

Parent Handbook

Revised August 2009

**Welcome to
Bridge School!**

Nancy and Dick say ...

“Please read this and keep it handy!”

School Day Schedule	3
School Guidelines & Suggestions	4
Attendance	4
Arriving and Leaving.....	6
Academics and Sports.....	7
Bringing Things From Home.....	8
Health.....	9
Social Gatherings	10
Policies.....	11
School Communications	11
Have a question? Talk with these people:	11
Bridge School Newsletter	12
Reports and Conferences	12
Volunteering at Bridge School	13
Fund Raising	15
Gift Wrap.....	15
Annual Fund Raising Letter.....	15
Raffle and Silent Auction	15
Book Fair.....	16
General Mills Box-tops and Shaws' Card Rewards.....	16
School Governance	16
Staff.....	16
Board of Directors.....	17
Special Events.....	18
Back-To-School Picnic	18
Halloween.....	18
Winter Week	19
Collar Day	19
Morning Recitals.....	20
Spring Term.....	20
The Great Kindergarten Reading	20
Spring Into the Arts – Every Other Year	20
Sixth Grade Trip	21
Beach Day	21
Graduation	21
Staff Wish List.....	22

School Day Schedule

8:15 – 8:30	Students arrive
8:40 – 8:50	Morning Meeting - whole school. Parents are welcome to join in our circle.
8:50 -9:35	Reading
9:35 – 10:25	First Writing
9:35 – 10:15	First Math
10:15 – 10:25	First Math 10-minute Recess
10:25 – 10:40	Snack
10:40 – 11:25	Second Math
10:40 – 11:15	Second Writing
11:15 – 11:25	Second Writing 10-minute Recess
11:30 – 12:10	Explorations Choices
12:10 – 12:40	Recess (whole school)
12:40 – 12:55	Lunch
12:55 – 1:20	Silent Reading Spanish for one Home Center each day
1:20 – 2:05	Arts Choices
2:05 – 2:40	Home Center time Bobbi Day for one Home Center each day
2:40 – 2:45	Afternoon Meeting - whole school. Parents are welcome to join in our circle.
2:45	Dismissal

School Guidelines & Suggestions

Following are some guidelines that we want all parents to read, understand and comply with. These guidelines help keep Bridge School an organized and safe environment for our children.

We have also included some suggestions that we hope will make school life easier for you and will acquaint you with some of our school traditions, celebrations and functions.

Attendance

School Hours - 8:30 – 2:45

Arrival: Between 8:25 and 8:30 – We expect students to be dropped off between 8:15 and 8:30 in the morning. As a courtesy, Nancy will open our “early room” (Diane’s room) at 8:00. And students may wait there until 8:15. Please make arrangements with Nancy in advance. Also, please bring your child into the school; don’t just drop them off in the parking lot. Students arriving after 8:30 are considered late.

It is vital that your children are at school by 8:30. If your child is late for meeting on a choice day, they will miss the descriptions of the choices by the teachers, and lose their place in the queue (they don’t get to choose until the end). This isn’t to punish the student, but to keep the meeting running smoothly without repeating class descriptions.

It is important to note that the home center teachers will not be on duty until 8:15, even if they are present in the building. Teachers sometimes come in before 8:15 specifically to accomplish tasks that cannot be accomplished with students present in the room. Please respect the schedule of the staff so that they can be at their best during school hours.

Dismissal: 2:45 We expect students to be picked up at 2:45. It can be upsetting to students, especially younger children, to be left at school late.

Students left at school late require that a staff member stay late as well. Please respect our teachers’ time and don’t let this happen. If you must be late, please call and let us know ahead of time.

If someone other than you is picking up your child, written notes are best; phone calls are OK; but a child's assertion is not enough.

Written permission is required if your child will be using the ACTR bus. Please speak with Nancy about the policies for using the bus.

Absences and Lateness

If your child will be absent or late (arriving after 8:30), please notify us between 8:00 and 8:30. If you arrive late, check in with your child's reading teacher and leave a note with the time of arrival on Nancy's desk.

Missing school disrupts class work and the feeling of community. We discourage vacation trips during school time and "days off" for reasons other than sickness. Please don't let the consequences of out-of-school activities, trips or sports, interfere with school or homework. We prefer a sleepy child to an absent or late child.

