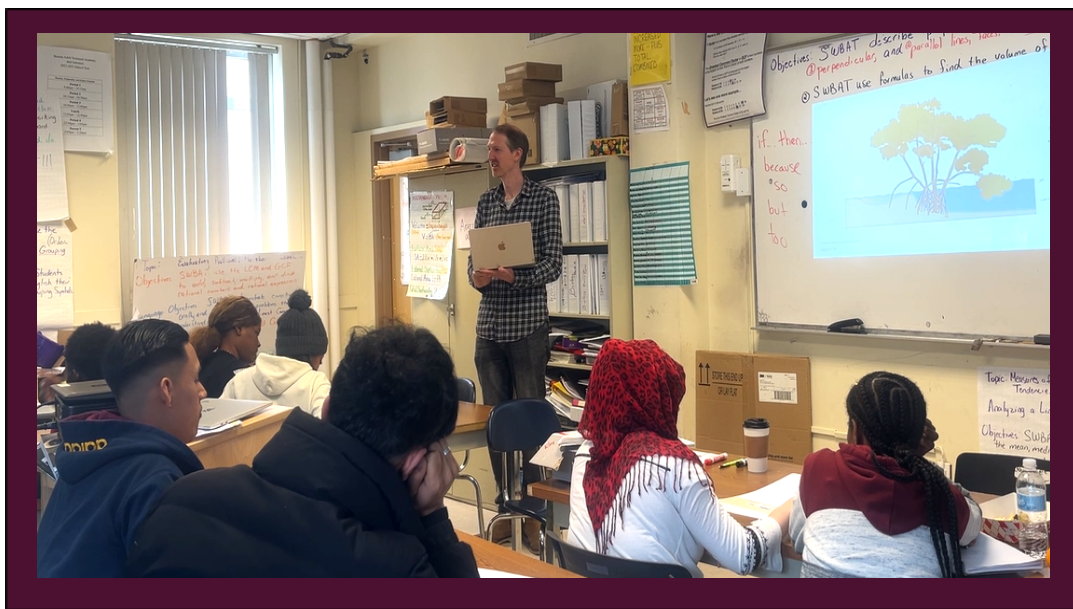


Boston Adult Technical Academy

Bridges-CUNY Impact Stories: Sharing SLIFE and Newcomer Learner Journeys

By the Bridges to Academic Success CUNY Team: L. Auslander, E. Townsend, C. Gaither, K. Seddon

When you walk into the SLIFE classroom at Boston Adult Technical Academy (BATA), you see students' home countries represented through flags and student work on the walls. It is obvious that students know that this space belongs to them. As class starts, they turn in their phones and prepare to learn. With fifteen languages spoken in the school, students are bound to sit next to classmates who speak a different home language, so English is the common denominator. This makes language an obstacle, but not a barrier, as they work together to express their stories and ideas through their common tongue, all while accelerating their language and literacy skills.



Nate Eckstrom's Newcomer students at Boston Adult Technical Academy (BATA) use cause and effect language to discuss the impact of changes to biodiversity in a mangrove ecosystem.

Multilingual students at BATA in Boston, MA are 19-22 years old and most are newly arrived in the US within the past 1-2 years. Nate Eckstrom teaches Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE) who are working toward college and career readiness. "The students' goal is to be able to communicate in academic English to prepare for postsecondary success. Their work samples show that they are able to understand each other, (and) express themselves with specificity," explains Nate.

Nate is a veteran teacher of twelve years who started piloting the Bridges-CUNY ELA/ELD Curriculum for SLIFE and Newcomer Learners this past winter. Nate has seen high student engagement in the topics which link to students' instruction in science and social studies, while skill building in language.

"They are able to organize their thoughts to make an argument which are part of the goals of our school and district. The curriculum has been effective in engaging them in the development of those skills as well as [providing] many opportunities to assess their progress."

Students speak and write throughout the curriculum, using mentor texts to provide evidence to support their ideas. This practice instills the value of doing research and using credible resources when sharing opinions and arguments. For example, here is snapshot of student discourse from Nate's classroom:

"The two texts being referenced in the conversation were appropriately ...challenging and provoked a lot of thought for students." Nate explains. Here we see, these students have internalized the academic language in the lessons and are using it to share their arguments in academic conversations."

Similarly in Amanda Leal's classroom at McDevitt Middle School of Waltham Public Schools, newcomer learners are working toward WIDA and ELA standards in Massachusetts using the Bridges-CUNY ELA/ELD Curriculum for SLIFE and Newcomer Learners. She has seen that, "...the curriculum effectively integrates a range of tasks that provide students with ample opportunities to practice and engage with the language orally and through reading, which allows these skills to transfer into writing."

Through the curriculum lessons and tools, students are able to authentically share who they are in the classroom, like this student from El Salvador. He has been in the U.S. for six months, and using his strength in speaking, Amanda worked with him to expand on his written ideas



Student D: If there are fewer trees, then the animals don't have a place to live.

