



# Parent Handbook

**Bridges Public Charter School**

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## 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 with a variety of abilities, needs, cultures and backgrounds. At Bridges we believe that including diverse learners in one school environment is beneficial to all of the students who have the opportunity to participate. It 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 are 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 are assessed and monitored.

- Transdisciplinary, family-centered approach:

Through transdisciplinary, family-centered planning and implementation of the educational program for children with special needs, students have increased opportunities to practice and learn developmental skills in home and school environments. Team planning fosters consistency

and the continuity of learning opportunities, as well as promotes collaboration and peer training among staff members and families.

- Active, hands-on and inquiry-based curriculum:

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

- Student-centered learning:

Students actively participate in all aspects of planning, developing, and assessing their learning experiences. Teachers 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 a preschool, pre-Kindergarten and elementary school. 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 are accepted using the [www.myschooldc.org](http://www.myschooldc.org) on-line application and lottery process. Applications received prior to the deadline are entered into the lottery for admission. A sibling set will be admitted to the school as a group, so parents 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 by the deadline exceeds the number of spaces available, Bridges PCS will hold a lottery in accordance with DC public charter school law.

### **Registration**

Preference in registration is given to 1) students who are already enrolled in the school and 2) siblings of children who are already enrolled in the school. The remaining spaces available are 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 a re-enrollment commitment form in March, followed by the enrollment forms required by OSSE by May 1. A reminder and the forms are sent to all families. The enrollment forms must be completed to secure your child's space for the following school year.

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

**Students may not start school until all of the above paperwork is submitted.**



## Attendance

Each student 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 Fridays school ends at 1:00 pm. Students may enter the classroom each day beginning at 8:20 am. **After 8:45 am a student is considered late to school.**

Students should be picked up from school between 3:30 pm - 3:45 pm Monday - Thursday and between 1:00 pm - 1:15 pm on Fridays. If a parent is going to arrive after the pick-up times, they must notify the front office. Students not picked up at the end of the school day are sent to a waiting room where their child will be supervised until pick up by school staff. **Parents / Guardians will be charged by the school a flat rate fee for late pick up of their student.**

**Parents must notify the school on all days when students will be absent by calling the front desk by 9:00am or e-mailing the school. In addition to phone call notification, all student absences from school must be explained by providing a written statement or sending an e-mail from the student's parent / guardian or a doctor, explaining the reason for the absence from school. This written notice must be provided within 5 school days upon the students return to school.** DC Law requires this written documentation of all absences from school.

The written note/e-mail must include:

- Date of the absence
- Parent / guardian's name
- Student's name and date of birth
- Reason for the absence.

The school can provide a simple form that can be completed to provide the written documentation for the reason for an absence from school.

**E-mails should be sent to: [attendance@bridgespcs.org](mailto:attendance@bridgespcs.org)**

**An absence from school is considered unexcused until a written note or e-mail is submitted to the front office.**

The following are considered excused absences:

- Illness of a student
- Doctor's appointment
- Emergency that requires the student to miss school
- Death in the immediate family
- Observance of religious holidays
- 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
- Other absences approved in advance by the Principal or Assistant Principal upon the written request of a parent/guardian

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. A family vacation outside of school break time is not automatically an excused absence for a student.

If a parent disagrees with a decision made about whether an absence is excused or unexcused, they should request to meet with the Principal or Assistant Principal to address their concerns. If parents need help in addressing challenges with attendance (i.e. transportation, sickness, etc.), they should request to meet the school's Social Worker or Counselor.

**Tardiness**

**For Bridges PCS school arrival time is between 8:20 – 8:45 AM. A student who arrives to school after 8:45 AM is considered tardy.** Attendance and tardiness are recorded by each classroom shortly after the beginning of the school day.

If a student arrives **after 8:45 AM**, parents must sign their child in at the front desk in the tardiness log. Students who are tardy miss important information and instructional time and disrupt the classroom's schedule. If a student is repeatedly tardy, the following actions are taken:

<b>Tardy Arrivals</b>	<b>Action Taken by the School</b>
Student arrives tardy, after 12:00 PM noon.	School will not accept student for the school day <u>without prior notification about a tardy arrival past 12:00 PM noon</u> and the student will be considered unexcused for the day. <u>With prior notification from parent about tardy arrival after 12:00 PM noon, school will accept student for the school day.</u>
Student arrives tardy five (5) days during the school year.	Attendance Coordinator monitors situation. Letter sent home to the family, reviewing the school's policies concerning tardy arrival, attendance and absences from school.
Student arrives tardy ten (10) times during the school year.	For 10 or more 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**

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:

