Bridges to Academic Success Student Profiles and Program Manual

Bridges | A project of the Graduate Center, CUNY

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Please see our website for participating schools and practitioners.

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Overview

Bridges to Academic Success:
Serving students with low literacy in their home language

Bridges to Academic Success is designed as an approximately one-year intervention for newcomer adolescents who are new to English and have emergent literacy in their home language.[1] These students, who we have designated SIFE with Developing Literacy (SDL), are a sub-population of *Students with Interrupted Formal Education* (SIFE). Bridges students have levels of home language literacy at 3rd grade or below, and have not been exposed to the academic content knowledge and ways of thinking assumed of the secondary student. These students arrive in U.S. secondary schools with a wealth of knowledge and experience. In many cases, students' learning has happened mainly through listening and speaking and as a result students have high levels of oracy. Notwithstanding, their experience has not prepared them for the academic demands of a secondary classroom where text is used as a resource to learn. Bridges students are some of the most at-risk students in secondary classrooms. To participate meaningfully in secondary classrooms, Bridges learners need sheltered instruction that addresses their specific needs.

The Bridges curriculum was developed for a multilingual context[2] to build on the rich and unique life experiences students bring to the classroom, and to target the foundational language and literacy skills and background content knowledge students will need to participate meaningfully in mainstream secondary classrooms. The *Bridges Program* is an interdisciplinary curriculum aligned to the Common Core and NGSS across four subjects: English Language Arts (Integrated ENL/ELA, Part 1 & Stand-alone ENL, Part 2), Math, Social Studies, and Science. There are schools that implement a full-sheltered *Bridges Program*. There are also schools that choose to implement Integrated ENL/ELA (Part 1) & Stand-alone ENL (Part 2). This manual focuses on the implementation of the two ELA/ENL courses. It will be revised to encompass implementation of the full *Bridges Program* in the near future.

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[1] McNamara,S., & Smith, A. (2015). What do teachers need to understand about the challenges that the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards present for students with interrupted formal education? In G. Valdes, M. Castro, & K. Mencken (Eds.), *Common Core, Bilingual and English Language Learners: A Resource for Educators* (pp. 222-227). Philadelphia: Caslon.

[2] The Bridges Curricula and the instructional principles and methods that guide its' implementation were designed for a multi-lingual classroom of SDL. In this context, we could not assume that teachers could support literacy in students' home languages, although we know this is pedagogically preferable. Bilingual programs are ideally placed to build students' home language literacy at the same time as students develop English language literacy.

This manual will:

- describe the features that distinguish SDL and SIFE from English language learners (ELLs) who have grade-level literacy in home language;
- present resources that can support the school team to gain a more complete understanding of student backgrounds and levels of home language literacy;
- provide guidance to support intake and programming;
- present the design features that frame the Bridges ELA/ENL Curricula; and
- present an overview of the principles that guide instruction for SDL.

Introduction

English language learners (ELLs) are a varied and diverse group of students.[3] They have arrived in U.S. classrooms in increasing numbers over the last 20 years,[4] galvanized by notions of promise and possibility instilled in their consciousness, sometimes from as far as 10,000 miles away. Our public school systems, their district leaders, administrators, and classroom teachers carry the responsibility to create programs that provide ELLs with rich and rigorous curriculum that affords them access to the opportunity structures that ensure mobility and voice in our plural society.

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) confirmed its commitment to access and equity in education for ELLs with its release of a *Blueprint for English Language Learners' Success* in April 2014.[5] This document provides a framework that articulates how districts should prioritize and attend to the needs of ELLs. One year later, CR Part 154, which outlines policy governing the education of ELLs, was amended to ensure that all ELLs, regardless of language proficiency, have access to not only Bilingual/ENL classes aligned to their proficiency level but also *Integrated ENL,* which targets the development of English language skills through content. This policy highlights an understanding of the ways language can be a barrier to learning, and responds to a focus on academic language that is ubiquitous in the new Common Core Learning Standards. Fang and Schleppegrell (2010) and Gibbons (2009) have pioneered providing such a focus on language development in the context of teaching content because it ensures that ELLs are learning to use and navigate the language of complex academic texts at the same time as they learn content.

Getting to know students is central to understanding their diversity and creating programming and instruction that is designed to meet their needs and ensure their access to high-quality curriculum and instruction. ELLs are not a homogeneous group, and school systems are adept at administering assessments, such as the New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL), and using the score to identify students' proficiency in English. This information has guided ELL student programing for decades. However, ELLs are diverse in more ways than their English language proficiency. In many contexts, schools are not looking beyond language levels to program and design instruction that meets students' specific needs.

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[3] Garcia (2011, p. 141) has called for the use of the term Emergent Bilingual instead of English language learner.to advocate that effective instruction will build students whole language repertoire and result in their bilingualism or tri-lingualism.

[4] https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=96

[5] http://usny.nysed.gov/docs/blueprint-for-ell-success.pdf

Much research has been devoted to the ways that literacy skills gained in one language can be *transferred* to the development of proficiency in a new language (Cummins, 1981). In other words, if a student has been taught to analyze the structure of a narrative and summarize the story, this is a literacy skill that can be brought to text read in English with some modifications. ELLs vary widely in their home language literacy and experiences with formal schooling. These factors significantly impact their experiences and performance in U.S. classrooms. It has helped us to understand the diverse instructional needs of ELLs by looking more closely at their levels of home language *literacy* as well as their language proficiency when they arrive in the U.S.

By 1996, the New York State Education Department began to look more granularly at ELLs to distinguish students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) from the larger pool of ELLs.

The current NYSED definition of SIFE states:[6]
*Students with Inconsistent/Interrupted Formal Education shall mean English Language Learners who have attended schools in the United States for less than twelve months and who, upon initial enrollment in such schools are **two or more years below grade level in literacy**[7] **in their home language and/or two or more years below grade level in math** due to inconsistent or interrupted schooling prior to arrival in the United States.*

This definition has led schools to identify SIFE and craft intervention programs and target instruction to meet their needs. It is important to understand the heterogeneity of the SIFE population, because one program cannot successfully be applied to all SIFE. SIFE, even as a subgroup of ELLs, span a huge range of home language literacy levels. Imagine the different needs of a student entering 9th grade with 6th grade home language literacy in contrast to a student entering 9th grade with no literacy in home language. In our experience, this subpopulation of SIFE, with the lowest levels of literacy in home language, struggle to participate meaningfully in secondary classrooms, and schools must provide them much more targeted intervention. The NYSED has developed a suite of tools to support the intake and identification of SIFE that can support a more nuanced understanding of their instructional needs (see Intake and Identification). In the following section, we bring together some of the information available through the use of these tools to begin to paint a picture of the diversity of the SIFE population and how an understanding of students who are at highest risk of dropping out of our schools (Ruiz de Velasco, 2000) can inform more targeted programming and instruction.

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[6] http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/docs/NYSEDSIFEGuidelines.pdf
[7] Though NYSED does not explicitly define literacy, the MLS is designed to evaluate home language literacy through reading comprehension and vocabulary knowledge. This assessment does not evaluate listening and speaking.

Meeting the Students

The students described in the profiles below are based on students we have met in classrooms across New York State. The profiles incorporate information and data from the SIFE Oral Intake Questionnaire and the Multi-Lingual SIFE Screener,[8] which assesses home language literacy in nine languages, in addition to more anecdotal information shared in the context of the classroom. As you read the following profiles, assume that the students will all be placed in the 9th grade, and consider the programming and instructional implications for each of the students:

- *What qualities do these students share and how are they distinct?*
- *What does each student bring to their classroom experience?*
- *What skills, competencies and knowledge might they need to meaningfully participate in a secondary classroom?*

Sandar

Sandar is 15 years old and a refugee who arrived with her family in Utica four months ago. She can say "hello" and "thank you" in English. She was born in rural Burma (Pye). When she was four, her father, a tailor with an elementary education, took flight with his family to support the fight for democracy. Sandar lived with her family and a group of political activists in camps; they moved frequently throughout Burma to avoid the military. Sandar, the eldest girl, helped her mother with cooking, collecting firewood and water. In addition, she took care of her younger siblings. When she was 10, her family moved to a refugee camp, and she attended school sporadically over the year and a half she was there before she moved to the United States.

