



The Bridge of Georgia
Center for Ability Development

Family Handbook of
Policies and Procedures
The Bridge of Georgia
2024-2025



It is with great joy and excitement I welcome you to the 2024-2025 school year at The Bridge of Georgia. Know that you are bringing your child to a place where they will be valued and loved and taught in a way that supports them in reaching their full potential. We believe that God created every child with a purpose and a plan for their lives and we are eager to help them find the purpose and build that plan. It is our goal to “begin with the end in mind” so that we might send out students into their communities prepared for rich and meaningful lives.

As we enter our twelfth full school year, we are filled with excitement that I hope is contagious. Each year, as our student body has increased, so has our commitment to excellence in teaching children with a spectrum of needs. We are intentional about seeing students in a way that values the gifts they bring rather than accentuating the challenges they face daily. It is amazing what students can accomplish when they know they are believed in and supported fully. As they become comfortable in our learning environment, we see behavior reduced, modes of communication acquired, and friendships formed, we regularly talk to parents who have been told their child couldn't _____ (fill in the blank) to find that they indeed can.

As we have grown, we have found that our students have diverse needs, and we want to ensure that we are meeting each of those needs well. Our students fall into several groups with similar needs. This year you will find the inclusivity that we all value with a greater attention to the specific needs of each of these groups and each student. We are forging new pathways for our students and hope you will show us patience and flexibility in the process of change.

I hope that you will feel the sense of family we have at The Bridge. I hope that your child will find a second home here...a place where they know they are deeply loved and valued, as are you. We desire that you find a continuum of services and support that reaches outside these doors and into your home as we work together for your child. No matter what other experiences you have had, you will find that here you are an important part of your child's team and will be treated as such.

When we opened our doors in 2013 our tagline was, “Exciting things are happening here” and they still are! I believe the very best is yet to come! Are you ready?

Blessings,

Mrs. Tami Burt
Executive Director

tami@thebridgeofgeorgia.org



Dear TBOG Family,

I hope you all had a wonderful summer and are feeling excited for the upcoming 2024-2025 academic year. As we begin this new school year, I want to extend a warm welcome back to our TBOG family.

As your principal, I am thrilled to be leading such an awesome school full of wonderful students. I look forward to working closely with the amazing families that make up our school community.

Our students are the pride and joy of our school. I am eager to witness their growth and development over the next school year. This school year will provide opportunities for your children to learn, achieve their goals, and make great strides with the support of our dedicated staff.

Parents, as I mentioned last year, my door is always open. I encourage you to schedule a meeting with me to address any concerns or share your valuable suggestions. It is my top priority to partner with you and ensure our students reach their full potential. Your child's well-being and education are of the utmost importance to me, and I want everyone to feel welcomed and supported at our school.

I am looking forward to an amazing year filled with fun, learning, growth, and joy. Together, we will make this an incredible school year for all.

Sincerely,

Tiffany Beckles

Principal

tiffany.beckles@thebridgeofgeorgia.org

Guiding Principles

Purpose

The Purpose of the Academy is to provide optimal learning at every level in a learning environment that fosters community among students at all ability levels. We desire to teach our students in the way that they learn so that, in turn, they may reach their highest possible level of success.

Mission

Our Mission is to support students in an inclusive environment and develop their abilities in a multi-faceted approach.

Vision

Our Vision is to support student learning in an inclusive environment that fosters integrity and respect. These values allow our students to obtain connections in our greater community.

Philosophy

The Philosophy of The Bridge of Georgia is to believe in the value of each child and support them in a way that allows them to be as successful as they can be. We believe that hope is powerful and that when the whole family is supported, we can generate a level of hope that wasn't possible without that support. We believe that children learn best in an environment that is most like the greater community with children of all different strengths and challenges learning and developing together. We strive to create an environment that is conducive to children being challenged in their areas of strength while being supported in their more challenging areas. Ultimately, we believe every individual has been created by God with a purpose and a plan for their life. We seek to help them in finding that plan and supporting them while they begin to carry it out.

School Information

The Bridge of Georgia School is a separate entity than The Bridge of Georgia Center. The School is nonprofit and consists of an Academy, Camps, Connections (for older teens and young adults), a sensory-friendly hair salon, daycare, and preschool with more to come.

The Bridge of Georgia Center consists of therapy services which Medicaid requires to be under a different tax ID number than the school. Current therapy services are ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis), Occupational Therapy, and Speech Therapy.

People can give donations to the School and receive a donation receipt for their taxes. This is not true of the Center. Both entities work together seamlessly, although there are Medicaid policies that guide us in how and where the therapists can provide therapy.

Physical Address 109 Blaine Street, Monroe, GA 30655

Mailing Address PO Box 542, Monroe, GA 30655

Phone Number 770-266-3390

CEO	Jim Bruner	jbruner@thebridgeofgeorgia.org
COO/Executive Director	Tami Burt	tami@thebridgeofgeorgia.org
Principal	Tiffany Beckles	tiffany.beckles@thebridgeofgeorgia.org
Curriculum Coordinator	Melaney Cohen	mcohen@thebridgeofgeorgia.org
Administrative Assistant/Finance	Debbie Adams	dadams@thebridgeofgeorgia.org
Receptionist	Barbara Brown	barbara.brown@thebridgeofgeorgia.org
Director of Clinical Services	Molly Masselli BCBA	mmasselli@thebridgeofgeorgia.org
Administrative Assistant/Finance	Crysti Blaylock	crysti.blaylock@thebridgeofgeorgia.org
Bridging the Gap Learning Center	Salina Daniel	salina.daniel@thebridgeofgeorgia.org
Fundamental Foundations Language and Literacy Program	Amanda Boyd	amanda.boyd@thebridgeofgeorgia.org
Connections	Nikki Paradise	nikki.paradise@thebridgeofgeorgia.org

The Bridge of Georgia begins accepting students at 8:00 am and students are tardy at 8:31.

Afternoon carpool begins at 3:30 PM and is usually done by 3:45.

