

Congratulations to all of our students! And a big thank you to Provost Dr. Susan Baum and Dean Henry Nichols, whose leadership, work, and commitment led to a memorable graduation and another amazing summer residency.



Best Regards,

Carl Sabatino
CEO, Bridges Graduate School

Congratulations, Graduates!

On Friday, July 2, the Bridges Graduate School of Cognitive Diversity in Education had its first graduation ceremony at Bridges Academy in Studio City, California. The ceremony was broadcast around the world with students, graduates, families, and friends logging in throughout the United States, Canada, India, and Australia. Due to the pandemic, the ceremony also recognized and celebrated the students who earned certificates in 2e during 2020. In total, 41 students received a California state-approved certificate in twice-exceptional education, and 11 students received a master of education degree in cognitive diversity in education.



The commencement ceremony began with the procession of faculty and graduates led by Graduate School Dean Henry Nichols with the school mace in hand and Provost Dr. Susan Baum carrying a candle.

The first speaker of the evening was the CEO of Bridges Graduate School, Carl Sabatino. Carl recalled the difficult questions he was asked 17 years ago when he was interviewing for the position of headmaster at Bridges Academy: Where will the future generation of top minds in the field of 2e education come from? Where will the next generation of 2e teachers and administrators come from? How can we further educate the public?

“The future of 2e education and the answers to these important questions,” Carl said to the crowd, “come from Bridges Graduate School. But most importantly, they come from the intellect, hearts, minds, and passion of our Provost Dr. Susan Baum and Dean Hank Nichols.”

Provost Baum spoke about presenting the Bridges Graduate School to the California Bureau of Private Post-Secondary Education four years ago and how they envisioned the mission of the graduate school. “We knew we wanted to prepare leaders, poised to make a difference for 2e youngsters and those bright individuals whose brains were wired differently,” Dr. Baum said. Upon reflection, “Bridges Graduate School has been able to achieve these ends by cultivating knowledge of diverse worldviews and perspectives, and developing the skills, insights, and imagination required of scholars who will assure leadership roles as instructional leaders, researchers, administrators, and policy makers.” Dr. Baum was pleased to be able to recognize the delightful, creative, and task-committed group of individuals as they continue their journey to become leaders.

Two students spoke on behalf of their classmates. The first was Juniette Kang’a, a current doctoral student who received her certificate in 2e in 2020, and Karen Workman, a master’s student. The backgrounds of the two student speakers are incredibly different. Kang’a has 16 years of experience in marketing and customer experience, specializing in launching products, programs, and services, and Workman has been a teacher and worked in learning support in China, Texas, and Cambodia. Both recognized how glad they were to have found Bridges Graduate School and to have met and worked with the incredible students and faculty.

After the student speakers, Provost Baum awarded the certificates in 2e to the 41 students in attendance and online. The master’s degree students were then recognized and awarded their Master of Education degrees as faculty member Dr. Kristin Berman read their names and the synopses of their action research studies to the crowd.

The event culminated with Dean Nichols explaining several academic rituals. The first was the school mace and *sabrage* technique of opening a champagne bottle with a sword. Dean Nichols performed the technique at the end of the summer residency in 2019. It is a tradition to pass the mace to someone new who will perform the *sabrage* at graduation and pick the following year’s participant. This year, master’s student Patryce Harris led the procession of students and faculty with the mace and performed the *sabrage*.

Each student was given a lit candle, a tradition that began in the 12th century at the end of the Dark Ages. The candle, Dean Nichols said, represents the light of education and knowledge and that Bridges Graduate School is dedicated to sharing the light. The students and faculty followed Patryce and enjoyed refreshments on the lawn.



Meet the Graduates!

Below are the bios, reasons for attending BGS, and a summary of action research studies for six of the master's students who completed their studies this July.

The five other master's students — Jessica Altuch, Yvonne Blinde, Patryce Harris, Siobhan Lamb, and Teresa Nair — who were recognized during graduation will be featured in the January newsletter.

JT Chaiyakam

JT Chaiyakam has worked in film for over 20 years producing and directing numerous short and feature films. JT is currently teaching film at Bridges Academy in Studio City, where he works with elementary, middle, and high school students. JT creates a student-led space where children can create their movie projects from script to screen. He sees producing projects as a talent-focused model for humanities and STEM.



Why did you pursue a degree from BGS?

Even as a filmmaker, I always had an interest in teaching and higher education. It has been my goal to teach students the dynamism of making movies and performing arts. Bridges Academy provided a unique opportunity to teach and

learn how to create a positive environment. While the graduate school focuses on cognitively diverse students, I firmly believe that making movies can be an engaging and exciting entry point to general education. My goal is to combine the excitement of movie making into any classroom to strengthen learning and working memory.