Sandar saw money for the first time when she arrived at the refugee camp in Thailand. She understands well the sacrifices her family has made to achieve democracy in Burma, though she cannot find Burma on a map. When she arrived in high school, her teacher noticed that she did not feel comfortable holding a pencil. She does not read or write in Burmese or Thai, and she has developed oral conversational English quickly. She can sing the alphabet song, but is unable to identify the sounds we associate with the letters of the English alphabet. Copying words and sentences from the board is difficult, and she does not know how to attempt to decode words she encounters. She successfully relies on memorizing familiar words or uses memory recall to guess words as she reads. Sandar perseveres through a laborious writing process in which words often run together. She seeks frequent support from the teacher, who often writes down what she dictates.

MLS report
MLS Reading Comprehension Results
Reading Level: 2
Reading Comprehension Results
This student did not reach the 3rd grade level.

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[8] Please see the information on the MLS in the Intake and Identification section for a more complete understanding of the screener.

Aicha

Aicha is 16 years old. She is from Conakry, Guinea. She has been in Rochester for six months. Aicha speaks Fula and some conversational French. In Conakry, she was enrolled in a private school when she was nine, but she did not attend often. Aicha spent her days in the market with her good friend, who sold fruit. She was excellent at sales and her friend often gave her a cut of the profits. However, her literacy was not at the same level as her peers in French private school. "Really," she says, "when I came here I couldn't read too much." She describes reading as memorizing the text: "You have to memorize those passages. Word for word. One by one. So you cannot miss a word, or you cannot skip a word. So it has to be like that. And you have to know what is the comma, where is the period. So it's very hard. But comes to the final, this is the big portion of the final. So out of that passage, they will take out a word, as a new vocabulary or something. And so you have to place the word, write the word in, fill in the word to make the sentence complete. But that word has to be from that passage, it's the exact word! So you have to remember that."[1]

Aicha likes to speak in English and often supports her classmates with vocabulary to help them communicate. She has basic decoding skills in French and English, is active in class conversations, and often spurs discussion. She struggles to comprehend academic texts in French and to put her ideas in writing in either French or English. She uses a French dictionary, but often does not know the French word. She is unfamiliar with the scientific method and does not seem to be able to interpret timelines and graphically represented information.

MLS report
MLS Reading Comprehension Results
Reading Level: 2
Reading Comprehension Results

This student did not reach the 3rd grade level.

[1] Yip, 2016, dissertation

Jorge

Jorge is 16 years old and from a coastal village in Honduras. He speaks Garifuna and Spanish. He arrived in New York City three months ago, when he was reunited with his father and new stepmother. His father has been living in the U.S. for 15 years, is literate in Spanish, and has strong oral English skills. Jorge is new to English. In Honduras, Jorge was active in his church and played soccer. In New York, he leaves his house only to go to school.

Jorge is engaged in class and often translates for his friends and helps them understand the task. He can move fluidly between Garifuna and Spanish, and is quickly learning English as his third language. He is interested in history and avidly discusses social inequities in his home country. He refers to a history of revolutions in Central America to illustrate his points. Jorge reads at a 3rd grade level in Spanish, but struggles to understand more academic texts in Spanish. He actively uses a bilingual dictionary to make sense of what he reads, and feels comfortable writing to communicate ideas in Spanish. He attempts to organize his Spanish writing into paragraphs, but has many errors with conventions, including spelling and punctuation.

MLS report
MLS Reading Comprehension Results
Reading Level: 2
Reading Comprehension Results
This student did not reach the 3rd grade level.

Darlyn

Darlyn is 17 years old and is from a mountain village in Guatemala. Her mother left for the United States when Darlyn was nine, and Darlyn heard little from her mother in the next seven years. She moved in with her aunt in a nearby town. During that time, she did her best to stay in school, in spite of pressures to contribute to the household. When Darlyn got to high school, she faced additional obstacles. Her family didn't have the money to pay for her to continue her education, and her village was plagued by some of the most dangerous gangs in Guatemala.

Darlyn and her family saved money to hire someone to bring her to the U.S. She was detained at the border, and a month later, was reunited with a mother she could not even recognize. Being together brought up emotional challenges neither could have foreseen. Darlyn entered school on Long Island five months ago and works hard to develop and use English. She is single-minded; she has actively pursued her teachers for the help that she needs and has never gotten a grade below a B. When she struggled in math, she asked her environmental science teacher to help her understand algebra. She says that she has understood from a young age that she has to pursue what she wants in life and she cannot wait for others to help.

Now that she is in the U.S., Darlyn is happy to be in school and is conscientious and likes to write. Darlyn has mentioned that writing is very different in her new school than it was at home. "For me, at school we learned writing by what we read. Then we memorized that, say a letter, and then we had to write that letter for the exam. Kind of as if it is our own writing, but it is not. We are using all the ideas from what we took, what we memorized. It doesn't go with your own life."[3]

She writes long pages, sometimes copying, sometimes inserting her own ideas. She writes in Spanish, and uses English whenever she can. Her Spanish compositions consist of smart ideas, but she does not often use academic vocabulary. Her ideas are unorganized and she has not yet mastered how to use sentence boundaries. She often summarizes from the text or from other materials she has access to in class.

MLS report
MLS Reading Comprehension Results
Reading Level: 4
Reading Comprehension Results

This student can read at an **Advanced 4th Grade** level in her home language, Spanish. At the 4th grade level, a reader:
- reads with fluency and accuracy to support comprehension;
- summarizes the main points and identifies details in a text/story;
- understands figurative language and analyzes abstract meaning in a story;
- is learning strategies to understand and use unfamiliar words via context clues or past knowledge;
- uses word knowledge and word relationships to understand new vocabulary; and
- is starting to develop a larger range of academic vocabulary.

[3] Yip, 2016, dissertation

Mohammed

Mohammed is 17 years old and grew up in Sana'a, the capital city of Yemen. He moved to New York City following the uprising and subsequent Yemeni Revolution of 2011-12. He has been in the New York for six months. His father has a master's degree in economics from the University of Aden. He was involved in the uprising and detained for several months. During the revolution, schools were occupied by both military and opposition forces. Mohammed attended school only intermittently for almost two years during the political unrest. Following his father's release, the family decided to flee the country. They left through Turkey and spent six months in Italy before they were reunited with Mohammed's uncle in New York City. Mohammed spent another year out of school during his journey to the U.S.

In New York, his father runs a deli with his brother, who has been in the U.S. for 25 years. Mohammed works behind the counter most afternoons. Mohammed has developed a relationship with his global history teacher, and has learned enough English that he stays after school to discuss politics with her. Mohammed is being transferred to an Algebra 2 class, as he clearly has more facility with math than many of his peers.

Mohammed enjoys writing to his family, and he reads and responds to articles in Arabic that are written about Middle Eastern politics. When he writes in English, Mohammed is at an emerging level in English proficiency. He tries to use advanced vocabulary to express ideas that demonstrate his conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking. However, he has trouble organizing his brilliant ideas. He often writes run-on or incomplete sentences, and he struggles to stay on topic in his writing. "We did, actually, lot of reading and writing. But, I always write like I never went too deep, like coming up with maybe deep analysis or something. I always wrote what just on top of my mind. It was not compare and contrast and find arguments and evidence."[2]

MLS Report
MLS Reading Comprehension Results
Reading Level: 6
Reading Comprehension Results

This student can read at an **Early 6th Grade** level in his home language, Arabic.

Upon completion a reader at the early 6th grade level can:
- summarize the main points in the text/story;
- recognize the emotional and ethical issues and the social development within a text (narrative or poem), and be able to discuss and elicit ideas from them;
- recognize the imagination, rhyme, and rhythm of poetry, and their role in influencing the reader;
- define unfamiliar words by using familiar words;
- identify synonyms and multiple-meaning words and context clues; and
- recognize genres and text structures, and use knowledge of form to support comprehension.

