A Program Year in Review
Fall 2012 – Spring 2013

It was another exciting program year for the Bridges: Children, Languages, World project. Now in its eighth year and going strong, Bridges continues to evolve and grow, bringing world language and culture instruction to young learners in the Monroe County area.

Last fall, thanks to the IU African Studies Program (ASP), Zulu was added to the list of class offerings. Children who were enrolled in the Banneker Community Center afterschool program learned how to introduce themselves, greet each other, sing songs, and much more, all in Zulu.

In the spring, St. Mark’s Nursery School and Kindergarten became a community partner and hosted its first Bridges class. Children there learned Arabic.

In addition to Arabic and Zulu, Chinese, Mongolian, and Russian, were taught at community sites including Girls Inc. of Monroe County, Knee High Day Care Cooperative, Monroe County Public Library, and IU Center for the Study of Global Change.

Of course Bridges could not exist without the hard work and dedication of its volunteers. Each semester, both fall and spring, we were fortunate to have 15 enthusiastic and creative instructors and countless assistants who taught over 70 students each week.

It is because of their creativity and energy that we receive remarks such as this one shared by the parent of an Arabic student: “…she LOVED it!!”

How can I access the latest Bridges class schedule?

Those interested in Bridges languages frequently ask how to access the latest class schedule. The quickest answer? A week into each IU semester, check: www.indiana.edu/~global/bridges/ or call Susan at 812/855-1638.

Because we rely on IU students, a wonderful local resource, to teach Bridges classes, schedules cannot be confirmed until they are settled into their course routines and able to commit to volunteering for the next 10 weeks.

In any case, know that a variety of Bridges classes will be offered each semester at a number of locations throughout the community. Just check the website often or call for updates!
What Happens When You Bring a Panda to Class?
by Alex Potter, Bridges Chinese Instructor

I had done it before, just once. The kids were not sure how to react, and I worried it may not have been the best idea. The parents assured me the children enjoyed it, which is why I decided to do it again that day, the last day of YaYa-Fall 2012.

I went to that same costume store and rented the same panda costume as last time. I knew I wanted to do something fun to end the semester, something even more than wearing a panda suit to class. After discussing it with my co-instructor, Clair Zhang, we decided we would also teach the children how to play a game that is known by children and adults throughout all of China, 踢毽子 (ti jiànzi). In English, this game is called “kick the shuttlecock.”

The kids were energetic that day. As soon as I walked in wearing the panda suit, there was laughter and requests for hugs and to shake my paw. I knew right then that the day was going to be a lot of fun. Clair led the instruction. We dove right into talking about games and introducing 踢毽子. We brought more than enough shuttlecocks for all the children that day and, despite the limited space, we were able to accomplish having a large group where we all kicked the shuttlecock around the circle. Class time was coming to an end, but each time a parent approached their child to leave, the student responded in turn, “5 more minutes,” or “I want to keep playing.”

In all honesty, I held the same sentiments in my own heart as I saw the last child leave for the day. I wanted to be able to see those same glowing smiles and hear that joyous laughter from the students again the very next day!

Your Brain on Languages

Why teach young children second, third, or even more languages? Aren’t they still learning to master their first one?

There are several convincing reasons to teach multiple languages to young learners. In his article, Your Brian on Languages, Chris Livaccari masterfully spells out several of those reasons.

Aside from the obvious potential for economic and professional benefit later in life, studies show that prior to adolescence the brain is primed for linguistic development. Have you ever noticed how easy it is for youngsters to imitate the accents of other languages? This is why. Additionally, there is a correlation between learning other language(s) early on and both improved metal flexibility and increased capacity for divergent thinking.

For these reasons and others, Bridges provides language instruction to young learners.

For the complete Livaccari article, see: asiasociety.org/education/world-languages/american-schools/your-brain-languages
The Push for K-12 Foreign Language in Schools

Currently there is a bill in Congress that recognizes the importance of students learning languages from around the world, and beginning to do so at an early age.

