



Transforming Learning

Community Handbook¹

2023-2024

Carriage House

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Pittsburgh, PA 15206

www.cityofbridgeshighschool.org

¹ Thank you to Springhouse Community School for the inspiration for this Community Handbook.

INTRODUCTION

City of Bridges is reimagining the purpose, the systems and the structure of education by fostering a student centered experiential high school and learning community in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. City of Bridges envisions a culture of whole person learning which encompasses values and practices that support people in building the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need in order to bring about their preferable futures and have a positive impact on their communities both large and small.

City of Bridges offers a high school program for students ages 13-19 as well as community education programs in order to support intergenerational and cross-disciplinary learning.

City of Bridges is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization and is governed by a Board of Trustees, facilitated by a Head of School, enlivened by a highly dedicated staff, and energized by the vibrancy and curiosity of teenagers.

This Handbook is geared toward current and prospective students and their families. Please refer to our website - www.cityofbridgeshighschool.org - for more information about the school.

MISSION, VALUES & NAME

Our Mission

City of Bridges High School is a progressive, holistic, 9th -12th grade high school which believes that school should be transformational for the students, the community, and the world. It is the mission of the City of Bridges High School to graduate confident young adults who comprehend their own human dignity and inherent worth; who are prepared to assert their agency in the world; who have the lived-experience, knowledge, and skills to find and follow their passions; and who are dedicated to living with the empathy, compassion, and joy necessary to positively affect society and remake a measurably more just and peaceful world.

Our Values

Real-Work-Lived-Experience: Students will explore the application of knowledge and skills to real world learning through community-embedded problem-based learning.

Trust in Human Dignity: Human beings possess an inherent dignity, worthiness, and awareness that is essential to our nature. The school recognizes that nurturing this basic goodness in students not only enriches their individual lives, but provides the confidence which makes world transformation and an enlightened society possible.

Peace and Justice: In this time of social turmoil and divisiveness we need a school that is explicit in its intention: the establishment and support of a compassionate, enlightened, and just human society. Toward this goal the lens of justice and peace will always guide the work of the school.

Sustainable Futures: We need to learn from, and listen to, the environment that sustains us, practicing systems thinking that promotes sustainability, non-violence, and deep understanding. The school recognizes and centers the intersectionality at the heart of this goal.

Our Name

Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, where we call home, is a City of Bridges. In fact, Pittsburgh has 446 bridges, more than any other city in the world. Bridges are also an important symbol of what we believe and what we do in practice.

- City of Bridges High School is dedicated to building, supporting and sustaining bridges between communities and people from different backgrounds, cultures and lived experiences. We believe that those connections and relationships are essential to fostering a more just and equitable future.
- City of Bridges High School is dedicated to helping young people build bridges from high school to their preferable futures. High school should be a time where young people are building the knowledge, skills and understandings that will help them to chart a path for themselves in their post secondary pursuits.
- City of Bridges High School is dedicated to bridging the gap between communities and learning opportunities. We are committed to providing meaningful and purposeful education to our students and to members of our community who are not enrolled as full time students or who have already completed formal education.

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

City of Bridges High School is part of a long tradition of Progressive Schools in the United States. The definition of Progressive in education can be difficult, a challenge which was recognized by the late Tom Little, the long-time head of the Park Day School, who spent a year visiting dozens of Progressive Schools around the country. As a result of this trip he created a list of key components of Progressive education:

1. Attention to children's emotions as well as their intellects.
2. Reliance on student's interests to guide their learning.
3. Curtailment or outright bans on testing, grading and ranking.
4. Involvement of students in real world endeavors.
5. The study of topics in an integrated way, from a variety of different disciplines
6. Support for children to develop a sense of social justice and become active participants in American Democracy.

People need to be able to problem solve, design, collaborate, reflect and redesign. Specific skills and knowledge are at our fingertips and schooling needs to evolve to focus not on the what, but instead on the how, to use the what to create the useful. This is best accomplished through Real Work on real needs in a community. This entrepreneurial and personalized model is present at numerous Progressive and project-based schools and is at the core of the City of Bridges curriculum.

Although City of Bridges is a private school, it exists not to be separate, but instead to demonstrate the efficacy of progressive and innovative education, not based on test scores, but assessed on the impact on lives of the students who attend and graduate from the school and the communities in which they make a positive difference.

Learning at City of Bridges

City of Bridges High School's curriculum is built on a number of pedagogical foundations that provide focus, purpose and meaning to the learning that takes place in the school and in the community. These values should be considered in all of the decisions made regarding learning experiences, materials, resources or partners.

1. Learning at City of Bridges High School should be informed by the experience of application. Students should learn from practitioner-educators and be able to connect their learning to application.
2. Learning at City of Bridges High School should allow students to follow their passions and assert the agency of their learning and progress. We are supporting the growth of the next generation of adults, not perpetual school students.
3. Learning at City of Bridges High School should always be aware of the voices of non-majoritarian narratives and strive at all times to be inclusive, open and attentive to its own context.
4. Learning at City of Bridges High School should keep at its heart the pursuit of justice, kindness and peace.
5. Learning at City of Bridges High School should strive to maintain the curiosity, joy, and laughter that encourage new explorations and foster happiness.

