

"I can honestly say there is no better way to spend the little extra time you may have in your day. The fulfillment of working with these great kids and their teachers is unbelievable. It is truly a joy and a blessing to be able to participate in something that makes you feel so good while helping to make a real difference in the life of a child."



Nora Gardner
Long-time Bridge volunteer



"Our reading group volunteer has the most awesome taste in books ever! What we read has changed me. What goes through my head has a lot more thought put into it."

Olivia Rittenburg
Student at
Lincoln Elementary School

"The lives of the students and staff have been enriched by The Bridge volunteer program in countless ways. To name just a couple of examples: Bridge volunteers allow us to provide a morning mathematics program for children in grades 2-5, and to provide Junior Achievement programming in every classroom at every grade level."



Bryna Lakin-Davis
Principal, Winthrop Elementary School

A History of The Bridge

The Bridge: A School/Community Partnership was developed as part of the Strategic Planning Process endorsed by the Melrose School Committee in the early 1990s. One action team that grew out of this process was the Parent/Community Partnership, which had a vision of the Melrose community re-investing in its public schools. This team applied for and received a grant to fund a pilot volunteer management program: The Bridge: A School/Community Partnership.

Both the philosophy of the volunteer program and initial organization plans were formulated at a workshop in January, 1993. Participants included parents, teachers, school administrators, members of the school committee, the newly hired Coordinator of Volunteers, and interested members of the community. From this group, The Bridge Advisory Committee was formed. By mid-February, the first volunteers were recruited for pilot programs. Throughout the pilot period, the Advisory Committee worked to formulate guidelines and evaluate the program.

Based on the success of the pilot program, by 1995 The Bridge's volunteer management program expanded to all Melrose elementary schools, the middle school, and the high school. As the configuration of the Melrose Public Schools has changed with the closing of schools and the addition of the Early Childhood Center, The Bridge has continued to provide a centralized volunteer program in which the number of recorded volunteer hours has grown each year.

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead



The Bridge: A School/Community Partnership is a non-profit organization that recruits, screens, and places volunteers in the Melrose Public Schools.

Drawn from the Melrose community and its environs, Bridge volunteers support and enhance programs in the Early Childhood Center, five elementary schools, middle school, and high school.

To volunteer, contact Emily Rubenstein at 781-979-2299 or e-mail: erubenstein@melrose.mec.edu



The Value of The Bridge to the Melrose Schools Community

- Each year, The Bridge registers approximately 1,000 volunteers who help in the Melrose Public Schools for varying amounts of time.
- The Bridge organizes Melrose's annual Community Reading Day.
- The Bridge publishes a directory of community members who can offer presentations in classrooms that enhance curriculum.
- All Bridge volunteers have criminal history checks. The Bridge's Coordinator of Volunteers assists the Melrose Public Schools with the hundreds of criminal history checks done by the school system each year.

Bridge Volunteers Do All of the Following—and More:

- Provide general assistance in early childhood and elementary school classrooms
- Staff elementary school libraries
- Assist in the middle and high school resource centers
- Screen students for vision and hearing difficulties
- Provide extra support for students who speak English as a second language
- Assist with elementary school reading programs



- Tutor students in math at all grade levels
- Offer enrichment in reading and math to elementary students and in math to middle school students
- Help in elementary school lunchrooms
- Work as science volunteers in the elementary schools
- Respond to requests from The Coordinator of Volunteers for help needed by faculty and staff throughout the year
- Assist in school offices
- Lead Junior Achievement and Regarding Art programs at the elementary schools
- Help the MHS fashion class learn to sew
- Help in new programs as they evolve, such as Education Stations, the Melrose Public Schools after-school program.

"In my 35 years of teaching at three grade levels, volunteers were key to helping me run a smooth and thorough program. By creating a 'village' for learning comprised of me and my Bridge volunteers, each child received the attention, the kind ear, or the materials that he or she needed at any time. I couldn't have extended my programs the way I did without my volunteers."

Bev Hinckley
Former Melrose Public School teacher and current member of The Bridge Board

How You Can Help

There are many ways that you can help The Bridge and, by extension, the Melrose Public Schools and our community:

Share your time and skills by becoming a Bridge volunteer at one of the Melrose schools. You do not have to live in Melrose to volunteer, and you can be a Bridge volunteer if you have as little as a half an hour a week or as much as five days a week to share

with students. To receive registration and CORI forms, contact Emily Rubenstein at 781-979-2299, or e-mail: erubenstein@melrose.mec.edu.

The Bridge is funded by grant monies, a stipend from the Melrose School Department, fundraising events, and the generosity of those who make donations to The Bridge. **You can donate to The Bridge by:**

- **Sponsoring a team in The Bridge's annual Trivia Bee.** This is not your average fundraiser! The Bridge's major fundraising event, the Trivia Bee, has become a much-anticipated and thoroughly enjoyable evening of fun and frivolity by and for the entire Melrose community. Participants representing city government, businesses of all types, professional offices, civic groups, non-profit organizations, and private citizens pit their wits against each other to discover which group knows the greatest amount of useless and semi-useless information. For information on how to sponsor a team, call 781-979-2299 or e-mail: erubenstein@melrose.mec.edu.
- **Making a tax-deductible contribution.** Since The Bridge is a charitable 501(c)3 organization, all contributions to The Bridge are tax deductible. To make a contribution, please send a check made payable to "The Bridge: A School/Community Partnership" to:
The Bridge, ATTN: Donations
360 Lynn Fells Parkway
Melrose, MA 02176
- **Remembering The Bridge in your Will or Trust.** To leave a legacy that will benefit the Melrose Public Schools, students, and staff for years to come, contact Emily Rubenstein at 781-979-2299 or e-mail: erubenstein@melrose.mec.edu.

For further information about The Bridge, and to download forms, go to www.melroseschools.com and click on "The Bridge: Volunteers."