[2] Yip, 2016, dissertation

Understanding The Varied Needs Of English Language Learners

All Students

English Language Learners

SIFE

SIFE with
Developing Literacy
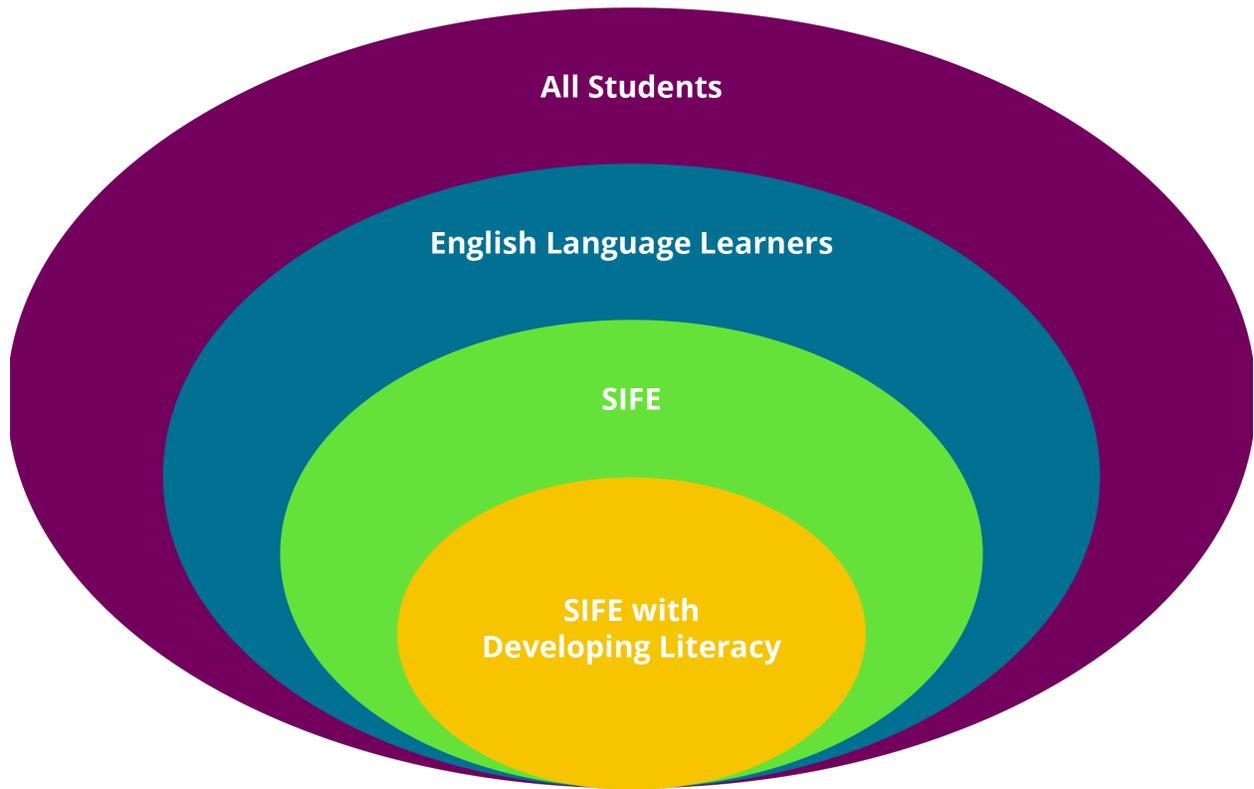
English Language Learners (ELL)

The five students presented here are clearly ELLs and so share characteristics in common. They are of a similar age, which in the U.S. places them in high school. They are all newcomers to the United States who have arrived in the last six months. English is a new language that they will need to learn to access content knowledge and participate meaningfully in English-medium classrooms. Additionally, it is likely that, as newcomers, they experience cultural dissonance as they adjust to living in the United States. Acclimating to the U.S. school system is one of the greatest challenges for ELLs. Finally, it is important to notice that though their home contexts are varied, they are all adolescents with cognitive capacity commensurate with their age.

Each of these students has been admitted to a U.S. high school based on his or her age. The work of the secondary classroom involves using text as a resource to learn. It is expected that students in secondary school have spent between five and eight years learning the skills they need to comprehend and analyze text and build knowledge about content through text. This is based on an assumption that

students who arrive in secondary school have print literacy and sufficient content knowledge in the disciplines to facilitate the development of more complex understandings. With a clear understanding of the assumptions made of students in secondary schools, it would be helpful to see how the skills and competencies of the students we have met match the expectations of high schools.

Mohammed and Darlyn: SIFE

In a report for the Urban Institute, Ruiz-de-Velasco and Fix (2000) describe the population of under-schooled students who enter high school as "overlooked and underserved." Their research indicates that the absence of services to identify and address the needs of this population has resulted in high dropout rates. Further, they importantly highlight that the typical program for ELLs is not designed to meet the needs of these learners. They describe Sandar, Aicha, Jorge, Darlyn, and Mohammed as overlooked and underserved. Districts and schools in the last 16 years have made strides to identify SIFE students, but they are often classified and programmed as if they were homogeneous. It is important to understand that the heterogeneity of the SIFE population includes a huge range of home language literacy levels.

The five students you met are SIFE, because after evaluation using the MLS, it was established that their home language literacy was at least two years below grade level for 9th grade. Mohammed and Darlyn, however, are markedly different from Sandar, Aicha, and Jorge.

Mohammed, with 6th grade literacy in Arabic as he enters 9th grade, is two years below grade level. Darlyn, with advanced 4th grade literacy, is between three and four years below grade level as she enters 9th grade. Mohammed and Darlyn bring solid foundations in both basic literacy and academic literacy in their home languages. Their understandings of school practices and academic ways of thinking will be resources in the secondary classroom. Darlyn and Mohammed will need scaffolding and targeted differentiation and intervention to ensure that they participate meaningfully in either bilingual or English-medium classrooms.

Sandar, Aicha, and Jorge: Low Literacy SIFE (SDL)

It is evident to any educator that Sandar, Aicha, and Jorge are a clearly a heterogeneous group. Jorge has literacy skills in Spanish that are not available to Sandar in Burmese. The MLS classified them into one group:[9] *"Reading Level 2. This student did not reach the 3rd grade level."* However, it provides no information about the reading skills these students have. Though their differences may be obvious, it is important to understand first the key characteristics that they share. These three students have reading

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[9] Please note that the MLS does not evaluate home language literacy below 3rd grade, and therefore all scores, regardless of reading level, appear as 2.

levels in their home language that range from pre-reader or new to print through 2nd grade. Though they differ in ways that seem substantial, they are similar because they have not yet consolidated the foundational reading and writing skills in their home language that they will need to navigate and learn from more complex texts. Secondary classrooms assume students have the skills in place to use text as a resource to learn and to communicate academic ideas in writing.

This subgroup of SIFE, whom we call SIFE with Developing Literacy (SDL), have not yet learned these essential skills, and so they do not have the tools or often the background knowledge to do the work expected in a secondary classroom. These are the students for whom the *Bridges Program* was designed. In most cases, these students must develop foundational literacy skills in a language they do not yet know, which poses great challenges to students and teachers. For these reasons, SDL face the greatest challenges in accessing curricula and meeting the NY State Standards at the secondary level.

