

Bridgeport Public Schools
Early Childhood Department



Family Handbook

Mission

The mission of the Bridgeport Public Schools Early Childhood Department is to nurture the academic and social emotional development of each child by creating early learning experiences focused on intellectual exploration, cultural diversity, inclusive relationships, community engagement, and family partnerships. When children explore, they develop the essential dispositions to become life-long learners.

Philosophy

Our preschool classrooms are dedicated to a whole child approach to learning. Our curriculum is built on developmentally appropriate opportunities that support curiosity, discovery, diversity, exploration, investigation, problem solving, creativity, imagination, and a positive sense of self.

We believe our families play a significant role in the learning process. Building strong partnerships with our families provide opportunities to support academic and social emotional learning growth.

It is our goal to provide every child, a challenging, dynamic, and enriching education that cultivates the unique talents of every child and fosters personal integrity, intellectual curiosity, individual well-being and civic responsibility.

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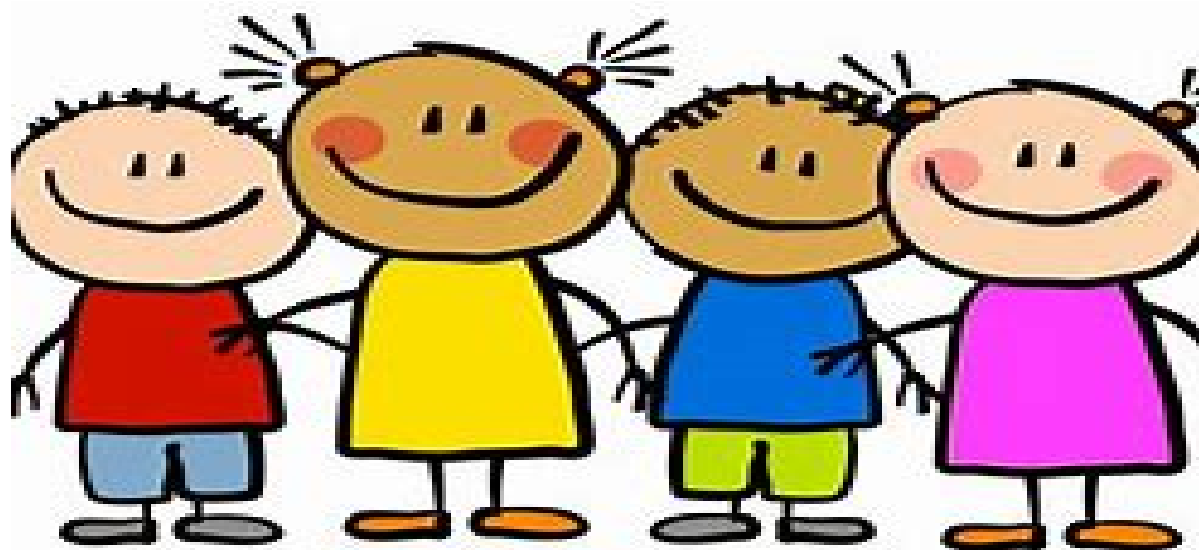
Age Eligibility

In order to enter our three-year old program, your child must turn three by Jan. 1st of the year that they are applying for enrollment. For the four-year old programs, your child must turn four by Jan. 1st of the year that they are applying for.

Toilet Training/ Toileting

Families are strongly encouraged to assist children at home with practicing the skills and behaviors necessary to become fully toilet trained. Children are not required to be toilet trained to attend a Bridgeport Public Schools preschool classroom. Our staff can provide you with resources and materials for supporting toilet training at home.

Families must provide to the school staff wipes, disposable diapers, or pull-ups for use during school hours.



NAEYC Accreditation

Each of our preschool classrooms are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Accreditation means our preschool classrooms were visited by an NAEYC accessor and meet the high-quality preschool program standards established by this association.

