

Bridge School

FAMILY & STUDENT HANDBOOK 2025-2026

BRIDGE SCHOOL

Bridge School is a Vermont state-approved independent elementary school and is pursuant to 16 V.S.A § 166.. The school was established in 1980 as a 501c (3) non-profit organization.

MISSION

Bridge School helps children become engaged community members with the critical thinking, problem solving skills, and self confidence to thrive academically and in life. Bridge students receive a personalized education which deepens self awareness, fosters empathy, and encourages healthy risk taking through collaborative projects, public speaking and performance, and enriching outdoor experiences. Bridge School recognizes that parents and teachers are also learners, and employs evidence-based approaches to academic and social-emotional learning, which are shared with students and their families.

Head of School

Bridge School is a teacher-run school. Bridge School is administered by one Head of School who is responsible for implementing and overseeing every aspect of administration and education. The Head of School reports to The Board. Parents/guardians should feel free to contact the Head of School at any time to discuss issues or concerns.

JEN GRILLY

jen@bridgeschoolvermont.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Parents and community members constitute the current Board of Directors. Board members direct fundraising, maintenance of buildings and grounds, alumni relations, and the hiring/supervising of Head of School and Teachers. The Board, in concert with the teachers, engages in long-range planning and creates the annual school budget. The board meets every month. Decisions of the Board are reached by consensus. New members are invited by the sitting Board.

BOARD MEMBERS 2025-2026

Phoebe Vaughan, President	phoebev@gmail.com
Margot Smithson, Vice President	margot.smithson@yahoo.com
Ellie de Villiers, Treasurer	ellie@maplebroadband.net
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Dylan Voorhees	dylan.voorhees@gmail.com
Josie Kruse	krusejosie@gmail.com
Howard Widelitz	howard.widelitz@outlook.com
Andrea Robbett	arobbett@middlebury.edu

COMMUNICATION

Home Center Teachers: Your child's Home Center teacher is the best person to contact with questions or comments about your child's life, both socially and academically, at school. The Home Center is your child's base at Bridge School, and the school day begins and ends here. **For social concerns**, your child's Home Center teacher is in the best position to explore problems, gather information and make suggestions, so please contact him/her first with any concerns. **For academic concerns**, your child's Home Center teacher is also the first person to contact, even if the Home Center teacher does not teach your child's specific class. If other teachers need to be involved, the Home Center teacher will make arrangements to facilitate this communication.

You should contact your child's Home Center Teachers if your child's pick-up plans change, or if they will go to the after-school program.

Head of School: The Head of School is in charge of overseeing all aspects of Bridge School, including curriculum, school safety programs, and strategy. Any concerns, at any time, can be brought to Jen.

Office: Yhordanna will oversee health and safety, so it is vital that she has current immunization records, emergency contact information, and medication dissemination information. Yhordanna also oversees admissions/enrollment forms, tuition payments, and building use.

Calling and Texting: Because we have a busy day, the best form of communication is texting the school number at 802-377-1892 or emailing your Home Center. We will try to return phone calls as soon as we are able.

Student, Family and Community Policies

TUITION AND FEES

Payment is due as outlined on your student contract. If an invoice is received, payments are due upon receipt. Interest at the rate of 1.5% per month (18% per annum) will be charged on all unpaid balances after 30 days. Bridge School relies upon tuition to maintain annual programs. As a reminder, **by signing the student contract, you have accepted responsibility for paying the full tuition, whether or not your child completes the full school year.** It is recommended that all families obtain tuition insurance. An example can be found at: <https://www.educationinsuranceplans.com/tuition-refund-insurance>

KEEPING YOUR INFORMATION CURRENT

Parents/guardians submit emergency contact information at the beginning of the school year. Please inform us immediately about any changes in address, phone number, or email. We also need to know of any changes in health or allergies that may impact your child's safety and well-being at school.

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.

REPORTS & CONFERENCES

A comprehensive student report will go home twice each year – at the end of January/beginning of February and in June.

Parents and Home Center teachers also participate in a Parent-Teacher Conference each year in October and March. Conference scheduling will be coordinated by the Home Center teacher. ***If you have any questions or concerns throughout the school year, please contact your child's Home Center teacher as soon as possible. We want to hear from you!***

WHAT TO BRING TO SCHOOL

DRESS CODE

Our dress code is designed to support a positive, inclusive learning environment where students feel comfortable and ready to learn. We value self-expression and comfort while maintaining respect for the school setting.

Students are required to wear age-appropriate clothing to school each day. Clothing should entirely cover stomach, bottom, chest and undergarments. It should be free from inappropriate graphics, language, or references (e.g., drugs, violence, hate speech)

CHANGE OF CLOTHES & BOOTS

Please be sure your child has a complete change of clothes at school every day. This is not just for bathroom accidents, but also for impressive mud puddle or pond accidents. All students are required to wear boots during recess when it is wet. Please consider leaving a pair of rubber boots at school year round and bringing in snow boots during the winter.

SNEAKERS & SAFE RECESS SHOES

Every child needs a clean pair of shoes at school every day to wear inside classrooms and in the gym. These “inside shoes” need to be kept at school and should not travel back and forth from home. For recess and outside activities, children must have a separate pair of close-toed shoes that attach securely to their feet. Crocs, flip flops and other shoes with holes in the toe or side areas are not allowed outside or for gym play but may be worn indoors. Children may not be barefoot anywhere on school property.

SNACK & LUNCH

We have a mid-morning snack at 10:00 and lunch at 12:30. **Please inform your child's Home Center teacher if there are any special concerns about food or other allergies.** Please pack healthy foods and adequate/generous portions to nourish your child while s/he is at school. Children are not able to refrigerate or heat their lunches at school. Students will be discouraged from sharing their foods and beverages with one another during snack and lunch given concerns about COVID-19, allergies and restrictions on diets. To help limit cross contamination, please work with your child to ensure all parts of their lunches are easily opened independently.