Admission Policies

All policies and areas of concern either specifically or not specifically covered in the Family Handbook are subject to clarification and/or change by the school leadership.

Age requirements must be met by September 1.

The Admissions Committee (principal, curriculum coordinator, director) has final approval for acceptance and class placement. Many factors are considered in the placement process, however, placement will always be based on our ability to meet your child's needs. An incredible amount of thought goes into these decisions so that students are placed in an environment where they are most likely to thrive. Each year the majority of our students remain for the next year at The Bridge. This determines how many spaces we have to fill. We desire to serve as many children and families as possible and work to that end.

Notice of Non-Discriminatory Policy

The Bridge of Georgia admits students of any race, color, nationality, and ethnic origin to all programs and activities made available to any of our students. We do not discriminate based on race, color, ethnicity, or gender in administration of its educational practices or admissions policies.

Admissions Standards

The Bridge of Georgia reserves the right to deny entrance to any student if, in the opinion of the Admissions Committee, it is determined that the child is not a good fit for our learning environment. The process is extensive for determining the placement of students for each class. We are committed to growth in a steady and organized way because we want to do all things with excellence for our terrific kids.

Pre-Enrollment Requirements

- Completed application submitted to the school.
- The non-refundable application fee must be paid for each student at the time of application unless covered by a scholarship or grant.
- An admissions assessment and visit with a class.

Enrollment Requirements

- Transcripts and student records including IEPs, Behavior Intervention Plans, and supporting documents are required for students transferring into The Bridge of Georgia.
- A current Certificate of Immunization (Form 3231) is required prior to the student's first day of class. It is Georgia law that all children in public and private schools have immunizations before attending. Medical waivers regarding immunizations must be notarized and on file before attending.
- A copy of your child's birth certificate is required.
- A financial contract with The Bridge of Georgia regarding payment of tuition and fees will be created before the first day of school for private pay students, and after the first SB-10 installment for SB-10 students.

Re-enrollment Procedures

Re-enrollment students must be in compliance with all requirements for enrollment. Attendance at The Bridge of Georgia is a privilege. The school reserves the right to refuse re-enrollment to any student or students or families who do not support the school's purpose, objectives, standards, policies, rules, and regulations. In addition, no family may be re-admitted unless all financial obligations have been met from the previous school year. Any student with excessive unexcused absences and/or tardies will have their file reviewed by The Board to determine if their spot should be surrendered to another student who can access the learning environment more consistently.

Withdrawals and Dismissals

When accepted as a student at The Bridge of Georgia, the agreement that is entered into between the school and the family is expected to be a yearly commitment. The Bridge of Georgia has made financial commitments to faculty and staff and purchased curriculum materials to assist with the education of enrolled students. However, if parents wish to withdraw their child, they should formally do so through the school's Administration office. This request must be made on the official Withdrawal Request Form. **Parents are responsible for tuition payments for 30 school days after written notice is received and acknowledged from The Bridge of Georgia Administration.** If 30 days' written notice is NOT received, parents agree to be fully liable for the annual tuition and any other fees for services rendered (including but not limited to late payment fees.)

Report cards and transcripts are released to students, parents, or other schools only when the student's account is current.

Student Probation

All students at The Bridge of Georgia are accepted on academic and behavioral probation for the first 9 weeks. Students will undergo an assessment period in which the staff may make recommendations for more support. This can include behavioral or academic support. All academic testing will be completed before recommendations are made. If recommendations are made for more support, parents will be given the opportunity to go over results with teachers and administrators. Additional support will be at the expense of the family. 1:1 support persons must be selected, trained, and employed by The Bridge of Georgia.

Class and Grade Placement

The classes at The Bridge of Georgia are inclusive classrooms. Our curriculum is designed to meet the needs of each individual learner at their ability level. You may find that students in your child's class are performing above or below their same-age peers. Because of this, your child will have an exciting opportunity to learn and grow in an environment that is very much like the real world, where individuals have varying abilities and backgrounds. In addition, students will be divided into same-level groups for learning in core academic areas. As students enter the Upper Hall classes and begin to have person-centered planning meetings, students may be divided based on the long-term goals of both the parents and the students.

Re-evaluation of Placement

We recognize that many of our students may not test well in a strange environment with people that they don't know very well. Often new students have a second placement test after they become comfortable in their new (home) here at The Bridge. Each situation will be evaluated individually. If a child is admitted, the Administration reserves the right to re-evaluate that placement within the first 9 weeks. The teacher will carefully evaluate and observe students during this time. If a child seems to be improperly placed, the teacher will request a conference to discuss the situation immediately.

Kindergarten Entrance

For a student to enter Kindergarten, The Bridge of Georgia **requires that a child be 6 or older** by September 1 of the school year the child is entering.

Class Size and Make-Up

All classes are limited to 10 students. The typical class has 8-10 students. Each lower hall class has at least one teacher and one assistant. For upper hall students, the placement of teachers and staff is determined by the size of the learning groups. Be assured that additional assistants are hired as class size increases and the need for additional support is noted. In addition, we often have interns from The University of Georgia and area colleges who work alongside our teachers. Our goal is to have four students per adult working in the classroom. If your child requires 1:1 support in the classroom, you may choose a tuition level that meets these needs.

Issuing of Transcripts and Right of Privacy

The Bridge of Georgia maintains cumulative records for each child, which are kept on file in the main office. A pupil's records are available to parents or legal guardians by placing a written request with the office. They will be made available within two full business days. The original records will be copied and sent to parents or guardians or other schools upon written request if the student's tuition and fees have been paid. If a child is withdrawn for any reason, all tuition and fees must be paid in full before any transcripts or records will be released.

Right of Privacy

Student records can be viewed on a purely need-to-know basis. Your child's teacher, therapists, and Administration will see them regularly but others will view only if a situation arises that involves them with your child. Anyone who is not involved with your child who needs to see the records would require written permission

Financial Policies

Payment Procedures

A monthly invoice will be emailed to parents before the first day of each month stating monthly tuition and any outstanding balances on your child's account. Please return payment by the 5th of each month to our front desk. Please do not send tuition checks in your child's book bag.