Needs of the Bridges Learner
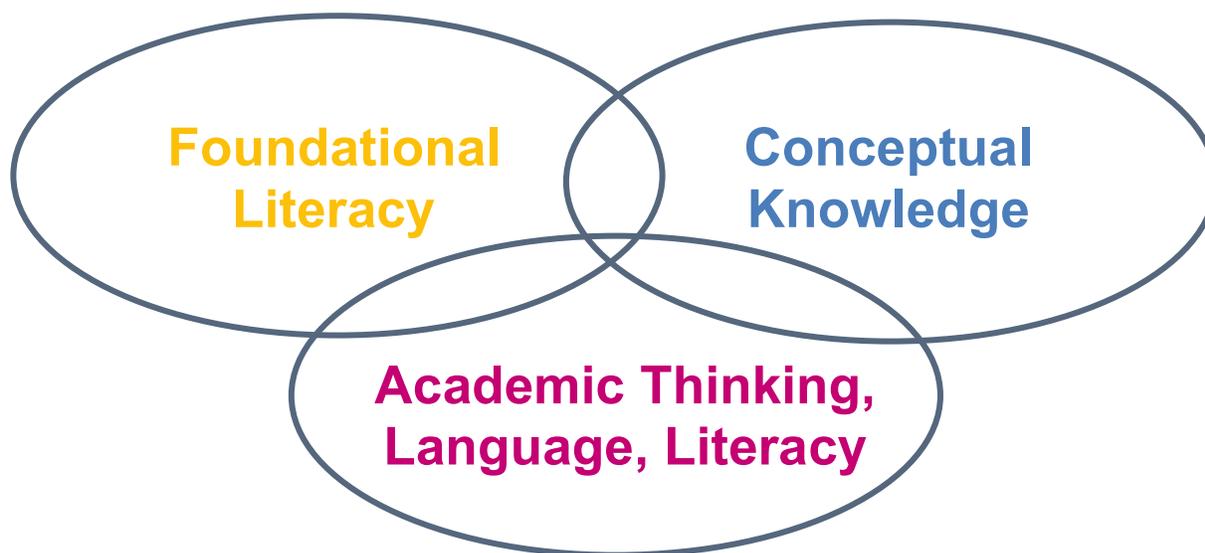
SDL students require curricula and intensive, daily instruction that targets all of the NY State Standard Foundational Skills (FS) typically reserved for early elementary students, as well as the academic skills emphasized. With that understanding, we began to look to descriptions of developmental reading levels in English to gain a clearer sense of the skills these students bring and those that need to be developed to ensure access to secondary school.

Students like Sandar who are new to print need instruction that includes orientation to print, connecting her oral and listening skills to print, how to track print on a page, connecting sound-symbol relationships, blending sounds to read words, segmenting sounds to spell, and instantly recognizing a

large number of sight words. As she gains these skills, she will begin to use the words she knows to label and describe images.

Aicha, who is an emergent reader in home language, can begin to problem solve as she reads. She uses the images to support meaning in the text, and can decode and recognize sight words in French. She self-corrects and attends to punctuation as she reads. She writes simple, descriptive sentences in French, but does not use academic language.

Jorge brings many Foundational Skills (FS) that transfer to English as well as academic habits that are fostered in the classroom, such as using details to support discussions and attending to story structure to support understanding. Jorge is beginning to use the text as a resource to learn. As he gains fluency in English, he will transfer these skills as well as begin to communicate his ideas in writing.

These three student profiles—Sandar, Aicha, and Jorge—have become a touchstone for the Bridges team as we develop curriculum, design instruction, and make recommendations for differentiation. The table developed below highlights the home language reading skills characteristic of each of level of reader typical of a Bridges class. We drew on reading development frameworks for English language development and literacy development frameworks for English language learners to craft these descriptors. We share these here to make clear the print literacy resources students bring to classroom, as we think they can inform the ways teachers target instruction.

Reading Development in Home Language[10]

New to Print in Home Language	Emergent Reader in Home Language	Transitional Reader in Home Language
Developing awareness: • that print carries meaning • of how print works (hold book, turn pages) • that pictures help tell the story • of one-to-one correspondence in print Can: • repeat an oral sentence stem • match spoken words with pictures • may say names of letters in alphabet but not know sounds	• Uses pictures to support meaning of text. • Identifies some high-frequency words • Uses phonetic clues to decode. • Starts to attend to punctuation while reading. • Begins to monitor own reading and self-correct. • Uses some text features to predict.	• Uses strategies to problem solve (language structure, visual/graphophonic). • Knows a large core of high-frequency words. • Reads with phrasing and fluency. • Attends to story structure and literacy language. • Identifies details to support discussions. • Uses text features to make meaning.
Sandar	*Aicha*	*Jorge*

Though SDL have levels of home language literacy at 3rd grade and below due to little to no exposure to intermittent, insufficient, or low-quality formal education, they bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences to the classroom. Frequently, SDL have gained their competence and knowledge through life experience rather than in an academic setting. Their learning has often happened in contextualized circumstances for pragmatic reasons—working on a farm or selling in a market. In U.S. schools, learning is decontextualized and abstract, often removed from real-world application. School involves academic tasks that privilege analysis, such as defining, categorizing, and synthesizing. These are not skills or dispositions SDL bring to their grade-level classes.[11]

We believe that they need a more comprehensive academic intervention to apprentice them into Western learning paradigms and to prepare them to actively engage in the secondary classroom. Like their ELL peers with grade-level literacy, SDL must learn English and how to navigate a new country. However, SDL, unlike their ELL and SIFE peers with stronger home language literacy, must gain foundational literacy skills in a language they don't speak fluently at the same time they are developing

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[10] This framework draws on work by M. Capellini (2005).
[11] This idea is grounded in the work of Andrea DeCapua and Helaine Marshall (2011).

foundational content knowledge that is assumed in secondary settings.

Challenges

Secondary teachers are trained to be experts in their content areas. Those who have degrees in TESOL have training to support students' language development in English. Teachers at the secondary level are not generally trained to support students to build foundational literacy and develop a complex understanding of content without access to print. It is not appropriate or reasonable to expect that teachers differentiate in a single classroom for the needs of Sandar, Mohammed, and ELL students who have grade-level literacy. Furthermore, differentiation for Sandar in a grade-level bilingual or English medium classroom would not provide her with to targeted focus she needs to accelerate, participate, and finally graduate from high school.

For these reasons we believe that **SDL need a sheltered program with dedicated classes that have been specifically designed to meet their language, literacy, academic, social, cultural, and emotional needs**. This is the design of the *full Bridges program,* which is a one-year sheltered program with dedicated classes in ELA, both Integrated ENL/ELA (Part 1) and Stand-alone ENL (Part 2), Math, Science, and Social Studies are designed to meet the needs of these students and prepare them to participate in the secondary classroom. For the purposes of this version of the manual we will focus on the two courses in the ELA Curriculum.[12]

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[12] Bridges Integrated ENL/ELA and Stand-alone ENL are revised and aligned to NY State Standards. Math, Science, and Social Studies, are not yet completed. When they are finished we will revise the manual to reflect the *full Bridges Program*.

SDL In The Context Of NY State Standards

The NY State Standards articulate rigorous grade level standards for *all* students including ELLs, which includes SDL. The emphasis on rigor and quality teaching for all students is imperative; even more so for secondary SDL, who must gain *foundational literacy*, *academic conceptual knowledge, and academic ways of thinking and using language* in a few years.

The ELA State Standards pivot on three pedagogical shifts that direct instruction for all students. These shifts are predicated on students' ability to access and acquire grade-appropriate academic language. A closer look at two of the shifts reveals the challenge that attaining the CCSS poses for SDL.

- Shift 2: Knowledge in the Disciplines *demands that students build knowledge about the world through TEXT rather than the teacher or activities.*
- Shift 3: Staircase of Complexity *demands that students read the central, grade appropriate text around which instruction is centered.*

Each of these shifts makes evident the emphasis on acquiring knowledge through grade-level text. This stance assumes that all students have the skills necessary to use text to learn and acquire knowledge. It implies that students have levels of literacy in their home language(s) that transfer to English and allow them to access and analyze text at close to grade level. In this scenario, students make use of their literacy and academic conceptual knowledge and ways of thinking to build both language and content knowledge. It is a process of leveraging and transferring what they have already developed in the home context to the context of the U.S. classroom. Clearly this scenario characterizes students with a very different profile than the SDL who arrive in secondary classrooms throughout the U.S. SDL need targeted curricula and intervention to ensure that they have access to the rigor promised through the NY State Standards.

