



Whole child. Whole family.

Whole community.

2013-14

Information Handbook for Parents and Students

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Phone: 805-492-3569**

www.bridgescharter.org

Parent Volunteer Commitment

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, for grades 1-8. The Kindergarten requires one full day, 4 hours, per week. For families with more than two children enrolled, the maximum requirement is 6-hours. 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 children when actively involved in the classrooms.

All classrooms have a room parent in charge of volunteer coordination. Each classroom has volunteer procedures including a log for volunteer hours. You will be contacted by the room parent in charge of volunteerism to schedule your volunteer times and ensure that the hours you have worked are being logged properly.

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 room parent for volunteers to make arrangements to help in a valuable and consistent way at home, or as an active member of a Parent Managed Cohort (PMC). Please remember that volunteering in the classroom supersedes volunteerism in PMCs.

Classroom Volunteering Requests

In all K-3 classrooms, and possibly in grades 4-8, 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.

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. If you are volunteering in the classroom, we ask that you do not have younger children in the classrooms with you. Siblings often present a distraction to the classroom and the parent who is volunteering; there are also liability issues the school may face. Extensions is available for childcare for younger siblings on Mondays and Fridays in the mornings.

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 is encouraged to 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, Technology, Food, Gardening, Outreach, Performing Arts, Music, Grant writing, and more. There are many PMCs to choose from, and more will develop as needs and interests arise. 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.

Parent Advisory Council (PAC)

The Parent Advisory Council serves as our “umbrella” for the PMCs, a booster club of sorts. The PAC meets the first Monday of each month and all parents in the BRIDGES Community are welcome to attend. PAC meetings are a forum for PMC chairpersons to update the PAC and all those in attendance. It is an appropriate place to request financial support for school based activities or investments. The PAC follows up with PMC concerns and requests, and generally supports our organizational structure for parent involvement.

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 family, although greater amounts are always appreciated. We are a nonprofit organization as defined by the IRS code 501(c)(3) tax-exempt. A detailed explanation and donation pledge form are provided at the beginning of each school year and all donations are kept strictly confidential. For tax ID number, please refer to the website.

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, and will need to provide fingerprints pursuant to state law. If you are willing and able to meet these requirements, please inform the office and your child's classroom teacher as soon as possible.

AB 346 expanded the category of individuals required by law to be dual fingerprinted (Department of Justice and Federal Bureau of Investigation). All non-certificated employees and volunteers who will be alone with students in a district-sponsored activity fall under the law. The exception is any non-teaching volunteer who will be in the direct immediate supervision of certificated personnel. (Ed Code 49024)

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.
- ☐ If out on yard duty supervision, please be sure to monitor all children in their activities. If you are on lunch duty, please monitor children at the lunch tables to ensure all children are eating.
- ☐ Any parents wishing to eat lunch with their child may do so. Following normal procedures, parents are to sign in at the front office and have a badge on them. Siblings attending a different school than Bridges are **not** allowed to be out on the campus during the school day.
- ☐ Follow rules for information dissemination to school families. Any notifications sent home in student mailboxes, through classroom distribution or via email need to be reviewed by the teacher and/or Learning Director. 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.
- 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 in the main office near the teacher workroom.
- Practice good hygiene in the classroom.
 - 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. 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.
3. 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.

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.