

Bridges Public Charter School's Parent Handbook

**Bridges Public Charter School
1250 Taylor Street NW
Washington, DC 20011
Phone (202) 545-0515
Fax (202) 545-0517**

Revised: August 20, 2015

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 learning 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 educational program that includes Students with special needs. Our developmentally appropriate, Student and family-centered educational approach nurtures students to expand their developmental skills, in order to build 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 students 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 student with a high quality education.
- To embrace the diversity of the students 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 teachers, social workers and related service providers.

Program Features

- **Developmentally appropriate, individualized education:**

Educational programs will be tailored to meet each student's individual learning needs and developmental levels. In order to ensure education of the whole child, the academic and social emotional goals of the child will be assessed and monitored.

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

Through transdisciplinary, family-centered planning and implementation of the educational program for children with special needs, students will have increased opportunities to practice and learn developmental skills in home and school environments. Team planning will foster consistency and the continuity of learning opportunities, as well as promote collaboration and peer training among staff members and families.

- **Active, Hands-on and Inquiry Based Curriculum:**

Students learn from experience. Therefore, our classrooms will be hands-on and academic studies will be thematic and project-based. Students will have daily opportunities to learn new skills through small group instruction, individual practice and whole group work.

- **Student-centered learning:**

Students will actively participate in all aspects of planning, developing, and assessing their learning experiences. Teachers will serve as facilitators, encouraging students to interact with peers, materials, and the environment in order to construct their own learning. With a small student to teacher ratio, teachers can consistently support each student's individualized learning.

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, pre-Kindergarten and elementary school program. 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 September 31.
- Your child is eligible to attend pre-Kindergarten if they will be 4 years old by September 31.
- Your child is eligible to attend Kindergarten if they will be 5 years old by September 31.

Admission

Applications for admissions will be accepted using the myschooldc.org on-line application and lottery process. Applications received prior to the deadline for the lottery 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 program each day. Sibling sets of twins will also be admitted to the school as a group. If the number of applications received application deadline exceeds the number of spaces available, Bridges PCS must hold a lottery in accordance to DC public charter school law.

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.

Bridges Public Charter Schools' campus addresses and phone numbers:

Pre-K 3 & Pre-K 4

1250 Taylor Street NW

Washington, DC 20011

p. (202) 545-0515

f. (202) 545-0517

Pre-K 3 & Pre-K 4 and Kindergarten

1246 Taylor Street NW

Washington, DC 20011

p. (202) 726-1843

f. (202) 726-1873

1st, 2nd & 3rd grade

4300 13th Street NW

Washington, DC 20011

p. (202) 545-0055



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 3:30 pm. On Wednesdays school ends at 1:00 pm. Students may enter the classroom each day as of 8:20 am. After 8:40 am a student is considered late to school.

Parents must notify the school on all days when students will be absent by calling the main office for the campus their child attends by 9:00 am or emailing the school. For 1250 Taylor Street call (202) 545-0515, for 1246 Taylor Street call (202) 726-1843 and for Sharpe Health call (202) 545-0055. Phone messages can also be left on the school's phone system in the general mailbox. To email the school all notices of absences should be sent to the following email address: attendance@bridgespcs.org.

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;
- Temporary closing of the school facility or suspension of classes due to severe weather or other conditions requiring the closing of the school facility or suspension of classes; and,
- Other absences approved in advance by the Principal or Assistant Principal upon the written request of a parent/guardian.

Attendance and tardiness are recorded in each classroom shortly after the beginning of the school day and forwarded promptly to the designated school official. **All student absence from school must be explained by providing the school with a written statement from the student's parent / guardian or a doctor to explain the reason for the absence.** The written note must include: the date of the absence, the parent / guardian's name, the student's name and date of birth, and the reason for the absence. **The note should be turned in to the main office in hard copy or sent as an email to the school within two weeks' time of the day the student was absent.**

Emails for all campuses should be sent to: attendance@bridgespcs.org

If no written note or no email is submitted to the main office the absence from school will be considered unexcused. 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 days must submit a doctor’s note verifying that the student has been seen by a doctor and can return to school. Families are expected to schedule recreational activities and vacations during designated school breaks.

Tardiness

For Bridges PCS school arrival time is between 8:20 – 8:40 AM; classes begin promptly at 8:40 AM. A student who arrives to school **after 8:40 AM** is considered tardy. Three tardy arrivals equal one unexcused absence on a student’s attendance record.

