



WHAT IS... **THE BRIDGE?**



The Bridge program is a premier leadership opportunity for Lanakila graduates. Bridging the camper years to counselor years, participants in the program begin the process of learning how to become a successful leader at Lanakila and in the outside world. Through a blending of traditional programming with more specific apprentice-style leadership offerings, Bridgers begin to build a foundation for future work and leadership endeavors. Specifically, the Bridge experience will include: extensive trainings in Success Counseling; close mentorship in activity departments; residential living with peers; developing outdoor skills through the framework of the Lanakila wilderness tripping program; and working with a small tent family of campers.

WHAT WILL A BRIDGER LEARN?

There are many things that young Lanakilans will learn as members of the Bridge program. In general, we hope that Bridgers walk away from the summer having learned and internalized both “hard” and “soft” skills – all of which will serve them well going forward in their school, camp, and work experiences. These include:

AN INTRODUCTION TO SUCCESS COUNSELING

Bridgers are exposed to our Success Counseling framework from their first day on campus. They attend large group trainings throughout the summer, and talk through the process during smaller weekly meetings as a Bridge unit. At all of these sessions, they are introduced to our counseling model and get a chance to ask questions and to practice in small groups. Throughout the summer, Bridgers have many opportunities where they are able to test out their counseling skills in “scaffolded” situations. Bridgers work alongside experienced mentors in camper tents and cabins, and get to watch senior counselors demonstrate the process. Where appropriate, senior staff involve Bridgers in counseling situations and help them along as they get counseling experience with kids. This is the ideal teaching model (gradual release) as Bridgers have a chance to put their developing skills to use, but in an environment where they are being closely supervised and mentored.

DEPARTMENT TEACHING

Bridgers are placed in a specific activity department, where they receive mentoring from the experienced department staff. Bridgers are assigned to departments based on their aptitude and enthusiasm, and immediately begin to learn the content and pedagogy of that department. The process is similar in each department, be it Swimming, Archery, Tennis, or Photography: the Bridger will train with experienced staff; they will watch experienced staff teach and lead children in activities; and they will gradually start to take on teaching roles independently, while being closely monitored by the department head. All the while, the Bridger will receive feedback from the senior staff, so that their knowledge and teaching skill can improve.

WORK ETHIC

Consistently, former Bridgers report that their Bridge summer was one of the first times that they really got to experience significant hard work. These stretches of physical work are purposefully built into the Bridger's schedule, in different forms. These work opportunities, which are occasionally longer and hotter than the Bridgers had anticipated before the summer began, are so valuable not just for the sake of the work itself, but for the lessons that Bridge staff help impart alongside this hard work. Those lessons include:

- Hard work can be fun if you bring the right attitude
- Hard work is always lurking "behind the scenes" of fun/worthwhile/magical events, and there is no escaping that pre-requisite hard work if you want to have the reward at the end
- When doing a job, it is important to do it well and to bring a level of detail and quality to it, no matter how small or unglamorous the job is. This approach allows Bridgers to take pride in their work; will often get noticed by others; and is what makes an organization great, rather than good.
- Bridgers can "do hard things" and can push themselves beyond what they thought they could.

At the end of the summer, Bridgers will have developed a new mental approach for situations where they used to give up or cut corners when the work got too long or tiring. After a summer in the Bridge, these same Lanakilans report that they have a new understanding of their ability to summon a work ethic and a positive attitude even in situations where they would rather be doing something else.

TEAMWORK

Almost all of the activities in the Bridge are done in small teams or as a full group. Bridgers learn very quickly the value of doing projects together, and that more hands make light work. However, they also learn that operating as a team is often more complicated than working alone, and takes higher levels of communication, deliberation, listening, and compromise. Bridgers learn that a great team does not leave anyone behind, both literally and metaphorically, and they learn to watch out for each other and advocate for all members of the group during all activities.



APPRECIATION OF OTHERS

The Bridge is a diverse group of young leaders with different interests, skills, temperaments, and backgrounds. Yet for the eight weeks of the summer, the Bridgers live and work alongside one another very closely. For this reason, many Bridgers find themselves in very close contact with other Lanakilans that they may not have been close to as campers, and with whom they would likely not spend time outside of camp. But because these Bridgers spend so much time together at Lanakila, they learn a lot about each other and become extremely close. It is truly magical when Bridgers realize that they have developed a deep respect and affection for other Bridgers that they could never have predicted – and that would likely not occur outside of camp. And in many cases, this propels Bridgers to return home with a much more open-minded and generous approach towards meeting and accepting others.

FEEDBACK

One of the philosophies that is central to the life of a Bridger is feedback. Bridgers receive consistent feedback on their performance from many difference sources – their Bridge counselors, their department heads, their unit heads, the tent/cabin counselor that they are shadowing – and they learn what a valuable and caring process this can be. Additionally, Bridgers are taught to GIVE their own feedback to the very same people, so that by the end of the summer they have skill and knowledge of both sides of the feedback process. This level of feedback accomplishes a few things for Bridgers: it teaches them to crave feedback and to see it as a tool for improvement, rather than a threat of criticism. It also teaches them how to have difficult conversations with peers and with supervisors in a way that leads to increased growth, confidence, and understanding. Understanding the power of feedback is a valuable tool that Bridgers can take with them back to school and also to future employment opportunities.

