



**Hands-On Education
Connecting Kids to Their World**

2010-2011
Information Handbook
for Parents and Students

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Welcome to BRIDGES Charter School!

Thank you for choosing to join our community. By making this choice, you are entering a proactive environment which focuses on educating the whole child - academically, emotionally and socially.

This Handbook is provided so that you may familiarize yourself with our program. In this Handbook, you will learn details about the philosophy and vision of our School, your child's general school day, ways in which you will be participating in and around the School, and the procedures and policies that will impact your family. We hope this Handbook will answer any questions you may have about BRIDGES Charter School. Even if your family is familiar with the Whole Child philosophy of education, please familiarize yourself with the contents of this Handbook, and be sure to discuss with your child(ren) any procedures that impact him/her/them.

If you have any questions or concerns about our School's philosophy, policies, or procedures, please make an appointment with Hilda Salas, our Director. If you have a suggestion to make this Handbook or any policy herein better, please submit it in written form, as we will be continually striving to make our School better. This Handbook will be amended after we journey through the many challenges and celebrations of our inaugural year. Please know that our doors, as well as our hearts, are always open.

We hope your years at BRIDGES Charter School will be filled with the joy and fulfillment that comes with being part of a positive change in education!

Respectfully yours,

Hilda Salas, Director

Lori Peters, Education Team Leader

Laura Erlig, Education Coordinator

Adopted September 3, 2010

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Please use our website (www.BRIDGEScharter.org) for the following information, as we will be updating these links as needed:

BRIDGES Charter School (BCS) Staff Directory
BCS Board of Directors Directory
Parent Advisory Council (PAC) Leaders
Parent Managed Cohort (PMC) Leaders
School Calendar and Important Dates

I. Mission, Vision and Philosophy

Mission

Our mission is to educate the **whole child** using a combination of innovative curriculum and instruction along with social/emotional education embedded in the program. Students will be enabled to reach their innate intellectual, creative, and leadership potential through our commitment to nourish curiosity, compassion, independence, resourcefulness, and respect for diversity.

Vision

Our vision is to create a K-8 learning community in which all teachers, parents and students partner to support the cognitive, emotional and social success of our students; where there exists positive, respectful and peaceful collaboration; and where children are enabled and empowered to become lifelong learners and compassionate global citizens.

Our Goal

BRIDGES Charter School is committed to providing a high quality, effective, and standards-based program through the education of the **whole child**, whereby the cognitive, social, emotional and physical growth of individual students is equally valued.

Educational Philosophy

We (educators, parents and students) operate under the shared philosophy that we are all teachers and learners in our educational community. Educators view the classroom as a rich, evolving experience, and consider the learning styles of our students when planning a meaningful, balanced and standards-based curriculum. Students are primarily motivated by their interests and passions, yet can learn to be motivated by opportunities to challenge themselves and improve in areas *they* determine to be ripe for growth. Children learn best, and will be most motivated, in a nurturing, safe, and supportive environment, where their curiosities and talents are respected. Thus, the impact of positive interpersonal relationships amongst classroom and community members cannot be understated. It is through these positive, collaborative and respectful interactions that learning will best occur.

We believe the school day provides ample opportunities to discuss, engage in, and learn from everyday experiences, be it a current event or playground dynamics. The exploration of relevant and sometimes challenging social issues and circumstances provides practice in conflict resolution and creates a participatory classroom community. When children are active participants in their learning, what they learn becomes more relevant. Making learning relevant to the world around us is vital, as is providing a context-driven curriculum. Context-driven lessons and activities allow students to recall and utilize what they know already, and apply that prior knowledge to new experiences. Thus, the learning and practice of basic, fundamental skills becomes part of the process, not the goal itself. As students mature and matriculate from one level to the next, they will each work toward the goal of being a confident, participatory, socially responsible, and independent life-long learner.

The educational design of BRIDGES Charter School has its basis in the theory of constructivism (Piaget), which details *how* people learn. Understanding cannot simply be transferred by

explanation from one mind (that of an educator) to another mind (that of a student). Rather, each of us constructs our own image of the universe and how it fits together through personal engagement with it. This approach is student-centered, whereby teachers (and parents) act as facilitators, providing the guidance and structure necessary for the children to construct meaning from their environment and experiences. Ultimately, children travel from engagement to learning, from learning to understanding, and from understanding to the competent application of information.

During this educational process and experience, our students will practice effective oral and written self-expression, critical thinking and problem solving, and learn personal responsibility. They will actively engage in the curriculum and find meaningful ways to demonstrate their mastery of concepts, be it thematic, collaborative, dramatic, presentation-style, or a combination of choices. Through cooperative activities and project-based learning, students will develop powerful reasoning, negotiating, and creative-thinking skills. Students will also learn to engage with a variety of learners, in order to further appreciate the variety of cumulative talents their groups have to offer, whether if be in cross-age groups, homogeneous groups, or while working with adults. Having ample opportunities to learn from, learn with, and assist in the learning of others builds and nurtures a sense of community and social responsibility, and fosters the skills necessary for life-long learning. Consequently, these fundamental life skills serve as a foundation for the pursuit of academic excellence and high achievement.

We believe that all children have an innate desire to learn and that children learn best by doing. Because we recognize that each child is unique, we have committed ourselves to creating an inclusive educational experience that combines current educational research, common sense, and attention to various needs and learning styles in order to move each child forward. We feel that such a dynamic, responsive learning environment is only possible when the student to adult ratio is dramatically lowered by consistent parent participation in the classroom. We also believe that a successful student is one who emerges from school as a balanced individual who is confident and competent not only academically, but also socially and emotionally.

In conclusion, it is our belief that learning best occurs when children are presented with ample opportunities to engage with others; when they have room for self-expression, creativity and mastery within the context of their learning; and where a nurturing educational environment is provided so that each student reaches his or her potential as a respected individual.

Our guiding principles are:

1. **We learn by doing:** Children learn best when they engage in activities that are interesting, interactive, and relevant, and when the teacher, the parents and the child all understand how the child learns best.
2. **Teachers and parents are partners in education.** Teachers and parents each have a different sphere of influence with respect to the children. Consequently, they must work together to educate the whole child, in order to help him or her reach his or her full potential academically, socially, and emotionally.

3. **A child's natural desire to learn is to be preserved and developed.** Without genuine understanding, learning is often rote and quickly forgotten.
4. **Creative and critical thought must be nurtured and actively developed.** Creativity is often enhanced through active and unstructured play and exploration, which leads to problem-solving and critical thinking. The ability to synthesize creative ideas is one of the most profound goals of any education.
5. **Every child deserves a solid foundation of basic knowledge.** Creative and critical thought is best served by a wealth of knowledge with which to work.
6. **An integrated curriculum provides more meaning and relevance.** Whenever possible, the inter-relationship between concepts and topics must be highlighted and explored. We strive to put even practice and skill-building activities into a context that has some meaning on a larger scale.
7. **Completing a task well fosters self-esteem.** Preserving a joy of learning is compatible with teaching self-discipline in learning, including the learning from mistakes.
8. **A sense of community aids development immeasurably.** When children feel secure and cared for in their surroundings, they become better able to develop social and academic skills.
9. **Communication is essential.** Frequent in-depth communication between teacher, parent, and child is essential, as students need guidance to make responsible choices in their learning. BRIDGES Charter School will attract a diversity of passions and opinions. Thus, some disagreements over content and/or strategies are to be expected. Clear communication that focuses on the issue at hand greatly facilitates the process of consensus and resolution.
10. **We are all partners.** All members of the community must support the philosophy to the best of their ability, both at school and at home, in order for BRIDGES Charter School and its students to thrive. This includes a commitment to promoting sustainable, environmentally conscious and healthy habits, and to the nurturing of conflict resolution skills.

Research-based Pedagogical Strategies that Guide our Philosophy

Our philosophical beliefs are derived from, but not limited to, a variety of educational and behavioral researchers. While we may or may not endorse the educational and behavioral philosophy of the following researchers in full, BRIDGES Charter School's educational philosophy is guided by the following *key tenets*, and each is followed by a strategy we will use:

- ***Fostering positive interpersonal relationships is essential to developing independence and confidence.*** To this end, “emotional intelligence” (EQ) is a stronger indicator of human success and confidence than IQ. The development of character qualities that develop one's emotional intelligence is paramount to Whole Child education. Emotionally intelligent children are better able to learn academically. (Daniel Goleman)

- ***The ability to communicate compassionately and empathetically with others is fundamental*** in building respectful, long-lasting relationships and is fundamental to successful integration into society at large. The daily practice of conflict resolution methods (such as those found in Non Violent Communication (NVC), or compassionate communication) is a necessary skill and will be an integral element of our Charter School. We will teach and practice conflict resolution skills throughout the day and in ***Circle***, our daily forum for conflict resolution and mediated communication. As teachers, we will model these skills for our students; parents will further develop their conflict resolution ability through ongoing parent education. (Marshall Rosenberg)
- ***The student must learn interactively and is not a vessel to be filled with facts.*** Children need opportunities to explore, manipulate, experiment, question, and seek answers, and the teacher must have confidence in the child’s ability to do so. In constructivist learning, intelligence grows through the twin processes of assimilation and accommodation, whereby children build upon their experiential understanding of events, materials, and subject matter. Therefore, we will build upon what children already know, and provide many opportunities for children to actively engage in their learning. (Jean Piaget)
- ***Social interactions make up our culture, and our culture shapes our cognition.*** Within the socio-cultural perspective is the idea of scaffolding, whereby the learner is provided clues and hints in order to solve problems and that, given appropriate help, the child can perform challenging tasks. Guided discovery in the classroom involves the teacher posing intriguing questions, offering feedback, and providing opportunities for students to learn and master the necessary tools they need to be successful. This socio-cultural model promotes multi-age groupings and peer teaching so that students themselves offer the dialogues and scaffolding needed to better understand the material. (Lev Vygotsky)
- ***Art, music, invention and play are necessary components to education.*** The brain must be fully stimulated through the mastery of six “high-concept, high-touch” abilities essential to professional success and personal fulfillment: design, story, symphony, empathy, play and meaning. We will honor and promote the attention to a child’s ability and desire to be creative and exploratory, and provide environments most conducive for optimal brain development. (Daniel Pink)
- ***Diverse learners must be provided with diverging pathways that lead to their success.*** Thus our curriculum will maintain rigorous standards while permitting innovation and creativity in curriculum choices, and will maintain the flexibility to allow highly specialized minds to prepare for a productive adulthood. In addition, our assessments will take into consideration the premise that different minds can show what they know in different ways. We reject the traditional paradigms that focus on exposing and fixing a student’s deficits, while neglecting the student’s latent or blatant talents. (Mel Levine)
- ***Differentiation within clusters can provide the extra scaffolding needed for optimal understanding of a subject, via the support of peers and adults.*** We will focus on a differentiated model rather than on an individualized model when preparing for the needs of our students. Differentiation in our classrooms will facilitate the understanding of ideas and the application of skills so that students develop frameworks of meaning which allow them to retain and transfer what they study. We will find “zones” in which students cluster, so that on any particular day, we may offer several routes to a goal- instead of 30

routes, as an “individualized” model would suggest (an individualized model being one in which it is expected that every child has his or her specific needs met). (Carol Ann Tomlinson)

