An Impressive Partnership in Teaching: Jen Pearl and Xini Wang

What are some elements that help make co-teaching work? According to Jen Pearl and Xini Wang, it takes respect, support, and a willingness to learn from colleagues. Jen and Xini have been teaching together for the Ya Ya Chinese language program since January 2011. Since then, they have developed classes geared towards young learners with a pedagogy based on a variety of teaching styles to capture the multiplicity of styles in which we all learn.

This semester, Ya Ya II students are working every week to compile information for a “virtual” trip to a Chinese city of their choice. Assignments encourage the students to research and write about foods from a region, types of transportation for getting around town, and attractions nearby. Eventually, students will create a budget for their trips and present their project to the class.

When Jen is not volunteering her time to teach for Bridges, she works as the program manager for the Global & Community Health Program through IU’s School of Health, Physical Education, and Recreation. This position offers Jen an opportunity to use her Chinese while working with visiting scholars and partners from China. Jen is inspired by the children she teaches and believes that the work she does for Bridges is key to “build[ing] positive international relations, one interaction at a time.”

Xini is working towards completion of her undergraduate degree in Education. To complete her requirements, she will teach Social Studies for four months on a Navajo Reservation in Arizona as part of the Cultural Immersion Project for student teaching at IU’s School of Education. This opportunity will give Xini more teaching experience and another chance to celebrate her language and culture with a local community.

For more information on Ya Ya classes, contact lctlproj@indiana.edu.
From STARTALK to Swahili:
Girls Inc. of Monroe County Explores the World

When you walk into Girls Inc. of Monroe County, you immediately notice the signs of creativity, playfulness, and ambition. Stay a little longer, and you come to respect the amount of attention it takes to create such a robust atmosphere in an after-school program.

This positive environment prompted Bridges founder, Naomi Spector, to ask the director of programming at Girls Inc. to host Turkish classes as part of a STARTALK grant during the summer of 2011. The grant, based on the Bridges model of providing community classes for young learners, was awarded to Bridges’ pedagogical consultant, Dr. Martha Nyikos from IU’s School of Education. In particular, it focused on pedagogical training and community advocacy for Arabic and Turkish instructors. During their summer camp, Girls Inc. was among the first sites to host Turkish classes for two different age groups.

Because of the success of Turkish classes and the enthusiasm of the participants, Bridges is now offering Swahili at Girls Inc. The language club, Twende Rafiki (Let’s go, friend), is led by Meg Arenberg and Nuhu Masay. Meg is a PhD student in Comparative Literature, focusing on Swahili literature and translation; and Nuhu has recently arrived from Tanzania to obtain a Master’s in Public Affairs from IU’s School of Public and Environmental Affairs. Meg is inspired by the energy and enthusiasm of the students at Girls Inc. and appreciates the terrific sense of community amongst them. She has noticed their eagerness to participate in activities and to practice what they learn in class with one another.

Erin Polinsky, Director of Girls Inc. of Monroe County, praises Meg and Nuhu by saying, “the [Bridges instructors] do a wonderful job of presenting information in fun and interactive ways that have our girls excited and asking if it’s Swahili day. I am happy that our partnership has continued with the Bridges program and I look forward to future collaborations.” She acknowledges the opportunity for learning and growth that the language classes present to Girls Inc. participants by broadening the exposure to another culture.

IU’s School of Education:
Making Connections with Bridges Instructors

Crucial to Bridges’ success is the ongoing professional development offered to the instructors by Bridges’ pedagogical consultant, Dr. Nyikos, Associate Professor at IU’s School of Education’s Department of Literacy, Culture and Language Education (LCLE). With direction from Dr. Nyikos, Bridges instructors have the opportunity to work with several experienced and talented language coordinators who guide them in the creation and implementation of their lesson plans. Through workshops and weekly consultation, the language coordinators teach them valuable tools to be used in a variety of community settings. Since last spring, Naoko Ozaki, doctoral candidate in LCLE, has trained over 55 IU students to meet the challenge of teaching for Bridges. This semester, Emilija Zlatkovska, who came to LCLE as an experienced teacher-trainer for UNICEF, has been able to share her practical as well as academic knowledge and offer support in every aspect of the teaching process, including on-site observations and debriefing sessions.
Reaching Out: Arabic Classes Change the Conversation

Since many of today’s young learners are not exposed to world languages and cultures, Bridges programs focus on creating positive learning experiences, building students’ confidence as they explore LCTLs. Over time, students become more comfortable in their ability to reach out and connect with people from different cultures, a key for thriving in today’s increasingly global society.

