What is Bridges: Children, Languages, World?

Bridges: Children, Languages, World facilitates the development of world language instruction programs for children. Bridges emphasizes Less-Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs). Bridges language programs utilize models of communicative teaching, which means fun for kids! Instructors use free play, games, and crafts to help children acquire new vocabulary in the target language.

Bridges programs are taught by IU students who are studying LCTLs. In partnership with IU Bloomington’s School of Education, they are taught valuable teaching tools which may be applied in a variety of community settings.

Currently, Bridges delivers programs in Arabic, Chinese, Dari, Mongolian, and Swahili. This February, over 240 young learners in the Bloomington community participated in Bridges programs, helping our young students get one step closer to the world through learning about new languages and cultures.

www.indiana.edu/~global/bridges

Mongolian Classes offer Unique Opportunity for Students at the Project School

Drop in at the Bloomington Project School any time during a given school day and you will feel the creativity flowing from every classroom; the drama teacher prepping his students for an original performance, the art teacher in the next room helping the students make their costumes for said performance, in another classroom, students working on one part of a multi-discipline project focusing on sustainability.

Given the circumstances, it doesn’t seem entirely extraordinary that Mongolian classes are offered every Tuesday after school. Undraa Enkhtavian and Teresa Nichols have been teaching the Mongolian Language and Culture class, Goyo Goyo, at the Project School since last semester.

Undraa is from Mongolia and at IU as a Fulbright Language Teaching Assistant for the Department of Central Eurasian Studies. Teresa has taken two years of Mongolian instruction at IU and plans to attend the American Center for Mongolian Studies Language Program in Mongolia this summer.

The students were at first unsure about learning such a different language, but now they enjoy class because of its uniqueness and challenge. It also helps that Undraa and Teresa use an interactive approach to teaching a foreign language which includes games, crafts and activities. For these students and others in Bridges programs, learning a foreign language will be associated with a rewarding, fun experience.
Partnership with Banneker Community Center brings Swahili to Fairview Elementary School

On a cold afternoon in February, students listened intently to a conversation in Swahili, trying to recognize familiar words. Jenga, hakuna matataa, and safari are only a few of the new words and phrases being explored by the young learners. The students are part of an after school Swahili club at Fairview made possible by the partnership between Bridges: Languages, Children, World, and the Banneker Community Center.

The club’s name is Twende Rafiki or “Let’s Go, Friend.” Led by Meg Arenberg and Justin Wild, Twende Rafiki offers fun and exciting language instruction for young learners. Meg and Justin attend advanced classes in Swahili at Indiana University and both have lived in Tanzania, East Africa. They are enthusiastic about sharing their knowledge of Swahili to young learners and hope to create a learning environment that focuses on interaction.

Swahili is the newest language to be offered through Bridges. It is our hope that students will continue to explore the world around them without feeling inhibited, but with an attitude of confidence, excitement and fun.

Arabic Program in its Fifth Year

The Alef Ba program was created in 2006 under the direction of IU-Bloomington’s Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures (NELC) and what was formerly the Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies Program. Alef Ba was designed not only to promote Arabic instruction within the community of Bloomington, but also to mentor IU-Bloomington students in teacher training and professionalization. From the beginning, Alef Ba has partnered with the Monroe County Public Library’s Children Services to provide curriculum based Arabic instruction for pre-K through grade 2 learners. Since 2010, the Alef Ba program has expanded to include classes at the Knee High Day Care Center.

Because of the Alef Ba program model, which is now under the direction of NELC and the Center for the Study of the Middle East, language learning has become more accessible to early learners in the Bloomington community.

Attention Bridges Instructors: Visit the New Bridges Resource Room

Please stop by the new resource room downstairs in the Center for the Study of Global Change, 201 N. Indiana Avenue. This space has been set aside for you! Please contribute your own activity ideas and lesson plans to the suggestion boards. Also, there are supplies for creating teaching materials or to bring to class for an activity. Please email lctlproj@indiana.edu with any requests for additional materials at least a week in advance.

Clockwise from top left: Volunteer Nasser Nabhan, instructor Christina Bills, and volunteer Katherine Barrus at Monroe County Public Library’s Alef Ba program. Alef Ba is free and open to the public Saturdays from 11-12.
Logan Phillippo recalls his first day teaching Chinese class for Bridges at the Monroe County Public Library (MCPL). “I was surprised by the focus on the instructor,” Logan recalls. As an introduction, Logan wanted to get a feel for the atmosphere of the MCPL Learn and Play room, but Logan felt that the parents expected a lesson plan and activities right away. Nevertheless, for observers of the class, it quickly became apparent that Logan was ever more comfortable in front of the group.

This has undoubtedly been helped by the strong core group of parents who bring their children to attend Logan’s lessons. Logan feels that parental involvement is strong within his class and takes advantage of this resource by encouraging parents to model activities for their children. Logan has found that his students have retained a surprising amount of information, even since last semester and he continues to push their linguistic boundaries with challenging and fun lessons.

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Logan hopes to spend some time in the future teaching English abroad and he believes that his time with Bridges has helped him to develop crucial skills. “Probably the most valuable experiences have been learning how to interact with students and tailoring the class to their needs,” Logan explains. In fact, Logan recommends to new instructors that they always take into consideration age range of their class. He feels that, in general, “instructors should focus on fun and not on cramming stuff into their [students] heads” in order to accomplish early language learning.

Join Logan’s Ya Ya class for exploring Mandarin Chinese on Saturdays, in the Learn and Play Room at the Monroe County Public Library at 12:00pm.

Bridges is funded in part by:

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