



Dear Parents:

Welcome to Bridges to Learning. Our Parent Handbook provides information about our center that will assist you in becoming familiar with our approach to learning, our policies and our curriculum. I hope it will prove valuable to you. After you have read and reviewed the handbook, please let us know if you have any additional questions.

I thought it might be helpful if I shared my background and my approach to teaching with you. I completed my undergraduate work at the University of Scranton where I received a Bachelor Degree with Honors in Psychology. I have completed a Masters Program in Education with a concentration in Literacy. My major area of concentration while in school was child development and learning. I have worked in various aspects of the day care profession for over seven years.

On a personal note, I have been a resident of Rockaway Township for seventeen years and have actively participated in various community programs.

I love working with children and hope you are happy with the educational support system that we have created here at Bridges to Learning. Feel free to contact me with any questions or discuss any aspects of the center in more detail.

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PHILOSOPHY OF OUR CENTER

A good education will provide the skills and knowledge for children to prepare for the future. A great education will enable a child to realize his or her potential. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, “children’s experiences during early childhood not only influence their later functioning in school but also can have effects throughout life” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p.6). Because early childhood education is so crucial to the intellectual, physical and emotional development of a child, it is imperative that we foster the development of the whole child during this time. We believe that a great education promotes intellectual growth, develops problem solving, critical thinking skills, instills a sense of community and achieves continuity in learning that goes beyond the hours spent in the classroom.

THE PROJECT APPROACH

By using the project approach, we are able to provide opportunities for children to use what they are learning. As Katz and Chard point out: “Including project work in the curriculum helps to ensure that the construction and acquisition of knowledge and the mastery of skills occurs in a way that strengthens dispositions to use them. In addition, children’s self-confidence, satisfaction, pleasure and enthusiasm increases if knowledge and skills are acquired in meaningful contexts with ample opportunity to apply them, the dispositions to deepen the knowledge and use the skills will be strengthened; conversely, without such meaningful application, these dispositions will be weakened. In principle, then, the incorporation of project work in the curriculum helps to ensure that all four categories of learning goals are addressed equally and simultaneously” (1993, p.213).

The project approach, therefore, affords us a learning experience that encompasses our philosophy of teaching and learning. It will foster intellectual growth and develop problem solving and critical thinking skills through a hands-on approach. It will create a sense of community as children must work collaboratively and respect each other’s ideas and opinions. And, if executed correctly, this approach will afford a continuous learning experience as children take the skills and knowledge learned here and apply them to their next challenge.

FEATURES OF OUR CENTER

Curriculum

Our center has many innovative features and aspects that make it special and different for you and your child. Our curriculum is designed to meet or exceed the state standards and was developed with both our philosophy statement and project approach to teaching in mind. Key aspects of the curriculum are:

- Child centered curriculum
- Developmentally, Age and Individually Appropriate (DAP/IAP) practices
- Monthly themes that incorporate all content areas (Art, Literacy, Science, Dramatic Play, Movement, Math, etc.)
- Curriculum is progressive, each year builds on the previous years
- Hands on experience based learning
- Weekly lesson plans detailing daily activities will be posted in each classroom

Safety

Our Center has taken strides to make you feel confident in leaving your child at our center on a daily basis. We have taken numerous steps towards this goal:

- Parent cameras are located in each classroom, so that you can observe your child during the day.
- Keyless entry into the building. Each family has their unique ID for access into the building.
- Detailed evacuation plans and equipment for emergency situations
- A Crisis Management Plan
- Two way radios for easy communication throughout the building.
- Our outside play area is fenced in and situated away from the road for your child's safety

Food Service

Our Center has also taken steps toward providing your child with three healthy and balanced meals every day. The children will be provided with a morning snack, lunch and an afternoon snack. A menu detailing each week's selection will be posted each Friday for the following week. Accommodations will be made for children with dietary restrictions. Parents with infants still using formula and jarred baby food should bring those items to the center.

Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of Bridges to Learning is quite basic. There are three principal owners; the Educational Director, Financial Director and Facilities Manager. The Educational Director determines the curriculum, provides classroom and educational assistance to all employees. The Financial Director is responsible for administration, customer relations, marketing and human resources. The Facilities Manager oversees all site maintenance and construction as well as major projects that are being pursued at the center. The management team conducts periodic classroom observations to assist in the development of our staff. They also perform periodic inspections of classrooms to ensure that classrooms meet standards.

Much of the success of our center is determined by the dedication and teamwork that is demonstrated by all of our staff. Our management team is dedicated to keeping an open mind and listening to all constructive concerns and suggestions. We have an open door policy and we strive to foster that amongst our employees.

Staff

We pride ourselves in providing “a home away from home” for our students. Our slogan, “Professional Care with a Personal Touch”, is taken seriously and all staff is expected to perform their responsibilities in this manner. Our Mission Statement is:

Mission Statement

The mission of Bridges to Learning Child Development Center is to provide superior care and quality education in a loving, caring “family oriented” environment. We provide professional care with a personal touch. Every child under our care is given individualized attention and care to enable them to reach their full potential.

The majority of our staff has degrees in the teaching or child development areas. All of our employees have had extensive training in the child care

area. In addition, the majority of employees have been trained in CPR and First Aid. Each of our employees is expected to continue education in the area of child development by taking at least 17 hours of training each year to refresh their skills.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Bridges to Learning is open from 7:00 A.M. until 6:30 P.M. Monday through Friday.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Infants – Exploring Me

Our program for children under eighteen months is centered on the theme of exploring me. During this time from 6 weeks to 18 months, the children need constant care and attention from those around them. The teachers spend much of their time attending to the children's needs on a daily basis. However, their experiences at this early age are important to their later development as well. Therefore, each class will have a number of activities in cross-content areas that they will engage in each week. These content areas are:

- Self Help Skills
- Sensory/Tactile
- Physical/Motor Development
- Language Development
- Social Development
- Special Art Activities

Your child's classroom teacher will help your child develop in these essential areas that coincide with their developmental abilities. They will develop many different skills while receiving the highest quality of care we can offer.

Please keep in mind that each child under 18 month room will be assigned a primary caregiver who will take on the responsibility of caring for them. This promotes trust and continuity in their schedule. Your child will be changed every two hours, unless otherwise needed. They will also sleep and eat according to the schedule that you provide. We want you to feel confident and comfortable that you are a part of your child's education! Every day you will receive a report of your child's eating, sleeping and

bathroom experiences, as well as the activities that they participated in and any important milestones that they reached!

Our infant program is superior in many areas, including care, attention, child/staff ratio, staff experience and training and many other areas. Please feel free to approach us with any other questions you may have.

Toddlers – Welcome Friends

This introductory program is for children 18 months to 3 years of age. This program is an introductory program that encompasses our center goals while focusing on the child's development and play. In this program your child will be introduced to centers. They will have a:

- Manipulative center
- Art center
- Dramatic play
- Library
- Block and Transportation
- Discovery/Science
- Listening

The children will also have thematic units that they will cover throughout the year. They will learn “All About Me”, “Me and My Friends”, “Life on the Farm”, “Families”, “Colors”, “Animals, Animals”, “The Circus”, “Everything Grows”, and “Transportation”.

The children will also be exposed to introductory literacy activities in the classroom.

Preschool

Three Year Olds – Let's Grow Together

This program is designed to allow children to explore the environment and begin to develop the skills that they will use for years to come. The curriculum is a unit based thematic curriculum and is progressive each year. Within their classroom environment the children will be exposed to centers and activities such as:

- Manipulative center
- Art center
- Dramatic play
- Library

- Block and Transportation
- Discovery/Science
- Listening

Each month the class will study a new unit that will encompass all of these areas and follow our center philosophy. Within each monthly unit, the class will have a weekly theme, two focus letters and a social skills goal.

