



# A LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE FAMILIES FROM THE BRIDGE SCHOOL VISION TEAM

*Written collaboratively in 2013 by the Vision Team, which includes Board Members, Parents and Staff Members*

We are honored that you are exploring The Bridge School as a potential school for your child and family. The decision about how to best support your child's education is among the most important a parent can make. We hope learning more about us helps you decide whether our program is the right fit for you.

We highly value our **school community** and expect all Bridge School staff and families to take active, nurturing roles to support this foundation of our children's education. We share responsibility for every child and believe everyone plays a role in safeguarding and supporting not just the development of our own child, but all children in the program. Our **cooperative structure** is integral to this as parents and staff work collaboratively to support student learning, school functions and classroom environments. We are committed learners embracing the idea that everyone has something to both contribute and learn, so we strive to treat each other with compassion and respect as we do this together.

The primary focus of The Bridge School is to support **whole child development** by inspiring, cultivating and protecting students' intellectual, social, emotional, creative and physical growth. We expect parents to take an active role in their child's education and to support learning at home, which naturally illustrates that learning takes place all the time, not just at school. Our role as teachers is to help every student develop his or her sense of self as a learner, community member, and participant in the school community and natural world. In short, we want to help children become not just good learners but "*good people*," as Alfie Kohn might say.

The Bridge School offers **multi-age** classrooms where students are taught and assessed based on developmental stage rather than strict grade levels. Strong student-teacher relationships have a chance to grow and there are opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and leadership. We use well-researched developmental continuums and descriptive benchmarks to assess students along a multi-year span to mark progress. We do not believe that learning is a race; rather, it is an adventure that each person experiences in her or his own way.

Rather than expecting students to respond to a fixed set of experiences and expectations, we spark the intrinsic motivation of life-long learners through a **progressive educational approach**. We believe students actively construct new knowledge and their understanding of the world by relating it to what they already know and our teachers select curriculum and interdisciplinary projects to support student inquiry, research and reflection. We trust children and their unique learning processes and we trust, encourage and expect our deeply committed teachers to be creative and to treat students with seriousness and respect.

There is no single type of Bridge School family, but families here generally support the mission of our program by:

- Treating our young and growing school with respect
- Supporting fearless exploration
- Valuing the state of childhood and supporting the wonder, play and joy that comes naturally to children
- Helping others in our community by demonstrating compassion and support for one another
- Having a really good time at school
- Having a sense of humor and perspective about ourselves and our children

We value our school both for what it offers current students and families and for the role it will play in the future. We work very hard – some of us every day – and take responsibility for providing a thriving learning environment for current students and for Bridge School families we do not yet know.

We hope you are interested in meeting some of our current families and learning more.

We look forward to meeting you!