

## **Student / Family Policies Submission to PCSB**

**Bridges Public Charter School – these policy statements can be found in the school’s Parent Handbook**

### **DISCIPLINE POLICY**

#### **Order and Student Discipline**

Bridges has school-wide behavior and conduct expectations for all members of the learning community. These expectations encourage each student to conduct his or her self in an appropriate way, behave in a cooperative manner that supports learning, and treat other members of the community with respect. The Bridges’ curriculum emphasizes the development of social skills, such as conflict resolution, collaborative problem solving, and expressing emotions through words rather than actions.

#### **School Wide Values and Expectations**

Bridges PCS students and staff will REACH for success by taking care of ourselves, our friends and our school through the implementation of PBIS, Responsive Classroom, and Second Step.

#### **REACH – Responsibility, Engagement, Acceptance, Creativity and Honesty**

#### **Whole School Rules**

1. Show Kindness
2. Be Safe
3. Always do your best

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

The Bridges PCS Behavior Department supports students to eliminate or replace disruptive, unsafe, or challenging behaviors with Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Behavioral intervention draws on multiple disciplines, including community health, social work, counseling and education. Our staff are trained in the use of de-escalation, momentary physical intervention, and physical and emotional management techniques. In addition, our Behavior Support Team assists school staff in conducting functional behavioral assessments, collecting and analyzing behavioral data, and delivering behavior programming using the principles of ABA and PBIS.

Behavior Team members observe and interact with our students to assist with the healthy functioning of our classroom communities. These professionals focus on specific behaviors that disrupt, exclude or otherwise negatively impact our students. Because behavior intervention is aimed at modifying challenging behaviors through implementation plans, the Behavior Department works closely with the

Special Education Department and the Department of Student Support Services to refine, change, and further modify academic and behavior programs to best support the children and families with a variety of different needs, cultures, and backgrounds.

### **Behavior Department Flow Chart**

Our behavior team is made up of the following individuals:

- Director of Student Support Services
- Assistant Direct of Student Support Services
- Behavior Intervention Lead
- Behavior Specialist
- School-Based Mental Health Clinician(s)
- ABA Coordinator

Prior to the involvement of the behavior team (listed above), our staff has received different levels of training in Responsive Classroom to support with management of the classroom behaviorally and building a positive classroom culture. Responsive Classroom is a research-and evidence-based approach to education that is associated with greater teacher effectiveness, higher student achievement, and improved school climate. Different Responsive Classroom techniques include Teacher Language and Logical Consequences that support our staff with behavior management prior to the involvement of the behavior team.

Within each classroom, teachers follow the ladder of consequences using least invasive behavioral approaches including the following:

- ★ Nonverbal Intervention: Gesture or eye contact
- ★ Positive Group Correction: Quick verbal reminder to the group about what students should be doing
- ★ Anonymous Individual Correction: “We need two people”
- ★ Private Individual Correction: Privately and Quietly
- ★ Lightning-Quick Public Correction: “Kristine, I need your eyes. Looking, awesome back row!”
- ★ Take a break with reflection in the classroom (each classroom has a designated “take a break” area)
- ★ Communicate need for observation from Leadership Team Member or Behavior Intervention Lead through the use of the phone or walkie talkie.
- ★ Take a break outside of the classroom in designated location by campus

When taking a break outside of the classroom, a member of the behavior team is called for support by the use of the walkie-talkie to implement this last step within the ladder of consequences.

After the student incident occurs and the student is supported with getting back on task, a behavior team member will send an incident report to be completed by the staff member who asked for assistance using the walkie-talkie. In order to ensure incident reports are well-written and include all

needed information, the team will review the report prior to sending it home. **At this time, the incident report will be sent home to families within 48 hours.**

Should a behavior escalate and a student's safety is in question, a member of the behavior team will deem what Safety Care strategies are necessary to de-escalate which may or may not include a restraint. Safety Care is a training program for staff working with children who may exhibit challenging or dangerous behavior. Safety Care is used to prevent behavioral crisis, reverse the momentary escalation and intensity of crisis behaviors, teach and strengthen behaviors that are incompatible with crisis behaviors, safely and therapeutically manage crisis without injury or trauma, and crises as quickly as possible, decrease the future likelihood of behavioral crises, and physically manage behaviors when necessary.

\*For all incidents that are de-escalated using Safety Care strategies that include restraint (as documented within a child's behavior intervention plan), communication will be **made by phone within the school day and the incident report documenting the incident will be sent home the same day or the next day following.**

All behavioral incidents will always be followed up with a phone call/email/text/in-person communication to the parent by the Lead Teacher. Behaviors that include support from a member of the Behavior Team will also include a phone call from a member of the Behavior Team based on the behavioral incident in need of support.

