

**THE NEXT STEP PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**



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SECTION 1 **INTRODUCTION**

This employee handbook outlines The Next Step Public Charter School's personnel policies and procedures.

The Next Step promotes uniformity in the application of its policies and procedures. The Next Step Board of Trustees reserves the right to change, amend, or delete any of the policies and procedures. The Executive Director will give notice to all employees, in writing, upon changing any of the policies articulated in the personnel manual.

The contents of this handbook are not intended to create contractual obligations in regards to any matters they cover. Nor is this handbook intended to create a contract guaranteeing that you will be employed for any specified time period. Employment with The Next Step Public Charter School is mutually at will and not for any specified period of time; it may be terminated at any time, for any reason, with or without cause or advance notice by you or The Next Step Public Charter School. Nothing in this handbook is intended to or should be read to alter or modify the at-will employment relationship. Only the Next Step Public Charter School, in a writing signed by the Executive Director, can alter that at-will employment relationship.

Approved by the Board of Trustees
December 8, 1999

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SECTION 2 **MISSION and VISION**

Vision statement: The Next Step / El Proximo Paso Public Charter School envisions a world in which all youth receive an excellent education and the support they need to realize their full potential as human beings and contributing members of society.

Mission statement: The mission of The Next Step / El Proximo Paso Public Charter School is to provide students who face extraordinary challenges, are not supported in traditional high schools, and/or are teen parents, with the opportunity to continue their educations. The school also enables young immigrants who have never attended school in the US to gain proficiency in the English language and master basic academic skills in both English and Spanish. The Next Step provides: a nurturing and intimate environment, comprehensive counseling and social services, life and job readiness skills, and individualized instruction. The Next Step focuses foremost on preparing students to take the GED examination and attend college.

SECTION 3 **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY POLICY STATEMENT**

THE NEXT STEP PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER COMMITTED TO A CULTURALLY DIVERSE WORKFORCE, IN COMPLIANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE FEDERAL AND LOCAL LAWS, AS WELL AS MORAL AND ETHICAL STANDARDS OF EQUALITY. WE ARE PROUD TO RECOGNIZE EACH PERSON AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND DO NOT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST APPLICANTS OR EMPLOYEES ON THE BASIS OF: RACE, COLOR, RELIGIOUS CREED, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR IDENTITY, FAMILIAL STATUS, PREGNANCY, GENETIC INFORMATION, MILITARY SERVICE, AGE, ANCESTRY, DISABILITY, APPEARANCE OR ANY OTHER PROTECTED STATUS UNDER STATE, FEDERAL, OR LOCAL LAW.

THE NEXT STEP PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AGREES TO USE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION TO ENSURE THAT DIVERSE APPLICANTS ARE EMPLOYED, AND THAT EMPLOYEES ARE TREATED DURING THEIR EMPLOYMENT, WITHOUT REGARD TO THEIR RACE, COLOR, RELIGION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, SEX, AGE, MARITAL STATUS, PERSONAL APPEARANCE, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES, MATRICULATION, POLITICAL AFFILIATION, OR DISABILITY. THE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION SHALL INCLUDE, BUT NOT BE LIMITED TO THE FOLLOWING:

- A. EMPLOYMENT, UPGRADING OR TRANSFER;
- B. RECRUITMENT OR RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING;
- C. DEMOTION, LAYOFF, OR TERMINATION;
- D. RATES OF PAY OR OTHER FORMS OF COMPENSATION;
- E. SELECTION FOR TRAINING, MENTORSHIP, AND/OR APPRENTICESHIP.

THE NEXT STEP PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AGREES TO POST IN CONSPICUOUS PLACES THE PROVISIONS CONCERNING NON-DISCRIMINATION AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION.

THE NEXT STEP PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL SHALL STATE THAT ALL QUALIFIED APPLICANTS WILL RECEIVE CONSIDERATION FOR EMPLOYMENT PURSUANT TO 1103.2 THROUGH 1103.10 OF MAYOR'S ORDER 85-85: "EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY REQUIREMENTS IN CONTRACTS."

THE NEXT STEP PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL AGREES TO PERMIT ACCESS TO ALL BOOKS PERTAINING TO ITS EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES AND TO REQUIRE EACH SUB-CONTRACTOR TO PERMIT ACCESS TO BOOKS AND PUBLIC/PERTINENT RECORDS.

THE NEXT STEP PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL SHALL INCLUDE IN EVERY SUBCONTRACT THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY CLAUSES, SUBSECTIONS 1103.2 THROUGH 1103.10 SO THAT SUCH PROVISIONS SHALL BE BINDING UPON EACH SUBCONTRACTOR OR VENDOR

SECTION 4 DRUG FREE WORKPLACE POLICY STATEMENT

It is The Next Step Public Charter School's policy to encourage and provide for a drug-free workplace.