Payments can be made online by debit, credit card, or check.

Questions or concerns regarding monthly invoices should be emailed to Debbie Adams, at dadams@thebridgeofgeorgia.org. Debbie will respond to questions within 48 hours. Debbie can also be reached by phone at 770-266-3390.

Late Payment Fee

This \$40 fee will be charged per student/per month if the appropriate tuition payment is not received by the 5th of the month.

Delinquent Accounts

The Bridge of Georgia reserves the right to take appropriate action in dealing with delinquent accounts. Such actions may include, but are not limited to being presented to the board of directors, legal actions, suspension of services to the child, and all other efforts allowable to collect a debt.

Georgia Special Needs Scholarship Students

Scholarship reimbursements for tuition and fees are received by The Bridge of Georgia from the state. These payments are scheduled quarterly at the discretion of the state. When the check is received, The Bridge of Georgia will notify the parent or guardian and he/she must come to the school office and endorse the check within 30 business days. This will enable The Bridge of Georgia to deposit the check towards tuition reimbursement as required by the Georgia Department of Education. Upon endorsing a check to The Bridge of Georgia, the parent(s) and the school validate that the payment amount is correct. Any discrepancies thereafter shall be resolved between the parent(s) and The Bridge of Georgia.

If the check is not endorsed within the required time frame, parents/guardians become **personally liable for the entire tuition amount**. Parent(s) cannot remove a scholarship check from a school's premises and cannot refuse to endorse a check; either or both could result in forfeiture of the scholarship. Parent(s) will then remain responsible for payment of any tuition and/or fees owed to The Bridge of Georgia. If the scholarship amount does not cover all tuition and fees due, parents agree to make 10 monthly payments of the balance due beginning August 2024 and ending May 2025.

If there are barriers that keep you from paying your bill on time, please give us that information. We want to help by developing a payment plan or brainstorming a solution with you. We are on your side!

Academic Policies

Curriculum

At The Bridge of Georgia, we are aware of the continuum of academic needs our diverse student population encounters to be successful. We have balanced that need by pulling from several different curriculum options based on the individual academic and long-term goals of each of our students.

Edmentum courseware offers diploma-bound credit courses for those students seeking a GA diploma or readiness for GED testing. It also offers many middle school and high school level core courses and career readiness courses that benefit many of our older students regardless of their long-term goals.

Reading Eggs and **Mathseeds** are fun programs that engage learners at their own level. They provide teacher-directed learning materials as well as a computer-based learning path.

Reading A-Z provides a leveled book system and vocabulary for guided reading opportunities on a variety of levels as well as countless teacher resources to promote literacy.

Science A-Z offers science materials, activities, and books with a tiered option for differentiation.

Khan Academy adds a strong standards-based supplement to our curriculum for mastery at any level. We have a library of additional resources at the disposal of our teachers to create learning experiences that are appropriate for their students. We feel strongly that understanding our students and their academic needs takes a commitment to differentiation and flexibility.

Inspire Curriculum allows us to stay on track with Georgia Standards. It is the foundation on which we build our curriculum for most students.

These various curricula allow us to meet the needs of our very diverse group of students so that each student is learning at a level and with the tools that are appropriate for them.

Progress Reporting/Report Cards

Academy Grading/Progress Reports

Report cards will be distributed to parents at the end of each quarter showing progress or level of achievement in the below content areas.

Report cards are provided to parents at the end of each quarter to indicate their child's progress or level of achievement in the below content areas.

- Language Arts/Literacy
- Mathematics
- Science

- Social Studies
- Social/Life Skills
- GAPP Goals

Students in each class will be graded using the same standards. Report cards may reflect different levels of accommodations and support. This allows a teacher to accurately communicate a student's progress towards meeting content standards.

Some students may receive a modified report card based on individualized instruction or goals. Modifications in grading are outlined in individual student GAPPs.

GAPP meetings and/or parent-teacher conferences will be offered in October. In April there will be conferences in which you will view a portfolio of your child's work for the year and review GAPP goals. Please see the school calendar for dates. Goals will be agreed on and modifications in grading will be discussed at this time. Person-centered planning meetings will also be scheduled for all upper school students aged 13 and above.

Growth and Performance Plans (GAPPs)

Growth and performance plans will be maintained on each student at The Bridge of Georgia. Goals will be determined or continued at the October conference each school year. These goals could be a combination of academic, social, vocational, and life skill goals. GAPPs help us to begin with the end in mind. The GAPPs are accepted in place of IEPs by Medicaid when applying for Medicaid waivers such as Katie Beckett and COMP and NOW waivers. New goals are developed as needed.

Beginning and End of Year Assessments

All students at The Bridge of Georgia will be assessed at the beginning of the school year (or upon enrollment) and the end of the school year. Results from these assessments will be sent home to parents at the end of the school year.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences will be held twice a year in October and April. Teachers will review or create student Growth and Performance Plans (GAPPs) with parents at this time. In the spring you will see your child's work portfolio.

Person-Centered Planning Meetings

During the first grading period, students who are age 13 and above will participate in a person-centered planning meeting. You may invite stakeholders in your child's life and their TBOG team will also participate. This opportunity to hear your student's hopes and dreams for the future, helps us all determine how to support them in their endeavors. After the first meeting, plan to meet on alternate years. If you desire a meeting sooner, we are glad to arrange that.

Health Policies

Employees are instructed in the universal precautions and procedures for general hygiene and are required to follow them.

We require the State Health Immunization Form 3231. An updated certificate of immunization is required each time immunization is issued. Students in the Academy Classes (K -12th grade) should have Form 3231 on file in the school office. Exemptions to the Immunization Policy may be submitted to the Board through Debbie Adams.

