During the grant period (October 2012 – 2013), Bridges operated in three high schools in New York City and began scaling up in other districts in New York State. As we scale up, we continue to advance the research and development phase of the intervention, the purpose of which is to enhance educational opportunities for recently arrived immigrant students with historically high drop-out and low graduation rates. Initial results show that this approach has great potential for success.
1. Financial Accounting

Submitted to NYCT on October 31, 2013
2. (a) Objectives of the project supported by the grant. The broad goal of Bridges is to develop, implement and study a Bridge year at the start of high school to accelerate language and literacy learning in content classes among a group of very disadvantaged immigrant students: recently arrived adolescents with very limited native language literacy, including Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE). To do this, we have been developing and testing a curriculum and related pedagogy to develop the foundational skills, the background knowledge, and the higher level cognitive and literacy skills these students need for achievement in high school. A second broad goal is to identify and address Bridges teachers’ professional development needs and document the processes developed to meet those needs.

The specific objectives supported by this year’s NYCT grant are to:

I. Develop and expand professional development (PD) for Bridges teachers, to include the development of a Training Guide for Teachers using the Bridges Curriculum

II. Develop and implement plans for scaling up Bridges, to include inter-visitations by school administrators and teachers interested in learning about Bridges, program development plans for NYC and upstate NY, along with Bridges presentations to disseminate information about Bridges to professionals inside and outside NYS

III. Document and evaluate the outcomes of the Bridges program for the 2012-2013 academic year

(These objectives also received partial support from the NYC Department of Education and the NYS Education Department, through the CUNY/NYS Initiative for Emergent Bilinguals.)

2. (b) Activities carried out to meet each objective: The following activities took place to help meet our objectives:

Objective I: Develop and expand PD for Bridges teachers, to include the development of a Training Guide for Teachers using the Bridges Curriculum

Activities:

PD sessions, Curriculum Coaching:

Overview: Over the course of the 2012-2013 school year, Bridges provided all 13 teachers with professional development, with most teachers also benefitting from individual onsite curriculum coaching at their schools in the Spring semester, 2013. We also designed and conducted a series of Informational and PD sessions in Rochester, NY attended by 20 school district representative and teachers-- Funded by the NYSED, the purpose of these sessions was to expand the Bridges Program to districts upstate with growing numbers of SIFE immigrant students, mostly refugees, in public high schools (see also under II). We call this the ‘Bridges NYS Initiative.’ Below is a summary of these PD offerings during the NYCT grant period.

IA. PD Sessions, NYC: These sessions were attended by teachers from our three participating Bridges high schools. The purpose of these sessions was to provide curriculum and instructional support for teachers new to Bridges this year and continuing support for experienced Bridges teachers (i.e. those who participated last year). Teachers attended a series of three PD sessions: Nov 6, 2012, Jan 28, 2013, June 2, 2013.
IB. **Curriculum Coaching, NYC:** These sessions began in January, 2013 and continued through June 2013. The purpose of these sessions was to provide individual support for Bridges teachers onsite at their high schools. Sessions were planned to follow up on the principles and practices learned in the general PD sessions (IA) by helping with lesson planning, observing classroom implementation, and offering feedback on this implementation.

IC. **Informational and PD Sessions, NYS** (supported by the NYSED): Two initial informational and planning sessions were held in Rochester, NY, and attended by administrators from upstate districts potentially interested in implementing a Bridges Program in their high schools under the Bridges NYS Initiative: The informational session was held on December 4, 2012, followed by Inter-visitations to NYC Bridges high schools (see IIA), and then by a full day PD session on June 5, 2013. This session was attended by representatives from three districts who will be participating in the expansion of Bridges during the next three years (2013-2016): Utica, Buffalo and Rochester. Further PD sessions took place in August, 20013, and are being planned for the rest of the academic year (see under IIB).

ID. **Design and development of the Bridges Teacher’s Guide** (partially supported by the NYC DOE): This guide was developed and produced by our PD Director, with input from other members of the Bridges Team. Through a year-long series of drafts and revisions, the Guide was the result of our experiences with classroom teachers in PD and curriculum coaching sessions through the year, focusing on areas where teachers needed the most support.