It is unlawful to manufacture distribute, dispense, or use a controlled substance in The Next Step Public Charter School's workplace without a legal physician's prescription. Any employee convicted of manufacturing, distributing or dispensing a controlled substance will be terminated.

The use of alcohol and other drugs at our workplace presents real dangers, such as serious injury or property damage to the individual user, their coworkers, and to the members of the public served by the school.

In accordance with the 1988 Anti-Drug Abuse Legislation that includes alcohol as a drug, the possession or use of alcohol is included in this policy. Specifically, the possession of alcohol for consumption by employees at The Next Step workplace is prohibited as is the consumption of alcohol to the degree that it impairs the employee's performance. Impaired employee performance includes examples such as documented and continued failure to meet deadlines, consistent errors in judgment or documentation, and excessive tardiness and/or absences.

Any convictions for the manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of an illegal controlled substance will be documented in the employee's personnel file and reported to the federal funding source as outlined in the Federal Register of Jan. 31, 1989, Part 11, Drug Free Workplace Requirement, Notice and Interim Final Rules.

In an effort to maintain a drug free workplace within the framework and philosophy of The Next Step's personnel policies and procedures, the following progressive phases will be instituted in the case of any infraction of The Next Step's Drug Free Workplace policies other than the manufacture, distribution, or dispensing of a controlled substance:

1. With proper use of documentation and informal discussion of counseling with the employee, the employee's supervisor and the HR Department, after confidential consultation with the Executive Director of the Next Step, will refer the employee for an assessment with a certified or approved counseling program;
2. An assessment will be completed by an approved counseling or assessment individual or program in the District of Columbia, Maryland or Virginia;
3. The intervention recommended, as a result of the counseling or assessment, will be followed by the individual employee;
4. Appropriate releases will be retained to inform the individual's supervisor/HR of the individual's progress;
5. Continuation of employment will be contingent upon successful completion of the recommended intervention plan.
6. Medical leave of absence will be given to the employee, if recommended by the evaluation plan, in accordance with FMLA.

If the employee is unsuccessful in completing the recommended intervention plan of the counselor, an escalating series of intervention procedures, up to termination, will be invoked. Specifically:

A. A second infraction, or failure to comply with the recommended intervention plan, will follow the plan outlined in the points 1-6. In addition, the employee will be notified, whether in person or by certified mail, of a 30-day suspension without pay.

B. A third infraction, or failure to comply with the recommended intervention plan, will result in the individual's dismissal from employment at The Next Step PCS.

Under certain circumstances, The Next Step Public Charter School will provide reasonable accommodations to employees who enter rehabilitation programs for treatment for drug and alcohol abuse, pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act and applicable state law, including allowing employees to use accrued PTO or sick leave, as stipulated under FMLA rules and regulations.

SMOKING POLICY

The Next Step Public Charter School is a smoke free environment. No smoking will be allowed in any of The Next Step spaces or outside, in front of The Next Step building. Smokers must maintain a distance of 50 yards from the school entrance, and not in visible sight of it. As a school, all staff should model healthy behaviors for our young people. The Next Step staff should be conscious of the messages their actions relay to Next Step youth. For this reason, The Next Step is requesting strict adherence to the smoking policy.

SECTION 5

HARASSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

GENERAL INFORMATION

This policy is designed to ensure that all employees will enjoy a safe work environment free from unreasonable interference, intimidation, hostility, or offensive behavior on the part of staff, students, consultants, volunteers or visitors. It also acknowledges that harassment, sexual or otherwise, is against the law and will not be tolerated by this organization. While the major part of this policy addresses sexual harassment, it should be understood that all forms of harassment, whether: racial, religious, sexual orientation, age, disability, ethnic or any other are prohibited.

The Next Step Public Charter School will maintain a workplace free of harassment of any kind and from any source (see aforementioned groups/categories), treating all complaints fairly and justly, while also seeking to prevent frivolous or malicious accusations. The Next Step Public Charter School prohibits any form of retaliation against any employee, for filing a complaint in good faith under this policy or for assisting in a complaint investigation.

DEFINITIONS

Unreasonable conduct

Treating someone as if that person were inferior. This includes condescension (refusing to take someone seriously), verbal abuse (making negative or derogatory comments), exclusion (overlooking or denying someone access to places, people or information, especially where opportunities for advancement are involved), and tokenism (selecting one or a few members of a group for very visible positions).

Discrimination

Employment decisions implicitly or explicitly based on factors other than job-related considerations or unusual/different treatment of one employee or a group of employees, merely on the basis of a protected characteristic, e.g., gender, race, or sexual orientation.

Harassment

Repeated, unwanted, or unwelcome verbal abuse or behaviors of a sexist, racist or ageist nature or with overtones related to a protected characteristic, e.g. gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation or military status.

