



A BRIGHT HORIZONS MONTESSORI SCHOOL

**Policy Manual
2016-2017**

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Bridges Montessori- Mission Statement

The staff, children, and extended families at Bridges Montessori are committed to creating a community that promotes cultural diversity, peaceful conflict resolution, environmental awareness, human values, and world citizenship through the development of each child's social, emotional, spiritual, and aesthetic growth.

Philosophy

The teaching community wants Bridges students:

To be active participants in our democracy.

To be caring, compassionate individuals who respect the diversity of others.

To be competent, confident, knowledgeable, and well rounded.

To maintain a sense of wonder, a creative spirit, and an enthusiasm for learning.

Goals

To stimulate the growth and development of the total child.

To provide a nurturing and accepting environment in which each child feels secure, respected, and loved.

To provide an enriched and stimulating environment with safe limits where the child is an active explorer.

To provide an integrated curriculum that has real-world relevancy.

To encourage the child to become self-directed.

To provide a framework for discipline and personal strength.

To develop creativity and a positive self-image.

To provide a cross-cultural environment in which the foundations of global peace may be laid.

ADMISSIONS

The admission procedure is as follows:

1. Overview and information packet
2. Tour with our Head of School
3. Transfer of records (where applicable)
4. Review of records by administration (where applicable)
5. Verbal acceptance notification by administration
6. Complete Registration & Enrollment Form and submit enrollment fee
7. Student's visitation in classroom
8. Meet with Assistant Head of School to review enrollment packet

There is a thirty (30) day probationary period for all new students. At the end of this period the student will be evaluated based on academic performance and behavior.

DAYS AND HOURS

Infant Hours

- Infant Full 9:00am - 3:00pm
- Infant Extended 7:00am - 6:00pm

Daily School Hours

- Toddler 9:00am - 12:00pm (Half Day)
- Toddler 9:00am - 3:00pm
- Pre-Primary 8:45am - 12:00pm (Half Day)*
- Pre-Primary 8:45am - 2:45pm
- Jr. Elementary 8:00am - 3:00pm
- Sr. Elementary 8:00am - 3:00pm
- Middle School 8:15am - 3:15pm

*All children four years and older must attend school from 8:45 am to 2:45 pm in order to ensure that each child will be equally prepared to enter our Elementary program.

Closing

Extended Day families are provided alternative care on the following "Extended Day Only" days: i.e. Parent-Teacher Conferences, Holiday Break, Spring Break. On these days, childcare is provided (7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) at an additional fee of \$40 per day. This fee will be automatically billed to those accounts prior to the month of service. If you do not intend to utilize the service, written notification must be submitted to the office two weeks prior to date of service in order for the charge to be reversed. With the exception of the Infant room, the entire school is closed on all legal holidays, in-service days and one week in August for maintenance. On Teacher Work Days, no childcare will be provided; please refer to the current year School Calendar for specifics. The Infant program is a twelve (12) month program. **Refer to the Infant Room Calendar for specifics.**

Emergency Closing

In case of an emergency closing, Bridges Montessori usually follows Martin County School District guidelines. A “Ready to Respond” emergency preparedness plan has been implemented at Bridges in the case of severe emergencies. All families receive hotline cards with pertinent contact information. Callers to the hotline hear a recorded message with the most current information available on the status of Bridges and may be connected with an Emergency Management Operator for further information at any time.

Extended Day

Parents interested in Extended Day must enroll in advance. Morning care (7:00 – class start time) is available at a flat rate of \$1,145 for the academic year. Afternoon care (2:45 – 6:00 p.m.) is available at a flat rate of \$1,710 for the academic year. Morning and Afternoon care is available at flat rate of \$2,280 for the academic year. Payment plans are available for these fees. For those children not enrolled in the program, parents will be billed at a rate of \$10.00 per child per hour; the hour is not prorated. Any pick-up after 6:00 p.m. will be billed at \$1.00 per minute. **See the Extended Day Calendar for a listing of days when care is not provided.**

The office must approve any extended care drop-offs in order to ensure appropriate staff-child ratios. Parents using Extended Day must notify a staff member when arriving and departing, and they must sign their child in and out. It is the responsibility of the parent to check the child’s class file daily for school communications or provide us with an e-mail address in which communications will be emailed directly to families.