For further information about NAEYC accreditation please visit www.bridgeportedu.net and find the word Academics in the top blue bar. Click on Early Childhood.

Ages and Stages Diagnostic Screening (ASQ3 and ASQSE)

Families will receive a Sparkler letter containing a QR Code to create a free Sparkler account. A requirement of the Preschool application process is for the student's family to complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ3) and the Ages and Stages Social Emotional Questionnaire (ASQSE), using the Sparkler App.

The data from both diagnostic screening tools should be utilized to intentionally plan your classroom environment to support your individual child's needs.

Connecticut State Funding

School Readiness

The Connecticut State Department of Education Office of Early Childhood Education provides interested programs in applying for the School Readiness Grant. BPS currently has nineteen preschool classrooms that are School Readiness funded.

The goal of School Readiness Preschool Program is to provide affordable, high-quality early care and education services in high-need communities that help young children prepare for kindergarten.

The School Readiness Preschool Grant Program offers benefits at the individual, family, and community levels.

Smart Start

The Connecticut State Department of Education Office of Early Childhood Education offers the opportunity for programs to apply for a Smart Start Grant. The purpose of the Smart Start Grant is to provide funding to establish or expand a preschool program in the public schools. These programs prioritize enrollment for families based on income and other factors such as housing insecurity or status as a dual language learner. Four of our preschool programs are Smart Start funded.

Financial Assistance

Family Fees

Families who select to enroll their children in a Bridgeport Public Schools preschool classroom are required to pay a weekly fee.

Weekly fees are determined by using the Connecticut State Department of Education Office of Early Childhood Education Sliding Fee Scale.

The fee is calculated using the family's gross income (current federal tax return, four consecutive and current pay stubs or a budget letter with supporting documentation) and the family size (number of adults and children).

Each family is required to sign the parent fee agreement form at the start of the school year. Included with the family fee agreement form is the payment schedule for the current school year, which outlines the dates that the fees are due for payment.

Failure to pay weekly fees may result in your child being considered for disenrollment.

Application

A child is considered for enrollment once the online application is completed in its entirety and all required application documents are submitted. The maximum number of students in a preschool classroom is eighteen. Once all eighteen seats are filled, the student is placed on a waiting list. If the child is placed on a waiting list, the family will receive contact from the school when an opening becomes available. There is no specific timeline for when an opening will become available for a child who is currently on the wait list.

Preschool applications are available online. Please go to www.bridgeportedu.net. Locate the word Academics in the blue bar at the top of the page. Click the word Academics and then locate the word Early Childhood. Click on Early Childhood. A new page will appear, the application link can be found at the bottom right hand of the screen.

All applications must contain the following documents in order to be marked as completed:

1. Original Birth Certificate with raised seal (Full Page) or Passport
 - Guardian papers when applicable
 - If you are a foster parent, contact your DCF social worker
2. Proof of Residency (any two of the following listed below):
 - Parent/Guardian's Driver License or State ID with current address
 - Current utility bill (no more than 1 month old) UI, Gas, Water, Or Cable (*these are the only acceptable documents*)

- Lease or Notarized Letter stating that you are living at that address

3. THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ARE ALSO NEEDED:

- ☐ Type of Health Insurance (public, private, or none)
- ☐ Number of household members claimed on your taxes (adult and Children)
- ☐ Most current year Income tax (for both parents)
- ☐ Four recent pay stubs (for both parents)

IF APPLICABLE:

- ☐ Unemployment Benefits Sheets - The entire sheet- all pages
- ☐ Social Security Income Sheet- The entire sheet- all pages
- ☐ DCF Subsidy Form
- ☐ State Assistance Benefit Letter (DSS Budget Form) - The entire sheet- all pages, and if you are working, provide four recent pay stubs.

