



Guidelines for Using Bridges in a Third/Fourth 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 third/fourth 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 third graders while another works with all the fourth 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 Three Number Corner the first year and Grade Four Number Corner the second year to prevent repetition over a two-year span.

Given the developmental differences between third and fourth graders, this may be the best approach. Most third graders, for instance, are still developing skills at adding and subtracting multi-digit numbers and are just being introduced to multiplication and division. Solid place value understandings are assumed in fourth grade, and students are expected to master basic multiplication and division facts and become proficient with multi-digit multiplication. Bridges reflects the developmental differences between the two grade levels to some extent, providing Work Places with greater frequency and more adult support in third than in fourth grade.

Or...

2. Keep all of your own students for Bridges and Number Corner. Select and teach one level of Bridges, probably Grade Four, unless the majority of your students are third graders. In order to support your younger learners and adequately cover the third grade expectations, teach the Grade Three Number Corner in conjunction with Grade Four Bridges. The Grade Three 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 third and fourth grade Home Connections books to provide individualized homework.

Or...

3. If you have access to third and fourth grade teacher's guides, blacklines, Work Places, and manipulatives, you may want to select units from both grade levels, with a heavier emphasis on the upper grade, to craft a more nuanced flow of instruction for your mixed-age group. The selection can be changed somewhat 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 third and fourth 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 third and fourth grade students, including activity and game record sheets, assessments, overheads, and Home Connections 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 3 and 4 are summarized in Table 2 below. The Bridges blacklines score relatively high compared to Lexile measures for typical texts at third and fourth 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 Third/Fourth Grade Blend over a Two-Year Period

YEAR ONE		YEAR TWO	
Grade 4 Number Corner		Grade 3 Number Corner	
Bridges Unit & Grade Level	Sessions	Bridges Unit & Grade Level	Sessions
Grade 3, Unit 2: Place Value Structures & Multi-Digit Computation	30 Sessions	Grade 4, Unit 1: Multiplication & Division Models	21 Sessions
Grade 4, Unit 1: Multiplication & Division Models	21 Sessions	Grade 3, Unit 5: Place Value & Computation with Larger Numbers	20 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 4, Unit 3: Fractions & Division	20 Sessions	Grade 4, Unit 3: Fractions & Division	20 Sessions
Grade 3, Unit 5: Place Value & Computation with Larger Numbers	20 Sessions	Grade 4, Unit 4: Geometry & Measurement	21 Sessions
Grade 4, Unit 6: Fractions & Decimals	22 Sessions	Grade 4, Unit 6: Fractions & Decimals	22 Sessions
Grade 3, Unit 3 Two- and Three-Dimensional Geometry	15 Sessions	Grade 4, Unit 7: Algebraic Thinking	14 Sessions
Grade 3, Unit 8: Bridges Design & Construction	15 Sessions	Grade 4, Unit 8: Wingspans	19 Sessions
Session Total	164 Sessions	Session Total	158 Sessions

**TABLE 2: Estimate of Bridges Reading Level**

Bridges Component Title	Bridges Lexile Measure	Interquartile Measures
Grade 3 Number Corner Student Book Blacklines	740L	500L to 700L
Grade 3 Work Place Student Book Blacklines	670L	500L to 700L
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