**Objective II:** Develop and implement plans for scaling up Bridges, to include inter-visitations by school administrators and teachers interested in learning about Bridges, program development plans for NYC and the Bridges NYS Initiative, along with Bridges presentations to begin to disseminate information about Bridges to professionals inside and outside NYS.

*Overview:* A series of Inter-visitations in April, 2013 led to the development of plans for the continuation and expansion of Bridges activities in the subsequent year (2013-2014) in NYC and NYS. In addition, the Bridges team conducted presentations at conferences in NYC and in California for the purpose of introducing the Bridges Program to other school districts with similar populations.

**Activities:**

IIA. **Inter-visitations of Bridges, April 24 and 25, 2013:** This involved a two-day series of visits to NYC Bridges schools. Visitors included administrators and teachers from three upstate school districts, all of whom had attended the Informational sessions provided by the Bridges team in December, 2012 (see IC above). Rachel Hoff, of the NYC DOE, also attended these sessions, visiting Bridges classrooms and participating in our program discussions and debriefing sessions. Soon after this visit, Ms. Hoff invited us to propose a continuation and scale-up of Bridges in NYC schools for the following year. This activity is described below in IIB.¹

¹ We also tried to initiate a similar series of inter-visitations for NYC SIFE teachers, but Ms. Hoff felt there was not enough time to schedule and implement the visits this year.
IIB. Planning for continued work in NYC: Based on our work over the last two years and our upcoming plans for NYS expansion of Bridges, we developed a proposal to continue and scale up Bridges in NYC, which was recently accepted for funding by the NYCDOE. Activities will include a set of six full day PD sessions to be given in NYC to continuing Bridges teachers and to teachers at four “new Bridges schools” At these sessions, teachers will learn how to set up and sustain a Bridges Program and how to use its instructional strategies through our Bridges Curriculum. Other components of the proposal include continuation of curriculum coaching in four Bridges schools and further development of the Bridges Curriculum.

IIC. Program Development Sessions, NYS (supported by the NYSED): A “planning and development” year began in August 2013, with a full day PD session held in Rochester, NY, attended by 13 teachers and administrators participating in our Bridges NYS initiative. Five subsequent PD sessions are planned for the 2013-2014 academic year in upstate NY, to be attended by all upstate participating teachers. Supplementing these full-day PD sessions, are extended onsite visits to each district by our Program Coordinator, the first of which took place during October, 2013, to help each district select their Bridges Teams (participating teachers and administrators), and to begin plans for the development of a Bridges Program at their selected high schools. Onsite visits are planned again for the Spring, 2014, with teleconferencing throughout the year, for the purpose of getting each district ready for implementation of their Bridges Program in Fall 2014. One school district, Utica, is piloting the Bridges Curriculum in their high school during the current year and will provide feedback for improvement of the materials.

IID. Bridges Presentations: The Bridges team gave presentations at the following conferences during the last academic year (2012-2013):

- Annual Conference of the Research Institute for the Study of Language in Urban Society (RISLUS), May 13, 2013, The CUNY Graduate Center, NYC: We presented a paper: *Bridges over changing waters: Supporting emergent bilinguals’ literacy development*.
- Annual Conference of the Low Educated Second Language and Literacy Acquisition (LESLLA) for Adults, August 7-9, 2013, City College of San Francisco, CA: We presented a panel on low literacy newcomers in New York City high schools, including a paper on Bridges: *SIFE in the City; an extended research program*.

For the next academic year (2013-2014), we anticipate giving the following presentations:

- Annual Conference of *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)*, March 25-29, 2014, Portland, Oregon: a 105-minute panel presentation and discussion on the background, history, rationale, structure and outcomes of the Bridges Project. Four Bridges team members will do the presentation.
- Annual Conference of the *American Association of Applied Linguistics (AAAL)*, March 22-24, 2014, Portland, Oregon: Our proposal to present a symposium at the annual conference of this organization was accepted. The panel will be similar to that at TESOL, but will have a more theoretical and research orientation.
Objective III: Document and evaluate the outcomes of the Bridges program for the 2012-2013 academic year

Overview: Led by our external evaluator, Deborah Short, activities for this component were extensive and also involved collection of data by other experts and school teams. These assessments included intake diagnostics, descriptions of each Bridges school, along with its teachers and student characteristics, English reading assessments, a NYS assessment for English language learners, student writing samples, teacher observations, and interviews with principals and teachers. These activities are briefly described below.