HAT & SUNSCREEN

We plan to spend a lot of time outside during the school year and a hat with a brim and sunscreen will further protect your child from the elements.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

We do not allow students to use any electronic devices, such as games, music, or cell phones, while at school. If you want your child to have a device for use after school hours, it must be turned off and left in a backpack in the cubby during the school day. Please discourage your child from bringing valuables to school.

COVID UPDATES

Families are required to abide by any and all rules regarding procedures for mitigating the COVID-19 pandemic.

Bridge School Beginners is open each weekday from **8:00am** to **3:30pm** for the preschool program and 3:30-4:30 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 8:00 am.
- To allow children time to engage in morning routines and experiences we **strongly** encourage parents to drop children off at the Center **by 8:45 am**. If children arrive much later, it can sometimes be difficult for them to join the group.
- Bridge School Beginners Aftercare closes at 4:30 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 4:25 pm. (Parents of children not staying for aftercare should arrive no later than 3:25.)**

DAILY SCHEDULE:

8:15-8:30	Students arrive in Home Center or outside, Morning Responsibilities
8:30-8:40	Morning Meeting
8:40-9:00	ChunkaChunka
9:00-10:00	Language Arts
10:00-10:15	Snack
10:15-11:05	Little Recess
11:05-11:15	Math
11:15-12:00	Explorations
12:00-12:30	Recess
12:30-12:50	Lunch
12:50-1:20	D.E.A.R (Drop Everything and Read)
1:20-2:05	Arts
2:05-2:45	Home Center
2:45	School Dismissed
2:45-5:30	After-School Program

ATTENDANCE

In consideration of the staff and children, we ask that the elementary program be respected as follows:

ARRIVAL 8:15-8:25

To allow staff adequate set-up time in the morning, under no circumstances may a child be dropped off earlier than 8:00 am.

If Early Room is available, families must text 802-377-1892 before 7:45am to sign up for Early Room each day. Early Room is from 8:00-8:15.

We expect students to arrive between 8:15 and 8:25 in the morning to allow adequate time to check in and join the group before meeting starts. You are welcome to join your student for their morning routine and Morning Meeting. We ask that you promptly leave after 9:00 to allow a smooth transition for all students to Language Arts.

It is important that students arrive at school between 8:15 and 8:25. Morning Meeting starts at 8:30. **Students arriving after 8:30 are considered late. It is imperative that your child arrives to school on time to support their first hour needs..**

Morning Meeting is a wonderful opportunity for our community to gather and begin each day with a game, song, mindfulness practice or another engaging activity. Because it's important for all of our staff to attend meeting, if you are arriving after 8:30 please wait until after Morning Meeting when a staff member can greet you.

DISMISSAL 2:45 PM

We expect students to be picked up at 2:45. If students are not picked up before 3:00, they will be sent to the after school program and charged for their attendance (\$19). If the program is already at capacity or there is no after school program, they will be charged an extra \$10 per 10 minutes late because another staff member will need to stay to support licensing ratios. If there is a consistent pattern of late pickups, a meeting between the family and head of school may be warranted

Intoxicated/Impaired Parent Emergency Policy

If an obviously intoxicated/impaired parent comes to the school to retrieve a child, the 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 Head of School and make the required report to the Department of Children and Families, and document the incident. Staff will also inform any parents, guardians not present of any incidents of this nature.

ABSENCES & LATENESS

In the state of Vermont, it is law that a child between the ages of six and 16 attend school:

<https://legislature.vermont.gov/statutes/section/16/025/01121>

Attendance at Bridge School is mandatory unless excused by the Head of School. Excessive absences or tardies will result in a meeting with the Head of School. If after the meeting, the pattern of absences or tardies does not change, it may result in dismissal of the child from Bridge School due to our responsibility to ensure students are receiving an education.

If your child will be absent, arriving after 8:30, or needs to leave during the day for an appointment, please text or call the school phone before 8:30am to let us know.

SNOW DAYS & CANCELLATIONS

We automatically cancel school and 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 many staff and families have a distance to drive, we may sometimes make an independent decision to cancel. We make cancellation decisions very early in the morning at the latest. 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 or text before 8:30.

PICK-UP & OTHER ARRANGEMENTS

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 teacher doing attendance in the morning. We do not allow students to call home during the school day to make plans to go home with another student. We ask that all arrangements be made at home the night before.

BABYSITTING

Bridge School strongly discourages families from soliciting babysitting services from teachers at Bridge School. Should families and staff engage in employment services outside of Bridge School, the Hold Harmless Agreement and Waiver found at the end of this handbook must be signed and returned by both parties to Jen Grilly before services are executed.

ACTR BUS

Written permission is also required if your child will be taking the ACTR bus. The bus stops at Bridge School around 3:00pm each day. Please note that the bus has been unreliable in the past, and if it fails to stop at Bridge School, we will contact you and place your child in the after-school program until you can arrive for pick up.

PARKING LOT

Please be very careful and drive slowly in our parking lot. The speed limit is 5 mph.

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. Transport children in appropriate car seats or restraints.

IN-SERVICE DAYS

We have in-service and early release days throughout the year. We use this time for professional development and preparation for special events in the year, such as The Big Show, graduation and Collar Day and extra cleaning. Please pay close attention to the school calendar.

AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM 2025-2026

The Bridge School After-school Program, otherwise known as Bananas, is a place for students to relax after a big day, complete their homework, and participate in a variety of enrichment activities.

Schedule and fees

After-school runs from 2:45 to 5:30 each school day. Students should be pre-registered to secure a spot. On-call participation in the after-school program is possible if the program has openings. Please send the school a text to ask about dropping in. Bananas tuition: \$20/day non-scholarship families, \$17/day scholarship families

Preregistration

Families may sign up for one to five days of after-school per week. Parents/guardians will receive a monthly invoice for their child's attendance in after-school care. After-school tuition is due upon receipt from our bookkeeper.