<b>Absences</b>	<b>Action Taken by the School</b>
1 - 4 unexcused absences.	Teachers will call parent / guardian for inquiry and support with attendance. They will also review the attendance policies and protocols.
4 unexcused absences.	Front Office staff monitors situation. Letter is sent home to the family reviewing the school’s policies concerning tardy arrival, attendance and absences from school.
After 3 consecutive unexcused absences from school.	The teacher will contact family for inquiry and support around attendance. If absenteeism is due to illness, information must be shared with school so plans for providing school work to student can be made to maintain student’s learning. <u>School requires medical documentation if a health problem is the cause of absenteeism prior to the student to returning to school.</u> If the teacher cannot make contact with parent, the Attendance Coordinator will be notified and a news may be completed.
5-9 unexcused absences	Attendance Coordinator will begin monitoring student’s attendance. A letter is sent home, requesting the parent / guardian to attend a meeting with the Social Worker / Counselor or the Principal. Problem-solving efforts and goal-setting is done by the family and school staff. An attendance contract may be developed.
10 unexcused absences	<b>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 (CFSA).</b> The referral by the school to CFSA must happen within 2 days of the 10 <sup>th</sup> unexcused absence. Parents / guardians are advised that significant unexcused absences or 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.
20 unexcused absences	Meeting will occur with family to review on-going attendance concern. Possible outcome may be the student being 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 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 and 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

No onsite parking is available at school. When driving, please park your car in the neighborhood and walk to the building. **The limited parking spaces at the school are assigned to the staff of Bridges PCS, Briya PCS, and Mary's Center.**



### 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. **There is no school for students and no aftercare on teacher training days.** The school calendar is available on the website or at the front desk.

## Monthly Newsletters and Classroom Websites

Bridges produces a monthly school newsletter that highlights upcoming events, activities and deadlines. Each classroom also produces a monthly newsletter and a classroom website with information about the classroom curriculum and how to make connections at home with what your child is learning at school. We distribute the monthly whole-school newsletter via hard-copy and e-mail.



### School Hours

Classes for students begin at 8:30 AM each day. On all days except Friday, the school day ends at 3:30 pm. On Friday the school day ends at 1:00 pm. **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 due 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 and label all of his/her clothes with first and last name. For PreK students, please send in two extra changes of clothes. Students go outdoors for recess or neighborhood walks in most weather conditions. Extended indoor play is scheduled on days when there is extended rain, the temperature falls below 32 degrees (including the wind chill

factor) or goes above 100 degrees (including the heat index). 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 for 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 care and after-school care through an outside organization. Before-school care is from 7:00 am – 8:20 am. After-school care is from 3:30 pm – 6:00 pm on Monday to Thursday and from 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm on Friday. It is available on all school days for students but not available during vacations, Federal Holidays, or on teacher training days. Students will receive a healthy snack each day during after-school care. **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 through Thursday, 3:30 pm – 6:00pm  
Friday, 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm



## Breakfast & Lunch

Classes sit down together as a group for breakfast at 8:30 a.m. and for lunch each day. Menus for the month are posted on the website and lobby bulletin board. Breakfast is free to all students. Lunch is available to all students. It is free or reduced-price for students who qualify and available for purchase for other students. Families may send lunch to school for their child in lieu of the in-school lunch. To receive the meals for free, you must complete an application form for the National School Lunch Program, which the school can provide.

**Students eligible for reduced price meals or who wish to purchase lunch at the regular price must order meals in advance on a monthly basis.** Meals provided by the school are ordered through Revolution Foods. Dietary restrictions that can be accommodated include vegetarian, dairy-only, and/or gluten free. Contact the front desk for information on the costs for meals.

Student meals are ordered for a full month. Payment must be received by the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. Unfortunately, students may not 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 outstanding balance over \$100 dollars may be carried into the next month. Meals will not be ordered for any student with a balance of \$100 dollars in unpaid fees.

**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 the research that shows all students function better and are happier and more attentive if they eat well. We provide a free healthy breakfast to all students and give students in after-school 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 School. Several students have severe peanut allergies. It is our policy to not allow students to share food that is sent from home and we ask 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 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 may use the classroom'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 on the last Friday of the month** between 3:00 – 3:30 pm in the classroom. Parents are invited to work together with the teacher to plan the celebration.

For birthday celebrations at school the following items may 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 out and games or other activities should not 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 in the main office and nurse's suite. 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 and documentation of immunization, and return these forms to school before 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 may not 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 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. Students with ringworm must be seen by

a physician and may not 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 also have an Individual Educational Program (IEP) that sets yearly learning and developmental goals for each. Meetings are held at school for the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Report cards are sent home for the 3<sup>rd</sup> 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 is 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 is in place of a traditional report card. Students in Elementary School 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 are 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 are 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 have Spanish speaking staff members who can act as translators and work directly with students in the classroom. We 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 have translators or are conducted separately in Spanish when possible.

The purpose of Bridges PCS' 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 Kindergarten to 5<sup>th</sup> 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 throughout 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 Team**

The Student Support Team (SST) is a school-based committee that serves as an early warning system to help Bridges PCS 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 . . .

- Is chaired by the Director of Student Support Services. Other members of the SST 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 school administrator.
- Examines student data (e.g. quizzes, student portfolio) to develop six-week intervention plans for individual students and/or groups of students with similar needs.
- Collaborates with city agencies, community groups and parents to provide services to students beyond the school day, if necessary.