Given that LCTLs rarely find their way into school curriculum, Bridges’ flagship language program for exploratory Arabic, Alef Ba, is reaching out to older students in the community after 5-plus years instructing preschool learners. The process began during the summer of 2011, when Bridges facilitated the delivery of Arabic instruction to older elementary and middle school students through a STARTALK grant, directed by Dr. Nyikos from IU’s School of Education (also see article about Girls Inc.). This fall, Arabic classes for 4th - 6th graders continued at the Banneker Community Center’s after-school program, Banneker at the View.

Suzie Zimmerman, an experienced Alef Ba instructor for Bridges, noticed right away the different challenges in teaching the 4th-6th graders in an after-school environment. Since many of these students had not previously been exposed to world languages and cultures, Suzie and her co-instructor, Kayleigh Long, worked to build-up the students’ confidence. They accomplished this by creating a rewarding and safe environment while meeting the high-energy levels of their students. Often, students played interactive games, held competitions, and learned about the instructors’ experiences in the Middle East. On the last day of class for the Fall 2011 semester, the students learned new vocabulary and phrases related to food and were treated to homemade dishes brought in by Kayleigh Long and volunteer Mustafa al-Azdee.

Bridges continues to provide programming for toddlers and preschool children. Christina Bills and Andrew Kibellus lead weekly classes at Knee High Day Care, introducing toddlers to Arabic vocabulary and phrases through songs, play, and story time. In addition, Amal Akbik and Christina Bills lead the preschool program at Monroe County Public Library’s Play and Learn Space, now in its sixth year.

Instructors Suzie Zimmerman and Kayleigh Long await participants’ reactions as they try hummus, falafel, koshary and baklava for the first time. Volunteer Mustafa al-Azdee brought in much of the homemade food to celebrate the last day of Arabic Club this semester.

Amal Akbik, a Junior majoring in Speech Pathology, sings a song to introduce Arabic vocabulary to young learners at Monroe County Public Library’s Play and Learn Space. The class, Alef Ba, is in its sixth year.

Thanks to the support and commitment of parents, Alef Ba classes have become an exciting part of the weekend for children in Bloomington.
**Bridges:**
*Children, Languages, World*
**Fall 2011**

*Programs with asterisks are not open to the public*

**Modern Standard Arabic Program—Alef Ba**
Monroe County Public Library
Saturdays 11:00am to 12:00pm

Knee High Day Care*
Mondays 10:15 to 10:45 am

Banneker Community Center at
Fairview Elementary*
Tuesdays 5:00 to 6:00 pm

**Mandarin Chinese Program—Ya Ya**
Monroe County Public Library
Saturdays 12:00pm to 1:00pm

Center for the Study of Global Change— Ya Ya I
Saturdays 1:45 pm to 2:30 pm

Center for the Study of Global Change— Ya Ya II
Saturdays 2:45 pm to 3:45 pm

**Mongolian Program — Goyo Goyo**
contact lctlproj@indiana.edu

**Swahili Program—Twende Rafiki**
Girls Inc.*
Mondays 5:00 to 6:00 pm

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**Recommended Language Websites**

**BBC Arabic Language** - [http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/other/arabic/guide/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/other/arabic/guide/)
A veritable online mini-textbook, BBC Languages offers a variety of electronic activities and lessons.

**Chinese Etymology** - [http://www.chineseetymology.org/](http://www.chineseetymology.org/)
Input any one of a large number of Chinese characters and you will be given an extensive survey of past forms of the character, spanning across nearly 2,000 years of Chinese written language. Many learners find that exploring older forms of characters can help a student to memorize and remember the symbols. Furthermore, it can be interesting for earlier learners to see the historical progression of the written language.

This link highlights activities of high school students taking Swahili in the summer at IU.