Describe your action research study.

In 2020, students went from classrooms to laptops and digital classrooms. And unfortunately, it appeared that cognitively diverse students were more disconnected from their teachers and peers. My goal was to create an exciting and engaging environment online in their motley environment.

My question was, "What is the effect of using group and individual activities during online learning on students' excitement, engagement, and executive function?" The 2020-2021 school year was tumultuous, but I witnessed students online for about one month and in person for the following month. The findings produced a few surprises.

Kimberlee Joseph

Kimberlee Joseph is a 2e advocate, parent coach, and writer whose primary focus lies in supporting the parents and caregivers of 2e learners as they navigate their child's educational path, be it public, private or homeschool. Kimberlee believes that when we discover, explore, and foster the unique strengths, talents, and interests of twice-exceptional kids, life and learning become more peaceful and joyous not only for the child but for the entire family.



Why did you pursue a degree from BGS?

The school's focus on cognitive diversity and a strength- and talent-based approach to learning aligns well with my own goals of supporting outside-of-the-box learners and their families in a way that affirms and leverages the unique strengths and abilities of each child. The chance to learn from the professors and staff at Bridges, many of whom are experts in the field of twice-exceptionality, was an opportunity that I could not pass up.

Describe your action research study.

Many twice-exceptional students experience difficulties with written production, making it challenging to show all that they know in a written format. This can lead to frustration, anxiety, and resistance to the writing process. Our research looks at the effects that strength-based and talent-focused entry points to writing have on student attitudes and experience of the writing process, and subsequent written production.

We found that when a small sample of 2e learners with a history of writing challenges were provided with personalized pre-writing activities that

leveraged their unique strengths and talents, students showed some gains on measures of self-confidence and self-efficacy, and the total word count of their writing products increased. Additionally, we found a statistically significant increase in sustained attention to the writing task when students participated in strength-based and talent-focused entry points to writing.

Mairen Lenehan

Mairen resides in New Jersey with her husband and two children. She received her bachelor of arts in French from Connecticut College. She studied speech language pathology at Pace University and at Kean University's Nathan Weiss Graduate College. Mairen is currently pursuing a master's degree, hoping to help other parents navigate the joys and challenges of raising a twice-exceptional child.



Why did you pursue a degree from BGS?

Once I was introduced to the concept of twice-exceptionality, I saw these children everywhere I looked. At the same time, I saw almost no professionals trained to help them or their families navigate an often unconventional path. I decided to become that professional and help 2e kiddos and their families thrive.

Describe your action research study.

Our action research intervention was designed to answer the question, "What is the effect of strength-based and talent-focused pre-writing activities on student attitudes, experiences and written production?" Two young twice-exceptional learners who have a history of writing difficulties participated in both a traditional pre-writing activity and multiple personalized strength-based and talent-focused pre-writing activities with the goal of producing a short personal narrative. Intervention activities were designed to align with each participant's unique strengths and talents as determined through a variety of assessments, a portfolio review, and a personal interview. Statistically significant gains were found in sustained engagement time when students participated in strength-based and talent-focused pre-writing activities.

Caitie Wilson

Caitie Wilson is a current teacher in the Phoenix program at Bridges Academy. She teaches the self-contained classroom and works with students to build new confidence and skills to prepare them to move through the program. She has been a part of the graduate school since it began and is looking forward to continuing on into the doctoral program.

Why did you pursue a degree from BGS?

I chose to be a part of this program to be a better teacher. I want to be sure that my skills meet the needs of my students so that they can release the trauma of their past experiences and see the strengths and interests they have and what they bring to this world.

Describe your action research study.

My action research study looked at the effects of student-led presentation-based activities on long-term concept retention and confidence in math. Over the course of my time at Bridges Academy, I have grown a high interest in finding ways to engage and support my students who enter my classroom with high levels of math anxiety. At the same time, I have seen that providing students with presentation opportunities allows them to engage with the material in a new way and build confidence. My work yielded statistically significant results when looking at long-term concept retention in math when students work with the material in a student-led presentation-based method. I am looking forward to using this result as I work on my doctoral project in the coming years!



Karen Workman

Karen Workman has a bachelor of science degree in special education and more than 20 years of teaching experience with students of all ages. Karen has worked with cognitively diverse students on a professional and personal level both locally and internationally. Karen is passionate about helping all students succeed.



Why did you pursue a degree from BGS?

I had been in special education for many years and found that though my students had learning differences, they also had fantastic strengths. I felt like I knew how to remediate and find workarounds for areas of struggle, but I wanted to shift my focus to celebrating and using strengths and talents to develop the whole person. I joined this graduate program to grow my understanding of encouraging and developing all aspects of a student.

