

MID-YEAR IMPACT REPORT 2026

January – June 2026 | Bridges Retreat Centre, Franschhoek

“Our learners really have it difficult out there and it breaks your heart to know that they are so young but the challenges they facing are huge... but they want to succeed. Bridges offers our learners food, stability, something to look forward to, beds, showers, love and someone who believes in them.”

— Coach Anita, Bridges Facilitator

Key Statistics — January to June 2026

21	1,505	75	12
Camps delivered	Learners reached	Educators on camp	Partner schools
462	7,140	3,160	11,060
LO-aligned activities	Coaching hours	Warm beds and showers	Nutritious meals shared

A Message of Gratitude

We extend our heartfelt thanks to you for your continued partnership and investment in the Bridges Outdoor Education Programme. This report documents the impact of your support between January and June 2026 — a period in which 1,505 learners and 75 educators from partner schools across the Western Cape experienced transformative three-day experiential camp programmes at the Bridges Retreat Centre in Franschhoek.

Your generosity made it possible for children facing poverty, community violence, and overcrowded classrooms to step into a world of safety, belonging, and possibility. What you will read in these pages is not simply data — it is evidence of lives changed, confidence found, and futures expanded.

Programme Overview: 2026 at a Glance

The Bridges Outdoor Education Programme (OEP) offers Grade 5, 6 and 7 learners from underserved partner schools a three-day residential camp experience. Every activity is intentionally designed around three progressive curriculum themes — Self-Awareness (Grade 5), Social Awareness (Grade 6), and Self-Management & Leadership (Grade 7) — each aligning with national Life Orientation objectives and contributing to employability competencies aligned with SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth.

Curriculum Themes by Grade

Grade 5 — Self-Awareness ✓ Identify and express emotions ✓ Recognise personal strengths ✓ Reflect on behaviour and its impact ✓ Build foundational confidence	Grade 6 — Social Awareness ✓ Build resilience under pressure ✓ Demonstrate empathy and trust ✓ Practice sportsmanship & respect ✓ Contribute positively in a group
Grade 7 — Self-Management & Leadership ✓ LEAD¹: Look Out, End Well, Attitude, Discipline ✓ Regulate emotions; make responsible decisions ✓ Demonstrate leadership in challenging situations ✓ Act as a role model for school & community	Employability & SDG 8 ✓ Teamwork through collaborative group challenges ✓ Communication — articulating ideas, active listening ✓ Problem-solving in real-time activities ✓ Leadership and perseverance

¹ LEAD leadership model, developed by Ezrah Community Training and Development NPC (www.ezrah.co.za) and used with permission.

Camps are structured around Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle — concrete experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and active experimentation — ensuring every activity creates lasting learning. Educators participate alongside learners throughout the camp, deepening the relationships that carry beyond the three days and into the classroom.

Camps: January – June 2026

In the first six months of 2026, Bridges delivered 21 camps across all grades and multiple partner schools, including dedicated Prefect Leadership Camps that brought together learners from different schools under the LEAD framework.



Camp Delivery Summary — January to June 2026

Month	School(s)	Grade	Learners	Highlight
January	Prefect Camp 1 – Bonga, Christmas Tinto, Elnor, Simondium	Grade 7	70	Cross-school leadership; values contracts co-created
February	Prefect Camp 2 – Cascade & Wes-Eind; Christmas Tinto Gr 7 (x2); Christmas Tinto Gr 5	Gr 5 & 7	372	Market Day; campfire; first-ever camp for Gr 5s
March	Elnor, Bonga, Riverlands, Wes-Eind, Dalubuhle	Grade 7	312	Spa day; fashion show; natural leaders emerging
April	Alpine, Cascade, Riverlands	Gr 6 & 7	241	Bootcamp; prefect closing speeches; tablet assessment pilots
May	Simondium, Christmas Tinto, Cascade	Gr 6 & 7	227	Keisha's transformation; Camp Olympics unites new campers; talent-show highlights
June	Alpine, Bonga, Wes-Eind, Simondium	Grade 6	283	Peer-affirmation exercises; marshmallow-tower teamwork; fashion show bonds educators and learners