If a student arrives **after 8:40 AM** parents will need to sign their child in at the front office in the tardiness log. Students who are tardy miss important information, instructional time and disrupt the classroom’s schedule. If a student is repeatedly tardy, the following actions will be taken:

| Tardy Arrivals | Action Taken by the School |
|--|---|
| Student arrives tardy, after 12:00 PM noon. Parent has not provided prior notification to the school about late arrival. | School will not accept student for the school day without prior notification about tardy arrival past 12:00 PM noon. With prior notification from parent about tardy arrival after 12:00 PM noon, school will accept student for the school day. |
| Student arrives tardy five (5) days during the school year. | Attendance Coordinator monitors situation. Letter is sent home to the family reviewing the school’s policies concerning tardy arrival, attendance and absences from school. |
| Student arrives tardy ten times during the school year. | For more than ten (10) tardy arrivals, a letter is sent home requesting a family / school meeting to discuss attendance. Parent/guardian is advised that significant additional tardiness during the school year may be grounds for discontinuance from school the next academic year. A significant number of tardy arrivals may also be a factor in retention decisions. Problem-solving efforts and goal-setting is done by the family and school staff. |
| Student arrives late more than 20% of school days in the first three quarters of the year. | Arriving late for more than 20% of school days for the first three quarters of the year may be grounds for discontinuance from school the next academic year. A significant number of tardy arrivals may also be a factor in retention decisions. |

Absences

Parents must notify the school on **all days** when students will be absent; if a parent/guardian does not communicate with the school their student will receive an “unexcused absence” mark on their attendance record for that school day. Extensive absences from school negatively impact a student’s learning and success in the school setting. **Families are expected to schedule recreational activities and vacations during designated school breaks.** Persistent absenteeism from school will result in the following actions being taken:

| Absences | Action Taken by the School |
|--|--|
| 2 unexcused absences. | Attendance Coordinator monitors situation. Letter is sent home to the family reviewing the school’s policies concerning tardy arrival, attendance and absences from school. |
| 4 unexcused absences. | For four (4) unexcused absences, a letter is sent home requesting the guardian / parent to attend a meeting with the Principal or Attendance Coordinator. Quarterly attendance policy review meetings are held for groups of parents / guardians to review the school’s attendance policy. |
| After 3 consecutive unexcused absences from school. | School staff will contact family for inquiry and support around attendance. If absenteeism is due to illness information must be shared with Attendance Coordinator so plans for providing school work to student can be made to maintain student’s learning. School requires medical documentation if a health problem is the cause of absenteeism. |
| For 5 unexcused absences in a quarter. OR More than 5 excused absences in a quarter. | School requires medical documentation if a health problem is the cause of absenteeism. For five (5) unexcused absences or more than five (5) excused absences in a quarter, a letter is sent home requesting a family / school meeting to discuss attendance. Problem-solving efforts and goal-setting is done by the family and school staff. An attendance contract may be developed. |
| 10 unexcused absences | Based on DC State Board of Education truancy policy when a student reaches ten (10) unexcused absences the school must make an immediate referral to Child and Family Services Agency. Parents / guardians are advised that significant unexcused absences, 10 or more, without adequate medical explanation may be grounds for discontinuance from school the next academic year. A significant number of absences may require that a student be retained. A letter is sent home requesting a family / school meeting to discuss attendance. Problem-solving efforts and goal-setting is done by the family and school staff. An attendance contract is completed outlining steps to be taken to support the student’s everyday attendance. Unexcused absences on a student’s attendance record that are the result of tardy arrivals to school (3 tardy arrivals = 1 unexcused absence) do not result in a referral to CFSA. All other steps listed above are still followed: letter home, meeting with family and attendance contract is signed. |
| 20 unexcused absences | Meeting will occur with family to review on-going attendance concern. Possible out-come student will be dis-enrolled from school. |



Early Departure

Whenever a student must leave school during school hours, the parent/guardian must sign out the student in the office in the early departure / dismissal log. Students should remain in class until the end of the school day. Students who are picked up early miss important information, instructional time and disrupt the classroom's schedule. If a student is repeatedly picked up early, the following actions will be taken:

| Early Departure | Action Taken by the School |
|---|--|
| Student leaves early five (5) days in a quarter. | Teacher and Attendance Coordinator monitors situation. Letter is sent home to the family reviewing the school's policies concerning tardy arrival, attendance and absences from school. |
| Student leaves early more than ten (10) days in a quarter. | School requires medical documentation if a health problem is the cause of early departures from school. For more than ten (10) early departures in a quarter, a letter is sent home requesting a family / school meeting to discuss attendance. Parent/guardian is advised that significant additional early departure for three quarters may be grounds for discontinuance from school the next academic year. A significant number of early departures may also be a factor in retention decisions. Problem-solving efforts and goal-setting is done by the family and school staff. |
| Student leaves early more than 13% of school days in the first three quarter of the year (18 + days). | Leaving early for more than 13% of school days for the first three quarters of the year may be grounds for discontinuance from school the next academic year. A significant number of tardy arrivals may also be a factor in retention decisions. |