Episteme, Techne, and Phronesis

City of Bridges High School strives to embody the three Aristotelian virtues of Episteme, Techne and Phronesis. Although these virtues can be discussed at length, we have simplified them as follows:

Episteme - Knowing

Techne - Doing

Phronesis - Practical Wisdom

Students must possess the knowledge and skills that enable them to apply their practical wisdom to addressing real world problems and projects.

ROLES AT CITY OF BRIDGES

Educator-Administrators

The Educator-Administrators are the core of the school staff. They facilitate learning experiences, support students and bring joy and curiosity. Educator-Administrators also hold administrative roles, which are outlined below:

Head of School: The Head of School is responsible for the day to day operations of City of Bridges. They oversee the administrative functions of the other Educator-administrators and ensure that all operational duties are complete. The Head of School is a non-voting member of the Board and sits on all the Educator-Administrator committees. Dr. Randy Bartlett fills this role, randy@cobhs.org.

Assistant Head of School-English: The Assistant Head of School is responsible for supporting the administrative and organizational functions for the school. In addition the Assistant Head of School is responsible for coordinating instructional scheduling and implementation at City of Bridges High School. Dr. Bret Moore fills this role, bret@cobhs.org. Bret is also the Advisor for the Class of 2024 (12th Grade Fall of 2023)

Director of Operations: The Director of Operations is responsible for managing the operations of City of Bridges High School. This includes budget and finance, enrollment, materials and supplies, development, tuition management and other necessary tasks. This position is a part time position for the 2023-2024 school year. Paige Wiegman fills this role, paige@cobhs.org.

Directory of Counseling: The Director of Counseling is responsible for supporting students wellbeing as they grow and develop as members of the City of Bridges community. In addition, this role also supports and guides the post-secondary planning process for students and families. This position is a part time position. Charlie Runyan fills this role, charlie@cobhs.org .

Mathematics and Director of Technology: The mathematics teacher develops and facilitates the mathematics curriculum and instruction at City of Bridges High School. This role also supports and manages the technology resources for the school and organization. Blain Schiff fills this role, blain@cobhs.org. Blain is also the Advisor for the Class of 2027 (9th Grade Fall of 2023)

Social Studies and Director of Student Governance:: The social studies teacher develops and facilitates the social studies curriculum and instruction at City of Bridges High School. This role also supports and guides student government. Tim Stapleton fills this role, tim@cobhs.org. Tim is also the Advisor for the Class of 2026 (10th Grade Fall of 2023)

Arts and Director of Community Engagement:: The arts teacher develops and facilitates the arts curriculum and instruction at City of Bridges High School. This role also supports and guides community engagement which includes both our internal and external community. Olga Brindar fills this role, olga@cobhs.org. Olga is also the Advisor for the Class of 2025 (11th Grade Fall of 2023)

Practitioner-Educators

Practitioner-Educators are an essential component of the City of Bridges pedagogical model. They are professionals, who come from all walks of life. They can be writers, attorneys, university professors, welders, game designers etc., who work with students for shorter periods of time, providing students with the experience of the application of skills and knowledge to the Real Work of life. This will occur through block classes taught as well as coordination and guidance on projects.

Advisors

Every student at City of Bridges will have an advisor who is one of our full time educators. This advisor will remain with a student for their entire time at City of Bridges. They support the student in their learning journey, internships, project planning and in building their Demonstrations of Learning. Advisors serve for an entire class, e.g. the Class of 2025 and meet weekly together with all of the students.

Mentors

Mentors are outside experts/professionals/community members who advise students on a specific project or learning experience that students are undertaking. Mentors provide expertise and guidance to the students for a given period of time. Mentors may be physically located in Pittsburgh and be available for face to face guidance or they may be located outside of the region and as a result their guidance may be virtual.

TRIMESTERS, SECTIONS, AND BLOCKS

City of Bridges believes that one of the best ways to learn about something is to dive deep into learning. Therefore our yearly schedule is designed to give us the opportunity to explore topics with depth and focus, not running from class to class. Before we look at our daily schedule it will be helpful to understand some of the ways that we think about time in our community.

Semesters

The City of Bridges year is broken into two Semesters. These semesters coincide with our internship periods and also allow us to focus on topics for a longer period of time.

Blocks

City of Bridges has 5 blocks, Blocks 1-4 last either 6 or 7 weeks and Block 5 is eight weeks. Each block will have different classes, events and activities.

Classes

Each block has multiple classes, independent learning times as well as other learning experiences. During classes students will engage in a deep exploration of a topic, with a focus on building the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need in order to demonstrate competency.

COMPETENCIES

At City of Bridges, we understand that learning is a lifelong process. Throughout their time at City of Bridges a student's learning progression is competency-based rather than time-based, allowing students to focus on their own specific learning needs by strengthening and refining the skills outlined in the competencies. In order for learning to be offered in a developmentally appropriate way, students are grouped into age-based cohorts for some of their Block Classes and are in mixed grade groupings for others.

Students do not receive grades or GPAs at City of Bridges. They learn about their growth through relationships and reflection. They evaluate themselves and also receive feedback from their peers, facilitators, and mentors. Through conversations, narrative written assessment, student self-reflection, evidence gathering, and the Demonstration of Learning process, students can accurately determine where they are in their learning.

