



## PRESS RELEASE

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# First evidence of success for Liberia's new approach to education

**New report reveals single semester brings significant learning improvements in reading and math  
Evidence that Partnership Schools for Liberia can help deliver SDG4  
Bridge awarded an 'A' rating and 43 new schools for 2017/18**

Liberian students in public nursery and primary schools, in an innovative education program undertaken by the Liberian Ministry of Education Partnership Schools for Liberia (PSL), have made substantial learning gains in reading and math in a single semester compared to their peers in neighboring schools.

A new report *Learning in Liberia* [published today](#) by the Liberian Ministry of Education, Pencils of Promise, The Dean of Education at the University of Liberia and Bridge PSL public schools, reveals that over the course of a single semester, students in Bridge PSL public schools could read 7 more words a minute and answer 6% more questions correctly about the story they just read. In math, they solved 2.6 more addition problems and 2.2 more subtraction problems in a minute.

Bridge PSL public school students made more progress toward achieving national literacy benchmarks. In just 4 months, 17 percent of Bridge PSL second graders met the reading fluency benchmark for the first time, compared to only 4 percent of second graders at traditional public schools. Bridge PSL public school students also outperformed their traditional public school peers on the reading comprehension benchmark by a similar margin; 15 percent of Bridge PSL public school students met this standard for the first time, compared to 4% of students attending traditional public schools.

The data demonstrates that students in Bridge PSL public schools are experiencing accelerated learning in comparison to their peers in other schools. Lessons learned from these Partnership Schools for Liberia can be brought into all public schools in Liberia. These early findings also show the direct and immediate benefits to children of Partnership Schools for Liberia itself.

The Report is released as the Ministry of Education Awards Bridge an 'A' rating for successful implementation allocating them 43 additional schools for year two and bringing the total number of Bridge PSL public schools to 68.

**Liberian Education Minister, George Werner**, said: "The findings of this mid-year report are both exciting and encouraging. They show that students in Bridge PSL public schools performed better academically than their peers in traditional public schools, across nearly every literacy and numeracy metric tested, and over a short period of time. This also points to the benefits of continuing the Partnership Schools for Liberia program, and continuing to see how organizations can work with the Ministry of Education to strengthen individual schools, as well as our entire system."

**Liberian Deputy Minister of Planning, Research and Development, Gbovadeh Gbilias**, said: "It is encouraging to see how Bridge PSL public schools' interventions mentioned within the report such as increased teaching hours, contextualized learning materials and involvement of local communities through Parent Teacher Associations have not only provided safe and conducive learning environments, but also the acceleration of learning outcomes for students assessed."

**Chief Impact Officer at Pencils of Promise, Leslie Engle Young**, said: "Pencils of Promise is thrilled to see the early gains on student literacy in Bridge PSL public schools. As a partner in this effort, we are excited to continue to learn more about what works best in getting students on the path toward literacy."

**The Dean of the School of Education and Professor of Education and Research Methods, Cuttington University Graduate School & University of Liberia, Dr. Saaïm W. Naame,** said: “I think this is one of the best things that has happened to Liberia, a partnership working on the education of elementary school children. This is something that has been neglected for a long time. The midline report shows significant progress within the shortest possible period of time. In just a few months, we have been able to see the progress of these children. This collaboration has great potential and it should inspire Liberians.”

**Head of Bridge Partnership Schools for Liberia, Marcus Wleh,** said: “We are delighted to be a part of the positive impact provided by the Partnership Schools for Liberia program, it has truly impacted our Liberian children in such a short window of time. The education gains released today, provide objective evidence that children in Bridge PSL public schools are learning faster and reaching higher learning targets than their peers at traditional public schools. This program when scaled up across the country could revolutionize education in Liberia.”

In reading, students at Bridge PSL public schools outperformed traditional public school students by 0.77 standard deviations. By comparison, Bridge accomplished in 4 months what a very successful early grade reading intervention in Liberia achieved in 18 months. In math, Bridge PSL results were quite strong as well, outperforming traditional public school students by 0.18 standard deviations (roughly equivalent to 50% more learning over the initial four months).

Bridge is one of eight operators supporting the Liberian government towards its reform of the Liberian education system in meeting the urgent need for quality public nursery and primary schools.

**ENDS**

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**Notes to Editors:**

Spokespeople available on request.

The full *Learning in Liberia: Mid-Year Gains in Literacy and Numeracy* can be [read here](#). The executive summary [is here](#).

The Midline Report: *Learning in Liberia* comes midway through the Partnership Schools for Liberia pilot. The report studies the learning gains made by Bridge PSL. The research was done 4 months into the PSL pilot.

The midline report adopts a quasi-experimental methodology to compare learning gains from 6 Bridge PSL Schools to a matched set of 6 traditional public schools for students in Kindergarten through to Grade 3. The study included 638 children in grades Kindergarten through Grade 3. The comparison traditional public schools were not chosen by Bridge, but by the PSL external evaluation team.

Counties and Districts of participating schools:

Pair #	County – District
1	Bomi – Senjeh
2	Bong – Salala
3	Grand Cape Mount - Garwula
4	Margibi - Kakata

5	Montserrado - Careysburg
6	Nimba - Saclepea 2

All school visits as part of the assessment were accompanied by representatives from the Liberian Ministry of Education.

- Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRA) and Early Grade Mathematics Assessments (EGMA) are measurement tools developed by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) in conjunction with USAID, and have been used by education ministries and multi-lateral agencies around the world. The Early Grade Reading Assessment and Early Grade Math assessment framework can be found [here](#).
- In 2014, the Liberian Ministry of Education and USAID developed a set of national literacy benchmarks for grades 1-3 tied to three specific literacy skills: non-word reading, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. The 2014 USAID / Liberia Benchmarks can be found [here](#).
- Previous research on 0.79 standard deviation gains were from Gove, A., Mora, A. & McCardle, P. (2017).
- Progress toward a literate world: early reading interventions in low- and middle-income countries: new directions for child and adolescent development, number 155. San Francisco: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. / Piper, B & Korda, M. (2011)
- EGRA Plus: Liberia - Program Evaluation Report. RTI International
- A full RCT of the PSL and all 8 partners is being conducted by the Center for Global Development and implemented by Innovations for Poverty Action. This is expected in August 2017.
- PSL was formed after decades of civil war and Ebola to revolutionize the education system where 59% of primary school aged children are out of school. Learn more about Bridge PSL Public schools [here](#).
- The final school allocation by the Ministry of Education for Year 2 of the Partnership schools for Liberia program can be found [here](#).
- The news of Bridge's A rating for successful implementation by the Ministry of Education can be found [here](#)

**More information about the *Learning in Liberia* report authors:**

About Liberian Ministry of Education: <http://moe.gov.lr/>

About Pencils of Promise: <https://pencilsofpromise.org/>

About University of Liberia: <http://ul.edu.lr/>

About Bridge: [www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com](http://www.bridgeinternationalacademies.com)