4. Health Assessment Record (Annual Physical)

- Part I: Health History
- Part II: Medical Evaluation and Immunization Record

5. YOUR CHILD MUST HAVE THEIR FLU SHOT BY JANUARY 1st.

District Policies

Specific district policies can be accessed via the Bridgeport Public Schools homepage which is www.bridgeportedu.com. Once on the homepage, find and click on the word Board of Education and you will see policies as the first drop down item. Click on the Policies drop down item to review a complete list of all BOE Policies.

Confidentiality

Bridgeport Public School preschool programs adhere to the Connecticut Code of Professional Responsibility for Teachers. The individual dignity of children, families, and employees is protected at all times in accordance with current laws. Information about children and families is not shared or released to other parties without written permission from parents/guardians.

Custody/Legal Issues

The education and safety of our students is top priority, Therefore, open communication with the administrator about parent arrangements, guardianship, and custody related issues, and other legal matters are of utmost importance,

If a parent or guardian is legally barred from contact, the school must have a recent copy of a court order or custody agreement **with a** raised seal. If we do not have legal documents on file that specifically state a parent/guardian is not allowed contact with the student, the school will release the student.

Emergency Forms

At the start of the school year, we require each family to complete an emergency form for their child. The emergency forms are a vital component of student safety.

You are required to keep all information related to the student emergency form updated.

If we do not have updated information, you will not receive communications from our district or your child's school throughout the school year. The Parent Square system will only send electronic communications to the phone numbers or email addresses you provide on your child's emergency form. If there are changes throughout the year to these numbers or email addresses, notify the school immediately.

Safety

BPS is strongly committed to the safety and well-being of our students and staff. In each of our school sites, we conduct periodic safety drills in collaboration with the Bridgeport Police and Fire Departments to ensure that all staff remain current in protocols and to ensure that students know the exact steps to follow to remain safer under the direct supervision of our staff. Each school is required to keep an updated Emergency Plan.

In accordance with Connecticut State Guidelines, we will conduct the following drills throughout the school year:

10 fire drills, 2 evacuation drills, and 3 security level drills.

Uniforms

All Bridgeport Public School students are required to wear a uniform each day. Each individual preschool program has specific uniform colors. When registering your child for one of our preschool programs, please ask the school to share their specific uniform colors with you. Uniforms can be purchased from a variety of stores (Walmart, Target, Old Navy, etc...)

Bus Transportation

Bus transportation is not provided for students enrolled in a regular education preschool class.

Bus transportation is provided for preschool students enrolled in a self-contained special education preschool class.

Attendance

It is important that your child attend school every day. Attending regularly and being on time develops a positive attitude toward school life. Your child will learn many new things every day, and it is difficult to catch up on missed lessons and work.

- 1. In accordance with the Bridgeport Public Schools Attendance Policy, if your child is going to be absent from school, it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to contact the school prior to 9:30 a.m.**

- If the school does not receive a phone call prior to 9:30 a.m., the district's phone messenger system will automatically call your home to state that your child did not report to school.*

2. **CT state guidelines require that the first nine absences in a given school year will be marked as excused if the school receives a written note by the parent/guardian or authorized medical personnel.**
- *The note must explain the reason for the absence, and it must be received within ten days of your child's return to school.*
3. **For the tenth absence, and all absences thereafter, a student's absences from school are considered excused for the following reasons:**
- *A student's illness (Note: All student absences due to illness must be verified by an appropriately licensed medical professional to be deemed excused regardless of length of absence).*
 - *A student's observance of a religious holiday*
 - *A death in the student's family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family*
 - *A mandated court appearance (additional documentation required)*
 - *Extraordinary educational opportunities pre- approved by district administrators and in accordance with the Connecticut State Department of Education guidance.*

If a child accumulates ten or more unexcused absences in a given school year, the following BPS attendance interventions will be utilized:

10 unexcused= A referral for intervention and a parent conference

12 unexcused= A parent conference

15 unexcused= A PPT meeting is held

Illness

Students should remain home from school or may be sent home for the day from school if they exhibit any of the symptoms listed below:

- *Fever-temperature of 100.5 MUST BE FEVER FREE FOR 24 hours without fever reducing medications prior to returning to school.*
- *Vomiting- No Vomiting for 24 hours. Also, nausea or severe headache*
- *Diarrhea- frequent loose or watery stool*
- *Sore throat- Keep home with a fever. If strep throat, the child must be on antibiotics for twenty-four hours*
- *Earache- Severe pain that may impact normal hearing*
- *Cough- congested or productive cough; constant hacking cough*
- *Runny nose- thick yellow or green discharge or needs frequent/constant wiping*
- *Pink eye or discharge, drainage or crust, doctor should be called*
- *Body Lice- unexplained cause or fever call the doctor*
- *Ringworm- Must be under treatment and area must be covered*
- *COVID 19- follow current state and CDC guidelines*





If your child reports to school in the morning ill, the school nurse may contact the child's family to pick the child up from school. It is important for families to make arrangements for childcare when a child is ill and must stay home.

It is the family's responsibility to ensure that personal cell phone numbers and the numbers of individuals listed as emergency contacts are current. The main office and your child's teacher should be notified immediately when changes occur to cell phone numbers.

Allergies

Caring for students with food allergies requires a comprehensive management approach with an emphasis on forming a partnership with the family.

Please provide the school nurse with all current medical information related to your child's allergy/allergies.

Medication

BPS PROCEDURE FOR REQUESTING MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION:

- 1. For each medication that must be administered daily or on an as-needed basis, the parent must obtain a written order from an authorized prescriber (physician, dentist, advanced practice registered nurse, or physician's assistant) using Bridgeport Public School's form for the Administration of Medicine by School Personnel. A new order form is required each year.**
- 2. The authorized prescriber must fill in the information requested on the form:**
 - a. Name and strength of the medication**
 - b. Reason that the medication must be given (diagnosis)**
 - c. Amount (dosage) of medication to be administered and route of administration**
 - d. Potential side effect of the medication**
 - e. Time of day that the medication is to be administered**
 - f. Duration of the orders to administer the prescribed medication**
- 3. A parent or guardian must sign the Parent/Guardian Authorization portion of the form.**
- 4. The medication must be packaged in the original pharmacy container, clearly labeled with the student's name, the authorized prescriber's name, and the prescription.**

5. A responsible adult must bring the medication and the completed authorization form.
6. No more than a forty-five day supply of medication may be stored at the school.
7. At the end of the school year, any unused medication will be destroyed if not picked up by a responsible adult by the end of the last day of school.
8. If your child has a severe food allergy, asthma, diabetes, or other conditions that may require an emergency care plan in school, as well as medications, please schedule a meeting the school nurse for additional required paperwork.

All medication will be kept in the school nurse's office in a locked cabinet or nursing refrigerator under the direct supervision of the school nurse. The school nurse will supervise and document the administration of medications.

Arrival and Dismissal

Each school has a designated arrival and dismissal time. It is important to ask school staff about the arrival and dismissal time for your child's school. Additionally, each school has a designated arrival and dismissal location for their preschool classrooms. Adults bringing the student to school or picking up the child from school should be familiar with the designated location.

For student safety, an adult (18 years or older) is required to bring the student to the designated arrival location at the individual school site and sign in the student. The adult is required to sign the student out of the school using the form provided by the school staff.

Bridgeport Public Schools will not release a child from school to an adult unless he or she is listed on the student's emergency form. **If** an adult is not listed on the student's emergency form, the student will not be released to this adult unless the parent/guardian sends a written note indicating that they give permission to this adult to pick up their child; this individual must show ID to school staff upon arrival to the school.

Tardy

Students are marked tardy when they arrive to school twenty minutes or more after the individual schools start time. An adult must accompany the tardy student into the school building. The adult must sign the student into school.