The City of Bridges competencies were developed by exploring the question, "If a City of Bridges graduate is able to bring about a more just, joyful and compassionate future and have the knowledge, skills and understanding to assert their agency in that world, what do they need to carry with them?"

Core Competencies

Core Competencies are value-aligned with City of Bridges and ask students to continue to develop in seven areas:

- Engaged Citizenship
- Interdependence
- Communication and Self-Expression
- Human and Cultural Awareness
- Quantitative Literacy
- Critical Analysis
- Reflection and Future Orientation

Core Competencies are requirements for graduation and are defined by City of Bridges. Students demonstrate their development of their foundational knowledge, skills and understanding through Core Competencies and their passions, interests and talents through their Advanced Competencies.

Engaged Citizenship: City of Bridges is a community that believes in Engaged Citizenship. We believe that every member of a community can enact positive change at every level. We believe that if we work together collectively that the solution to any problem can be found and that every individual can flourish. In order to achieve this students must understand the ways in which our government systems and structures work, they must know the intricacies of their world and they must have the skills to navigate and improve those systems and structures.

Interdependence: City of Bridges is a community that believes in Interdependence. We believe that human beings are only one part of a global system of life. We believe that our survival and holistic wellness depends on the survival and wellness of other living beings and the systems of our planet, both natural and created. In order to achieve this students must understand the systems of interdependence that support life on the earth, they must know the impacts of their actions and they must have the skills to support the long-term viability and sustainability of life.

Communication and Self-Expression: City of Bridges is a community that believes in Communication and Self-Expression. We believe that humans are fundamentally relational beings and that in order to be in relation we need to be able to communicate and express our thoughts, ideas, dreams and feelings. We believe that we all need to read and experience the ideas of others and write and share our ideas. In order to achieve this, students must be able to understand the languages of communication, they must know the ways to explore the ideas of others and they must have the skills to share their ideas with others.

Human and Cultural Awareness: City of Bridges is a community that believes in Human and Cultural Awareness. We believe that knowing the history and present of our cultures allows us to celebrate our triumphs and understand our challenges. We believe that in order to support the development of a more just, equitable and joyful society in the future we need to be fully aware of the past and present. In order to achieve this, students must be able to understand the events of the past, they must know the culture of the present and they must have the skills to shape the future.

Quantitative Literacy: City of Bridges is a community that believes in Quantitative Literacy. We believe that one of the essential ways to explore and understand the world is through the quantitative systems which underlie our culture. We believe that numeracy is essential for all people. In order to achieve this students must understand how mathematical concepts and processes work, they must know how mathematics supports sensemaking and they must have the skills to comfortably use mathematics to build and create understanding.

Critical Analysis: City of Bridges is a community that believes in Critical Analysis. We believe that inquiry and analysis are essential to supporting the development of a world with more flourishing and less suffering. We believe that by engaging in systematic explorations of the world, we are better able to make decisions that have a positive impact on human beings, other living beings and the larger systems

of the world. In order to achieve this students must understand the processes of inquiry and analysis, they must know the fields and existing knowledge of science and they must have the skills to use inquiry and analysis to solve problems.

Reflection and Future Orientation: City of Bridges is a community that believes in reflection and future orientation. We believe that the potential of each person is limitless and that with effort and focus every possible future can be achieved. We believe that this limitless preferable future requires reflection, planning and effort. In order to achieve this, students must understand their own learning and goals, they must know the futures that they desire to inhabit and they must have the skills to create a path to that future.

Evaluating Competencies

Competencies are assessed based on evidence presented at a student's Demonstration of Learning (DOL), which is an opportunity for the student to showcase the work they have done to hone a particular competency. DOLs are typically held at the end of each block. Every course, project, workshop, internship and learning activity provides many opportunities for students to build knowledge, skills, and understanding and to gather evidence of their learning. We recognize that learning happens beyond the classroom and school grounds, so a student can present evidence in a DOL of their growth in these skills from any context.

Transcripts

City of Bridges High School is a member of the [Mastery Transcript Consortium](#), an organization that currently consists of 405 schools who are developing a national competency based transcript. Students at City of Bridges have the option of using a traditional transcript or a Mastery Transcript.

Expectations for Graduation

In addition to Demonstrating the City of Bridges Competencies and meeting the Pennsylvania Department of Education requirements for a high school diploma, students are expected to participate in the following experiences to strengthen and refine the skills outlined in the City of Bridges competency framework:

- Attendance at a minimum of two (2) Expedition Weeks a year
- The completion of a Personal Finance Competency
- Community Internship and Apprenticeship Program
- Art, Music and Movement
- Participation in our Morning Meetings and Appreciations
- Demonstration of Learnings at the end of every class or learning experience

- Senior Capstone

THE RHYTHM OF THE DAY

The schedule and structure of City of Bridges High School is designed to support the growth of community, meaningful student learning, student agency, and the application of knowledge. The rhythm of the day changes for students as they progress through the time at City of Bridges. As students advance in the grades they have greater time dedicated to their interests and greater opportunities to apply their learning to application in their community and in the world. These opportunities occur both individually and in collaborative team projects. The schedule demonstrates the changing rhythm for students as they progress through City of Bridges High School.

