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Student and Family Handbook

Annual Notices and Acknowledgments

2026-2027

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WELCOME & SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Dear Bridges Charter School Families,

Welcome! We are thrilled to have you as part of our vibrant and caring school community at Bridges Charter School. Whether you are joining us for the first time or returning, you will find dedicated educators, a supportive network of families, and a nurturing environment that meets each child's academic, social, and emotional needs.

Our goal is to provide a rich and engaging learning experience—one that is both rigorous and responsive to individual student needs and interests. We are committed to providing high-quality instruction through classroom-based and hybrid learning models, while fostering a safe, inclusive, and respectful school culture.

This handbook outlines the programs, policies, procedures, and expectations that guide our school community. Families are encouraged to review this document carefully and refer to it throughout the school year. The most current version of policies may always be found on our website.

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2. SCHOOL GOVERNANCE & STAFF

Bridges Charter School is governed by a Board of Directors responsible for policy oversight and organizational direction. Daily operations are managed by the administrative team.

All staff members are responsible for maintaining a safe, inclusive, and academically rigorous environment for students.

All staff email addresses follow the format:
firstname.lastname@bridgescharter.org

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3. COMMUNICATION & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Effective communication between school and home is essential to student success.

School Communication Platforms

- ParentSquare (primary communication tool)
- Teacher newsletters and updates
- School website
- Email communication

Families are responsible for maintaining updated contact information and regularly reviewing communications with the main office.

Parent Engagement Opportunities

- Parent Advisory Council (PAC)
- Parent Managed Cohorts (PMC) (E.g. Performing Arts)
- Board Meetings
- Volunteer opportunities

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4. HEALTH, SAFETY & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Campus Safety Procedures

For the safety and security of all students and staff, the campus shall remain secured during the instructional day. All gates will be locked once school begins at 8:20 and will reopen at dismissal at 2:45 unless otherwise authorized for school events.

All visitors, including parents/guardians, volunteers, and vendors, must:

- Enter through the main office
- Present valid identification
- Sign in through the Visitor Management System
- Wear a visible visitor badge at all times while on campus

The Director or designee may deny or revoke campus access to any individual whose presence is deemed disruptive, unsafe, or inconsistent in accordance with Board Policy 1240.

Emergency Preparedness and Procedures

Bridges Charter School maintains comprehensive emergency preparedness procedures in compliance with state and local requirements. Staff are trained annually, and students participate in regular drills.

Fire/Evacuation

- Conducted monthly
- Students are escorted to designated evacuation areas
- Attendance is verified immediately upon evacuation

Earthquake

- Students and staff follow “Duck, Cover, and Hold On” procedures
- Evacuation occurs after the all-clear signal

Lockdown

- Initiated in response to an immediate threat
- All individuals must remain in secure locations
- Communication is directed by administration and law enforcement

During any emergency, students will only be released to individuals listed on the emergency card and must be signed out properly.

Emergency Contact Requirements

Parents/guardians are required to maintain accurate and current emergency contact information through the Student Information System - Q Connect. Updates must be reported to the front office immediately for:

- Address changes
- Phone numbers
- Emergency contacts
- Medical information

Health & Illness Policy

Students must remain home when exhibiting symptoms that limit participation or pose a risk of contagion. These include but are not limited to:

- Fever of 100.4°F or higher
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Persistent cough or difficulty breathing
- Contagious conditions (as determined by a healthcare provider)

Students may return to school only when:

- Fever-free for 24 hours without medication
- Symptoms are improving
- Medically cleared when required

Medication at School

The school will not administer medication without:

- A completed medication authorization form
- Written physician instructions

All medications must be stored in the school office.

Head Lice Policy

Head lice are common among school-aged children and, while inconvenient, do not spread disease. In alignment with guidance from the California Department of Public Health, Bridges Charter School does not enforce a “no-nit” policy.

Students found to have head lice or nits may remain in school for the remainder of the day. Parents/guardians will be notified so that treatment may begin promptly at home.

Families are expected to:

- Check their child's hair regularly
- Begin appropriate treatment immediately upon identification
- Follow all treatment instructions and complete recommended follow-up treatment

Students may return to school after appropriate treatment has been initiated. The school may recheck as appropriate.