- ***The avoidance of humiliation and public embarrassment will be of paramount importance.*** Thus, in order to fulfill our School’s vision of positive, respectful and peaceful collaboration, discipline practices will focus on proactive resolutions and the understanding of natural consequences. (Mel Levine)
- ***Collaboration and cooperation promote higher achievement and lead to greater results and fulfillment than competition.*** It is a waste of one’s energy to prevent another from winning, thereby lowering individual and group productivity. We seek to change the competitive nature of society by fostering a sense of true community in our classrooms. (Alfie Kohn)
- ***Most human behavior is chosen.*** According to *Choice Theory* (a book by William Glasser), the present psychology of most people in the world is that we can only get what we want through external control, when in actuality external control is destructive to relationships. Therefore, we will teach, model, and practice, either specifically or similarly, the “Seven Caring Habits” (replacing the “Seven Deadly Habits”)¹ in order to address our commitment to connect to one another and the world around us. (William Glasser)
- ***Students think and learn differently, and express their intelligence in a multitude of ways.*** Thus, we will consider a student’s intellectual and affective learning style in order to maximize his or her learning. The *Multiple Intelligence Theory* defines eight separate intellectual domains: verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, spatial, musical, body/kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal and naturalist. (Howard Gardner)

BRIDGES Charter School’s Educational Philosophy (including guiding principles and researched-based pedagogical strategies), in its entirety, will serve to direct all curriculum and classroom management methods in BRIDGES Charter School.

II. BRIDGES Charter School Overview

Our Learners will develop their skills in:

- Academic and social leadership
- Emotional fortitude
- Understanding themselves and their best path to success
- Compassion and citizenry
- Public speaking

¹ The Seven Caring Habits, according to Glasser’s Choice Theory, replace the need for external control. Those habits are: supporting, encouraging, listening, accepting, trusting, respecting, and negotiating. By replacing “deadly habits” (criticism, blame, complaints, nagging, threats, punishments and bribery) with caring habits, we can build and protect healthy interactions and relations.

- Collaboration and team building
- Effective communication
- Handling conflict with integrity

Curriculum Features:

- Child centered and developmental practices
- Social, emotional and ethical education
- Health, wellness, and physical education
- Integrated, thematic and interdisciplinary instruction
- Global and multicultural studies
- Visual, practical and performing arts
- Core areas of language arts, math, science and social studies
- Writers' Workshop and Literature
- California Content Standards
- Environmental studies and gardening
- Social justice
- Service learning
- Independent student selected projects
- Circle and classroom meetings

Instruction Includes:

- Parents as partners in facilitating learning
- Interactive, hands-on lessons with manipulative materials
- Constructivist learning theory
- A cooperative rather than a competitive learning environment
- Social interaction and peer cross-age tutoring
- Multi-age grouping
- Large group, small group and individual instruction, as needed and when possible
- Multi-sensory, multi-modal approaches
- Experiential learning, including field trips and community resources when possible
- Process over product orientation
- Learning by inquiry, investigation, exploration, construction and creation
- Learning by doing, seeing, questioning, listening, experimenting, analyzing, relating and applying knowledge
- Multiple Intelligence Theory
- Circle and classroom meetings

Evaluation/ Assessment

- Formal and informal conferences amongst parents, students and teachers
- Project rubrics
- Teacher-selected skills assessments (e.g. quizzes, essay type tests)
- Authentic assessments including performance, portfolios and work samples
- Student reflection and self-evaluation

- Teacher and parent observation
- Bi-annual narrative reports written for cumulative file
- State mandated standardized testing
- Circle and classroom meetings

What is a Charter School?

A charter school is a form of public school that may be started and operated by individuals or organizations from outside of the conventional school district system. Charter schools are exempt from many laws that apply to traditional public schools organized into districts. Thus, administrators, faculty, staff, and parents have considerable autonomy in designing an educational program, facilities, and budget that meet the needs of their students. In exchange for this increased autonomy, charter schools are held much more strictly accountable for their use of public funds than most non-charter public schools (large districts tend to have more administrators, and therefore more oversight of one another). Charter schools must meet state academic performance standards, as well as other goals agreed to in the charter document, and they must successfully manage school finances and operations. If charter schools don't perform, they are closed.

III. School Leadership

BRIDGES Charter School has adopted a model of leadership that we feel is more collaborative and consensus building than that of traditional Principal/Superintendent roles. Our Director, Hilda Salas, will be the primary leader of the school, especially when dealing with our charter authorizer, the Ventura County Office of Education, and the BRIDGES Board of Directors. However, Ms. Salas may consult the Education Coordinator, Laura Erlig, and the Education Team Leader, Lori Peters, for decisions regarding the needs of the Education Team, best practices for classroom instruction, and student needs. Additionally, our Parent-Managed Cohorts will each have a lead parent as a chairperson, and this chairperson will have some autonomy in guiding the direction of the PMC. Our Parent Advisory Council (PAC) will serve as an advisory board, or “umbrella,” of the cohorts, helping manage the needs of the PMCs and directing new families to an area of School involvement that is both symbiotic and valued. The PAC may also serve as our School's booster club.

When Concerns Arise

As a Charter School, we have the same responsibilities as all traditional schools and school districts. At times, the jobs of various people overlap. The following is intended to help you know to whom to go in order to most efficiently address concerns and questions. Please see the Staff and Faculty page on the website (www.BRIDGEScharter.org) for email addresses and/or classroom phone numbers.

Your Child's Teacher, for questions or concerns related to:

- Your child's academic, social, or emotional needs or concerns
- A conflict involving your child
- Curriculum, enrichment or instructional ideas
- Help or ideas for effective volunteering in the classroom

- Help or advice needed to assist children in the classrooms
- Questions concerning or about classroom management
- Ideas for helping your child at home
- Student behavior when working with a group
- Classroom parties (and bringing in any treats, which must be approved in advance)
- Field trips for the class
- Just to say Thank You!

The Education Coordinator, Laura Erlig, for questions or concerns related to:

- Curriculum/Instruction ideas and/or staff development ideas
- Parent Managed Cohort ideas
- A concern regarding your child's classroom, if already addressed with your child's teacher and still in need of resolution
- Student behavior on the general campus
- Classroom happenings
- Volunteer hours, if already addressed with your child's teacher and still in need of resolution
- Special Education programs
- School events and traditions
- Field trips for the school
- Parent Education
- Orientations to the school/tours/visits

The Education Team Leader, Lori Peters, for questions or concerns related to:

- Any needs, questions or concerns related to the Education Team, if you are not able to reach Laura Erlig, and/or if these needs or concerns were already addressed with your child's teacher and still in need of resolution
- Parent Managed Cohort ideas
- Curriculum/Instruction ideas and/or staff development ideas

The Director, Hilda Salas, for questions or concerns related to:

- The BRIDGES Charter School Board of Directors
- Special Education, if not able to be addressed with the teacher and/or Education Coordinator
- Daily operations outside of the classrooms
- Disciplinary procedures
- School policies
- Issues concerning personnel
- Insurance, facilities, etc.
- Business/reporting/budget
- Fundraising and grant writing (suggestions may also be addressed to the Fundraising PMC and the PAC)
- Publicity/community outreach (suggestions may also be addressed to the Community Outreach PMC and the PAC)
- Website and technology (suggestions may also be addressed to the Technology PMC and the PAC)

- Ideas, question or concerns regarding the School as a whole
- Any issues/concerns already addressed with your child's teacher, the Education Coordinator, or the Education Team leader which are still in need of resolution

IV. General Daily School Schedule, M-TH (specific classroom schedules may vary depending on specialist schedule)

7:45	Supervised Before-School Activities
8:10	School Begins
8:15	Tardy Bell
8:15-9:40	Grades K-7th Instructional Block #1
9:40-10:10	Nutrition Break (Healthy Snack) and Recess
10:10-11:20	Grades 1-7th Instructional Block #2
10:10-12:15	Kindergarten Instructional Block #2 (additional break/snack/lunch time may vary from other grades)
11:20-11:50	Healthy Lunch Time
11:50-1:30	Grades 1st-7th Instructional Block #3
12:15	Kindergarten Dismissal
1:30-2:00	Active Play
2:00-3:00	Grades 1-7th Instructional Block #4, or Enrichment
3:00	Dismissal
3:00-4:00	Indie Time or After-School Enrichment Classes (some require fee); Child Care (parent paid) available until 6 PM

Friday (bank day) and any other 1/2 days

7:45	Supervised Before-School Activities
8:10	School Begins
8:15	Tardy Bell
8:15-9:40	Grades K-7th Instructional Block #1
9:40-10:10	Nutrition Break (Healthy Snack) and Recess
10:10-11:20	Grades 1st-7th Instructional Block #2
11:20-11:50	Healthy Lunch Time
11:50-1:30	Grades 1-7th Instructional Block #3
12:15	Kindergarten Dismissal
1:30	Dismissal
1:30-3:00	Possible After-School Enrichment class(es) or Child Care

Please note: Check our website at www.BRIDGEScharter.org for the Schedule of Specialists, Chorus, Band, and other Enrichment activities.

After School Enrichment Program

BRIDGES Charter School will offer several options for children wishing to stay after school. The schedule, program choices (including start and end days), and any fees will be posted on our

website. Fall and Spring choices may vary. Enrichment programs will begin at 3:00 PM, upon class dismissal, M-TH. On Fridays (early dismissal, or “bank day”), courses will begin at 1:30. Choices include chorus, band, art, and sport’s club; other programs may be added. Some 16-week courses require a fee, payable in advance of the course, and space may be limited. Schedules and age range may vary for courses, so please check the School newsletters, the School office, and/or the website for updated information, as well as start and end dates. Children who stay for enrichment classes must commit to coming consistently each time the class meets (or informing the instructor of their absence). Children in our Independent Study (Home School) Program (IS) may take enrichment classes as well, if committed to weekly attendance, and as long as there is not a wait list of site-based students.

It is recommended that all children staying at School after 3:00 PM bring an additional snack.