### **PURPOSE OF SCHOOL RULES**

Educating students at Bridges Public Charter School represents a significant commitment of financial and human resources. The benefits a student derives for this investment depend very much on the student's attitude toward learning and the student's adherence to high standards of behavior. This handbook provides information and direction to students and parents regarding the expected standards of behavior as well as possible consequences for misconduct. The rules set forth in the Student Handbook apply to any student who is on school premises, in a school-related vehicle, at a school-sponsored activity whether on or off campus, or whose conduct at any time or place directly interferes with the operations, discipline, or general welfare of the school.

### **REACH VALUES**

Bridges PCS believes that each and every student and staff member can REACH for success. REACH is an acronym for the Bridges PCS expectations and values. By encouraging students to REACH Bridges PCS focuses on maintaining a strong positive school culture that cultivates citizenship and encourages the development of character.

- **Responsibility-** I listen to all voices in my community and hold myself accountable to meet school-wide expectations
  - **(ECE/Non-Category Students)** - I will follow directions (Listening ears and Safe body)
- **Engagement** – I am committed to doing my best everyday.
  - **ECE/Non-Category Students)-** I will do my best
- **Acceptance-** I appreciate and celebrate the differences of others in my community .
  - **(ECE/Non-Category Students)** - I will be kind

- **Creativity-** I understand that challenges are an opportunity for me to grow.
  - **(ECE/Non-Category Students)** - I will try new things
- **Honesty-** I take responsibility for my actions through truth telling.
  - **(ECE/Non-Category Students)** - I will tell the truth (share my thoughts).

### **CLASSROOM RULES**

In addition to the rules and regulations set forth this handbook, each teacher may also establish rules for his or her own classroom to help ensure maximum learning for everyone. Students are expected to abide by the rules established by the classroom teacher. These typically may include but are not limited to the following:

- To behave in a way that enhances and supports opportunities for students to learn and for the teacher to teach.
- To bring to class all necessary materials and assignments.
- To observe rules of common courtesy and respect in class.
- To make sure that furniture and equipment are not damaged, and that the room is kept clean.
- To observe the teacher's rules regarding food & drink.

### **CONSEQUENCES FOR INFRACTIONS:**

The following list identifies potential administrative responses to infractions in the Student Handbook.

#### **Range Of Disciplinary Action**

Disciplinary actions include, but are not limited to the following:

- Conference with student.
- Problem solving meeting.
- Conference with student and parent/guardian.
- Intervention conferences.
- Peer mediation.
- Behavior plan/contract.
- Exclusion activities.
- Restorative Justice Practice.
- Agency referrals.\*
- Police involvement.
- Out-of-school suspension.

- Recommendation for expulsion.

\*The school district's provision of information or referrals to an outside agency is not an express or implied offer to pay, in full or in part, for any expenses, which the student may incur as a result of his/her participation with the agency.

A student placed on suspension is not allowed on school grounds or at school activities for any reason during the suspension period, unless authorized by an administrator. The suspension period officially concludes at 8 a.m. on the day the student returns to school.

### **Grounds for Suspension, Expulsion, Emergency Removal or Other Disciplinary Action**

Violation on the part of a student of any one or more of the school's rules and behavioral expectations shall constitute misconduct and may result in in-school or out-of-school suspension, expulsion, emergency removal, or other discipline of a student. These Bridges PCS Student Code and Conduct regulations are applicable to conduct while school is in session, at school-sponsored activities or events whether on or off school premises, at events in which the Bridges Public Charter School participates whether on or off school premises, off of property owned or operated by Bridges PCS but that is connected to activities or incidents that have occurred on property owned or controlled by Bridges PCS, on school premises whether or not school is in session, in any vehicle whose use is controlled, organized, or arranged by Bridges PCS, or at any time the student is subject to the authority of Bridges PCS personnel. In addition, a student may be subject to school disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion, for harassment, vandalism, physical abuse or other conduct directed toward school personnel and/or toward school personnel's property, during school or nonschool hours, regardless of where it occurs.

Student attendance at after school co-curricular events is a privilege. Any student may be removed from such events for engaging in disruptive conduct, for violation of the student code of conduct or for conduct posing a danger to persons or property. Any student removed from co-curricular events may be barred from attendance at future events for the remainder of the school year. The following is a list of behavioral concerns that the school may need to address and the consequences for those concerns.

#### ***1. Assault***

A student shall not knowingly or with reckless disregard cause physical injury or threaten to cause physical injury to any person.

