

# **Bridges Public Charter School's Parent Handbook**

**Bridges Public Charter School  
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**Revised: August 28, 2009**

## Welcome

Welcome to Bridges Public Charter School. The Parent Handbook has been developed to inform you of the school's policies and procedures, answer questions about our educational program and inform you about parent participation opportunities and requirements. We invite all parents to become involved in the life of the school. If you have additional questions about the information found in this handbook please speak with your child's teacher or the school's administration. At Bridges we believe schools are stronger leaning communities when parents are active participants. Our goal is to have a collaborative relationship with all parents and we invite your questions and suggestions.

## Our Mission

Our mission is to provide an exemplary early childhood educational program for all preschoolers, with and without special needs. We provide a developmentally appropriate, family and child-centered education that nurtures students and expands their skills and abilities, building a foundation for life-long learning.



## Our Goals

Bridges, the name of our school, symbolizes an inclusive learning community that builds *bridges* of understanding, awareness and support by connecting children and families with a variety of different needs, cultures and backgrounds. At Bridges we believe that inclusive education is beneficial to all of the students who have the opportunity to participate. Inclusion builds compassionate relationships among students, develops self-esteem in individuals, and develops the awareness that everyone has strengths and challenges.

The following are our primary goals:

- To provide students with a strong foundation for life-long learning.
- To develop a nurturing, inclusive learning community that provides each child with a high quality early childhood education.
- To embrace the diversity of the children and families we serve.
- To work in partnership with families.
- To provide support and training for parents and the larger DC community.
- To serve as a training site for future early childhood educators such as special educators, teachers, social workers and related service providers.

## **Program Features**

### ***Individual planning for each student:***

Educational programs are tailored to meet each child's individual learning needs. We address skills in all developmental areas (cognitive, linguistic, physical, and social-emotional) to develop the whole child.

- ***Transdisciplinary, family-centered approach:***

The educational program is supported by the expertise of a curriculum specialist, special education coordinator, and therapists who work with the classroom teaching teams. Teachers and parents work together to develop learning goals for home and school.

- ***An integrated curriculum:***

Children learn from experience. Therefore, our classrooms will be play-based and academic studies will be theme-oriented and project-based. Children will have daily opportunities to learn new skills through group and individual experiential learning. In addition, they will practice their acquired skills in thematically designed learning centers.

- ***Thematic and project-based curriculum:***

Children learn from experience. Therefore, our classrooms are play-based and academic studies are thematic and project-based. Each day children learn new skills through group and individual hands-on learning. Teachers serve as instructors and facilitators, encouraging students to interact with peers, materials, and the environment.

## **Enrollment**

Ideally, 50 percent of the student population will be typically developing preschoolers and 50 percent of our students will have special needs.

## **Admission and Registration**

Bridges Public Charter School is a **free** public school open to all District of Columbia residents.

### **Eligibility**

Bridges is an inclusive preschool and pre-Kindergarten program for children ages 3-5 years old. You are eligible to apply if:

- You reside in the District of Columbia.
- Your child is eligible to attend preschool if they will be 3 years old by December 31.
- Your child is eligible to attend pre-Kindergarten if they will be 4 years old by September 31.

## **Admission**

Applications for admissions for the 2010 – 2011 school year will be accepted from January 2010 through June 2010. Applications received prior to June 15<sup>th</sup> will be entered into a lottery for admission. A sibling set will be admitted to the school as a group, so parents will only have to travel to one preschool program each day. Sibling sets of twins will also be admitted to the school as a group. If the number of applications received by June 15<sup>th</sup> exceeds the number of spaces available, Bridges PCS must hold a lottery in accordance to DC public charter school law. Once the available spaces have been filled, the rest of the applicants are placed on a waiting list in the order in which their names were drawn.

## **Registration**

Preference in registration will be given to 1) students who are already enrolled in the school and 2) siblings of children who are already enrolled in the school. Then the remaining spaces will be allocated through a random lottery.

## **Re-enrollment**

Parents of current students wishing to attend Bridges Public Charter School for the following school year must complete the registration commitment form by set deadlines. A reminder and form will go home to all families. All families must complete re-enrollment forms by the end of the school year in June in order to secure their space for the following school year.