Please make medical and dental appointments during after-school hours.

Your child will be considered truant by the State of Vermont if they have multiple unexcused absences. We are obligated to report truancy to your child's public school district.

Snow Days

We will cancel school if the Addison Central Supervisory Union (includes Mary Hogan School, MUMS and MUHS) cancels school.

Bridge School never has delayed openings even if the Addison Central Supervisory Union does. We always start school at the normal time.

Find out about cancellations:

Most area radio and television stations will make the announcement.

Web: www.bridgeschoolvermont.org,
www.vpr.net

We understand that many of our students travel quite far, and that conditions in your area may be dramatically different from here in Middlebury. We understand that you may have to make a decision to stay home even if school is in session. Please call us between 8:00 and 8:30 to let us know.

In-Service Days

We have scheduled two full-day in-services during the year. See the calendar for dates. Our in-service dates may not coincide with public school in-services.

Arriving and Leaving

Going Home Arrangements

We do not allow students to call home to make plans to go home with another student. We prefer that all arrangements be made at home the night before.

Remember, if someone other than you is picking up your child, written notes are best; phone calls are OK; children's assertion is not enough.

Written permission is required if your child will be using the ACTR bus. Please speak with Nancy about the policies for using the bus.

Parking Lot

In the morning, students play on the playground so there is **NO PARKING beyond the moveable barrier on the kickball field**. In the afternoons, parking is usually allowed because there are no children on the playground and the barrier will have been removed.

Please be careful!! Drive slowly!!

We value the safety of our children!!

Speed limit: 5 MPH!!

Please do not idle your car when dropping off and picking up your child [Idle Free Vermont].

Academics and Sports

Explorations and Arts Choices

Every two weeks students choose one Arts and one Explorations class. Students listen to descriptions of the classes in morning meeting and make their choices. Not everyone gets their first choice, but we know that all the classes are good! Sometimes there are age restrictions for classes. Older Home Center teachers keep track of children's choices to ensure that children experience a diversity of classes.

At Explorations time we teach science, social studies, history, Spanish and other foreign languages. The kindergarten is kept together as a group and rotates through all the Explorations teachers. This kindergarten choice is also open to students who were in kindergarten last year.

Arts choices include arts and crafts, sports, music, dance and theater.

Homework

Older students regularly have homework each weekday evening. Younger students have homework occasionally.

Readers are required to read for at least 15 minutes each evening. Older students should read up to 30 minutes, depending on the teacher and the reading program. This is in addition to reading done at school and other homework.

Older math students should be practicing math facts for at least 5 minutes each evening.

It is helpful for students to have a regular time and place in which to work. It is also helpful to have a backpack for homework that comes to school and goes home each day.

If there is any confusion or problem about homework and/or expectations surrounding it, please ask the assigning teacher.

Homework should not be a struggle between you and your child. If your child balks at doing homework, please bring the issue to the assigning teacher and/or your child's Home Center teacher.

Library Books

Children are allowed to check out books from the Bridge School library. Please check your child's room and around your house for Bridge School library books from time to time. Return any books you find – no questions asked – so that we do not have to buy replacements. Thank you!

After School Sports

Parents coach soccer and basketball for certain age groups after school. Some of these sports include games against other schools. We focus on providing experience in playing the games rather than on competition. There is typically an equipment and T-shirt fee.

Skating

As soon as we can keep a rink frozen, we have skating at recess and other free times. We have some skates that may be borrowed (they will need to be sharpened).

Help clearing the rink is appreciated! Please see Gerry.

Bringing Things From Home

Change of Clothes and Footwear

Please be sure your child has a complete change of clothes at school every day. This is not just for bathroom accidents, but also for really impressive mud puddle or pond accidents. **Older students need a change of clothes also.**

Please provide a pair of season-appropriate boots for use during muddy and snowy recesses.

Students in younger Home Centers (Sharon's and Kathy's) are required to wear boots if they want to go outside during recess when it's muddy or snowy.

Gym Sneakers

Every child needs an extra pair of sneakers **at school every day** to wear in the gym and on scheduled Bobbi days.