Curricula that meet the needs of SDL must build academic conceptual knowledge across the disciplines and teach students across all domains (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) so that they can bring these skills to bear to use text as a resource to learn and can communicate their ideas in writing. A standards-based, grade-level curricula without these components will disenfranchise SDL who are unable to participate in the classroom discourse and build academic identities. In many circumstances, this leads to educational foreclosure. SDL sitting in secondary classrooms without means to engage meaningfully with the curricula often drop out (McNamara, S., & Smith, A., 2015).

The Bridges ELA Curriculum & Instructional Design

SDL students arrive in classrooms from all over the world and bring with them their rich cultural backgrounds and diverse languages and life experiences. These must be recognized and tapped as resources to support students to gain traction and find relevance in the U.S. classroom.

The development of the Bridges ELA curricula has been informed by our own experience in the classroom and by our understanding of the learner as it has been articulated in the preceding section and is aligned to the NY State ELA Standards. SDL range from new to print in their home language to 3rd grade levels of literacy. The curricula were developed to respond to the characteristics shared by SDL that make them distinct in the secondary context. When we looked closely at these shared qualities, it was evident that meeting the needs of this population meant crafting curricula that attends to:
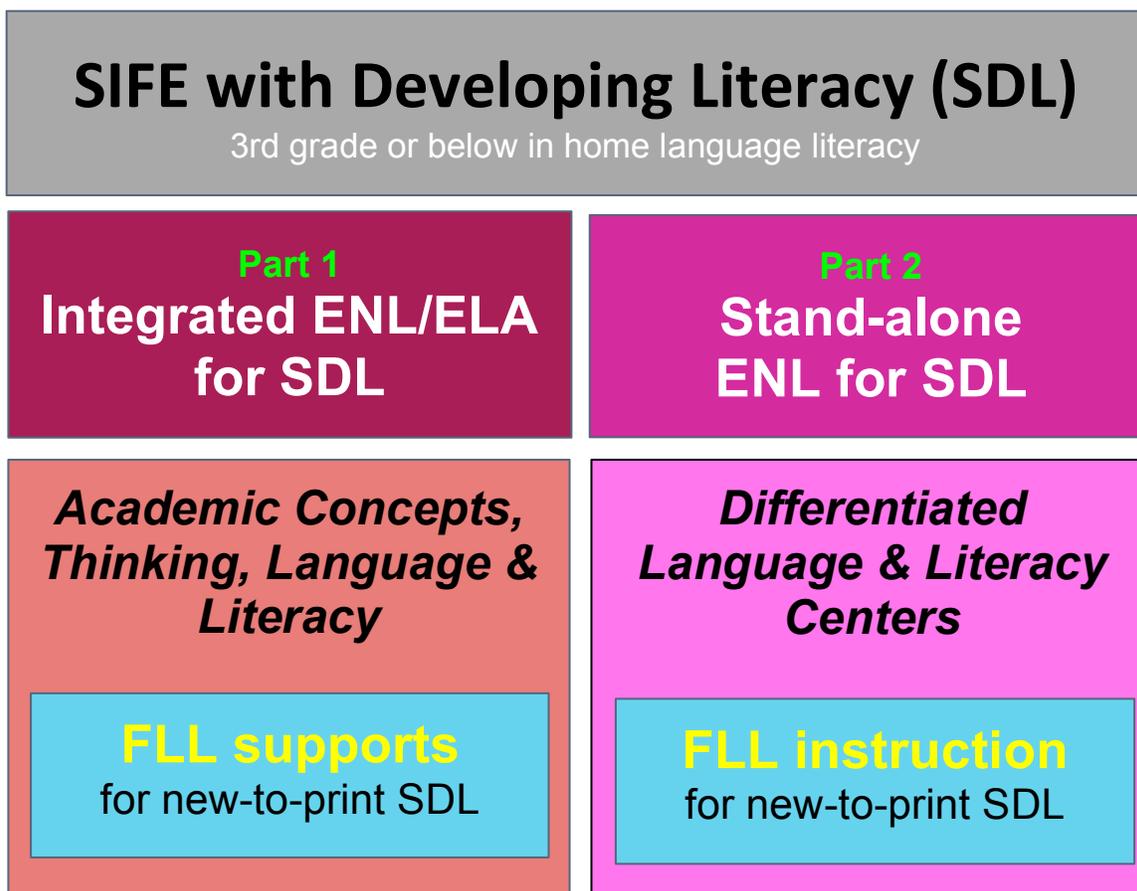
- **building foundational literacy so students learn to read;**
- **explicitly teaching academic ways of thinking so students can internalize these dispositions;**
- **developing the content knowledge necessary for the student to be able to eventually access grade-level content; and**
- **establishing routines that inculcate the norms and behaviors of the formal classroom**.

Balanced Literacy Framework

Balanced language and literacy is the organizing framework for the two strands of SIFE instruction: Integrated ENL/ELA (Part 1) and Stand-alone ENL (Part 2). We borrow the balanced literacy model from elementary classrooms because it is designed to support the development of emergent readers and writers; unlike speaking, reading and writing must be learned. SDL, of course, are adolescents whose cognitive development is far more advanced than elementary students. Nevertheless, they must be apprenticed to take up the foundational and academic skills that support literacy and be challenged by rigorous content. The balanced literacy model is integrated across **Integrated ENL/ELA (Part 1)** and **Stand-alone ENL** (**Part 2)** (which is designated for SDL who are new to print in any language). We believe that this integrated design targets the specific needs of SDL and emphasizes that exposure and experience with the variety of texts and genres of writing is necessary to accelerate both academic and foundational literacy.

The Bridges curriculum draws strategically from the NY State Standards and builds students' foundational and academic skills in ELA in concert. The goal across ELA/ENL is to accelerate SDL literacy *toward* grade-level proficiency. We looked to Foundational Skills standards and K-8 ELA

standards to inform the unit goals and lesson targets. In our work with the ELA standards, we targeted anchor standards that we believed would provide students with most leverage and traction in the secondary classroom. Both sets of standards are woven throughout the two classes in the curriculum design, with varied weight depending on the goals of the class.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">SIFE with Developing Literacy (SDL)
3rd grade or below in home language literacy</td></tr>
<tr><td>Part 1
Integrated ENL/ELA for SDL</td><td>Part 2
Stand-alone ENL for SDL</td></tr>
<tr><td>Academic Concepts, Thinking, Language & Literacy

FLL supports
for new-to-print SDL</td><td>Differentiated Language & Literacy Centers

FLL instruction
for new-to-print SDL</td></tr>
</table>

English Language Arts (ELA/ENL)

The ELA course is divided into two classes: ***Integrated ENL/ELA (Part 1)*** and ***Stand alone ENL (Part 2)***. These work together to accelerate student learning in the development of academic concepts, academic thinking and language, and foundational literacy skills. A focus on these three areas of instruction supports students to develop **both** the foundational skills they need to *learn to read and write* and also the concepts and academic thinking they need to analyze information as they *read to learn*. We recognize that developing literacy is more dynamic than simply learning to read. Withholding complex texts and the discussion of big concepts until SDL have learned to read would be tantamount to educational foreclosure. SDL need both Integrated ENL/ELA (Part 1) and Stand-alone ENL (Part 2)
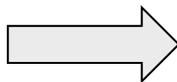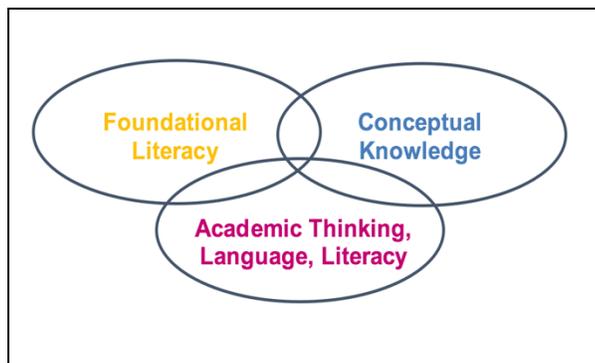
daily: each class is necessary, but neither alone is sufficient when the goal is to accelerate their literacy development.

