***Bridging The Gap***

***Learning Center***

***Parent Handbook***

***Purpose:*** *A guide specific to BTGLC’s policies, procedures, conduct, and behavior guidelines*

***Mission Statement***: Bridging The Gap Learning Center (BTGLC) is a state-licensed school age program that is fully devoted to fostering an environment that enhances the social- emotional growth of our children within a nurturing, caring community. In partnership with parents we are dedicated to providing a rich academic foundation that recognizes the individual learning style of each child. We encourage students to achieve their own potential, see the good in others, and be of service to their neighbor.

**Program Description:**

Bridging The Gap Learning Center is located at 127 State Street, Windsor, Vermont. The program accepts children from 5–12 years of age. BTGLC is licensed for 59 school age children. This facility provides services for families in Windsor and the surrounding communities. Our hours of operation are 2:30 PM to 5:30 PM when school is in session. BTG runs two full day vacation camps from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM in February and April. BTG also runs a full day summer camp from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM from June – August. See Director for details. The program operates year round (closed for one week in July, one week in late August and during the December-January break).

**Philosophy:**

Bridging The Gap Learning Center was conceived to be an extension of the family by providing a warm and engaging environment that can help enhance the growth of our children physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually to the fullest of their ability. We offer a program where children can be themselves: that is spontaneous, eager and willing to learn about the world around them. Children have the opportunity to be in an engaging and educationally prepared environment, which caters to the size and style of learning most appealing to children from 5–12 years of age. We create an atmosphere of ongoing learning that includes exploration, investigation, and thoughtful conversation. We nurture respect and caring for self, others and the environment. We strive to encourage and establish a positive and productive relationship with families. BTGLC is a nonprofit program governed by Windsor Early Childhood Education Center, Inc., a Board Of Directors, composed of members of the Community, as well as experienced local educators, business people, and parents, is entrusted to form policies necessary for the day-to-day operation of the program.

**Goals:**

1. To teach and model the skills of cooperation, empathy, and caring.
2. To focus on learning to be self-reliant, developing a good self-image and accepting responsibility.
3. To develop an interest and proficiency in the use of equipment and materials that is developmentally appropriate and satisfying to each child.
4. To help children gain or enhance the skills necessary for individual and group activities.
5. To provide opportunities for creative self-expression.
6. To produce meaningful and significant positive influences on each child's language, literacy, and math skills.
7. To encourage the advancement of intellectual, social, and physical competence of each child in age appropriate activities aligned with the Vermont K-12 indicators and standards.
8. To increase access to enriching activities such as dance, arts, social clubs and collaborate with local artists and community members.
9. To support the school day academic curriculum by providing extra opportunities to apply student knowledge.
10. To collaborate with and have a positive impact on the school and the community including parents as well.

**Enrollment:**

Our Center’s enrollment is available on a first come, first serve basis with current families taking precedence. For new families, we ask that you first visit the program before making the decision to enroll. Timeslots are established doing our best to accommodate needs of the families, yet maintaining appropriate state ratios. **The enrollment packet must be completed and the enrollment fee of the 2-week deposit must be paid to reserve a space. (The first week’s tuition is due on the first day your child is** **scheduled to attend.)** A spot can only be held for up to 1 week while parents make a final decision on their childcare needs, and then full payment is expected.

**Trial Period & Termination of Service:**

The first two weeks of care are considered probationary for everyone; care may be terminated any time during that period. After the trial period, this agreement may be terminated by either party by giving a written two-week notice. If a two-week notice is not given by the parent, fees for two weeks will still be billed. We retain the right to terminate this contract without notice in the event of destructive, uncontrollable or violent behavior or in the case of delinquent fees. BTGLC reserves the right to re-evaluate any child or family's continued participation in the program to determine if the center can adequately meet the needs of the child/family. In the event your child or family needs a setting/services different than we can provide we will help with referrals.