Daily Schedule

The daily schedule at City of Bridges is designed to enable the personalized and flexible learning that is central to our work and our beliefs and learning. The schedule that is included in this handbook is a format that most of the students will experience most of the time, but if someone has a great opportunity or needs something different, then their schedule might change to give them the best experience possible.

The schedule is designed to allow people to dig deeply into learning, to reflect on the possible application of their learning and then to take that possibility and put it into practice. The schedule has a couple of essential elements which are described below, but it will also grow and change with the needs and interests of the community of students.

Trimester I: September 5-December 8			
Block 1 September 5-October 13			
	Monday and Wednesday	Tuesday and Thursday	Friday
8:00-8:35	Optional Project Time/Work Time/Advising		
8:40-8:50	Morning Meeting		
8:50-10:20	Morning Block Classes	Morning Block Classes	Morning Block Classes
10:20-10:30	Break	Break	Break
10:30-11:20	Math/Science/Foreign Language/Personal Learning Plan/Advisories	Math/Science/Foreign Language/Personal Learning Plan/Advisories	Math
11:25-12:15	Math/Science/Foreign Language/Personal Learning Plan/Advisories	Math/Science/Foreign Language/Personal Learning Plan/Advisories	Math
12:15-1:10	Lunch and Committees	Lunch and Committees	Lunch and Committees
1:10-2:10	Electives/Arts/Movement/Personal Learning Plan	Electives/Arts/Movement/Personal Learning Plan	Internships/Project time Offsite
2:10-3:10	Electives/Arts/Movement/Personal Learning Plan	Electives/Arts/Movement/Personal Learning Plan	
3:10-3:30	Cleaning, Questions and Appreciations	Cleaning, Questions and Appreciations	

Monday - Thursday

Optional Project Time/Work Time/Advising: The doors at City of Bridges open at 8:00 am; students can arrive then to work on a project, meet with their advisor, read, or just spend time with their friends. **All Students are expected to be at school by 8:35.**

Morning Meeting: Our day officially begins at 8:40 with our morning meeting. Students are expected to be there ready to start the day. Our meeting consists of greeting everyone, sharing news and announcements and often a fair amount of laughter.

AM Block: The AM block is one of the cornerstones of the City of Bridges Experience. These blocks might be facilitated by one of the educators at the school or by a practitioner, such as a physics professor from Duquesne or a Defense Attorney. These blocks are one of the ways that students can demonstrate learning on the competencies that form the backbone of our learning. Some examples of AM Blocks are: Utopia in Literature and History, Botany, Introduction to Philosophy, and Inquiry and Analysis.

Mathematics, Foreign Language and Science: Mathematics, Foreign Language and Science are generally year long classes in order to support students so that they have the opportunity to both work through new concepts and time to practice them with support. **Lunch:** Lunch at City of Bridges is pretty straightforward. Students have a long lunch period, because it is their time to eat, socialize and spend

their time working on projects. Students may either bring lunch, make lunch in our kitchen or with parental permission, they may travel off site to purchase lunch.

Afternoon Classes: Afternoons at City of Bridges offer students a number of different ways to learn. Classes are sometimes directed at a certain grade level and sometimes open to all students. Afternoon classes typically last for twelve weeks and meet every other day.

Movement: City of Bridges is a small school and I suspect we will never field a varsity football team (Ultimate Frisbee is a possibility), but we do love to move and build skills in movement. These classes typically last for six weeks and may include: Yoga, Dance, Qi-Gong, Ultimate Frisbee, School Yard Games, Soccer and whatever else might catch our fancy.

Arts: The Arts are an essential part of the human experience. It is a way for us to explore and express our lived experiences. City of Bridges arts classes are offered in the afternoons and are also integrated into our other classes.

Electives: Electives can take many different forms. They are often based on staff, student or community member interests. If you have an interest in teaching an elective at City of Bridges, please reach out to Randy.

Student Government and Committees: Student voice and agency is baked into the City of Bridges culture. Students sit on our Board of Directors and all of our Board Committees. In addition City of Bridges students help to shape everything that we do during the school day from curriculum to lunch.

Personal Learning Plan: Every student at City of Bridges develops a personal learning plan (PLP) which is an opportunity for them to explore the knowledge, skills and understanding that they need for their possible futures. Students design independent projects with guidance and from a faculty member and occasionally an outside mentor. These projects last as long as is necessary and when completed students demonstrate their learning and then proceed to design another project.

End of Day Reflection and Cleaning: City of Bridges is a community that belongs to all of us and therefore we all need to take care of it together. All staff and students are responsible for cleaning our space at the end of the day. Following our cleaning we gather one more time to reflect on the day and appreciate each other. **Students are dismissed at 3:30 and are expected to be present at school until 3:30.**

Friday

Fridays at City of Bridges are a little different. Students are expected to come to school in the mornings, and they are always welcome to remain at school in the afternoons to work on projects and school work as long as they are not expected to be at their internship.

Community Internship & Apprenticeship Program

All City of Bridges students participate in the Community Internship and Apprenticeship Program. Staff and students work together to find internships or apprenticeships with community members and at local

organizations that are aligned with the students' passions. Each internship takes on a competency focus, and students find opportunities to practice this competency with the support of both their mentor and the internship supervisor. During the school day, students learn and practice skills, work on internship projects, and reflect on their experiences. Students gather evidence throughout their internship or apprenticeship experience that demonstrates their growth in their chosen competency, which they then showcase to City of Bridges staff and host organizations during their Demonstration of Learning. Students will have one internship in the fall and one in the spring. 11th and 12th graders may have internships which last for multiple semesters or the entire year.