Hostile environment

Conduct that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a person's job performance or which creates an intimidating or offensive work environment.

Quid pro quo sexual harassment

(1) Making submission to sexual demands an implicit or explicit term or condition of employment or compensation; (2) making decisions affecting someone's employment or compensation on the basis of whether the person submits to or rejects sexual demands.

Unwelcome behavior

Conduct that the employee did not solicit or incite and that the employee regards as undesirable or offensive.

Reasonable person standard

The legal standard for judging whether a specific instance of sexually oriented behavior constitutes sexual harassment. In other words, cases are judged based on the question, "Would any reasonable person object to or be offended by this behavior?"

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

Legal Description

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and is an "unlawful employment practice" under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct constitutes sexual harassment when:

- It is part of a manager or supervisor's decision to hire or fire;
- It is used to make other employment decisions such as pay, promotion or job assignment;
- It interferes with the employee's work performance;
- It creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Behaviors which can constitute sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as deliberate or repeated behavior of a sexual nature, which is unwelcome. Explicit or implicit unwelcome behaviors can include verbal behaviors such as unwanted sexual comments, suggestions, jokes or pressure for sexual favors; nonverbal behavior such as suggestive looks or leering; and physical behavior such as pats or squeezes, or repeatedly brushing against someone's body.

Other conduct commonly defined as sexual harassment includes (but is not limited to):

- Verbal: Sexual innuendoes; suggestive comments; insults; humor and jokes about sex, anatomy or gender-specific traits; sexual propositions; threats; repeated requests for dates; or statements of a sexual nature about other employees, even outside of their presence.
- Non-Verbal: Suggestive or insulting sounds (whistling, "catcalls", "smacking" or "kissing" noises); leering; obscene gestures or sexually suggestive bodily gestures.
- Visual: Sexually offensive posters, signs, pin-ups, calendars, magazines, cartoons or slogans of a sexual nature.

- Physical: Unwelcome touching flirtations or advances; hugging or kissing; pinching; brushing the body; physical or emotional coercion of sexual intercourse; or actual assault.

Reporting harassment

The Next Step will take an affirmative role in protecting its employees from sexual harassment. Should an instance of inappropriate behavior occur, it is the employee's responsibility to bring concerns to the attention of the Executive Director. This includes employees who think they are victims of sexual harassment as well as those who believe they have witnessed another employee being harassed.

If you believe you are being harassed, take action immediately as follows:

- If you are able to do so without danger, tell the harasser as clearly as possible that the behavior is unwelcome and request that it stop.
- Put your concern in writing and discuss your concern immediately with you're the HR department, your direct supervisor, the Principal or the Executive Director.
- If your concern is regarding an action made by the Executive Director, you should put this concern in writing and contact the Chair of The Next Step Board of Trustees.
- When the Next Step is notified of alleged harassment, the complaint will be promptly investigated. The investigation may include interviews with the directly-involved parties, and where necessary, with employees who may have observed the alleged harassment or who may be similarly situated with the complaining employee, and who may be able to testify to their experiences with the accused employee.

Disciplinary action

Complaints and cases of sexual harassment will be dealt with promptly. An employee who sexually harasses another employee will be disciplined as in any other case of serious, illegal, employee misconduct. Employee complaints will be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible.

If the investigation shows that the accused employee did engage in harassment, the Next Step will take appropriate action which will include a written warning that any continued harassment may result in a negative employment action, such as suspension or termination. Additional actions which may be taken include verbal and/or written reprimands, a letter to the employee's file, or an employee transfer, where warranted.

Questions or concerns

If any employee has questions or concerns regarding this policy, they should speak with the HR agency or the Executive Director, who are authorized to deal with discrimination matters.

Responsibilities of staff

1. Each employee is responsible for creating an atmosphere free of discrimination and harassment, sexual or otherwise. Further, each employee is responsible for respecting the rights and dignity of his or her coworkers and has the responsibility to refrain from committing sexual harassment in the work place.
2. If you are considering reporting an incident of harassment, please: (1) Contact the HR department or Executive Director for consultation; (2) Keep a written record of harassment that occurs, including the times, dates, and other details; and (3) Find witnesses for substantiation.
3. Verbal request: If it is within your comfort level to do so, let the offending person(s) know that you find the conduct offensive and ask that it stop immediately and that it not occur again. If you find it uncomfortable to confront the offender, talk with the Supervisor and/or the Executive Director and the HR representative.
4. Written request: If the offensive behavior does not stop, you should write a letter to the accused detailing all the facts, describing your feelings, and stating that you will follow the steps established in The Next Step's policy. Keep a copy for yourself. Send a copy to the Supervisor, Executive Director and the HR Representative.
5. If it does not stop, or if it recurs, you should file an official complaint in writing as articulated in The Next Step Employee Handbook Section entitled The Next Step Employee Grievance Procedure.
6. Make every effort to resolve the situation internally; staff should also maintain detailed documentation of every incident.
7. The Next Step Public Charter School accepts no liability for harassment of one employee by another employee. The individual who makes unwelcome advances, threatens or in any way harasses another employee is personally liable for such actions and their consequences. The Next Step Public Charter School will not provide legal, financial or any other assistance to an individual accused of harassment if a legal complaint is filed.