Early Dismissal

Bridgeport Public Schools strongly recommends that parents/guardians consider the possible loss of academic learning time as a crucial factor

in deciding whether or not to take a child out of school early. Therefore, we recommend that all medical and dental appointments for students are made after school or on non-school days.

In the event that these appointments cannot be scheduled after school or on non-school days, a written communication must be submitted to your child's teacher or the main office indicating the time for early release and the reason.

Inclement Weather

Occasionally weather or other emergency conditions will require school to be closed, experience a delayed opening, or an early dismissal. Your child's school and our district will send notifications via the Parent Square app, local television stations, and local radio stations. It is important for you to pay close attention to these communications and to plan appropriately for your child's care.

Media Release

Each student is required to return a signed media release consent form stating whether you grant permission for your child to be photographed or videotaped.

During a school/district event where media is present, any student who does not have parent/guardian permission to be photographed or videotaped, will be placed in a designated area.

Visitors

At this time, due to federal, state, and local COVID regulations, all visitors who are not a child's parent or legal guardian are required to

show proof of vaccination before entering our school buildings to work with students and staff.



School and District Communication- Parent Square

Parent Square is our school and district preferred method of communication when we need to provide our families with real time information about upcoming school events, school closings, school emergencies, and other important information.

The electronic communication from Parent Square will only be sent to the phone number and email address the school has on file. To verify or change the phone number or email address we have on file, please contact the individual school secretary or your child's teacher.

The school will provide each family with directions on how to download the Parent Square app and how to use this app for communications.

PowerSchool Access

Each family has access to their child's PowerSchool account. The PowerSchool account can be utilized to monitor your child's academic progress. Please request your PowerSchool access letter from either your child's teacher or the school secretary.



IPADS (school assigned)

Each student will be assigned an individual IPAD for instructional purposes. The classroom teacher may periodically send the IPAD home for student to utilize district approved learning apps that meet the CT Student Data Privacy Act.

The IPAD is school property and is closely monitored by the Bridgeport Public Schools Information Technology Department for proper use. Students and their families are financially responsible for damages to an individual IPAD.

Families can opt to purchase insurance for the IPAD.

All students should bring to school an inexpensive pair of headphones. Headphones can be purchased at the Dollar Store, Walmart, Target, Five Below, etc.

Online Learning Tools

Your child's school assigned IPAD has a variety of district approved learning apps such as ABC Mouse, Lexia, Footsteps2Brilliance, Clever University, etc. These apps are provided to further support your child's skills in reading and mathematics. Each app purchased by our school district that appears on your child's IPAD has met the requirements of the CT Student Data Privacy Act.



Students with Special Needs

Our preschool programs are inclusive environments.

Students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) receive their related services (speech/language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, social work, and specialized instruction) in accordance with their IEP. Services are delivered in a variety of formats (within the classroom setting, individually, or small groups).

For students with an IEP, Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings are conducted annually (once a year) to discuss an individual child's progress towards IEP goals and objectives.

Our school district has a pre-referral process in place to identify and provide instructional support to children who demonstrate developmental delays in the areas of academics, social/emotional learning, speech and language, fine or gross motor, and daily living skills activities.

Families should speak to their child's administrator, teacher, or school support staff members when they have concerns about their child's development.

Families may request a PPT meeting at any time if they have concerns about their child's progress.

IEPs (Individualized Education Plans)

Individualized Education Plans (IEPS) are developed for each student who has been identified as developmentally delayed. IEPS include present levels of performance, specific goals and objectives, special education hours, and related service provider hours. IEPS are updated annually during a PPT meeting.

Classroom teachers, specialty area teachers, special education teachers, and support staff members who instruct/service a child with developmental delays are knowledgeable of his/her professional and legal responsibilities as it relates to the IEP.

PPT Meetings (Planning and Placement Team Meetings)

Families of a student with a current IEP (individualized education plan) will participate in an annual PPT meeting.

