



Bridge School Beginners Preschool
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Family Handbook 2020-2021

Welcome to Bridge School Beginners Preschool!!

We are excited to welcome you and your child/children to Bridge School Beginners. We have developed this handbook to explain our philosophy, goals, and program policies. We hope that the information in this book will give you a thorough understanding of the program, as well as its expectations.

First and foremost, we value and respect children and families points of view, ideas, and theories. We strive to empower children. We are dedicated to ensuring that the different components of a high quality program are all in place. High quality programs are based on accepted theories of child development and the needs of the children. A high quality program accepts and respects family cultures, maintains a safe and healthy environment, and selects activities and materials based on the interests and skill levels of the children.

We hope that you will work with us to establish open avenues of communication and build with us a positive and stimulating community for the children. Ask questions about things you don't understand and make suggestions to us for ways in which we can work together to improve our program. We sincerely hope that your involvement with Bridge School Beginners will be a positive and rewarding experience.

Important Note: We will be following the orders of the Governor and the Vermont Department of Health regarding COVID. Given that those are changing rapidly, families will be kept up to date with any changes from the guidelines included in this handbook.

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MISSION, PURPOSE & GOALS

Bridge School's Mission

Bridge School nurtures children's development as inquisitive scholars and kindhearted community members. Through collaborative, project-based, community-engaged learning, Bridge School cultivates children's natural curiosity, and joyful creativity. We value holistic learning, thereby fostering a 21st century learner's essential skills, knowledge and habits of mind.

Beginners' Purpose Statement

Bridge School is a non-profit organization which began in 1980 and was designed to be a "laboratory in freedom and responsibility for both children and adults." It has always valued community interaction and engagement. Bridge Beginners began in 2019 as a way to expand Bridge School's mission to preschool-aged children.

Beginners' Philosophy

The curriculum for the Bridge Beginners Preschool is based on social constructivism. Like the elementary school, children build deep and meaningful relationships with their teachers, peers, and fellow students throughout the school, which allows the children to be confident in directing their own learning experiences. The rich classroom environment supports their theory making, ideas, and explorations and empowers the children to take risks and practice problem-solving, both socially and intellectually. Through close observation, the teachers respond to children's inquiries through asking questions, revisiting experiences, and presenting more opportunities and materials to expand the children's knowledge.

This strength-based program supports children's learning in an authentic and motivating way. Through the children's inquiries and through the teachers' mentoring STEM, literacy, the arts, and physical movement all occur emergently. The natural world is a significant component of the curriculum, and is an additional classroom. Through the social constructivist practice the Vermont Early Learning Standards occur naturally. This curriculum highlights the rich learning opportunities of the world around us.

Goals

For the children:

- To learn about themselves
- To learn about their feelings
- To learn about others

To learn about communicating
To learn about moving and doing
To explore and be curious about their world
To acquire thinking skills
To acquire practical life skills

For the families:

To build a partnership with families
To support families in their parenting skills
To support families in their roles as primary educators of their child
To ensure that the home cultures of the children’s families are reflected in the program

For the staff:

To build responsive relationships with children, families, and co-workers
To plan and implement a developmentally appropriate program
To promote children’s development and learning
To maintain professional standards
To be an advocate in support of children and their families

Services of Bridge School Beginners are available without regard to age, race, creed, color, religious beliefs, disability, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, or marital status.

THE PRESCHOOL

Hours

Bridge School Beginners is open each weekday from **8:00am to 3:30pm** for the preschool program and 3:30-5:00 for the after-care program, except on the days listed in our calendar or emergencies (such as snow days). In consideration of the staff and children, we ask that the preschool hours be respected as follows:

- To allow staff adequate set-up time in the morning, under no circumstances may a child be dropped off earlier than 7:55 am.
- To allow children time to engage in morning routines and experiences we **strongly** encourage parents to drop children off at the Center by 8:30 am. If children arrive much later, it can sometimes be difficult for them to join the group.
- Bridge School closes at 5:00 pm promptly. To allow themselves adequate time for greeting their child, gathering his or her belongings, and chatting with staff, **parents must arrive no later than 4:45 pm.**
- Parents must sign their child in and out. Sign in sheets are located in your child’s classroom.
- Parents are responsible for their child while they are in the building, and must be with their children at all times unless they have given them into the care of their teacher.

Late Pick-up

We ask families to cooperate in picking up their children on time. If for some reason a parent should be delayed, please call (802) 388-3498 immediately. While we

understand that emergencies do arise, please understand that we ask you to be on time not only for your child and their needs but also for our teachers and their family needs. If your child has not been picked up by 3:40, they will then be enrolled in the after-school care for that day and you will be charged for the full rate. If children are picked up late from after-care, families will be asked to pay \$15 for every 15 minutes after 5:00.

In addition, continual tardiness in picking up a child on the part of the family may necessitate our requesting that the child be withdrawn from the after-care program.

Pick Ups: other than parent

If someone other than you, or those designated on your Emergency Card, will pick up your child, we must have written permission. Even if another Bridge School parent is picking up your child, we must have written permission, so leave a note with the teachers in the morning. If the person picking up is not on your emergency card, along with a signed note, we have to ID them, so please let them know they have to have an ID ready when picking-up.

Absence

It is important that we know when children will be absent or late, as this may affect staffing or plans for that particular day. Please call as early as possible, and inform us each day that your child will be out, unless you have notified us in advance. If your child will be out for an extended period (i.e. for a vacation, etc.), please let us know as soon as possible. (See also section on Universal Pre-K Funding.)

In-Service Days

We have 5 teacher in-service days during the year, as well as a week of in-service in August. We use this time for professional development as well as to make changes in the room.

Snow Days and Cancellations

We automatically cancel school or have a delayed start if the Addison Central Supervisory Union (Mary Hogan School, MUMS, MUHS) cancels school or delays. If you see that the Middlebury public schools are closed, you should plan for Bridge to be closed. Because schools may be on vacation and so many staff and families have a distance to drive, we may sometimes make an independent decision to cancel. We make cancellation decisions as early in the morning as possible, given the need to monitor conditions. To find out if school is cancelled: Check your e-mail, local television stations (such as WCAX) and radio stations (such as VPR) for up-to-date closure lists. Many of our students travel quite far and the conditions in your area may be very different from Middlebury. If you decide to keep your child home due to the weather, please call us before 8:30.

Forms

Each child must have the following forms completed, signed and on file prior to the child's attending Bridge School. New forms must be updated each year of the child's enrollment.

- **Registration Contract.** Read this form carefully. It details your family's financial obligation to Bridge School.