A Responsive Design

SIFE with Developing Literacy Academic Needs → **Course Design to Meet Needs**

	Integrated ENL/ELA	Stand-Alone ENL
Conceptual Knowledge	●	•
Academic Thinking, Language & Literacy	●	●
Foundational Literacy	•	●

Integrated ENL/ELA (Part 1)

The goal of Integrated ENL/ELA (Part 1) is to expose students to rich language and content through high-interest, high-quality informational and narrative texts. These central texts are more complex than students can read independently, and the content in these texts lend themselves to more sophisticated and rigorous discussion of ideas. Integrated ENL/ELA (Part 1) integrates content, language, and literacy through four thematic units that focus on how everyday people use resources and power to set goals, overcome challenges, and solve problems. The themes provide access points for students to share the knowledge and experiences they bring to the classroom. Students analyze how the ways people decide to use their power and resources impact themselves and others. They determine ways people can work together to make sure resources are shared and power is not abused. Throughout the year, students also explore how all people are connected and how we can respond to differences among us. These themes are interwoven through all units, so as students build understanding, language, and academic thinking skills, they return to the themes, comparing them and analyzing them with increasing rigor.[13] Students are exposed to rich academic vocabulary and build close listening and reading skills and strategies. They also develop ways of responding to text through speaking and writing. These are all skills and competencies drawn from the ELA K-8 standards. The Next Generation Learning Standards FS are addressed implicitly rather than explicitly, since students are exposed to print concepts through text (FS.1 - Print Concepts), as they internalize the phonological system of oral English (FS.2 - Phonological Awareness), as they work on reading and spelling at word level (FS.3 - Decoding & Word Recognition), and as they do repeated reads of text (FS.4 - Fluency).

[13] See the Integrated ENL/ELA (Part 1) Curriculum.

In our experience with SDL in the ELA classroom, we have found that students need opportunities to build conceptual knowledge and academic skills. However, they also need explicit attention paid to developing the skills they need to learn to read and write. While the kind of instruction in Part 1 is necessary, it is not sufficient. Students need opportunities to develop, apply, and practice their newly developing literacy skills as they build independence and identities as readers and writers.

Stand-alone ENL (Part 2)

The focus of Stand-alone ENL (Part 2) is learning to read and write, and developing oral language through literacy.[14] This is a language and literacy centers-based class designed to target the language and literacy levels of each student by using a developmental framework and leveled texts. Foundational Language and Literacy (FLL) instruction and practice are integrated across all centers of Stand-alone ENL to *accelerate* basic language and beginning print skills for SDL who are new to print. Students are assessed in both reading and writing in English. Assessments focus on identifying what students *can* do, as well as identifying the skills and competencies they need to advance to the next reading level. Students rotate through four centers, each of which targets a specific area of language and literacy differentiated to match students' goals. Students are actively involved in setting goals to advance their reading, and the centers provide the space to build fluency and competence and foster independence and self-regulation through applied practice.

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[14] See Implementation Guide for more details.

Centers at a Glance
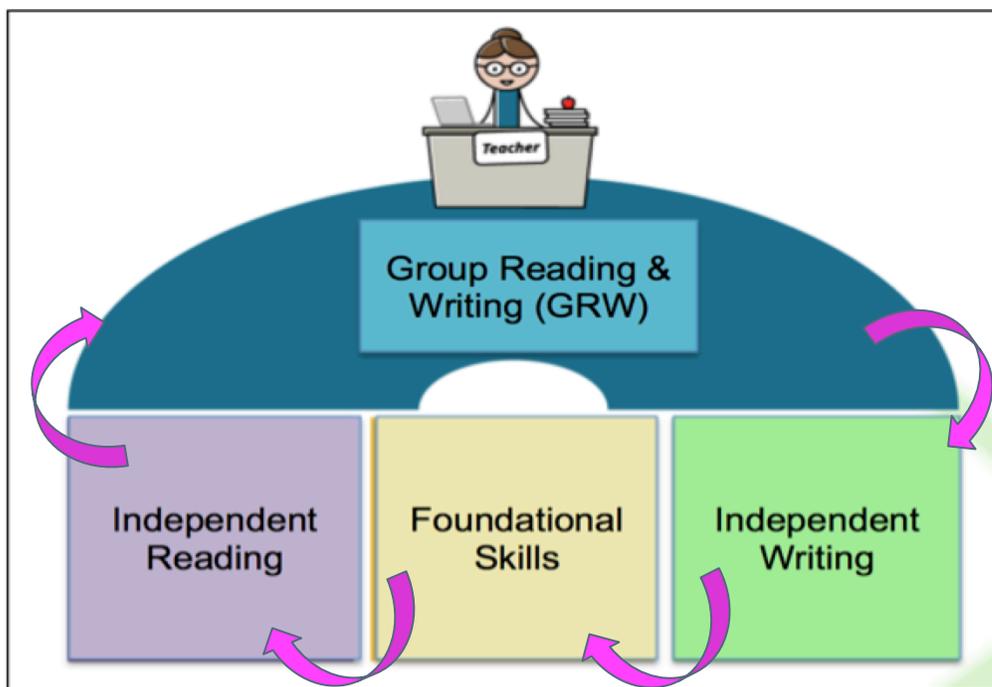
The literacy centers include: Group Reading & Writing (GRW), Independent Reading, Foundational Skills, and Independent Writing.

Stand-alone ENL (Part 2) does *not* include whole-class lessons, with the exception of the first 21 lessons, where students learn center routines. Instead, it consists of teacher-led Group Reading & Writing lessons alongside a range of center tasks; the work at each center is differentiated. For example, at the Foundational Reading Skills Center, some students begin working on beginning consonants, and others are ready for blends and digraphs. While these are both FS.3, students are at different points along the early elementary continuum.[15] Tracking print using one-to-one correspondence, decoding and spelling words, instant recognition of sight words, and repeated reads of the same text are targeted daily in Stand-alone ENL (Part 2). The reading comprehension skills of retelling, inferring, and citing evidence (R.1), determining main idea and summarizing (R.2), and using text features integrating visuals and print (R.7) are also integrated into work at both the Group and Independent Reading Centers. Writing is targeted through CCSS W.2 (writing to explain/inform) and our framework of 6+1 Traits of writing. We use this framework to call out the sub-skills of writing that are not made explicit in the Next Generation Learning Standards.

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[15] While the ELA/Literacy Next Generation Learning Standards span K-12, the Next Generation Learning Standards FS are limited to the early grades. The assumption is that students learn these skills when they are young children, which is not the case for SDL.

Two Course Design Details

	Integrated ENL/ELA for SDL	Stand-Alone ENL for SDL
Purpose	**- Build academic concepts, thinking, language & literacy to prepare students for grade-level ELA classes.**	**- Provide direct reading & writing instruction targeted to student levels.** **- Build literacy independence through daily practice at centers.**
Overall Structure	**Thematic Units** Students engage in four sequential units across the year.	**Rotating Centers** Students move through the same four centers across each week, with tasks targeted to literacy levels.
Instructional Design	Scaffolded language arts instruction through whole-class lessons, using gradual release. Distinction between targets for acceleration vs. exposure.	Direct instruction at Center 1, and student application at Centers 2-4 *(independent reading, writing & foundational skills).*
Texts	**Stretch Texts** Rich informational and narrative text that require scaffolding	**Leveled Texts** Leveled texts targeted to each reader, used with instruction and practiced independently.
Student Grouping	**Flexible Grouping** - Mostly heterogeneous - Frequent same HL partners	**Reading Level Grouping** - Fluid groups that change with student progress

Note: All schools in New York State are required to provide Integrated ENL/ELA and Stand-alone ENL classes for ELLs at early levels of English proficiency. However, because SDL often cannot access these print-heavy classes, we have designed the curriculum and instruction to target SDL needs. Since these documents make clear that these courses are *only* for SDL, the remaining curriculum documents only refer to **Integrated ENL/ELA** and **Stand-alone ELA**.