Indie Time

A reasonable amount of independent work will be assigned daily/weekly; the amount will vary based on grade levels. Most children (especially in grades 4th-7th) will not complete all of their independent assignments (essays, projects, observations, math problems, etc.) during school, especially if the student is in need of extra practice, extra time, or adult support. “Indie Time” will be provided in a classroom from 3:00-4:00 PM, Monday-Thursday, for 1st-3rd, and 4th-7th graders. Indie Time is reserved for students dedicated to completing assignments (so they don’t become homework), studying, reading, and/or working on independent or collaborative projects. Indie Time is recommended for students who can work independently and respectfully, and/or who would like to utilize the resources available at School to complete their assignments. Indie Time will be a quiet workspace, with parent volunteers available to assist. ***Indie Time is not childcare.*** (A teacher will be present, but she/he will also be working/planning.) Students may sign up for Indie Time anywhere from one to four days, or not at all. Younger students or those who finish their work quickly might not need Indie Time. Students who sign up for Indie Time must commit to coming weekly, for the day(s) they sign up for (or informing the supervising teacher of their absence).

Childcare

The YMCA will provide childcare from 6:30 AM until 6:00 PM. There is a fee for childcare. For more information, or to sign up, please visit the School office. Childcare with the YMCA will also include time for “quiet work”, but this time will flex to meet the needs of students who might not be able to work independently for a full hour, as is needed in Indie Time.

V. Safety Procedures, Policies, and Requests

BRIDGES K-8 Charter School shares a campus with Glenwood K-5 Elementary School. In order for all children to be safe, and to maintain a respectful relationship with our Glenwood neighbors as well as entire BRIDGES community, we kindly ask that you observe the following procedures:

Drop-off and Pick-up

- Students should be dropped-off and picked-up in front of the School, along the curb or in the turn out along Windsor Drive. Please do not park, even temporarily, in the Glenwood parking lot.
- Parent volunteers may park in the **Glenwood Park** parking area, or anywhere along Windsor Drive, where there is ample parking.
- The parking lot adjacent to Glenwood Park (in front of the basketball court) is for **BRIDGES staff parking only**, until further notice. Some spots may become available to volunteers once we have had the opportunity to fully assess our parking needs. Please do not use this lot for drop off, as there is not sufficient room to turn vehicles around safely.
- Please drive slowly and conscientiously, always on the lookout for pedestrians. **Turn off your cell phones while driving near the School.** There is limited time for dropping off and picking up children. Please be mindful as you approach the school and encourage your child/ren to be ready to exit/enter your vehicle quickly to facilitate the drop off/pick up speed.
- There will be two gates for School entry and dismissal: in front the BRIDGES office, and next to the BRIDGES parking lot. The gates will be closed once School begins (8:10) for security reasons. After 8:10, please enter through the front office.
- The Glenwood School parking lot (spaces within the “horse shoe” driveway in front of the school) is for Glenwood staff and Glenwood parents only. If you will be walking your child in to School, park your car in one of the following areas:
 1. Along the curb on Windsor Drive
 2. In the **Glenwood Park** parking lot
- The curb along Windsor Drive in front of the BRIDGES’ office, and in the drive-through Glenwood parking area, is for quickly dropping off or picking up children only, and preferably not during Glenwood’s school hours (8:25 AM-2:40 PM). To avoid congestion, do not park or wait for your child there.
- If you are waiting while parked along Windsor Drive and are not near the office, please turn off your car engine while waiting for your child.

Bicycles, Skateboards, Heelys, and other equipment with wheels

- Walk your bike, skateboard, or scooter when on campus, at all times while School or any School programs are in session. Please note that BRIDGES childcare will run until 6:00 PM.
- No wheels in Heelys on campus.
- Wear helmets at all times if riding (bikes, skateboards, rollerblades, scooters, etc.) around the School or Glenwood Park after hours or on weekends. While the park is not “part” of our School, practicing safety when off site, at all times, is encouraged.

Carpooling

Due to limited parking (and to help our environment), carpooling is encouraged at BRIDGES Charter School. If you need help arranging a carpool, please stop in at the office so we may connect you with people who live in your area. A School Roster will also be available.

It is advisable to evaluate your auto insurance before driving other people's children. BRIDGES Charter School does not assume any responsibility for carpool arrangements or for liability arising from carpooling.

Good Neighbors

It is important that we are good neighbors with Glenwood staff and students. It is never necessary to use the Glenwood entrance as we have our own entrance through our BRIDGES office. The covered lunch area will be shared with Glenwood students; do not sit at or near the lunch tables between 12:00 and 1:15. Please be considerate by not walking through their campus for any reason except for the following:

- Parent use of the Glenwood restroom in the teacher's lounge behind the office.
- Walking to and from the Glenwood/BRIDGES shared library, which is across from the Glenwood office.
- Walking to and from any Specialist classroom or After-School class, where passing near a Glenwood classroom is necessary. Please observe quiet, respectful behavior.

Attendance/Tardy Policy

Attendance

At BRIDGES, we view every day as an essential learning opportunity, and all School activities are important for your child's educational, emotional and social development. Therefore, we expect excellent attendance from all our students. Missing school regularly is not only detrimental to a child's learning, but can create poor learning habits. A child is considered absent when he/she is not in school to begin the day.

If your child is experiencing worries about school that may prevent him/her from wanting to come, please talk to the classroom teacher as soon as possible so that these issues can be worked out.

Tardies

Children should arrive at school **at least** 5-10 minutes before school starts. Supervised morning play activities will be offered between 7:45 and 8:10 to encourage early arrival; our first "bell" (or whistle) will sound at 8:10, and another will sound at 8:15 AM, the time at which students must be in their classrooms. Arriving early gives students time to check in with their friends and to put their backpacks, lunches, jackets, and other materials outside their classroom in a designated area. Children should not, however, arrive at school before 7:40 AM unless they are enrolled in the childcare program. Teachers will be busy preparing their classrooms for the day, and will not be available to supervise students. Teachers might not be opening their doors until 8:10 when school begins.

Frequent tardiness (arriving at school at 8:10 or later) is problematic for your child's teacher and classmates, as well as for your child. The beginning of the school day is filled with discussion, traditions, and instruction that are important for setting up the day to be successful. When children arrive after the morning has started, it detracts from the learning environment and is disrespectful to the teacher and the other students in the class. **PLEASE ARRIVE ON TIME.**

We know this is early for some children, but we ask you to adjust. We compromised with an early start time in order to not overlap with the start time for Glenwood.

PLEASE SYNCHRONIZE YOUR CLOCKS TO THE SCHOOL CLOCKS. 8:15 is the official time that we will be going by to determine if a child is counted as tardy.

Absences

As a public school, our funding comes from the state and is based strictly on our students' average daily attendance (ADA). When your child is absent from school, regardless of the reason, the school will lose some of its allocation. Having all students present (when healthy) is an easy way to keep our School's funding at its highest level.

If your child is absent due to illness (see Health and Wellness section in this handbook for when to keep your child home) or an appointment, call the school office and leave a message on the attendance voice mail as soon as possible. Please make every effort to plan doctor and dentist appointments for after school hours. If your child is taking an enrichment class or is enrolled in chorus/band, please wait for the schedules of these activities before making after school appointments.

Not only is it best for your child to be at school, it is also the law. Student attendance is used for school funding (see "About ADA" below). Because they are often limited in size and don't have monetary reserves built up the way large districts do, charter schools are even more reliant upon the funds received by the state for attendance than traditional public schools.

When a student's attendance problems cannot be resolved or the student and parent/guardian have failed to respond to directives to correct the problem, a student who has been classified as truant may be referred to another, more suitable, placement.

Unlike local district public schools, BRIDGES Charter School does have an option. If you know that your child will be **absent for more than one day** (our policy differs from CVUSD), you may contact the office to sign up for Independent Study (this is not to be confused with our "Independent Study", or Homeschool, Program). This must be done at least ONE WEEK in advance of your departure, as teachers need adequate notice to prepare materials and have forms signed.

About ADA (Average Daily Attendance)

Our federal & state educational funding is directly tied to our Average Daily Attendance (ADA). Our School gets "charged back" every time your child is absent. As a parent, here are some things you can do to help us minimize those losses:

- **Be thoughtful when planning extended family vacations.** When you take your child out during regularly scheduled school days, it costs *about* \$35 a day/child. A whole week is worth about \$175 in lost income to the school. If you must take your child out for a significant number of days, please arrange independent study (as described above) so our ADA is not impacted by your child's absence.

- **Bring your child to school before or after a doctor's appointment.** As long as your child is at school by 9:00 AM each day, your child may be counted as being present.
- **Keep a contagious or infectious child home.** While we stress good attendance, we also want to ensure the health and safety of all our children. You may think you are helping by sending in a sick child (to keep our ADA up), but if they infect a number of others, more children will be absent! As our school population grows, passing of germs will be an even bigger challenge.
- **Encourage your child to adopt healthy habits, and model them yourself.** It may sound obvious, but children with healthy habits get sick less. Make sure your child is getting enough sleep, especially on school nights. Offer them a balanced diet with lots of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and limit sweets and fast food. Teach them to wash their hands frequently, particularly before they eat and after they use the restroom. Help them find ways to be physically active.

Leaving Campus

No child is permitted to leave the BRIDGES campus at any time during school hours unless they have permission from the office and are accompanied by an adult. Children will only be released to parents or designated caretakers unless the office is notified of other arrangements.

Going Home with Friends After School

Permission will be granted for children to go home with another parent or designated caretaker provided the office has received written permission from the child's parent/guardian.

Health and Wellness

Should I keep my child home?

To minimize the spread of illness at school, all children who have symptoms of contagious illness need to be kept at home. It is often difficult to determine if your child is actually sick or perhaps just a bit tired or out of sorts. The following guidelines may be helpful to you in making this determination:

Typical Symptoms of Contagious Illness

These symptoms are not always contagious, but we do ask you to consider keeping your child home if any are present:

- fever
- runny nose with cloudy, yellow or green mucous - or - excessive/constant running nose of any kind
- excessive coughing/sneezing
- congestion
- excessive crankiness/irritability
- mysterious rashes
- diarrhea

Children who have any of the above symptoms may need to be kept home for at least 24 hours for observation. Contact the School office (after hours: leave a voicemail or send an email) if your child is staying home due to illness. Should the absence be more than one day, please inform your child's teacher, and arrange for any class work to be picked up or taken home by a peer.

Please inform us immediately if your child has head lice. Most children will have lice at one time or another. We will check all children who have had lice before they return to class. If there is a verified case of lice in one classroom, a note will go home to all parents in the affected classroom(s) so they can check their children.