- **Child Admission Form.** This form includes medical information, family information, developmental information, permission forms (walks, photos/videos, and medications), emergency contact form and pick-up authorization.
- **Immunization Forms.** Families must provide a current record of their child's immunizations. As new immunizations are received, updated copies must be given to the center.
- **Documentation of Well Care Exam:** Within 45 days of enrollment, parents must provide documentation of appropriate well care exam. This must include information regarding any health conditions and medications that may impact the care of the child.

It is essential that the information on these forms be kept up-to-date. This could be critical in an emergency. Changes in medical information, address, phone numbers, emergency contacts, family structure, etc. must be reported at once to staff or Director. This information is kept in a locked file cabinet in the preschool room. The information is shared only with staff that work directly with the child. Parents may have access to their child's files at any time, as well as the appropriate licensing authorities.

Tuition

Families are responsible for payment for all days that children are scheduled to attend, as well as days the preschool is closed (for a snow day, holiday, in-service or full-day emergency). It is our policy that families are not permitted to switch one day for another; however, if numbers allow there may be occasions when it is possible for families to add a day. This is left to the discretion of the child's classroom teachers and the director. If days are added, families are responsible for payment for those days in addition to the regular tuition.

Families receive the week between Christmas and New Year's as a tuition free week. We are also closed for a week in August for in-service, which will also be a tuition free week.

Prepayments may be made for any amount. You will receive a monthly invoice, thus **payment should be made on a monthly basis at the beginning of the month on the first day that your child attends.** Tuition checks should be made payable to: Bridge School. You may also pay by ACH (direct deposit). If you would like to make other arrangements, please contact the School Office Administrator.

Full time tuition for the preschool program is \$230 per week. Tuition for 4 days is \$200 and for 3 days is \$175. The after-care program is \$15 per day. An extra day is \$45 per day. Tuition rates may be changed without prior notification at the discretion of the Bridge School board. If you have any questions regarding tuition please see the School Office Administrator.

Universal Pre-K funding

If your child has turned 3 by September 1, 2019, and is in a school district with which we have a contract, you may qualify for universal pre-K funding. This pays completely for 10 hours of preschool per week, for 35 weeks per year.

Please note that we share information about students with the school district in which your student is enrolled, including TSG (Teaching Strategy Gold, assessment reports) and attendance. The school district may contact you and/or discontinue funding when attendance is irregular.

Withdrawals

Families may withdraw a child from Bridge Beginners at any time; however we strongly discourage withdrawals because of the impact it has on the children and the community. **Four weeks' notice is required.** Families wishing to withdraw their children, but who fail to provide the four week notice will still be liable for tuition owed.

Beginners Daily Schedule

8:00-9:00am Arrival and Morning Responsibilities

- Children arrive, put their things away and choose from a variety of places to play. This may also include outdoor play. "Provocations" will be set out to encourage the children to explore specific activities. Between 8:40-9:00am, elementary students may choose to be in the room, playing with the Beginners. Students will never be left alone with any preschooler. The ratio of teachers to students will be maintained as per the regulations.

9:00-9:45 Morning Snack

- Clean up and get ready for snack.

10:00-10:30 Morning Meeting

- Come together for Morning Meeting--singing, games, books, etc.

10:30-12:00 Explorations and Outside Time

- Small group investigations. Topics are emergent based on children's interests. Some investigations may take place outside.

12:00-12:30 Lunch

12:30-1:00 Rest and Buddy Reading

- Children may go and read with elementary students or children in the preschool will rest and be read a book at this time.

1:00-1:30 Beginners Rest Time

- All Beginners rest in the classroom.

1:30-3:00 Afternoon Choice

- Quiet afternoon choices are set out by teachers. Outside time may be a choice.

3:00-3:30 Afternoon Responsibilities

- Clean up room and gather things to go home.

3:30 Dismissal

- Children get picked up or after school care begins.

After School care:

3:30-4:30 Afternoon snack, small group activities, outside time

4:30-5:00 End of the day cleaning. This practice shows children the responsibility and ownership of being part of a community and using a communal space.

FAMILY INFORMATION

Open Door

Families are warmly invited and encouraged to spend time at the preschool. You are welcome to come have lunch with your child, play in the yard, read a book, sing some songs, or just sit and watch! Children benefit by seeing that their parents and families are interested and involved in their experiences at school. We do ask you to follow some general rules.

- Children come first!

- Sit down, kneel or squat—please stay at the child’s level.
- Always inform a staff person when taking your child out of the room.
- Speak in gentle, low tones, especially if children are sleeping.
- Interact in a nurturing, positive manner, using respectful language.
- Keep conversation to a minimum with staff members.
- Let a staff person know when you are leaving school.

Thanks for following these guidelines—come and enjoy!!

Parental Access

Families always have access to their child (without prior notice), their child’s files, and within reason, to their child’s teacher unless we have legal documentation prohibiting this.

Bridge School recognizes in most situations both parents have a legal right to be a part of their child’s life. Bridge School denies a parent access to their child only if there is a legal document on file that addresses that denial.

Communication

Your child may be spending many hours at Bridge School, especially if he or she attends the after-care program as well. Open avenues of communication are essential. There are a variety of ways in which we communicate with families, including taking a few minutes at pick up and drop off, journals, and family conferences. If you have any questions about your child’s day that are not addressed by any of these methods, please ask one of his/her teachers. You may also leave a note with the teachers if you have information you would like to convey about your child.

If families have more involved issues to discuss with teachers, it is better to make an appointment, rather than try to find time during arrival or departure. These times can be hectic for everyone and people cannot focus on the issue at hand. Families can also leave a note for the teacher or write in the child’s journal. Any request for a formal or informal meeting with the director or staff shall be accommodated within ten (10) business days of the request. (Reg. 4.3.2)

It is also very helpful to share information about things that might be a stressor for your child, such as loss of a family member, moving, job changes, etc. This helps us to better understand what your child might be experiencing, and to support them in those issues.

Journals

Your child’s teacher ensures regular written observation logs are kept for your child. Journals track children’s development, behavior and interests. Families are invited to write in the journals and then return them promptly. Some families choose to communicate by email. These entries are then put into the child’s journal. The child’s journals and portfolio will become the property of the family when the child leaves the preschool. They will become a readable, informative, continuous record of the child’s experiences while at Bridge Beginners!

Portfolio

In each child’s portfolio, there are photos, observations, documentation of your child’s emerging skills and examples of art work created by your child. Families may have access to the portfolio at any time. They are maintained in your child’s classroom.

Family Conferences

We schedule conferences in October and May for each child. This is the time to sit down with your child's teachers to discuss your child's growth and development and to work together on goals. It is an opportunity to share information about favorite activities, social interactions, etc. Conferences can also be scheduled at any time during the year when there is a concern or if you just want to talk with your child's teacher about how your child is doing. The teachers at Bridge Beginners have all been educated in child development and if they can't answer your question or concern then they will work to help you find the information you need.