To reduce the spread of lice, students are encouraged to avoid head-to-head contact and any sharing of personal items such as hats, brushes, and helmets.

The goal of this policy is to support student health while minimizing unnecessary absences and maintaining student dignity.

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5. ATTENDANCE & INSTRUCTIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Compulsory Attendance

In accordance with California Education Code §48200, all students are required to attend school regularly and on time. Attendance is critical to student success and school funding (Average Daily Attendance).

Reporting Absences

Parents/guardians must notify the school office of any absence within 72 hours and provide the specific reason. Documentation may be required for verification.

Board Policy 5110 Student Attendance

Excused Absences (Education Code §48205)

Excused absences include:

- Student illness, including mental health
- Medical, dental, or vision appointments
- Quarantine under official order
- Funeral services (up to five days)
- Court appearances or jury duty
- Religious observances or retreats
- Naturalization ceremonies
- Time spent with an active-duty military parent

Unexcused Absences

Absences not listed above are considered unexcused, including:

- Vacations or travel
- Transportation issues
- Personal convenience

Truancy Definition (Education Code §48260)

A student is considered truant if they have:

- Three (3) unexcused absences, or
- Three (3) tardies exceeding 30 minutes

Truancy Intervention Process

- Truancy Letter #1 issued after 3 violations
- Truancy Letter #2 issued after continued violations
- Truancy Letter #3 and SART meeting after persistent violations

Failure to improve attendance may result in further legal or administrative action.

Tardiness

Students arriving after the start of the school day must:

- Report to the office
- Sign in and obtain a tardy slip

Excessive tardiness may be subject to truancy procedures.

Regular attendance is required pursuant to California Education Code §48200.

Full attendance Board Policy: Board Policy 5110 Student Attendance

Independent Study

Short-term independent study may be approved at the discretion of the Director or designee for qualifying reasons. Requests must:

- Be submitted at least one week in advance

- Meet eligibility criteria
- Exclude vacation-related absences

Board Policy 6158

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6. STUDENT CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE

Bridges Charter School utilizes a progressive discipline model grounded in restorative practices.

Expectations

Students are expected to:

- Follow staff directions
- Respect others and property
- Maintain a safe learning environment

Prohibited Conduct

Includes but is not limited to:

- Physical aggression or threats
- Bullying, harassment, or discrimination
- Possession of prohibited or dangerous items
- Disruption of school activities

Discipline Measures

May include:

- Restorative interventions
- Counseling or behavioral supports
- Parent conferences
- Suspension or expulsion in accordance with Education Code §48900

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7. TECHNOLOGY & ACCEPTABLE USE

Students are expected to:

- Use school-issued devices and networks for educational purposes only

- Follow all directions provided by teachers and staff
- Protect their login credentials and personal information
- Report any inappropriate content or safety concerns immediately
- Refrain from accessing, creating, or sharing harmful, offensive, or unlawful material

Violation of acceptable use expectations may result in disciplinary action, including loss of technology privileges and additional consequences in accordance with school policy.

School Responsibility (On Campus / School Network)

While students are on campus or using school-managed systems, Bridges Charter School is responsible for:

1. Supervision & Instruction

- Providing active supervision of student device use during the school day
- Ensuring technology use is aligned with instructional goals
- Establishing classroom expectations for appropriate digital behavior

2. Network Monitoring & Filtering

- Maintaining internet filtering and firewall protections in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)
- Monitoring activity on school Wi-Fi and school-issued accounts (e.g., Google Workspace, learning platforms)
- Taking reasonable measures to restrict access to harmful or inappropriate content

3. Enforcement of Acceptable Use

- Investigating and responding to violations occurring on campus, during school activities, or on school-issued devices/accounts
- Applying progressive discipline and restorative practices when appropriate

4. Digital Citizenship Education

- Providing instruction on online safety, cyberbullying prevention, and responsible technology use

5. Data Privacy & Security

- Safeguarding student data in accordance with state and federal laws
- Utilizing approved educational platforms that meet privacy standards

Parent/Guardian Responsibility (Off Campus / Non-School Network)

When students are off campus and not using the school network, parents/guardians assume primary responsibility for supervision and guidance, including:

1. Supervision of Device Use

- Monitoring use of personal and school-issued devices at home
- Setting expectations for screen time, appropriate content, and online behavior