Families who gain admission into the school must provide the following information to complete registration:

1. Proof of residency, as required by the DC Government
2. Any previous school records such as an Individualized Family Service Program (IFSP), or Individualized Education Program (IEP), transfer papers, etc.
3. Physician signed dental and health certificates
4. Proof of immunization
5. Birth Certificate

**All of the above paperwork must be submitted before your child's first day of school.**



## Attendance

Each student enrolled at Bridges Public Charter School is expected to attend school every day for the entire school day unless there is an exceptional health or family reason that prevents their attendance. School begins at 8:30 am and ends at 3:00 pm. On Wednesdays school ends at 1:15 pm.

**Parents must notify the school on all days when students will be absent by calling the main office by 9:00 am at (202) 545-0515. Phone messages can also be left on the school's phone system in the general mailbox at ext. 100.** The following absences are excused:

- Illness of a student or doctor's appointment;
- An emergency that requires the student to miss school;
- Death in the immediate family;
- Observance of religious holy days;
- Suspension or expulsion from school by an administrator; and,
- Other absences approved in advance by the Director upon the written request of a parent/guardian.

Families are expected to schedule recreational activities and vacations during designated school breaks.

Parents must submit a doctor's note for all absences or late arrivals to school due to a doctor's appointment. Students absent from school due to illness for 3 or more day must submit a doctor's note verifying that the student has been seen by a doctor and can return to school.

If you do not communicate with the school about your child's absence your child's record will show an "unexcused absence." After 3 consecutive unexcused absences you will receive a call from the school. After 5 consecutive unexcused absences you will be asked to come in for a meeting with the school team.

Students who have 10 or more unexcused absences during the school year will be considered to have an attendance problem. Parents of these students will need to meet the school team to discuss possible solutions.

After 10 consecutive days of unexcused absences, students will be dropped from the school enrollment and parents/guardians will need to complete a re-enrollment process to have their child attend Bridges PCS.

## Tardiness

A student who arrives to school **after 8:45 AM** is considered tardy. Habitual tardiness disrupts class learning and can negatively impact your child's learning and development. Three tardy equals one unexcused absence.

If you arrive **after 8:45 AM** you will need to sign your child in at the front office in the tardiness log and again in your child's classroom, and bring to the teacher a tardiness slip given to you at the front desk. **You will also be required to stay 15 minutes to assist your child with transitioning into the classroom. For example, sit with your child while they eat breakfast or assist them in joining circle time.**

**Without prior notification to the school concerning a late arrival, students who arrive at school after 12:00 noon will not be accepted for the day.**



### **Early Dismissal**

Whenever a student must leave school during school hours, parents/guardians **MUST** notify his/her teacher in writing. When picking up a child before 3:00 PM, the parent/guardian must sign out the student in the office in the early dismissal log.

## **Parking when Dropping Off, Picking Up or Attending a Meeting**

Parking is available for parents on the street in the neighborhood. Between 8:00 am – 4:00 pm the street immediately in front of the school building is reserved for school buses and deliveries. **The school's parking lot has a limited number of spaces that are for school staff only.** The rest of the spaces in the lot are for other businesses in the building, please do not park in these spaces.



## **School Calendar**

Please consult the Bridges Public Charter School's calendar for holidays, vacations, parent / teacher conferences days, and school closing due to teacher training. **On teacher training days there is no school for students and no aftercare.** Copies of the school calendar are available in the front office.

## Monthly Newsletters

Bridges produces a monthly whole school newsletter that highlights upcoming workshops, activities and deadlines. Each individual classroom also produces a monthly newsletter with information about the classroom curriculum and how to make connections at home with what your child is learning at school. In an effort to reduce the amount of paper produced by the school please let us know if you are interested in receiving newsletters via email. All email addresses given to the school remain private and are only used for school purposes.



## School Hours

Classes for students begin at 8:30 AM each day. On all days except Wednesday the school day ends at 3:00 pm. On Wednesday the school day ends at 1:15 pm. Students are dropped off and picked up in their classroom at the end of the day. All students who are not picked up by 10 minutes after dismissal time will be enrolled automatically in the aftercare program. Parents / guardians will then be charged the daily rate of \$15.00 dollars for after care.

**Students will only be released from school to an adult authorized by the parent/guardian.**

## Inclement Weather & Emergencies

Bridges follows the decision of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) in opening late and/or closing entirely on account of inclement weather and/or emergencies. If DCPS is open, Bridges is open; if DCPS is closed, Bridges is closed; if DCPS is delayed, Bridges is delayed.

The school must have on file a current list of emergency contacts, in addition to parents/caregivers, who can be contacted by phone in case of emergency. Please notify the office when you have a change in address or telephone number.