Please let us know if you have any concerns about your child or if your child has any health issues that we should be aware of so that we can make sure they do not interfere with your child's education or well being.

Medications

We are not allowed to dispense ANY medications without a doctor's written authorization. This includes over-the-counter medications, prescription medications, herbs, lotions and drops, or anything else prescribed by your doctor or alternative practitioner. ***Please do not send medications in your child's backpack, including inhalers, unless the doctor has approved this and you have informed the School in writing. All medications must be kept in the School office.***

Field Trips

A Parent/Guardian permission form must be completed before your child can participate in a scheduled field trip. Teachers are required to carry a copy of each student's permission form on each trip, as well as any student medications that have been cleared by the BRIDGES' office (i.e. have a doctor's release). In addition, BRIDGES aims for a high chaperone-student ratio to ensure the safety and well being of the children during field trips. You can support this effort by volunteering to chaperone your child's class during a field trip.

Playground Expectations

- Students will play safely within the designated boundaries.
- If student play looks *too* physical or rough, it probably is. If a supervising adult asks students to play less roughly, they need to comply. Keep in mind: while we have plenty of play space for all ages, older students will need to be aware of younger students at all times.
- If *students* think others are playing too rough, they should check in with others playing the game to see if everyone is "okay" with the play before ending it. If students can't agree, they should then seek the counsel of an adult.
- During recess, students will stay on the field, play games on picnic tables, or socialize within designated areas. Students should not be near classrooms or hanging out in the BRIDGES restrooms.
- BRIDGES students must not use Glenwood's restrooms.

- BRIDGES students need to walk to and from the BRIDGES play area via the direction (route) that they are advised of by their teachers.
- Students should play away from outlying fenced areas in order to respect the privacy of homes adjacent to the School campus.
- Only games that do not involve “tackling” should be played. No “dog-piling” allowed.
- Balls/equipment should stay on the playfield or in designated areas.
- Students may not throw food and must clean up their own lunch debris from tables/grass areas before playing. (All students are responsible for helping to clean up the surrounding lunch area after use).
- Students may not throw rocks, pebbles or sand in the direction of another student at any time.
- Students may not climb on the fences or trees. (We do appreciate and understand that tree climbing is “second nature” to many children. However, for safety reasons and with respect to our School’s liability, and in accordance with rules at our neighboring campus, we ask that children not climb the trees on the BRIDGES or Glenwood campus).
- Play Structure Rules
 - No food on play structure
 - No balls in play structure
 - “Two minute rule” if there are friends waiting for a turn
 - No climbing or sitting on top of any apparatus
 - No more than one person on a slide at anytime

Specific game rules and procedures are currently being developed. Until further notice, standard game rules apply. If members do not know standard rules for a game, another student, adult, or teacher must advise. If members of a group want to play by alternate rules, all members at that game site and during that recess time must agree, without coercion by or argument with a dissenting member. The following games may be played at BRIDGES:

- Handball
- Basketball
- Tetherball
- Soccer
- Flag football
- Dodgeball
- Other: Tag, Baseball, and Frisbee may be played **under the direct supervision of, and participation with, an adult.**

VI. Behavior Expectations

The students, staff and parents at BRIDGES Charter School strive to create an environment of mutual respect, consideration and admiration where all students learn, progress and thrive. An important part of our School culture is that students take responsibility for their behavior and accept the consequences of their choices. The following community norms are in place so that all can enjoy a safe and effective learning environment:

- Maintaining our own dignity and the dignity of those with whom we interact, at all times

- Taking responsibility to get our own needs met, while respecting the needs of others
- Being polite, courteous and respectful of the rights and feelings of others
- Respecting school property and the property of others
- Keeping our hands, feet and objects to ourselves
- Using appropriate school language
- Following instructions of all adult staff members and parent volunteers in a respectful manner
- Leaving toys, mp3 players, iPods, electronic games, stuffed animals, and gum at home unless prior approval is obtained
- Leaving cell phones turned off in backpacks or cubbies, and absolutely no texting, picture taking, or phone calls during the school day without prior approval of a supervising teacher

In support of our needs for learning and community, students are encouraged to be:

- Self-directed learners
- Engaged in becoming lifelong learners
- Intrinsically motivated to excel in the classroom academically, emotionally and socially
- Responsible to self and community
- Willing to address concerns respectfully with peers and adults
- Effective communicators who honor their own needs, as well as the needs of others

In support of our needs for safety, respect and trust, students are expected to:

- Care for and respect themselves
- Care for and respect others
- Care for and respect another's property (including the School, its grounds, and all materials and equipment)
- Care for and respect our environment

We support our students in meeting these expectations by:

- Making expectations known and clear
- Providing explicit instruction regarding how to effectively navigate and negotiate conflict
- Providing guided opportunities for learning about peaceful conflict resolution when conflicts arise
- Providing feedback and support as necessary
- Holding students accountable for their behavior and for keeping agreements

*** Accordingly, violent behavior, either verbal or physical, will not be tolerated***

Discipline Procedures

Our discipline procedures and policies protect all students, teachers and volunteers from being physically or emotionally harmed. Any disciplinary action will be administered with the intent of supporting students in learning effective strategies by which to live and learn together,

peacefully and in harmony with their community and environment. Whenever possible, parents will be notified in the event of disciplinary action.

If attempts by teachers and administrators to help a student live and learn in harmony with others fail, the student may be suspended, expelled or exited from the program.

Students always have choice regarding their response to a problem. Some of the choices that are explicitly taught at BRIDGES Charter School include:

• “I Messages”	• Take Turns
• Compromise	• Use Humor
• Apologies	• Get Help
• Avoidance	• Postpone
• Chance (Rock-Paper-Scissors, pick straws)	• Share
• Peer/ adult mediation	• Looking for the Win/Win
• Effective communication that aims for understanding, agreement, and/or consensus	• Consider another’s point of view (POV); this is also referred to as our “kaleidoscope”

Discipline Process for Repeated Misbehavior

- 1st Incident
 - verbal warning
- 2nd Incident
 - time-out inside of classroom or in another classroom
 - student conference with teacher
 - use of reflection forms and/or writing about the incident (their POV)
- 3rd Incident
 - teacher or student will call home
 - student conference with Education Coordinator, Education Team Leader, or Director
 - use of NVC forms
- 4th Incident
 - Teacher/Director decide if student will be sent home
 - next morning at 7:45 AM, conference held with parent, student, Director and teacher
 - individual student contract
- Subsequent incidents may include:
 - additional in-School Suspension
 - home suspension
 - expulsion

** Verbal teasing, physical violence, and/or emotional or physical bullying may result in the advancement of this process, foregoing any number of the steps described above.

Dress Code

BRIDGES Charter School recognizes that all students are individuals and that the choice of clothing is reflective of their interests and comfort level. While it is often true that some “trendy” clothing can spark peer pressure, promote varied attitudes, create lengthy mornings getting ready, an/or cause distractions in class, we feel it is important to assist children to think for themselves with regard to their clothing choices, while still respecting guidelines that ensure safety, comfort with various activities, concentration for themselves and others, and age-appropriate attire. While these guidelines represent the overall “Dress Code”, individual requirements may be imposed if BRIDGES staff members observe issues or concerns related to a student’s clothing choices:

Guidelines:

- No vulgar or offensive statements, or inappropriate media slogans.
- Girls: No short skirts or “short” shorts. Skirts and shorts should fall at least 3 inches below the top of the thigh. Students in grades 6-8th may have stricter guidelines for short skirts and shorts. Please adhere to teacher and administrative recommendations for particular grade levels. Because we want our students to be active in the play area, we recommend that all skirts have thin shorts under them (“skorts”).
- No makeup in grades K-5. While not recommended, lip-gloss and minimal makeup is allowable in grades 6th-8th (i.e. some students may prefer to “cover up” minor skin breakouts).
- All shirts must have at least one-inch straps, and no thin strap tank tops are allowed. Stomachs may not be exposed. A good rule of thumb is: If hands are raised over the head and the stomach is exposed, the shirt is too short. Girls: bra straps may not be exposed.
- Close-toed shoes must be worn at all times while on the playground or on a field trip. If shoes require laces, **the laces must be tied**. It is up to the supervising teacher whether or not shoes may be taken off inside the classroom, in the sandbox, or in another area on site.
- Baseball caps should be taken off when indoors.
- Pants need to fit around the waist without falling down, or a belt must be worn. Boxers or underwear should not be exposed at any time.
- Jewelry should be kept to a minimum and not be a focus in class. No hoop or dangling earrings, long necklaces, chunky bracelets, or chunky rings, for safety reasons.
- No false nails or nail tips, for safety reasons.
- If hair is dyed, it should not be dyed (or styled) in such a way as to be a distraction to others in class. (Should a question arise, the supervising teacher will determine the distraction level).
- Yoga, athletic, or other comfort/sports clothes are acceptable on any day, except when going on a theater performance field trip, or on a day when particular attire is requested in advance (such as a themed School event, ceremony, or other activity).

VI. Parent Volunteer Commitment

The BRIDGES Charter School staff and Board of Directors are deeply grateful for the enormous contribution from their Founding Group members and general volunteer community. The extent of quality educational experiences provided, and the sense of community and purpose created, are only possible through the continued dedication of our parent volunteers.

Parent participation is an integral part of the BRIDGES Charter School experience. It is our hope that ALL families in the School have chosen BRIDGES for their children because they want to **actively participate** in a way that is valuable for their child(ren), the classroom, and the School at large. We also hope that ALL parents see volunteering as an opportunity to be an empowered member of our community, as opposed to it being a chore. The more responsible and proactive parents are in meeting their commitments, the less the School will have to manage this component, and the more time our staff will have to focus on the important task of educating our students.

Weekly Time Commitment

Each family is responsible for committing a minimum of 2.5 hours per week, per child, on average, either in the classroom, in a PMC, or in a combination of both. (There is a 6-hour maximum requirement for multiple children, although a family may offer more time). An extended family member or other trusted adult (18 and over) might be designated as the person to fulfill this time commitment, which amounts to about 10 hours per month, per child. Our volunteers best serve our younger children when actively involved in the classrooms. Thus, *if your child is in grades K-3, it is important that you meet some or all of your volunteer time in the classroom, on a consistent basis*. Due to the nature of the center-based learning in the Kindergarten classrooms, our teachers Tina Lorch and Tori Cervantes would prefer to have their parents volunteer for the full morning, if possible (which is in excess of 2.5 hours per week).