2. Home Internet & App Oversight

- Recognizing that school filtering may not apply on home or public networks
- Utilizing parental controls, filters, or monitoring tools as desired

3. Accountability for Off-Campus Behavior

- Reinforcing expectations for respectful communication and appropriate conduct online
- Understanding that, pursuant to California Education Code §§ 48900(r) and 48900(s), the school may address off-campus conduct that substantially disrupts the school environment

4. Care of School-Issued Devices

- Ensuring devices are used appropriately, charged, and brought to school daily
- Protecting devices from damage, loss, or misuse

5. Communication with School

- Reporting concerns related to cyberbullying, safety threats, or misuse that may impact the school community

Shared Responsibility

The school and families work in partnership to:

- Promote safe, respectful, and responsible digital behavior
- Reinforce expectations for appropriate technology use regardless of location
- Collaborate when concerns arise that affect student well-being or the school environment

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8. CAMPUS PROCEDURES & LOGISTICS

Arrival & Dismissal

- Gates open at 7:50 AM
- Students arriving after start time must check in at the office
- Students must be picked up within 15 minutes of dismissal

Traffic & Safety Procedures

- Follow all posted traffic rules
- Use designated drop-off/pick-up areas
- Adhere to staff direction

Leaving Campus

Students may only leave campus with an authorized adult and must be signed out through the office.

Field Trip Participation

Field trips are an extension of the classroom and are designed to support the educational program. Participation is limited to enrolled students assigned to the class and approved chaperones.

Siblings on Field Trips

To ensure student safety, supervision ratios, and compliance with school liability requirements, siblings are **not** permitted to attend field trips.

- Parents/guardians may not bring enrolled siblings from other classes or non-enrolled children to any school-sponsored field trip or activity.
- Participation is strictly limited to students assigned to the class and approved volunteers.
- Any unauthorized child present at a field trip will be required to leave immediately with their parent/guardian.

Families are expected to plan accordingly when volunteering or chaperoning field trips.

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9. FAMILY INVOLVEMENT & VOLUNTEERING

All volunteers must comply with school policies, safety procedures, and legal requirements.

General Expectations for Volunteers

Volunteers are considered part of the educational team and are expected to:

- Follow all school rules, procedures, and staff direction
- Maintain confidentiality of student information
- Interact with students in a respectful and appropriate manner
- Support, not replace, the role of certificated staff

The Director or designee may deny or revoke volunteer privileges if a volunteer's presence is determined to be disruptive, unsafe, or inconsistent with school policies (Board Policy 1240).

Siblings While Volunteering

To maintain a safe and focused learning environment and to ensure appropriate supervision and liability coverage:

- Siblings (enrolled or non-enrolled) are not permitted to accompany a volunteer in classrooms, on campus during instructional time, or during volunteer activities.
- Volunteers must make alternate childcare arrangements.
- Any volunteer who arrives with a sibling will not be permitted to volunteer that day.

Volunteer Requirements (Pre-Approval Required)

All volunteers must complete the following requirements prior to providing service:

1. Identification & Application

- Complete Volunteer Application and Acknowledgments Form
- Provide a valid government-issued photo ID (driver's license or state ID)

2. Health Clearance

- Submit proof of a recent negative Tuberculosis (TB) test or approved waiver on file with the school

3. Fingerprinting (Background Clearance)

Required for any volunteer who:

- Works alone with students, or
- Is out of the direct line of sight of certificated staff

Fingerprint clearance must be completed through the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in accordance with Education Code §49024.

4. Mandated Reporter Training (AB 848)

In accordance with California law:

- Volunteers who meet the criteria must complete mandated reporter training
- Training must be completed within six (6) weeks of beginning service
- Training must be renewed annually
- Proof of completion must be submitted to the school

5. Additional Requirements for Field Trip Volunteers/Drivers

Volunteers serving as drivers or chaperones must also provide:

- Valid Driver's License
- Current vehicle registration
- Proof of automobile insurance meeting minimum coverage requirements
- Driving record (DMV report)
- Completion of driver authorization forms
- Verification of seatbelt compliance and appropriate child safety restraints

6. Volunteer Orientation

- Attendance at a volunteer orientation is required prior to service

On-Campus Volunteer Procedures

While volunteering on campus, all volunteers must:

- Sign in and out using the Visitor Management System
- Wear a visible volunteer badge at all times
- Follow all campus supervision and safety expectations
- Use adult restrooms only

Volunteers may not:

- Be alone with a student in a closed or unsupervised setting unless fingerprinted
- Transport students without prior authorization and completed paperwork
- Discuss confidential student or staff information

Failure to comply with volunteer requirements or expectations may result in revocation of volunteer privileges.