**Rates:**

**$85 per week (with a contract)**

**$tbd per day (with a contract, two day minimum)**

**$tbd drop-in (no contract, per availability)**

**No additional charge for half and inservice days**

**$135 Full Day/Week (February & April Vacation)**

**tbd Full Day/Week Summer Program**

**Tuition & Payment:**

Please note: **As we are a non-profit center that offers the most affordable licensed childcare in our area, we do not have the resources to cover payments for parents who do not pay tuition on time.** Your enrollment contract will state contracted times and weekly fees due. You will receive a weekly statement via email. *Our* ***Board of Directors*** *requires your first week's payment to be made before the first day your child is scheduled to attend, and when paid, your child’s spot is reserved regardless of attendance. The following weekly payments will need to be made the first day of each week (if your child doesn't come on Monday, payment needs to be made on Tuesday etc.).* ***If payment is not received by Friday, your child WILL NOT be allowed to attend until ALL past due payments are made along with the next weeks payment. If payment is not made, your child’s spot will be forfeited and will be filled. Your child may be reenrolled based on space available only with full payment of all past due fees and payment of the next week’s fee. Any outstanding balances in excess of 15 days will be sent to Credit Association Financial Services LTD for collection and you will be responsible for any collection fees.* Monthly payments can be arranged, but payment is expected on the first day of each month. If payment is not received by the first Friday of the month your child WILL NOT be allowed to attend until all past due payments are made. (As outlined above). Checks should be made out to BTG (Bridging The Gap), with the week’s date written in the memo line.** There is a $25 returned check fee if your check is returned. You will be required to pay in cash or money order for the remainder of your time at the center. Cash can be accepted if you have time to wait for a receipt. A receipt must be given at the time the cash is received. Please plan to stay a few minutes when paying with cash.

**Arrival & Departure:**

The time that your child is contracted to arrive is the time your child needs to arrive. Departure times follow the same rule. We have a program (and staff rotation) that is built around a consistent schedule and routine. **In an effort to encourage timely pick- ups a fee of $5 per 5 minutes will be charged for a late pick up**. There is no window for this - if you are one minute late there will be a fee - please plan to be here at least 5 minutes early as to avoid a late pick-up. Late pickups have the potential to affect our ratios and staffing, putting us in jeopardy of being out of compliance with our state regulations.

**Parent Involvement:**

Open communication is extremely important in the school age setting; it is our belief that teachers should use parents as a resource and parents should use teachers as a resource in order to gain a clearer perspective on the daily lives of the children. Please share information the following information with your child’s teacher or assistant teacher when appropriate. The more opportunities we have to open the lines of communication, the better! We also welcome parents to join our Board of Directors as parent members.The Board of Directors meets formally 12 times per year and discusses Program policy/practice changes, budget changes, and other current items of interest. The Board is responsible for long-term guidance of the Program and staff.

**Children with Unique Needs and Individualized Education Plans (IEP’s):**

We believe in the success of all children and are willing to accommodate children with special needs to the best of our ability. If your child has special needs, please make an appointment with the director to discuss accommodations before enrolling your child. In order to understand and serve your child’s social, emotional, physical, and cognitive needs in the most informed way possible, we require a copy of your child’s IEP and a meeting with at least 2 of their IEP team members ahead of enrollment (in addition to parent participation) should your child have an IEP in place.

We are willing to help your family connect with one-on-one services for your child should this be recommended, however we cannot be the provider of one-on-one services based on our budgeted staff-child ratios that allow our program to be as affordable as possible for all children.

**Child Guidance:**

BTGLC views guidance and behavior management as a process of developing capacity to experience, regulate, and express emotions and behaviors in socially and culturally appropriate ways. It is our belief that these goals can be accomplished by providing an interesting learning environment for our students with plenty of opportunities for the child to choose what they would like to do in a challenging environment that allows for exploration, ongoing learning, and includes a balance of quiet and physical activity. When necessary we will use age-appropriate positive guidance techniques to facilitate self-control.

BTGLC uses **indirect guidance** techniques such as these:

We give advance warnings: “You have five more minutes to play before it’s time to clean up.”

We give choices: “You may paint with the other children or read a book in a quiet corner.”

We have regular routines: “We always wash our hands before snack/lunch. After lunch is story time.”

We avoid nagging: We tell the child what we expect just once, follow it by asking the child if he/she remembers what was asked, and then offer to help the child do what was asked.

We’re consistent: We model getting along behaviors in a similar way each day so the children know what to expect and learn to trust and feel safe in their environment. We also use **direct guidance** techniques:

We use affirmation: “We use walking feet indoors”, rather than “Don’t run!” or “Use your words to tell us you’re angry” rather than “Don’t hit!”

We get the child’s attention by crouching down to his/her level, making eye contact, speaking quietly, and asking the child to repeat the directions.

We try very hard to be fair. We examine our expectations to make sure they are age appropriate and try to plan ahead in an effort to prevent problems that may arise.