Activities:

IIIA. Intake Diagnostics: Individual intake assessments were conducted at each school by school team leaders or administrators and teachers; these included diagnostics in students’ home languages for the purpose of selecting students for Bridges classes, and individual questionnaires, also in students’ home languages, for the purpose of providing classroom teachers with students’ background information to supplement each school’s (required) Home Language Survey.

IIIB. Descriptions of school, teacher and student characteristics: These were prepared by Dr. Short using published school data, student and teacher questionnaires, and interviews with principals.

IIIC. Pre- and post- tests of English reading: The English Academic Language and Literacy Diagnostic (the ALLD) was given to all participants to assess their English reading comprehension at the start of their exposure to Bridges classes. An improved diagnostic (the LENS), commissioned by the NYC DOE and developed at our CUNY lab, was given at the end of the school year to measure gains over time. Analyses of these assessments were done by Dr. Short and her research team.

IID. The NYSELAT: This NYS test assesses knowledge of English and determines whether an emergent bilingual still requires language services at school. It is administered at the end of the academic year to all students designated “English language learners” throughout the state. The scores of Bridges students in cohort 1 (pilot year, 2011-2012) and cohort 2 (this past year 2012-2013) were received in the early fall 2013 and are currently being recorded and analyzed.

IIIE. Attendance records: Since school attendance has been shown to correlate highly with school success, we are gathering each school’s attendance records for Bridges participants. We believe that attendance is also a measure of motivation; thus, if Bridges students show more consistent school attendance than non-Bridges students, we will take that to imply greater motivation among the students in our program.

IIIF. Writing samples: In the spring of 2012 the Bridges literacy consultant, Nancy Cloud, and Instructional Leader, Suzanna McNamara, began collaborating on the development of a writing rubric especially tailored to the beginning English writing of Bridges students. Dr. Cloud drew on the NYS proficiency level descriptions for writing, the WIDA proficiency level descriptions for writing and the Beginning 6 + 1 Traits Rubrics for writing to create an initial draft, which was reviewed by Ms. McNamara, and subsequently revised by Dr. Cloud.
based on her input. During the past academic year (2012-2013), writing samples were collected from all Bridges students, and a team of research assistants was trained by Dr. Cloud to code and analyze the data in accord with the most recent version of the writing rubric.

IIIG. Teacher Observations: Dr. Short trained two research assistants to help her develop an observation protocol and to conduct two observations, one in fall (2012) and one in spring (2013) of each Bridges teacher. After the fall observations, Dr. Short held an informational session for the entire Bridges team to present her initial findings; the purpose of this session was to discuss the particular instructional needs of Bridges teachers, in order to help in planning PD and curriculum coaching sessions for the rest of the year.

IIIH. Interviews with Bridges teachers and principals: In June 2013, Dr. Short conducted structured interviews with the principal at each of our schools, and with a sampling of Bridges teachers across the three schools. The purpose of these interviews was find out how Bridges has affected individual schools (the benefits and challenges), and to discuss suggestions for improvement in Bridges classrooms.

2. (c) Results accomplished

Overview: The results for the current year of this grant (Oct 2012-2013) are the culmination of the extensive activities described in the previous section. These results are listed below, per each objective, with documentation contained in the Appendices to this report.

Results for Objective I: This objective involved the expansion of PD for Bridges teachers. Results include:

- Implementation and evaluation of PD sessions in NYC and NYS: For samples of materials used at and evaluations of these PD sessions, see Appendix A.
- Implementation of Curriculum Coaching sessions in NYC: For descriptions of these Curriculum Coaching sessions, see Appendix B.
- Production of the first version of The Teacher’s Guide to Bridges (see Appendix C)

Results for Objective II: This objective involved plans for the scaling up of Bridges. Results include:

- Implementation of Inter-visitations between NYS and NYC: For samples of the documentation of this program, see Appendix D.
- Proposals, written and accepted, for the development of future Bridges Programs for upstate and downstate: see Appendix E for NYC and NYS work plans.
- Presentations of the Bridges Program: For a sample of these presentations, see Appendix F.

