

STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK

A. MISSION

The mission of The Bridge Academy is to educate and empower students with learning disabilities to reach their fullest potential through a comprehensive program developed around each student's individual needs.

B. CHARACTER AND PURPOSE

The Bridge Academy accepts students between the ages of eight and eighteen, of average or higher intellectual potential with a diagnosed learning disability. Students who are classified Specific Learning Disability, Multiply Disabled, Other Health Impaired, or Communication Impaired are appropriate candidates if they have a diagnosed learning disability. While The Bridge Academy is not a school for students with primary emotional or behavioral issues, our philosophy is to help those who, despite their best efforts, are frustrated by the failure of previous instructional strategies. We know that the best way to provide academic success to these students, to repair and renew their self-esteem, is to provide them with knowledgeable instructors who care deeply about them, work collaboratively with them to address their needs, and teach them according to the way they learn.

All classes are taught using methods, materials, and strategies that have proven to be effective for the learning disabled student population. Teachers consider the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and student profile to match specific strategies to individual need.

C. ORGANIZATION OF THE SCHOOL

The Bridge Academy was established and incorporated in 2003. It is a private, non-profit school with 501 (c) (3) status. The Bridge Academy is also accredited by the New Jersey State Department of Education.

1. Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is the primary governing body of the school. It functions according to By-Laws established in 2003 and revised in 2004. The Board is composed of 18 members, 30 % of whom must be parents of current students. The Board is responsible for the establishment of policy, the appointment of the Principal and Business Manager and the preservation of the school's mission, finances, facilities and programs.

The Principal, Business Manager and President of the Parent Teacher Organization are members, ex officio, of the Board of Trustees.

2. Administration

The Principal is appointed by the Board of Trustees and is responsible for the daily operation of the school and implementation of the philosophy and policies established by the Trustees. The Principal is also responsible for assuring that the school complies with all State Department of Education requirements for accreditation.

The Business Manager is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day business operations of the school with management responsibilities for the financial operations, execution of the Human Resource methods and procedures and compliance with Federal and State laws and requirements.

D. PARENT INVOLVEMENT

1. Parent Teacher Organization

The PTO plays a key role supporting the students, staff and families of The Bridge Academy. This organization is comprised of parents/guardians of students and teachers of The Bridge Academy. If you are a parent/guardian of a student at The Bridge Academy you are automatically a member of the PTO and are encouraged to be an active member. The PTO supports and/or subsidizes school trips and activities, the Teacher Appreciation Luncheon and school requests for items that may not be covered in the school budget. There are opportunities to be an activity chair or to serve on one of the PTO committees. At Back-to-School Night there will be a PTO overview and sign up sheet. We encourage all parents to be active participants in the PTO.

2. Annual Giving

Since tuition does not cover the entire costs of The Bridge Academy, annual giving by all including trustees, parents, grandparents, staff, alumni, and friends is critical to enabling The Bridge Academy to be all it can be for the students. An annual giving request letter will be sent to all families, trustees, and friends of The Bridge Academy in the fall along with an Annual Report that will provide important information to its supporters. Our goal is 100% response. No gift is too big or too small!

E. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

1. School Hours

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
8:00 am to 2:45 pm

Wednesday
8:00 am to 1:15 pm

2. Student Expectations

All students should arrive daily:

- well rested and having had breakfast
- and with:
- a pencil case which contains sharpened pencils, a pen, an eraser, 3
 - highlighters (pink, green, and yellow)
 - a notebook or other organizational materials
 - an assignment pad
 - necessary classroom materials
 - completed homework
 - lunch

3. Absences

If a student is going to be absent, please contact The Bridge Academy main office. Upon the student's return to school, please send a note regarding the student's absence. In the case of extended medical absences, a doctor's note may be required.

If a student is absent for five (5) consecutive days, The Bridge Academy is required to notify the sending district.

If the Student does see a physician, please send in pertinent medical information such as updated immunization records and medical excuses.

The parent/guardian should notify the bus company of any change in regular transportation due to absences.

4. Arriving Late/Leaving Early

If your student arrives late to school or must leave before the scheduled end of the school day, please sign him/her in or out in the main office. Students should give a note to the homeroom teacher in the morning specifying the need to leave early.

Unless prior written permission is obtained, students will be released to a parent/guardian only. Chronic lateness (3 times within one semester) will result in a lunch detention and parent conference.