We avoid arguments by following through with solutions that address the problem, but also offer the child a way to exit gracefully from the problem: “You can choose a quiet place to calm down or I can choose one for you.”

If a child is unable to demonstrate self-regulating behavior, a brief time-out (limited to one minute for each year of the child’s age) results for the child to regain control. Time-out occurs only when other measures fail, and is used as an opportunity for the child to regroup, not as a punishment. **Please understand that your child is important to us but that we are unable to stay with one child due to teacher/child ratios, and will call for your support should the need arise.**

**Drugs, Alcohol & Smoking:**

State regulations and common sense prohibit caregivers from arriving at the center under the influence of drugs (including marijuana) and/or alcohol; we expect the same from parents. Do not come to the center after using alcohol or drugs, this will be considered neglect and will be reported as such. There will be no smoking in the school, on the school premises, within 50 feet of the grounds, in vehicles on school field trips or at family gatherings. Staff, parents, and visitors must extinguish smoking materials in their vehicles before entering school property.

**Abuse:**

As mandated reporters, staff members are obligated to report any suspected abuse or neglect of children. The Department of Children and Families will be notified of suspected abuse and/or neglect.

**Accidents & Incidents:**

If an accident or incident results in injury to the child an incident report will be filled out by the caregiver and signed by the director. The parent is asked to read the report, sign it, and it will be kept in the child's file. If your child is injured and needs emergency care, all efforts will be made to contact you. There is a complete first-aid kit at the facility and the staff has first-aid and CPR training. It is crucial that we have up-to- date emergency phone numbers and contacts. If you are not going to be available at one of these numbers please be sure to leave the number of where you can be reached for the day.

**Clothing:**

We do our best to go outside most days...even in the winter months. Please remember this when dressing your child. Each younger child should bring a clean change of clothing, including underwear, socks and pants with them to school. Snow gear, jackets and all other clothing should be labeled.In the winter months please send your child in waterproof mittens/gloves, as the children dive right into the fresh snow and when mittens are not waterproof the children's hands get cold and wet quickly. It also is a good idea to have an extra pair of gloves handy as well. **Boots are not acceptable inside footwear**, so please pack or leave a pair of sneakers. During warmer months please send a water bottle.

**Pick-ups & Custody Considerations:**

If an adult other than the parent or other parent-approved people is picking up, written permission must be presented by the parent and a valid photo ID must be presented by the person picking up. **As mandated by the state of Vermont we are unable to deny any legal custodian the right to pick-up a child, unless we are supplied with the official court document stating otherwise.** If there are custody issues or changes in status of people who are able to pick up your child you must let us know immediately and provide proper documentation. It is always best to let us know each day who is coming if there are a number of people who often pick up your child.

**Absences:**

If your child is going to be absent from school it is common courtesy for you to call...it is also required. We require a phone call before 12 a.m., and reserve the right to revoke your child's space if we don't hear from you three times or for three consecutive days. Please note that there are no make-up days or substitution days for any planned or unplanned absences.

**Vacation Time:**

We will be closed for Christmas week. There will be no charge for this week. Additionally, if your child does not attend the week of February and/or April vacation there is no charge.

**Holiday Closings:**

Please see enclosed closing list. **Please note that you pay for the closed days in your tuition.**

**Weather, Emergency & Additional Closings:**

The programfollows the local school district closings. There are other instances that will force us to close, these are: no heat, no running water, low # of children in attendance or in the rare event of a training falling during the times we are open. Any additional closings will be posted a week in advance when possible.

**Health Policy:**

Immunization records must be on file prior to admission and updated annually. A child will not be allowed to attend without a copy of the immunization records ~ no exceptions. Due to state regulations health records must be updated each year. It is always best to ask your physician for a copy of immunization records for us to keep on file here at the center each time your child receives a childhood immunization. Medical, religious, and philosophical exemptions are accepted with approved VT Department of Health documentation.