TUITION

Payments are accepted exclusively through the Online Payment Solution, available through the Bright Horizons Family Information Center. The payment system, managed by JP Morgan, can automatically deduct tuition from your authorized bank account when tuition is due, or it allows you to initiate one-time payments each time a payment must be made. Tuition is due on the first of each month. A 5% late fee will be added after the 5th of the month; 10% will be added after the 10th of the month; and 15% will be added after the 15th of the month.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Car Line

It is a traditional Montessori practice to pick up and deliver children in car line. This enables gentle separations and smooth transitions for parents and children. All Pre-Primary and Elementary students are dropped off and picked up at the Elementary entrance. All Toddlers and Middle School students are dropped off at the Office entrance. Toddlers are picked up at

the Office entrance. Middle School students are picked up at the Elementary entrance. Infants are walked to their classroom by the parent. Once a parent/guardian signs out his/her child, the child is considered to be in the care and custody of the parent. Parents are responsible for the supervision of their children on campus once they have signed them out. Please note, children are only allowed to play on the playground designated as appropriate to their age. For the safety of the children, Toddlers are not allowed on the Pre-Primary Playground and Pre-Primary friends are not allowed on the Elementary Playground.

Car line times:

Toddler 8:45am - 9:00am
Pre-Primary 8:25am - 8:40am
Elementary 7:45am – 7:55am

Senior Elementary students may act as Safety Patrols to escort Pre-Primary and Elementary students to their cars. Parents must not leave their cars when in car line, even for a moment. If you need to come into school, you must first park. **Please observe all designated parking spaces as labeled (including two spaces reserved for Gala auction winners).** This facilitates the orderly movement of traffic during these busy periods.

For the convenience of our families with multiple children enrolled at Bridges, younger siblings may be dropped off at the earliest applicable carline time.

Arrival

Please be sure to have your child at school on time. Late arrivals are very disruptive to the classroom and heighten the anxiety of the child entering a class in progress. Late students will not be accepted into the classroom without an administrative escort or a signed office pass. All children arriving late must be taken to the office and signed in by a parent or guardian. For obvious safety reasons, never drop your child off unattended.

Departure

A child will not be released to any person other than a parent unless that person is listed on the Registration Form and written or verbal permission is given in advance through the school office. Identification must be made available for staff upon pick up by the alternate driver. A child being released early must be picked up from the office. A parent or guardian must sign-out his/her child when removing him/her earlier than the regular dismissal time.

ATTENDANCE

Because of the nature of the Montessori environment, it is essential that children attend class on a regular basis. Tardiness and absences interrupt the flow of learning and often impede the child's academic, social, and emotional progress. Absences exceeding nine days per semester (two semesters per year) will require a conference to assess the child's progress and to make recommendations regarding the requirements for academic advancement. The State of Florida Truancy Statute "amends the definition of habitual truant to be a 'student who has 15 unexcused absences with 90 calendar days with or without the knowledge or consent of the student's parent or legal guardian'." Bridges Montessori will make no exceptions for truancy as it is described in the statute. Parents should inform the office by 9:00 a.m. if a child is going to be absent that day.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Students must have the following documents on file in order to attend school:

- **Florida Certification of Immunization form (DH 680)**
- **State of Florida School Entry Health Exam (DH 3040)**

Immunizations must remain current and School Entry Health Exams must be completed within the last two years. Family physicians have the proper medical forms required by the county Health Department. **New families: please refer to the sample documents included in your Enrollment Forms.**

Illness

Bridges Montessori will not accept sick children into class. If a child has a fresh cold, fever (100 degrees or above) or contagious symptom such as a cough, purulent conjunctivitis, head lice, runny nose, sore throat, or any type of parasite, parents may not send him/her to school. If a child becomes ill at school, he/she will be isolated from the other students (as appropriate), and the parent(s) will be notified for pick-up. If your child will be absent due to illness, please call the office by 9:00am.

A child who has been excluded from school due to illness may return: when he/she is free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea for a full 24 hours, when he/she has been treated with an antibiotic for a full 24 hours (unless otherwise specified), when he/she is able to participate comfortably in usual school activities, including outdoor time.

Bridges Montessori reserves the right to make final decisions on whether or not to exclude a child from school.