Illness

Students are not allowed to attend school with any contagious symptoms such as, but not limited to, the following:

- Fever of 100.1 or more (**A student sent home with a fever, diarrhea, vomiting, or other contagious illnesses must be free of symptoms for 24 hours before returning to school.**)
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea (uncontainable)
- Any symptom of infectious childhood diseases
- Severe coughing
- Sore throat
- Pink eye or other eye infections
- Open lesions
- Undiagnosed rash
- Symptoms of COVID-19
- Symptoms of flu or a virus

Please note that a child with an excessively snotty nose, cough, or diarrhea may be sent home, even if a contagious illness is not confirmed. It may be necessary in to create a healthy environment for the whole class. Please keep in mind that we have students at every age level who tend to put things in their mouths.

Communicable Diseases:

The office must be notified if a child is diagnosed as having any of the following communicable diseases:

- Covid 19
- Campylobacter
- Diphtheria
- Impetigo
- Chicken Pox
- Conjunctivitis
- Common Cold
- Strep Throat
- Herrpes Simplex 1
- Influenza
- Measles
- Head Lice or Scabies**
- Meningococcal

- Salmonella
- Rotavirus
- Ringworm
- Viral Gastroenteritis
- Shigellosis Coronavirus

**If nits attached to the hair follicle are white, they are inactive, and the child may remain at school. If the nits are brown, they are active and will hatch and the child must be picked up immediately. If live lice are found on the child, they will also need to go home immediately. Please refer to the CDC's guidelines for ridding your home, vehicles, and belongings of lice.

Students with these diagnoses may return to school after being released by a physician.

Emergency Notification Procedures

A parent is notified immediately of any illness or injury requiring professional medical attention. In the event a parent cannot be contacted, an emergency contact person will be notified. If none of these are available, the child's physician may be contacted. If an illness or injury requires immediate professional medical attention, 911 will be called. Children are transported to the hospital listed on their emergency contact form or the nearest hospital. Parents will be notified by the school office if a student is exposed to a confirmed noticeable communicable disease such as COVID-19 or chicken pox, an injury occurring while at school, or other emergencies that may occur such as fire, physical plant problems, severe weather, etc.

Seizures

Students who have been diagnosed with a seizure disorder must have a seizure plan in place while attending The Bridge of Georgia, even if they have not had a seizure for an extended time. We want to be prepared even if a seizure is unlikely.

Non-Emergency Notification

- A parent is notified upon arrival if a student has become moderately ill or has an injury that does not warrant professional medical attention.
- When symptoms of illness occur during the day, a child is moved to a supervised area away from other children and provided the necessary attention until leaving the school or returning to the class.
- If a student remains in the office for more than three hours, they will be considered absent for the entire school day.
- Parents will be contacted if the staff notices an adverse reaction to medication approved by the parent for the school to administer.

Incident Report Form

Incident Report Forms are completed by the teacher or supervising adult when an accident or injury occurs. Depending on the nature and/or magnitude of the injury, a parent's signature may be required when the child is picked up.

Medications

When it is necessary for medications to be taken at school, the parent/guardian must give complete and detailed instructions for the dispensing of medication(s). All medications brought onto school grounds must be checked in to the school office. The student will be taken to the school clinic by authorized personnel assigned for medication dispensing. The Bridge of Georgia personnel will not distribute narcotic medication of any kind. Under no circumstances should any student have medication of any type on his or her person including book bags.

IMPORTANT: All medications must come to and be dispensed through the school clinic. Verbal authorization is not sufficient; we must have current paperwork and medication in the school clinic.

- **Over-the-counter Medications** - In cases in which the student absolutely needs over-the-counter medication to attend school the parent should send over-the-counter medication to school for their child. The parent must complete the Authorization for Medication Form which includes the student's first and last name, grade, name of medication, date, dose, time to be given, and reason for taking medication. Medication must be received at the school office in the original child-proof container. Medication received in any other manner than as specified above will not be administered to your child.
- **Prescription Medications** - If prescription medication must be taken at school, the parent/guardian must complete the Authorization for Medication Form. For long-term prescription medications, this form must be updated yearly. Prescriptions must be in the original child-proof prescription container
- **All medications** not retrieved by the parents/guardians by the last day of school be disposed of in accordance with State Pharmacy Regulations.
- **Allergies/Medical Conditions/Food Needs** - If your child has allergies, medical conditions, or special food needs please make us aware of these by including this information on our *Emergency and Medical Contacts Form*. It is the parent's responsibility to inform The Bridge of Georgia staff of any allergies or special health considerations.
- **CBD** – At this time we are not permitted to administer CBD to students in any form. While we know some families consider this a vital part of their child's medical plan, we are not permitted to administer it under GA law. This will have to be administered at home.

Safety and Security Policies

All persons, parents, and visitors MUST check in at the front office to obtain a visitor pass upon entering the building. This is for the protection and security of all the children.

Emergency plans have been developed and are available for parent review.

For The Bridge of Georgia staff to give the students our undivided attention from the moment they enter the classroom and to provide safety during morning drop-off, parents are required to use carpool instead of entering the building. If you need to speak with your child's teacher, please set up a conference time by emailing the teacher. During the 1st week walking down to class is acceptable but not required, but no more after 1st week. We are working to teach your child independence.

A STUDENT MAY ONLY BE RELEASED TO AN AUTHORIZED PERSON.

CAR TAGS ARE PART OF OUR SECURITY PROCEDURES. You will be given a car tag to use during the afternoon carpool. This should be displayed in the front window of your car.

Written permission must be sent that morning if there is any change from the usual authorized person to pick up your child. All names of anyone who is authorized to pick up your child must be listed on the authorized pick-up section of the Emergency and Medical Contact Form. In case of an emergency, please call the school office with the name of the person to pick up your child. They will need a picture ID which will be photocopied for security reasons. You may update the names of those listed on your Authorized Pick-Up List at any time by visiting the front office.

In the rare case of an extreme emergency, a parent may change the authorized pick-up via telephone with the proper identification and by following specific office requirements. This will only be used in case of extreme emergency.