Teacher Technology and Social Media Policy

Cell phone use in the classroom is prohibited. Cell phones can be used during walks away from the school but only for school-related calls. When outside on the playground, staff should always have a center phone accessible. Families needing to get in touch with the classroom must call the main phone number. Every effort will be made to have someone answering the phone. In the event that the staff are not able to answer the phone immediately, they will check for messages within 15 minutes. Cell phones may not be used for taking photos of children. The classroom has a camera for this purpose. Staff who have a Facebook page (or similar) may not put any information or photos of children on this page. They may be "friends" with parents, but should not be sharing information or photos about work or children on the site. This must be done in the classroom.

Parents may not post photos of other Bridge School students at school on social media. Computer use with children should be limited to short amount of times, and only for educational purposes (i.e. to look up information on a subject of interest.)

NAEYC and the Fred Rogers Center recommend that early childhood educators

1. Select, use, integrate, and evaluate technology and interactive media tools in intentional and developmentally appropriate ways, giving careful attention to the appropriateness and the quality of the content, the child's experience, and the opportunities for co-engagement.
2. Provide a balance of activities in programs for young children, recognizing that technology and interactive media can be valuable tools when used intentionally with children to extend and support active, hands-on, creative, and authentic engagement with those around them and with their world.
3. Prohibit the passive use of television, videos, DVDs, and other non-interactive technologies and media in early childhood programs for children younger than 2, and discourage passive and non-interactive uses with children ages 2 through 5.

Questions and Concerns

Any question, concern or worry is important and needs to be addressed. **Please ask!!** Please feel free at all times to ask about your child, discuss concerns or issues, or get feedback from the staff. We encourage families to speak daily with your child's teacher. If he or she is not available, speak with another staff member. We work as a team at Bridge School, so they will most likely be able to help you also. If you need support in approaching a teacher, you can ask the director for help. The director is always available to talk about questions and concerns, but may need to schedule a time if he or she is currently in the classroom.

If, upon speaking with the Beginners Director and teachers, you feel that your concern has not been resolved, you are welcome to contact the co-director of Bridge School.

Jen Grilly jen@bridgeschoolvermont.org

If there are further concerns, please contact the Bridge School Board, which is comprised of parents and community members and meets monthly. To see full board, please visit the Bridge School website, under "About", and go to "Team."

Pam Marsh, Co Chair pashamarsh@gmail.com

Anja Wurm, Co Chair awurmdeboer@gmail.com

Families have the further option of appealing at any point to the Child Care Consumer Concern Line at 1-800-649-2642.

Parents can find the Early Childhood Program Licensing Regulations for the State of Vermont at http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/child_care_licensing.

We thank you for taking the appropriate steps when you have a question or concern.

We are all here for your children and work to provide the best possible environment for them and for your family.

Family Participation

Each year Bridge School plans several opportunities for families to participate in the school (see the website and school calendar.) In addition, the Beginners teachers may offer other opportunities for families to participate, such as work days, potlucks, etc. We plan family meetings once or twice a year. They include discussions on topics of interest and concern, speakers, and an opportunity to be involved with planning activities and events. We hope that you will become part of these meetings.

The Board includes parent members who are invited by the Board. Board members direct fundraising, maintenance of buildings and grounds, alumni relations, and the hiring/supervising of Co-Directors and Teachers. The Board, in concert with the teachers, engages in long-range planning and creates the annual school budget.

We also welcome parent participation in activities that happen at Bridge Beginners, such as special activities or holiday celebrations. Occasionally, we plan a community field trip, such as picking strawberries, or visiting Shelburne Farms, and we welcome families on them as well.

Saying Goodbye

It is important to establish a routine with your child when leaving or picking him or her up at Bridge School. A routine will help your child know what to expect and feel secure with daily transitions. Please **do not** leave without saying goodbye. When you are ready to leave, please feel free to enlist the help of a teacher. We will tell the child that you are going to work and will come back later in the day. We will go to the window to wave goodbye to you, or follow whatever routine works best for you and your child. Please make eye contact with your child, smile (it matters), say goodbye once, blow kisses and walk out the door. Your child's teacher will handle any tears that may come or any angry feelings. You are welcome to call us to make sure that your child has settled in and is involved with the routine of the day.

At the end of the day, it is sometimes just as hard for the child to say goodbye to Bridge School. Don't be surprised if your child is busy with a project or activity and does not come running right over to you! Give a smile, say "hello" and start to get the child's things ready to go. This will be a signal to the child that the end of the day is here.

Again, please feel free to enlist the help of one of the teachers.

Family Resources

The Bridge School library has a shelf of books for families to borrow. The Beginners classroom also has a collection of pamphlets, information on community organizations, recalls of children's furniture, toys, etc, and other helpful information underneath the family bulletin board.

As part of a larger community, we would be happy to help you locate whatever other resources you might need. These might include articles on a specific topic, the name of an organization that could screen your child if you have concerns, or the times for local playgroups. Please ask your child's teacher or the director for this information.

Family Board

The Family Board contains information about upcoming Beginners events, community events, announcements, opportunities for family involvement, advocacy etc. It is located next to the main entrance. Families are encouraged to read the family board regularly.

Library Books

Children and parents are allowed to check out books from the Bridge School library. Please check your child's room and around your house for Bridge School library books from time to time. Please return any books you find so that we do not have to buy replacements. If you would like to donate any hardcover books in good condition, please let us know.

Toys From Home

We ask that all toys stay at home or in your car. We have found that when children bring toys in they can get lost or broken and can be the source of disruption. If your child is looking to share something, we encourage them to bring in books from home or natural objects such as a favorite rock, flower, leaf from a tree, etc.. Books are a wonderful way to start conversations as well as learn about other families values.

Winter Skating

As soon as we can keep a rink frozen, skating is available with parental supervision after school hours as an activity. We have some skates in the attic that can be borrowed, but parents are responsible for having the skates sharpened. All students are required to wear helmets while skating. We always appreciate help snow-blowing the rink. If you are able to help, please speak to the Director of the Bridge School. You are responsible for your child's safety on the rink.

Birthdays

Birthdays are very special at Bridge School and students are honored during Morning Snack. Birthday kids may bring treats such as finger foods that don't require anything beyond a napkin. Families are strongly encouraged to provide sugar-free, healthy treats for their child's group. Some examples might be mini-muffins, fruit breads, carrot cake, fresh fruit, etc.

We also invite you to come in at morning snack and share your child's birth story or a story about your child. Students, whose birthdays inconveniently fall outside the school

calendar, may pick a date for a "School Birthday." Check with your child's teacher and ask to have it put it on the office calendar.