Medication

Parents must fill out a Bright Horizons Authorization for Administration of Medication form in the office for all prescription medications. Medications may only be given per the directions on the container. Parents are responsible for giving their child's medications directly to the main office. An office staff member will administer medications. All medications administered are recorded on the Bright Horizons Administration of Medication Log. **Copies of the Authorization for Administration of Medication are located in the office.**

Sun Protection

As part of the Montessori philosophy and curriculum, children do spend time outdoors. We encourage parents to provide their child/ren with a hat, sun protective clothing, and sunscreen. Parents who wish sunscreen to be applied at school must sign a Sunscreen Authorization form. Sunscreen provided by a parent/guardian must state "for child's use" and be clearly labeled with the child's name. Appropriate staff may then apply sunscreen that is provided by a parent/guardian if the child is not capable of applying it to him or herself.

Copies of the Sunscreen and Insect Repellent Permission Slip are located in the office.

Animals

Per insurance requirements, families may not bring pets or animals on school property.

DRESS CODE

School Uniforms

Bridges Montessori requires **Elementary and Middle School** Students to wear a daily school uniform. The uniform, on non PE days consists of:

- Any top, any color, from the Lands End School Catalog www.landsend.com/school (Polo shirts preferred in elementary). All tops *must* have the Bridges Logo.
- Khaki or plaid bottoms from the Lands End School Catalog (or similar style). Plaid bottom option is offered for girls only.
- Closed-toe shoes only (no flip-flops or open toed sandals). Laces must be tied on shoes with shoelaces. No "stompies" or shoes that make noise or light up. **See indoor shoe details in Junior Elementary Handbook.**
- No skirts or shorts shorter than the tip of fingers when arms down at side.
- No commercial characters on personal items (TV/movie characters on water bottles, lunch boxes, sneakers, etc.)
- Students have the option to wear their PE uniforms on days when they participate in PE. **See Physical Education (PE) Uniform Section.** They may wear their PE uniform the remainder of the day or may change into their regular school uniform following PE.
- One field trip shirt is required for purchase. **See Field Trip Uniform Section.**

Any student not adhering to the school policy will be asked to comply or sent home accordingly.

Dress

Toddler

- Easily removable clothing to support self sufficiency
- No one piece outfits with fasteners
- Socks for indoor environment
- Closed-toe sandals with back straps, no sandals
- Closed-toe shoes
- Velcro shoes

It is important for Toddlers to be free to move around and explore their outside environment. Many are still working on running and climbing skills, therefore we recommend a supportive sneaker or shoe to be worn.

Pre-Primary

- One field trip uniform is required in Pre-Primary. The field trip uniform includes one evergreen Polo shirt with Bridges logo from the Lands End School Catalog www.landsend.com/school and khaki bottoms.
- Third Year Students (Explorers) participate in PE once a week. A PE uniform is required. **See Physical Education (PE) Uniforms Section.**
- Easily removable clothing to support self sufficiency of parent's choice on non-PE and field trip days.
- Closed-toe shoes

Any student not adhering to the school policy will be asked to comply or sent home accordingly.

Field Trip Uniforms

Pre-Primary, Elementary and Middle School field trip uniforms consist of an evergreen polo shirt with Bridges logo and khaki bottoms from the Lands End School Catalog. During hot temperature months, Students may wear a tie dyed shirt created by the classroom. For safety reasons, all students must wear the same colored shirts on field trips. Families will be notified of shirt color on the field trip form prior to each trip.

Physical Education (PE) Uniforms

Explorer, Elementary and Middle School student's uniform consists of a gray Bridges logo t-shirt from the Lands End School Catalog and navy blue athletic shorts that are appropriate in length, together with supportive, athletic shoes and socks.

- Explorers, Elementary and Middle School students must wear their PE uniform to school on PE days. If there is a scheduled field trip on a PE day, students must wear the field trip uniform and appropriate shoes.

LUNCHES AND SNACKS

Lunch/Water

Bridges Montessori encourages healthy eating practices and environmentally conscious, waste-free packaging. All students are required to bring their lunch and lunch beverages in a thermal lunchbox. Students are required to have a re-usable water bottle. All daily lunches must also include a cloth placemat and a napkin. *Do not send in foods that require heating.* Children may not bring candy, gum, soda, or other “junk food” to school (inappropriate items will be returned with the lunchbox at the end of the day). Half-day Pre-Primary students do not participate in class lunches.