## Dress

Bridges does not have school uniforms, but we require that students dress appropriately for the weather and for learning activities. We discourage open-toe shoes and t-shirts with offensive or negative messages. Please dress your child comfortably, label all of his/her clothes with his first and last name, and send in two extra changes of clothes. Students go outdoors for recess or neighborhood walks in almost all weather conditions (except pouring rain). Extended indoor play is scheduled for all classes only on days when the temperature falls below 32 degrees including the wind chill factor. However, classes may go for a walk when it is snowing in order to experience the unique weather of the season. Please be sure that your child has clothing and outerwear that is appropriate to the season. Students should wear clothing and shoes that are appropriate for play, participation in art activities, and outdoor physical activity.



## Before and After School Care

Bridges Public Charter School offers before school and after school care. Before school care is from 8:00 am – 8:30 am. After school care is from 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. On Wednesdays after school care is from 1:15 pm – 6:00 pm. Before and after school care are available on all school days for students. **The before and after school care program will not be offered during vacations, Federal Holidays, or on teacher training days.** Students will receive a healthy snack each day during after care.

**Bridges After School Care Program is intended to serve parents who are working or parents who are enrolled in school. If you are applying for the sliding scale fee you must bring proof of income. If you are attending school you must bring proof of enrollment.**

### Hours

Mornings: Monday through Friday 8:00 am – 8:30 am

Afternoons: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 3:00 pm - 6:00pm. Wednesday 1:15 pm – 6:00 pm.

Families are asked to pick up their student on time. **There is a fee for picking up a student late. The late charge is \$1.00 dollar a minute.**

### Fees

The cost for before school care is \$2.00 a day. The cost for after school care \$15.00 dollars a

day. The cost for after school care on Wednesday afternoon only is \$10.00 dollars. The school has a sliding scale based on income for after school care. To get the sliding scale fee for after school care you must register for the program. When applying for the sliding scale you must provide proof of income. Parents can also use the school’s program on a drop-in / as needed basis, however the drop-in rate is the full fee of \$15.00 dollars.

Families can apply for a DC Child Care Subsidy to help pay for the cost of the after care program. Please contact the Office of Early Childhood Development at 727-1839 to apply for the subsidy.

	Fee for After Care	Approximate Monthly Cost
Sliding Scale fee for families based on income.	See the Sliding Scale chart	See the Sliding Scale chart
Fee for families paying the full cost for before & after care.	\$15 a day \$75 a week	\$300

**Payment**

Payment for before and after school care should be made in advance. The payment for the following month’s care is due before or on the 25th of the current month. For example, the payment for before and / or after care for the month of November is due no later than October 25th. No balance in fees over \$100 dollars can be carried into the next month. Any students with a balance of \$100 dollars in fees will not be able to attend before and/or after school care until the balance is paid off.

Bridges PCS will accept personal check, money order, and cash. Checks should be made out to Bridges Public Charter School. A bounced check will be charged a \$30 fee and you will be asked to pay in cash or with a money order in the future. Payment is accepted by the Office Manager, Ms. Guzman, from 8:00 am – 10:00 am and 1:00 pm – 3:30 pm.

**Payment is made for all days a student is registered to attend before and / or after care.** If a student does not attend due to illness (or for another reason) the fee for all registered days must still be paid. Bridges’ before and after care program is staffed based on expected enrollment numbers, as well as legally mandated adult to child ratios. We are only able to staff the programs and meet our program costs with a consistent fee base.

**Enrolling Your Child and Drop-In Use of Before and After School Care**

In order to enroll your child to regularly attend the before and/or after school care program you must complete an application. The application is available at the front desk. Your child’s start date will be confirmed by the school’s After School Care Coordinator. Once your child is accepted you must complete a contract for tuition and fees.

Parents can use before and/or after care on a drop-in / as needed basis. For drop-in use of after care, please notify the front desk / receptionists in the morning or as soon as possible by phone during the school day. The receptionist can be reached by calling the main number (202) 545-0515.

**ALL DROP-IN and LATE PICK UP FEES are expected to be paid when you pick your child up, on the day that care is provided.** A grace period of 48 hours (2 Days) is given to

those parents who are unable to pay the Drop In or Late Pick up Fees on the day that care is provided. If fees are not paid within 48 hours, you will automatically be charged an additional **\$15.00** invoicing fee in addition to your current drop-in or late pick up fees.

### **Policies and Procedures**

**Drop off and pick up:** Students can only be dropped off and picked up by a person who is 18 years or older. The school's staff cannot accept or release a student to anyone under the age of 18. Students will only be released to adults listed on the child's pick-up list. Any adults who are unfamiliar to the staff will be asked to show a photo id to document their identity. At drop off and pick up time students must be signed in or out on the daily attendance / pick-up log.