Built on Research: Why Bridges Works

The Bridges Outdoor Education Programme is not simply a camp — it is an evidence-aligned intervention designed around the scientific research that tells us what children genuinely need to develop resilience, confidence, and the life skills that carry them forward. Three bodies of research form the foundation of the programme:

Evidence Base — Research Foundations

✦ Ann S. Masten — “Ordinary Magic”

Resilience Research

Children thrive with stable, long-term adult relationships, self-regulation skills, and safe environments. One caring adult can reduce the impact of adversity by 30–50%.

At Bridges: the most powerful protective relationship is the one that lasts — between educators and their learners. By participating fully in camp alongside their learners, educators deepen bonds that continue back in the classroom every day of the year. Bridges strengthens these existing relationships, extending their protective impact far beyond three days.

✦ Albert Bandura — Social Cognitive Theory

Self-Efficacy & Role Modelling

Children learn behaviours, attitudes and values by observing others. Belief in one's ability (self-efficacy) predicts academic motivation, persistence, and resilience. Positive role models and mastery experiences are its primary builders.

At Bridges: trained facilitators serve as powerful role models — demonstrating teamwork, courage, and care in everything they do. Outdoor challenges and achievable goals build the mastery experiences that account for 12–15% variance in academic outcomes.

✦ Durlak et al. (2011) — SEL Meta-Analysis

270,000+ students; 213

programmes

Structured SEL programmes produce: +11% academic achievement, +23% social-emotional skills, +9% positive social behaviour, –9% conduct problems.

At Bridges: team-building, values-based discussions and structured reflection circles mirror the design of the highest-impact SEL programmes studied — and these skills are then reinforced back in the classroom by the educators who experienced camp alongside their learners.

Outdoor and adventure education research (Hattie et al.; Becker et al.) demonstrates effect sizes of 0.34–0.47 in self-concept and leadership development, with sustained gains months after participation. An effect size of 0.40 is considered educationally significant.

Impact Area 1: Confidence & Self-Belief

The most consistently reported outcome — observed by learners, educators, facilitators, and school leadership alike — was a visible and measurable growth in confidence. Learners who arrived shy, withdrawn, or reluctant consistently left camp more willing to speak, lead, try, and engage.



What Educators Observed

“Yes some learners came here as introverts, shy to speak but left the camp with friends, confidence and more positivity.”

— **Thaabiet Abdol, Educator, Alpine Primary School, Grade 7**

“Confidence, because when we arrived here most of our learners were very shy to learn new games, speaking in front of other learners. But now all our learners are confident and believe in themselves.”

— **Lelethu Fokwana, Educator, Dalubuhle Primary School, Grade 7**

“Learners who were too shy to speak for themselves developed as they gained more confidence. Making new friends also assisted with it as they had mixed groups.”

— **Chandre Hendricks, Educator, Cascade Primary School, Grade 7**

“Learners have become much more mature. They are able to distinguish between right and wrong. They are able to practice tolerance between each other and mainly show love, care and respect towards each other.”

— **Sukaina Miller, Educator, Alpine Primary School, Grade 7**

“Learners were very happy, free and confident, they learned a lot with fun and educational games, skills that will help them in the classrooms.”

— **Nonkosi Blaai, Educator, Christmas Tinto Primary School, Grade 7**

What Facilitators Observed

“I saw natural born leaders on camp come out of their shell.”

— **Coach AJ, Facilitator, Elnor Primary, Grade 7**

“One meaningful moment for me was when I had a conversation with a learner who shared that they sometimes struggle with confidence and speaking in front of others. I encouraged the learner to believe in themselves... later during the activities I noticed the learner trying to participate more and interact with others. That moment stood out to me because it showed how a little encouragement can help a learner feel seen and supported.”