Celebrations

If your family has a special occasion or a family tradition or a family cultural celebration, please share that with us. We would encourage you to bring part of that special time to the preschool and share what would be developmentally appropriate with the children and staff. We learn about our global community through small direct contacts. We would love to share with you!!

Bridge School is non-denominational and does not celebrate religious holidays or support religious teachings.

Clothes

Your child will get "dirty" and "messy" at the preschool because that is the essence of play and learning!! Please do not send your child to the center in clothes that must stay clean and spotless. We believe that children need to be uninhibited in their exploration and discovery. No child will be prohibited or restricted from participating in art, sensory activities, cooking, gardening, etc. in order to keep their clothes clean.

At least **two** changes of clothing, including socks and underwear (when appropriate), should be kept at Bridge School at all times. All clothes and other items sent to or worn at the center should be labeled with the child's name. Each child will have a special cubby for his/her belongings.

We believe daily outside time is important for every child. Since children will be going outdoors to play on most days, please dress your child appropriately, especially in the colder weather. Winter wear would include snowsuits, boots, hats and mittens. Because we often go outside on lightly raining days, mud boots and a rain coat/pants are also important for each child to have. (All students are required to wear boots outside when it is wet.) Having the appropriate clothing will encourage children to explore and investigate more deeply.

Every child needs a clean pair of shoes at school every day to wear inside classrooms and in the gym. For outside activities, children must have a separate pair of shoes that attach securely to their feet. Crocs and flip flops are not allowed outside or for gym play but may be worn indoors. Children may not be barefoot anywhere on school property except in the preschool classroom.

Confidentiality

All Bridge School teachers and staff must sign a Statement of Confidentiality, which states that they will not discuss a child or family with anyone outside the school or with anyone within the school whose responsibilities do not require such knowledge. All employees are cautioned about using a child's name or a family's name when parents, children, or other persons might overhear them.

We ask families to respect these same guidelines and to refrain from discussing either in the preschool or in the community what might be considered personal information about children, families and staff that they acquire through their time in the preschool. If children are receiving services from other community agencies, their families will be asked to sign a Release of Information Form that will allow a child's teachers to work with the other agency or agencies involved to best coordinate services for that child.

Each child has a confidential file in a locked cabinet in the classroom which includes enrollment documents, permission forms, medical, health & safety documentation and any correspondences with the family. The content of each child's file is confidential but is immediately available upon request to:

- Administrator's and teaching staff who have consent from a parent or legal guardian to access the records
- The child's parents or legal guardians
- Regulatory authorities

STAFF

All teachers at Bridge School have been interviewed by a team consisting of at least the Director of the preschool and Co-Director of Bridge School and approved by the Bridge School Board. Their primary responsibility is to maintain a positive and respectful atmosphere in the groups throughout the day. They serve as a role model for children, fellow staff, community members, and parents, and are expected to conduct one's self and the group with this in mind.

Each Beginner student is provided with a primary teacher. The primary teacher will be decided shortly after new children start, so that we can match children and teachers who are best suited to each other. The primary teacher is the person who coordinates that child's care, and communicates with families about that child's development. This relationship helps the children form strong relationships with another adult while they are away from their families. Additionally, the primary teacher system allows families to have a clear, systematic line of communication about their child.

Each primary teacher has between 5 and 8 children assigned to her/him. Although each child has a primary teacher, **all** primary teachers are familiar with **all** children at the center and share duties or cover for each other frequently (during lunch breaks, vacations, etc.) We also communicate about each child's strengths, challenges, and goals. This team approach allows for the smooth and consistent care of every child. The primary teacher system is open in that changes can be considered when they seem to be in the child's best interests.

Support Staff

Bridge Beginners welcomes volunteers of suitable age—even parents can volunteer! Substitutes and volunteers are an integral part of our program. They allow teachers to spend more quality time with the children, to take part in staff meetings, and to have release time to plan curriculum. They also allow for more individual attention. If you are interested in volunteering, please speak to the director.

Following are the guidelines.

Volunteers:

Never allowed to be alone with children. All volunteers must go through background checks and get fingerprinted.

Substitutes:

Will be used to cover teacher absences. All substitutes are hired by the Director and are given on the job training. All substitutes go through background checks and are fingerprinted.

May be alone with children in the building or in the play yard after probationary period of at least one month, when staff and director feel comfortable with the capabilities of the sub.

May not go on walks alone with children without permission from the director.

These limitations may only be modified at the discretion of the director.

PROGRAM

Assessments:

The teachers continually assess children's progress through observations, conversations as a team, and input from parents. Teachers are also trained in using a more formal assessment tool called Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG.) This training is either through an in-person community training or via the online training offered by TS Gold. Twice a year, these more formal assessments are done, looking at several developmental areas, such as social skills, language skills, motor skills, and cognitive skills, as well as content areas such as Math and Science. Teachers then write up a report using all of the information, and include narratives and anecdote. Parent conferences are offered. At that time, parents and teachers have the opportunity to talk about the child's progress, focus on areas of strengths and challenge, and work together to create goals. Parents are given a copy of the assessments, and copies are also kept in the child's folder. This information is shared only with the families and relevant staff. Teachers also use this information to help create curriculum that meets each child's goals.

Curriculum

Bridge Beginners works from an emergent framework for designing curriculum; that is, curriculum is not planned in a void, but instead teachers and children co-create explorations, as a response to children's inquiries and interests. Teachers act as researchers in the classroom, collecting observations and artifacts (photos, drawings, etc.), which inform decisions about the kinds of activities, materials, and learning provocations to make available to children. Teachers are active participants in children's learning and development. The teacher-learner relationship is seen as a guided partnership, with each partner teaching and being taught by the other.

From close observation and documentation of the children, teachers are able to react and represent ideas, objects, and reframe questions for the children in order to deepen their theory making and understanding. This approach to curriculum advocates for children by giving them power over their own learning.

The emphasis for the preschool is on the natural world, community and interpersonal relationships, and supports the Emotional Foundations for School Readiness, developed by the National Organization, Zero to Three:

- Confidence-A sense of control and mastery of one's body, behavior and world; the child's sense that he or she is more likely than not to succeed at what he or she undertakes, and that adults will be helpful.
- Curiosity-The sense that finding out about things is positive and leads to pleasure.
- Intentionality-The wish and capacity to have an impact, and to act upon that with persistence. This is clearly related to a sense of competence, of being effective.

- Self-Control-The ability to modulate and control one's own actions in age-appropriate ways; a sense of inner control.
- Relatedness-The ability to engage with others based on the sense of being understood by and understanding others.
- Capacity to communicate-The wish and ability to verbally exchange ideas, feelings, and concepts with others. This is related to a sense of trust in others and of pleasure in engaging with others, including adults.
- Cooperativeness-The ability to balance one's own needs with those of others in a group activity.