Parental Access

The Bridge of Georgia welcomes parents to be an active part of their child's education. To ensure the safety of our children, we ask you to come directly to the front desk upon entering the building to obtain a VISITOR PASS and sign in. Parents and visitors are not allowed in the classrooms before checking in at the office. While we appreciate our parent volunteers, it is imperative that parents do not interfere with classroom instruction. We reserve the right, during times of community-wide spread of illness, to limit all access to the building by anyone other than staff and students. In addition, parents may not video in the classroom and pictures must be approved before placing them on your own Facebook page to insure that no students are included who have restrictions on their picture being used on public media.

Communication with Students

Lunches, homework, book bags, and other items that may need to be delivered to your child should be left at the front desk. If you need to send a message to your child during school, please call the office, and the message will be delivered. We do not call students to the phone except in the case of an emergency. A message may be given to a student to call a parent during a convenient break (i.e., lunch). Students are not allowed to use cell phones during the school day. Therefore, any messages or calls should be directed to the school office. All cell phones brought to school will be placed in a secure location in the front.

Child Abuse Policy

The state of Georgia requires The Bridge of Georgia's staff and volunteers to be mandated reporters and to report allegations of suspected child abuse to the Department of Family and Children Services (DFACS) when there is cause to suspect that physical or emotional abuse, sexual abuse or exploitation, inadequate supervision, neglect, or other forms of abuse have occurred. While The Bridge of Georgia is expected to communicate with parents the well-being of their child, the Administration is placed between the parent and the state, acting on behalf of the child and in accordance with state law. The Bridge of Georgia may not always contact parents in advance of making a report to DFACS. Reports made by a Bridge of Georgia-mandated reporter are in the best interest of the child. The Bridge of Georgia may also undertake an inquiry of school personnel before making a report to determine whether or not there are sufficient grounds to require reporting. These decisions are not made lightly. While we understand that daily situations with children with some of the diagnoses, we serve can be hard, possibly even impossible to navigate, we are also responsible for the safety of the children in our care.

Emergency Evacuation

In case an emergency requires The Bridge of Georgia to evacuate our facility, parents will be notified immediately as to where to pick up at an evacuation location. The staff will require a parent/guardian to present their security car tag to the classroom teacher for their child to be released. REMIND is a phone texting app that we will also use to contact parents/guardians.

Weather Closing

In the case of inclement weather, we will alert families through the listings on CBS, ABC, NBC, and FOX. Please watch for The Bridge of Georgia on these stations. We will also post on our website and Facebook page. Safety is always our first priority. If The Bridge of Georgia does not close and you live in a county that has dangerous road conditions, please keep your child home and be safe. We will offer cyberlearning as an option. REMIND is a phone texting app that we will also use to contact parents/guardians.

In the Event of a Facilities Problem (Loss of Water, Heat, Electricity)

In the event of a Facilities problem (the loss of water, heat, or electricity) the Administration will assess the situation and verify the severity of the issue. If the situation cannot be repaired quickly, parents will be contacted via email or telephone to come and pick up their children in a typical carpool manner. If parents are unable to come, students will be moved to a safe location until parents can come. Students will be evacuated to wait until he/she can be picked up by a notified parent or the all-clear is given to return to the school. Parents must use their carpool security tags for pick-up. The evacuation point will be communicated to parents via text or email at the time of an evacuation. REMIND is a phone texting app that we will also use to contact parents/guardians.

Weapon Policy

To ensure the safety of our students and staff no weapons will be allowed on campus or at any off-campus event. Possessing a firearm, destructive device, a firearm muffler or firearm silencer, knife, or a pneumatic gun on school property or at a school-sponsored activity is grounds for expulsion. On this same topic, we do not imitate the use of weapons, threaten the use of weapons, or create artwork that portrays weapons or their use. The Bridge of Georgia strives to make everyone feel safe at all times.

Discipline Policy

Basic Approach to Discipline

PURPOSE

Behaviors are addressed in a way that addresses the function of the behavior for that child. Because of this, how the staff at The Bridge of Georgia addresses a behavior of one child may be somewhat different than how they address the behavior of another child. We seek to address behaviors in a way that brings about positive change and maintain the dignity of the child.

LOGICAL CONSEQUENCES

Ultimately, as an adult, children will become entirely responsible for their actions. We must gradually guide the children toward this responsibility and give them opportunities to experience the consequences of their actions. The teacher must take care that these consequences are not too severe or beyond their capabilities. Our expectations for the children must be appropriate to their developmental level.

GUIDELINES FOR DISCIPLINE

The methods of guidance and discipline used shall be positive, age-appropriate, consistent with the developmental needs of the children, and applied with the full knowledge and understanding of the parents. Strategies for behavior change begin with a functional behavior analysis and a plan is developed for that child that will be used in all settings. We believe appropriate behavior skills must be taught.

Mindset Crisis Intervention

Teachers and Support Staff at The Bridge of Georgia are Mindset-certified yearly. Understanding effective communication and human physiology during aggressive moments, as well as the core philosophy of maintaining care, welfare, safety, and security, provides a solid foundation for this training. Training gives staff the needed tools to de-escalate potentially unsafe situations while protecting their relationship with students. Safety holds are used as a last resort to protect the safety of the student requiring restraint, other students, or staff. Every measure is taken to de-escalate behaviors and promote self-calming behaviors before physical safety holds are used.

Notice to Parents

If your child sustains an injury at school, you will be notified by the classroom teacher and/or an administrator of the school by the end of the day the event occurs. Often students work with staff to develop a behavior contract that gives the student the opportunity to learn self-management skills while gaining rewards for maintaining the goals of their contract.

Elopement Policy

When a student leaves the building in an effort to leave school during the school day, **law enforcement will be called immediately** to assist in maintaining the safety of the student eloping. Parents will be notified of the incident and a report will be provided.

Suspension

Suspension is not a strategy that is often used at The Bridge of Georgia. We find many students will seek strategies that allow them to go home from school. However, a child may be suspended for extreme aggression against students or staff.