Results for Objective III: This objective involved the evaluation of Bridges for the 2012-2013 academic year by an external evaluator. The extensive activities for this objective resulted in a 19-page report by this evaluator, Dr. Deborah Short, and her research team. Here is the conclusion of the report, the full version of which is found in Appendix G:
Conclusion

This formative evaluation of Year 2 of the Bridges program revealed benefits to the low literacy newcomer students, their teachers, and their schools. The students received a curriculum for four core content courses that was specially designed for students who needed to learn English and develop foundational knowledge of subjects they would face in the regular 9th grade curriculum. The Bridges curriculum met the students at their educational level and advanced their learning. The classroom environment was geared to learning about the operation and expectations of U.S. schools and introduced students to U.S. culture as well. The units integrated academic literacy and basic content learning with critical thinking and project-based learning. All four language skills were practiced daily in Bridges classes. Students’ home language and cultures were respected and valued.

Overall, the year in Bridges gives these newly arrived adolescents time: time to learn how to participate in an American high school, and time to learn enough social and academic English to participate in ninth grade courses the following year. Students learned academic study habits and how to engage with the teacher and other students in lessons, which was a shift for many from the rote learning approach prevalent in their native countries’ schools.

2. (d) Problems encountered and how they were resolved

Problem: Teacher attendance at PD sessions was a problem when principals did not fully support the use of NYCDOE designated PD days for the purpose of Bridges PD. Lack of preparation and meeting time for teams and teachers also surfaced as a problem.

Resolution: While we could not resolve these problems during the current year, we are insisting on meeting with all principals prior to the establishment of their schools’ Bridges Programs for the following year. At this meeting, we will provide them with more information about Bridges and the urgent need for extensive PD. We hope this will encourage them to ‘buy into’ to the PD requirements of Bridges teachers, along with other requirements for a successful Bridges program, to include provision of extra prep. time for Bridges teams to meet and for teachers’ classroom prep. Without such ‘buy in’ and accommodations on the part of Bridges principals, along with offers for additional resources, the program has less chance of success.

Problem: There is a continuing need for more extensive home language support and home language resources for all Bridges students.

Resolution: In next year’s NYC Bridges programs, we have received funding for the development of bilingual curriculum supports (in Spanish and Bangla), which should provide some help in this area. In next year’s NYS Bridges programs, we are working with local communities to help with home language translations and support.

Problem: There is a need for additional support for exiting Bridges students, i.e. in their follow-up (9th grade) year to Bridges.

Resolution: All new Bridges programs will include the development of concrete plans for counseling and supporting Bridges students in the ninth grade, recognizing that a single year of Bridges may not be sufficient to sustain students’ interest and achievement in school.
2. (e) Activities carried out to secure funding to continue this project once the NYCT grant expires.

Extensive meetings with representatives from the NYSED and the NYC DOE were undertaken by the Bridges PI during the Winter and Spring 2013, in an effort to secure ongoing funding and support for Bridges. These activities have resulted in the following funding for Bridges:

Grants Received:

- A grant of $300,000 per year from the NYSED through CUNY/NYSIEB for Bridges over next three years (July 2013-June 2016), totally $900,000. The grant focuses on funding to help Bridges start-ups in three New York State school districts.

- A grant of $500,000 from the NYSED (from Race for the Top) for the development of a NYS SIFE Curriculum (July 2013-Dec 2014). This Curriculum, which will be widely disseminated to SIFE districts throughout NYS, is based on the Bridges Curriculum that we developed and which is used in all Bridges classes.

- A grant of $198,000 from the NYC DOE for the further development of Bridges in the form of PDs for instructional improvement and for new Bridges start-up programs, onsite coaching, and curriculum development (August 2013-June 2014).

We are very grateful for the funding provided to us during our two start-up years by the NYCT. This funding enabled us to begin and continue the research and development on this project, a phase that continues to this day. At this time, we are encouraged by the initial outcomes of an intervention that is proving to be very promising for students who otherwise have little chance of academic success. Thank you!