**Consequence:** may range from Teacher/Student conference up to recommendations for out-of-school suspension/expulsion.

#### ***2. Conduct on Buses***

The Bridges PCS Student Code of Conduct expectations are applicable on buses as they are in our building. Bus drivers are responsible for safely transporting students to and from school and enforcing bus rules. Children are responsible for reasonable and acceptable behavior while riding the bus.

**Consequence:** student misconduct may result in the loss of bus riding privileges and/or other disciplinary actions.

### ***3. Damage to Private Property***

A student shall not knowingly or with reckless disregard cause or attempt to cause damage to private property.

**Consequence:** may range from Teacher/Student conference up to recommendations for out-of-school suspension/expulsion

### ***4. Damage to School Property***

A student shall not knowingly or with reckless disregard cause or attempt to cause damage to or deface school property including, but not limited to, buildings, grounds, equipment, materials, or computers or other technology. Parent(s) may be liable for payment for the cost to repair or replace any such property damage caused by the acts of their children.

**Consequence:** may range from Teacher/Student conference up to recommendations for out-of-school suspension/expulsion

### ***5. Dangerous Weapons***

A student shall not possess, transport, transmit, conceal or attempt to possess, transport, transmit or conceal a dangerous weapon, firearm, knife, explosive ordnance, stun gun, Taser gun, other dangerous instrument, or "look-alike" counterfeit weapon, firearm, knife, ordnance or dangerous instrument.

"Look-alike" weapons, firearms, knives, ordnance or instruments include, but are not limited to, any object a reasonable person might consider under the circumstances a dangerous weapon, firearm, knife, explosive ordnance or dangerous instrument.

As used herein, "firearm" shall be defined as in 18 USC section 921 and shall include, but not be limited to, any weapon (including a starter gun) which will or is designed to or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive or other propellant; the frame or receiver of any such weapon; any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; or any destructive device as defined in 18 USC section 921 et seq. The definition of destructive device includes, but is not limited to, (1) any explosive, incendiary, or poisonous gas including, but not limited to, a bomb, grenade, rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, mine, or a device similar to any of the devices described herein or (2) any combination of parts either designed or intended for use in converting any device into any destructive device described herein and from which a destructive device may be readily assembled.

As used herein, "knife" shall be defined as any instrument that possesses a pointed or sharp-edged blade of metal or other rigid material and that is designed or can be used for cutting, slicing or stabbing:

this definition shall include, but is not limited to, straight razors, utility knives, box cutters, ice picks, pocket knives, switchblades and buck knives.

Nothing in this provision is intended to, nor shall it, preclude Administration from suspending, expelling or removing a student in accordance with the law for otherwise possessing, transmitting or concealing a weapon, explosive ordnance, or other dangerous instrument that is not as just defined herein.

**Consequence:** may range from Teacher/Student conference up to recommendations for out-of-school suspension/expulsion.

## ***6. Harassment, Bullying, Intimidation or Other Degrading, Disgraceful, Discriminating, and/or Racist Acts***

A student shall not harass, bully, intimidate, degrade, disgrace, disparage, incite, urge, provoke, threaten, discriminate, or cause mental or physical harm against any other student or school employee or otherwise disrupt the school environment. For this purpose, harassment, bullying or intimidation includes, but is not limited to: slurs; displaying inappropriate images or text; profanity; written information; stalking; relational aggression; cyber-bullying; denigrating remarks or actions; obscene gestures; the wearing or display of inappropriate insignia, signs, buttons, clothing or apparel; or other verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct including, but not limited to, those based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, religion, sexual orientation, handicap, age or sex that are harassment as defined in the DCPS Bullying Prevention Policy or that have the purpose or effect of being severe, persistent or pervasive enough to create a situation of (1) causing or intending to cause any other student or school employee to be reasonably placed in fear of his/her personal safety; (2) reasonable fear of damage to students property; (3) causing or intending to cause a hostile, intimidating, threatening or an offensive/abusive educational environment for any other student or school employee; (4) causing or intending to cause material disruption of the educational process; (5) unreasonably interfering with a student's curricular, co-curricular or extracurricular performance or (6) otherwise adversely and unreasonably impacting upon a student's educational opportunities. These are violations that are disruptive to the educational process or may cause harm to other persons or property.

**Consequence:** May range from Teacher/Student conference up to recommendations for out-of-school suspension/expulsion.

## ***7. Disruption***

A student shall not knowingly or with reckless disregard act or urge other students or persons to act in such a way as to cause by use of repetitive disruption, violence, force, noise, threat, intimidation, fear, passive resistance or any other conduct, the substantial and material disruption or obstruction of any lawful mission, process or function of the educational process of the school district, but not limited to, curricular and extracurricular activities.