Kindergarten pre-readiness skills are taught, such as how to listen to others, learning to be part of a group, and taking responsibility for one's actions. Skills such as number and letter recognition and pre-writing are taught through the use of informal activities and opportunities found throughout children's play.

Behavior Guidance

Our philosophy of positive guidance focuses on the importance of treating young children as individuals, with widely differing personalities. Our goal is to maximize growth for each child while protecting every member of our community.

When a child behaves in a manner that needs intervention, teachers use a variety of strategies such as redirection to another activity, active listening to determine why the behavior is occurring, distraction, etc. When the behavior continues or is dangerous, the caregiver will remove the child from the situation and discuss the behavior and alternatives with the child, age permitting. Caregivers emphasize that certain behaviors are not acceptable at Bridge School and pose alternative activities while validating the child's thoughts and emotions. We regard discipline/positive guidance as the teaching of appropriate behavior, not as punishment. This is a process, and children will be given all of the time and guidance they need to work on self-control issues.

There are some specific types of disciplinary intervention that are always prohibited by Bridge School's philosophy. These include: spanking and all other forms of corporal punishment; no child will ever be subjected to severe punishment, humiliation, or verbal abuse; food is not denied as a form of punishment or behavior control; children are never punished for not using the toilet, toileting accidents, or for wetting or soiling clothing. We ask that families follow these same guidelines while at the Center.

In the event of acute or chronic issues, families are consulted without delay. Sometimes we may recommend that alternative services be consulted for additional strategies. Our policy is to work with families and local agencies to ensure that children can remain in the program. See Expulsion Prevention Policy below.

Our focus is also on prevention. We look at the environment to ensure that we have adequate and interesting materials. We ensure that children have time and space for what they need, including to be active or quiet, to be alone or with groups, to be independent or to be nurtured. Teachers think about individual children, and create curriculum that addresses the interests, strengths and needs a particular child may have. We spend a lot of time working on interpersonal skills such as communication and teaching techniques for helping children to get their needs met. The curriculum encourages collaboration and cooperation. We help children understand and express their emotions in appropriate ways. We help children learn self-regulation skills, such as

calming techniques. And finally, teachers spend time observing the room and the children, focusing on group dynamics.

Expulsion Prevention Policy

In accordance with State and Federal Child Care Regulations, Bridge Beginners has adopted an Expulsion Policy which ideally prevents the need to ask any child or family to leave our care. (See also Behavior Guidance.) We strive to provide nurturing and responsive care which supports each child's unique strengths and interests. We do this in partnership with families, cultivating nurturing, trusting relationships through open and caring communication. Exchanging relevant information, observations and wondering questions will allow us to develop shared understandings with strategies that effectively, respectfully and compassionately support children's optimal development. As early childhood professionals, we are committed to implementing what is considered best practice in the field of early care and education by providing nurturing and responsive relationships within a supportive environment for all children and families. There may be times when experiences and circumstances in a child(ren)'s lives are such that we need to call on the support and expertise of local resources to help in problem-solving and developing strategies to support all of us working through a developmental need.

Our goal is ongoing communication with families which promotes collaboration, shared problem-solving and facilitates decision-making that best supports child(ren)'s overall well-being.

Process: Parents/guardians and staff will communicate regularly, as well as participate in individual parent conferences two times per year or when requested by either party. Parents/guardians and staff agree that should a situation arise where a need is identified, community resources, such as Children's Integrated Services (CIS), will be utilized.

Exclusionary measures will be used as a last resort when there is a determination that Bridge Beginners is not the appropriate setting for a specific child.

In the case that the program cannot meet the needs of a child, families and staff will work together to develop a seamless transition plan and will use the plan to implement a smooth transition for the child and family. Written notice will be provided to a parent with at least 5 days notice before the child is asked to leave the center. A full copy of the child's file will be provided to the family on or before the last day at the center, and a note stating that this was provided along with a copy of the child's file will be kept at the center. (see regs 6.2.7.7, 6.2.8.4, 6.2.8.4.1, 6.2.8.4.2, 6.2.8.4.3)

The purpose of this policy, in addition to complying with State and Federal Regulations, is to help create a community in which the well-being of all children and families is nurtured and supported.

Children With Special Health Care Needs and Disabilities

Bridge Beginners plans an environment that includes all children to the best of their abilities. Children will be included in all activities possible unless a specific medical contraindication exists. Each child shall have a plan developed by parents and staff to address the particular needs of the child. We will work with local agencies to include strategies to ensure that every child can participate to the fullest extent possible.

Walks and Field Trips

Walks provide children with interesting experiences outside of the preschool. Bridge School has developed specific guidelines for staff to ensure the safety of the children while they are away from the preschool. Children may be going for a walk in the Bridge School field, to Maple Landmark or other safe places. The walk permission form that families are asked to sign includes these places.

Field trips outside of walking distance may occur a couple of times a year. This is a great way for us to interact as a community. For field trips we hire transportation for those children whose parents are not able to accompany us. Parents are informed ahead of time and are given a special permission form to sign. You may choose not to send your child on that day and we will make arrangements accordingly.

Families are always welcome to join us on community outings or field trips. Please let us know if you would like to take part in any of our outings!

HEALTH/SAFETY AND NUTRITION

Allergies

Bridge Beginners follows state and federal requirements for accommodating children with allergies or intolerance. In the case of food allergies, families are asked to provide the preschool with a medical exemption form from their physician and suggested alternatives before we can make any dietary accommodations. If the allergy is severe, classroom staff will meet with the family to construct a plan for the child. The information will be shared with all staff who work with the child. In the case of a food allergy, information but not the child's name will be shared with other parents if necessary in extreme cases to restrict certain foods in the classroom. Families must provide classroom staff with an unexpired EPI pen if the allergy requires such intervention.

Cleaning Practices:

Bridge Beginners follows all State Licensing Regulations for cleaning and sanitizing. We also strive to use safer cleaning and sanitizing products.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Child abuse is against the law. All staff at the preschool are chosen very carefully and are required to have references in their file attesting to their suitability to work with young children. All staff must have a background check, including fingerprinting, before being allowed to be alone with children.

Vermont State law requires that **all** people working with children and families are mandated reporters. This means that they must report suspected or confirmed child abuse and neglect to the Vermont Department of Children and Families (DCF). Bridge Beginners staff **must** abide by these state regulations.

Families should be aware that in reporting suspected child abuse, no definitive judgment is made by preschool staff. Personnel from the State of Vermont Department of Children and Families decide whether evidence exists to determine whether or not a report is upheld.

