students' off-task behavior?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Handle off-task behavior during math just as you would in any other part of the day.</li> <li>• Hold students accountable by devising a system whereby any student can be called upon to participate in class discussions at any time.</li> <li>• Refer to your classroom agreements or expectations. Add to or revise them as necessary.</li> <li>• Address the source of the off-task behavior (e.g., academic struggles, turmoil at home).</li> <li>• Assign partners and small groups with care to avoid grouping students with peers they find distracting or who set them off.</li> <li>• Remind students that manipulatives are <i>tools</i>, <i>not toys</i>.</li> </ul>	

<b>WORK PLACES</b>	<b>What can I do to curb students' off-task behavior during Work Places?</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to your classroom agreements or expectations. Add to or revise them as necessary.</li> <li>• Assign partners with care to avoid grouping students with peers they find distracting or who set them off.</li> <li>• Remind students that manipulatives are <i>tools, not toys</i>.</li> <li>• Remind students that making choices during Work Place time is a privilege. If they make poor choices, you will assign them partners and Work Places to complete.</li> </ul>
<b>PARENTS</b>	<b>How can I prepare Work Place materials and keep them organized? (Grades K–3)</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You could copy and bind all of the Work Place record sheets for each student. As an alternative, keep copies of each record sheet in a manila folder or large re-sealable plastic bag in each Work Place basket or bin for students to take as needed.</li> <li>• Use the hanging folders that came in your Bridges kit. Make all the copies in advance and place them in the appropriate hanging folder with the other materials for that Work Place.</li> <li>• Develop a system in which students take out and put away the Work Place baskets or bins at the start and end of Work Place time.</li> <li>• Keep all assessment sheets related to Work Places in one binder. During Work Place time, put just the sheets you need on a clipboard and walk around the room to make observations and talk with students as needed.</li> </ul>
<b>PARENTS</b>	<b>Some students are not completing their homework (Home Connections).</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to identify and address the specific problem for each student who is not completing and/or returning his or her homework. Does the student lack support at home? Is the student doing the homework but forgetting to turn it in? Does the student need more help to stay organized?</li> <li>• Identify the most important Home Connections in a unit and run a few extra copies of them to have on hand. Then, if some students do not complete those Home Connections, you can give them some time to complete them with a volunteer, an assistant, or an older student. This can help ensure that <i>all</i> students are getting the most important pieces of practice offered in the Home Connections.</li> <li>• If the problem is widespread, consider allocating 10 or 15 minutes at the start or end of your day to homework. Give students that time to work on homework that is due the next day, or to complete homework they did not finish the night before.</li> </ul>
	<b>Some of my students' parents are critical of the Bridges curriculum.</b>
<b>PARENTS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite the parents to a conference so that you can understand and address their concerns. Parents want the best for their children and are usually reassured when they are shown evidence that the curriculum will help their child meet the mathematical goals they feel are important (e.g., mastering their facts, learning to multiply larger numbers).</li> <li>• Express your own confidence in the curriculum and its benefits for children.</li> <li>• Invite parents to observe a math class. You might recommend a specific lesson that you know will address their concerns.</li> <li>• Host a math night to provide more information about the curriculum. Have students teach their parents some games and explain what they have learned. Parents are often more receptive when the message is delivered by their children and when they can see the program in action.</li> </ul>
	<b>Some of my students' parents are critical of the Bridges curriculum.</b>