Expedition Weeks

City of Bridges values expeditionary learning because it fosters a sense of connection, develops resilience in both the student and the community, and sparks curiosity in ways that simply cannot happen in a familiar environment. City of Bridges offers three (3) Experience Week trips each school year, one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. Each expedition week focuses on a different topic and is based around travel away from the school site to experience immersive learning. Students must attend at least two (2) expedition weeks a year. If they choose not to attend a week it will be treated as a vacation week and they will not be permitted to come to school or visit any of the expedition week sites with the rest of the school.

A school calendar with opening and closing dates, trips, and holidays is posted on our website and is frequently updated. For the most current information, please refer to this calendar.

SCHOOL STRUCTURE & GOVERNANCE

City of Bridges serves students who would typically attend grades 9-12. The school is governed by a Board of Trustees; led by a Head of School, dedicated staff and Student Government; supported by committed families; and informed by an advisory council. The school is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. The Board of Trustees can be contacted by emailing board@cobhs.org.

Financial Support

Money flows into City of Bridges mostly through tuition, fundraising dollars, and grants. It flows out in all kinds of ways to support the City of Bridges mission, but it flows primarily to the staff who facilitate the programs at City of Bridges and to the high school program costs.

We are committed to Universal Hospitality for our programs. We define Universal Hospitality as the belief that one's financial situation should never be a barrier to being a part of our learning community. We are committed to ensuring that City of Bridges is accessible to any family or individual who wants to be an active member of this community. If you want to participate in a program and cannot invest the full amount, please talk with the Head of School, Randy Bartlett, about what kind of investment you can make into City of Bridges.

In order to sustain City of Bridges, the Board of Trustees, staff, families, and students are all needed in raising funds for the school. All constituencies have a fundraising goal for the year and each supports the other in meeting their fundraising goals.

Service

The work of City of Bridges is made possible by the thousands of hours of volunteer time given freely each year. Even though the core staff is now paid, they along with practitioners, community members, friends, families and supporters devote their time to the service of the mission of City of Bridges. We have found that through being of service at City of Bridges, we learn and grow more than we could have known. We are transformed by the experience of following our calling and being of service. This is the richest form of currency we know, and especially pivotal as we establish our community in these first few years.

Family Involvement

Family involvement is an essential component of what we do at City of Bridges. We cannot raise healthy teens unless we all work together. When City of Bridges and the family are aligned and in communication we have seen real magic happen. Students with families who are involved at City of Bridges and at home are more engaged and more likely to grow and transform in lasting and meaningful ways.

Family involvement at City of Bridges includes:

- Engaging in the Parent Education programming at City of Bridges to support teens as they learn and grow
- Attending Community meetings
- Assisting with fundraising
- Attending and organizing school community events, and
- Participating in family-mentor conferences.

We rely on the engagement of our families. If you value what City of Bridges is offering to your teen, we need you to help sustain it. To learn more about ways you can support our community, please email Bret Moore, the Assistant Head of School at bret@cobhs.org.

PROCEDURES

Timeliness & Attendance

City of Bridges operates Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 3:30 pm. **Students are expected to arrive at City of Bridges and be prepared to start the school day at 8:35 am.** Students can arrive between 8:00 am and 8:35 am. Habitual tardiness is grounds for intervention by school staff. Failure to attend school

regularly may result in a student's dismissal. **Students are expected to remain at school until 3:30 pm and depart by 3:45 at the latest**, if they are not remaining in an afterschool club or program.

Absences

The parents/guardians of a learner who will not be in school for any reason must make sure to call or text (412-651-5902) or email (randy@cobhs.org) with as much advance as possible. If a learner is not present and we have not heard from the family, we endeavor to call by 9:30am.

If a family feels that a learner cannot participate in any school-related activities (athletics, dance, trips, etc.) for physical or psychological reasons we ask that a formal conversation occur in order to ensure that we can provide for the student in other ways.

We understand that some absences are unavoidable, but we ask that families make every effort to avoid scheduling appointments during school hours. **If a learner must miss school for any reason, a parent or guardian should provide the Head of School with notification in writing or via text message with as much advance notice as possible.**

In the event of an absence, **the learner is responsible for communicating with his/her facilitators by email and making up all work** by an agreed upon date. Facilitators are not required or expected to tutor learners outside of class or provide additional work to compensate for excessive absences.

The Consequences of Poor Attendance

A learner demonstrates their work in both core and advanced competencies through evidence they gather throughout their time at City of Bridges. A learner's transcript reflects the competencies in which they have become proficient. It is an expectation that City of Bridges learners work toward proficiency in all core City of Bridges competencies, a task that requires time and ample examples of evidence of their learning. Without this evidence, a learner's level of proficiency with a competency cannot be determined, and, thus, that competency would not be reflected on the learner's transcript. Failure to provide evidence for multiple foundational competencies may affect the learner's eligibility for a City of Bridges diploma.