**Consequence:** May range from Teacher/Student conference up to recommendations for out-of-school suspension/expulsion.

## **8. Fighting**

A student shall not engage in physically or verbally abusive or provocative activities or conduct directed toward another person which leads or, under the circumstances could lead, to harm to such person or bystander. Spectators are subject to disciplinary action if they are viewed to instigate, prolong or heighten a situation.

**Consequence:** May range from Teacher/Student conference up to recommendations for out-of-school suspension/expulsion.

## **9. Frightening or Intimidating Acts**

A student shall not engage in any act or conduct which, under the circumstances, a reasonable person would believe does or is intended to frighten, intimidate, bully, harass, or otherwise cause harm to the person toward whom the act or conduct is directed. Students are expected to be tolerant of individual differences. A student shall not knowingly or with reckless disregard engage in any act or conduct which causes another person to reasonably believe that such student will cause physical harm to the person or property of such other person.

**Consequence:** May range from Teacher/Student conference up to recommendations for out-of-school suspension/expulsion.

## **10. Insubordination**

A student shall not disregard or refuse to obey reasonable requests or directions given to the student by school personnel.

**Consequence:** May range from Teacher/Student conference up to recommendations for out-of-school suspension/expulsion.

## **11. Leaving School Premises**

A student shall not leave school premises before the hour of dismissal except where individual school policy otherwise provides or without first obtaining the consent of the principal, assistant principal or school nurse or their designee. In addition, a student shall not be in an improper area of the school away from proper supervision.

**Consequence:** May range from Teacher/Student conference up to recommendations for out-of-school suspension/expulsion.

## **12. Use of Profane, Vulgar or Abusive Language or Gestures**

A student shall not use profane, vulgar, abusive, obscene or other words or gestures which, under the circumstances, are offensive to the sensibilities of ordinary people in the Bridges PCS community or



which normal school activities. Such prohibitions include, but are not limited to, use of computers or other technology or communications.

**Consequence:** May range from Teacher/Student conference up to recommendations for out-of-school suspension/expulsion.

### ***13. Other Conduct***

In recognition that any list of prohibited conduct cannot, with specificity, encompass every conceivable action which may properly be subject to discipline, the Principal or Administration shall have the authority to suspend or expel a student for conduct not specifically set forth herein and which substantially and materially disrupts or interferes with the good order, discipline, operation, academic or educational process taking place in the school or which substantially and materially is or poses a threat to the safety of persons or property.

**Consequence:** May range from Teacher/Student conference up to recommendations for out-of-school suspension/expulsion.

### ***14. Repeated Violations or Other Circumstances***

These guidelines do not restrict school personnel from using judgment in interpreting and implementing consequences. The administration reserves the right to assign and establish procedures in areas where precedent has not been set.

**Consequence:** May range from Teacher/Student conference up to recommendations for out-of-school suspension/expulsion.

## **STUDENT DUE PROCESS RIGHTS**

Due process rights will be afforded each student before and/or during appropriate disciplinary action. Students will be given written or oral notice of the charges and an opportunity to respond to those charges.

For suspension of five (5) days or more, a written appeal may be filed with the building principal, within 24 hours, but the student will not be allowed to remain in school during the appeal.

When a student is considered for long-term suspension (6 or more days) or expulsion, the student's parent/guardian will receive written notification. The notification will contain:

- Charges and related evidence
- Time/place of the hearing
- Length of the recommended suspension or expulsion
- A brief description of the hearing procedure

Students being considered for long-term suspension or expulsion may or may not be immediately removed from school. A formal hearing will be scheduled with the BESST Team during which the student may be represented by his/her parents/guardian, legal counsel at his/her own expense, and/or by a person of his/her choice.

### **Grievance Procedure - Process to Appeal Decisions for Suspending and Expelling Students**

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

The decision to suspend or expel a student shall be made by the Principal or Assistant Principal, with or without the recommendation of the student's teacher or other school employees. The Principal or Assistant Principal determines the number of days for suspension based on the severity of the infraction, and previous infractions. The suspension or expulsion becomes effective immediately unless otherwise stated by the Principal or Assistant Principal. After three suspensions from school within the same school year, expulsion will be seriously considered. The decision to suspend or expel a student is made in writing and given to the parent/guardian. Ideally there is a meeting that the parent/guardian attends with the Principal or Assistant Principal and the student's teacher before the suspended student returns to school. It is not however a requirement that a meeting is held for a student to return to school at the end of the suspension period. The student's parent/guardian has five days to challenge the suspension or expulsion by submitting an appeal of the decision, in writing, to the Head of School who will provide it to the Board of Trustees for Bridges Public Charter School. The review of the appeal request made to the Board of Trustees will follow the timeline that is part of the school's Grievance Procedure outlined at the end of this document.