After school pick-up is at 5:25 sharp to allow for gathering of materials and checking out. Each additional 10 minutes the teacher waits with a child after 5:30, is \$10.00.

SOME NOTES ON THE SCHOOL DAY

FRIDAY FOLDER: Students will bring home a folder each Friday with announcements, updates, and the “Fabulous Five Questions of the Week”. Your child is expected to spend time discussing his/her thoughts and answers to these five questions. Please sign this form and have your child return the form and folder to school on Monday morning.

HOMEWORK: All Bridge School students are required to read for at least 20 minutes each evening. Older students should read at least 30 minutes each evening, depending on the teacher and the reading program. This time is in addition to reading completed at school. It is helpful for students to have a regular time and place in which to work. It is also helpful to have a backpack for homework that comes to school and goes home each day. Older students regularly have homework each week. Younger students have homework occasionally.

If there is any confusion or problem about homework and/or expectations surrounding it, please ask the assigning teacher. Homework should not be a struggle between you and your child. If your child resists doing homework, please bring the issue to the assigning teacher and/or your child’s Home Center teacher.

LIBRARY BOOKS: Children 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.

WINTER SKATING: As soon as we can keep a rink frozen, we have skating at recess and other free times. 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. Bridge School does not provide helmets. Please have your child bring a helmet if they wish to skate. Please feel welcome to use the rink outside of the school day! We always appreciate help snow-blowing the rink. If you are able to help, please speak to Jen.

BIRTHDAYS: Birthdays are very special at Bridge School and students are honored during Morning Meeting with the Bridge School traditional birthday song. Birthday kids may bring individually wrapped or store bought treats for their Home Center. Students, whose birthdays inconveniently fall outside the school calendar, may pick a date for a “School Birthday”. Check with your child’s Home Center teacher and ask to have it put on the office calendar.

We ask that students that wish to exchange gifts with other students for any reason, to please do so off school property and outside of school hours unless it is a gift for each member of their Home Center or the whole school.

HEALTH

MEDICATIONS: We need written permission to give your child any medications, including acetaminophen and ibuprofen. All medications must be given to your child's Home Center Teacher to administer. This includes cough drops and homeopathic remedies. We are required to keep prescription medicine in its original, properly labeled, container. If you need an additional container, please ask your pharmacist.

CONJUNCTIVITIS (pink eye): Your child may not attend school until they have been diagnosed by a medical professional and treated with antibiotics for 24 hours.

FEVER (100.4 degrees F): A child must be fever-free for 24 hours, *without the use of medication*, before returning to school.

HEAD LICE: With the exception of the common cold, head lice infestation affects more school-age children than all other communicable diseases combined. If you find lice (adult) or nits (eggs) in your child's hair, please call your child's pediatrician to determine the most up-to-date treatment plan. If you decide to send your child to school, it is best that they wear a hat to keep their hair contained.

SEVERE COUGHING: Your child should not attend school until severe coughing disappears for 24 hours or otherwise indicated by a medical professional.

VOMITING: Children may not attend school until 24 hours after symptoms disappear.

LEAVING SCHOOL WHEN SICK: If your child gets sick during the school day, we will contact you for pick up. If we can't reach you, we will call your emergency contacts. **In an effort to reduce contagion, we ask that you do not bring your child to school in the afternoon if s/he were too sick to attend in the morning.**

TICKS: If we find a tick on your child during the school day, we will email and call to let you know. Please complete the Tick Removal Permissions form so we understand your preference for removing ticks.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Parents and families play an integral role in maintaining a healthy and vibrant Bridge School. Shared commitment to regular and meaningful participation is vital for the success of our school. There are many ways parents and families can demonstrate this commitment and participate. Showing up for community events, answering a call for volunteers, contributing to teacher appreciation days, serving on a committee, or helping out with fundraising sets a positive example of social responsibility for our children, increases connections between families and school staff, and raises awareness of the school within the larger community.

Volunteer activities are managed by the Barn Buddies, a parent and family led committee. Barn Buddies will regularly reach out to assess resources, communicate needs, and make families aware of volunteer opportunities and other community engagement events. Parents who are interested in becoming more involved with Barn Buddies should send an email to volunteer@bridgeschoolvermont.org.

FUNDRAISING

Fundraising is vital for helping Bridge school remain a safe and inviting learning environment, to pay our amazing staff a livable wage, and to uphold our values of diversity, equity, and inclusion through scholarships that make access to Bridge available to families who would otherwise be unable to attend. The more successful our fundraising, the less we have to adjust tuition to meet our goals. As such, it is expected that all families play a part in our fundraising initiatives, whether helping plan and execute fundraising events, contributing monetarily, and/or rallying friends and family to support the school's fundraising initiatives.

YEAR END FUND DRIVE

This is a broad appeal letter that goes out in the fall.

SOCIAL GATHERINGS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

Invitations to birthday parties, sleepovers, play dates, and similar gatherings should be kept as discreet and private as possible unless the whole school is invited. In consideration of other students' feelings, please NO invitations or gift-giving at school.

“What Grade are you in?”

We are a mixed-age school and the only grades we recognize are kindergarten and sixth grade. One big advantage to this is that students who might make the choice to spend an extra year are not “repeating a grade.” We do not use class grades as a means of academic, athletic or social grouping. Skill level, interest and learning style are our chosen methods for student grouping. We do often use the terms “Younger” and “Older” but not specific grades.

SPECIAL EVENTS

We have many wonderful events throughout the school year. See the school website and calendar for dates and times. Parking can get pretty tight at all-school events. Please park carefully, especially if you park on the side of Exchange Street. At evening events, you may use the Champlain Valley Orthopedics' parking lot across the street.

HALLOWEEN

This is a BIG holiday at Bridge School! The day begins with a parade at Morning Meeting, so students (and parents) are encouraged to come in costume. Please be sure to send a change of clothes. We enjoy a community feast on Halloween but please send a snack as usual. After lunch and D.E.A.R., teachers offer choices like “Oobleck”, “Games”, and “Wackiest Witch.” Children make their choices in advance.