Fire Drills

We are required to have fire drills on a monthly basis. The preschool is equipped with a complete fire alarm system and a sprinkler system. We have in place an emergency fire escape plan that the staff will use in case of an emergency. The escape routes and procedures are posted in the room. Please be aware of the route and meeting place in case of fire occurring at drop off or pick up.

Food

We have a mid-morning snack at 9:00, lunch at 12:00 and an afternoon snack at 3:45 for children who are staying for the aftercare program. Parents are responsible for providing all food for your child(ren). Please inform your child's teacher if there are any special concerns or needs around food or other allergies. Please pack healthy foods and generous portions to nourish your child while s/he is at school. We often find that children eat more than at home, possibly due to the busyness of the day. Children are encouraged to sample each day's food; no child is forced to eat. There is a refrigerator for your child to store their lunchbox for the day, but no way to heat food.

Health Guidelines

The health and well-being of everyone at Bridge School is of great concern to us. Colds and flu do occur with great frequency in childcare settings. We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children we ask that you not bring a sick child to the preschool. Therefore, we have developed health guidelines to help ensure that both children and staff have as healthy a time as possible at the preschool. We are also required by Vermont State Licensing Regulations to follow certain guidelines.

Families must notify the preschool (802) 388-3498 whenever the child is going to be absent or has a communicable disease. **The preschool reserves the right to send a child home or refuse to allow a child to attend the preschool if the condition of his or her health warrants it.** Although we would love to be able to cuddle sick children our staffing does not allow this. Should your child become ill or injured during the day, we will call you to come and pick up the child. If we cannot reach you, we will call the emergency person you have given us. Therefore, it is essential that your emergency person know that this will be an expectation and be someone who is close by and able to take care of your child on short notice. You or your emergency person is expected to come to Bridge School within an hour of the call and pick up the child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable until you arrive.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Illness that poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever (100°F or higher under the arm, 101°F or higher in the mouth, 102°F or higher in the ear) accompanied by other symptoms.
- Diarrhea – 3 or more incidents. If there is a stomach bug going around that includes diarrhea, after one loose stool.
- Vomiting – green or bloody, and/or more than 2 times during the previous 24 hours.
- Mouth sores caused by drooling.
- Severe Coughing-until it disappears for 24 hours or otherwise indicated by a medical professional.

- Rash with fever, unless a medical professional has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye), until diagnosed by medical professional and on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice, until after medical professional recommended treatment and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.
- Tuberculosis, until a health professional indicates the child is not infectious.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Has a physician or other health professionals written order that child be separated from other children.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever (without the use of medication), vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions unless:
 - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, and;
 - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

Immunizations

Vermont State Licensing regulations require that all licensed programs document children's immunizations. A copy of each child's immunization record is kept in his or her file. Families are responsible for keeping staff and the child's file updated after medical check-ups. If you choose not to have your child immunized, you must fill out an approved Immunization Exemption Form, which is then placed in your child's file. If a vaccine-preventable disease occurs at the preschool, the parents of any under immunized children will be notified immediately. (An under immunized child is defined as a child who has not received the recommended number or types of vaccines for his or her age according to the current national and local immunization schedules.)

Incident Reporting

Children are under the close supervision of qualified staff; however, accidents do sometimes occur. It is our policy to notify parents in writing of any incidents that may occur during the course of the day; our Incident Report form is used to communicate that information. If we feel the child may need to see a doctor, or if we want to give

the parent the option of picking up their child early, we may notify a parent immediately.

Intoxicated/Impaired Parent Emergency Policy

If an obviously intoxicated/impaired parent comes to the preschool to retrieve a child, the preschool staff will encourage the parent to find someone else to pick up the child. If a parent insists on retrieving the child and drives away with the child in the car, the police will be called and given the license plate number. The staff will notify the Director and make the required report to the Department of Children and Families. If the parent's behaviors do not seem to be impaired, the staff will ask the parent if they are OK to drive. If so, the staff will let them go. If they are not OK to drive, the staff will help them call for a ride. The staff will notify the Director and document the incident. Staff will also inform any parents, guardians not present of any incidents of this nature.

Lead Testing

The water will be tested annually for lead and the results must meet the Vermont Standards at the minimum. If not, bottled water will be provided until the situation is remedied. Parents will be notified if this is the case. (At Bridge School, we believe even minimal amounts of lead are unsafe for young children, and will be working to lower any lead found.)

Essential Maintenance Practices are also performed annually since the building was built in 1978. This is to ensure that there is no lead anywhere in the building, and that if found, proper procedures will be utilized to remedy the situation. Parents will be informed in any work needs to be done that might involve lead.

Medical Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency or of an accident/injury, we will contact the family, the emergency contact person and/or the doctor of the child. If it is impossible to reach these individuals and emergency treatment is required, the child will be taken to Porter Medical Center. Your authorization for the preschool to contact your family physician and take whatever emergency medical measures are deemed necessary is part of your Medical Authorization Form.

Medications

We ask that families try to schedule medications so that they can be given at home. If this is not possible, medications that are prescribed by your physician may be administered at the preschool. We ask you to give the first dose or two to your child at home so that you can see if there are any adverse reactions. Please give all medications to your child's teacher and fill out a Medication Form including any specific dosage information. We would also request that you tell the teacher of any medications which are being given to the child at home, as this can often have an effect on the child's behavior. The following guidelines apply to **all** medications, including non-prescription drugs, such as Tylenol and homeopathic remedies. **The Preschool may dispense medications only under the following conditions:**

The prescription must be in writing and must specify the date, the child's name and dosage to be administered.

All medicine containers must be labeled with the child's name and be the **original container**. If you need an additional container, please ask your pharmacist.

Families must sign the Medication Authorization Form for the teachers to dispense the medication.

Naps

A rest period is required for all children who spend most of their day with us (see child care regs.) We welcome your suggestions about ways to help your child relax. Children will be resting on individual mats, marked with the child's name. Families of the children need to provide bedding for the rest time which could include a sheet and a blanket or sleeping bag. (Please note a crib sheet will fit on a mat.) We also recommend a small pillow, and your child may choose to bring a loved stuffed animal. These must be taken home each Friday to be washed. This is a state requirement and we depend on you to follow this rule for health and sanitation reasons. Remember to mark the child's name clearly on any item you bring to Bridge School.

As children relax, they may fall asleep. We try not to wake children, as we recognize that they will wake up when they are rested enough. If it is the parent's wish that a child not sleep longer than a certain amount of time, we will find ways for the child to wake naturally, such as opening curtains, allowing a little more noise in the room, etc. Children who do not rest will be offered quiet activities after the required rest period is over. We may also allow children to look at books on their mats if they do not rest.

Parking Lot

Please be very careful and drive slowly in our parking lot. In the morning, there is no parking beyond the green fence because children may be playing on the playground. In the afternoon, if the fence is gone, parking is allowed because it means that there are not kids on the playground.

