

# Bridge to College and Careers Program

## LaGuardia Community College

**The Bridge to College and Careers Program provides an educational and career pathway for adults and out of school youth.** Students prepare for the high school equivalency exam and create a plan to successfully transition to post-secondary training and college. Coursework covers topics in healthcare, science or business and develops academic reading, writing and math skills in preparation for college and employment in one of these three areas.

Admission to the Bridge Program requires a three step registration process; upon admission, students attend a single course that meets as a cohort for ten hours per week for twelve weeks, and then transition to a six week course to prepare for college, or to continue to build skills for the high school equivalency exam.

### KEY PROGRAM FEATURES

#### Contextualized Coursework

The central innovation of the Bridge Program is the implementation of contextualized, career-focused curriculum. Contextualized instruction is a sector focused approach of developmental instruction that uses authentic materials from one career area to build basic skills.

- Contextualized Math

Mathematics skills outlined in the College and Career Readiness Standards are taught in the context of the specific career focus of each class. Students explore how math skills are embedded in the work of science, business and health disciplines and have the opportunity to practice concepts that are relevant to their career sector. For instance, students in the Bridge to Science class study cellular transport and are asked to calculate the surface area to volume ratio of cells. Bridge to Business students analyze cost sheets from a real business plan, using proportions to calculate annual percent growth and division to calculate operating expenses.

- Contextualized Literacy

Using nonfiction texts that become progressively more complex as the semester moves along, students explore key questions in their field of interest, such as the relationship between patients and healthcare providers, medical ethics in stem-cell research, or the economics of supply and demand. For example, in a contextualized Bridge to Health class, students may read about topics in epidemics, end of life decisions and patient case studies, which all develop knowledge in sector-specific concepts and serve to build academic basic skills based on the College and Career Readiness standards.

#### Instructional Strategies

The Bridge classroom is a collaborative learning environment where students discover key concepts and practice professional skills focused on a specific career pathway. Favoring an interdisciplinary range of texts and primary source materials, the rigorous course content emphasizes basic reading, writing and math skills.

Bridge instructors design student-centered learning activities to engage students in critical investigations of key sector specific questions and build the analytical and professional skills required in college and the workplace. During the semester, students have multiple opportunities to evaluate their own academic progress, participate in one-on-one student conferences and demonstrate their skills in summative assessments, formal essays, portfolios and final project presentations.

#### Bridge Program Research: Measuring the Effectiveness of Contextualized Coursework

Bridge Program students are performing better in coursework and on the high school equivalency exam and are enrolling more in postsecondary education programs than their traditional prep program counterparts.

Read the MDRC May 2013 report at :

[http://mdrc.org/sites/default/files/Enhancing\\_GED\\_Instruction\\_brief.pdf](http://mdrc.org/sites/default/files/Enhancing_GED_Instruction_brief.pdf)

## KEY PROGRAM FEATURES CON'T

### College and Career Pathways Services

The Bridge Program college and career advisor and instructors co-facilitate college and career workshops, to introduce personal growth and career focused reading and writing assignments and lead group discussions to develop strategies for educational and professional growth beyond the Bridge program. Students complete a computer-based career interest and skills inventory and conduct research into local growth industries, professional occupations and post-secondary education options.

LaGuardia Community College faculty visit Bridge classes as guest lecturers and career panelists to introduce students to the training and professional requirements of various career tracks. Pathways services are integrated into the Bridge classrooms to develop students' academic and professional identities and support continued success in college and career training. Throughout the semester, Bridge students participate in series of college and career workshops to develop self-efficacy and prepare to enact their own college and career plans.

Bridge students can receive one-on-one support to help them develop and refine their strategy for education and professional growth beyond earning the HSE diploma. Assistance with the college application process, financial aid guidance, and educational case management is available during class and in individual sessions. Ongoing transitions support is available to Bridge Program graduates as they move forward to college and certificate programs, including financial aid guidance, educational case management and degree planning, academic advisement, and referrals for tutoring and social services.



## BRIDGE PROGRAM CALENDAR

### Session One: 12 Week Contextualized Coursework

Students complete contextualized basic skills coursework aligned to their career interests in health, science, or business. By the end of 12 weeks, students have built content mastery in their career field of choice and gained transferable skills that they will use in college level courses and the workplace. Students demonstrating readiness to take the official high school equivalency exam will be referred to the test at the end of Session One.

### Session Two: 6 Week Postsecondary and High School Equivalency Preparation

Depending on their readiness for the high school equivalency exam at the end of session one, students participate in either continued skills development for the high school equivalency exam or college prep classes that build analytic reading, writing and math skills for college level coursework and the workplace. In the college prep module, students prepare for placement exams, undertake a guided research project, collaborate on close reading activities in the classroom and practice new math topics they will encounter in first year college mathematics.

## STUDENT POPULATION

Bridge students are a diverse group of adults. Roughly half of the students are 26 years or older and over half of students are parents of minor children. Representing a broad range of ethnic and racial backgrounds, forty-five percent of Bridge students are foreign-born. More than half of the students are employed upon entering the program, though an equivalent population reports low to extremely low income, with over 50% of students receiving some form of public assistance. Just under half of Bridge students left high school upon completing the 11th grade, however, more than half enter the program at a 7th or 8th grade reading level.

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