7TH GRADE GRADUATE DAY

Alumni Day is when the students who graduated the previous June visit school for the day while their middle school has an in-service. They go to classes and get to be adored again by their former schoolmates.

THE BIG SHOW

After the Thanksgiving break, we start rehearsals for the BIG SHOW, written by the sixth grade class. We rehearse during Arts and Explorations times. Every child has a part in the show, with the sixth graders having larger parts with lines and solos, if they wish. On the same day as the evening performance, there is a matinee for small children and parents. We ask everyone to bring a finger dessert to share with the community after the evening performance. It is an exhilarating send-off for the two-week December break.

WINTER WEEK

The week before February Break is designated for special activities. Often parents teach special classes. We also have a talent show, skating and sledding parties. Big fun!

COLLAR DAY

This day is set aside for teachers to give each child an award for excellence in some part of their school experience. The ceremony begins at 8:30 at Morning Meeting. We ask parents to stay for the entire ceremony. The name “Collar Day” comes from an old Elizabethan custom in which Queen Elizabeth I directed her court to dress up and then presented them with gifts and awards. We celebrate the day by getting dressed up and wearing family awards and medals. We encourage family members to give each other awards for excellence on this day.

CELEBRATIONS OF LEARNING

Throughout the year, students will frequently have information and projects to share with the community. Families will be contacted to attend all special events.

BEACH DAY

Beach Day is held during the last week of school. Everyone goes to Branbury State Park on Lake Dunmore for the day and we hire lifeguards. Send a labeled towel, swimsuit and sunscreen. Parents are invited and may bring younger sibs along.

MOVING ON MORNING

Moving on morning is held during Morning Meeting on the day of Graduation. This ceremony honors all Bridge students that are transitioning on to other educational programs but are not graduating.

GRADUATION

Our graduation celebration is the night before the last day of school in June. This is a whole school event. All students and families are invited and encouraged to participate. Bridge School graduation is very special! Our sixth graders perform and are given their diplomas. We ask everybody to bring a finger food to share with the community. You won't want to miss it.

BRIDGE SCHOOL COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

Bridge School believes that the social and emotional growth of children is equally as important as the academic growth. To enact this belief, Self-Control, Community Respect, Conflict Resolution and Logical Consequence are the essential values of our Community Expectations and social and emotional learning philosophy. Teachers and students collaboratively create a respectful and positive learning environment together that is both physically and emotionally safe for all. Teachers model, mentor, and explicitly teach the skills for working and learning cooperatively with others.

School Discipline Philosophy

Bridge School is an educational community that expects all its members to help create a supportive environment by showing respect for each other, doing their best, and taking responsibility for their actions.

All members of the community- students, teachers and parents- need to play an active role in supporting this philosophy.

COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS

In order to keep our community safe, all students, staff and families must follow these Community Expectations:

1. Keep everyone safe and healthy.

Examples:

- Show respect and kindness with how you move and use your body.
- Play in a way that keeps everyone safe and healthy.
- Walk inside at all times.
- Wait for a teacher before going into a room.
- Only go into rooms where the lights are on.
- Stay within the playground boundaries.
- Play without the use of violence or weapons.
- Wash hands thoroughly between all activities

2. Earn and give respect through your words and actions.

Examples:

- Show respect and kindness with the words you use and the actions you take.
- Speak to all peers as you would want to be spoken to.
- Speak to all adults as you would want to be spoken to.

3. Be a respectful learner.

Examples:

- Be respectful of quiet attention signals.
- Treat the classroom, playground and shared community materials with respect.

- Respond to requests from an adult.

4. Actively Create our Caring Community.

Examples:

- Do your best and try your hardest at all times—both in the classroom and on the playground.
- Practice kindness.
- Reach out to all members of the community and get to know them.

GENERAL

- Do not hurt anyone intentionally.
- Do not hide from staff or peers.
- Use respectful and appropriate language and behavior.
- Obey reasonable requests from adults.
- Don't jump on or pile on each other.
- Always wear shoes.
- If something doesn't seem right, please get a teacher.

OUTSIDE

- Stay within the boundaries – must be with adult in parking lot.
- Ask before going inside and check back in with the same adult when you return.
- Waterproof boots are needed to go in water.
- Outside shoes must attach to your feet – no Crocs or flip flops.
- Use sticks and other objects safely – no swinging or throwing.
- Objects may not be kicked/thrown toward the school.
- Ask an adult to get a ball that goes outside the boundaries.
- Kindergarteners may only slide down the firepole after an adult has seen them do it.
- Side-swinging on the swings is permitted only after an adult says “yes” and is watching.

INSIDE

- If classroom lights are off and/or no adult is in a room, the room is closed. Do not enter without permission.
- Permission needed to touch items throughout the school marked with a “red dot.”
- One person limit in a bathroom.
- One person limit sitting on laps during morning meeting.
- Kids need to be visible to adults at all times. Hiding is not allowed.
- Trading food at snack or lunch is not allowed.

CLIMBING WALL EXPECTATIONS

Five H's of climbing:

1. **Head:** Check your hair and helmet
2. **Human:** Is your mind ready? Is your body ready?
3. **Harness:** C for closed and D for Danger
4. **Hardware:** belay device, figure 8 knot
5. **Harmful objects:** anything in your pockets? Jewelry?