Research shows that a Student Support Team improves 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 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 based on the individual needs of the student, and must be offered within the least restrictive environment. Service options available include special education support in the general-education classroom, special education instruction in a 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 PCS 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 school's 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 from the main office.**

The school's behavior and conduct expectations are:

- Care for ourselves (self-respect)
- Care for others (respect)
- 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 throughout the school building. On-going and open communication with families through parent-teacher communication books, phone calls and conferences provide opportunities to compare behavior in the home and school environments.

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

Bridges PCS encourages 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 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 employees. The Principal or Assistant Principal determines the number of days for suspension based on the severity of the infraction, and previous infractions. The suspension or expulsion becomes 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 is made in writing and given to the parent/guardian. The student's parent/guardian has five days to challenge the suspension or expulsion by submitting an appeal of the decision, in writing, to the Chair of the school's 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 are also considered. Consequences for behavior or actions taken by a student with special needs takes into account the child's disability and IEP goal.

## **Communication and Paper Work**

Bridges Public Charter School's staff, teachers and administration are committed to being responsive to families' questions and requests. Please be aware that the school's standard response time for phone call or e-mail messages is two business days. All school staff can be reached by calling the main telephone number (202) 545-0515. 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 front desk.

The Principal, Assistant Principal, Director of Student Support Services and Special Education Coordinators have open office hours. All requests for meetings are made by appointment with the front desk or the staff person directly.

Requests for the completion of any paper work or forms by the school must be done in writing and turned in to 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 (e.g., 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 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 Special Education Coordinator's office. Health records are also secured in the nurse's suite. 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 Classroom Observations – Policies and Procedures**

Bridges PCS welcomes parent classroom observations and applauds the commitment to parental involvement in education that observations represent. However, because we wish to provide all students with the best instruction we can, we schedule observations in a way that will not distract students from the quality of instruction taking place in our classrooms.

Parent visits to the classroom should be approved in advance to avoid unnecessary disruptions such as over-crowding in the classroom or distracting parent-child interactions. Parents wishing to observe their child's class in action should contact the teacher in advance to set up a date and time for the observation, then complete a Parent Observation Request form. In the interest of protecting the privacy of all students in the classroom, the "Parent Observation Request" form includes a confidentiality requirement that prohibits parents from discussing with others what they observe concerning other students in the classroom, except when there exists a clear educational need to know.

Bridges PCS, in consultation with the relevant classroom teacher(s), retains both the responsibility and the authority to determine when and how often a parent may visit his or her child's classroom(s).

While present during a class in session, parents should refrain from communicating with either the instructor or any of the students in the class, including their own child, without the express approval of the instructor.

## **Parent/Guardian Volunteer Opportunities**

Parents/Guardians who choose Bridges PCS for their children commit to active involvement in their children's education and to helping 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
- Parent / Teacher Organization (PTO)
- 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 Principal or Assistant Principal or any of the classroom teachers for more information.

## **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 are made possible by 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 receive requests to support the classroom and school programs 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 requested include markers, glue sticks, post-it notes, hand sanitizer and ziplock bags.
2. \$40.00 fee for the year for snack for the classroom.
3. \$15.00 fee to support the cost of classroom field trips that occur during the school year.

If purchasing the supplies, classroom snacks or the payment of the field trip fee is a financial hardship for your family please let the administrative staff know. You can speak with Ms. Kristel (Operations Manager) or Ms. Guzman (Director of Operations).

### **Parent Training and Workshops**

Workshops and training are offered throughout the school year in the morning and in the evening. 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.

### **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 has 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 an individual knows or has 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 the individual has 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 that 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. Because more than 40% of Bridges PCS students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, the school is designated as a Title I school as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act.

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

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

### **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 qualifies for English as a Second Language (ESL) services through Title III, a Federal program, and the state.

At Bridges PCS, services are delivered to a student in one or more of the following ways:

1. PreK – 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. PreK to 5<sup>th</sup> – Adaptations made by the teachers of the regular academic class to make the content understandable to the students as well as teach English.
3. PreK to 5<sup>th</sup> – Development of an individual language development plan and monitoring of development during the year.
4. PreK to 5<sup>th</sup> – 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**  
**Bridges Public Charter School**  
**100 Gallatin St. NE**  
**Washington, DC 20011**  
**Phone Number (202) 545-0515**

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Gary Friend – Chief Operating Officer, [gfriend@bridgespcs.org](mailto:gfriend@bridgespcs.org)

Kristine Rigley – Principal, [krigley@bridgespcs.org](mailto:krigley@bridgespcs.org)

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Youseth Guzman – Director of Operations, [yguzman@bridgespcs.org](mailto:yguzman@bridgespcs.org)

Kristel Guzman – Operations Manager, [kguzman@bridgespcs.org](mailto:kguzman@bridgespcs.org)

**Bridges PCS – Parent Handbook Receipt Page**  
**(Please turn in to the main office)**

**I received a copy of the 2017-2018 Bridges Public Charter School parent handbook and will read the information it contains. I have been notified that the school’s complete Discipline Policy is available by request in the school’s main office.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Print your child’s name)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Print your name)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Sign your name)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**(Today’s Date)**