Four Year Olds – On the Road to Success

This program continues to build on the previous program. Just as in the “Lets Grow Together” three year old program, the classroom in this program will be set up in centers to allow the children to explore their environment and learn from a variety of perspectives. The children will be exposed to teacher directed, child directed, small group, large group, and individual group work.

The curriculum is also a unit based thematic program. The curriculum again incorporates learning centers in the lessons. They are:

- Manipulative center
- Art center
- Dramatic play
- Library
- Block and Transportation
- Discovery/Science
- Computers
- Listening

The children will study a new unit each month. Some areas of study will be similar to those in the three year old program; however, there will be different learning goals and activities. This program has a different approach to focus letters. For example, in the previous program the children go through the alphabet starting with A and ending with Z. In this program they begin to learn the letters for themselves. For instance, they may study S and W during the first month.

Another difference in this program is that the social skills are replaced with a science skill. They may study collecting and observing during September and classifying, measuring, and estimating during October.

We believe this program is a wonderful preparation for Kindergarten.

Kindergarten

Our private kindergarten program provides your child with the foundation that they will build on for the years to come. Our qualified teachers use the project approach to teaching as well as a language arts block to provide your children with the best learning experience possible. Our curriculum not only prepares your child for elementary school, but it also provides them with the “personalized and professional care” that they need to succeed.

The kindergarten curriculum at Bridges to Learning has a number of focuses as stated in our center philosophy:

- Academic skills such as reading, math, science and social skills
- Development of problem solving and critical thinking skills
- Development of community and continuity outside the classroom

Within this framework, the kindergarten will focus on:

- Beginning reading and writing skills-both phonics and whole language based
- Fundamental math skills, counting, time, money, etc.
- Science themes and problem solving strategies
- Social studies concepts such as communities, community workers, maps, etc.
- Dramatic and creative arts and movement
- Social emotional development
- Healthy habits
- Social skills

Our program has a solid academic foundation as well as qualified teachers in a small classroom environment. The student to teacher ratio is excellent and far exceeds that in the public school. Our kindergarten program is also full day to better accommodate your family needs. In addition, the full time programs allow your child to excel. We are proud of our kindergarten curriculum and we are happy you have joined the program.

Before and After School Care

Bridges to Learning offers an educational and fun before and after school care program for school aged children. We provide our students with an enriching environment full of fun and educational activities. Our program is

designed to provide your child with opportunities to develop and build on the foundations that they are beginning in their elementary classrooms. This program is designed to promote a child's independent thinking and decision making as well as increase their social skills. We help your child reach these goals through developmentally and age appropriate activities that are child centered.

The children will be presented with cross content curriculum choices including computer based education. The children will focus on:

- Discovery (math, manipulative and science)
- Creativity (art and dramatic expression)
- Literacy (computer, listening, library and literacy)
- Other small focus areas
- A quiet spot for them to relax with an activity of their choice.

All children enrolled in this program will be provided a snack.

REQUIRED PAPERWORK

All families enrolled at Bridges to Learning must complete the following forms prior to admission to our Center.

Enrollment Agreement

This form provides basic information regarding your child, such as full name, date of birth, etc. It provides contact information for the child's parent and/or guardian. The Enrollment Agreement also specifies the days your child will attend the center and the rates that are applicable at the time of enrollment. In addition, the Agreement explains extra charges that may apply dependent on various situations. These charges are explained in more detail later in this handbook. This Agreement also authorizes others you choose to pick up your child.

Authorization of Emergency Medical Care

This important form provides contact names for emergencies. In addition it also provides names and numbers for medical personnel that you have chosen to care for your child.

Permission to Photograph

We use photos for various reasons in our center. This form authorizes those situations where your child can be photographed as well as where those photographs can be displayed.

New Jersey Licensing Requirement Statement

This statement is provided to all parents that have children attending New Jersey Child Care. A letter stating you have received the notice and read it is included and requires your signature.