Spotting for Bouldering:

- A. **Attention:** eyes on the climber
 - B. **Body position:** wide stance with knees bent, move when the climber moves. Spoon hands.
 - C. **Communication:** help climber with seeing foot holds and hand holds, AND encouragement
 - D. **Decision making:** How high do you feel safe falling from?
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- Two adults must be present and actively supervising the climbing wall. One of the adults must be a Bridge School staff that has undergone Belay Training.
 - Only trained staff can belay.
 - All equipment must be inspected at the beginning of each climbing session.
 - Students must wear helmets.
 - Students can only climb if they have a signed Hold Harmless Waiver.
 - Mats must be positioned under the routes
 - Bouldering may be done underneath the 'bouldering' line - or students may climb up with their feet to holds nearest head height
 - Students who are waiting to climb must wait in a safe designated area
 - Students must follow top rope and belay commands: On belay / belay on / climbing, climb on. ("climber on rock" / "rock on, climber!")
 - Equipment should be used for exactly what it is meant to do: harnesses for wearing, belay devices for belaying, helmets on head, etc.
 - Belay commands and safety expectations should be reviewed EVERY climbing session.
 - Students will not climb if they are dysregulated, not listening or following directions, using gear inappropriately, or are unsafe in any way. No exceptions.
 - No other active activities can be happening in the gym during rock climbing so as not to distract the belay team.

SCHOOLWIDE RESPONSES TO SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS

PHYSICAL HURTING

If a child in the Younger Home Center hits or physically hurts another child, they are given a warning. If a student is new to school, they also get a warning, irrespective of age. When a child gets a warning, their Home Center teacher or Head of School contacts the student's family to describe what happened and let the family know their child has received a warning. (The Home Center teacher or the HOS will also contact the family of a child who has been hurt by another child.) If that child hits or hurts a child again in the same academic year, the Home Center teacher reserves the right to send the child home for the remainder of the day. If the conflict occurs after D.E.A.R. time, the Home Center teacher may ask the family to keep the child home for the following day of school. The Home Center Teachers track these incidents. If a pattern forms, they will call for a meeting with a student's family members to help form a behavior plan that will lead to positive outcomes for all of the people involved.

Students in the Older Home Centers do not get warnings for hurting other students. The Home

Center teacher reserves the right send them home if they hit or hurt another child. As children get older the expectation is that they will not hurt others. If the issue occurs after D.E.A.R. time the student may be asked to stay home for the following day.

HURTING WITH WORDS

Hurting another student with words, either intentionally or unintentionally, is treated with the same degree of seriousness as hurting physically. If a student maliciously hurts another student with words, the protocol of warnings and being sent home is followed.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Bridge School uses Restorative Justice practices in the classroom because we believe in fostering a strong, caring community where every student feels valued and heard. Restorative practices help students learn important life skills such as empathy, accountability, and problem-solving by encouraging open conversations and reflection when conflicts arise. Instead of focusing solely on punishment, we guide students to understand how their actions affect others and how to make things right. This approach builds stronger relationships, reduces repeated misbehavior, and creates a more respectful and supportive environment where students can thrive both socially and academically.

- We expect young students to learn to manage conflicts and confusion with language. All through the child's day teachers and staff are working to help the child develop their fluency in navigating the dynamic environment of Bridge School. If a young child hits or physically hurts another child they are given a warning. When a child gets a warning their Home Center teacher or the Head of School contacts the student's family to describe what happened and let the family know their child has received a warning. If that child hits or hurts a child again (in the same academic year) the school reserves the right to send the child home for the remainder of the day and/or the following day.
- The Home Center teacher or the Head of School will also contact the family of a child who has been hurt by another child. The School will track these incidents in a binder and if the School starts to see patterns forming they will call for a meeting with the student's family members to help form a behavior plan that will lead to positive outcomes for all people involved.
- Older students do not get warnings for hurting other students. The Home Center teacher reserves the right to send them home if they hit or hurt another child. As children get older the expectation is that they will not hurt others. If an older child uses words to hurt another child or adult at the school, the action is treated the same as if s/he had hit that person. All involved will be contacted and the student who was hurtful may be sent home.
- Home Center teachers have the discretion to work with families to manage recurring behavioral problems. If a teacher feels that the negative behaviors are not changing they will bring the issue to the Head of School's attention and ask for support. If after trying various approaches to working with a child's negative behaviors there is no sign of positive change, the Head of School will make a decision on how to proceed with input from faculty and the Board, as necessary.

- Students who do not have a developmentally appropriate level of self-control may be asked to leave the school for a short period of time, a suspension. If the child's behaviors are unmanageable for the Bridge School staff, a student may be asked to leave the school permanently, a dismissal.

EXTREME AND / OR REPEATED NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR

Students who do not have a developmentally appropriate level of self-control may be asked to leave the school for a short period of time as a suspension. If the child's behaviors are extreme and dangerous to the community, a student may be asked to leave the school permanently, as a dismissal. It is possible for a student to return after receiving an evaluation and screening from a licensed professional child psychologist that has met with the child and communicated with Bridge School teachers to determine that the child is ready to transition back to school. Bridge School reserves the right to bill families for broken furniture and/or damage done to the building and supplies due to a child's behavior.

FAMILY SUPPORT -- How can families support a child who has received a warning or been sent home for hurting another person?

- It is important to be calm and matter of fact about behavioral consequences. Let your child know that it is important to you that you understand what happened and show them that you care about the problem that they are facing.
- If a situation feels uncomfortable and you want to talk more with the Home Center teacher, please don't hesitate to request a meeting.
- Some families make the choice to take away children's privileges at home as a result of in-school behavior problems. Please let your HC teacher know if this is the case because it could be a factor in how we work together as a team to support your child in developing a positive outcome to stressful situations.
- Please reach out to us and share any concerns and questions you have. We look forward to working with you.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT-

We aim to create a joyful and positive learning environment. The Community is dedicated to maintaining an environment that is both physically and emotionally safe for all people.

Community Respect and Self-Control

- Teachers, staff and guest instructors set the example of respect for our learning environment. Showing care for others and working collaboratively to take care of our facility is expected of all people in the community.
- Students learn self-management skills in all parts of their school day. Self-control is the basis of our behavior management system at Bridge School.
- Teachers and staff guide and support students as they practice self-management. We stress the importance of being kind and respectful of others. It is important for students to practice being kind and respectful of themselves as well.