RESPONSIBILITY

While a huge portion of the Bridger's day/week/summer is closely supervised, with a mentor looking on and providing real-time feedback and coaching, there are also other opportunities where Bridgers are given their own leadership opportunities with kids. This is true especially in the second half of the summer, when Bridgers become ready to take on some teaching, coaching, and counseling tasks on their own. They cherish this opportunity, as it is a chance for them to put their learning into action, and to start to give back to the camp that they love so dearly. We believe that young people – in all environments – crave more opportunities to take on responsibility and to do real work, but that they are rarely provided the chance to do so. When Bridgers get a chance to cover a tent of campers for a morning, or to lead a swimming lesson, or to design an activity in their department, they come alive with enthusiasm, pride, creativity, and maturity – and they grow hungry for more opportunities like this. At Lanakila, we believe that if we want to teach young people to be responsible and to take on leadership roles, we need to give them chances to practice those skills. In the Bridge program, we do just that.



WHAT IS THE TUITION FOR THE BRIDGE?

Bridge tuition is the same as camper tuition for a full season at Aloha, Hive, or Lanakila. This season's tuition is posted on our website at alohafoundation.org.

A “Bridger” is by definition a hybrid role. They are neither fully campers nor fully counselors, but walk between those roles depending on the situation. During the first half of the summer, they work on developing leadership skills. As the summer progresses, they are helped to implement these skills as they play a supporting role in the departments and units.

WHY HAVE BRIDGERS WORKED IN THE KITCHEN?

Working in the kitchen has always been a powerful part of the Bridge experience. It stretches Bridgers to confront issues of patience, energy, and cooperation, while also providing programmatic guidance and time for reflection to help them go beyond their imagined boundaries. In doing so, they become more patient, responsible, cooperative, forgiving, and energetic.

For many Bridgers, working in the kitchen is the first “real” job they have had in which they are treated as young adults rather than young teenagers. Washing dishes and scraping pots is simply a vehicle, and a very effective one, to allow Bridgers to answer many of life’s important questions every day that they are in the kitchen.

- *What do I do when I really don’t want to get up and work but I have a responsibility and others are counting on me? (Get up even though I don’t feel like it)*
- *What do I do when I am so tired that I all I want to do is go relax? (Do the job anyway)*
- *What do I do when I can’t get my fellow Bridgers to work as hard as I think I am working? (Have an honest conversation and ask for help, if necessary, to solve the issue)*

Kitchen work can be challenging. There are days when every pot in the kitchen gets used for a meal and the washing seems overwhelming. There are days when the Bridgers feel too tired to work. These situations are fundamental to the Bridge program; they are the foundation of the pride the Bridgers feel in accomplishing something that is real and something that is hard. The message is: “This is real work; you conducted yourself professionally, and you should feel proud for your important contribution to the community.” At the end of the summer, Bridgers are able to see themselves as workers, and this first experience can frame their professional ethic and their willingness to do hard work for the rest of their lives.

WHAT ELSE WILL BRIDGERS EXPERIENCE?

As part of the Bridge experience, Bridgers will also participate in several team building exercises, one of which is a group wilderness trip during the summer.

WILDERNESS TRIP

During the summer, the Bridgers will take part in a wilderness trip. Depending on the size of the Bridge, the trip may be split into smaller groups. The Bridgers will take an active role in planning the route, preparing the food, packing the gear, and working with the Bridge counselors to develop a successful experience.

Much like the trips we plan for campers, these trips offer the Bridgers the chance to grow and challenge themselves in unique ways. They will learn to rely on the help and support of others; to overcome adversity; to communicate together; and to share an intimate experience that will transform the dynamic of the group and create a bond that can last long after the trip has ended.

In addition, as part of the planning process, Bridgers will learn the preliminary framework of the Standard Operating Procedures used by Designated Trip Leaders. This will be beneficial as they progress through the Counselor-In-Training program and will be asked to play a support role on future trips with campers.



WHAT DO FORMER BRIDGERS SAY ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE?

"My job now is directing an NGO in Africa, using psychosocial support, teambuilding, and recreation to help youths recover from decades of war and reassert themselves as loving, powerful, playful, and free human beings. All of this is because of the Bridge. Seven weeks of scrubbing pots, teaching boat landings, and building a big fire brought me, slowly but directly, to where I am currently sitting. It's a remarkable feeling to be able to pinpoint a time that shaped me so dramatically, particularly when the experience was so positive. The Bridge program helps young people feel as though someone believes in them; but more importantly, it gives them the tools to believe in themselves. In short, it helps create fine people."

"The Bridge program teaches young people on the verge of adulthood what it means to invest yourself in an intentional community, and encourages them to commit themselves to their fullest. Mentors of various ages provide aspirational leadership, while a cohort of friends invites vulnerability and inspires toughness. Anyone can scrub pans and learn nothing from it. The bridge program is meaningful years later because your hard work contributes to a community greater than yourself. I credit the bridge program with the foundations of conscientiousness and teamwork upon which I strive to build all my meaningful personal and professional relationships."

"I really learned to take pride in my work. If something is hard and exhausting, that is all the more reason to do it. Other people can motivate you, but nobody can hold you accountable like yourself. The Bridge was the hardest work I ever did, but I came out of it with a whole new perspective on myself."

"The habits you learn in the Bridge anchor everything you do in the next decade: Getting up consistently; learning and engaging in any task; communicating about goals and obstacles; accepting feedback; following through. Any Bridge alum will confirm: college (and life) is simpler with these clubs in your bag."

"Although 20 years have passed, I remember very distinctly how much I felt trusted and appreciated and valued as a member of the Lanakila community during my Bridge summer – especially by the staff. That level of trust and responsibility was not something I had experienced before as a 15-year-old (certainly not in school, and not from my parents either) and it inspired me in a way that stuck with me for years. In fact, I use that experience as a model for how I treat MY current employees in my current management position. Hard to believe that one summer could have such a profound effect, but it did."