Between 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm the log book for after care is kept in the after care room. As of 5:00 pm the log book for after care is kept at the main entrance reception desk.

**Illness and contagious conditions:** The school's policies concerning illness and contagious conditions also apply to participation in before and after care. If your child becomes ill, you will be called to come pick them up. A student who develops symptoms of a contagious illness or condition (for example vomiting, diarrhea, or itching due to lice) cannot return to school for 24 hours.

**Parties:** Birthday parties cannot be held in the after school program.

### **Termination and Withdrawals**

Bridges reserves the right to terminate children for the reason:

1. If the children have five or more unexcused absences and the parent fails to provide the school with doctor's verification of illness.
2. If the child/ren or parents conduct themselves in a disrespectful, violent or threatening manner toward Bridges staff or families.
3. Non-payment of fees.
4. Providing false personal information.
5. Any family who fails to pay after care fees after receiving a letter from the school concerning a past due account will be referred to a collection agency by the school for failure to pay. Any family referred to a collection agency will no longer be able to enroll their child in Bridges' After School Care program.

## **Breakfast & Lunch**

School begins at 8:30 AM. It is important for your child to arrive to school on time. Classes sit down together as a group for breakfast and lunch each day. Students who arrive after 9:00 AM will not be served breakfast. Menus for the month are posted in each classroom and on the Parent information bulletin board.

Breakfast and lunch will be available to all students: it will be free or reduced-price for students who qualify, and available for purchase for other students. Families also have the option of sending lunch to school for their child. Students who qualify for the free lunch under the National School Lunch Program automatically are entitled to receive breakfast and lunch. You must have a completed application form for the school Lunch Program on file for your child to receive free meals.

**Students eligible for reduced price meals or who wish to purchase breakfast and lunch at the regular price must order meals in advance for the following week.** You can also pay a month in advance if you wish. Orders are made with the Operations Manager. Unfortunately, students cannot bring money to school and purchase food the same day. If a student does not bring a lunch to school, parents / guardians will be called to bring a lunch to school for them. No balance in fees over \$100 dollars can be carried into the next month. Meals will not be ordered for any student with a balance of \$100 dollars in unpaid fees.

Bridges food service vendor is At Home Management, LLC. Below are the prices for breakfast and lunch. There is also a vegetarian option that can be order for students.

Meal	Cost
Breakfast	\$1.75
Lunch	\$2.75
Vegetarian Lunch	\$2.75

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint alleging discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call, toll free, (866) 632-9992 (Voice). TDD users can contact USDA through local relay or the Federal Relay at (800) 877-8339 (TDD) or (866) 377-8642 (relay voice users). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. The District of Columbia Human Rights Act, approved December 13, 1977 (DC Law 2-38; DC Official Code § 2-1402.11(2006), as amended) prohibits discrimination on the basis of marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family responsibilities, familial status, source of income, place of residence or business, genetic information, matriculation, or political affiliation of any individual. To file a complaint alleging discrimination on one of these bases, please contact the District of Columbia’s Office of Human Rights at (202) 727-3545.

## **Parties at School / Birthday Celebrations**

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their special school friends. We encourage these celebrations. If you would like to give out invitations, please do not put them into cubbies as we cannot guarantee that the invitations will make it home. Invitations for parties outside of school must be sent to students’ home using the U.S. mail, not placed in cubbies. You can use the school’s directory to get addresses to mail invitations to students’ homes. If more than five children from a class are invited, please host a party that can accommodate the entire class. Children feel awful when their friends come to school talking about a birthday party they were not invited to. If you would like to make a special celebration at school, please discuss this two weeks in advance with your child's teachers. Parties can happen after nap time in the classroom.

Bridges has a commitment to providing children with healthy foods and snacks. For celebrations at school the following items can be served – fruit, juice, cake and ice cream. **No candy or soda.** All families do not give their children candy, if you are providing goodie bags to students for parties please do not include candy. Suggested items for goodie bags - stickers, crayons, and small plastic toys.



## Health Issues

A medical record is kept on your child and updated yearly. Health files are confidential and kept in a secured file cabinet in the main office. Bridges PCS complies with D.C. laws that require physical, dental and immunization records to be updated yearly. You are required to have your physician complete the health forms provided and documentation of immunization and return these forms to school by the first day of school.