- All students are expected to respond to a reasonable request from a teacher in a timely and respectful way. Teachers set up their own management techniques and collaborate with other teachers to provide the most open and child centered environment that we can. Teachers and students collaborate to build a respectful school environment.

SUSPECTED ABUSE-

All Bridge School teachers and administrators are mandated reporters. They have received training through the state of Vermont to look for signs of sexual and physical abuse. If you would also like to be a mandated reporter: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/news/training-mandated-reporters>

For more information about the prevention of child abuse:
<https://www.healthvermont.gov/family/healthy-relationships/prevent-child-abuse>

Safe School Environment and Weapons Play

Bridge School is committed to providing all of its students with a safe and supportive school environment in which all members of the school community are treated with respect. We have zero-tolerance for bullying and work closely with children, parents, and staff to build a safe community for all. Our school policy for Harassment, Hazing and Bullying is on file at the front desk, as well as our procedures for addressing any complaints or concerns. Two teachers, Jen Grilly and Angus Barstow are designated employees to receive complaints of hazing, bullying and/or harassment. While all teachers are always available to address any concerns, these two are especially versed in implementing our Harassment, Hazing and Bullying policy.

Bridge School is a community that supports peaceful and cooperative play. Weapons and weapons play are not permitted anywhere on the school property. We strongly discourage violent language and imagery during any activities at school. If a student is repeatedly depicting acts of violence in their work or play, we will meet with the parents and child to discuss this situation.

If a threat of harm (self inflicted, or involving , the use of weapons, or individualized threats toward others, etc.) happens at school, on social media, or outside school, the school has the responsibility to follow the following protocols as deemed necessary and appropriate:

- Ensure immediate safety of all students.
- Seek to understand the situation. Who was involved? What happened before? How is this behavior linked to other situations? Is there a plan and intent to harm?
- Contact all families that are involved in the situation
- Use expert community resources to help assess the severity of the threat. Such resources include, but are not limited to, the local district administration team and resource officer, members of the ACCESS team at CSAC (Counseling Services of Addison County), members of the local police force, etc.

- Follow all suggestions from these resources including making a report to Vermont Crime Information Center if deemed necessary.
- Require a safety assessment through CSAC for the student before the student returns to school. In addition, the student and their family must meet with the Head of School and the Home Center Teacher before returning to school.
- If and when it is deemed safe for the student to return to school, developmentally appropriate disciplinary action may be put into place.
- Extra safety precautions may be put into place as deemed necessary, such as extra supervision or a search of personal items.
- Ensure the students have the social emotional support they need to feel safe. This may include requiring outside counseling services.
- If Bridge School deems they are unable to support the student that made the threat, the student may be suspended from the community on a short term basis, or permanently excluded if the behavior persists or the family is unwilling to follow the requirements for readmission. Parents may appeal to the Bridge School Board if their child is suspended for more than 3 days, or is dismissed from the school.
- Restorative Justice is a large part of what we do as a school community to build relationships and restore harm. These practices will continue to be used throughout all conflicts in the community. In Restorative Justice, members involved in the conflict are separated at first to answer the following questions: What happened? What were you thinking about at the time? What have you thought since then? Who has been impacted by this behavior? What needs to happen to fix the problem? The students are then brought back together to share their answers. These questions serve as a model to have students hear what happened through different perspectives and give students an opportunity to share what they need moving forward.

Through these processes, Bridge School will communicate information to families as needed. However, by school policy, the school cannot share private information about another student with a family. This includes and is not limited to academic, health, behavioral, disciplinary and attendance records. Bridge School has adopted FERPA (Family and Educational Rights Privacy Act) as its guiding policy.

Unauthorized materials

Unauthorized materials are not allowed on school property including in vehicles. Unauthorized materials include but are not limited to drugs, alcohol, guns, knives, other weapons or materials that could cause harm to selves or others.

Search and Seizure

Bridge School reserves the right to search a student's belongings on property if there is reasonable suspicion that they are in possession of illegal or unauthorized materials. Unauthorized materials include but are not limited to drugs, alcohol, guns, knives, other weapons or materials that could cause harm to selves or others.

Photo & Media

Bridge School regularly shares photos of life at school on our website, social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Homeroom), and with the local papers. We always post responsibly and respectfully. **Please see our social media policy below.**

Internet Use

Bridge School recognizes the value of computer and other electronic resources to improve student learning and enhance the administration and operation of the school. To this end, we encourage the responsible use of computers; computer networks, including the Internet and the school's Google network; and other electronic resources in support of the mission and goals of Bridge School.

Because the Internet is an unregulated, worldwide vehicle for communication, information available to staff and students is impossible to control in entirety. Therefore, in order to uphold our community values, Bridge School adopts this policy governing the voluntary use of electronic resources and the Internet in order to provide guidance to teachers and students obtaining access to these resources on school-owned equipment and interactions that occur between students on social media platforms outside of school.

Bridge School Rights and Responsibilities

It is the policy of Bridge School to maintain an environment that promotes ethical and responsible conduct in all online network activities by staff and students. It shall be a violation of this policy for any employee, student, or other individual to engage in any activity that does not conform to the established purpose and general rules and policies of the network. Within this general policy, Bridge School recognizes its legal and ethical obligation to protect the well-being of students in its charge. To this end, Bridge School retains the following rights and recognizes the following obligations:

1. Internet access by students will be relegated to school owned hardware.
2. Teachers will visually monitor the use of online activities in school. No student shall use a computer without a teacher present.
3. The school Google network administrator shall add and delete user accounts on the Google network when needed.
4. The school Google network administrator shall monitor the usage of users on the Google network.
5. The school Google network administrator shall provide internal and external controls as appropriate and feasible. Such controls shall include the right to determine who will have access to Bridge School-owned equipment and, specifically, to exclude those who do not abide by the Bridge School's acceptable use policy or other policies governing the use of school facilities, equipment, and materials. Bridge School reserves the right to restrict online destinations through software or other means.
6. The school network administrator shall provide guidelines and make reasonable efforts to train staff and students in acceptable use and policies governing online communications.