NUT SAFE

All classroom environments are “nut safe”. Due to the possible severity of the reaction from the ingestion of any nut product, we ask all families in all environments to refrain from sending in any of the following: peanuts or any type of nut, foods that may have come in contact with peanuts or nuts, peanut-based products and products that contain peanut derived ingredients.

Toddler

Toddler “community lunch” takes place at various times throughout the year. Families are notified in advance and are assigned foods to bring in and share with the community on a rotating basis.

Snack

Infant/Toddler

Each month, parents of Toddler students receive a weekly snack rotation menu that lists snack assignments (one family per week).

Pre-Primary

Each month, parents of Pre-Primary students receive a Snack Calendar a rotation schedule which lets them know in advance when they are expected to provide a healthy snack for their child's class. **A suggestion sheet for nutritious snacks can be found in the Parent Forms (for new families) and in the office.** On a child's snack day, he/she has special privileges and responsibilities. A basket will be sent home with your child the night before, and it can be given to a teacher in the morning. Staff and Safety Patrol students ensure that snacks are carried to the classroom on your child's snack day.

If for any reason parents do not bring snack on their child's assigned day, they will have a 24-hour period to replenish the back-up supply.

Elementary

All Elementary students are required to bring their own healthy snacks daily.

Pizza Day

Friday is Pizza Day. If you are interested in purchasing cheese pizza for your child, you must sign up in the office. The yearly cost will be billed to your account in September. If school is closed on Friday, pizza will be provided on the last day that school is in session that week. There will be no reimbursements under any circumstances.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are an integral part of the Montessori holistic curriculum; *participation is mandatory*. If a child misses a field trip, appropriate make-up work may be assigned.

Toddler/Pre-Primary Field Trips

Toddler and Pre-Primary students will participate in on-campus "field trips." Pre-Primary students may participate in off-campus field trips related to community service and performance rehearsals. Explorers will participate in an end of the year off campus trip.

Forms

The annual field trip authorization form covers field trips and walks for the school year. All Pre-Primary, Elementary and Middle School parents or guardians must sign this authorization form in order for students to attend field trips. Bridges Montessori staff will always notify parents in advance of any field trip. A separate Field Trip Permission Slip for Swimming is required for field trips involving a pool.

Uniforms

For safety's sake, all Pre-Primary, Elementary and Middle School students must wear the Bridges Montessori field trip uniform on all field trips (refer to Field Trip Uniforms section). If a child arrives after the field trip has departed, the child must leave school for the day; we will not be responsible for providing care.

Fees

All Toddler, Pre-Primary and Elementary field trip fees are included in the annual tuition with the exception of the end-of-the-year trips. We try to anticipate all field trips in the annual tuition, however, if an unscheduled trip of an *exceptional* nature presents itself, the additional field trip will be offered, and the fee will be charged to your account.

Transportation

Transportation for field trips is provided by our school bus. Parents may drive their own children if they choose to do so.

STUDENT PROGRESS

Progress Reports

Pre-Primary, Elementary and Middle School progress reports will be issued two times per year. Bridges Montessori does not send daily or weekly activity reports home for Pre-Primary, Elementary and Middle School students. Formal Parent/Teacher conferences are provided three times per year (see School Calendar for specific dates). Elementary and Middle School Teachers also provide two Interim Progress Reports per year. If at any other time parents need to communicate with their child's teacher, they should call the classroom after 3:15 p.m., schedule a conference through the school office or via email.

All Infants and Toddlers will receive daily activity reports.

Testing

Bridges employs a variety of means to assess the progress of the students; authentic, performance-based, and standardized assessments are used to understand and evaluate individual strengths and weaknesses. Formal, standardized testing is administered annually to Explorer/Kindergarten through 8th grade students. The Kindergarten/Explorer results will be used for internal purposes only. If, at any time, the teacher, Department Head, and/or Administration determine additional testing is necessary for diagnosis and evaluation and/or instructional modifications, parents will be required (at their own cost) to obtain an outside, professional evaluation within thirty (30) days of the request.