A parent might be asked to pick up a student who has continued inability to regulate their behavior within a day. This does not happen often but can occur if the behavior of the student causes learning to be discontinued continuously. This is not considered a suspension and the child may return the next day. Most often this happens in cases in which a child is becoming ill or has not slept.

Dress Code Policy

The dress of a student at The Bridge of Georgia should show respect for personal appearance, the school, and the learning process. The way students dress strongly influences their behavior, self-image, and the effort they exert in school. We desire to encourage students to develop an attitude about their appearance which shows a high degree of self-respect and self-worth.

Because children learn through engaging with their environment, we ask that students dress comfortably in clean clothing that is appropriate for the weather.

T-shirts should not have any offensive print or offensive pictures or weapons on them

Shorts should be worn under dresses.

Appropriate footwear must be worn to reduce the opportunity for injury on the playground and PE.

- Shoes have to remain on at all times.
- Athletic sandals, flip flops, and slippers may not be worn on P.E. day.
- All girls' apparel must be worn modestly, not too tight, and not too low.
- Midriffs must be covered.
- Tank top straps must be no less than 2 adult fingers wide.
- Shorts must be worn modestly, not too tight or too short.

***All students need a weather-appropriate change of clothing to be kept on our campus during the school year.**

If your child needs additional personal hygiene products (such as pull-ups or feminine hygiene items) please provide plenty to keep on-site in a discreet location. Must be labeled with the child's name.

Attendance Policy

Attendance will be closely monitored, and enrollment must be reported to the local school system for which your child is zoned. Each student is required to bring a note following each absence. There is a **20-day absentee limit** for the school year. Parents will be given a written notice when absences reach 10 and 15 days. We recognize that some of our students have medical issues that make regular attendance difficult. Please make every attempt to get your child here when they are able and communicate well with us when medical issues arise. All students missing 20 days or more in a school year will be forwarded to the Board of Directors for possible retention. For this reason, it is important that you are diligent about sending doctor excuses throughout the year.

Authorized Absences

Listed are The State of Georgia accepted reasons for a student to be considered excused from a school absence or tardy. They include:

- Personal illness which jeopardizes personal health or health of others
- Doctor/Dentist/Therapy/Other Healthcare Professional
- Serious Illness or death in immediate family
- Religious Holiday
- Voter registration (18 years or older) or voting
- Conditions rendering school attendance impossible or hazardous to student's health or safety
- Tests and physical exams for military service including National Guard
- A student misses school days to spend time with active-duty combat-zoned parent(s) who are about to leave for overseas deployment or who are between military deployments

Written notification must be received from a parent or guardian to authorize an absence. Please send in the Student Absence/Tardy Excuse Note along with any other documentation such as a doctor's excuse to be turned in to the front office when your child returns to school. Please notify the School Administrator if your child will be absent for an extended time period (more than 1 week) for any reason.

Unauthorized Absences

An absence is considered unauthorized when written notification from the parent has not been received by The Bridge of Georgia.

Makeup Work

- Teachers will maintain regular procedures for late work and make-up work to encourage academic success.
- If an extended absence occurs due to illness or a prior arrangement, please give the teacher advance notice.
- The staff will be happy to get any needed books and materials from the teacher if the parents call and make this request.
- Exceptions may be made to the make-up work policy in cases of extended absence.

Truancy

From the time a student arrives on campus in the morning until the school dismisses, students are required to check out through the office before they leave school grounds. Students who leave campus without checking out or who are absent from school without their parent's knowledge will be considered truant. Students who miss school for invalid reasons will also be considered truant. Disciplinary action will be taken. A student must be in school for a minimum of 3 1/2 hours to be considered present.

Student Driving Policy

- Students driving their own vehicles to school will be issued a parking sticker and will have assigned parking spaces.
- Students must fill out a form describing the vehicle with make, model, and color.
- Students must submit a copy of their driver's license and vehicle registration.
- Student drivers will be released at regular carpool dismissal and will exit the building when carpool begins.
- When student drivers arrive, they will walk to the front doors and be allowed entry when the morning carpool begins.
- Upon entering the building, the student will turn in his/her keys to the front desk with cell phone and they will be returned to him/her at the end of the day.
- At no time will a student driver be allowed to leave the campus in his/her vehicle during the day.
- Student drivers will not be allowed to transport other students in personal vehicle at any time.
- No alcoholic products, weapons, or firearms may be brought on the school grounds at any time in a vehicle.
- The speed limit in the parking lot is 10 MPH. Students will be issued a warning if speeding. After 3 warnings, their driving privileges at school will be revoked for thirty days.

Driving to school is a privilege and that privilege can be revoked at any time should the student be irresponsible or unsafe in their driving practices on campus or coming to and from campus.

Tardy to School

Tardiness to class disrupts the learning process for the tardy student and the classmates who are interrupted. Many of our students rely on their routine and have difficulties when that routine is disrupted, even if it is the class routine being disrupted by late arrivers.

- Students are marked tardy after 8:30 and **MUST** be signed in by a parent/guardian upon arrival.
- Students who are not in school for 3 1/2 hours are considered absent.
- Ten (10) unexcused times tardy will result in 1 absence.

Excused Tardy

The following are instances where an excused tardy (to school) will be given:

Student Illness

- Accident
- Doctor/Dentist/Orthodontist appointment
- Car Trouble
- Severe Weather
- Acts of God
- Family Emergency

Please speak with the Principal if your student will be tardy regularly due to circumstances outside of your control.

Check-Out Procedures

Please try to avoid making appointments for your child during the school day. However, if it is necessary to do so, please follow the check-out procedures below:

- Send a note or email to let your child's teacher know when your child will be picked up.
- Please note that only authorized people on the pick-up list will be allowed to check your child out of school.
- Report to the office and sign your child out while the receptionist retrieves your child.
- Students will not be brought to the lobby to wait for pick-up during the school day. This takes needed staff out of the classroom and reduces teaching time. Please arrive in time for your student to be retrieved from class.
- Upon returning to school, sign your child back in in the lobby. Your child will return to class.