Families of student with or without a current IPE can request either orally or in writing to conduct a PPT meeting at any time if they have concerns about their child's educational progress or behavior.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) and Scientifically Based Research Interventions (SRBI)

For students whose current academic or behavior data indicates that they are currently performing below developmental standards, he or she may be referred by their classroom teacher to receive MTSS/SRBI support. Families will be notified by the classroom teacher if their child is recommended for MTSS/ SRBI support.

The goal of MTSS/ SRBI is to provide direct support in the area/areas where the student demonstrates difficulty. Support is given in a small group or individualized settings.



Dual Language Learners

Students whose families speak a language other than, or in addition to, English at home may be classified as a Dual language learner (DLL).

School districts in Connecticut are not obligated to identify, assess, or provide ESL and bilingual services to students in preschool programs. However, the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS) Dual Language Learning Framework sets goals for language growth and the use of English in the preschool classrooms.

Student Behavior and Social Emotional Learning

A critical component of a comprehensive education is to develop a student's social emotional skills focused on self-awareness, self-regulation, and personal responsibility. All students are expected to follow district, school, and classroom rules.

Across the District, and at the school level, we employ a variety of research based social emotional resources and materials from the following:

1. Yale RULER
2. Pyramid Model
3. PBIS
4. Restorative Justice
5. Move This World

When students demonstrate difficulty with following expected behaviors, school-based interventions are utilized and the family is notified of the interventions. These interventions are progress monitored to determine next steps.

School and Classroom Information

Instruction-

Connecticut Early Learning and Developmental Standards (CT ELDS)

Each of our preschool programs provide explicit instruction and daily student learning experiences centered on the state of Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards. These standards foster developmentally appropriate learning experiences for your child to:

- be creative- have opportunities to create and express themselves in a variety of ways and approach problems from new perspectives.
- be inquisitive- feel comfortable questioning information, testing out new ideas, and simply playing with materials in new and unusual ways.
- be flexible- ability to adapt to new situations, to be flexible in their responses and to actively engage in new environments. Exposure to new ideas, environments, and situations in meaningful ways can promote resilience.
- be critical thinkers- promote an understanding of the concepts behind specific skills (e.g., understanding quantity as well as learning the sequence of counting) provide opportunities to engage in higher order thinking skills and encourage children to question the accuracy of the information they receive.
- be purposeful and reflective- play an active role in planning experiences, setting goals, and celebrating accomplishments. They should be encouraged to be reflective and learn from their mistakes.
- be social learners- Social interactions form the basis for children's learning. Your child should interact with adults and peers, ask questions, and jointly solve problems, learning through cooperative experiences with adults and peers.

Assessments

Preschool students are assessed using the Brigance (fall and spring) and the CT Dots (winter).

Brigance

The Brigance is a developmental screening tool that measures a student's early development and academic skills to determine his/her school readiness capabilities. The teacher individually administers the Brigance.

Connecticut Document and Observation for Teaching System (CT DOTS)

The Connecticut Documentation and Observation for Teaching System (CT DOTS) is a progress monitoring framework that we use to monitor an individual student's progress towards meeting the Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (CT ELDS) in reading, math, science, social studies, and social emotional learning.

Your student's teacher will share the results of both assessments with you and will support you with home learning materials/resources to assist your child with demonstrating growth in the skills needed for school readiness.

For further information about the Brigance or CT DOTS, please visit www.bridgeportedu.net and find the word Academics in the **top blue** bar. Once you find the word Academics, please click on Early Childhood.

Daily Schedule

Each preschool classroom has a daily schedule and your child's teacher will share their daily schedule with you.

Items Needed for School

Children should bring a book bag/backpack daily. The book bag/backpack should be clearly labeled with his/her name.

Clearly labeled lunch box (if your child brings his/her own lunch to school).

Rest items (small blanket, crib sheet, and pillow) should be brought to school each Monday and brought back home on Friday to wash.