## **DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

### **I. Purpose**

If a student violates Bridges Discipline Policy, before consequences or punishment are imposed, a school must consider whether the student has a disability evidenced by an IEP or 504 Plan. While all students may be disciplined, it is both illegal and unjust to punish a child when the offense is directly related to his or her disability or when the IEP or 504 Plan is not implemented.

### **II. Legal Standard**

Disciplinary actions give students with disabilities extra legal protections when the discipline constitutes a change in placement. A "change in placement" is a legal term that applies to the following situations:

- A suspension or expulsion for more than 10 consecutive school days. If a student has transportation on his IEP, then bus suspensions are also counted.

- Suspensions that may total less than 10 cumulative school days in a school year may be a change in placement if they appear as part of a pattern of suspensions. A pattern of suspensions may be found if the student is suspended for behavior that is “substantially similar” to behavior for which the child has previously been suspended. Factors may include same type of behavior, same victim, same class, same day of the week or same time of day. If the offense is a change in placement, the school team (including the parent) must advise parents in writing, provide a copy of the IDEA procedural safeguards, and hold a Manifestation Determination meeting to determine two issues:

- Was the student’s misconduct caused by or directly and substantially related to the student’s disability?
- Was the student’s misconduct a direct result of the school’s failure to follow the child’s IEP?

If the team answers yes to either question, then the student’s behavior is a manifestation of his/her disability. The student may not be suspended, expelled or transferred to a remedial disciplinary school as a punishment for misbehavior that is a manifestation of a disability. The team must conduct a functional behavioral assessment and create a behavior plan addressing ways that the school can help a student with a conduct issue. If the student already has a behavior plan, the plan must be reviewed and modified to address how the school can better assist the student with the conduct issue.

If all team members agree that the student’s conduct was not a manifestation of his disability, then the student may be subject to the same consequences as all students. If a parent disagrees with the team’s decision that the behavior was not a manifestation of the student’s disability, the parent may request a due process hearing to challenge this finding. If the Hearing Officer agrees with the parent, the student will remain in the school where the offense was committed unless the parent and the school agree otherwise. However, during the period of expulsion or transfer to an alternative placement or remedial disciplinary setting, the student must continue to receive special education services prescribed by his IEP and a Behavior Plan must be created or revised to address the offending conduct.

If Bridges PCS orders a disciplinary removal that meets the definition of a change in placement, it must continue to make FAPE available to the student. This means that even if the child is suspended or expelled from a school, the LEA must ensure that the student continues to receive educational services.

### **III. Emergency Circumstances Involving School Safety: Weapons, Drugs or Serious Injury**

If a student: possesses illegal drugs; is selling prescription drugs; carries a weapon; or causes serious bodily injury to another, either at school or during a school related activity, the school may immediately remove the student for up to 45 school days to an alternative or remedial disciplinary setting. To comply with the law, a 45 school day emergency removal for serious bodily injury must be serious, i.e., requiring medical treatment. Because drugs, weapons and serious bodily injury are so dangerous to a safe school climate, a school may remove a student under these circumstances for 45 school days regardless of

whether a child has intellectual disability (formally MR) or even if the team believes that the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability. During the 45 school-day period, the school must convene a manifestation determination meeting. If the school determines that the conduct is a manifestation, the school may have the child re-evaluated, create or revise an existing behavior plan, or hold an IEP meeting to consider a more intensive special education placement upon the expiration of the 45-day alternative placement or sooner. If all team members determine that the conduct was not a manifestation of the student's disability, then the 45 school day emergency placement may proceed to a disciplinary proceeding afforded to all students.

#### **IV. Emergency Hearing/Dangerousness**

If a school has solid reasons to believe that keeping the student in his current school is "substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others", the school should consult with the Special Education Director who may request an emergency hearing to ask a Hearing Officer to transfer the student to an alternative setting for up to 45 school days. Dangerousness may exist even if there is no Code of Conduct violation. It is a consideration based on serious safety concerns for the student and/or the school community.

#### **V. Notice to Parents**

Any time a student with an IEP or 504 plan is removed to an alternative or remedial disciplinary setting, the parent must be given a prior written notice stating this decision and a copy of the procedural safeguards.

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

#### **Attendance**

##### **Attendance Counts: Attend all day, every day, for the full day**

Each student is expected to attend school every day for the entire school day unless there is an exceptional health or family reason that prevents their attendance. School begins at 8:20 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m. On Fridays school ends at 2:00 p.m. After 8:45 a.m. a student is considered late to school. Students who have a doctor's note will be received at school up to 2:00 pm. Students who gave prior notice by phone call or email of tardy arrival will be received up to 12:00 p.m. without a doctor's notice. Students without a doctor's note or prior notice of tardy will not be received after 10 a.m.