Parents/guardians should make every attempt to give medication to students before or after school. In order for the school to dispense any medications, we must receive a document authorizing the school to do so, signed by the treating physician. It is unlawful for minors to have medications, including aspirin and to medicate themselves.

Children with contagious conditions cannot be at school. For your child's welfare and the protection of others, it is important to keep your child home if he or she has:

- A fever over 100 degrees during the past 24 hours
- A cold in the active stages
- A sore throat and/or swollen neck glands
- An undiagnosed rash or skin eruption
- Vomiting or diarrhea in the past 24 hours
- Head lice or ringworm that has not been treated
- Pink eye

**In order to rest and regain their strength and to avoid getting other students sick, a student should be kept home an additional 24 hours after his/her fever breaks.** Students absent from school due to illness for 3 or more day must submit a doctor's note verifying that they have been seen by a doctor and can return to school.

If you find that your child has either head lice or ringworm, please notify the school immediately, so that preventive measures can be taken. Children with ringworm must be seen by a physician and cannot return to school until treatment has begun. Please provide the school with a doctor's note to verify the date of the doctor's visit and that treatment has begun.

**If a child develops symptoms of a contagious illness or condition while at school (for example vomiting, diarrhea, or itching due to lice) the school will notify a parent / guardian immediately. Parents / guardians are expected to pick up their child within two hours of being notified that their child is sick with a contagious condition.**

### No Smoking and Drug Free Environment

Bridges Public Charter School is a non-smoking building and a drug free environment. Parents, students, and staff are prohibited from using any tobacco products in the building or on the school grounds at any time.

# **Student Assessment**

On-going assessment and documentation of progress are essential in order to provide a classroom environment that supports the individual learning needs of each student.

## **Assessment and Report Cards**

Bridges uses written progress reports and portfolios to document children's work and development through out the school year. Progress reports are developed four times a year. Children with identified special needs will also have Individual Educational Program (IEP) that set yearly learning and developmental goals for them. Parent are required to attend all three parent/ teacher conferences to review their child's progress report with the classroom teacher. The forth progress report will be sent home.

## **Portfolios**

Portfolios are valuable assessment tools because they are purposeful collection of children's work that shows progress and achievement over time.

## **Progress Reports**

A Progress Report will be written by teachers and shared with parents during parent/teacher conferences. The Progress Report profiles a child's classroom performance based on anecdotal notes, the developmental checklist and their portfolio. The Progress Reports will replace a traditional report card.

## **Individual Educational Program (IEP) Progress Reports**

For children with Individual Educational Programs (IEPs) progress reports will be written four times a year to document the progress a child is making on her or his individual plan. In accordance with Federal Law and DC Special Education Regulations, IEPs will be reviewed annually to determine on-going need for support services and to develop annual goals.

## **English Language Learners (ELLs)**

At the time of enrollment parents will be asked to complete a Home Language Survey to identify the primary language or languages spoken in the home.

We expect that most of the NEP and LEP students enrolling in the school will be native Spanish speakers. In order to support the inclusion of Spanish speaking students and their families in our program we will have Spanish speaking staff members who can act as translators and will work directly with students in the classroom. We will also provide written information and materials for parents in Spanish, and other languages when possible. This includes all forms to be completed by parents/caregivers, report cards, and the parent handbook and school newsletters.

# Concerns with Learning and Development

## Student Support Teams

Student Support Teams (SSTs) are school-based committees that serve as an early warning system to help schools identify students who would benefit from academic, behavioral or personal interventions (e.g. academically not on grade level, chronically absent or truant, at-risk for grade level retention, etc.).

- The SST **must** be chaired by a general education faculty member (e.g. assistant principal). Other members of the SST may include: general education teachers; the requesting teacher; parent; counselor; school nurse; department chairs; staff specialists (e.g. literacy/numeracy coaches); any District government agency or government funded agency providing services to a family; and building administrator if he or she is not chairing the team.
- SSTs examine student data (e.g. quizzes, student portfolio) to develop six-week intervention plans for individual students and/or groups of students with similar needs.
- SSTs collaborate with city agencies, community groups and parents to provide services to students beyond the school day, if necessary.
- Research shows that SSTs improve student achievement and reduce unnecessary referrals to special education.
- Resources for our SSTs (manuals, brochures and required forms) are available at [www.dcsig.org](http://www.dcsig.org).

## Special Education

All academic and behavioral needs of students must first be addressed through regular education; therefore, we have our SST team to address concerns. If the student's needs are beyond what is available in regular education, either the school team or the parents may request an evaluation to determine if the student is eligible for special education services.