**Medication:**

It is our preference that parents administer medication to their children. We understand that work schedules may not allow that to happen. Medication can be administered to your child only after you have completed the medication permission form. **Prescription medicine must be in a container with a pharmacy instruction label on it. We are not able to administer or store over-the-counter medicines, including vitamins, without a signed doctor’s letter describing proper dosage and intervals. All medications must be age- appropriate, have child-proof lids, and be *handed* by the parent to a staff member, who will store them in our lock-box. With the exception of Epi-Pens, medications *must* be stored in the lock box, never in the classroom or in your child’s backpack.**

**Illness & Exclusion from care (in accordance with state regulations):**

We know that children inevitably catch various illnesses from each other. When you are trying to decide whether or not to bring your child to school, we ask that you consider how you feel when you walk in and see a sick child at school. If your child cannot participate in the normal daily routine/activities, he or she should be kept home; this includes instances where your child is unable to go outside; **we are unable to stay in with one child due to ratios**. We rely on you to help prevent the spread of common illnesses by making the right determination for your child, thus helping to keep all of the children and staff healthier. **We reserve the right to send your child home if we deem him or her contagious or unable to keep up with the normal routine. Please plan ahead for sick days so that alternative care is available when you need it.** A child or staff member who has been diagnosed by a medical professional as having any of the following diseases shall be excluded from care until a medical professional indicates that it is safe for them to return. You must call us each week to let us know what the doctor has said, as we do not and are unable to speak with your child's doctor due to confidentiality. If we do not receive a call we will consider you absent and follow the procedures as outlined in the absences section. Bacterial Meningitis Chicken pox Diarrhea due to Shingles Strep Throat Salmonella Scarlet Fever Poho Impetigo Diphtheria Hepatitis A Measles Mumps Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Rubella (German Measles), Coxsackie Virus (hand, foot & mouth disease) Head Lice Scabies Croup A child or staff member with the following symptoms shall be excluded from care until the symptoms disappear or until otherwise directed by a medical professional. Diarrhea (two loose stools beyond what the child has in a 24 hour period or loose stools persisting for 48 hrs.) Severe coughing (The child gets blue/red in the face or produces whooping or croup noises or vomits after cough) Pinkeye or yellow skin Fever greater than 101 degrees by a thermometer Rash with fever or behavior changes Thick, green or yellow nasal discharge. Children who have been ill during the night or prior to arrival need to be kept home. Children who arrive ill or who become ill during the day will be sent home. If a child has been up all night please keep them home as they are likely to be coming down with something and unable to keep up with the daily routine. **Children who have been ill may return to care according to the following guidelines:** Cold - 24 hours after fever is gone Strep Throat - 24 hours after medication has begun (or four doses)

Pinkeye - Eyes must be clear of any discharge Chicken pox - Last sore is scabbed and there is no oozing Impetigo - 48 hours after medication is begun, totally scabbed over Measles - Five days after rash appears and with a note from your physician Mumps - Nine days after swelling starts and with a note from your physician Head lice - After Kwell treatment and **all eggs are removed**, with a follow-up shampoo in one week Scabies - After two Kwell treatments on successive days Fever of 101 degrees or higher - 24 hours without fever medications Vomiting and diarrhea - 24 hours from last episode If your child is “crabby” and you have given them Tylenol, Advil or Motrin, any illness that they may have can be masked by these drugs. this is why we require your child to stay home if they have been given any of these medicines. If diarrhea is so severe that it leaks from your child's diaper we will send the child home. Please inform us immediately of any contagious illness so we can inform other parents, allowing for other children to treat any illness they may have properly.

**Staff Responsibilities:**

It is the responsibility of our staff to follow all of BTGLC’s policies, including being excellent models of our Child Guidance and Behavior Management policies. If at any time you feel these policies are being substituted, or if you have any questions or concerns, please follow the steps outlined below.

**Complaint Procedures:**

1. Discuss your complaint calmly and in a civil manner with child's teacher 2. Discuss with childcare director, Carrie Harn at 802-674-9822 ext.235 or 802-281-0206. 3. After #1 & 2 done, without result, request a meeting with the Board of Directors at wececboard@gmail.com. 4. When all else fails, call the childcare consumer hot line @ 1-800-540-7942. If these procedures have not been followed, parents will be notified and required to follow these procedures in the proper order. It is our belief that communication is a two-way-street, if no one says anything until it is to the point of #3 or #4 then there has been a lack of communication somewhere and no opportunity to put everyone back on the same page.

**Thank you for trusting us with the care of your child! ----***The BTGLC Team*

**Parent Handbook Receipt**

**I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, have read and understand the Bridging The Gap Learning Center’s Parent Handbook, and agree to abide by its policies and procedures. I have asked any clarifying questions that I needed to understand what is expected of myself and my child. I also understand that policies and procedures are subject to change at any time. I understand that BTGLC administration will seek to notify me if and when they are moved to action.**

**Child’s Name** *\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

**Parent/guardian signature Date**