5. Alternate Travel Plans

Students wishing to travel home on another student's bus must have prior approval from the bus companies and written permission from each student's parents/guardians prior to the travel day. Alternate transportation is at the discretion of the bus driver. Many of the bus companies will not transport other students and it is the parent's responsibility to confirm with the bus company.

6. Driving To School

Students who have had a driver's license for at least two months (based on the issue date of the license) wishing to drive to school and park on the school grounds, may apply for a Student Driving Permit Registration and Agreement.

Those students granted permission to operate a vehicle should understand that driving their vehicle to school is a privilege which may be revoked by the school authorities in the event a student violates any of the guidelines pertaining to the Student Driving Policy.

F. ACADEMIC PROGRAM

1. Curriculum

The curriculum at The Bridge Academy is tailored to meet the individual needs, learning styles and Individual Education Program (IEP) of each student. To reach this goal and close the gap between the students's potential and achievement, a strong emphasis is placed on professional staff development with a focus on assessment design and analysis. Effective assessment is an ongoing part of diagnostic teaching which insures better delivery of services. Teachers work with students to implement remediation strategies to address individual weaknesses in reading, writing, math, organizational and study skills. Content area teachers present challenging, grade appropriate material and employ multi-sensory teaching techniques to foster learning and mastery of skills and content. Small group instruction spans the curriculum so students receive a high degree of direct, individualized instruction and feedback. The curriculum committee develops unique curriculum utilizing the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and reflective of best practices for our special needs population.

2. Back To School Night

In early fall, The Bridge Academy offers a Back To School night designed so parents can meet their child's teachers and better understand the projected curriculum. The Bridge Academy has a strong commitment to communicating and working in partnership with parents, therefore, we encourage full participation in Back To School Night.

3. Groupings

Students are grouped according to age, academic and social needs.

4. Homework

Homework will be provided according to each student's needs and abilities and in support of the goals of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Homework should be a manageable responsibility for the student. The readiness level of the student will be considered when homework is assigned.

All students are expected to abide by the individual homework policies established by each department.

5. Assessment and Testing

The Bridge Academy uses a variety of assessments and tests to monitor the progress of each child and to adjust teaching methodology and content. The Bridge Academy staff reviews all evaluations and IEP for each student. Informal assessments are administered throughout the school year in all curricular areas. Formal assessments are given in reading and math at the end of each school year and shared at the annual review meeting. Each student is given testing accommodations as specified in his/her IEP.

6. Grading

A student progress report to provide the student, parents and district case manager with an early assessment as to how the student has transitioned into the new school year is provided approximately six weeks after school commences. Trimester report cards are issued which include progress with academic goals, learning foundations, a letter grade, and teacher comment.

7. Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences are an important component of each child's educational program and The Bridge Academy expects 100% participation at these scheduled events. These conferences are used to review student efforts and any other issues supporting or impeding each child's progress.

8. Individual Education Program Conferences

The Bridge Academy facilitates and participates in an Individual Education Program meeting each year for every student.

9. Counseling Services

The Bridge Academy employs a full time counselor to address the social, emotional and counseling needs of students as designated by the Individual Education Plan.

10. Physical Education Requirements

All students in the State of New Jersey are required to participate in physical education. Students may miss one class with a parent note. Consecutive absences require a doctor's note.

Exemptions from participation will be accepted for medical reasons. A doctor's note is required for all medical exemptions.

All students are expected to be prepared to participate in physical education by having soft soled sneakers and clothes which don't restrict movement or activity. Students without proper footwear will receive an incomplete for the day.

11. Student Activities, Field Trips and Assemblies

The Bridge Academy encourages teachers to support the curriculum with as much experiential learning as possible. Students will have a variety of activities, field trips, and assemblies designed in conjunction with curriculum goals.

G. STUDENT EXPECTATIONS

The Bridge Academy seeks to provide a school climate that fosters learning, respect and safety of all. Therefore, all students are expected to adhere to the rules below.

1. General Behavior

All members of The Bridge Academy community are entitled to kindness and respect.

All members of The Bridge Academy community will contribute to the positive physical environment by respecting the facility and belongings of others.

All members of the Bridge Academy community will strive for success by being on time, prepared, and being responsible for their actions.

All members of The Bridge Academy community will communicate in a respectful manner by using positive words, listening to others, and showing appropriate demeanor.