Parking when Dropping Off, Picking Up or Attending a Meeting

Parking is available for parents on the street in the neighborhood. Please park your car in the neighborhood and walk into the school building with your student. Between 8:00 am – 4:00 pm the street immediately in front of the school buildings considered a school zone and is reserved for school buses and deliveries. Families can park in these school zones in front of the buildings during drop-off and pick-up for a short period of time as they bring their student into the building or pick up their student. **Please do not park in any of the parking lots next to or in front of the Taylor St. buildings or the Sharpe Health school building.**



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 and on the school's website.

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 3:30 pm. On Wednesday the school day ends at 1:00 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 drop in rate for after care by the school's after care provider.

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 requires students to dress appropriately for the weather and for learning activities. 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 for students who are in Pre-K. 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 7:00 am – 8:20 am. After school care is from 3:30 pm – 6:00 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. On Wednesdays after school care is from 1:00 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 Before and After School Care Program is being managed by an outside agency. Please go to the school's website to get information about how to enroll and what the costs are.

Hours

Mornings: Monday through Friday 7:00 am – 8:20 am

Afternoons: Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 3:30 pm - 6:00pm.

Wednesday 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm.



Breakfast & Lunch

Students may enter the classroom as of 8:20 am and 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. Menus for the month are posted in each classroom and on the Parent information bulletin board. Breakfast is free to all students. 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. 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 lunch at the regular price must order meals in advance. Payment is made a month in advance. Orders are made with the Director of Operations. 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 Revolution Foods. There is also a vegetarian option that can be ordered for students. For information on the cost for meal please speak with the front desk administrative staff.

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.

Junk Food Free School: We are a school that believes in the brain research that shows all students function better, are happier and more attentive if they eat well. We provide a free healthy breakfast to all students and give students in after care a healthy snack. When packing your child's meals from home please do not send junk food or sweets, such as chips, donuts, cookies or soda.

Peanut Butter and Peanut Free Program: Bridges PCS is a Peanut Butter and Peanut Free Program. We have several students in the program this year with severe peanut allergies. It is our policy to not allow students to share food that is sent from home, however we ask that all parents not use peanut butter in their child's breakfast or lunch if they are sending food to school for their child to eat. There are alternative nut spreads that you can try – soy, almond, cashew. Otherwise please send other types of sandwiches for your child to eat.

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. For students in preschool or pre-kindergarten we ask 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.

At Bridges we celebrate the birthday for students once a month for all students whose birthday occurs during that month. The birthday celebration occurs at the end of the month, on the last Friday. Parents are invited to work together with the teacher to plan the celebration. Parties happen at the end of the day between 3:00 – 3:30 pm in the classroom.

For birthday celebrations at school the following items can be served – fruit, juice, cake and ice cream. **No candy or soda.** Celebrations are just the sharing of food and singing happy birthday to students. No goodie bags are given, games or other activities occur during the classroom birthday celebration.



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.

Students 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 days 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. Students 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.

Assessment and Report Cards

Bridges uses written progress reports and portfolios to document student's work and development throughout the school year. Progress reports are developed four times a year. Students with identified special needs will also have Individual Educational Program (IEP) that set yearly learning and developmental goals for them. Meetings are held at school for the 1st, 2nd and 4th quarter. Report cards are sent home for the 3rd quarter. Parents are required to attend all parent/ teacher conferences to review their child's progress report with the classroom teacher.

Progress Reports & Report Cards

For students in Pre-K 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 assessment tools, anecdotal notes, the developmental checklist and their portfolio. The Progress Reports will replace a traditional report card. Students in Elementary School will receive a quarterly report card reviewing the student's academic work in the areas of English Language Arts (reading and writing), Math, Social Studies and Science.

Individual Educational Program (IEP) Progress Reports

For students 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. School held meetings for parents will have translators or be conducted separately in Spanish whenever possible.

The purpose of Bridges English Language Learning (ELL) support program is to:

1. Develop the language and literacy skills of non-native English speakers.
2. Ensure access to the general education curriculum for students who are still developing cognitive academic language proficiency in English.

To achieve these goals the school identifies all students who speak a language other than English and assesses them to determine if they would benefit from ELL services. Students in Pre-K are

assessed using the Pre-IPT and students in grades kindergarten – 5th grade are assessed using the WIDA ACCESS. ELL Services consist of direct instruction, consultation with the general education teacher and professional development for staff. At the Pre-K level the school also provides when possible Spanish language support in the classroom from a teacher. Bridges' ELL teacher creates a language development support plan for each student and monitors the progress of students' through out the year. In accordance with the guidelines determined by the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) Bridges use the annual ACCESS test scores to track the progress of students' language and literacy development over time.