Food

We have a 15-minute mid-morning snack starting at 10:25. Fifteen minutes is allocated for lunch beginning at 12:40. Children may also use some of their recess time to eat, if needed. Please be sure the amount of food you send is adequate.

Students may not use the kitchen appliances for heating or cooling their food. Please provide a small ice pack in their lunch box for items that need to be kept cool.

Let your child's Home Center teacher, and Nancy, know if there are any special concerns about food or other allergies.

Electronic Devices

We do not allow students to use any electronic devices – games, music, phones, whatever – at school. If you want your child to have a device for after school, it must be turned off and left in a cubby during the school day.

Health

Medications

All medications should be given to Nancy to administer. This includes cough drops and homeopathic remedies.

We need **written** permission to give your child any medications, including Tylenol.

We are required to keep prescription medicine in its original, properly labeled, container. If you need an additional container, please ask your pharmacist.

Head Lice

If we discover that your child has head lice, we will call you. If you find lice or nits at home, please contact your Home Center teacher. The names of children with head lice are kept confidential.

Fevers

If your child has a fever, we ask that they be kept home until they are fever free for 24 hours.

Social Gatherings

School Birthdays

Birthdays are very special at Bridge School. Students are honored with a special song during Morning Meeting. Additionally, the birthday students may bring treats for their Home Center. **Finger foods, please!**

Students who have birthdays that are not on school days may pick a School Birthday. Check with your child's Home Center teacher and put it on the office calendar.

Social Gatherings Outside of School

Invitations to birthday parties, sleep-overs, play-dates and similar gatherings should be kept as discreet and private as possible.

In consideration for other students' feelings, please **NO** invitations or gift-giving at school.

“Gradedness”

We are a mixed-age school. The only actual grades we have are kindergarten and sixth grade. One big advantage to this is that students who might make the choice to spend another year here are not “repeating a grade”. We do not use class grades as a means of academic, athletic or social grouping. Skill level, interest and learning style are our chosen methods for student grouping.

We would appreciate it if parents did not organize any “graded” events.

Policies

Asbestos Management Plan

We have an asbestos management plan on file. Please ask Nancy if you wish to see it.

Sexual Harassment Policy

A copy of our sexual harassment policy is on file. Please ask Nancy if you wish to see it.

School Communications

People are sometimes reluctant to approach teachers and administrators with their concerns and ideas. That's not the Bridge School way. In order to serve our children effectively, we need frequent, detailed and free communication between parents and staff. What we don't know, we can't deal with. A problem unspoken is a problem un-solved.

Have a question? Talk with these people:

When you have **hopes and concerns about your child** at Bridge School, speak first with your child's Home Center teacher. Your child's Home Center is your child's home base at Bridge School. Your child's Home Center teacher acts as the coordinator of your child's educational experience at Bridge School. They are in the best position to explore problems, gather information and make suggestions. If other teachers need to be involved, the Home Center teacher will help make the necessary arrangements.

When you have questions about **school logistics** (schedules, volunteer responsibilities, general confusions, etc.), talk with Nancy or Dick.

When you have questions or suggestions about **fundraising, enrollment, building and grounds, scholarship issues or publicity**, speak with Dick.

Front Desk Hours

Front desk hours are 8:00 – 8:40 and 9:35 – 2:45. Calls received between 8:40 and 9:35 will go onto the answering machine. **We do not answer the phone during morning reading time.**

Administrator's Office Hours for Parents

Dick is available every Monday morning from 9:00 – 9:30 to meet formally with parents. His regular administrative hours are 11:30 – 2:05 each day.

Keeping Files Up-To-Date

Please inform us immediately about any address change, new phone numbers, e-mail address changes, emergency numbers and contacts, immunization updates, etc.

You may always see your child's Bridge School file. Just ask Nancy.

Bridge School Newsletter

Our school newsletter comes out 2 – 3 times each year. We can always use help putting it together. Talk with Dick or Nancy if you are interested.

Reports and Conferences

A comprehensive student report will go home twice each year. Reports include all the teachers' comments about all the classes in which your child has participated, many examples of your child's work, and a cover letter from your child's Home Center teacher summarizing your child's effort and progress in school.