Assignments & Work Outside of Course Time

To provide depth to our explorations and to work on skills in a meaningful way, facilitators may assign work that needs to be completed outside of class time. **Students are responsible for checking their email daily** to stay on top of school work and relevant communication. If a student is unclear on the expectations or not able to complete assignment by the deadline **they are expected to email the course facilitator and their advisor.**

Course facilitators track completed, late and incomplete assignments. This information will be shared in the end-of-trimester Narrative Reports. **If a significant portion of work remains incomplete, a conference will be scheduled with the student, family, advisor and course facilitator.** A significant

portion of incomplete work will also jeopardize the ability to have flexible learning opportunities at City of Bridges.

When students do not complete assignments, they are missing out on opportunities to build evidence for their DOL's, and opportunities to learn and grow. The course as a whole suffers because continued exploration is often contingent on the work. This impacts peers and the culture of the learning community at large. We strive to cultivate intrinsic motivation in our students. We do not believe in punitive motivators, but rather highlight the natural consequences of the choices made.

Inclement Weather

City of Bridges will follow Pittsburgh Public Schools' inclement weather announcements regarding cancellations, delays, and early releases. To find out about delays and cancellations for Pittsburgh Public Schools, please see: <https://pittsburgh.cbslocal.com/school-closings/>

In addition, families will receive an email announcement regarding closings or delays. In the case of an early dismissal due to inclement weather, City of Bridges will notify parents/guardians by email, and also using the emergency telephone number(s) listed on the student's Emergency Contact Information and Release Form. If parents/guardians or an emergency contact person are not reached, we will ensure student safety until a parent/guardian arrives.

Sign-Out Procedures

As indicated above, parents/guardians must communicate any planned absences in writing to the school. Verbal communication regarding any unplanned absences must come from a parent/guardian (not just the student). Students must notify a City of Bridges staff member and sign out in the kitchen before leaving the property and sign back in when they return. Leaving school without permission is considered a serious violation of school policy. Any student who leaves without consent of parent or guardian, and notifying staff is considered to be cutting school.

Visitor Policy

Visitors are welcome to the school if prior permission has been obtained from staff. All visitors are required to sign in and follow appropriate health and safety procedures.

Transportation

The school district where the student resides is responsible for transporting the student to and from their home to City of Bridges as long as the edge of their district is within ten miles of the City of Bridges facility. If a student lives outside of the transportation zone, it is the responsibility of the family to arrange transportation for the student.

City of Bridges will offer support in getting students to their internships if necessary and will work with families to ensure that transportation is not a barrier to access.

City of Bridges is committed to being engaged in our community and we will have multiple learning expeditions, community events and participation in local and regional activities. We will ensure that transportation is available through public transportation and community carpooling.

Emergency Plan

An emergency plan is on file at City of Bridges, and staff will brief students on all components of this plan at the beginning of the school year. If a crisis should occur, staff will contact parents/guardians as soon as possible. If students are evacuated from the building, they will meet in assigned areas, and attendance will be taken. All students will be expected to stay with the group for safety and security purposes.

HEALTH SERVICES

Emergency Information

The parents/guardians of each student must complete an emergency information form and return it to the school before the first day of the student's attendance.

Medications

The administration of medication to students is carried out under written orders from a student's physician and/or written permission of the parents/guardians. Please contact the office to inform the school of any medication needs including the use of aspirin/Bayer, acetaminophen/Tylenol, ibuprofen/Advil/Motrin, or allergy medication.

Illnesses/Accidents

If your child becomes ill at school, every attempt will be made to send your child home. If a student sustains an injury at school, first aid or other necessary care will be given immediately. A digital incident report will be emailed to families after any such occurrence. If the accident is of a serious nature, parents/guardians will be called immediately. If the school is unable to contact the parents/guardians, a doctor will be called or the student will be transported to the nearest clinic for examination. We will try to contact parents/guardians at home or at work to assume responsibility for the care of their child. If we are unable to contact a parent/guardian, we will contact the persons designated on the student's emergency form. If all attempts to contact someone fail, the student will remain at school and will be sent home at the end of the day.

School personnel will not assume responsibility for any treatment beyond first aid. First aid procedures do not include any form of medical treatment. No drugs or medication, including aspirin or Tylenol, will be given. The faculty is not permitted to dispense either Tylenol or aspirin to students without written permission (see above).

Students with a temperature above 100 degrees will be sent home. If a student has had a temperature above 100 degrees, vomited, or had diarrhea within the past 24 hours, they should stay home.

Communicable Diseases and Infectious Disease

To prevent the spread of contagious diseases, City of Bridges needs to be informed of all students with a communicable disease. These include but are not limited to chicken pox, pinkeye (conjunctivitis), measles, mumps, rubella, impetigo, ringworm, head lice, scabies, and strep throat. If a student has any of these illnesses, the student needs to report to the Head of School for clearance to return to school. Parents/guardians should contact the school regarding readmission guidelines for each disease.

COVID-19 Precautions

The COVID-19 pandemic has shaped the life of our school for the past three years and with the pandemic entering a new phase, the school will be updating our precautions for the 2023-2024 school year.