— **Coach Icy, Facilitator, Elnor Primary, Grade 7**

“Those 2 learners stood up and talked in front of everyone at the closing ceremony. That proved to me that now they are not shy anymore. I was very proud of them!”

— **Coach Anathi, Facilitator, Wes-Eind Primary, Grade 7**

Keisha's Story — Simondium Primary, Grade 7

From tears on Day 1 to the front of the Fashion Show on Day 3

Keisha arrived on Day 1 in tears, feeling so overwhelmed she needed to move to a different team. By the afternoon, her peers' warmth and the facilitators' encouragement had begun to shift something. On Day 2 she was participating fully, independently. By the Fashion Show on Day 3, Keisha was at the front. “From being shy to being in front at the Fashion Show” was Coach Anita's highlight of the entire camp. This three-day arc — from tearful withdrawal to confident self-expression — is among the most vivid demonstrations of what Bridges makes possible.

— **Coach Anita, Bridges Facilitator, Simondium Primary, May 2026**

Learner Voices on Confidence

“I will remember team work and sportsmanship, to speak more than before. I became very confident.”

— **Learner, Cascade Primary, Grade 7**

“I will always remember that I am a leader. I will always help my teammates and support them.”

— **Learner, Cascade Primary, Grade 7**

“I will always remember the first time on camp, in Grade 5, at the fashion show, I was so nervous, but my team helped me.”

— **Learner, Cascade Primary, Grade 7**

Impact Area 2: Teamwork, Empathy & Social Connection

Teamwork is the heartbeat of every Bridges camp. Learners are intentionally placed in groups that cut across classrooms and social groupings, creating the conditions for new relationships to form. Across all feedback sources, teamwork is consistently identified as both the dominant activity experience and a lasting takeaway.



“I learned that working together and trusting people can sometimes help you move forward.”

— **Learner, Alpine Primary, Grade 7**

“I will always remember the teamwork and encouragement of my team and the new things we learned.”

— **Learner, Cascade Primary, Grade 7**

“What stood out was not just the completion of the task, but the transformation in the group. Learners who had been competing for leadership began supporting one another, encouraging quieter voices, and celebrating the success as a team rather than as individuals. Bridges have an amazing team of coaches working well together and that definitely speaks volumes.”

— **Martelize Frederiks, Educator, Wes-Eind Primary School, Grade 7**

“It’s about unity and working well with people.”

— **Simiso Ntuli, Educator, Bonga Primary School, Grade 7**

“When my team got together and shared — trying to show each other the meaning of the values — that stood out to me the most.”

— **Coach Goodwell, Facilitator, Simondium Primary, Grade 7**

A Moment of Empathy — Christmas Tinto Primary, Grade 7

Peers solving a problem before the teachers even knew

One of the children left home while her mother was at work and forgot her backpack with all her clothes. When her peers realised this, they decided to lend her their spare clothes so she could change. When they came to report the issue, they had already come up with the solution. This showed empathy, leadership skills, and maturity. They said they knew they should care and respect others — something I realised they were being taught through Bridges.

— **Thandokazi Qotoyi, Educator, Christmas Tinto Primary School, Grade 7**

What the Data Shows

Learner Assessment Data — Teamwork & Social Connection (Grade 5, 248 learners)	
Learners who found it difficult to trust teammates — before camp	30%
Learners who said they learned to trust their teammates more — after camp	56%
Learners who found it difficult to make friends — before camp	45%
Learners who made new friends or appreciated existing friends more — after camp	73%
Learners who noticed no change in friendships	7%

Source: Bridges pre- and post-camp learner assessments. Grade 5 cohort, 6 schools.