Universal Health Care Record

This form must be completed by your child's doctor. A special appointment is not required for you to have this form completed. You may take it to your doctor at your next scheduled appointment.

Immunization Record

A current copy of your child's immunization record is required.

Expulsion Agreement

This form states our policy regarding expulsion and requires your signature.

SCHOOL POLICIES

Communicable Disease

If a child exhibits any of the following symptoms, he/she not attend the center. If such symptoms occur at the center, the child will be removed from the group and you will be called to take him/her home.

- Severe pain or discomfort
- Acute diarrhea (**3** or more times)
- Episodes of acute vomiting (**2** or more)
- Elevated temperature of **101.5** degrees Fahrenheit
- Severe coughing or sore throat
- Yellow eyes or jaundice
- Red eyes with discharge

- Infected untreated open wounds
- Difficulty breathing
- Skin lesions that are bleeding
- Skin rashes that last longer than 24 hours
- Swollen joints and stiff neck
- Blood in urine
- Visibly enlarged by lymph nodes

These symptoms may be signs of common or more serious communicable diseases.

Once the child is symptom free for 24 hours, or has a doctor's note stating that he/she no longer poses a serious health threat to himself/herself or others, he/she may return to the center.

Table of Excludable Communicable Diseases

A child who contracts any of the following diseases may not return to the center without a physician's note stating that the child presents no risk to himself/herself or others, he/she may return to the center.

<u>Respiratory Illness</u>	<u>Gastrointestinal Illness</u>	<u>Contact Illness</u>
Chicken Pox**	Giardia Lamblia*	Impetigo
German Measles	Hepatitis A*	Lice
Hemophilus	Salmonella*	Scabies
Influenzae*		
Measles*	Shigella*	
Menningococcus*		
Mumps*		
Strep Throat		
Tuberculosis*		
Whooping Cough*		

*Reportable diseases that must be reported to the Health Department by our Center

**Note: If your child has chicken pox, a doctor's note is not required for re-admitting the child to the center. A note from the parent is required stating

either that at least six days have elapsed since the onset of the rash or that all sores have dried and crusted.

If your child is exposed to any excludable disease at the center, you will be notified in writing.

Again, this is not a BTL policy; it is a state mandated policy to prevent the spread of communicable diseases among children. If your child is brought to school the next day they will be denied access to the center. If you have any questions regarding this policy please let us know.

Delayed Openings and Closings

In case of inclement weather, Bridges to Learning may have a delayed opening, early closing or may be closed completely. All delays and closing will be displayed on our website (www.bridgestolearning.org) by 6:30 A.M. on the morning of the closing. In addition, a telephone snow chain will be instituted at the beginning of each school year for use during these periods.

Holidays

Bridges to Learning will celebrate between 7 – 10 holidays each year. These holidays will be posted at the beginning of each school year. Reimbursement of charges is not given for scheduled holidays. You may not change the day you attend the week of a holiday. All families are contracted for specific days, we are sorry but we can't accommodate these types of day changes. Should you have specific questions regarding personal circumstances please discuss them with us.

Positive Discipline

Bridges to Learning employees use a positive and consistent approach to problem solving in the classroom. Discipline should be developmentally appropriate and promote positive problem solving among the students. Children may be removed from a group activity when acting inappropriately. However, these children must be under the supervision of a staff member. If a child is removed from the group activity, it will be for a reasonable and appropriate period of time. This is usually defined as one minute for each year of the child's age.

A child will never be physically or corporally punished by a member of the staff. When using discipline with a child the staff member will use appropriate language, tone, and approach to the situation.

Any employee not abiding by the center's positive discipline policy will be terminated immediately.

Safety and Outdoors

Bridges to Learning has a Safety and Outdoor Policy to ensure that your child is under proper supervision at all times. All employees are introduced to and trained on this policy when they are hired at our center. They are expected to follow all policies, procedures, and rules in this area throughout their employment with our center.

