

A BRIGHT HORIZONS MONTESSORI SCHOOL

# **Policy Manual & Student Handbook**

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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. Student's visitation in classroom (where applicable)
- 6. Verbal or written acceptance notification by administration
- 7. Complete Registration & Enrollment Form and submit enrollment fee

#### **DAYS AND HOURS**

## **Infant Hours**

Infant FullInfant Extended9:00am - 3:00pm7:00am - 6:00pm

## **Daily School Hours**

• Toddler 9:00am - 12:00pm (Half Day)

• Toddler 9:00am - 3:00pm

• Primary 8:45am - 12:00pm (Half Day)\*

Primary 8:45am - 2:45pm
Lower Elementary 8:00am - 3:00pm
Upper Elementary 8:00am - 3:00pm
Middle School 7:50am - 3:00pm

#### Closing

Extended Day families are provided alternative care on the following "Extended Day Only" days: i.e. 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. If you do not intend to utilize the service, written notification must be submitted to the office two weeks prior to date of service. With the exception of the Infant room, the entire school is closed on all legal holidays, in-service days and one week in June for camp set up and one week in August for school set up/training. 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**

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

In case of an emergency closing, Bridges Montessori usually follows Martin County School District guidelines. School closures will be announced via Constant Contact emails to the school community.

## 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 \$1,333 for the academic year. Afternoon care (2:45 – 6:00 p.m.) is available at a flat rate of \$1,980 for the academic year. Morning and Afternoon care is available at flat rate of \$2,646 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 School 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. Extended Day closing hours may be adjusted due to staffing issues. In this case, parents will be notified in advance.

#### **TUITION**

Payments are accepted exclusively through the Online Bill Payment Solution, available through the Bright Horizons Family Information Center. Tuition is due on the first of each month. A 5% late fee will be added after the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month; 10% will be added after the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month; and 15% will be added after the 15<sup>th</sup> 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 Primary and Elementary students are dropped off and picked up at the Elementary entrance. All Toddlers are dropped off and picked up at the Office entrance. Middle School students are dropped off and picked up at the Upper School. Infants are walked to their classroom by the parent/guardian. 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 Primary Playground and Primary friends are not allowed on the Elementary/Middle School Playground.

#### Car line times:

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

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.** 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 disruptive to the classroom and heighten the anxiety of the child entering a class in progress. Late Elementary and Middle School students will not be accepted into the classroom without 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/guardian unless that person is listed on the Emergency Contact list on the Registration and Enrollment Agreement or written 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 Supplemental Enrollment Forms.

#### Illness

Bridges Montessori will not accept sick children into class. If a child has a fresh cold, fever (100.4 degrees or above) or contagious symptom such as a cough, conjunctivitis, head lice, 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 (do not place in lunchboxes or backpacks). 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 Repellant Permission Slip are located in the office.

## **Animals**

Families and staff may only bring approved animals on school property.

#### **DRESS CODE**

## **School Uniforms**

Bridges Montessori requires Explorers, Elementary and Middle School students to wear a school uniform. Any student not adhering to the school policy will be asked to comply or sent home accordingly.

## **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
  - Field trip uniform: evergreen polo shirt with Bridges logo from the Lands' End School Catalog and khaki bottoms. For details on field trips, refer to the Bridges Montessori Policy Manual.
- Explorers (third year Primary students) participate in PE weekly. One PE uniform is required.

- PE uniform: Gray heather essential or active tee with Bridges logo from the Lands' End School Catalog, navy blue or black athletic shorts, sneakers and socks.
- Daily-comfortable, easily removable clothing to support self-sufficiency. No belts on bottoms.
- Closed-toed shoes only (no flip-flops, Crocs or open-toed sandals)
- No commercial characters on any personal items (TV/movie characters on water bottles, lunch boxes, t-shirts).

## **Elementary and Middle School**

The uniform, on non PE days consists of:

- Any polo or essential tee from Lands' End School catalog (polo shirts preferred) for daily wear
  - All colors approved
  - o All tops must have the Bridges logo
- Khaki or plaid bottoms from Lands' End School catalog for daily wear
  - Plaid skirts/skorts only offered in girl sizes
  - Khaki shorts, skirts/skorts or pants can be purchased from another company IF the style is very similar
- One field-trip uniform required
  - Evergreen polo shirt with Bridges logo from the Lands' End School Catalog and khaki bottoms. Elementary students may wear a class designed/teacher approved shirt on specific field trips.
- One PE uniform required
  - Gray heather essential or active tee with Bridges logo from the Lands' End School catalog, navy blue or black athletic shorts, athletic sneakers and socks.
- Closed-toed shoes only (no flip-flops or open-toed sandals) daily. Laces must be tied on shoes with shoelaces. No shoes that make noise, roll or light up. See indoor shoe details in Lower Elementary handbook.
- No skirts or shorts shorter than the tip of fingers when arms down at sides
- No commercial characters on personal items (TV/movie characters on water bottles, lunch boxes, sneakers, etc.)

## **Field Trip Uniforms**

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 shirt created by the classroom. For safety reasons, all students must wear the same shirts on field trips. Families will be notified of shirt details 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 Primary students do not participate in class lunches.

#### **NUT SAFF**

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 foods that contain nuts..

#### 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).

## Primary

Each month, parents of Primary students receive a rotation Snack Calendar 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 Classroom Parent Forms. 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 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 and Middle School**

All Elementary and Middle School 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 on the annual Pizza Form. 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 for missed pizza days.

## **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/Primary Field Trips**

Toddler and Pre-Primary students will participate in on-campus "field trips." 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 Primary, Elementary and Middle School parents/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.

## Uniforms

For safety's sake, all 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, 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**

Toddler and Primary progress reports are distributed two times per year. Elementary and Middle School report cards are distributed four times per year on a 9 week quarter system. Parent/Teacher conferences are provided three times per year for Toddler, Primary, Elementary and Middle School environments (see School Calendar for specific dates). If at any other time parents/guardians 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 direct email to teacher.

All Infants and Toddlers will receive daily activity reports through the MyBrightDay app.

## **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 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. The Kindergarten/Explorer results will be used for internal purposes only. If, at any time, the teacher, 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 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.

#### 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.

## **Primary**

Biting at the 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 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 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.** 

#### **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.** 

#### **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 (includes extended families) is required fifteen (15) participation hours per year. There are a variety of ways to volunteer throughout the year. Any non-participation hours may be billed at the end of the school year at a rate of \$20 per hour.

## **Parent Workshops**

All parents are encouraged 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. 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 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 or email. 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.