Coordinating Outside Support Services

We fully support parents in the linking and coordinating of private educational support services for their child. We do not, however, have a separate space on campus designated solely for the purpose of tutoring and/or therapies (such as speech or occupational therapy). On an as needed, “first come-first served” basis, we will make reasonable efforts to make space available, if scheduling permits. However, we cannot guarantee that space will always be available. Please contact the office if you would like to try and coordinate the provision of services on site.

Observation

After the first month of school, parent observations can be arranged through the school office with one-day prior notice. An Observation Guidelines form will be made available for prior review. Please check in with the office upon your arrival. You will be escorted to the classroom. These guidelines should be strictly followed during the visit.

New families: please refer to the Observation Guidelines in your Enrollment Packet.

DISCIPLINE

We believe that a child in an environment of love, trust, and respect will gain self-discipline and a desire to learn and succeed in a positive way. Our teachers are trained in *Conscious Discipline* by Dr. Becky Bailey and find this approach most consistent with Dr. Maria Montessori’s philosophy. We do not use corporal punishment at any time.

We believe that discipline is a necessary component of learning. In order to assure your child a quality education, it is important to have a written discipline policy that is understood by the parent as well as the child. Each class has an individual classroom discipline policy understood by the children in that room. We also have a general school discipline policy, which includes the following:

- Control verbal and physical aggression toward others; use appropriate means of conflict resolution
- Handle school property and materials in an appropriate manner (It will be the parent’s responsibility to replace any school property that is intentionally destroyed)
- Respect the rights of other children and staff members

In instances where aggression is provoked, we ask children to take the following steps:

- Verbally express their displeasure
- Walk away from the situation

- Ask for intervention from a teacher

Our approach to discipline challenges is an individual one, and consequences for behavior are determined according to each child's personal and developmental needs. Staff members immediately discuss discipline issues with children and notify parents in writing about incidents. Other natural and logical consequences for unsafe or disruptive behavior may include temporary removal from the classroom, activity, or area.

Biting

Toddler

Toddlers will occasionally go through periods of biting behavior. This can be attributed to several normal developmental processes (i.e. teething, impulsiveness/lack of self-control, making an impact, excitement/overstimulation, frustration). While we strive to keep all children safe and secure, toddler biting is expected. Our response to biting will be; care for and help the child who was bitten, help the child who bit learn other behavior and work with the child who bit and examine the setting so that the biting will stop. It may be necessary to confer with parents to develop a combined strategy if the behavior persists. We reserve the right to recommend dismissal should it become necessary for the protection of others in the environment.

Pre-Primary

Biting at the Pre-Primary level is a serious situation and requires a more immediate and committed response. Children who bite will be removed from the environment after the incident. After repeated incidents of biting by a Pre-Primary student, parents will be asked to confer with the teacher and administration in order to develop a strategy for safety in the learning environment. Possible consequences of biting at this level may include parents picking up the child from school, temporary suspension from school, probation, and expulsion.

Elementary and Middle School Level Discipline

Any form of intentional physical violence or verbal aggression, whether it is initiated or it is in retaliation, is not permitted in the Elementary and Middle School environments at Bridges Montessori. This includes, but is not limited to swearing, hitting, biting, choking, kicking, and aggressive pushing. These choices will result in immediate removal from the environment, along with written parent notification.

When a child's actions are severely or repeatedly hurtful or disruptive, a conference will be scheduled in which the teacher, parents, and administration can devise a plan aimed toward the child's success. Consequences for serious or chronic incidents may include removal from

classroom, asking parents to pick up the child from school, suspension from school, probation with implementation of recommended strategies, and expulsion.

We reserve the right to modify our discipline policy due to exceptional circumstances.