Parents and Home Center teachers participate in one formal 30-minute Parent-Teacher Conference each year. This year, these conferences will be held October 21, 22 and 23. Sign-up sheets will be posted on Home Center doors well in advance.

If you have any questions, concerns or praise to share, **do not wait!** Call, e-mail or visit your Home Center teacher right away. Conferences may be impromptu. If you want a more formal meeting, please schedule it with your Home Center teacher.

Volunteering at Bridge School

We invite and appreciate the generous assistance of our parent community in providing individualized and personal attention to our children and to our school. Volunteer categories are below. Please refer to the Bridge School Volunteer Opportunity Questionnaire to sign up.

Reading

In Sharon's reading classes we need people who can listen to the children read and play games with them.

At Monday morning and all afternoon silent reading times we need people to listen to children read.

Writing

In Gerry's first and second writing classes on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, we need helpers to circulate in the classroom while the children are doing their writing, read what they've written, tell them what you like, make comments, and not make any corrections.

On Thursday mornings in first writing classes we need volunteers to help the children make corrections with their typing using Microsoft Word.

In Sharon and Kimberly's second writing classes we need helpers to take dictation and make basic corrections on the children's work on Monday and Tuesday mornings [priority]. Wednesday mornings would be helpful as well.

On Thursday mornings Kimberly and Sharon's writing classes need a volunteer to work with students on computers using "Typing Master".

Math

In both first and second math classes we need helpers to play with and supervise assigned games with specific children.

At folder time we need helpers who will, with supervision, assist a consistent group of children as they do their written math work. There will be a volunteer meeting to prepare folks to help. Nervous ex math students are more than welcome.

Publicity and Enrollment

We always need help publicizing Bridge School and enrolling new students. We need volunteers to run tours for prospective parents, help write and publish our newsletter, take photos for our extensive school picture albums and for publication, and write news releases and articles about the school for the local news papers.

Grant Writing

We're always looking for people who have skill and experience writing grant proposals.

The Holiday Show

Preparations for our annual Holiday Show need special volunteer help. We need people who can collect and/or make costumes. We need help creating the set for the show at arts time (1:20 – 2:05) for the two weeks before Thanksgiving vacation. We also need help moving the show's set pieces down from the attic and returning them.

Fund Raising

We'll need everybody's help and support throughout the year with our scholarship and capital fund raising campaigns. See the attached fund raising sheet.

Arts and Explorations Classes

If you would like to offer a two-week arts or explorations class let us know as soon as you can. We'll help you with planning if you need it and supervision. Speak with Gerry about explorations classes and Kathy about arts classes.

Substitute Teaching

If you are interested in being a substitute teacher at Bridge School and have done or are willing to have a background check done, let Dick or Nancy know. Let us know what your most available days are. We need to know if you need advance notice about substituting or if we can call you at the last minute.

Adopt a Space

In order to make Bridge School an even lovelier and more comfortable home, we're asking volunteers to help us clean, tidy, and do some repairs. You received a list of the jobs for each school space in the July mailing.

Fund Raising

Raising money for the Scholarship Fund is a year-long effort. We ask that everyone help raise the money that is awarded. Following is a list of the major fund raising events of the year.

Gift Wrap

We sell Sally Foster wrapping paper with 50% of the proceeds going to Bridge School. We ask **everyone** to sell to friends and family in the fall.

Annual Fund Raising Letter

In August we will ask you to give us names and addresses of friends and relatives who you think would welcome the Bridge School Scholarship Fund Raising letter, which is sent out in the fall. Every donor receives a personal thank-you and photo.

Raffle and Silent Auction

The annual Bridge School Raffle is our major Scholarship Fundraising event. We sell 275 tickets at \$50 apiece. The Raffle Committee (for which you are welcome to volunteer) solicits prizes from local businesses and friends. We welcome all donated prizes.

The prizes are awarded at a hors d'oeuvre/dessert buffet that also includes entertainment and a silent auction. It is absolutely worth the price of a ticket, which entitles two adults to go to the buffet. Parents make the delicious food. There will be sign-up sheets on the doors of the school for donating food.

Ticket purchasers do not have to be present to win a prize. However, you must attend and bring your ticket to be eligible for door prizes.