To help them do so, it is important that our parents follow a number of guidelines as well. Please drop your child off in their classroom with a teacher. Do not leave them in the hallway to find their own way or leave them in a room where no teacher is present. When picking up your child, please come into the building. I know it may seem convenient to send an older child into the center while you wait outside, but for your child's safety an adult must pick up. Also, if children are on the playground you can not enter and exit the property through the playground gates. All entry and exits must be through the main entrance. Our first priority at Bridges to Learning is to ensure all of our children's safety. Thank you for your help in this matter.

Hand Washing

Germs are spread quickly through children. Our mission is to cut down on the spread of germs. If we do not promote healthy practices with our students, sickness is more likely to spread throughout the school. While it is impossible to prevent this altogether, we do our best to minimize these occurrences. Following is a list of basic provisions for keeping Bridges to Learning healthy and germ free:

1. Wash hands after blowing nose.
2. Wash hands after using the bathroom.
3. Wash hands before and after using the water table.
4. Wash hands before snack and lunch.
5. Wash hands after playing outside in the sand, dirt, etc.
6. Wash hands when you are dirty.
7. Wash hands anytime they are exposed to bodily fluids.
8. Cover mouths when coughing and sneezing.

Attendance and Time off

In the Enrollment Agreement you stipulate the days that your child will be attending Bridges to Learning. These are firm dates that cannot be changed. For example, if a holiday is on a Tuesday, a day you normally attend, you can't change your day that week to a Wednesday. In addition, if you choose not to attend the day you are scheduled you cannot attend on a different day. Employees are scheduled according to the time you have contracted for. You will not be reimbursed for holidays, sick days or days that your child doesn't attend but you have contracted for. If you do have a conflict with days and need to change days, please let us know as soon as possible.

If possible we would appreciate advance notice when your child will be away from school.

Medication

We can only dispense medication if you have completed a Medication Request Form. This form is required every time there is a medication requirement. You can not complete a "blanket" Medication Request Form. This applies for prescription and non prescription medication. These forms are for our records, and are not sent home. Your classroom teacher, or yourself can leave the completed form in the office. We need a doctor's note to dispense medicine on an ongoing basis.

Diapers, Wipes and Changes of Clothing

If your child is still in diapers, you must provide diapers and wipes. In addition, each child should have an appropriate change of clothing, including socks and underwear. Lastly, your child also needs a sheet and blanket for nap time. All items brought to school should be labeled and kept in your child's cubbie.

Toys from Home

We are not responsible for items such as toys that are brought to school that may be lost or broken. We maintain a "no toys from home policy" and recommend that you not bring things to school that you will be terribly upset if they are lost. Children often share, show, and play with things that they have in their cubbies and throughout the day they may get misplaced. Please choose what you bring in carefully!

Alternate Pick-Up

If you require someone that is not listed in your enrollment agreement, to pick up your child, you must complete and sign an Alternate Pick up Form. If necessary we can fax the form to you. The person picking up your child will need to show us their driver's license before we will release your child. Your child will not be released to someone if the appropriate paperwork has not been completed.

Special Diet

Please advise us if your child has any special dietary needs. For example, if your child is allergic to peanut butter we need to know. Also if you have an EpiPen for your child, please provide that to us. If your child has unique needs, such as, can only drink soy milk, we ask that you provide that. We will mark the item with your child's name, so that it will not be used by others. Also, if there is something specific that you want your child to have on a daily basis, please provide that. If your child has very specific dietary needs or allergies it may be required that you provide food for them on days where there is a conflict. Please see the weekly menu and contact the office to make decisions about your child.

FEES

Actual fee charges are subject to change and therefore are not published in this handbook. You will be provided a fee schedule upon enrollment and whenever fees change.

Payment Schedule and Tuition

You are advised of your tuition when you enroll at Bridges to Learning. In the event that tuition is raised, you will be provided with the new rate at least one month prior to the effective date of the increase. You may pay tuition weekly or monthly or bi-monthly. Weekly tuition is due on Monday mornings. Monthly tuition is due on the 1st business day of the month. Bi-monthly tuition is due the 1st and 15th business days of the month.