Extra set of clothes in a closed bag labeled with the child's name.

Weather appropriate clothing (jacket, hat, gloves, scarf, etc...) These items should be clearly labeled with the child's name.

Personal Belongings

Items that interfere with the educational process (toys, nuisance items, electronic devices, trading cards, etc...) will be confiscated and returned to the parent/guardian.

Students are asked to leave toys, nuisance items, and personal belongings at home, as the school is not responsible for lost or stolen personal items.

Meals at School

- *Our schools are not free environments.*
- *Each school serves breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack to all preschool students.*
- *The monthly school menu can be accessed online via the Bridgeport Public Schools homepage.*
- *You may pack your student a healthy meal or snack from home.*
- *Candy, glass bottles, and caffeine type drinks are not permitted.*
- *Food purchased from local restaurants is not permitted.*
- *If your child brings a lunch from home, please make sure they can open containers easily.*
- *Containers and lunch boxes should be clearly labeled with your child's name.*

Birthdays

Please ask your child's school about their birthday policies. Due to nutrition regulations, student allergies, and student dietary restrictions, birthday treats such as cupcakes, cake, or other food items may not be permitted.

Recess

Weather permitting, each pre- K student has a twenty minute to a half an hour supervised outdoor recess period each day. Decisions to have outdoor recess during extreme cold or warm weather conditions are based on temperature and state guidelines. Students should always dress appropriately for outdoor recess. For safety purposes, students will not be allowed to use playground equipment when they do not have on the proper shoes or are not dressed appropriately for the weather conditions.

Only students with current medical excuses will be allowed to remain in a designated location, inside or outside, during a scheduled recess period.

Students will have a supervised recess inside on days when the weather prevents outdoor recess.

Rest Time

Children are provided with an hour each day for quiet rest.

On Friday, the school will send the blanket, crib sheet, and/or pillow home to be washed. These items should be brought back to school on Monday.



Field Trips

School field trips are directly linked to our curriculum and are for educational purposes only. Your child's teacher will provide you with notification of field trips. Written parent/guardian permission is required for each student. If written permission is not received by the school, the student will not attend the field trip.

Each school will comply with current state and school district protocols for field trips.

Lighthouse- After-school Program

Please speak to your child's teacher to determine if the Lighthouse Program is available at your child's school for preschool students.



Parent Involvement

BPS strongly support parent engagement and involvement in the learning process. Each of our schools has a Parent Advisory Council and a School Governance Council which supports the school in making key academic and social emotional learning decisions. Each family is encouraged to inquire with their child's teacher about the numerous opportunities available at each school site for family involvement. Open communication with your child's teacher, the administrators, and support staff is the key ingredient to student success.

Volunteer Opportunities

Families are sternly encouraged to share their talents by volunteering to support our schools. Please check with your child's school regarding the volunteer opportunities that are currently available.

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent Teacher Conferences occur twice a year (November and April). These conferences may occur in-person (at the school building) or virtually (via Microsoft Teams app). The purpose of these conferences is to provide you with an update regarding your individual child's progress.

You will receive your child's standards based (CT ELDS) report card via the email address you provided to the school. It is important to ensure this email remains current and on file with the school.

Families can also request a parent- teacher conference throughout the school year as needed.

Family Engagement Activities

Throughout the school year, you will receive family engagement activities to further support learning. Activities may include hands on experience and online resources.

Kindergarten Registration

Registration for Kindergarten occurs around the beginning of April.

A child must turn five on or before Jan. 1st.

Please visit the Bridgeport Public Schools website for application information.

Children must enroll in their neighborhood school based on their current home address.

Magnet Lottery

If you are interested in having your child attend a Bridgeport Public Schools Magnet School, please visit the Bridgeport Public Schools website to complete the online magnet lottery application. The magnet lottery application becomes available online on or around January 1st.