Please do not leave young children unattended in cars while you are dropping your child off. Vermont has a law prohibiting idling, as this can be a health hazard. Please shut your car off unless you are picking your child up in the winter, and you need to leave it on for warmth. Please hold your child's hand until they are safely in a car or have left the parking lot. Please transport children in appropriate car seats or restraints.

Pesticide Policy

We are dedicated to using the least amount of chemical pest control in our program in order to provide the healthiest environment possible for our children. As part of our curriculum, we teach children about nature and taking care of the environment, and so are dedicated to modeling healthy alternatives to chemicals. We attempt to PREVENT infestation by such methods as:

- *Taking out trash daily or more as needed, and cleaning cans regularly.
- *Keeping trash cans or dumpsters covered and away from the building.
- *Keeping grounds clean of food and rubbish.
- *Storing food in sealed plastic or metal containers.
- *Cleaning and sanitizing all dishes, utensils, and surfaces used for eating or food preparation after meals and at the end of the day.

We do not regularly apply any pesticides. Should there be a need to use a chemical pesticide as a last resort, (for wasp, yellow jacket, mouse or ant control for example), notification signs for applications shall be placed at the location of the application and at each entry point to the area being treated. Pesticides will be applied at the end of the day after children have left and will not be stored above or near food or cooking or

eating utensils. Parents will be notified when pesticides are applied. Children will not touch or transport any pesticide or pesticide container. Pesticides with the signal words of "Danger", "Warning", or "Caution" will be kept in secured storage out of reach of children in a locked area and in accordance with any warnings that accompany the product. If there are any infestations of pests that we cannot control by natural methods, we will work with local pest control to find the least toxic method possible.

Power Outages

If we are without electricity for more than one half hour, we may call parents to ask them to pick up their children, unless we have called the power company and we know it will be on momentarily. This is due to the following reasons: no hot water for washing hands. In the summer, we will be unable to use the air conditioning, and in the winter, we will have no heat. In these cases, we may call earlier if conditions warrant (building gets too hot or too cold.)

Release of Children

Only those people listed on the Pick-up Authorization Form will be allowed to pick your child up from the preschool. However, no parent or guardian may be denied access to his or her child without a court order. If there is a court order in place, it is the parent's responsibility to make sure that we have a copy on file at the preschool.

Please arrange a time for the staff to meet your emergency contacts so that we will be able to recognize them. You must tell your child's teacher each time someone other than you is to pick up your child and if that person is not listed on the authorization sheet you must also give us a note giving him or her permission to pick up your child. If, in a real emergency (such as an accident), you must have someone else pick up your child and you are unable to write a note, we must have your verbal authorization, as well as a description of the person. We will ask anyone we are not familiar with for ID when they arrive at the preschool. This is a state regulation for your child's protection. We understand that things do come up on short notice. However, except for a real emergency (as stated above), we will not release a child to anyone other than the family or authorized person until we have it in writing. Thank you for helping us to keep the children safe!

Safety Plan

We have a safety plan put into place. This can be found in the appendix at the back of this handbook. Please check with the director if you have any questions as to protocol.

Smoking

Bridge Beginners is a smoke free environment. We ask that you not smoke anywhere on the premises, including the parking lot.

Toilet Learning

We respect that preschoolers are sometimes still practicing toileting skills. We will support your child in this by asking them occasionally if they need to use the toilet. However, we will not insist that children use the toilet, as we feel strongly that this needs to be according to their own self-regulation. We will respond to any accidents with compassion and patience. Please send adequate clothing for any accidents that may happen. We will send any soiled clothing home in a plastic bag (unwashed.) If

your child has frequent daily accidents, we may reassess whether your child is ready for our program.

Weapons

There will be no firearms or weapons of any kind anywhere on the premises, including within the building, or in parked cars. The only exception will be if a parent is carrying hunting weapons they may be in a vehicle in the parking lot, but that vehicle must be locked at all times while someone is not in the vehicle.

Weather Emergencies

On days when the schools are closed because of hazardous road conditions, and we are concerned about the safety of the children and the staff, Bridge Beginners will also be closed. (See also Snow Days and Cancellations.) If we close early due to unsafe conditions, we will call parents and remain open until the last child has been picked up. If there is any thunder and lightning at all, no matter how far away, we will remain inside. If a group is out on a walk, they will immediately return to the preschool if close, or seek shelter at the nearest public place if not. Teachers will call the preschool to let someone know what is happening, and where they are.

If there is an air pollution alert, children will remain inside until levels are acceptable for outside play.

If the wind chill factor is below 15 degrees, or the heat index is above 90 degrees, we will keep children inside until the temperature changes. Between 15 degrees and 20 degrees wind chill factor, children may choose whether they would like to go outside.

LAST WORDS

WELCOME to Bridge Beginners Preschool!! We look forward to your family's involvement in our program. We sincerely hope to be able to serve you and your child in the best way possible.

Appendix: Bridge Beginners Safety Plan

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A standard protocol for operations, licensed centers must have a Safety Response Plan in place. The following is a list of policies and procedures that are in place to ensure that all children are safe while present at Bridge Beginners. These policies and procedures are required by the Vermont State Regulations for Licensed Centers.

A. Prevention

1. The Board is responsible for facility maintenance. This includes regularly cleaning and checking heating, cooling, gas and electrical systems to verify that they are in good working order. The building is equipped with carbon monoxide and smoke detectors as well as fire extinguishers which are regularly checked. The fire extinguishers are properly charged, mounted and easy to reach in case of fire. Staff are trained in proper usage.

Doorways are kept clear of obstructions for safe exits from the building.

Bridge Beginners conducts fire drills each month. These drills are very important so that staff and children are aware of emergency procedures. The door closest to Route 7 is used, and children follow the sidewalk, then cross the parking lot and go to the sign that says Kathy Nessen Kickball Field.

Bridge School is not located near any potential dangers, such as proximity to a nuclear reactor, or in an area prone to flooding or power loss.

Anyone requesting entrance who is not known by staff and/or director is stopped at the door to verify identification.

We ask all parents to list anyone who can pick up their child. If someone is coming to pick up a child who is not on the list, we ask parents to notify us beforehand (preferably in writing.)

We keep in a confidential file any pertinent information such as conditions of release, conditions of parole, relief from abuse orders, custody conditions, etc.

3. All staff must take mandated Act I training which includes: Prevention of child sexual abuse, signs and symptoms of abuse, mandatory reporting, grooming processes and predatory behavior of sex offenders. Staff are also trained in working with families, child trauma, safety, CPR, First Aid, etc.