Students should be picked up from school between 3:30 p.m. - 3:45 p.m. Monday - Thursday and between 2:00 p.m. - 2:15 p.m. on Fridays. If a parent is going to arrive after the pick-up times, they must notify the front office. Students not picked up at the end of the school day will be held lobby until pick up by school staff. Parents / Guardians will be charged by the school one dollar per minute late pick-up fee for the student. Parents will receive a late fee invoice documenting dollar amount owed to the school for child care. Please be advised that not picking up your child from school is considered leaving a child unsupervised and can result in a referral to Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA).

### **How do I report my child's absence:**

Please report all absences to the front office staff as soon as the need for the absence is known. If we do not receive advance notice of an absence, we will call the students' parent/guardian to determine the reason for the absence. Please share notice of the absence preferably by 9:00 a.m. Otherwise, all notice of an absence must be given within 5 days of the student returning to school

### **Other Ways to Report an absence**

All written notices should have the student's name, class, date of and reason for the absence. All absences are unexcused until a notice is given within 5 days of return. After 5 days of return without a notice the absence will be unexcused.

· Email the attendance line: [attendance@bridgespcs.org](mailto:attendance@bridgespcs.org)

· Written notice submitted to the front office staff.

· The school can provide an attendance absence form at the front desk that can be completed to provide the documentation of the student's absence.

DC Law requires this written documentation of all absences from school.

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

An absence is excused when a student (a) has a valid excuse and, (b) provides a written note from a parent/guardian or doctor within five (5) days of the absence. All excused notes are subject to monitoring and verification. Absences are only excused by the Principal or Assistant Principal.

The following are considered reasons for excused absences:

#### **Student Illness**

- Student **must** provide a doctor's note for absences over three consecutive (3) days
- Parents can provide a maximum of five (5) handwritten notes/emails/calls to excuse an absence due to illness if the student is too sick to attend school but does not necessarily require a doctor's visit.
- After five (5) handwritten notes are submitted, all other absences due to illness can only be excused with a doctor's note. Otherwise the parent/guardian will be asked to meet with the Attendance Coordinator

#### **Other examples of excused absences:**

- Medical Appointments
- Students are expected to attend school before/after the appointment
- Religious holidays
- Death in the Family
- Family Emergency, such as house fire, flood, violence, proven utility outage, sudden illness of a family member
- Mandatory court appearance.
- Suspension or expulsion from school by an administrator
- Temporary closing of the school facility or suspension of classes due to severe weather or other conditions requiring the closing of the school facility or suspension of classes
- Other absences approved in advance by the Principal or Assistant Principal upon the written request of a parent/guardian
- Transportation provided by the school according to a student's IEP not picking up a student.

If a valid **written excuse** is not provided within five (5) days of the absence, the absence may be considered unexcused.

**Illness Excuse Requirements:**

***After an illness for three (3) days or more:***

Students absent from school due to illness for 3 or more consecutive days must submit a doctor’s note verifying that the student has been cleared by a doctor and can return to school. Families are expected to schedule recreational activities and vacations during designated school breaks. A family vacation outside of school break time is not automatically an excused absence for a student.

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

**When is an Absence Unexcused?**

An absence is unexcused when a student fails to attend school without a valid excuse. The following are considered reasons for unexcused absences:

- Family Vacations within the school year
- Extended vacation before and after a school break
- Oversleeping
- Weather related concerns that did require school closing.
- Other absences may be deemed unexcused by the Principal or Assistant Principal, this list does not cover all issues or concerns.

**Tardiness**

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

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

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

Student arrives late more than 20% of school days in the first three quarters of the year.	Arriving late for more than 20% of school days for the first three quarters of the year may be grounds for discontinuance from school the next academic year. A significant number of tardy arrivals may also be a factor in retention decisions.
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## Absences

Extensive absences from school negatively impact a student's learning and success in the school setting.

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

Persistent absenteeism from school will result in the following actions being taken:

Absences	Action Taken by the School
For all absences	<p>The classroom team will call parent/guardian for inquiry and support with attendance each time a student is absent from school. They will also review the attendance policies and protocols.</p> <p>The family will receive an automatic call from the school to notify you that your child was not in school today.</p>
4 unexcused absences.	Front Office staff monitors situation. Letter is sent home to the family reviewing the school's policies concerning tardy arrival, attendance and absences from school.
After 3 consecutive unexcused absences from school.	Front Office staff will contact the family for inquiry and support around attendance. If absenteeism is due to illness, information must be shared with school so plans for providing school work to student can be made to maintain student's learning. <u>School requires medical documentation if a health problem is the cause of absenteeism prior to the student returning to school.</u> If Front desk staff cannot make contact with parent/guardian, the Attendance Coordinator will be notified and a <b>meeting</b> be completed.
5-9 unexcused absences	Attendance Coordinator will send a letter home requesting the parent/ guardian to attend a meeting with the School' RTI (Response to Intervention) Team. Problem-solving efforts and goal-setting are done by the family and school staff. An attendance contract may be developed.
10 unexcused absences	<b>Based on DC State Board of Education Truancy Policy, when a student reaches ten (10) unexcused absences, the school must make an immediate referral to Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA).</b> The referral by the school to CFSA must happen within two (2) days of the 10 <sup>th</sup> unexcused absence. Parents/guardians are advised that significant unexcused absences of 10 or more without adequate medical explanation may be grounds for discontinuance from school the next academic year. A significant number of absences may require that a student be retained. A letter is sent home requesting a family/school meeting to discuss attendance. Problem-solving efforts and goal-setting is done by the family and school staff. An attendance contract is completed outlining steps to be taken to support the student's everyday attendance.
10 consecutive unexcused absences	The family will receive an automatic home visit from the school counselor or Social Worker.
20 consecutive unexcused absences	Meeting will occur with family to review on-going attendance concern. Possible outcome may be the student being unenrolled from school. This will be with the exception for students who are identified as homeless.

## Early Departure

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

<b>Early Departure</b>	<b>Action Taken by the School</b>
Student leaves early five (5) days in a quarter.	Teacher and Attendance Coordinator monitors situation. Letter is sent home to the family reviewing the school's policies concerning tardy arrival, attendance and absences from school.
Student leaves early more than ten (10) days in a quarter.	School requires medical documentation if a health problem is the cause of early departures from school. For more than ten (10) early departures in a quarter, a letter is sent home requesting a family / school meeting to discuss attendance. Parent/guardian is advised that significant additional early departure for three quarters may be grounds for discontinuance from school the next academic year. A significant number of early departures may also be a factor in retention decisions. Problem-solving efforts and goal-setting is done by the family and school staff.
Student leaves early more than 20% of school days in the first three quarter of the year.	Leaving early for more than 20% of school days for the first three quarters of the year may be grounds for discontinuance from school the next academic year. A significant number of tardy arrivals may also be a factor in retention decisions.



## **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

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

## **GRIEVANCE POLICY**

### **Grievance Procedures**

A grievance is any significant concern that arises in the treatment of a student or adult. This policy should not be interpreted by any person as anything more than a method of solving problems before they reach damaging proportions.

### **Grievance Procedures for Parents/Guardians and Students**

It is the policy of Bridges Public Charter School to treat all students in a fair and impartial manner. A student's parent or guardian or an individual student may submit a grievance to the Bridges Public Charter School to resolve a problem as quickly, fairly, and informally as possible.

A parent or guardian who believe that s/he or his/her child has been treated unfairly or discriminated against or a student who believes that s/he has personally been treated unfairly or discriminated against is encouraged to utilize the following grievance procedures:

Step 1. In the event a parent or guardian of a student believes that his/her child has been treated unfairly, the parent or guardian should discuss the situation with the student's classroom teacher. If a student him or herself has a concern, and believes that s/he has been treated unfairly, s/he or the teacher may arrange a meeting of all parties involved in the grievance to work out an informal solution to the grievance.

Step 2. If a resolution cannot be reached through discussion with the classroom teacher, the parent/guardian or student should arrange to discuss the situation with the Principal. The parent/guardian or student should provide information to the Principal about any efforts to resolve the situation with the teacher and the outcome. (If the problem is not a classroom issue, Step 2 (addressed to the appropriate administrator) would be the first step in the grievance process.

Step 3. If after Step 2 the parent/guardian or student is still not satisfied with the school's response, the parent or guardian of the student should put the complaint in writing—not e-mail—to the Principal. Complaints can be hand-delivered to the Principal's office or mailed to 100 Gallatin St. NE, Washington,

DC 20011. The written document should state clearly that it is intended to initiate the grievance process and it should state the nature of the complaint, the date(s) of the occurrence, and the desired result.

Upon receipt of the complaint, the Principal (or designee) will initiate an adequate, reliable, and impartial investigation of the complaint. Each investigation will include, as necessary, interviewing witnesses, obtaining documents and allowing parties to present evidence. All documentation related to the investigation will remain confidential. Within 15 school days of receiving the complaint, the Principal or designee will respond in writing to the complaint, summarizing the course and outcome of the investigation and any appropriate corrective or remedial action necessary.