Use of Technology

Students are encouraged to use technology resources for educational and communication purposes. The use of such resources is a privilege, not a right. Students must conduct themselves in a responsible, efficient, ethical, and legal manner. Unauthorized or inappropriate use, including any violation of these guidelines, may result in cancellation of certain privileges, and/or disciplinary action, and/or civil and/or criminal liability.

Internet/Network Guidelines:

- Students are responsible for their behavior and communication on the internet.
- Students who access inappropriate material during work time will receive a period of restriction from computer use and will be required to complete work with pencil and paper.
- Transmission of any material in violation of any State or Federal law or regulations is prohibited.
- The actions of students on home computers in hours they are not in school are the responsibility of the parents. We cannot control students' use of technology outside our setting.

Cell Phone/Devices:

ALL Students' Personal Cell/Smart Phones, iPads, and Smart Watches are to be turned in at the front desk during morning carpool. Students will be able to collect their phones just before the afternoon carpool. No phones are allowed in classrooms unless used on projects approved by teachers/administrators. If you need to contact your student, call the school front desk number: 770-266-3390.

Students are expected to abide by the following rules of internet etiquette

- Be polite, courteous, and respectful in your messages to others. Use language appropriate to school situations in any communications made through The Bridge of Georgia School computers.
- Refrain from using obscene, profane, vulgar, sexually explicit, defamatory, abusive language or racial slurs in your messages.
- Do not transmit pictures or other information that could be used to establish your identity without prior approval of a teacher.
- All copyright issues regarding software, information, and attributions of authorship must be respected.
- Privacy in communication over the Internet and the Network is not guaranteed. To ensure compliance with these guidelines, The Bridge of Georgia School reserves the right to monitor, review, and inspect any directories, files, and/or messages residing on or sent using The Bridge of Georgia School's computers. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities will be reported to the appropriate authorities.
- Use of the Internet and any information procured from the Internet is at the student's own risk.
- Information (including text, graphics, audio, video, etc.) from Internet sources used in student papers, reports, and projects should be cited the same as references to printed materials.
- Disclosure, use, and/or dissemination of personal identification information of minors via the Internet is prohibited, except as expressly authorized by the minor student's parent/guardian.
- Chat rooms and other forms of direct electronic communications (i.e., Instant Message services) are prohibited.
- Students are not allowed to use computers designated for teacher use.

- Students may use personal devices (such as laptops, iPads, Smart Phones, etc.) on the school's Public Wireless Network when approved by the classroom teacher. All traffic on these devices is subject to all the policies written above. Students may not use data connections such as cell phone data plans that bypass the school network during normal school hours.
- Students may not take or transmit pictures or video without teacher permission
- Misuse or abuse of electronic mediums (including iPads) can be subject to disciplinary action.
- Students will adhere to the age requirements and guidelines of all websites.
- Students will protect their personal information and respect the privacy of others' information.
- Students will respect teachers by keeping all communication school-related.
- Students will show respect for themselves and others by accessing, posting and hosting information and images that reflect positively on themselves and others.
- Students will not access or use hate-based or sexually explicit materials.
- Students will follow all guidelines set by teacher(s) regarding the use of electronic devices.
- Students will care responsibly for the computers owned by The Bridge of Georgia.

The Bridge of Georgia reserves the right to access, view, or monitor any information stored on or transmitted over the School's technology resources, on or over personal equipment that has been brought to school or used to access the school's network and on or over personal equipment that violates any aspect of this policy.

Student Policy on the Use of AI for Completing Work

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools have become increasingly prevalent and accessible, offering significant potential to enhance learning and productivity. We are aware this is a tool that may create easier pathways to accomplish many things for our students in the future. However, the use of AI in academic work raises important ethical and academic integrity considerations. This policy aims to guide students on the appropriate use of AI tools in their academic work to ensure fairness, transparency, and integrity.

This policy applies to all students enrolled in The Bridge of Georgia School and Center and covers all forms of academic work, including but not limited to assignments, projects, exams, and research.

Acceptable Use of AI

Students are permitted to use AI tools under the following conditions:

- **Research and Learning Enhancement:** AI tools may be used for research purposes, such as gathering information, generating ideas, and summarizing content, provided proper citations are given.
- **Writing Assistance:** AI tools can assist in improving writing quality, such as grammar checking, language translation, and style suggestions. The final submission must be the student's own work.

Prohibited Use of AI

The following uses of AI tools are prohibited:

- Automated Content Generation: Submitting work generated entirely or substantially by AI without proper attribution is considered plagiarism.
- Examination Assistance: Using AI tools during exams or assessments, unless explicitly permitted, is strictly forbidden.
- Fabrication of Data: Using AI to generate false data or research findings is unethical and violates academic integrity.

Academic Integrity

- Attribution and Transparency: Students must clearly indicate any AI tool used in the completion of their work. Proper attribution must be given in accordance with the citation guidelines provided by the instructor or institution.
- Originality: Students are responsible for ensuring that their work reflects their own understanding and effort. AI tools should not replace the student's own critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Consequences of Misuse

Misuse of AI tools constitutes a violation of academic integrity and will be subject to disciplinary action. Consequences may include:

- Academic Penalties: Reduced grades, failure of the assignment or course.
- Disciplinary Actions: Suspension from the institution.
- Record of Violation: A permanent record of the violation in the student's academic file if there are repeated offenses.

Morning and Afternoon Carpool Procedures

Morning Drop-off Procedures

All academy students may be dropped off in the front carpool line beginning at 8:00 AM. Students should not leave their vehicles until they are safely in place near the porch area of the school. Students may not enter the school until we begin receiving students at 8:00. Please understand that the car lane is not supervised by The Bridge of Georgia staff until 8:00. If you choose to arrive before 8:00, it is your responsibility to ensure the safety of your student until carpool begins. Students are tardy at 8:30 and parents will need to walk students in regardless of age. If you are coming into the building between 8-9 and 1:30 – 2:30, please refrain from parking in the carpool line.