Impact Area 3: Leadership Development

The LEAD framework — Look Out for others, End Well, Attitude, Discipline — was embedded throughout Grade 7 camps, and its impact was visible in real, observable behaviours: prefects stepping up during conflicts, quiet learners taking the microphone at closing ceremonies, and educators asking facilitators how they unlock leadership in learners who remain silent in classrooms.



“Learners that you never see as leaders because they are not academically strong stepped up and became leaders. They became more confident.”

— **Abdulgakiem Samoduen, Educator, Alpha Primary School, Grade 7**

“The head boy shared that he didn’t come to camp for fun only but also to learn. He shared that he learned about self-management skills and all the values of the camp, and named them: Respect, Trust, Courage, Sportsmanship and Commitment. It shows that Bridges is a place of nurturing leaders of tomorrow where learners learn while having fun.”

— **Coach Naye, Facilitator, Cascade Primary, Grade 7**

“I had conversations with some of the prefects. They told me how these camps had shaped their future and us believing in them — and now they are leaders of the school.”

— **Coach Anita, Facilitator, Elnor Primary, Grade 7**

Three Years of Growth: An Educator's Perspective

What makes the Bridges journey truly powerful is its layered, cumulative nature. Learners attend camp in Grade 5, 6, and 7 — and the educators who accompany them often walk the full journey too. The trust built over those three years, between educator and learner, deepens with each camp. This is precisely what Masten's research points to: it is the consistent, long-term adult relationship — the educator who knows a child's name, history, and potential — that becomes the most powerful protective force in that child's life. Bridges creates the conditions for that bond to flourish.

"Because I have walked this journey with them since Grade 5, there is a level of trust and understanding that made this camp experience even more impactful. Seeing them embrace challenges, encourage each other, and reflect on their own growth reminded me why I chose to work in education."

— Sonwabile Ntwanambi, Educator, Christmas Tinto Primary School, Grade 7

Impact Area 4: A Safe Space to Be a Child



For many of our learners, Bridges is one of the only places in their lives that offers consistent safety, warmth, and the freedom to simply be a child. Against the backdrop of gangsterism, violence, overcrowding, and poverty that defines many of their communities, camp represents a radical act of care. The environment itself — beautiful, calm, and structured — lowers the barriers that prevent children from opening up. Research by Ann Masten confirms that supportive environments dramatically increase positive outcomes for high-risk youth, while Bandura's work reminds us that children internalise what they observe: when they see adults model warmth, inclusion, and encouragement, they begin to practise it themselves.

"Most of our kids struggle at home: a warm bed, a warm shower, a place I can call home, warmth, support, freedom to play and think, food, people who care and actually listen to you — that is Bridges to most of our learners."

— Coach Anita, Bridges Facilitator

“One of the teachers shared that all these kids come from different backgrounds and sometimes at home it’s not nice, but when they come here, you see that they are happy to be here. They become kids and enjoy themselves.”

— **Coach Naye, Facilitator, Alpine Primary, Grade 7**

“A learner came to me and told me that this was the first time she had ever slept in a bed alone and that she would never forget this experience.”

— **Sinovuyo Mankayi, Educator, Christmas Tinto Primary School, Grade 5**

“There is a learner who said he is so grateful for the opportunity to attend, because he got to own his own bed and toiletries for the very first time in his life.”

— **Sonwabile Ntwanambi, Educator, Christmas Tinto Primary School, Grade 5**

“One boy was very grateful for the dignity packs provided to them. He told me that at home, cosmetics are shared amongst siblings.”

— **Sibone Mtyobile, Educator, Christmas Tinto Primary School, Grade 5**

“A learner who lost her mom about a month ago told me she feels like she has a family again and how glad she is to be on camp. It only shows that being amongst others can help with her healing process.”

— **Sukaina Miller, Educator, Alpine Primary School, Grade 7**

“One of the boys said to me on the Thursday: “Coach, it’s better to be at camp than at home.” That touched me.”