Mandated Reporters: Anyone who is a child care worker is a mandated reporter. If a mandated reporter reasonably suspects child abuse or neglect, they are legally required to make a report to the Family Services Division (FSD) within 24 hours of the time they first received or observed information about the suspected abuse/neglect.

B. Emergency Supplies

- The classroom has emergency contact cards for children enrolled. These cards are taken with teachers when building is evacuated.
- The classroom maintains an emergency backpack to be taken in the case of evacuation. This includes contact information for each child, the safety plan, and emergency supplies. Emergency supplies include: flashlights, wireless radio, first aid supplies, emergency blankets, personal hygiene and sanitation supplies.
- An adequate supply of water is maintained for use in the case of an emergency.

C. General Information

In case of an emergency, parents will be notified as soon as possible by the staff. If the staff are unable to phone all parents themselves, if possible information will be posted on the local media and on the answering machine.

The Middlebury Fire Department is alerted if the fire alarm has been activated except in cases where the staff have activated the alarm for a fire drill.

The following "chain of command" will be used in emergencies:

Director: Jenne Morton

Bridge School Director: Jen Grilly
Backup: Nikki Juvan

D. Medical Emergency

Steps to be taken in the event of a medical emergency:

Assess the situation.

Designate someone to call 911.

Designate someone to remove the other children and stay with them.

Administer First Aid/CPR.

Call the parents of injured child.

Call the ambulance if necessary.

E. Interactions with Adults

As with most preschools, Bridge Beginners serves a diverse population of families. Within this diversity, it is not uncommon for some families to experience various adverse circumstances that impact the health of their family. Whether a family is working with Family Services, addressing an addiction struggle, have a jail or probation background or going through a contentious divorce, unfortunate experiences can impact our families. Another consideration for us to consider is that families often have people other than themselves picking up their children with approval. These policies and procedures are in place to ensure safety and protect the privacy of all members of our community.

Confidentiality: All preschool teachers and staff must sign a Statement of Confidentiality, which states that they will not discuss a child or family with anyone outside the preschool or with anyone within the preschool whose responsibilities do not require such knowledge. All employees are cautioned about using a child's name or a family's name when parents, children, or other persons might overhear them.

We ask families to respect these same guidelines and to refrain from discussing either in the preschool or in the community what might be considered personal information about children and families that they acquire through their time in the preschool.

If a situation occurs: The following steps should be used in interactions with adults entering the building who are unknown, or a situation with an adult becomes difficult or threatening.

Assess the situation

What is the circumstance and appropriate response?

If an unknown person is at the preschool, ask why the person is there. If the person does not have a reason to be at the preschool, ask them to leave.

If the person arrives to pick up a child and staff or the director have not been notified that this person would be picking up, call the parent(s) and ask if that person has the parent's permission. Remind the parent(s) that the preschool must have notification, preferably in writing from the parent before the person arrives. Ask for i.d. if the person is unfamiliar.

If a non-custodial parent unexpectedly arrives to pick up a child, and there is no order preventing them from doing so, we are required to allow them to take the child.

However, the other parent will be notified immediately. If a parent arrives to pick up a child, and the preschool has an official document prohibiting pick-up, then the child shall not be allowed to leave the preschool and the parent will be informed of the aforementioned document.

If a parent is uncomfortable with the actions of another person in the preschool, the staff will ask them to speak to the director.

What is the level of danger and appropriate response?

If the situation seems to be able to be diffused, contact the director and ask him/her to talk to the person. If the director is not available, ask for the teacher in charge or a Bridge School Director.

If the situation seems to be dangerous, pass the code word to all other teachers. The code word will be given to staff, but not to parents. One teacher needs to notify the director, or the teacher in charge. Whichever person is contacted will call 911 and explain the situation.

All teachers will assist in getting between the child(ren) and the threat, removing the children to a safe area if possible or going into lock down if not and waiting for back up. (See below for evacuation procedure.)

F. Evacuation

To evacuate the building follow fire drill plan.

Staff in each group are responsible for taking backpack and attendance sheets.

Director (or teacher if director is unable) will bring emergency evacuation kit.

All groups should meet at the elementary playground at the Kathy Nessen sign.

Do a roll call and account for all children.

Designate a person to make phone calls to parents. If unable to do so, designate a person to call media and put message on answering machine if possible.

If evacuation is needed (for example for a fire or other damage to the Bridge School), we will go to Vermont Cider Company (Use chain of command to make that decision.)

Contact local media to be source of communication to keep parents informed. Change phone message to update if possible.

If wider evacuation is necessary, for example, in the case of a tornado or a wider county threat, contact Middlebury Police Department (for site to evacuate to, and further information.)

For any evacuation that would need to take place, we would use the Bridge School van and staff cars. We can also walk to the Vermont Cider company, weather permitting.

G. Shelter in Place

Certain types of emergencies require staying inside the building. These emergencies would be accidental release of toxic chemicals or other emergencies where air quality is threatened. Local authorities would issue orders for shelter in place during chemical emergencies. Once this order has been issued we would not leave our location until official notification is received that the danger has passed.

The following steps would be taken in the event of a shelter in place:

Meet in the Teacher Resource Room.

Take backpacks, emergency evacuation kit.

Take roll call and make sure that all children and staff are present.

All doors and windows to the outside would be locked.

Heating and air conditioning units would be turned off and switch intakes moved to the "closed" position.

Gaps around windows and doors would be sealed.

Exhaust fans turned off.

Tape, plastic food wrapping, wax paper or aluminum foil would be used to seal exhausts, vents, and other openings to the outside.

Drapes, curtains and shades would be closed.

If vapors bother staff and children hold wet cloths or handkerchiefs over the nose and mouth. Do not worry about running out of air to breathe, as this is very unlikely.

H. Recovering from an incident/emergency

Recovery involves efforts to return the program, staff and children to a normal routine as soon as possible. Steps below will be taken as necessary.

In case of fire, earthquake, etc, the building would be inspected by the appropriate authority (Fire, Police, Department of Public Safety, Facilities Services) prior to re-entry to ensure the safety of staff and children.

Program Staff will provide children and families with correct information regarding the incident/emergency.

Opportunities will be available for children, families and staff to talk about and share feelings regarding the emergency.

In some cases professional consultation (local mental health organization) would be warranted.

The appropriate staff will document all pertinent information on the incident as soon as possible.

Director will strategize with teachers and/or parents to see what worked well and what was a challenge, to decide whether we need to revisit any policies and to put in place any other needed policies.

Contact Child Care Services within required time period if applicable.

I. Emergency Phone Numbers

Middlebury Fire Department:	388-2217
Middlebury Police Dept:	388-3191
Porter Hospital:	388-4701
Middlebury Ambulance Squad:	388-3333
American Red Cross:	1-800-660-9130

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