In order to receive special education services, students must qualify as having exceptionality and show a need for specialized instruction and/or support that is not available through regular education. These include students who have significant academic, social, speech-language, motor, and behavioral needs. The special education team, including the parents and the regular education teacher, develops an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for each student who receives special education services. The IEP is a written document that contains information regarding the student's academic and behavioral needs.

Special education services are offered along a continuum, are based on the individual needs of the student, and must be offered within the least restrictive environment. Service options available: special education support in the regular education classroom, special education instruction in the non-categorical classroom, speech-language services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, school social worker services, and behavioral support. The special education staff works with teachers to design a support network allowing each child to progress academically.

## Order and Student Discipline

Bridges has school-wide behavior and conduct expectations for all members of the learning community. These expectations encourage each student to learn at his or her individual potential, behave in a cooperative manner that supports learning, and treat other members of the community with respect. The Bridges' curriculum emphasizes the development of social skills, such as conflict resolution, collaborative problem solving, and expressing emotions through words rather than actions. **The school's complete Discipline Policy is available by request in the front office.**

The school's behavior and conduct expectations are:

- Care for ourselves (self-respect),
- Care for others (respect), and
- Care for the world around us (taking care of school materials, personal belongings, and the environment).

To support students in meeting these expectations each classroom utilizes a consistent approach to behavior management. This includes: having a regular and predictable classroom schedule, teaching students how to use classroom materials, assisting students with conflict resolution, role-playing positive social interactions, and a thinking chair. Rules and expectations are also paired with visual cues and posted in each classroom, as well as through-out the school building. On-going and open communication with families through parent-teacher communication books, phone calls and conferences, will provide opportunities to compare behavior in the home and school environments.

### **Policies and Procedures for Suspending and Expelling Students**

Bridges encourage each student to learn at his or her individual potential, behave in a cooperative manner that supports learning, and treat other members of the community with respect. The Director or Assistant Director, however, may suspend or expel a student under circumstances when the health and well being of the student or others is threatened, or due to the seriousness of the behavior. Students may be suspended from school for a specific number of days, or expelled from the school for the remainder of the year.

The decision to suspend or expel a student shall be made by the Director or Assistant Director, with or without the recommendation of the student's teacher or other school employee. The director or Assistant Director will determine the number of days for suspension based on the severity of the infraction, and previous infractions. The suspension or expulsion shall become effective immediately unless otherwise stated by the Director or Assistant Director. After three suspensions from school within the same school year, expulsion will be seriously considered.

The decision to suspend or expel a student shall be made in writing and given to the parent/guardian. The student's parent/guardian have five days to challenge the suspension or expulsion by submitting an appeal of the decision, in writing, to the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees.

Bridges requires that a parent/guardian attend a meeting with the Director or Assistant Director and the student's teacher before the suspended student may return to school.

## **Policies and Procedures for Suspending and Expelling Students with Special Needs**

Student with special needs may have individual behavior guidelines and policies based on their Individual Education Program (IEP). The safety, health, and welfare of all students and staff must also be considered. Consequences for behavior or actions taken by a student with special needs will take into account the child's disability and IEP goal.

## **Communication and Paper Work**

Bridges Public Charter School's staff, teachers and administration, is committed to being responsive to families' questions and requests. Please be aware that the school's standard response time for phone call and email messages is 48 hours. The school's staff and contact information is listed on the last page of the Parent Handbook. All school staff can be reached by calling the main telephone number (202) 545-0515. Classroom teachers are not available to speak on the phone during class time, 8:30 am – 3:00 pm. Messages for classroom teachers can be left with the receptionist.

The Director and Assistant Director will have open office hours weekly. All other requests for meeting with the Director or Assistant Director are made by appointment with the receptionist.

Requests for the completion of any paper work or forms by the school must be done in writing and turned in to the receptionist at the front desk. Forms will be completed for pick up at the front desk two weeks after the submission of the request.

Parents / guardians are given a copy of all quarterly progress reports, quarterly IEP progress reports and special education documentation completed by the school when they attend meetings at the school. It is a good idea to keep all school documentation in a safe and secure place in your home.

Requests for copies of any student records (i.e. - progress reports, health forms, birth certificates) or any special education document (assessments / evaluations, IEPs or progress notes) must be made in writing and turned in to the receptionist at the front desk. The copies will be completed for pick up at the front desk two weeks after the submission of the request. There is a \$2.00 fee per student record and a \$5.00 fee per special education document.