Staff Responsibilities

1. Staff members who supervise students, control electronic equipment, or otherwise have occasion to observe student use of said equipment online shall make reasonable efforts to monitor the use of this equipment to assure that it conforms to the mission and goals of the Bridge School.
2. Staff should make reasonable efforts to become familiar with the Internet and its use so that effective monitoring, instruction, and assistance may be achieved.

Acceptable Use

1. All use of the Internet, including staff use of the school Google network, must be in support of educational and research objectives consistent with the mission and objectives of Bridge School.
2. Proper codes of conduct in electronic communication must be used. In groups and forums, giving out personal information is inappropriate. When using e-mail, extreme caution must always be taken in revealing any information of a personal nature.
3. Google network accounts are to be used only by the authorized owner of the account for the authorized purpose.

Unacceptable Use

1. Student or staff use of the Google network for personal matters unrelated to school activities.
2. Neither students nor staff shall log on to another individual's Google Google network account EXCEPT for the Google network administrator(s).
3. No use of the network shall serve to disrupt the use of the network by others. Hardware and/or software shall not be destroyed, modified, or abused in any way.
4. Malicious use of the network to develop programs that harass other users or infiltrate a computer or computing system and/or damage the software components of a computer or computing system is prohibited.
5. The unauthorized installation of any software, including shareware and freeware, for use on Bridge School computers is prohibited.
6. Hate mail, chain letters, harassment, discriminatory remarks, and other antisocial behaviors are prohibited on the network.
7. Students shall not perpetrate harassment on the school network OR on non-school networks towards school students or employees. Harassment means an incident or incidents of verbal, written, visual, or physical conduct including any incident conducted by electronic means based on or motivated by a student's or a student's family member's actual or perceived race, creed, color, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability that has the purpose OR effect of objectively and substantially undermining and detracting from or interfering with a student's educational performance OR access to school resources OR creating an objectively intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. 16 V.S.A. § 11(a)(26)(A).
8. Use of the network to access or process pornographic material, inappropriate text files (as determined by the system administrator or building administrator), or files dangerous to the integrity of the local area network is prohibited.

9. Downloading, copying, otherwise duplicating, and/or distributing copyrighted materials without the specific written permission of the copyright owner is prohibited, except that duplication and/or distribution of materials for educational purposes is permitted when such duplication and/or distribution would fall within the Fair Use Doctrine of the United States Copyright Law (Title 17, USC).
10. Use of the network for any unlawful purpose is prohibited.
11. Use of profanity, obscenity, racist terms, or other language that may be offensive to another user is prohibited.
12. Playing games is prohibited unless specifically authorized by a teacher for instructional purposes.
13. Establishing network or Internet connections to live communications, including voice and/or video (relay chat), is prohibited unless specifically authorized by the system administrator.

Use of Personal Devices in School

1. Students shall not carry personal electronic devices with them while during school. Any electronic device must be turned off and stored for the entirety of the school day in the student's backpack.
2. Staff may carry personal electronic devices on them during the school day in order to ensure access to emergency communication.
3. Staff must only use their personal electronic devices for work-related purposes, or emergency personal matters during the school day.

Social Media

1. Staff must never be "friends" or connect with current students on any social network while employed by Bridge School.
2. Staff must take reasonable effort to maintain a professional appearance on social media and must not post any content that negatively impacts the school's public appearance.
3. No picture posted on a Bridge School social media account or on the school website will be done so with the intent of ridiculing, harassing, or embarrassing a child.
4. No picture will be tagged by any Bridge School employee.
5. Student and family names, addresses, phone numbers or other personal information will never be given without consent from parents (including local print media).
6. Pictures will be removed from social media by the request of parents or students.
7. Comments made on social media sites that are not in the spirit of Bridge School's mission will be removed.
8. No picture posted by Bridge School will promote or advertise for products, politics, or religion.
9. Bridge School promises to:
 - Intentionally and minfully think about how each post represents our school, our students, and our families.
 - Respect concerns of students and families.
 - Monitor comments.
 - Correct mistakes.

Bridge School will not post:

- Negative comments or offensive jokes.
- Compromising or questionable pictures.

Disclaimer

1. Bridge School cannot be held accountable for the information that is retrieved via the internet.
2. Pursuant to the Electronic Communications Privacy Act of 1986 (18 USC 2510 et seq.), notice is hereby given that there are no facilities provided by this system for sending or receiving private or confidential electronic communications. System administrators have access to all mail and will monitor messages. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities will be reported to the appropriate authorities.
3. Bridge School will not be responsible for any damages you may suffer, including loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, or service interruptions caused by our own negligence or your errors or omissions. Use of any information obtained is at your own risk.
4. Bridge School makes no warranties (expressed or implied) with respect to:
 - the content of any advice or information received by a user, or any costs or charges incurred as a result of seeing or accepting any information; and
 - any costs, liability, or damages caused by the way the user chooses to use his or her access to the network.
5. Bridge School reserves the right to change its policies and rules at any time.

Special Education and Related Services

Bridge School is a general education school, approved as an independent school by the Vermont State Board of Education. It is not approved, authorized or required to provide special education and related services or to develop or implement Individualized Education Plans or Section 504 plans, including those provided by a public school district. We also acknowledge and agree that the Bridge School's responsibilities for providing access, services, and accommodations are in keeping with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Vermont Public Accommodations Act.

Bridge School, as a general education school can provide accommodations and services as funded by the general tuition for our students, including but not limited to:

- small class sizes and differentiated learning,
- opportunities for individualized attention,
- opportunities for student choice and voice,
- opportunities for movement and breaks, or
- flexible scheduling

The accommodations and services that Bridge School cannot reasonably provide as part of the general tuition include but are not limited to:

- An individually designed, separate curriculum
- A dedicated private room for self regulation or academic support
- A therapeutic program

- A behavior modification program
- Accommodations that would require the funding to hire additional staff or reallocate current staff
- Accommodations that would fundamentally alter our mission and/or programs

Bridge School does work with Addison Central School district to secure equitable share funding to support services for students that qualify for special education services. Bridge School will, to the best of its ability, provide time and space in the school building to allow for these supports.