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10. NUTRITION & WELLNESS

Bridges promotes a healthy school environment through:

- Nutritional guidelines for meals and snacks
- Restrictions on highly processed foods
- Wellness education aligned with federal and state guidelines

All food provided on campus must comply with school nutrition standards.

Board Policy 5030 Student Wellness Policy

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11. APPENDICES (LEGAL NOTICES & POLICIES)

Appendix A – Title IX Notice (Full Annual Notification)

Bridges Charter School does not discriminate on the basis of sex in any education program or activity. This includes sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking.

Title IX Coordinator: Cindy McCarthy, Director of Daily Operations
1335 Calle Bouganvilla, Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
Phone: 805-492-3569 Email: cindy.mccarthy@bridgescharter.org

Any student, parent, or staff member may report sex discrimination. Reports may be made in person, by mail, by phone, or by email. The school will respond promptly in accordance with Title IX grievance procedures. Retaliation is strictly prohibited.

Appendix B – Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP – Full Notice)

Bridges Charter School has the primary responsibility to ensure compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations.
Complaints may be filed regarding:

- Discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying

- Pupil fees
- LCAP compliance
- State or federally funded programs

Timeline:

- Filed within 6 months (discrimination) or 1 year (other complaints)
- Investigation completed within 60 days
- Appeal to CDE within 30 days

Complaints should be submitted to: Cindy McCarthy, Compliance Officer
Civil remedies may be available outside of the UCP process.

Appendix C – Annual Parent Rights Notification (EC 48980)

Parents/guardians are notified annually of their rights, including:

- Compulsory education requirements
- Student discipline policies
- Attendance expectations
- Access to student records (FERPA)
- Health and safety policies
- Non-discrimination protections

Copies of full notices are available upon request.

Appendix D – Mandated Reporter Requirements (AB 848)

Under California AB 848:

- Certain volunteers are mandated reporters
- Training must be completed within 6 weeks of starting service
- Training must be renewed annually
- Volunteers must report suspected abuse or neglect immediately

Failure to comply may result in removal and potential legal consequences.

Appendix E – Health & Safety Annual Notices

Includes:

- Immunization requirements (CDPH)
- Vision and hearing screening requirements
- Illness exclusion guidelines
- Emergency preparedness protocols

Parents are responsible for maintaining accurate medical and emergency records.

Appendix F – Healthy Food Agreement

Families agree to:

- Provide nutritious meals
- Limit processed foods, sugar, and unhealthy snacks
- Follow school nutrition guidelines for celebrations

The school promotes a healthy, nut-free environment.

Appendix G – Boundaries Policy (Full Summary)

All staff and volunteers must maintain professional boundaries with students.
Prohibited behaviors include:

- Physical discipline
- Inappropriate physical contact
- One-on-one unsupervised interactions
- Personal or social relationships outside school

Violations will result in disciplinary action and may be reported to authorities.

Appendix H – Policy Access

All Board Policies referenced in this handbook are available:

- On the Bridges Charter School website
- In the front office upon request

Families are encouraged to review full policies for complete legal language.

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12. Annual Notices and Acknowledgments

12.1 Annual Parent/Guardian Notification

In accordance with **California Education Code §48980**, Bridges Charter School annually notifies parents and guardians of their rights and responsibilities. The following notices are provided in full as part of this handbook.

12.2 Nondiscrimination and Safe School Environment

Bridges Charter School is committed to providing a safe school environment where all individuals are afforded equal access and opportunities. The school's programs, activities, and practices shall be free from discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and bullying based on actual or perceived:

- Race, color, ancestry, national origin, or ethnicity
- Age or religion
- Marital or parental status
- Physical or mental disability
- Sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or gender expression

This includes compliance with:

- **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972**
- **California Education Code §§200–220**
- **Safe Place to Learn Act (EC §§234–234.1)**

All complaints of discrimination or harassment are investigated promptly through the Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP). Retaliation against any individual who files a complaint or participates in an investigation is strictly prohibited.