BABYSITTING

In an effort to maintain the professionalism of Bridges staff and avoid any potential conflict of interest, babysitting by a staff member is not allowed within the specific environment he/she works. Babysitting is allowed by staff in other environments. **Families must sign a Babysitting Release Form (available in the office).**

TUTORING

In an effort to maintain the professionalism of Bridges staff and avoid any potential conflict of interest, tutoring after school hours by a staff member is discouraged within the specific environment he/she works. Due to the specific needs of our students, exceptions to this rule may be made with prior approval from the office. **Families must sign a Tutoring Release Form (available in the office).**

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are a special time at Bridges Montessori. The children enjoy a celebration that is both educational and fun. Each teacher has their own special classroom ceremony and will be happy to plan with the parent in advance. Your child may bring a treat to share with the entire class on his/her birthday. We ask that you refrain from bringing in treats with chocolate, artificial dyes or excessive frosting/sugar. To reinforce the power of giving as well as receiving, each child is asked to donate a book to his/her classroom on his/her birthday. Special labels are placed in these books to acknowledge the child's gift and birthday; books can be new or old favorites.

In order to avoid hurt feelings, parents may not distribute party invitations through school unless the entire class is receiving them. Invitations should be given to the office for disbursement. Please see Snack Guidelines in the Parent Forms for birthday snack ideas.

CLASS HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

Holiday celebrations are often incorporated in the Montessori curriculum but are not expressed in an overtly religious, traditional, or commercial manner (i.e., parties, treats, games). Bridges

Montessori supports the teachers in their individuality and in their choices when it comes to whether or how holidays are celebrated. All Elementary students incorporate the study of world religions as part of their cultural curriculum.

SHOW & SHARE

Children are asked to bring only educational objects for sharing at school. These can be educational games, handmade crafts, or a natural object discovered by the child. Non-educational toys are not permitted.

COMMERCIAL CHARACTERS

Bridges Montessori discourages the use of items imprinted with commercial characters. Dr. Maria Montessori expressed very strong beliefs that children should be grounded in reality. The staff feels that manufacturers are programming children to associate materialism and consumerism with entertainment and happiness. Parents will help reinforce the values taught at Bridges Montessori by not sending lunch boxes, t-shirts, shoes, or other personal items adorned with commercial products to school. Bridges Montessori strictly prohibits any characters that promote violence as a means of resolving conflict (i.e., Transformers, Power Rangers, Pokemon, Spiderman, etc.) If a child has a long established security item that contains a nonviolent commercial character, this will be allowed at rest time.

A “No Commercial Characters” reminder note will be sent home with any inappropriate items brought into school.

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Hours

All families will be required to contribute to the enrichment of the school environment by assisting in the school, attending informational meetings, joining project committees, or completing individual assignments. This ensures a reasonable fee policy and allows children to witness family involvement with their education. Each family is required fifteen (15) participation hours per year. Parents are responsible for recording participation hours on a Volunteer Hour Submission Form (located in the office). Any non-participation hours may be billed at the end of the school year at a rate of \$20 per hour.

Workshops

All parents are required to attend the scheduled Parent Education Workshops. Please review the current School Calendar for workshop dates and times.

Workshops are designed to provide parents with needed knowledge regarding Montessori philosophy, teaching methods and materials, curriculum, schedules, expectations and assessment. During the assigned workshop time, presentations and open discussion takes place between teachers and parents. The information and focus of each workshop is different, and assists parents in understanding the process behind the growth, developmental and educational progress their child makes throughout the school year.

We believe that parent education is a vital part of a student's overall success. It is also a great opportunity for parents to gain volunteer hours. Because we value these workshops so greatly, parents receive double the amount of scheduled workshop time in volunteer hours. For example, if the workshop is scheduled for one hour, you can submit two volunteer hours per parent attending a workshop.

We welcome your ideas for new Parent Education Workshop topics.

PARENT-STAFF RELATIONS

Communication

Communication is extremely important to us at Bridges Montessori. Our primary mode of communication is via email. The secondary mode is via carline flyer distribution. Folders are provided for both parents of separate households. It is the responsibility of the parents to check their email and child's file for school information. Pre-Primary and Junior Elementary students will have designated "Take Home Days" on which a child may bring home a portion of his or her completed work.

Please remember that Montessori children, especially those in Pre-Primary, work primarily with hands-on materials in the classroom.

Concerns

If parents have a question or concern, they may schedule an appointment with our teaching staff through the office, email or leave a message on the classroom voice mail. Under no circumstances may parents approach a teacher with concerns or issues on an impromptu basis prior to or during classroom hours. Parents are strictly forbidden to approach any staff member or child in a verbally or physically aggressive or threatening manner. Parents not adhering to these guidelines will not be invited to return to the campus.