We ask each family to sell **at least** five tickets. You do not have to buy them yourself. We need to sell all the tickets to make the event a complete success.

Book Fair

In the spring, the Book Fair Committee works with Borders Bookstore to have a Book Fair. A percentage of the proceeds goes to the Scholarship Fund. Concurrently, there is a Bake Sale, before and after school, for the Scholarship Fund. We ask that families donate items to sell.

General Mills Box-tops and Shaws' Card Rewards

Bridge School gets cash for redeeming General Mills box-tops. There is a collection receptacle near the Bridge School Information Board in the Office. Please cut your box-tops instead of tearing them off.

If you shop at Shaws or Star Market and use your rewards card, they will donate 1% of your total purchase to Bridge School. This applies to shopping on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. You may need to get a new Rewards card. You can register for a new card at the service desk or online at www.shaws.com/neighborhoodrewards.

School Governance

Staff

The Staff is responsible for all decisions relating to students, curriculum and staffing. Staff Meeting is held every Tuesday after school.

The staff consists of four Home Center teachers, two part-time teachers, an Administrator, and an Administrative Associate.

2009-2010 Home Center Teachers:

Diane Hare, Gerry Loney, Dick Nessen, Kathy Nessen, Sharon Pinsonneault

Part-Time Teachers:

Bobbi Loney, Kimberly Waterman

Administrator:
Dick Nessen

Administrative Associate:
Nancy Cyr

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for fund-raising, enrollment, maintenance of buildings and grounds, publicity and hiring the School Administrator. The Board, in concert with the Staff, does long-range planning for the future of the School. The Board and the Staff create the annual School budget. The Board accepts suggestions, requests and issues raised by parents and community members.

The Board of Directors is made up of 6 – 12 members drawn from the staff, parents and community.

2009 – 2010 Officers of the Board of Directors

President	Kim Moyer
Vice President	Janet Fancher
Treasurer	Lawrence Miller
Secretary	Christine Plunkett

2009 – 2010 Committee Chairs of the Board of Directors

Building and Grounds	Andrew Dregallo
Publicity	Janet Fancher
Scholarship Allocation	Jeanette Gyukeri
Scholarship Fundraising	Nancy Cyr
Enrollment	Kathy Nessen

2009 – 2010 Other Board Members

Sarah Bourne
Bobbi Loney
Kimberly Waterman – Staff Representative
Dick Nessen – Administrator (non-voting member)

The Board meets the second Thursday of each month. Decisions of the Board are reached by consensus. New members are invited by the sitting Board. Bridge School is 501c (3) non-profit organization.

Special Events

Please refer to your School Calendar for specific dates.

We have permission to use Champlain Valley Orthopedics' parking lot across the street for evening events only.

Back-To-School Picnic

On the first Thursday of the school year, we have an all-school picnic. It is an opportunity for families to meet one another. Dick introduces the children and their families. The school provides juice and dessert. Bring a blanket and your picnic supper. (The local pizza parlors do a lot of business that night!)

New families will be contacted by a "Buddy Family" before the picnic to help them feel more comfortable, to introduce them to the community and to answer questions.

Halloween

This is a very celebrated holiday at Bridge School! The day starts out with a parade at morning meeting, so students (and parents) are encouraged to come in costume. It doesn't have to be THE costume. Please be sure to send a change of clothes. We follow our regular schedule until 11:30. The students have an early Recess while Home Center teachers prepare for a sit-down lunch. Your Home Center teacher will ask your child to provide a part of the lunch. Be sure to send a snack.

After lunch and Silent Reading, the teachers offer choices like "Oobleck", "Games", and "Wackiest Witch". The children make their choices in advance.

Alumni Day & Night

Alumni Day is when the students who graduated the previous June visit school. They go to classes and meet with the present sixth grade class during lunch and Silent Reading to share their experiences at their various Middle Schools.

There is also an evening in January when **all** alumni are invited back for a reunion. Favorite activities are looking at photo albums and singing old school songs.

Holiday Show

After the Thanksgiving break, we start rehearsals for our Holiday Show. We rehearse during Explorations and Arts times. Every child has a part in the show. On the same day as the evening performance there is a matinee for small children and for parents who take photos and make videos. Photos and videotaping are not allowed at the evening performance.