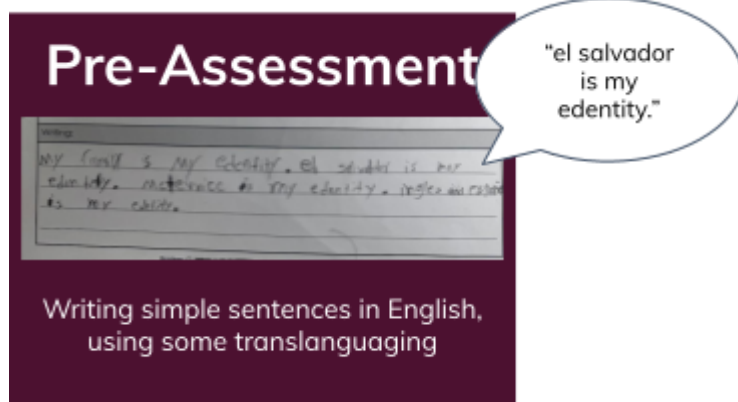
Student L: I agree because Andrés say on page 12, "There are fewer trees for the butterfly to live in, its a problem for them."

Student R: I agree because...I understand your idea because Lucía's Story says on page 14, "'Mangrove forests were ecosystems, too,' Anton adds. 'The fish and the crabs liked the trees. The trees gave them a safe place and food.'"

Student D: Thank you for sharing.

over the course of the unit and build on his original thoughts by adding details. His voice as a multilingual student is clear in his expression of his identity.

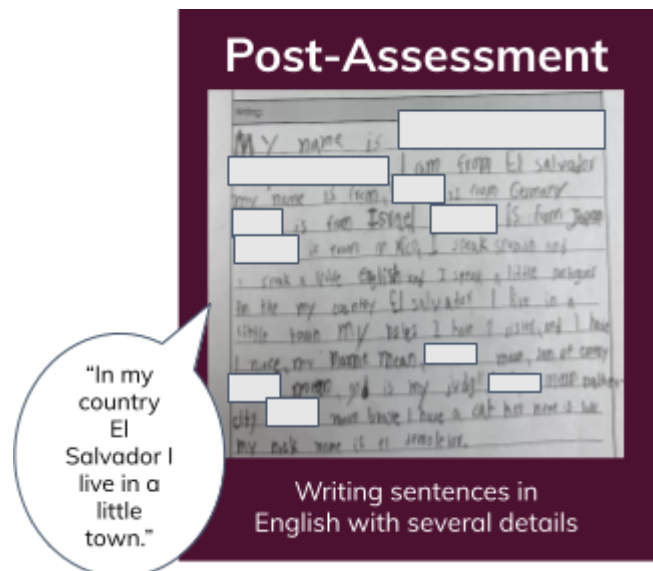
All students, Amanda shares, continued to work on these skills throughout the year and increase their ability to communicate with support from her targeted instruction.



"The pre- and post-assessments rubrics were really helpful with identifying both strengths and areas for growth. This insight allows us to tailor our instruction to better meet the needs of each learner in the class and inform instruction in future units."

The speaking and writing skills that students learn in Amanda's class are then transferred to other classes and into students' daily lives. The ability to share about themselves is important in advocating for their identity to be seen and understood at school, in the wider community, and beyond.

The Bridges-CUNY Newcomer Program, like all Bridges programs, supports newcomer students, teachers, school and district leaders on a journey of personal and professional development. Teachers partner with Bridges to integrate strategies and resources that elevate their students, allowing improved and more targeted feedback and learning. Bridges programs equip schools with not only differentiated resources, but also professional learning, job-embedded adult learning, and research and evaluation to engage in a cycle of continuous improvement that holistically impacts newcomer education at the school.



At Bridges we love to highlight the stories of our students to show the possibilities of growth. One of the things that excites us is the way our students respond to our partner teachers. We love to share the voices of our SLIFE and newcomer students as they grow and evolve in the classroom. After almost a year in a Bridges classroom, one of our students shared their experience:

"[I] also feel proud because in my country I had seen these topics, but I had never understood them well for the same reason that my classmates said, [no one] ever took the time to explain them to me. So here I have learned more, I have learned to develop myself more, and if I give an answer and I'm not right, I don't feel afraid."

Stories of successful classrooms show how teachers take steps to build confidence in the classroom. A supportive environment creates a welcoming culture and targeted strategies and materials can make a difference in the lives of newcomer students.

If you are interested in learning more about the [Bridges ELA/ELD Newcomer Program](#) or any of our other nationally available programs on professional learning and leadership consultation, please reach out to info@bridges-sifeproject.com or visit our website at bridges-sifeproject.com

The Bridges-CUNY Newcomer Program in Massachusetts is possible thanks to a partnership with Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).