

*Bridges to Literature and Content* is based on scientifically proven research and pedagogy in language and literacy. The science of reading as it pertains to adolescent readers is complex and requires a consideration of the intricacies of reading as an ongoing developmental process. Literacy encompasses much more than reading, as students traverse language domains (including listening, speaking, and writing).

For today's learners, literacy also includes digital and discipline-specific literacies. This process is nonhierarchical and not always linear. Each academic content area requires its own development of vocabulary, knowledge of syntax, and useful comprehension strategies for fluency and understanding to grow.

Beyond content-area literacy, adolescents often rely on out-of-school literacies as part of their identity development. Students have literacy skills that must be made evident in the classroom setting. Today,

we recognize these skills as part of the funds of knowledge students bring forward, and capitalize on them as academic assets (Gonzales, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Moll 2019). Striving readers, multilingual learners, and students from a wide range of abilities and backgrounds all possess the talent necessary to become strong in literacy. *Bridges* provides the supports necessary to aid and accelerate the process.

*Bridges* is built on specialized knowledge specifically designed for working with these learners by building on the assets they bring into the classroom and addressing the unique academic challenges they face. All lessons contain differentiation and offer scaffolds and opportunities for augmentation.

Strong literacy development requires multicomponent strategies that move beyond isolated skills to cognitively challenging and engaging literacy activities that promote growth. Engagement is key when working with students who need added literacy supports.

## Research background

### Importance of motivation and engagement

In a classroom setting, complex emotional and motivational factors come into play as students strive to develop language. Krashen (1982) referred to this as the "affective filter." When the affective filter is high, students may experience anxiety, self-consciousness, boredom, annoyance, or even alienation. When the affective filter is low, students experience less anxiety and are actively engaged. Current research continues to support motivation and engagement as key to literacy development for adolescents (Wilkinson, 2020). *Bridges* is structured to create environmental and pedagogical supports that engage multilingual learners and developing readers in the simultaneous learning of language and content in an engaging and welcoming manner. Meaningful tasks for students with disabilities, as well as amplification for students who would benefit from additional challenges (including gifted learners), are included in every unit.

### Language and literacy interaction in the classroom

The work of Vygotsky (1978) has long served as a foundation for much of the research and theory on cognitive and linguistic development. He strongly believed in the role of social interaction in the development of cognition and language—notably, the importance of multiple exposures and meaningful interactions with language. Students cannot learn a language through rote memorization and have it be preserved or applied in any meaningful way. Instead, repeated exposure is crucial. Further, Bruner's (1977) work also emphasized the importance of revisiting concepts and ideas. He noted that learning requires a continual deepening of understanding in progressively more complex ways. *Bridges* contains multiple opportunities for repeated interaction in pairs, small groups, and whole groups. Vocabulary and concepts are revisited and reviewed throughout the curriculum.

## Scaffolded instruction

Systemic supports are needed in order to support the complex, nonlinear process of language learning (Walqui, 2012). With scaffolded instruction in literacy, the educator supports students at a level just beyond what they are able to achieve on their own. Vygotsky (1978) called this the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD). Current research building upon the ZPD emphasizes the importance of scaffolds across the language domains. For example, the American Institutes for Research Center for English Language Learners (2018) disseminated research noting that scaffolding is crucial in language acquisition and literacy. They suggest adding visuals, gestures, examples, graphic organizers, and sentence frames. *Bridges* incorporates the foundational research and progressive models designed to meet the needs of today’s multilingual learners, as well as students developing literacy skills. The research is translated into strategies that function in a cohesive and consistent manner, focusing on the desired result of increased language and literacy development. These are the bridges to academic success.

## References

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## Bridges Instructional routine

- **Explore and learn** Each unit section begins with an initial engagement where students explore visuals, Essential Questions, activities, and text. Students share what they know (e.g., about the theme, concept, vocabulary, etc.). Vocabulary is cued, but not pre-taught out of context, as the development of schema is necessary for language to be retained and meaningful. After the exploration, there is direct instruction of the standards-based topic.
- **Practice** Students have many opportunities to interact with language across the domains in a guided manner followed by a gradual release.
- **Communicate** Students then have multiple opportunities to reiterate their learning with partners, in small groups, and independently.
- **Assess** Lessons include formative assessments so that teachers can gauge progress in real time and then respond to individual student needs.