All teachers will arrange for preferred times where parent help is needed and will ask their parents to sign up for a weekly time/day. Parents who want to stay in their child's classroom in excess of their agreed-upon volunteer time must have the approval of the classroom teacher. Excessive time in the classroom by one parent can sometimes interfere with their child's ability to learn independence, encounter and resolve conflicts and challenges, and/or establish peer relations.

Parents who work outside of their homes are asked to look into any arrangements that can be made with employers, such as a flex-time schedule, working through lunch time to make up for classroom time, and/or using accumulated vacation time. Many employers today support and acknowledge an employee's volunteer hours to their child's school. If you cannot help out in class at the School, please talk to your child's teacher and make arrangements to help in a valuable and consistent way at home, or as an active member of a Parent Managed Cohort (PMC).

Classroom Volunteering Requests

In all K-3 classrooms, and possibly in grades 4-7, parents will be facilitating center activities with groups of children, working one on one or in small groups with children, and assisting with

supervision and safety. Additionally, in all classrooms, parents may be leading activities in an area of their expertise, helping in the morning with snack, assisting with copying, filing and organizing, driving and chaperoning on field trips, or helping the teacher in a mutually agreed upon way. Parents are encouraged to bring their knowledge, passions, and expertise when volunteering in the classroom.

If children are in the older grades, in-class help is still valued and needed, but not in the same way or to the same extent as in the younger grades. While the upper grades might not have as many center-based activities as grades K-3, these students will still need assistance in reading, writing, social studies, math, science, art, cultural studies, and enrichment. The upper grade teachers will arrange preferred time slots where parent help is most needed. If you cannot help out in class at the School, but want to be connected to what your child is doing in class, please talk to your child's teacher and make arrangements to help in a valuable and consistent way at home. ***Parents of upper grade students will be expected to hold a larger, more active role in providing enrichment courses and/or in serving in a leadership position of a Parent Managed Cohort (PMC).***

Besides arriving on time and consistently, it is important that you be fully present when volunteering in your child's classroom. Cell phone(s) must be off and we ask that you avoid having social conversations with other parents while leading groups or supervising students.

Siblings

Bringing other children (younger or older siblings) onto campus while you are volunteering is not advisable. Siblings often present a distraction to the classroom and the parent who is volunteering; there are also liability issues the School may face. However, in light of the fact that BRIDGES' Childcare Co-op has not yet been established, and knowing that not all siblings are a distraction to the class or to a parent, BRIDGES will allow siblings on a **case by case basis**. Thus, please be respectful of the position the School is put in when additional children are on campus, and discuss **with your child's teacher, in advance, whether or not your child's sibling** may attend class while you are working your required hours. You will need to work out a place where that sibling may work quietly, safely, and independently. Again, please understand that **any** sibling who needs your supervision while you are working in the classroom, or who is a distraction to the class as a whole, may not be present during your volunteer work hours.

If you must miss your volunteer time/day: When you sign up for a volunteer time in ANY grade, your child's teacher will rely on you to be there consistently. If for any reason you cannot come, please find another parent to cover your time, or let the teacher know by phone or email in advance of the affected day to make other arrangements. **Please do not just send a note with your child**, as these are sometimes forgotten or delivered at the last minute, and the teacher is then stuck with an unsupervised group or an incomplete activity she/he was not anticipating.

Parent Managed Cohort (PMC) Commitment

Each family should participate in at least one PMC, even if already volunteering in the class. BRIDGES would not be where it is today without the active involvement of parents who were organized into efficient and competent committees, such as Fund Raising, Instructional Media, Food, Program Development, and more. There are many PMCs to choose from, and more will

develop as needs and interests define them. Parents are encouraged to join a PMC of their passion and assist as much as possible. PMC Chairpersons will plan for and direct meetings, organize task lists, and generally lead the group to facilitate the development of an area of our BRIDGES Charter School vision. We are grateful for the tremendous commitment of those who have stepped up thus far as PMC Chairpersons.

Some PMCs have subcommittees. For example, Fund Raising has groups of volunteers working on auctions, special events, e-scrip, yard sales, and more. Sometimes subgroups become their own PMC, such as Grant Writing. Some PMCs may be for a one-time event, such as the Community Fair, and others will be ongoing, like our Food PMC. Since the list of active PMCs may ebb and flow, please check the School calendar on the website or e-newsletter to see where you want to be involved. We will update our website (www.BRIDGEScharter.org) frequently about meetings and PMC needs, and keep you informed weekly via our e-newsletter, *The Communicator*.

It is hoped that ALL volunteers find a way to balance their time spent in class with time spent in at least one PMC (if applicable). However, we also hope that parents view their PMC as time doing something they enjoy, rather than “clocking hours”, as well as spending time with like-minded adults. After all, all efforts provided within a PMC directly and positively impact the success of our School and community at large.

Outside of your regular time commitment, it is hoped that ALL families will also help with our big fund-raising events, such as the Community Fair, the Harvest Festival, etc. Helping to plan the event, and then helping in advance of it, during it, or even by donating materials and/or food, will support the success of these events and, by extension, our School. The more children you have in the program, the more your help is needed and expected.

Remember: the more everyone helps, the less the burden on each individual.

Parent Advisory Council (PAC)

The Parent Advisory Council will serve as our “umbrella” for the PMCs, a booster club of sorts. While still in development, the PAC will eventually have a Lead Representative (which may be called the President), and a Leadership Committee. This Committee may develop designees to be Historian, Fund Raising Treasurer, and/or other. The PAC will meet monthly on Wednesdays opposite monthly Board meetings, and all parents in the BRIDGES Community are welcome to attend. PAC meetings will be a forum for PMC chairpersons to update the PAC and all those in attendance; it will also be an appropriate place to request needs, and set agendas for future meetings, if needed. PAC leaders will assist new families (eventually establishing a mentoring program), follow up with PMC concerns and requests, and generally support our organizational structure for parent involvement.

Please Note: If PMC Chairpersons or teachers report to either the PAC Lead Representative, School Director, or School Education Coordinator that a parent on their committee, or one who has signed up to assist within the classroom, is no longer helping and has not responded to attempts to make contact, such parents may receive a ***Letter of Non-Compliance*** for not fulfilling their volunteer agreement, as well as follow-up conferences as needed. If a family fails

to respond to such notifications requesting adherence to their agreed-upon volunteer commitment, it will be recommended they leave the Charter School.

Please refer to **BRIDGES Governance Hierarchy** on page 39 for more information.

Parent Education Nights

Opportunities will be offered at various times, and may correspond with the monthly Wednesday PAC meetings. At times, parents will be meeting as a grade level or classroom, or as a larger community, perhaps with a guest speaker. These are important meetings to attend, if possible, as they are where parents will find out information on our School's philosophy and teaching methods, while broadening parenting skills and receiving School/classroom updates.

Donations

In order to limit the amount of fund-raising necessary to provide our School with the extra supplies and equipment we will need as we build, we have asked families to pledge an annual donation to BRIDGES Charter School directly. Our suggested starting donation is \$150 per child, although greater amounts are always appreciated. We are a nonprofit organization; our 501(c)(3) tax-exemption is pending. A detailed explanation and donation pledge form are provided at the beginning of each school year and all donations are kept strictly confidential.

Field Trips

Driving

Each class may take multiple field trips throughout the year, which parents help organize. A bus may be rented for long trips, or parents may drive their own cars to transport the children for more local trips. Please note: parent drivers will need to have full insurance coverage (liability of \$100,000 injury/\$300,000 per incident), seatbelts and at least two seats in the back. No child under 12 may ride in the front seat except in the vehicle of his/her own parent, and only after having met minimum weight restrictions. Your child's teacher or classroom liaison will post sign up sheets on the classroom door when drivers are needed. ***Well in advance of any driving field trip***, parents must provide the School office a current copy of their valid Driver's License and car registration, and proof of current insurance before driving anyone else's child on a school-sponsored trip parents, and may need to provide fingerprints. If you are willing and able to meet these requirements, please inform the office and your child's classroom teacher as soon as possible.

Field Trip Money

Each class will be asking for additional funds for field trips and class enrichment activities. While no child will be denied the opportunity to attend a field trip due to financial reasons, please understand that there are limited scholarships available at this time, since BRIDGES is a brand new school. Therefore, it may be necessary for teachers to assess the commitment and willingness of families to contribute to the overall "kitty" of anticipated field trips in each class BEFORE making deposits. Total field trip costs for the year may range from \$50-\$200 per child, and may be more in the 6th/7th grade, as an overnight trip in the spring is to be expected. Teachers and parents will work together to plan student fund raising opportunities for larger trips.

Policies and Procedures for Campus Visitors and Adult Classroom Volunteers

Please be sure you (and anyone else who volunteers in the classroom from your family) understand and follow these very important safety agreements:

- Please **sign in and out** in the log available in the office whenever you are on campus to volunteer in any capacity. Take, wear and return the volunteer badge provided in the office. State law (P.C. 627.2, P.C. 626.8) requires all visitors and volunteers in schools to sign in and wear a badge. This will identify you to school personnel as a BRIDGES Charter School volunteer for both student safety and for accountability in case of an emergency.
- **Respect students.** When working with students at BRIDGES Charter School, please remember to honor their dignity during your interactions. Make every effort to engage and include all students in learning activities. If your kind, yet firm, efforts do not succeed, please direct the child back to the classroom teacher.
- **Please ensure any attention given to your child during instructional time does not distract him/her from the activity at hand.** There may be situations where you need to comfort another parent's child, but please do so only if you know that child well.
- Outside of a real injury or emergency, we ask that adults NOT pick up or carry children, such as to the office or during P.E., etc., due to safety and liability issues.
- Be sure to **honor gender equity** by treating boys and girls with the same attitudes and expectations. Avoid statements that make assumptions about boys having one career or lifestyle choice, and/or girls having another.
- **Follow rules for information dissemination to School families.** Any notifications sent home in student mailboxes, through classroom distribution or via email need to be checked by the teacher and/or Education Coordinator. The Director must approve correspondence that is to go out to ALL families, in advance of photocopying (if needed) or distribution.
- If you take your child(ren) off campus for any reason, remember to sign him/her/them out in the office. If you plan to take a child other than your own off campus, you must have prior permission from the child's parents in the form of a written and signed note. The note must have a contact number where that child's parent may be reached. The office cannot accommodate last minute telephone calls for permission.
- **Please be respectful of the students and teachers at Glenwood Elementary.** Keep noisy activities away from proximity of ANY other classrooms. Keep outdoor centers, such garden, P.E., and music from disturbing other classes. Walk quietly though the halls if you must walk near a Glenwood classroom.