ELL Policy and Programming: Commissioner's Regulations

(CR) Part 154

In New York State, CR Part 154 is the policy and regulations that govern education to English language learners. In the past 10 years, the number of ELLs in New York State has increased by 20 percent; however, policy has lagged behind. In 2015, an amendment was passed that resulted in the following changes:

- *ELLs cannot be served in classes of more than two contiguous grades (unless in special education).*
- *All students must receive a specified amount of standalone ENL and integrated ENL.*
- *Stand-alone ENL is instruction to develop English language skills so that students can succeed in core content courses. It is delivered by a certified ENL teacher.*
- *Integrated is instruction is to build English language skills through content area instruction (e.g., Social Studies) It is delivered by:*
  - o *A dually certified teacher (ENL + content area), or*
  - o *Co-teaching by an ENL teacher and content area teacher*

The diagram below illustrates how Bridges Courses can be programed to meet the requirements of CR Part 154.

English Proficiency Level: ENTERING	CR PART 154 Regulations Instructional Time: 540 minutes	Bridges Curricula
INTEGRATED ENL/ELA	**1 unit of study in ENL/ELA (180 min.)**	**Integrated ENL/ELA (Part 1) (not flexible)**
STAND-ALONE ENL	**1 unit of study in ENL (180 min.)**	**Stand-alone ENL (Part 2)**
FLEXIBLE PROGRAMMING	**1 unit of study can be *STAND-ALONE ENL* instruction or *INTEGRATED ENL* in Core Content Area (180 min.)**	**Integrated ENL/ELA (Part 1)** **Stand-alone ENL (Part 2)**

Bridges Instructional Principles

Introduction

The Bridges ELA curriculum is guided by a set of instructional principles that support the needs of SDL (students with literacy at or below 3rd grade in their <u>home language</u>). These six principles are not content-specific, but rather guide curriculum planning and implementation across all content classes. They can also be valuable for teachers who are teaching SIFE with higher levels of home language literacy. The principles are grounded in both research on best practices for ELLs and early literacy development as well as our own experiences in the classroom with SDL and our current understanding of their instructional needs.

We present these principles here so that they can support teachers, school administrators, and educational communities serving SDL populations to reflect on and strengthen their practice. The goal is for educators to understand and internalize these principles, and to apply them to both unit and daily lesson planning for SDL in their content classes, as well to turn to as "rules of thumb" when making on-the-spot decisions in the classroom. Although these are listed separately, to support teacher's understanding, these instructional principles are interconnected. Effective teaching and powerful methods reflect an integration of the principles. This is not just a list; the principles are dynamic and must be enacted in the classroom through routines, instructional tasks and protocols, and the culture that is created in the classroom.

Summary of Principles

Principle	Summary
1. Build from known to new and balance the cognitive load.	SDL arrive in our classrooms with rich life experiences. Though they may have spent little time in a classroom, their experience has built understanding and competences that are integral to their identities and interpretation of the world. **Use students' knowledge and experiences as a resource to expand on and build new content and skills.** This means getting to know students and leveraging what they know and are able to do in order to connect to content ideas and academic ways of thinking.[16] SDL have gaps in academic conceptual knowledge, academic thinking and language, as well as foundational literacy. ***Balance the load.***[17] When you are teaching a new thinking skill, keep the content and language familiar so that students can allocate cognitive resources to learning one new thing at a time. If teaching new content, use familiar language and thinking skills.

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[16] Nieto, S. (2005). *Language, culture, and teaching: Critical perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
[17] Sweller, J. (1994). Cognitive load theory, learning difficulty, and instructional design. *Learning and instruction*, *4*(4), 295-312.

2. Use home language as a resource.	Learning involves thinking; for newcomers, students' home language is their language of thought. In order to privilege thinking in the classroom, it is essential to value students' home languages and to create opportunities for students to interact in home language to process their understanding of new ideas. **Incorporate frequent opportunities for students to use home language to make sense of content and to express ideas** in speaking and writing. This shows teachers what students know, validates student expertise, and builds community.
3. Move from experience to oral language to print.	Oral language is the foundation for reading—which in turn involves the process of matching oral language to print.[18] SDL do not have the literacy skills or English language to learn new content through reading. So it is essential to begin by developing students' oral English, which is a foundation for reading in English. Developing oral language happens through experiencing input in meaningful contexts. **Design instruction that builds from experience to oral language (listen/speak) to print (read/write).[19]** First, build content knowledge through non-print activities (experiments, drama, video, pictures)—this helps to develop background. Next, teach the content and language as students describe the experience. Then, after content and language are familiar, provide opportunities for students to make meaning from a written text.
4. Maximize routines using gradual release.	SDL need challenging tasks that stretch their content knowledge, their academic thinking skills, their English language repertoire, as well as their ability to read and write increasingly complex text. Set high expectations, model the thinking process, and release to students, allowing them to struggle productively. Provide support as needed, but "just enough" to allow for the stretch into new learning. **Use gradual release of responsibility to maximize routines and support students to internalize academic ways of thinking that build independence.[20]** Teach highly transferable skills that support students to internalize the ways of thinking that are central to academic thinking (e.g., classifying) and strategies (e.g., annotating text). Through repeated practice, these routines become habit, and students apply similar strategies and ways of thinking to new contexts. This builds independence and gives students more traction across content classes.[21]

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[18] August, D., & Shanahan, T. (Eds.). (2006). *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the national literacy panel on language-minority children and youth*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
[19] Gibbons, P. (1993). *Learning to learn in a second language*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
[20] Fisher, D., & Frey, N. (2014). *Better learning through structured teaching*. Alexandria, VA: ACSD.
[21] Bransford, J., Brown, A., & Cocking, R. (Eds.). (2000). *How students learn: Brain, mind, experience and school*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

5. Design integrated tasks that require collaboration.	Learning is social; knowledge is constructed as we interact with others and is shaped by the skills and competencies that are valued in a particular context. In schools, we value reasoning, analysis, and independence. Vygotsky contends that developing these abilities happens through language—expressing our ideas and our processes supports us to become strategic about the ways we problem solve.[22] The tasks that are designed must embed the skills we value. **Design collaborative tasks that support students to interact with and process content as well as represent their own understanding.**
	SDL may be unfamiliar with the kinds of academic thinking valued in U.S. classrooms.[23] They will need direct instruction and modeling. However, students learn the most when they are engaged in tasks that require collaboration and interaction to process information and build content knowledge and academic thinking. Teachers must strategically design these activities and support students to be active participants. Maximize class time on these tasks.
6. Keep language whole and focus on meaning before accuracy.	The content is the "whole." The discrete skills (e.g., decoding, grammar) are the "parts." SDL need instruction and practice in the "parts," but these should always follow exposure and exploration of the ideas that make up the meaningful "whole"—the content or text. Over a unit, engage students in making sense of the content (whole), then zoom in on some key skills (part) for short periods of time, and then zoom back out to the content (whole).[24]
	Content learning is about understanding and expressing ideas. Ideas get expressed as students speak and write about what they understand. Language comes from the content, and is taught through content. The primary goal is to understand and express content using English academic language, but at first, ideas are expressed in home language, English, or a mix of both. ***Focus on the content in student ideas before focusing on grammatical accuracy.*** Students are often challenged attend to both simultaneously.
7. Observe, assess, and respond.	Building knowledge is a cumulative process; it does not happen through a single exposure to material. Rather, it takes repeated attention, interaction, and reflection. This is an important disposition to cultivate in the classroom for both teachers and students.
	Teachers in the SDL classroom have to be clear about student goals, and become keen observers of student behaviors and have systems in place to capture student learning. Written tasks are not a valid assessment for SDL upon arrival. Use observations and checklists as regular formative assessment, several times a week, as students are working on tasks. Respond by designing mini-lessons based on your observations of student performance. Give students feedback that includes the heart and the mind—acknowledges their progress and directs them to specific next steps to build competence. Find out as much as you can about each student, and share with them aspects of your life, especially challenges you experience learning new content. **Cultivate a community of learners who understand that learning is a process** and support one another.