12.3 Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP)

Bridges Charter School follows the Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP) to investigate and resolve complaints related to:

- Discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or bullying
- Violations of state or federal educational programs
- Failure to comply with laws governing educational programs
- Retaliation against complainants

Complaints must generally be filed within six (6) months of the alleged incident. The school will conduct an investigation and provide a written decision within required timelines.

For filing assistance, contact the school office.

12.4 Title IX Notice

Bridges Charter School does not discriminate on the basis of sex in any educational program or activity.

Title IX protections include:

- Protection from sexual harassment and sexual violence
- Equal access to educational programs and athletics
- The right to file a complaint and receive a prompt, equitable resolution

Any student or parent may report concerns to school administration. The school will respond promptly in accordance with Title IX requirements.

12.5 Attendance, Absences, and Truancy

Regular school attendance is essential to student success.

A student may be excused from school for reasons including:

- Illness or medical appointments
- Religious observances
- Court appearances
- Family emergencies
- Military family leave

A student is considered truant after:

- Three unexcused absences, or
- Three tardies exceeding 30 minutes

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of school days, including excused and unexcused absences.

Students have the right to complete missed assignments for excused absences and receive full credit upon completion.

12.6 Acceptable Use of Technology

Students must follow school guidelines when using technology.

The school will:

- Implement internet filtering systems
- Monitor use on school networks

Students and families must:

- Sign the Acceptable Use Agreement annually
- Refrain from accessing inappropriate content
- Use technology responsibly

Violations may result in disciplinary action and/or legal consequences.

12.7 Student Records and Privacy (FERPA)

Parents and eligible students have the right to:

- Inspect and review student records within 45 days
- Request corrections to inaccurate or misleading records
- Control disclosure of personally identifiable information

The school may release records without consent to authorized personnel with legitimate educational interest or as required by law.

Complaints may be filed with the U.S. Department of Education.

12.8 Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

All school employees are mandated reporters and are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect.

Reports are:

- Made to appropriate law enforcement or child protective agencies
- Confidential and protected by law

Parents may also report suspected abuse to school administration or law enforcement.

12.9 Health, Immunizations, and Medical Care

Students must comply with California immunization laws unless exempt.

The school provides:

- Emergency care, including epinephrine for anaphylaxis
- Medication support with proper documentation

Parents must:

- Provide updated medical information
- Submit required physician and parent authorization forms for medication

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12.10 California Healthy Youth Act

Students may receive comprehensive sexual health and HIV prevention education.

Parents have the right to:

- Review instructional materials
- Be notified prior to instruction
- Opt their child out in writing

Instruction is age-appropriate, medically accurate, and inclusive.

12.11 Foster Youth and Homeless Student Rights

Students who are homeless or in foster care have the right to:

- Immediate enrollment without required documents
- Remain in their school of origin
- Access transportation and support services
- Equal participation in all programs

The school designates liaisons to support these students and families.

12.12 School Safety and Emergency Procedures

Bridges Charter School maintains a Comprehensive School Safety Plan that includes:

- Emergency response procedures
- Disaster drills (fire, earthquake, lockdown)
- Campus safety protocols

Parents may request access to the safety plan.

12.13 Discipline and Student Conduct

Students are expected to follow school rules and behave respectfully.

Grounds for suspension or expulsion include:

- Causing or threatening harm
- Possession of weapons or drugs
- Bullying or harassment
- Theft or property damage

Disciplinary actions follow due process and are aligned with California Education Code.

12.14 Immigration and Educational Rights

All students have the right to:

- A free public education regardless of immigration status
- A safe and nondiscriminatory learning environment

The school:

- Does not require immigration status for enrollment
- Protects student information
- Supports family safety planning

12.15 Acknowledgment of Receipt

Parents/guardians must acknowledge receipt of this handbook and annual notices.

Acknowledgment confirms:

- Review of policies and expectations
- Understanding of rights and responsibilities
- Agreement to comply with school requirements

12.16 Access to Full Policies

Full policies are available:

- On the school website: bridgescharter.org
- In the school office upon request

Families are encouraged to review all materials carefully.