## **Student Files Policy**

The confidentiality of students' files is of the highest priority. Student files are secured in the Main Office and the Special Education Coordinator's office. There are appropriate employees who have justifiable need for specific access to such files, and only the Director and Assistant Director may determine the right to examine any file.

# Parent / Guardian Involvement



## Parent/Guardian Volunteer Opportunities

At Bridges we view parents as our partners. You are, after all, your child's first teacher. Parents/Guardians who choose Bridges PCS for their children commit to active involvement in their children's education and to helping to fulfill the mission of the school. Bridges PCS provides many opportunities for parents to be involved in school related events. Here are some ways to be involved:

- Board membership
- The School Planning Team (SPT)
- Fundraising campaigns
- Classroom assistance
- Field Trips
- Office work and support outside of the classroom
- Family Meal of Thanks – a whole school multicultural Thanksgiving celebration
- Winter Extravaganza and Dessert Party
- Advocacy and advisory committees
- And much, much more...

Parents/guardians who are interested in volunteering are encouraged to contact the school's Parent Involvement Coordinator, Director or Assistant Director or any of the classroom teachers for more information. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and older siblings are also welcome to volunteer.

### The School Planning Team (SPT)

The SPT is Bridges' parent/community organization. No dues are charged, and all parents/guardians are automatically members. Meetings are held monthly. All parents are encouraged to attend these meetings, which offer the opportunity for parents to discuss common issues or concerns, share ideas, and plan activities with other parents, teachers and school administrators.

The SPT sponsors many school activities, projects and fundraisers. These activities will not be possible without dedicated volunteers.

## **Parent Contract**

All parents/guardians who have with a child enrolled at Bridges Public Charter School are required to sign a Parent Contract. The Parent Contract outlines expectations for parent/guardian participation and support of their child's learning. All parents are required to participate in four (4) school activities during the school year. Examples of activities that are counted toward parent participation are: attending a parent training/workshop, volunteering in the classroom, going a field trip, or volunteering at an SPT activity.

## **Parent Training and Workshops**

All parents / guardians who have with a child enrolled at Bridges Public Charter School are required to attend 2 parent workshops during the school year. Workshops are offered throughout the school year in the morning and in the evening.

For parents / guardians whose child will be attending Kindergarten the following school year you are also required to attend a Kindergarten readiness workshop. This workshop will help you plan and prepare for the transition to elementary school.

For parents of children with special needs you are required to attend the Bridges' Special Education Back to School Night held in fall. This evening will introduce you to the special education process and services provided in a public school setting. You will also have an opportunity to meet the school's special education service providers (speech therapist, occupational and physical therapist, and special education teachers).

Bridges offers parent workshops and training throughout the school year. Sessions are led by school staff and by staff from community based organizations. Examples of workshop topics are: supporting emergent literacy, managing a family budget, math and science activities that you can do at home and supporting social skills development. Morning sessions run from 9:00 am – 10:00 am and evening sessions run from 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm. Child care and food is provided for all evening workshops and trainings that run past 6:00 pm. Look for posters and flyers about workshops and training sessions for parents.

## **Mandated Reporting to Child Protective/ Family Services**

All States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Virgin Islands have statutes identifying mandatory reporters of child maltreatment. A mandatory reporter is a person who is required by law to make a report of child maltreatment under specific circumstances.

Approximately 48 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the territories have designated individuals, typically by professional group, who are mandated by law to report child maltreatment. Individuals typically designated as mandatory reporters have frequent contact with children.

For the **District of Columbia** the Professionals (i.e. Mandatory Reporters) Required to Report are:

- Physicians, medical examiners, dentists, chiropractors, or nurses
- School officials, teachers, or daycare workers
- Psychologists or other mental health professionals
- Law enforcement officers (except an undercover officer whose identity or investigation might be jeopardized)
- Social service workers

Also, any other person who knows or has reason to suspect that a child is being abused or neglected may report.

### Standards for Making a Report

When they know or have reasonable cause to suspect that a child known to him or her in his or her official capacity has been or is in danger of being abused or neglected.

Also, when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child is abused as a result of inadequate care, control, or subsistence in the home environment due to exposure to drug related activity.

Please visit [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov) for additional information regarding mandated reporting or consult our resource library here at school which has copies of publications in both English and Spanish on the topics of the prevention and reporting of child abuse/neglect.

# **Notification for No Child Left Behind**

## **Title I School**

Title I of the federal No Child Left Behind Act is designated to help close the achievement gap between low income and minority students and their peers. With more than 40% of Bridges students eligible for free and reduced lunch, the school is designated a Title I school as defined by No Child Left Behind and receives NCLB funds.