1. Staff and Students will not be required to wear masks while indoors at school.
2. We will continue to run air filters throughout our building.
3. If students have any respiratory symptoms including sneezing, coughing, runny nose, or fever, they will be asked to mask until a negative COVID-19 test can be provided.
4. If a student has a family member who is exhibiting any respiratory symptoms including sneezing, coughing, runny nose, or fever, they will be asked to mask until a negative COVID-19 test can be provided.
5. If a family member of a student tests positive for COVID-19, the student will be asked to work from home for a minimum of three days, after which they will be asked to provide a negative COVID-19 test result.
6. If a student tests positive for COVID-19, they will be asked to work from home for a minimum of five days, after which they will be asked to provide a negative COVID-19 test result.

Immunizations/Vaccinations

City of Bridges keeps the immunization records of all students on file. State law requires that all students be properly vaccinated to remain enrolled in school unless an official immunization waiver has been filed with the school. Immunizations must be up to date prior to school entrance for all students, including transfer students.

MANDATED REPORTING

Any school employee who has reason to suspect abuse or neglect of a child is a mandated reporter and must immediately report all instances of suspected abuse and neglect directly to Childline and to the Head of School.

STUDENT CONDUCT AND DISCIPLINE

Respect for our Community

It is important to us that we treat our community, including our school space, other buildings, the grounds, and every other place in which we find ourselves learning with the utmost respect and care. This means vandalism (e.g., defacing walls, damaging buildings, or disrupting landscaping), littering, theft, unsanctioned fires, or other harmful activity will not be tolerated. This is a strict policy, and students who choose to disobey are at serious risk of expulsion.

Students should treat our school space with care. Recyclables should be placed in the recycling bin; trash should be placed in trash bins; food scraps should be placed in the compost bucket; dishes must be washed; and personal belongings should be kept in students' cubbies.

Cleaning

Everyone at City of Bridges is expected to help keep the school tidy, clean, and safe. Students are responsible for cleaning up after themselves throughout the day. Students are expected to clean at the end of each school day.

Technology Policy

It is important that we recognize the impact of our actions and use of resources on our community when we use technology. At City of Bridges, technology is used to facilitate the learning process.

Computer Policy

The staff and students are expected to:

- Be polite and not be abusive in any message to others.
- Use language appropriate to public settings. This means that profanity, obscene comments, sexually explicit material, and expressions of bigotry, racism, or hate will not be used for communication.
- Adhere to all federal laws regarding creation, access and use of online content.
- Keep personal information confidential.

- Not use the network in such a way that you disrupt the use of the network or other users (e.g., excessively streaming music or downloading videos).

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a direct violation of City of Bridges policy and more importantly of the ethos and values of this community. Plagiarism is theft, and it gives students the false idea that they can succeed by simply copying someone else's work. Students at City of Bridges are taught how to properly cite the sources of their information. Those who do not provide adequate documentation and are found guilty of plagiarism will be asked to redo the assignment using the proper form of documentation. If a student repeatedly abuses this policy, a meeting will be scheduled with the parents/guardians to discuss the issue.

Theft

City of Bridges will not tolerate the theft of property belonging to students, staff, the school, and our larger community. . We see this as an offense against our entire community and will consider it as grounds for expulsion.

Tobacco/Drugs/Alcohol

All City of Bridges activities, events, and programs are tobacco-, drug-, and alcohol-free. This includes the area around the school and off site learning experiences. Violation of this policy will be considered as grounds for expulsion.

Weapons

City of Bridges takes seriously its commitment to provide a safe, secure place of learning for every student. As such, the possession, use, or distribution of weapons and firearms are prohibited. This prohibition extends to expedition week trips, every school trip into the community, and all internship opportunities. The consequences for violating this policy are likely to be serious and may involve immediate expulsion.

Search and Seizure

Although not required by law in a private school setting, City of Bridges believes each student should enjoy the same protections against unreasonable searches given to students who attend public school. These protections are outlined below.

A student's person and/or personal effects (e.g. backpack, purse, etc.) may be searched if a school official has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the search will turn up evidence that the student has violated or is violating either the law or City of Bridges rules and regulations, including, but not limited to, possession of illegal, unauthorized or contraband materials. Illegal, unauthorized or contraband materials include those materials that are dangerous to the health or safety of students or school personnel, are disruptive or potentially disruptive, or which have been cited as unauthorized in school rules or regulations.

Articulable facts must support a school official's reasonable suspicion that a search is justified. In no case shall a search be conducted if predicated on mere curiosity, rumor, or hunch.

Any search of a student and/or their personal effects shall be conducted by a school official of the same gender as the student and in the presence of another adult witness. The extent or scope of the search shall be reasonably related to the objectives of the search and not excessively intrusive in light of the age and sex of the pupil and the nature of the infraction. For example, if a school official has reasonable suspicion to believe that a student has on his or her person an item imminently dangerous to the student or others, a more intrusive search of the student's person may be conducted.

Student Use Areas

Student use areas, including but not limited to instructional and recreational space, are school property and remain at all times under the control of City of Bridges. However, students shall assume full responsibility for the security and condition of these areas. Periodic general inspections of instructional space and other areas of the school may be conducted by school officials for any reason at any time without notice.

Harassment and Violence

It is the policy of City of Bridges to maintain an environment that is free from harassment and all forms of violence and bullying. Our community will not tolerate harassment or violence in any form and will act to resolve these issues immediately.