2. Dress Code

Interpretation is at the discretion of the Administration.

All members of the Bridge Academy community should refrain from wearing:

- hats or hoods in the building
- ripped clothing
- clothing with references to alcohol, drugs, profanity, vulgarity or violence
- revealing clothing such as bare midriffs, low cut tops, or excessively short skirts or shorts.
- clothing that exposes underwear
- pajamas

3. Cell Phones/Portable Electronics

Cell phones must be muted or turned off during the school day.

Portable electronic devices may only be used under teacher direction and supervisions.

4. Technology User Policy

Technology is available to The Bridge Academy community as an integral part of the curriculum, supporting both teaching and learning.

All students and parents must sign an Acceptable User Policy after students have completed appropriate training.

The Acceptable User Policy (AUP) includes:

- **No** food, gum, drinks or any liquids (except for specific science experiments under teacher supervision) will be near computer equipment.
- Students must be properly supervised at all times.
- Students are allowed to print only what is necessary and pertinent to the lesson or project
- **No** games, listening to music, checking internet e-mail accounts or internet chatting unless part of a specific lesson directed by a teacher.
- **No** inappropriate use of programs including downloading of harmful or malicious software, or installing personal software.
- Quit all programs and log off when finished.

Failure to follow the above user policy will result in the loss of computer and internet privileges.

H. DISCIPLINARY CODE

The Bridge Academy disciplinary code has three (3) levels depending on the severity of the behavior. The application of these levels is at the discretion of the Bridge Academy staff and administration.

1. Lunch Detentions

Lunch detentions are served during lunch in a supervised room separate from the general population.

Lunch detentions may be given as a result of:

- behavior inappropriate to the school setting
- physical aggression
- out of the area of supervision
- inappropriate bus behavior
- chronic lateness to school

A parent/guardian signature is required on the student copy of the lunch detention form.

Upon receiving a third lunch detention within a single marking period, the student will serve an In School Suspension (ISS).

2. In School Suspensions (ISS)

In School Suspensions are served for an entire school day in a supervised setting. Students are kept separate from their peers.

All students will receive work from their teachers to do throughout the day.

In School Suspensions may be given as a result of:

- behavior inappropriate to the school setting
- physical aggression
- more than two (2) lunch detentions within a single marking period.

Parent/guardian will be notified by phone when their student receives an In School Suspension.

3. Out Of School Suspension (OSS)

Out of School Suspensions will be served away from the school premises for one (1) or more days, not to exceed ten (10) days. District case managers will be notified.

Out of School Suspensions may be given as a result of:

- behavior inappropriate to the school setting
- severe aggression
- possession of a weapon
- possession of tobacco, drugs, or alcohol

A mandatory meeting between parent, guardian, student and the administration will be held following the suspension.

4. Bus Behavior

Students will:

- remain seated with seatbelt if provided
- refrain from eating and drinking
- keep noise to a minimum
- follow directions given by the bus driver and/or aide

Failure to follow bus rules may result in a lunch detention, the loss of bus privileges or any other appropriate disciplinary action deemed necessary by administration.

I. HARRASSMENT, INTIMIDATION & BULLYING

Bullying interferes with the learning process and undermines the provision of a safe environment. Harassment, intimidation, and bullying is prohibited on school property, at a school -sponsored functions or on a school bus.

Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying is defined as:

Any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or series of incidents that:

- Is reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic
- AND Takes place on school property, at any school -sponsored function or off school grounds as provided for in section 16 of P.L. 2010, c122
- AND Substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students
- AND THAT A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to his person or damage to his property;
- OR Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students;
- OR Creates a hostile educational environment for the student by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the student.

Bullying of any nature will not be tolerated at The Bridge Academy and will be dealt with according to the disciplinary code and as required by New Jersey's Anti- Bullying Bill of Rights Act (ABR). Additional parent information and report forms are available on our website <https://bridgeacademynj.org> and in our main office.

J. HARASSMENT/SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is the behavior of an individual that emphasizes the sexuality or gender identity of another individual in a manner that prevents or impairs the victim's full enjoyment of educational opportunities. An individual who resorts to the use of power and status over another individual can commit harassment or sexual harassment through unwanted, offensive behavior.

The environment at The Bridge Academy shall be free from harassment and/or sexual harassment. This applies to every member of the Bridge Academy community.

K. DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

The Bridge Academy is committed to maintaining a drug free and smoke free school zone.