- If carpool with The Bridge of Georgia personnel has ended, students may not be dropped off to walk into the school without being escorted by a parent or guardian
- If a student arrives after 8:30 am, it will be necessary for the parent to sign the student in
- at the sign-in station.
- For the safety of students, parents, and staff, please remain in your cars during carpool. If you need to come into the building, please park in the designated area. •
- **Parents are not allowed to walk their students to the classroom. This enables our classes to continue without interruption.**

Afternoon Pick-Up Procedures

- Academy afternoon carpool is held in the front of the building, just like morning carpool. The afternoon carpool begins at 3:30 PM and continues until 3:45.
- Please enter the parking lot going East on Edwards Street while making a right-hand turn into the front parking lot.
- Each car will pull up to a numbered cone and put their car in park.
- Students will be loaded from the passenger side of the car only. If loading from the passenger side is not possible, a Bridge of Georgia staff member will escort the child to the other side of the car.
- Cars must remain at their designated cone until the children at all five cones have been loaded. They will then receive a signal to leave.
- Drive slowly and be attentive to students and other drivers at all times.
- When exiting the parking lot, make a right-hand turn onto Blaine Street.
- Students not picked up by 4:00 will be sent to afterschool care in the Early Learning Center for pick-up. Fees for childcare will apply.
- Early pick-ups must be made at least 45 minutes prior to afternoon carpool. Pick ups after this time will have to wait until the classes are dismissed.
- Parents are expected to be courteous to other Bridge families during carpool hours.
- If you must enter the building to talk to your child's teacher, please park in the parking area after you have picked up your child in the carpool line.

Car Line Etiquette

When picking up and dropping off your children:

- Be patient, careful, and watchful
- Go slowly: 5MPH Speed Limit
- Do not pass other drivers on the left side of the carpool lane. Please be patient when students are being loaded.
- Face forward when moving
- When dropping off, your child should be prepared to exit the car once the door is open.
- Stay in your car and allow school personnel or their designee to assist your child in or out of the vehicle.
- For the safety and security of parents, students, and staff, please remain in your car during carpool. If you need to come into the building, please park in a designated parking spot.

Georgia Law Regarding Car Seats:

The Bridge of Georgia School is dedicated to educating all students in a safe and supportive environment. Beginning and ending each day in a safe manner is essential.

The Bridge of Georgia will release students at carpool to parents or authorized persons for pick-up. It is the parent's responsibility to follow Georgia car seat and transportation laws. The Bridge of Georgia School is not liable for drivers not adhering to these carseat or transportation safety laws.

Realizing the crucial role that car seats play in child safety, Georgia lawmakers passed laws and regulations pertaining to their use. Car seat safety as outlined below is the responsibility of the parents or authorized pick-up person.

According to Georgia law:

- ALL children under the age of 8 whose height is less than 57 inches must ride in the backseat of a car. A child is safer in the back and farthest away from the force of an airbag. Remember that airbags are designed to save adults, and since they deploy with great force they can be fatal to children.
- Children under the age of 8 are required to be in either a car seat or a booster seat suitable for their age and height.
- If there is not a back seat in the vehicle (e.g., a truck) or if other restrained children are in the back seat, Georgia law permits a child under the age of 8 to sit in front if restrained in the proper car seat or booster and the child weighs at least 40 pounds.

General Policies and Information

Parent Conferences and Communication

Our staff encourages close communication between parents and the school. If you need to talk with your child's teacher or the School Administrators, please feel free to email and request an appointment. Appointments with the teacher must be set up with consideration of the teacher's schedule.

Please refrain from walking your child to class to talk with their teacher. These small conferences should be scheduled as well. Remember our teachers have obligations to the students for the entire school day. Our teaching time begins the minute the first student walks into the classroom. This time is valuable. Please protect this time and schedule an appointment with your child's teacher.

Parents are asked to respect the privacy of teachers and staff members of the school by making inquiries concerning school matters during regular school hours. ***Please do not call or text school personnel outside of these hours unless it is an emergency. Teachers have been encouraged to maintain communication with families during their regular work hours.** You may send an email at any time but do not expect a response from the teacher or Administrator until the next school day.

If you text the staff in your child's room, do not expect an immediate response. Staff are encouraged to check their phones on breaks and outside of teaching time. Parents should discuss all school matters with involved parties only. Please discuss any concerns with your child's teacher or the School Administrators. Talking about these concerns with appropriate parties will ensure that the school can address them promptly and in cooperation with parents, making the best learning experience for your child.

Parent Volunteers

There are times we will count on parent volunteers for events and activities. Each class will need a room parent to coordinate volunteers from within that class. Your child's teacher will coordinate events in conjunction with room parents.

Items from Home

- Please mark all items with your child's name including clothing, backpacks, lunch boxes, folders, and school equipment.
- Please keep a complete change of weather-appropriate clothes in your child's backpack at all times. REMEMBER, PUT NAMES ON EVERYTHING!

Lunch and Snack

Please include a lunch and snack for your child each day including a drink. Be sure their lunch box is clearly marked with the child's name.

Please do not send meals that require more than 2 minutes to heat. Heating food at home and sending it in a thermos is preferred.

***Please send all items your child needs to eat lunch including utensils and napkins. Utensils are not always on hand at The Bridge.**

Please note that when a child with a severe food allergy is enrolled in a class, it may be necessary that all children from that class refrain from bringing that item to lunch.

In Conclusion

Occasionally something comes up during the school year that needs to be addressed, although it is not in this handbook. Should a policy change occur, you will receive notice of the changes.

We want to create a team to support your child. We are committed to communicating well with you and including you in decisions about your child. Your child can best reach his highest potential when we all work together. Please make us your first stop if you have concerns or are upset by a situation. We will work together to make the best decisions for your child and your child may learn a little about conflict resolution in the process.

It's going to be an exciting year!