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[22] Bruner, J. (1985). Vygotsky: An historical and conceptual perspective. In J. V. Wetsch (Ed.), *Culture, communication, and cognition: Vygotskian perspectives* (pp. 21-34). London: Cambridge University Press.
[23] DeCapua, A., & Marshall, H. W. (2010). Serving ELLs with limited or interrupted education: Intervention that works. *TESOL Journal*, *1*(1), pp. 49-70.
[24] Cloud, N., Genesee, F., & Hamayan, E. (2009). *Literacy instruction for English language learners.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Intake and Identification: Understanding the Students

SIFE who arrive into classrooms in secondary school face some of the greatest obstacles to graduation and, among their ELL peers, are at highest risk of dropping out. For this reason, it is incumbent on schools to assess SIFE students carefully and use the information they garner about students to make programming choices that accelerate SIFE access and meaningful participation in the secondary classroom. There is no time to waste, and schools cannot wait until students fail to identify more targeted interventions.

The New York State Education Department has offered guidance on the procedure for identifying SIFE. Combined with careful observation of students and conversations with families with home language support, these tools provide a snapshot of each student and the profiles they most closely match. Schools can then make immediate, informed choices about programming. The NYSED resources include:

- **NYS Home Language Questionnaire and Interview (HLQ):** Identifies if student understands a language other than English.
- **The New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL):** Measures English language proficiency.
- **SIFE Oral Interview Questionnaire:** Seeks information about previous schooling in home country and family background.
- **Multilingual SIFE Screener (MLS)** Assesses home language literacy.

1. NYS Home Language Questionnaire (HLQ)

The HLQ is administered to determine whether there is another language spoken at home and represents the first step in the identification process. The HLQ must be completed by the parent or guardian of each new entrant at the time of the student's initial enrollment in a New York State school. Schools must provide the HLQ in the language the parent or guardian best understands. If the responses on the HLQ indicate that a language other than English is spoken at home or that the student understands a language other than English, then an informal interview in the home language and English must be conducted. If the informal interview indicates that the student is possibly an ELL, the assessment of the student's level of English language proficiency must be conducted using the NYSITELL (see below). Please visit the NYSED website in order to get the most updated list of languages in which the HLQ is available.

2. NYSITELL

The New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners (NYSITELL) replaced the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) and measures the English language proficiency of a student who may possibly be an ELL. A student's score in English proficiency can begin to give us insight into an instructional program that might best serve a student's needs. Based on their score, students receive a designation of:

- **Entering**
- **Emerging**
- **Transitioning**
- **Expanding**
- **Commanding**

We suggest that you review the tests of students who score Entering on the NYSITELL for any clues that might indicate that they are SIFE. It can be helpful to review each of the domains of a student's results on the NYSITELL to ascertain whether there are significant differences in scores across domains. One indicator could be high oral language scores and significantly lower scores in reading and writing. A home language writing sample can often reveal whether students are new to print or have emergent levels of literacy in home language. A review of transcript information or information that was shared in an initial conversation with school or district staff might also shed light on a student's previous schooling.

We also encourage you to work with community-based organizations that might lend insight into the home contexts. Valuable information can also be learned from refugee resettlement organizations. You will use this information to decide who *might* be SIFE.

Those students and their families will be interviewed in more depth, and students will be assessed to ascertain their literacy in home language. ***Keep in mind that an Entering level does not mean SIFE. English language proficiency is distinct from home language literacy.***

3. SIFE Oral Interview Questionnaire

The SIFE Oral Interview Questionnaire can provide valuable insight into a student's educational background, which can play an important role in programming and instruction for schools. The Questionnaire is administered in order to gain a more complete picture of a student's educational history as well as information on family and home background. We urge school districts and schools to hire staff who are proficient in students' languages and who have the cultural proficiency to work with

refugee and immigrant students and families. This requires that the staff are well trained. Staff conducting interviews must be mindful that this conversation often happens within weeks of a student's enrollment in school. Families' lack of familiarity with the school system and the implications connected to the information they share may mean that they choose not to fully disclose information. This might be because they believe it is prudent to tell school staff what they believe they want to hear. We encourage school staff to make each encounter with students an opportunity to continue to understand their experiences and to get to know them. It is important to set up structures in schools where, when appropriate, this information can be shared with other staff members and compiled into a student profile that is developed throughout a student's schooling.

4. Multilingual Literacy SIFE Screener (MLS) – New York State[25]

The MLS is a multilingual suite of diagnostics designed to assess students' literacy in their home language. This is an invaluable tool. Where the NYSITELL evaluates proficiency in the English language, the MLS can help educators distinguish newcomers who bring high levels of literacy in their home language—which is likely to transfer to their literacy practices in English—from students who need more targeted instruction to build literacy skills that are assumed in secondary classrooms.

The MLS is a **semi-adaptive online diagnostic** that assesses **reading comprehension** in nine languages, **vocabulary** in four languages, and **early literacy** in Spanish and English. This assessment reflects current literature-based curricula and didactic principles from students' home countries for grades 3 through 9. Culturally and age-appropriate reading passages are authentic, original texts written by native speaker experts. Passages were created carefully to avoid region-specific vocabulary. Text types and topics were selected according to popular home language literary traditions and genres that newcomer students would have previously been exposed to in their home classrooms. Question types differ by language to match home-country testing conventions.

Note: The MLS is a useful tool for understanding students whose literacy is at a 4th grade level and above. It does not provide any data for students whose literacy is below 3rd grade. In other words, the screener can help you decide where to program SIFE with varied levels of home language literacy. Students who score at 3rd grade or below are appropriate candidates for Bridges.

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[25] Much of this information is taken from the Multilingual Diagnostic User Guide, produced by RISLUS, the Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Education, February 2016.

Overview of Assessment Modules

- The *Reading Comprehension module* presents passages of various types: *literary, informational, functional,* and *persuasive*. Students read and answer both *Initial Understanding and Interpretation questions*. The text types differ by language. It is available in 15 languages as of September 2017: **Arabic, Bangla, Chinese, English, Haitian Creole, Maay Maay, S'gaw Karen, Spanish, Urdu**, **Burmese, French, Fula, Nepali, Russian, and Somali Swahili**.

- The *Vocabulary module,* which is an optional module available separately in some languages and embedded in the reading comprehension module in others, tests students' knowledge of words in context and synonyms. For some languages, the MLS Vocabulary section also includes compound words and multiple-meaning words. In some languages, vocabulary is embedded in the Reading Comprehension section. Please see the NYSED website for the most current and up-to-date information on languages that are available.

- The *Early Literacy module* asks students to identify same and different sounds, syllables, and sound-to-symbol correspondences. Beyond the word level, it examines basic sentence comprehension. It is available in **Spanish and English**.

The Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension assess literacy above the advanced 3rd grade level. Modules begin on the computer with a practice section, and are followed by a series of questions that are scored. The subsequent MLS passages and questions increase in grade and difficulty if they are answered correctly, and decrease in grade and difficulty if they are answered incorrectly. Students with home language literacy below advanced 3rd grade will complete the screener quickly, as it is likely they will not have the literacy to respond to the questions accurately.

The presentation for the MLS Early Literacy varies slightly. Each section begins with a practice session. However, students see every question in each section at once.

The MLS's Literacy Skills and Abilities Teacher Report is a detailed description of a student's skills and abilities in reading, vocabulary, and early literacy. The report also identifies grade level (grades 3 advanced through 9) according to literacy skills and abilities standards of the home country. For students whose literacy is below grade 3 in home language, there is no information provided about their literacy skills.

MLS is valuable precisely because it supports educators to understand students in a more nuanced way. Understanding students' literacy levels in home language enables school staff to design

programming to target the very different needs of their students. As we articulated early in this manual, SIFE are not a heterogeneous group and it is incumbent on schools to program students and design instruction that targets their needs. The MLS represents the timely development of assessments that do support this understanding. Home language literacy has been shown to be extremely important to the education of ELLs. For example, five separate meta-analyses of classrooms showed that educational programs that systematically incorporate use of ELLs' home language result in levels of academic success (Paradis, Genesee, Crago & Leonard, 2010; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2009). In addition, oral proficiency and literacy in the first language can be used to facilitate literacy development in English (August and Shanahan, 2006). By having a better understanding of the skills students bring to the classroom in their first year, teachers can support students to use their home language to access classroom content.

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