

# **Frequently Asked Questions/Bridges Math Curriculum**

## **What will students do in math class?**

There are 8 units of study at each grade level. Each unit includes 20 lessons and takes approximately 4 weeks to complete. Each lesson takes a single class period. In addition to the main lesson of the day, students also work on their skills in 15- to 20-minute Number Corner exercises, many of which are games.

In Bridges classrooms, students:

- Play an active role in their own learning and in the classroom community
- Talk about math by sharing observations, explaining their thinking, and asking questions
- Use hands-on activities and a variety of math tools and visual models to understand how mathematical concepts work
- Build stamina for solving complex problems that require perseverance
- Play games in small groups to practice what they learn

## **How often should we expect homework?**

Homework is a chance for students to practice what they have learned and for families to see what students are doing in math class. Homework is assigned with increasing frequency as students progress from kindergarten through fifth grade. In the lower grades, assignments are sent home about once a week; by fifth grade, you can expect to see assignments two or three times a week. In addition, teachers may send home supplemental practice pages if students need more practice with a particular skill or if there is a desire for more frequent homework.

## **Does each student get a textbook?**

No. Each student uses a Bridges Student Book in class to solve problems and record their work. Each student also gets their own Home Connections book for homework assignments. In kindergarten, the homework doesn't begin until later in the year. Some schools choose to run all of these pages as handouts, rather than use bound books.

## **What resources are available online?**

You can get an overview of the mathematics in each unit; free apps that run on devices and on the Web; as well as ideas about books, games, and other resources to help your child by going to **[the Resources for Families page](#)**.

## **What do I do if I want my child to have extra practice?**

Talk to your child's teacher. Bridges includes additional practice pages, and there are many high-quality games and apps available for practice. Talking with your child's teacher ensures you're on the same page regarding your child's needs.

**Why is it a good idea to learn multiple strategies? Why not have students memorize basic facts and algorithms?**

As students develop their ability to recall basic facts, it makes good sense to address both mastery of the skill (quick recall of facts) and understanding of the concept (the properties of the operation and the relationships between facts). Bridges teaches basic facts by first having students explore the operation (addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division) in the context of story problems or situations, which ensures students understand what it means to add, subtract, multiply, or divide. Students then learn strategies for solving basic problems; these strategies illustrate properties of the operation and can be used for mental math with larger numbers (as well as to help recall facts when needed). Finally, students practice the facts until they can recall them from memory.

Bridges teaches students to compute with larger numbers by first establishing conceptual understanding of the operation, then using visual models to learn different ways of calculating, and finally helping them become proficient with efficient algorithms. When computing with larger numbers, students are frequently encouraged to make an estimate first. Estimation promotes number sense, helps students evaluate whether their final answers are reasonable, and encourages them to develop mental math skills that are useful in so many real-world situations.

**Why is it important for students to show their work and explain their thinking?**

Asking students to show their work provides more information for teachers and improves student learning: when students explain how they solved a problem, they come to understand the mathematical concepts more deeply. Showing their work also provides detailed evidence that teachers can use to see what students know and where their misconceptions lie. This evidence is essential: it allows teachers to adjust the way they teach to meet students' needs, and to document student learning over time, which helps them communicate with families about students' progress. For similar reasons, state tests often require students to explain how they solved a problem. Students are better prepared for such test items when they explain their solutions on a regular basis.