Registration Fee

A registration fee is required to enroll in Bridges to Learning. This is a non refundable fee.

Security Fee

A security fee of two weeks tuition is required upon enrolling at Bridges to Learning. We require a two week written notice should you decide to terminate our services. When that notice is received your security deposit will be used to cover your last two weeks of attendance. If we do not receive written notice, you will forfeit your security deposit.

Late Fees

Late Pick-up Fees

Our center closes at 6:30 P.M. We expect that you will honor this closing time and pick up your child by closing. If you are going to be late due to an emergency, please call. We do not have staff scheduled to work after 6:30 P.M. If you are late and we have received no emergency call you will be charged a late fee. The late pick-up fee is per minute per child, so if you are 15 minutes late and have 2 children, you will be charged the late fee times 2. This fee is due at the end of the week that you were late. For example, if you were late on Wednesday, the fee is due by Friday. If you do not pay the late fee, you will be charged a late payment fee. If this becomes habitual or you do not pay your late pick-up fee, your enrollment may be terminated.

Late Tuition Payment Fees

Tuition may be paid weekly, monthly or bi-monthly. Weekly, tuition is considered late by close of business on Tuesday. Monthly, tuition is considered late by close of business on the second business day of the month. Bi-monthly payments are considered late by close of business on first business day after the 1st and 15th business days of the month.

Returned Check Charge

If a check is returned from the bank, you will be charged a return check charge. If we receive more than 2 returned checks, you must paid tuition in cash going forward. Habitual return checks may result in termination of our services.

Termination of services for Late Payment

Habitual late payments, refusal to pay late fees or return check charges may result in termination of services.

Sibling Discount

We do provide a sibling discount on our tuition fee.

PARENT TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

We strive to maintain a strong connection between our school and our children's parents. Numerous events are scheduled throughout the year, where parents can participate in activities with the children. Examples include holiday parties, parent reading time, and field trips where parents are encouraged to chaperone and enjoy the fun. We have an open door policy at Bridges to Learning and you always welcome to visit the center at any time during the day. We encourage you to schedule time to come into your child's classroom to participate and lead an activity. Examples of parent participation include; reading a story, doing an art project, leading a cooking activity, etc. This is a wonderful opportunity to get to know your child's teacher as well as spend quality time with your child.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

We conduct Parent-Teacher Conferences, twice yearly. Although we hope you are communicating with your child's teacher ongoing, these conferences are a time to discuss in detail, with your child's teacher, the developmental goals that your child has reached. Conferences are normally scheduled in November and June. If you would like to set up a conference at another time throughout the year, please feel free to contact your child's teacher.

Notices to Parents

Each child has a mailbox in their classroom. All notices are sent home via this method. Please check your child's mailbox regularly.

Emails

We encourage the use of email for communication purposes. If you would like to use this method of communications, please provide the office with your email address.

Newsletter

We publish a monthly newsletter. The newsletter provides information regarding monthly activities as well as a parenting article from Amanda. The newsletter is provided via paper or email and can also be viewed on our website.

Parent-Teacher Committee

We are in the planning phase of developing a Parent-Teacher Committee. You will be provided with more information about this area as we have it available.

TERMINATION OF CARE

Parent Initiated

We recognize that there are times when you no longer will require our services. We require a written two week notice to ensure that your security deposit is applied to your last two week's of tuition.

School Initiated

Unfortunately there may be times when we need to act on our Expulsion Agreement. Reason for school initiated termination may include; failure to pay tuition in a timely manner, failure to pay late fee charges that have been assessed, habitual late pick-up, child behavior, parent conduct and deportment. If this occurs we will give you two weeks notice to find alternate care. Your security will be applied to these last two weeks of attendance. However, we reserve the right to terminate services immediately in cases of extreme negative behavior by a child or parent. In those cases where immediate expulsion is warranted, your security deposit will not be refunded.