It is a violation for any student or staff member to harass, bully, or inflict violence upon a student or staff member through conduct or communication as defined by this policy. Harassment, bullying, or violence constitutes any written, verbal, graphic, physical, or electronically transmitted action that creates a hostile or offensive environment.

Restorative Justice

City of Bridges practices restorative justice, which is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations in order to heal and put things as right as possible.

The restorative justice mindset relies on five key principles:

- Focus on the harms and consequent needs of the victims as well as those of the community and the offenders
- Address the obligations that result from those harms
- Use inclusive, collaborative processes
- Involve those with a legitimate stake in the situation, including victims, offenders, community members, and society

- See to put right the wrongs

- Adapted from *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* by Howard Zehr

Restorative Justice Committee

The Restorative Justice Committee (RJC) is a group of students selected by their peers along with staff who are responsible for addressing choices which are not in alignment with our community values. At the start of the school year all staff and students agree to live by these values, which are included at the end of the handbook. Students and staff may bring choices that are not in alignment with these values to the RJC which will work to find solutions which may include peer mediation, change in privileges or other actions deemed appropriate. The RJC is not responsible for the Disciplinary Actions below, which are addressed by school administration.

Disciplinary Action

Suspension

Every attempt will be made to resolve conflicts in-house through restorative justice practices. However, in severe cases, we reserve the right to suspend students. Suspensions will be handled on a case-by-case basis, and parents/guardians will be notified.

Expulsion

While we view this as a last resort, we reserve the right to expel students for severe offenses or numerous suspensions. Causes for immediate expulsion may include the following:

- Possession of a gun or other dangerous weapon at school
- Possession of or intent to distribute drugs or alcohol
- Extreme harassment or physical violence
- Other criminal offenses

Non-Discrimination Policy

City of Bridges is a community of people with respect for diversity. The school emphasizes the dignity and equality common to all persons and adheres to a strict nondiscrimination policy regarding the treatment of individual faculty, staff, students, family members, volunteers, subcontractors, and vendors. City of Bridges is an equal opportunity employer. In accord with federal law and applicable Pennsylvania statutes, the school does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, age, national origin or ancestry, marital status, parental status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, political

affiliation, disability, or status as a veteran in employment or in any program or activity offered or sponsored by the school.

Community Values Agreement

All students and staff will discuss and sign this form during the orientation experiences in the first weeks of the school year. Subsequently, a copy will be sent home for a parent or guardian to sign as well.

We expect all our community members, students, staff, board, and families to commit to practicing our values. We developed the following statements to be explicit as to what this means.

I commit to practice **Engagement** by:

- Being present in my work and in our community
- Exploring my interests and actively seeking learning opportunities to support their development
- Communicating my needs and ideas within our community

I commit to practice **Compassion** by:

- Supporting the members of our community with care and an attention to their needs as well as my own.
- Treating every other being in the manner in which I would hope to be treated
- Striving to make choices which reduce suffering and enhance flourishing at City of Bridges and in the world.

I commit to practice **Inquiry** by:

- Exploring new knowledge, understanding and skills
- Asking Questions
- Examining my own assumptions about myself and the world around me

I commit to practice **Community** by:

- Supporting the growth and development of all member of the City of Bridges Community
- Making choices that benefit the City of Bridges community as a whole
- Developing actions which have a positive impact on my larger communities in whatever shape they take

I commit to practice **Critical Awareness** by:

- Tending to my personal growth
- Being honest with myself and others

- Examining information and the bias that underlie information
- Exploring the systemic nature of our world which shape both generative and oppressive structures

I commit to practice **Self-Reflection** by:

- Examining myself, my assumptions and my biases
- Examining my learning to serve my development and the development of my community
- Taking time to get to know myself and honor all that I have to offer

I commit to practice **Dignity** by:

- Holding others' vulnerability with confidentiality and care
- Striving to make decisions that bring about greater peace and justice
- Honoring basic goodness

For parents:

I/We, the parent(s)/guardian(s) of _____ (student's full name) acknowledge that I/we have read the City of Bridges High School (COBHS) Handbook. I/we understand and agree that my/our child's enrollment at COBHS demonstrates my/our willingness to abide by and comply with the school's regulations, policies, and procedures stated herein. I/We understand that the administration of COBHS reserves the right to interpret, amend, and change the contents of the Handbook if necessary at any time.

Parent/Guardian 1 Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian 2 Signature _____ Date _____

For students:

I, _____ (student's full name) consent that I have read the COBHS Handbook. I understand and agree that my enrollment at COBHS demonstrates my willingness to abide by and comply with the school's regulations, policies, and procedures stated herein. I understand that the administration of COBHS reserves the right to interpret, amend, and change the contents of the Handbook if necessary at any time.

Student Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX A: REFERENCES

Works Cited

Loving Learning: How Progressive Education Can Save America's Schools, Tom Little, Head of Park Day School

The Little Book of Restorative Justice, Howard Zehr

Springhouse Community School

Things to Read

I Won't Learn from You and other essays on Creative Maladjustment, Herb Kohl

The Long Haul, Myles Horton

We Make the Road by Walking, Myles Horton and Paulo Freire

Other Schools/Learning Organizations to Explore

[Youth Initiative High School](#)

[Spring House Community School](#)

[One Stone](#)

[Highlander Research and Education Center](#)

[The Putney School](#)

[Stone Independent School](#)