- **Sharp knives are to be handled by adults only.** Cooking centers and preparation of daily snack for our children often require the use of sharp knives, **which are to be handled by adults only.** To ensure the safety and well being of all the members of our community, there will be a designated area for these items in each classroom. Only adults may use sharp knives and large shearing scissors, then are responsible for replacing them in their box after use and cleaning. Children in grades K-3 may use only butter knives or safety knives for food preparation, such as cutting, chopping and spreading, and only under close adult supervision. Children in older classrooms (grades 4-7) might use sharp knives for a food preparatory class, but only with direct, explicit supervision by an adult, and only after safety instructions are provided for safe use.
- **Make sure you know the names and number of students in your center and where each student in your group is at all times.** Keep all children involved in learning activities, and please do not let students wander away—even when they have finished their work. Be sure that students leaving to go to the restroom return promptly.
- **Parents supervising outdoor centers are responsible for their group at all times.** Supervising parents should escort their student group outside and back to the classroom to pick up the next group, if needed.
- **Adults should not be in or use the children’s restrooms, unless assisting a child.** Adult restrooms are located behind the Glenwood office, in the Glenwood teacher’s workroom. Children should be instructed to not to enter the child’s restroom if an adult other than a known BRIDGES parent is inside, and should immediately report such an occurrence to their teacher.
- **Practice good hygiene in the classroom.** Blood borne pathogens are disease-causing microorganisms that are carried in human blood and certain body fluids. There are several blood borne diseases. Two of the most serious are HIV and HBU (Hepatitis B). Parent volunteers should be sure to follow all safety procedures to protect themselves. These include:
 - Frequent hand washing— this is the single most effective measure you can take to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.
 - Wearing disposable latex gloves when giving first aid, cleaning blood and body spills, and handling contaminated clothes, trash and waste containers. Gloves are provided in the first aid kits in each classroom. Hands should be washed thoroughly after removing gloves from the inside out and avoid touching one’s own mouth or eyes after working with any student in need of first aid.
 - Cleaning and disinfecting contaminated surfaces promptly.

Appropriate Conversations Between Adults and Students

Parents and guardians working in the classroom are essential to the success of BRIDGES Charter School, and are one of the components that make our school unique and effective. They help facilitate the teacher-led curriculum and provide their own experience and skills where

appropriate (e.g. musicians, scientists, engineers, and visual artists). ***Parents and guardians facilitating centers acknowledge that they are representatives of the school and the state (as BRIDGES Charter School is a publicly-funded entity) and will act in the best interest of the school and its students.*** While families certainly have the right to believe whatever religious/spiritual and political doctrines they hold to be true, when adults are on campus their rights to religious and political expression are limited. Regardless of each family's personal beliefs, we are all united in that:

1. **We respect the individual rights of our students and their families** - Students and their families have the right to their own personal beliefs and the right to freedom from being indoctrinated into another's beliefs.
2. **Students must never feel coerced** to adhere to any belief/religion and/or political affiliation, or feel shame about their own beliefs or lack thereof.
3. **We rely on our well-trained teachers for curriculum.** Parent and guardian facilitators are a valuable resource to teachers. The teacher carries the responsibility to review and approve any curriculum created by a parent. Our well-qualified teachers are ultimately responsible for all lessons and activities in their classroom.
4. **We voluntarily monitor our conversation, both within the context of classroom activities and in casual conversation, with the students:** Students are not expected to differentiate casual conversation with an adult during the school day from a lesson. Therefore, our casual conversations are monitored and restricted to be appropriate for the students in our care.
5. **When concerned, we use words and body language carefully,** both in and out of class. If you are upset or irritated with a teacher, another parent, a procedure, or a student other than your child, or you question the fairness of something, **please vent your frustrations away from children, including your own**, and seek to resolve your concerns in a constructive, proactive and respectful manner. Inappropriate dialogue between adults, especially with regard to other adults and peers, can easily confuse, intimidate, and upset children. Additionally, anything you say at home about a teacher, another adult, or a child's peer will most likely find its way back to School, and this gossip will then create additional repercussions.

In practice, adults working in the classroom and generally on campus or at any affiliated school-sponsored activity are expected to refrain from using foul language, and must refrain from discussing with students political and religious beliefs, gender or cultural biases, and/or negative attitudes about anyone's sexual orientation, either explicitly or through humor or innuendo. This policy respects the rights of our diverse population and fosters an environment of inclusion and safety.

Our Healthy Lunch and Healthy Snack Program

Outside of asking all families to provide their children a healthy lunch everyday (please refer to *Healthy Food Agreement*), **we are in the process of developing a Healthy Snack Program.** We hope to create a tradition at BRIDGES Charter School of providing a healthy mid morning snack for the children (during their first break, which for all students is from 9:40-10:10).

Besides giving them an energy boost, snack time provides a great opportunity for learning. It introduces the children to a variety of foods, teaches them about healthy eating habits, and gives them a chance to share and be thankful with others.

Our plan: Each family is asked to bring in snack two to three times a year for either the Kindergarten-3rd grade classrooms, or the 4th-7th grade classrooms. If you fail to bring in snack on your designated day, the children in that cluster may go without! In that case, you will be responsible for replenishing any “emergency snack” ingredients we had to use. Every effort should be made to use “whole foods” (unrefined and minimally processed vegetables, fruits, and grains) that are low in sugar and salt and have no preservatives, artificial colors or flavors, or hydrogenated oils. **Please refer to the list of snack ideas and preferred ingredients provided by the Food PMC and available on our website under the Family Resources link.**

The amount you should provide will vary according to the age of the children. A 4 oz portion is about the average. You should provide enough food for up to 120 children each day (numbers will be updated). You are welcome to make your snack contribution as simple or complex as you would like. Many parents enjoy baking healthy breads, muffins, etc. to bring in and many families simply purchase pre-made items at the market. ***If you bake something, please provide an ingredient list as we have some students with gluten, nut and other allergies.*** (If your snack contains such ingredients, we will be able to pull from an alternate source for those children, that day). Some parents like to bring fruit or veggies already cut up and ready to serve. You are encouraged to do what feels best to you. Pre-made or uncut food is absolutely fine, but take into consideration the time that other parents will need in order to serve your snack. Please do not worry about how intricate your involvement is! We welcome whatever is convenient for you. **Your snack must arrive at school each morning no later than 9:00 AM, preferably at the start of the day.** There is some space for refrigeration available to us.

When it is your workday, and your volunteer time is prior to 9:40, please offer to help set up and serve snack. Make sure children wash hands (or use hand sanitizer at the minimum), wait their turn, take only their fair share, eat in a designated area (outside the classroom, unless it’s raining) and eat calmly rather than run, chase or play while eating. Remind them to return reusable plates, bowls and utensils to where they belong. Help clear off and clean snack table afterwards and make sure all dishes are washed after snack and returned to their storage bin.

Ingredient Requirements (refer to more complete list on Family Resource link)

Very low in sugar and sodium

No artificial colors, sweeteners, flavors

Organic whenever possible

Minimal processing

No hydrogenated oils or high fructose corn syrup

It is helpful to carefully read ingredient labels carefully. If you do bring in items that are determined to be outside the School’s preferred list (i.e., contains too much sugar, etc.), we will ask you to exchange them for a more appropriate item. **We thank you in advance for your careful snack selection.**

If your child has allergies to certain foods or ingredients likely to be found in common snack items, please be sure that the office and the teachers are informed (it is also advisable that you post this information near the snack area in your child's classroom). Please provide an alternate snack item, to keep on hand in the classroom, in case your child cannot eat a snack provided.

Snack Ideas

Whole grain crackers, tortillas, bagels, pita bread, flax cereal, etc.

Bean dips, salsas

Cheese, yogurt, hard-boiled eggs

Fresh fruits and veggies (carrots, grapes, apples, bananas, celery, snap peas, berries, etc.)

Hummus, edamame, tofu

“Ants On A Log” (celery, peanut butter, raisins)

Dried fruits (figs, raisins, dates, apples apricots)

Fruit Sauces (apple/peach)

LUNCH

Given that the excessive processing and common ingredient list of lunches served in the National School Lunch program do not meet our Healthy Food preferences, and given that the costs and facility limitations in providing an alternate lunch for purchase program at this time, **BRIDGES will not have food for purchase** during the 2010-2011 school year. *If your family has financial constraints that absolutely prevent you from providing your child lunch, please notify the office immediately.* We will recruit a host family to assist with your child's lunch or arrange another method of lunch provision.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle! (Strive for a “trash-free” lunch!)

Since your child is most likely bringing a lunch from home, please consider the trash impact of your child's lunch. Our goal is to have our lunch time be as close to zero waste as possible. We encourage reusable containers such as thermoses, plastic ware, and Wrap-N-Mats, rather than the packaging (boxes and bags) that some food comes in. This is a win/win for our school site and the environment. We lessen the impact on landfills, and help reduce the environmental impact of plastics and packaging manufacturing. Please send a reusable spoon or fork if your child's lunch requires one. And, please label all utensils and reusable containers with your child's name!

A Word about Nutrition

The most important measure we can take to ensure our children develop good eating habits is to be aware of the environment in which they live and learn. “Out of sight is out of mind”. Candy, chips, and sodas are powerful motivators and encourage bargaining, peer pressure, and poor attitudes about healthier choices. Children who develop unhealthful habits are at risk of having a lifetime of illnesses that come from poor dietary choices. It is our goals to help our children understand the importance of healthy foods constituting the majority of their diet, as well as to teach them moderation in snacks.

Please honor our desire to make BRIDGES a safety zone for healthy habits. Familiarize yourself with items we have requested NOT be brought onto the BRIDGES campus (including by adults) at any time. Our teachers prefer to spend valuable class time educating students about healthy

habits, not checking lunches and monitoring foods. However, should a BRIDGES staff member observe unhealthy food items brought onto campus (Cheetos, Coke, McDonald's, etc), we will ask that those items not be eaten on site, and returned home. Should students repeatedly bring in unhealthy items for lunch or snacks, a family conference will be arranged.

Remember...

By coming to BRIDGES, you are making a statement. You and your family have chosen to have a different school experience than what may be offered elsewhere. Your commitment to making this choice will not just benefit your child, but all of the children who attend our School. We want BRIDGES to be a place where it's "cool at school" to eat well, where we will enjoy and understand the benefits of real food, and where we ALL can commit to being a little healthier every day. If we ALL have a shared vision together, BRIDGES Charter School will succeed in its promise of promoting better health.