H.R. 2170: Foreign Language Education Partnership Program calls for legislation that would provide incentives to create programs for K-12 foreign language instruction. The goal is to graduate high school students with advanced proficiency in foreign language ability, as well as to encourage an understanding of contextual factors (historic, geographical, cultural, economic, and others) of the countries whose people speak the language studied.

If you are interested in tracking H.R. 2170, you may visit www.govtrack.us/start and enter the bill numbers in the space provided in part “A.”

Additionally, if you would like to explore other federal initiatives, including advocacy efforts, related to early language learning and teaching, you may visit the National Network for Early Language Learning (NNELL) website at www.nnell.org. This is a superb website with various resources and insights on foreign language learning.

Communicative Teaching

At the beginning of each semester, fall and spring, before Bridges classes begin, instructors are trained in the communicative teaching method. This approach is highly interactive and situational. Instead of writing one through ten on a chalkboard in Russian, for example, the instructor plays a game with students that involves counting, and the counting itself happens in Russian.

Games, songs, crafts, free play, and other interactive activities that help students acquire new vocabulary in the target language are all hallmarks of communicative teaching. Students respond well to this style and look forward to the fun they will have from class to class. One student remarked to her parent, "My favorite part of class was making puppets. Sometimes we get to play red light/green light and you get to say the colors in Arabic words."

Our hope is that students will not only learn new language skills but also develop a positive attitude toward world language learning, one that will continue with them as they grow into teens and then adults.

Many Thanks, Bridges Volunteer Instructors!

Bridges classes are taught by volunteer instructors, most of whom are IU students that have either taken two semesters of the language they teach or are native speakers of the language.

In addition to their IU responsibilities, they attend Bridges trainings, plan and execute weekly lessons, and participate in after-class debriefings with the language coordinator who provides ongoing professional development and support. This relationship is mutually beneficial since valuable experience is gained by instructors who are building their professional skills. As Chinese instructor Alex Potter put it, "Bridges has become a very significant part of my college career and by far one of the most beneficial and fun."

Thank you, Bridges volunteers, for sharing your time and talent with us!
A Heartfelt Farewell and Best Wishes to Dean Auer

Matthew Auer, dean of the IU Hutton Honors College, recently accepted a position at Bates College in Maine to become its next vice president for academic affairs and dean of faculty. Congratulations, Dean Auer!

During his time with the Honors College, Dean Auer readily supported course credit to facilitate Bridges instructors taking language pedagogy classes for Less Commonly Taught Languages. In addition, he provided meeting space and attended annual stakeholders’ meetings at which he provided valuable feedback for moving Bridges forward.

Bridges: Children, Languages, World is a project that offers exploratory language and culture classes to children in the Monroe County area. With an emphasis on Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs) such as, Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Mongolian, Russian, Swahili, and Zulu, children are taught using communicative teaching methods which help them acquire new vocabulary in the target language. Bridges classes, which are taught by IU students, take place throughout the Monroe County area and are hosted by a variety of partner sites.

Bridges is funded in part by these U.S. Department of Education Title VI National Resource Centers at Indiana University

- African Studies Program
- Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region
- Center for the Study of Global Change
- Center for the Study of the Middle East
- East Asian Studies Center
- Inner Asian and Uralic National Resource Center
- Russian & East European Institute
- IU Office of the Vice President for International Affairs

Academic and Community Partners

- Banneker Community Center
- Girls Inc. of Monroe County
- IU African Studies Program
- IU Center for Languages of the Central Asian Region
- IU Center for Chinese Language Pedagogy
- IU College of Arts and Sciences
- IU Department of Near Eastern Languages & Culture
- IU School of Global and International Studies
- IU Hutton Honors College
- IU Russian & East European Institute
- IU School of Education
- Knee High Day Care Cooperative
- Monroe County Public Library
- St. Mark’s Nursery School and Kindergarten

Bridges Leadership Team

- Susan Garcia, MSEd, Project Coordinator
- Vesna Dimitrieska, EdM, Language Coordinator
- Professor Martha Nyikos, PhD, Pedagogical Consultant