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.

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 Principal or Assistant Principal, 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 Principal or Assistant Principal, with or without the recommendation of the student's teacher or other school employee. The Principal or Assistant Principal 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 Principal or Assistant Principal. 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 Principal or Assistant Principal 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 for the campus that your child attends. For Taylor Street the number is (202) 545-0515 and for Sharpe Health the number is (202) 545-0055. Classroom teachers are generally not available to speak on the phone during class time, 8:20 am – 3:30 pm. Messages for classroom teachers can be left with the receptionist or administrative assistant.

The Principal, Assistant Principal, Director of Student Support Services and Special Education Coordinator will have open office hours weekly. All other requests for meeting 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 Principal or Assistant Principal 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 child 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 Parent 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, Principal or Assistant Principal or any of the classroom teachers for more information. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and older siblings are also welcome to volunteer.

THE SCHOOL PARENT / TEACHER ORGANIZATION - (PTO)

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

PARENT CONTRACT

All parents/guardians who have a student 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.

Support of the Classroom and School Fees

Parents will receive requests from the school for support of the classroom and school program during the school year in the following ways:

1. Request to purchase classroom materials and supplies at the start of the school year and once later in the school year. Examples of materials and supplies that could be requested are: markers, glue sticks, post-it notes, hand sanitizer and ziplock bags.
2. A \$40.00 fee for the year for snack for the classroom.
3. A \$15.00 fee to support the cost of classroom field trips that occur during the school year.

If the purchasing the supplies, classroom snacks or the payment of the field trip fee would be a financial hardship for your family please let administrative staff know. At Taylor Street you can speak with Ms. Kristel (Operations Manager) or Ms. Michelle Gray (Assistant Principal). At Sharpe Health you can speak with Ms. Guzman (Director of Operations) or Ms. Kristine Rigley (Principal).

PARENT TRAINING AND WORKSHOPS

Workshops are offered throughout the school year in the morning and in the evening. 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 5:00 pm – 6:00 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.

Toilet Training

For students who are not toilet trained all parents are required to work with the classroom teaching team to support their child's working on and mastering this independence skill. The school will have workshops for parents on toilet training. **Parents of students who are not toilet trained are responsible for providing the school with all needed items – wipes and pull ups. The pull-ups must be the type that can open up on the side with velcro.**

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 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 as a Title I school as defined by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act.

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 indicated as being spoken in the home, the student is given a test to measure his or her proficiency in English. Students identified as Non English Proficient or Limited English Proficient qualify for English as a Second Language (ESL) services through Title III, a Federal program, and the state at Bridges Public Charter School.

At Bridges services will be delivered to a student in one or more of the following ways:

1. In grades Pre-K participation in a classroom that provides language support in Spanish, in addition to the English language instruction that occurs in the classroom. The use of Spanish in the classroom supports students who speak Spanish as a first language with the acquisition of skills and knowledge. Your child will be with both non-Spanish speaking students and native Spanish-speaking students.
2. In grades preschool – 5th grade adaptations made by the teachers of the regular academic class to make the content understandable to your child as well as teach English.
3. In grades preschool – 5th grade the development of an individual language development plan and monitoring of development during the year.
4. In grades K – 5th students receive instructional support from an ELL teacher who is trained in working with students who are English as a Second Language Learners.

It is your right as a parent / guardian to decline the enrollment of your child in an ELL / 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 ELL Coordinator 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.

Administrative Leads at 1250 Taylor Street, phone number (202) 545-0515
1250 Taylor Street NW, Washington, DC 20011

Olivia Smith – Head of School / Director, ext. 101, osmith@bridgespcs.org

Keesha Blythe - Director of Student Support Services, ext. 102, kblythe@bridgespcs.org

Administrative Leads at 1246 Taylor Street, phone number (202) 726-1843
1246 Taylor Street NW, Washington, DC 20011

Michelle Gray – Assistant Principal, mgray@bridgespcs.org

Administrative Leads at Sharpe Health, phone number (202) 545-0055
3400 13th Street NW, Washington, DC 20011

Kristine Rigley – Principal, krigley@bridgespcs.org

Yousef Guzman - Director of Operations, ygzuzman@bridgespcs.org

Receipt Page

(Please turn in to the main office)

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 at the school's Taylor Street office.

(Print your child's name)

(Print your name)

(Sign your name)

(Today's Date)