Describe your action research study.

My action research study was on how extended professional development can influence teachers' attitudes toward cognitively diverse students and increase their knowledge of how to implement strength-based differentiation in their classrooms. When teachers do receive training on how to work with cognitively diverse students, it is usually a one-time session with a focus on a specific learning difference which leads to minimal change in knowledge or value of cognitive diversity. However, the results of my action research indicate that knowledge can be significantly increased through focused professional

development using best teacher-training practices over a period of at least four weeks.

Samuel Jerome Young

Samuel Young is a growth-minded, two-time Fulbright Scholar with a decade of educational leadership experience. As an ADHD learner himself, he has a tremendous understanding of, experience in and respect for all things related to neurodiverse education. Samuel is the director of Young Scholars Academy, an online enrichment program that seeks to provide twice-exceptional students with transformative educational experiences that serve to develop their love of learning, personal character, self-awareness, and exceptionalities.



Before founding YSA, Samuel taught in a variety of capacities — including eight years at Bridges Academy — at an array of programs in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. Travel and culture are near and dear to him. He has led 2e students to over seven countries for immersive cultural and educational trips.

Why did you pursue a degree from BGS?

In 2018, I was feeling as if I was outgrowing the classroom and was actively seeking opportunities to have a bigger impact in the neurodiverse space. I had several meetings with Carl Sabatino, head of school at Bridges Academy, and he persuaded me to pursue an Ed.D. in cognitive diversity, something that I may not have pursued without his encouragement.

Describe your action research study.

My final project was centered around self-reflection on internship experience, growth as a leader, and future application of graduate school goals and principles. During the wild and wonderful 2019-2020 school year, I interned under Carl Sabatino. The ultimate scope of the internship was the sequential examination of various models of leadership that culminated with the creation of a survey that allowed my colleagues to assess my proclivity to be a leader.

Coming Up: July Open House

We will be conducting a virtual open house on Wednesday, July 14, for anyone interested in learning more about the programs at Bridges Graduate School of Cognitive Diversity in Education.

Whether you are considering a certificate in 2e, a master's in education, or a doctorate in education, an open house is a great way to meet our faculty, learn about our programs, and ask questions.

Make sure to spread the news — [and the link](#) — about our upcoming open

houses!

[Click Here for Open House Registration](#)

Summer Residency

For two weeks the BGS faculty and students were on campus at Bridges Academy in Studio City, California, for the annual summer residency. Due to the pandemic, some students and faculty attended online.



In attendance were three doctorate cohorts, three master's cohorts, and two certificate cohorts. Each day of the first week began with a keynote from Provost Dr. Baum, Dean Nichols, or one of the four assistant deans.

On Monday, Provost Baum and Dean Nichols spoke about "The State of Bridges Graduate School." On Tuesday, Dr. Susan Daniels presented "Developing a Visual Learning and Teaching Toolbox." On Wednesday, Dr. Nicole Tetreault spoke about "Neuroscience of Engagement, Flow, and Motivation in Neuro-Unique Learners." On Thursday, Dr. Matt Zakreski discussed "Combating Imposter Syndrome in the Gifted Brain." Dr. Lin Lim-Goh finished the week with "Development and Learning Multi-Systems Framework."

The two weeks were great for individual work with faculty members, collaborative work amongst cohorts, and a great social experience where students and faculty had daily happy hours on campus and in the local neighborhood.

The residency culminated with the graduation ceremony on Friday afternoon.





Unique Career Opportunities

The Bridges Education Group (BEDG), comprised of Bridges Academy Los Angeles, The Graduate School for Cognitive Diversity in Education, Bridges 2e Media (2enews.com), and the 2e Center for Research and Professional Development, is in the planning stages of opening a new school in Seattle, Washington. By design, Bridges Seattle will be a small, independent school specializing in twice-exceptional students in Grades 4-12. Current plans call for opening in September 2022. We invite you to consider Bridges Academy Seattle in your career plans.

Position: Founding Director

The director of Bridges Academy Seattle reports to the head of schools, who splits his time between the Los Angeles and Seattle campuses. The director is charged with carrying out the school's stated mission and functions as both the **administrative and educational** leader of the school. The director is responsible for all aspects of its day-to-day programs and operations and serves as chair of the parent advisory committee.

Timeline & Application Process:

- Interviews have begun
- Start date is flexible between August 1, 2021, and January 30, 2022
- Send cover letter, philosophy of education, resume, and references to seattle.director@bridges.edu

For questions or more information about the position, please email seattle.director@bridges.edu.

Watch this space for teaching positions at Bridges Seattle for the 2022-2023 school year.

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