



A LETTER TO PROSPECTIVE FAMILIES FROM THE BRIDGE SCHOOL VISION TEAM

Written collaboratively by Bridge School Board Members, Parents and Staff

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 student education. We collectively share responsibility for every child and believe all adults here play a role in safeguarding and supporting not just the development of *all* children in the program. Our **cooperative structure** is integral to this as we collaborate to support student learning, school functions and classroom environments. We are committed learners embracing the idea that everyone has something to contribute and learn, so we strive to treat each other with compassion and respect as we work 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 them at home, which naturally illustrates that learning takes place all the time in all environments. Our role as teachers is to help every student develop his or her sense of self as a thoughtful 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.

We do not believe that learning is a race; rather, it is an adventure that each person experiences in her or his own way. To support this The Bridge School offers **multi-age** classrooms where students are taught and assessed based on developmental stage rather than strict grade levels. This format offers opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and leadership, as well as supporting strong student-teacher relationships. Well-researched developmental continuums and descriptive benchmarks guide teachers in marking student progress.

Supporting students to grow at their own pace (rather than respond to a fixed set of experiences and expectations) sparks intrinsic motivation of lifelong learners. This **progressive educational approach** supports our belief that students actively construct new knowledge and understandings of the world by relating novel information to what they know. 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!