Healthy Food Agreement-

All BRIDGES families are asked to commit to the following:

- **Provide a healthy lunch for your child(ren) daily, with at least three (3) combined servings of "healthy foods".** Additional nonnutritive items (or treats) may also be provided in moderation (i.e. *one* home-baked cookie, *one* small bag of home-popped popcorn, etc.). Families are asked to give extra thought to food choices each week, and proactively include their children when establishing the weekly food schedule. "Healthy food" is defined as:
 - Whole fruits, fresh vegetables, whole grains (rice, flax, oats, wheat, etc), nuts and legumes, lean proteins and dairy products which have minimal or no processing;
 - Foods **without** high fructose corn syrup, hydrogenated oils or trans fats, refined sugars, artificial color and additives, high sodium, or high saturated fat;
 - Water, unsweetened milk, or beverages with high nutritional value (i.e. fruit juice with 100% juice). Note: most juices contain added refined sugar.
- **Support our healthy School culture by not bringing the following food items onto campus or to School events:** Soft drinks, fast food, Lunchables (or similar *highly processed* meal substitutes), Cheetos (or similar *highly-processed* snack bags), and/or candy bars. "Out of sight, out of mind."
- **Follow nutritional guidelines for birthdays, class parties, and special events:** We all enjoy celebrations, and acknowledge that special days like birthdays are traditions that children will carry with them the rest of their lives. However, in order to moderate our student's access to nonnutritive "treats" while they are in our care, food choices for "special days" need to be approved by the classroom teacher, and/or the School's Director, and/or the Education Coordinator (depending on the nature of the activity). P
- **Parents are asked to NOT bring treats onto campus at any time** (i.e. cupcakes, candies, doughnuts, cookies, etc.) without advance approval. A list of *appropriate treats for sharing* will be generated with input from parents on the Food PMC (Parent Managed Cohort).

VII. Communication

There are many ways to stay informed of school events, discussions, meetings and successes. If you are feeling out of the loop in any way, please contact your child's teacher so that you can be put in touch with the right channel of communication.

Weekly or Biweekly Teacher Letters/Emails

Your child's teacher will be sending home frequent updates via email, or by hard copy if you do not have access to email (please notify us in writing if you need all School correspondences in hard copy). This is a good source for learning what is happening in your child's classroom. Curricular focuses, field trips, classroom community reminders and updates, as well as inspirational messages are often distributed in this forum. Classrooms are in the process of establishing web pages, and any classroom information or newsletters will also be posted there.

BRIDGES Charter School E-Newsletter

Our weekly e-newsletter, *The Communicator*, is a great way to stay connected! If you are not receiving this email, please request to have your name added by emailing info@bridgescharter.org. This is a good source for learning what is happening in other classrooms and in our PMCs, to see updates on school wide issues, to gain inspiration and a deeper understanding of what makes BRIDGES Charter School unique, or even to write an article yourself on a topic of interest to the BRIDGES Charter School community.

BRIDGES Charter School Updates (from the School office)

Updates from our School office and Director will be sent via email or hard copy, or may be posted on our website, either weekly or as often as needed. Fundraisers, school wide events and traditions, school wide community reminders and updates, as well as thank-you notes to our community, are distributed in this forum. Occasionally, community organizations (CRPD, YMCA, AYSO, etc.) will ask our School to send home flyers about programs available to students. Please note: our general School updates may merge with our BRIDGES Charter School E-Newsletter, in order to streamline our communications and reduce paper waste.

If you do not have access to email and need hard copies of all correspondences, or are having trouble receiving our emails, please contact our School office immediately.

Suggestion Box

An anonymous suggestion box is provided for your convenience in the office. This is a great place to make suggestions about this Handbook, playground rules, or just day-to-day operations. Obviously, if you want a follow-up, be sure to leave your name.

School Board Meetings

BRIDGES holds public board meetings on the third Wednesday of each month in the school Multi Purpose Room. The public is welcome to attend all open session meetings, which typically begin at 6:30pm. Dates change to accommodate various events and holidays. Check the website calendar to confirm dates and location. A time for public comments is designated at the

beginning of each meeting (speaker cards are available). This is the place to come learn about, and have input on, all school-wide operations.

PAC Meetings

The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) will be developed in our inaugural year, and will serve as an “umbrella” of the PMCs, a booster club of sorts. The PAC will be responsible for overseeing the PMCs and assisting parents with volunteering; it will also serve as a forum for discussion of matters of interest and concern to parents. In coming years, the PAC will coordinate the Back to School Picnic and organize mentors for new families. Attendance at a monthly or bimonthly PAC meeting is a great way to feel connected and heard; these meetings will be held on alternate Wednesdays (on campus) from our Board meetings. All parents, guardians and teachers are welcome to attend. (Our website will post meeting dates once they are available). After the PAC is established, PAC classroom representatives will be chosen to assist with the general communication of needs, requests, and/or concerns regarding particular classrooms. (Please refer to pages 24 and 39 of this Handbook for more information regarding the PAC).

End of the Year Survey

An end of the year survey will be offered each year. This anonymous survey will allow parents to give feedback on all aspects of our School and community. Responses will be carefully considered for their potential impact on our future School policies, procedures and climate.

Special Days

Birthdays

Birthdays are acknowledged at BRIDGES Charter School, but the ways in which teachers honor the students in their classrooms may vary; we also honor the traditions of families who do not celebrate birthdays by considering alternate activities for these children. Check with your child’s teacher about the tradition in his/her classroom. **We do not allow “birthday” food treats to be brought to your child’s classroom on an individual basis. This request supports not only our Healthy Food Agreement (“treats in moderation”), but also equity in recognition amongst our students.** However, the classrooms may designate specific days to celebrate clusters of birthdays together and will allow for special occasion treats at that time. Please note: we request that treats brought on specially designated days be homemade, with as many whole ingredients as possible. Should you be aware of specific allergies in your child’s classroom, please provide an ingredient list if you are not present to serve the treat yourself. These special days will not occur more often than once per month.

There are many ways to acknowledge a birthday, which don’t involve food. If it is your child’s birthday, and you’d like to join them in Circle or share something special with the whole class, in honor of your child (something which doesn’t involve treats), we welcome you to do so. However, we ask that you inform your child’s teacher in advance of any such special visit, so that classroom schedules can be respected and/or adjusted.

Parties off site

If you plan to have a party for your child, and this party is an event that will be discussed at school, we encourage you to consider inviting everyone in the class. At a minimum, we ask that you consider inviting the whole grade level, or gender group without leaving anyone out. Although this represents a large number of children, a park or beach party lends itself nicely to a larger crowd. **We do not allow invitations to any kind of party to be passed out in school unless everyone in the class is invited, or unless a whole grade or gender is invited (such as for a sleepover).** Likewise, students should not bring presents, sleepover items, or thank you notes to school or discuss plans for parties when everyone is not included. This policy helps to prevent hurt feelings and distractions during the school day.

Holidays

BRIDGES Charter School's teachers follow a policy and philosophy of instructing and informing our students about the many diverse ways people observe holidays, celebrations, rituals and traditions across history, ethnicity, culture and religion. We believe it is our responsibility to teach *about* holidays, rather than to celebrate holidays. While the teaching of a holiday may sometimes involve some type of celebratory activity, it is our goal to limit or avoid the representation of one holiday over another.

In a pluralistic society, where some people worship differently than the majority, or choose not to observe holidays at all, it is the task of public school teachers to present non-biased education about a variety of viewpoints and beliefs and not to *actively promote* one over another. In order to teach respect, tolerance and understanding, it is incumbent upon us to help children learn about observances with which they are less familiar. At times, BRIDGES will have events that tie into a holiday, such as a crafts fair before winter break, or opportunities to write kind messages to peers around Valentine's Day. We feel a balance of activities, and perhaps the provision of alternatives to many media-driven holidays, is a good way for students to discuss varied viewpoints in the safety of their classrooms.

One of the founding principles of BRIDGES Charter School is the honoring of diversity. There is separation of church and state in this country and too many children are marginalized when schools tacitly support one view over others. We therefore leave it to you, as parents, to discuss your own family's cultural and religious beliefs with your children.

Acceptable Internet Use Policy

BRIDGES Charter School recognizes the importance of computer technology competency as an integral part of the education process. The School has invested a tremendous amount of time, money, and effort to provide our students with filtered access to networks on the Internet so that they will be able to search and download from the worldwide web.

Students are responsible for the proper and ethical use of network access through the computers by following the written procedures set up by the School, as well as, the oral instructions given

by the staff. Any actions by students that might harm the computer equipment or software, or impair its effective use, are to be avoided.

Students are prohibited from accessing social networks (Facebook, MySpace, etc.) at school; they are also not permitted to access their email without direct approval by a supervising teacher. Violation of this rule by a student will jeopardize the School's access to the Internet, and the student will immediately lose his/her right to network access. Should BRIDGES students have a login to our website, allowing anyone else to use his/her account name and/or password is also prohibited. **At no time** during School hours, or while on site, may students use the Internet for purely personal interests, such as accessing any sites to shop, browse goods and services, or inquire about clubs, video games, and the like.

It is a violation of the law for a student to knowingly access any secure network files, documents, applications, etc. without express permission by an authorized staff member and a legal signature on the network registry.

There are limited computers available for student access, especially in this inaugural year. The teaching staff of the School will also have limited time to monitor all of the information that our students are accessing or downloading while in the classroom. Although the School's network includes filters, students may encounter material in a network/bulletin board that is considered inappropriate or offensive (e.g. pornography, vulgar jokes, statements of belief that some may consider immoral, etc.). Each student is responsible for NOT pursuing material that could be considered inappropriate or offensive, and MUST advise their teacher immediately if any of these sites are accidentally accessed, as these may indicate issues with the network or spam, which require addressing. Accessing or downloading inappropriate material, at ANY time, will not be tolerated by the School and will result in the student's loss of network privileges as well as possible academic penalty and/or disciplinary action.

Students should not, at any time, provide any personal information such as her/his (or any other person's) address, telephone number, password, parents' work address/telephone number, credit card information, or the name and location of the School in any Internet forum, without the explicit permission of the staff member in charge.

Students will take full responsibility for her/his actions and will use the School's computers and the Internet for educational purposes only.

Students will follow the copyright rules for the distribution and use of software and information on both the School computer system and on the Internet.

Students must realize that use of the School's computer system and Internet is a privilege, rather than a right, and that inappropriate behavior may lead to loss of privileges. All students will be required to sign the Acceptable Use Policy each year.

Peaceful Conflict Resolution

Procedures for solving student conflict

BRIDGES Charter School is a community where students, parents, and teachers are actively involved in teaching and learning. Our goal is to provide a safe environment where all individuals are respected and where we learn to interact with each other constructively. We emphasize self-direction, decision-making, problem solving, and an understanding of natural consequences of behavior. We foster respectful interaction amongst all members of our community. At times, however, conflicts will inevitably arise between children. We work to help children become contributing members of the School community by:

- 1) Peer problem solving – the use of Circle and Classroom Meetings
- 2) Talking with students individually or in small groups as needed
- 3) Encouraging students to evaluate their own behavior. This may include having students ask themselves:
 - “What is my responsibility in this situation?”
 - “Is this what I meant to have happen?”
 - “What could I do differently to change the situation?”
 - “What should happen as a result of my actions?”