In some instances, support may be provided through private tutoring and/or other academic or social/emotional supports, including those paid for by the family, as arranged for and agreed upon by Bridge School and the family.

Termination or Dismissal

Bridge School reserves the right to administratively withdraw a child from enrollment if Bridge School determines, in the professional judgement of the Head of School, after consultation with the parents/guardians, that: (a) the school is unable to safely and appropriately educate the student in keeping with Bridge School's mission, pedagogy and programs; (b) the parents/guardians are not complying with Bridge School's policies or are otherwise causing harm to Bridge School's mission, pedagogy, programs or their child's participation as a student enrolled at Bridge School; or (c) other non-disciplinary-related reasons necessitate administrative withdrawal of the student at any time, for any reason.

Parent Conduct and Communication Policy

Bridge School believes that a community thrives in a space that is safe for all members. We work hard to create a space where all communications (verbal, digital, with body language, etc.) can be given and received with respect. Our kids are always watching and we want all interactions to be positively role modeled. Therefore we require that all communication is made with our following community expectations kept in mind:

- 1. Keep everyone safe and healthy (physically and emotionally).**
- 2. Earn and give respect through your words and actions.**
- 3. Be a respectful listener and role model.**
- 4. Actively create our Caring Community.**
- 5. Maintain a positive attitude when interacting with teachers, children, and community members.**

If you wish to discuss any concerns, please make an appointment with your child's teacher, the program director or the Head of School, privately. If you are unable to maintain these community expectations, you will be asked to leave the property. If you are asked to leave and choose not to, you will be escorted off the property.

If a behavior arises that is not in line with our community expectations, a meeting with the program director, Head of School and/or Board President will be called to come up with a plan for moving forward and a family may lose their place(s) in the programs at Bridge School.

Any member of the Bridge Community that feels a Bridge Employee has broken this policy can file a formal complaint with the office, the Preschool Director, Head of School or the Board of Directors President. A complaint form can be requested from these parties.

POLICIES

The following policies are available upon request. Please ask Jen if you wish to see them.

Harassment, Hazing and Bullying Policy and Procedures

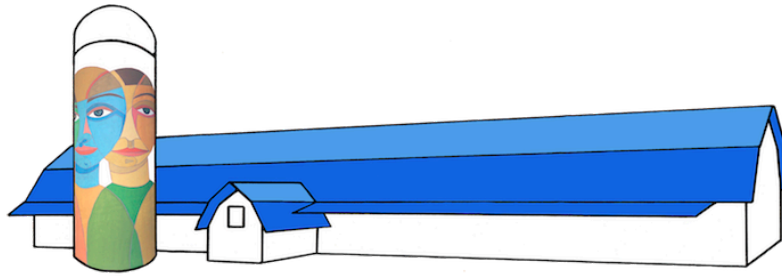
Restraint and Seclusion in Schools (Rule 4500)

Media Policy

Non-discrimination and Enrollment Policy

Asbestos Management Plan

The Bridge School Board reserves the right to update this Family and Student handbook without prior notice. Changes will be communicated to families in a timely manner.



Bridge School

I/We, parents or guardians of _____, have read, and hereby agree that we
(Student Name)
will abide by all aspects of the Bridge School Student and Family Handbook.

Guardian Signature

Date

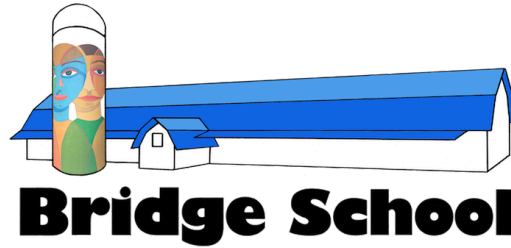
Guardian Signature

Date

Guardian Signature

Date

**COMPLETE THIS PAGE IN THE EVENT THAT YOU WISH TO CONTRACT THE SERVICES OF A
BRIDGE EMPLOYEE OUTSIDE OF BRIDGE SCHOOL**



**Bridge School Programs
Hold Harmless Agreement and Waiver**

Bridge School has several programs. This waiver covers Bridge School, Bridge School Preschool and after care, Bridge School After School Program, and Bridge School Summer Camps. Known hereon as *The Programs*.

Bridge School et al, do not promote the practice of families engaging in the services of employees (including but not limited to babysitting or transportation of the children) outside of The Programs

In the event that an Employee is engaged by a family to babysit, *The Programs* do not in any way, warranty or guarantee the suitability of the Employee for that purpose. *The Programs* shall not bear responsibility in any manner for any disputes of any kind which may arise between the Family and the Employee, including any claims, injury, or damage to the Family, their minor child/children, the Employee or either's property.

While engaged by the Family as a babysitter, the Employee shall be considered an employee of the Family and not an employee of *The Programs*. Any and all activities or events that occur during the course of such services, including but not limited to any transportation to or from the School are considered outside the responsibilities and duties of *The Program's* employee.

By signing below, the Family, on behalf of themselves, and their minor child/children, and the Employee hereby agree to release, hold harmless and indemnify Bridge School, Bridge School Preschool and after care, Bridge School After School Program, and Bridge School Summer Camps and employees for any claims, injury or damage of any kind and nature arising therefrom.

By signing this handbook the Family, on behalf of themselves, and their minor child/children hereby agree to release, hold harmless and indemnify Bridge School, Bridge School Preschool and after care, Bridge School After School Program, and Bridge School Summer Camps and employees for any claims, injury or damage of any kind and nature arising during volunteer work at the Bridge School or during programming offsite.

Employee Signature

Date

Parent/guardian Signature

Date

Parent/guardian Signature

Date

Parent/guardian Signature

Date

If there are multiple guardians, all MUST sign.