## **Parents' Right to Know- Teacher and Paraprofessional Qualification**

Parents of Title I students may request certain information from the Front Office on the professional qualifications of the student's classroom teachers and paraprofessionals providing services to the child.

## **Parents' Right to Know – Non-Highly Qualified Teachers**

Parents of students who are taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who is not highly qualified will be notified by the school.

## **Parent Notification Letter – English Language Learner Services**

Upon enrolling in school, each family completes a Home Language Survey to determine if a language other than English is spoken by the student or used within the home. If a language other than English is present, the student is given a test to measure his or her proficiency in English. Students identified as NES or LES qualify for English as a Second Language (ESL) services through Title III, a Federal program, and the state at Bridges Public Charter School.

Services will be delivered to a student in one or more of the following ways:

1. Participation in a dual language classroom, where your child will be with both non-Spanish speaking students and native Spanish-speaking students, and instruction will be provided in both English and Spanish.
2. Adaptations made by the teachers of the regular academic class to make the content understandable to your child as well as teach English.

It is your right as a parent / guardian to decline the enrollment of your child in an ESL program; furthermore, it is your right to withdraw your child from an ESL program at any point during the school year. Please contact the school's director if you would like to schedule a parent conference to discuss your child's test results or discuss the support services put in place for ELL students.

## **Staff and Teachers**

Olivia Smith - Principal / Director, ext. 101, [osmith@bridgespcs.org](mailto:osmith@bridgespcs.org)

Alexa Kuuskraa - Assistant Director / Special Education Coordinator, ext. 102,  
[akuuskraa@bridgespcs.org](mailto:akuuskraa@bridgespcs.org)

Youseth Guzman - Operations Manager, ext. 117, [yguzman@bridgespcs.org](mailto:yguzman@bridgespcs.org)

Kristel Guzman – Receptionist, ext. 100. [receptionist@bridgespcs.org](mailto:receptionist@bridgespcs.org)

Chimere Weaver – Parent Involvement & After School Care Coordinator, ext. 111,  
[cweaver@bridgespcs.org](mailto:cweaver@bridgespcs.org)

Amanda Bunch – Teacher, [abunch@bridgespcs.org](mailto:abunch@bridgespcs.org)

Kimberly Brooks – Teacher, [kbrooks@bridgespcs.org](mailto:kbrooks@bridgespcs.org)

Mary Laura Calhoun - Teacher, [mlcalhoun@bridgespcs.org](mailto:mlcalhoun@bridgespcs.org)

Maureen Connolly – Teacher, [mconnolly@bridgespcs.org](mailto:mconnolly@bridgespcs.org)

Laura Dallas – Teacher, [ldallas@bridgespcs.org](mailto:ldallas@bridgespcs.org)

Allison Karsh – Teacher, [akarsh@bridgespcs.org](mailto:akarsh@bridgespcs.org)

Nita Wong – Teacher, [nwong@bridgespcs.org](mailto:nwong@bridgespcs.org)

Aimee Worsham – Teacher, [aworsham@bridgespcs.org](mailto:aworsham@bridgespcs.org)

Lillian Eason – Assistant Teacher, [leason@bridgespcs.org](mailto:leason@bridgespcs.org)

Yvette Gilmore – Assistant Teacher, [ygilmore@bridgespcs.org](mailto:ygilmore@bridgespcs.org)

Esther Guzman - Assistant Teacher, [eguzman@bridgespcs.org](mailto:eguzman@bridgespcs.org)

Kyle Hickman – Assistant Teacher, [khickman@bridgespcs.org](mailto:khickman@bridgespcs.org)

Angel King – Assistant Teacher. [aking@bridgespcs.org](mailto:aking@bridgespcs.org)

Sandra Nance - Assistant Teacher, [snance@bridgespcs.org](mailto:snance@bridgespcs.org)

Yvonne Kornegay – Enhanced Staffing, [ykornegay@bridgespcs.org](mailto:ykornegay@bridgespcs.org)

Donise Wiggins – Enhanced Staffing, [dwiggins@bridgespcs.org](mailto:dwiggins@bridgespcs.org)

## **Board of Trustees**

Betsy Centofanti- Chairperson & Parent Representative

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**I received a copy of the parent handbook during a Bridges Public Charter School parent orientation session. I have been notified that the school complete Discipline Policy is available by request in the school's front office.**

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**(Print your child's name)**

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**(Print your name)**

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**(Sign your name)**

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**(Today's Date)**