— **Coach Anathi, Facilitator, Riverlands Primary, Grade 6**

“A learner told me: “Sir, what I have experienced in these few days is like no other. The support, luxury and treatment we get here is not felt at home.” I responded: “Whatever you gained here, let it filter through to your home. You be the change, and change will come.””

— **Thaabiet Abdol, Educator, Alpine Primary School, Grade 7**

Learner Voices: What They Will Always Remember

“I will always remember how the coaches took us into their hearts like a family.”

— **Learner, Alpine Primary, Grade 7**

“I will never forget that the teachers and the coaches made me feel safe and at home. I love you guys so much.”

— **Learner, Alpine Primary, Grade 7**

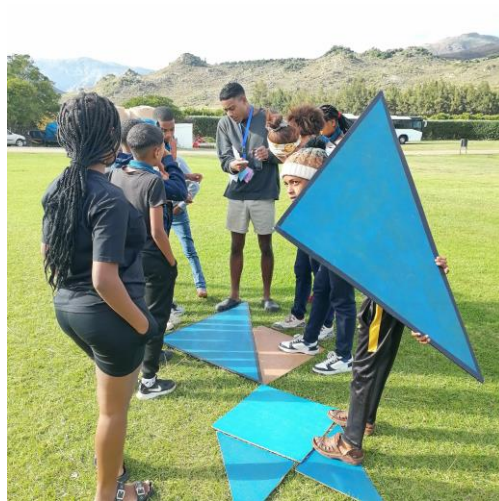
“This camp changed me a lot. I will miss the activities and especially the food and coach Siya!”

— **Learner, Cascade Primary, Grade 7**

Impact Area 5: Cognitive Growth & Curriculum Alignment

Every activity at Bridges is intentionally curriculum-aligned. In 2026, more than 462 Life Orientation-aligned activities were delivered across 21 camps. Learners engaged with Tangram puzzles (Mathematics and geometric thinking), Pyramid and marshmallow tower challenges (problem-solving), storyboard journeys, Market Day planning, and creative arts activities. Structured debrief questions after each activity mirror the reflective observation stage of Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle, deepening

conceptual understanding and encouraging learners to connect camp experiences to their classroom lives.



"I learned about problem-solving, doing activities and playing soccer."

— Learner, Cascade Primary, Grade 7

"I learnt different ways of getting through to my learners. Also how to play and learn at the same time. The experience was fantastic. A learner who did not like coming to school and participating in class, had challenges at home really changed after coming to this camp. He found his voice and became very active in class. His attendance improved so much."

— Thandokazi Qotoyi, Educator, Christmas Tinto Primary, Grade 7

"The learners thought that all the activities they do are for fun. My highlight was the interaction we had when I was asking debrief questions and they were all interested to answer — they got the flow and would remind me about the debrief questions."

— Coach Naye, Facilitator, Christmas Tinto Primary, Grade 7

What the Data Shows

Learner Assessment Data — Values Transfer (Grade 5, 248 learners)	
Named teamwork as the most important value learned at camp	56%
Named respect as the most important value learned at camp	22%
Named trust, kindness, or courage	18%
Learners who could name a specific value to take back to school	95%
Source: Bridges post-camp learner assessments. Grade 5 cohort, 6 schools.	

What the Schools Say: Partner Feedback Survey

At the end of each year, school principals and leadership complete a structured feedback survey assessing the programme's impact on learner development and alignment with school priorities. In 2026, feedback was received from 10 partner schools (based on 2025 camps). The results are unambiguous: 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed across all four measures.

Partner Feedback Survey Results

Survey Statement	School Agreement
The Bridges OEP has impacted our learners' social development	100% Agree
The Bridges OEP has impacted our learners' personal development	100% Agree
The Bridges OEP aligns with our school priorities (well-being, teamwork, respect)	100% Agree
Skills and values taught at camp are applied back in the classroom	100% Agree

70% of respondents answered “Strongly Agree” for alignment with school priorities and classroom transfer of skills.