We ask everyone to bring a finger dessert to share in their Home Center after the evening performance.

At the time of the Holiday Show we collect books for IIsley Library.

This is a terrible time to miss school!

Winter Week

The week before February Vacation is designated for special activities. This year's activities and schedule will be announced later.

Collar Day

This day is set aside for the staff to give each child an award for excellence in some part of their school experience.

The name comes from an old Elizabethan custom in which Queen Elizabeth I directed her court to dress up. She would then present them with gifts and awards. We celebrate the day by getting dressed up and wearing family awards and medals. We encourage family members to give each other awards for excellence on this day.

The ceremony is held at morning meeting. We request that parents stay for the entire ceremony.

Morning Recitals

In early spring we have a week-long student recital series during morning meeting. Students who regularly study any of the performing arts outside of school may choose to share their work with the rest of the school. In the past we have enjoyed performances of piano, trumpet, drums, flute, voice, magic, gymnastics, dance, clarinet, violin, fencing and martial arts. Diane will arrange the recitals.

Spring Term

The three weeks before April vacation are devoted to an all-school, in-depth exploration of a single topic. We sometimes have an Open House at the end of Spring Term to display the results of our study.

This is also a terrible time for your child to miss school!

The Great Kindergarten Reading

Every spring the kindergarten does a reading presentation for the whole school. Some read from books, some demonstrate reading projects such as “OO BOOKS”, and some may read the other children’s names. We all look forward to this day with great excitement!

Spring Into the Arts – Every Other Year

In May, all the local schools present art displays and performances at the Middlebury College Center for the Arts. Our entire school participates. Spring Into the Arts will not happen in the 2009 – 2010 school year.

Throughout the year children create works of art and bring them home. During this event we need your help in choosing a piece of artwork to return to the school for presentation. **No glass-framed work please.**

All artwork will be returned to the students after Spring Into the Arts.

Sixth Grade Trip

In May our sixth grade goes to the Hulbert Outdoor Center in Fairlee, VT for three days. Two staff members go with them. This program builds group trust and strengthens cooperative work skills. The sixth grade trip kicks off an array of special graduation activities.

Sixth graders will be asked to do the fundraising for their trip. We'll ask sixth grade parents to organize and assist in their efforts.

Beach Day

Beach Day is held during the last week of school. Everyone goes to Branbury Beach State Park (Lake Dunmore) for the day. Home Center teachers will ask you to provide a part of our communal lunch. Send a labeled towel, swimsuit, sunscreen and \$1.50 for the snack bar. Parents are invited to share the day with us.

Graduation

In June on the last Thursday evening of the school year, we have our graduation celebration. Our sixth graders perform and are given their diplomas. Each sixth grader individually presents a gift to the school. We ask everybody to bring a finger dessert to share in Home Centers. This is a whole school event. All students and families are invited to participate!

Bridge School graduation is very special! You don't want to miss it.

A note about graduation gifts:

Sixth grade gifts should reflect the student's talents and interests – a piece of art, writing, music, research – something that we, as their school community, recognize as something uniquely “them”.

We ask that the gifts be something smaller than a breadbox (or a small microwave, for those who don't remember breadboxes).

Staff Wish List

Bobbi:

- White cotton sheets
- Paperback book series, for example Hank Zipper, Artemis Fowl, and others

Gerry

- Stuffed animals of any kind and pictures of owls and ducks
- Science specimens or posters – metals, elements, taxidermy specimens, skeletons and/or skulls -- anything unusual, intriguing or weird.
- If you travel to a foreign country, especially in Asia or Central America, I would love any art, especially traditional, and instruments or sound effects for the Holiday Show.

Kathy

- Corks
- Animal magazines, for example Ranger Rick
- Legos
- Cool stuff for collage
- Plastic frosting containers with lids

Playground Equipment

- Sturdy musical instruments, for example, recorders, shakers, etc.
- Costumes, dress-ups, hats
- Clean lumber, no nails, for fort building [1 inch by any length]
- Rope
- Water and sand buckets
- Plastic trucks and dishes