Parent volunteers who need help assisting children with a conflict are asked to please seek the advice of the classroom teacher for further suggestions.

Parent-to-Parent or Parent-to-Staff Conflicts

It is the hope of everyone at BRIDGES Charter School that any disputes can be resolved informally by direct and healthy communication. Attempts at informal resolution are strongly encouraged; resolving differences in a timely, objective and equitable manner creates a climate of collegiality, mutual trust and respect.

If the dispute cannot be resolved after following informal procedures, please consult the School’s Education Team Leader, Education Coordinator, or Director. Refer to page 10 to see whom best to consult.

Policies and Legal Issues

School operational policies are available in the school office. Reviewing policies and procedures lends information that may at times help to solve a conflict. The BRIDGES Charter School Board of Directors approves all school policies and procedures. Thus, issues of policy and procedures should be addressed directly to the School Board at the next scheduled Board meeting.

Daily Operations

The Director implements Board policy through establishing school procedure and daily operation. The Director serves as the primary administrator of the school. Any daily operations/procedural issues involving the whole School should be addressed directly to the Director.

Pedagogy

Pedagogical issues pertaining to anything that occurs in the classroom, i.e. teaching, curriculum, classroom management, or teacher-student relationships, should be addressed by contacting your child's teacher. If the teacher does not adequately address the question or concern, then the Education Coordinator or Education Team Leader is available to meet to discuss it.

Interpersonal Communication and Relationships

Concerns between people should be directly communicated with the person(s) involved.

Class Placements

The teachers work very hard at the end of each school year to make the best class placements possible within the constraints of class size limits. We consider the following important criteria:

1. Meeting the child's needs:
 - Socially
 - Emotionally
 - Academically
 - Developmentally and with regard to age
2. Students' compatibility:
 - Need for peers and friendship possibilities
 - Keep friendship groups intact for child's sense of security, when needed
3. Classroom balance:
 - Grades/ages/abilities
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity/culture
 - Participating parent volunteers
 - Special needs/Inclusion students
 - Student behavioral issues
4. Continuity with teacher for more than one year when possible
5. Family circumstances conveyed by parents
6. Teacher input regarding child's needs

Since there are many factors and considerations affecting student placements that parents may not be aware of, we ask that the staff's decision regarding class placement be respected. If for any reason, you have an extenuating issue with your child's placement, please address it with the Education Coordinator and/or Education Team Leader.

VIII. Independent Study (Homeschool) Program

At BRIDGES Charter School, one way we focus on meeting children's needs is by offering families the choice of a home-based or a community-based learning environment. Our Independent Study (IS) Program for Kindergarten through grade eight provides opportunities for children and their families to:

- Socialize within our school community
- Receive ideas, assistance and guidance from credentialed teachers
- Receive access to books, instructional materials and creative supplies
- Participate in programs, field trips, workshops and school-wide events

- Create experiences within the local, state, national and global communities

For questions regarding our IS Program, please contact our IS Director, Claudia Weintraub, at claudia.weintraub@bridgescharter.org

Please note: A separate Handbook for our IS Program is currently being developed.

For Classroom-Based and IS Students: Independent Study Program's Travel and Classroom-based Absence Guidelines

If you know in advance that your child will be absent from school for one day, or several consecutive days, please contact the office to obtain information and to avoid both unexcused absences and the School's loss of ADA (average daily attendance) funding. The process includes:

Planning Stage

1. Obtain an Independent Study Agreement Contract from the school office at least one week prior to departure. Fill in the required information with the student and parent (or guardian's) signatures. Return it to the school office prior to your trip or 2-day absence.
2. Let your child's teacher know of your plans. Ask for any work that your child might miss. Please give your child's teacher at least a week's notice to gather the appropriate work.
3. Your commitment is to keep track of your child's learning during this period. Your child's commitment is to be engaged in the learning process for a minimum of four hours (first through eighth graders) or three hours (kindergarteners) per day, for every school day missed.

During Travel or Absence

1. Use a planner or chart to write down and keep track of the educational activities in which your child is engaged.
2. Keep "original" work samples, which your child produces (no photocopies). One of the three or four samples, per week, must be in Language Arts.

Final Step

1. After the trip or school absence, return to the office with your child's work samples and your planner listing their daily activities. **These must be turned in to the office within two days of your child's return to School from his/her absence.**

X. Other

The School Board

The Board of Directors meets every third Wednesday of the month (unless changed with 72 hours prior notice) to ensure the School's viability and academic success by focusing on financial, legal and personnel issues. The Board oversees the implementation of the Charter and approves necessary revisions of its bylaws, policies and procedures. The Board's major roles and responsibilities include: establishing and approving all major educational and operational

policies, approving all major contracts and the School's annual budget, overseeing the School's fiscal affairs, approving the hiring and or dismissal of all staff, in consultation with our Director, and attending major School functions. Please check our website to learn more about the members of our BRIDGES Charter School Board of Directors.

BRIDGES Governance Hierarchy

BRIDGES Charter School is overseen by a Governing Board which has final decision-making authority over the School. Specifically, the employment status of the Director is under control of the Governing Board.

The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) reports to the Director. Parents are encouraged to join Parent Managed Cohorts (PMCs) as part of their volunteer commitment. Each PMC selects a chairperson; that chairperson reports to the PAC.

No Parent Faculty Association (PFA) or Parent/Teacher Association (PTA) currently exists at BRIDGES, although nothing precludes the formation of such a group.

Governing Board

Board members serve 2-year staggered terms ending June 30th, with three board members standing for reelection in odd numbered years and two in even numbered years.

Board positions shall include a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and Parliamentarian. Offices are assigned by Board consensus. Additionally:

- Mid-term vacancies are filled by consensus of the remaining, active board members.
- No board member may serve more than 3 consecutive terms.
- Employees of the School may not serve as board members.
- Board members are selected in a 2 or 3 vote (depending on year) per family secret election. BRIDGES' employees and spouses of employees are ineligible to vote. Cumulative voting is not permitted.
- The Board currently contains 5 members and may contain up to 9 members.
- Board elections are held in June.
- The board meets at least once monthly in accordance with the Brown Act.
- No sitting board member may serve as a PAC officer or as the Chairperson of a PMC.

Parent Advisory Council (PAC)

- PAC members serve one-year terms ending June 30th.
- PAC positions shall include a President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary and Historian. The Director of the School shall assign offices.
- No PAC officer may serve more than 6 consecutive terms.
- Full-time employees of the School may not serve as PAC members.
- PAC members (offices) are selected in a 5 vote per family secret election. BRIDGES' employees are eligible to vote. Cumulative voting is not permitted.

- The PAC will begin with 5 members (offices) and may be expanded upon the Director's discretion, in consideration of School needs.
- PAC elections are held in June. An inaugural PAC may be formed prior to June 2011.
- The PAC will meet twice a month in an open public forum.

Parent Managed Cohorts (PMCs)

- PMC membership is fluid and members may come and go as needs dictate.
- PMCs are to be unlimited in number and membership size.
- PMC members may serve in multiple PMCs.
- PMC members may be community volunteers, parents, or BRIDGES' employees.
- Full-time employees of the School may not serve as PMC chairpersons.
- PMC leadership is selected from the membership of each PMC by consensus and chairpersons so selected may serve in any capacity and for an indeterminate period.

PMCs will meet on an as-needed basis, and meetings are open to all interested in attending.

Emergency Disaster Procedures

Should an emergency or disaster situation ever occur in our area while school is in session, we want you to know that the school has made preparations to respond effectively.

Fire Drill

Fire/evacuation drills will be held monthly. Teachers are required to keep a student roster with them at all times during an evacuation, checking attendance immediately after exiting the room and arriving at the designated field area. In the case of fire at either the BRIDGES or Glenwood campus, students will be immediately evacuated to the field behind and/or adjacent to the School campus, and will need to remain in a designated area until cleared to return to class, or until allowed to leave campus with a parent or guardian. Our emergency bells are “in concert” with Glenwood’s. If, for any reason, the bells become inoperable, verbal signals will be given through telephones, cell phones, and/or bullhorns.

Earthquake

In the event of an earthquake, all students, parents and teachers should quickly duck, cover and hold, where they will remain until the “all clear” signal is given, at which point they will then safely exit the classroom to the field behind or adjacent to the BRIDGES Charter School campus.

Lockdown

In the case of an imminent danger or threat at the School, an emergency lockdown of the School may be required. During a lockdown, the Director (or teacher in charge) will call 911 and notify all teachers, support staff, parent volunteers, and the Board President. If the threat is detected first at BRIDGES Charter School, the signal for “Lockdown” will be announced over the telephone/intercom to classrooms and to the Glenwood office, then a rapid succession of bells with pauses to announce lockdown will sound from Glenwood office. Any students, parents or volunteers not in classrooms should go to the safest and closest area or room. DO NOT try to go to your own classroom unless it is the closest location to remain safe. Instead, enter any available room and stay there.

The Director and staff will follow the directions of law enforcement and/or other competent authorities upon their arrival. When it is determined that there is no danger, an “all clear” will be signaled by the Director (or teacher in charge). In the event that parents are coming onto campus while the School is in a lockdown, parents will not be allowed to enter the campus or the classrooms. Parents must wait in a safe place for the lockdown to end.

Should there be a major earthquake or other emergency, children will remain under the supervision of School’s personnel until a parent or a responsible adult designated on the child’s emergency release form signs him/her out.

Discrimination Policy

BRIDGES Charter School is committed to providing an environment free of harassment based on such factors as race, religion, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, medical condition, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or mental or physical disability. BRIDGES Charter School will not condone or tolerate harassment or discrimination of any type by any student, parent, staff member or volunteer. BRIDGES Charter School will promptly and thoroughly investigate any complaint of harassment or discrimination and take appropriate corrective action, if warranted. This may include a combination of education, counseling, and/or discipline.

Lost and Found

Please make sure to label everything your child brings or wears to school. This is the quickest and most reliable way to make sure your child’s belongings make it home. It is also very important to leave valuables and “special” toys at home. In the event that something is lost either at School or at a School-sponsored event, all lost and found items will be placed in a designated area near the office marked “lost and found”. If the item lost is fragile, check also in the office. Unclaimed lost and found items are donated to thrift stores and charities, at regular intervals.