“The programme helps learners grow into confident, responsible, and socially aware individuals who are better prepared for school, leadership roles, and everyday life.”

— **Wes-Eind Primary School, School Leadership Feedback**

“The improvement of their self-confidence was most obvious after their return. They learned to say “No” when coerced into the wrong situation.”

— **Petunia Primary School, School Leadership Feedback**

“Those who were in Bridges are always sharing their experiences.”

— Dalubuhle Primary School, School Leadership Feedback

“The programme is completely great and I wish it could continue forever. It is such a great programme for learners to experience in their early childhood learning journey.”

— Sonwabile Ntwanambi, Educator, Christmas Tinto Primary School

School Challenges & Bridges Response

Grade	Primary Challenge	Bridges Response
Grade 5	Peer pressure; social & emotional development	Self-Awareness theme: identifying emotions, building confidence through mastery experiences
Grade 6	Emotion regulation; poor decision-making	Social Awareness theme: empathy, sportsmanship, resilience, prosocial behaviour
Grade 7	Peer pressure; authority & discipline; academic transition	Self-Management & Leadership: LEAD framework, responsibility, emotional regulation

Measuring Our Impact

Every Bridges camp is measured. Learners complete structured assessments before and after each camp, educators and facilitators submit detailed feedback, and all data feeds into a live Power BI dashboard that tracks development across key competencies: teamwork, communication, leadership, and problem-solving. In 2026 we piloted digital tablet-based assessments for the first time — reducing capture time to under 10 minutes per learner and enabling real-time analysis.

Impact Measurement Summary

100% of partner schools confirmed skills and values are applied back in the classroom	95% of Grade 5 learners named a specific value they intended to carry back to school	+49% positive shift in trust and teamwork responses, pre to post camp
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Why It Matters

South Africa's children face profound challenges. The communities our partner schools serve are marked by gang violence, substance abuse, overcrowded homes, and schools under-resourced and overstretched. The Bridges Outdoor Education Programme cannot solve systemic poverty. But it can — and does — do something research consistently tells us matters profoundly: **it places caring adults into the lives of children who need them, and surrounds them with experiences that build resilience, self-belief, and the social-emotional competencies that carry forward.**

For three days, 1,505 learners this year experienced what it feels like to be valued, to belong, and to succeed. Many experienced their own bed, a warm shower, and a meal with seconds for the first time.

They experienced adults who believed in them. And the educators who stood beside them on camp returned to their classrooms carrying something renewed — a deeper knowledge of who their learners are, and a stronger relationship to build on.

Research tells us this is not trivial. Protective relationships reduce the impact of adversity by 30–50%. Structured SEL programmes improve academic performance by 11%. Outdoor adventure experiences produce effect sizes of 0.40 in self-concept development — gains sustained months later. Your investment makes this possible. The data shows it is working.

“The investment you make doesn’t just transform a week — it changes life trajectories.”

— Bridges Outdoor Education Programme

With Gratitude



Your partnership with the Bridges Outdoor Education Programme is visible in every breakthrough moment described in this report — in Keisha’s transformation at the fashion show, in the learner who slept in their own bed for the first time, in the prefect who found her voice, in the classroom that became warmer because one child came back from camp knowing they matter.

We are honoured to walk this journey alongside you. Thank you for helping us build the ordinary magic that resilient children need.

“I witnessed the holistic development of the children. The focus is not only on academics, but beyond that. Well done again.”

— School Principal, Partner School

“The love that the coaches have for the kids is amazing.”

— **Sandra Muller, Educator, Cascade Primary**

“Bridges is about inspiring, motivating, and giving our youth the best possible experience ever.”

— **Coach Anita, Bridges Facilitator**

With sincere gratitude,



Bridges Retreat Centre, Franschhoek, South Africa | www.bridgesretreat.co.za

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