Step 4. If the parent/guardian or student remains unsatisfied with the resolution reached by the Principal in writing, the parent or guardian of a student should submit a written statement of appeal to the Head of School, which should include the written material (his/her complaint and the Principal's response), within five school days of receiving the Principal's response. Complaints can be hand-delivered to the Head of School's office or mailed to 100 Gallatin St. NE, Washington, DC 20011. The parent or guardian of a student must notify the Principal of this action.

Step 5. The Head of School will review all relevant information and meet with the parties involved as necessary. Within 10 school days, the Head of School will issue a decision in writing summarizing the outcome of the appeal and any corrective or remedial action to be taken.

Step 6. If the parent/guardian or student remains unsatisfied with the resolution reached by the Head of School, the parent/guardian or student should submit a written statement of appeal to the Chair of the Board of Trustees within five school days of receiving the Head of School's response. The statement of appeal can be submitted to the Head of School who will provide it to the Board. The statement of appeal can also be submitted to the Board of Trustees via email at the following email address: [BPCSboard@bridgespcs.org](mailto:BPCSboard@bridgespcs.org). The parent or guardian of a student must notify the Head of School of this action.

Step 7. Within 10 school days, the Board Chair will convene a meeting of the Appeals Committee of the Board to discuss the grievance and all relevant information. The parties and their representatives may be invited to participate in this meeting if necessary. Within 10 school days of this meeting, the Board Chair will issue a decision in writing summarizing the outcome of the appeal and any corrective or remedial action to be taken.

Parents and guardians of students are obligated to cooperate in good faith in the investigation and resolution of any grievance raised by them or against them. There will be no retaliation of any kind against individuals who file a complaint or participate in a complaint investigation. At their own expense, individuals may seek outside counsel or guidance to assist them in the grievance process. This grievance procedure does not bar individuals from filing claims in other forums to the extent permitted by state or federal law.

## **FERPA POLICY**

### **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
  - School officials from the State Education Office with legitimate educational interest;
  - Other schools to which a student is transferring;
  - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
  - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
  - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
  - Accrediting organizations;
  - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
  - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
  - To an agency caseworker or other representative of a state or local child welfare agency or tribal organization;
  - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies;
  - State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Requests from a parent to opt-out of the directory must be made in writing and submitted to the front administrative office. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

For additional information, you may call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327) (voice). Individuals who use TDD may use the [Federal Relay Service](#).

Or you may contact us at the following address:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202-8520

### **Admission and Registration**

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

#### **Eligibility**

Bridges is a preschool, pre-Kindergarten and elementary school. You are eligible to apply if:

- You reside in the District of Columbia.
- Your child is eligible to attend preschool if they will be 3 years old by September 31.
- Your child is eligible to attend pre-Kindergarten if they will be 4 years old by September 31.
- Your child is eligible to attend Kindergarten if they will be 5 years old by September 31.

#### **Admission**

Applications for admission are accepted using the [www.myschooldc.org](http://www.myschooldc.org) on-line application and lottery process.

#### **Registration**

Preference in registration is given to students who are already enrolled in the school.

#### **Admission Preference Policy**

Bridges has the following admissions preference in place in the following rank order: 1) children of staff, 2) siblings of children who are already enrolled in the school and 3) sibling offered a space in the current year lottery. The remaining spaces available in the general admissions process are allocated through a random lottery.

Bridges Public Charter School has an additional lottery for high level special education students to gain entry into our high level special education classrooms for grades Pre-K 3 to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. The high level classrooms are for students with the following level of special education support outside of the general education setting as defined by the Individual Educational Program (IEP). Special education support can include but is not limited to: specialized instruction from a special education teacher, therapy/related services (speech, OT, PT, ABA, etc.), counseling and consultation with classroom teachers.

Level 3 - A student with 16 – 24 hours of support outside of the general education setting.

Level 4 - A student with 24 – 32 hours of support outside of the general education setting.

#### **Re-enrollment**

Parents of current students wishing to attend Bridges Public Charter School for the following school year must complete a re-enrollment commitment form in March, followed by the enrollment forms required

by OSSE by May 1. A reminder and the forms are sent to all families. The enrollment forms must be completed to secure your child's space for the following school year. There are 2 main steps to complete the enrollment of the student at Bridges PCS. First step is to complete the online enrollment form. The second step is to submit paper forms and required documentation to the school in person. If the school does NOT receive re-enrollment forms by the deadlines, your child will be withdrawn and the space offered to someone else on the waitlist.

Bridges PCS gives preference to siblings of enrolled students. Siblings only get this preference as long as the enrolled sibling continues to attend Bridges for the school year they are applying for. If the sibling that was attending school withdraws, then their siblings will lose their preference for a space at the school.