No unauthorized substances including medicines, tobacco, alcohol, inhalants, paraphernalia, or any other material that can be dangerous to life and health are to be brought to school.

Staff will take steps to remove such substances or paraphernalia from a student suspected of using or actually in possession of suspicious materials.

The possession of these materials will be reported to the appropriate authorities and the student's parents/guardian.

Students violating The Bridge Academy drug, alcohol and tobacco policy will be subject to the disciplinary code at the discretion of the administration.

L. WEAPONS

Weapons of any nature are forbidden on school property.

Staff will notify the administration immediately of any suspected weapons. The administration will take steps to insure safety.

The administration will report any weapons possession on school property as required by law.

M. EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

School closings for inclement weather will be posted on NJ101.5 FM website and television Channel 6. It will also be posted on The Bridge Academy website at <https://bridgeacademynj.org> . The Bridge Academy may be open independently of individual school districts. Please check the websites for listings specific to The Bridge Academy.

If your local school district is closed and The Bridge Academy is open, transportation may not be provided. If parents/guardians are uncertain, they should check with their sending districts.

The Bridge Academy may have early closings due to worsening weather or unforeseen events. Transportation coordinators will be contacted and requested to send buses/transportation for early dismissal.

Please make a plan with your child in the event of early closings.

N. EMERGENCY EVACUATION/FIREDRILLS

The Bridge Academy has developed an Emergency Evacuation Plan that identifies procedures and shelters in case of disaster emergencies. Alternative plans have also been developed to assure safe evacuation.

In case of fire, staff, student and any visitors will immediately evacuate the building according to directions and routes in each classroom.

Fire drills and other drill types are conducted monthly.

O. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Bridge Academy has a comprehensive emergency management plan in place. This plan has been reviewed by the Lawrence Township Police Department.

P. CHANGE OF PARENTAL/GUARDIAN INFORMATION

If your address, home or work telephone number or any other contact information changes, please inform the school immediately. In cases of emergencies it is essential that we be able to get in touch with all parents/guardians.

Q. HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

New Jersey State law requires parents to furnish a complete record of all immunizations before a child may enter school. These immunizations include DPT, DT, Salk or Sabin polio vaccine, measles, mumps, and rubella. Any updated immunization records should be provided to the health office at school.

Each school day there is a nurse on duty who is available to any student as needed. Minor injuries are cared for at school. For more severe injuries the student may be taken to nearest hospital.

The school nurse will always try to reach the parents immediately in the case of a serious problem. It is therefore essential that parents keep the school apprised of changes in addresses or telephone numbers. Work numbers and alternate emergency numbers are also necessary.

R. ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION IN SCHOOL

If a student must take a prescribed or over the counter medication during school hours, only the nurse will administer the medication.

All medication must have written instructions signed by the parent/guardian and physician.

All medication must be in its original prescription bottle/container and clearly marked with:

- physician's name
- pharmacy
- student's name
- name of medication
- time to be administered
- dosage to be administered

A parent/guardian or an adult must personally deliver all medications to school.

Absolutely no medication, prescription or over the counter, is to be carried by the student at school. The only exceptions are inhalers and Epi-pens for severe allergies. If your child requires either of these, and you would like your child to carry their medication, please contact the nurse so the appropriate form can be filled out.

The school nurse will:

- inform appropriate school personnel of the medication, with parental consent
- maintain a record of the administration of medication
- lock medication in the nurse's office
- return unused medication to parent/guardian only

It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the school nurse of any changes in the student's health or medication.

Instructions for administration of medication during all school sponsored trips will be sent home prior to the trip.

S. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. School Communications

Administrators and staff are available through email or by phone as needed. See the school website, <https://bridgeacademynj.org> for staff email addresses. Parents and students are encouraged to communicate first with any teacher or staff member where there may be a question, concern or suggestion. The next point of communication is with the Principal.

Report cards will be sent three times per year by mail to parents/guardians.

All students will receive a progress report during the first trimester and as necessary during subsequent trimesters.

Parent/Teacher conferences will be held in the fall and in the spring.

2. Website

Parents and students are encouraged to check The Bridge Academy website at <https://bridgeacademynj.org> for announcements and updates.

2. Lost and Found

The Bridge Academy assumes no responsibility for personal items. A lost and found box is located in the main office and will hold lost items for two weeks.

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