Responsibilities of Principal and Executive Director

1. Refrain from all forms of discrimination or harassment at all times.
2. If observing discriminatory or unreasonable conduct, ask the offending person(s) to stop immediately, explaining the offensive conduct, how it offends and that it is illegal.
3. If the conduct continues or recurs, file an official complaint in writing with the HR department and cc: the Executive Director.

4. The HR Agency, in consultation with the Executive Director, will handle the complaint by conducting a complete internal investigation and writing up the complaint and the results of the investigation within seven business days.

Responsibilities of Executive Director

The Next Step will make every reasonable effort to determine the facts and resolve the situation.

Sanctions for employees

The Next Step has the right to apply any sanction or combination of sanctions to deal with unreasonable conduct or discrimination:

1. Counseling the offender(s);
2. Transferring the offender(s);
3. Probation, with a warning of suspension or discharge for continuing or recurring offenses;
4. Suspension, with or without pay (depending on the seriousness of the offense);
5. Discharge for cause;
6. The Executive Director and the HR representative will maintain all investigative materials for a period of time specified by current law.

WHISTLEBLOWER POLICY

TNS requires its directors, officers, employees and volunteers to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities within the organization. As representatives of the TNS, employees must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling responsibilities and must comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

The purpose of the Whistleblower Policy is to create an ethical and open work environment, to ensure that the organization has a governance and accountability structure that supports its mission and to encourage and enable directors, officers, employees and volunteers of the organization to raise serious concerns about the occurrence of illegal or unethical actions within the organization before turning to outside parties for resolution.

Notwithstanding anything contained in this Whistleblower Policy to the contrary, this Whistleblower Policy is not an employment contract and does not modify the fact that all employees of the organization are employees at will. Nothing contained in this policy provides any director, officers, employee or volunteer of the organization with any additional rights or causes of action not otherwise available under applicable statutory law.

Reporting Responsibility

All directors, officers, employees and volunteers of the TNS have a responsibility to report any action or suspected action taken within the organization that is illegal, unethical or violates any adopted policy of the organization ("Violations").

Anyone reporting a Violation must act in good faith, without malice to the organization or any individual in the organization and have reasonable grounds for believing that the information shared in the report indicates that a Violation has occurred. A person who makes a report does not have to prove that a Violation has occurred. However, any report which the reporter has made maliciously or any report which the reporter has good reason to believe is false will be viewed as a serious disciplinary offense.

No Retaliation

No one who in good faith reports a Violation or who, in good faith, cooperates in the investigation of a Violation shall suffer harassment, retaliation or adverse employment consequences. Any individual within the organization who retaliates against another individual, who has reported a Violation in good faith or who, in good faith, has cooperated in the investigation of a Violation is subject to discipline, including termination of employment or volunteer status.

If you believe that an individual who has made a good faith report of a Violation or who has, in good faith, cooperated in the investigation of a Violation is suffering harassment, retaliation or adverse employment consequences, please contact Human Resources, the Executive Director or any other member of the administration with whom you feel comfortable. .

Reporting Process

All directors, officers, employees and volunteers should address their concerns relating to a Violation to any person within the organization who can properly address those concerns. In most cases, the direct supervisor of an employee or volunteer is the person best suited to address a concern. However, if the reporter is not comfortable speaking with his/her supervisor or is not satisfied with the supervisor's response, the individual is encouraged to contact the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees or speak to anyone in management that s/he feels comfortable approaching.

TNS encourages anyone reporting a Violation to identify himself or herself when making a report in order to facilitate the investigation of the Violation. However, reports addressed to an individual within the organization may be submitted on a confidential basis and reports may be submitted to the Executive Committee of the Board anonymously by sending a written statement.

Board of Trustees

A supervisor, manager or board member is required to notify the Executive Committee of the Board of every report of a Violation. The Executive Committee will notify the sender and acknowledge receipt of a report of Violation within five business days, but only to the extent the sender's identity is disclosed or a return address is provided.

The Executive Committee is responsible for promptly investigating all reported Violations and for causing appropriate corrective action to be taken if warranted by the investigation. The Finance Committee of the Board is responsible for addressing all reported concerns or complaints

of Violations relating to corporate accounting practices, internal controls or auditing. Therefore, the Finance Committee will be immediately notified of any such concern or complaint. In addition, where appropriate, the Board may advise the Executive Director.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT POLICY STATEMENT

The Next Step is committed to complying with all applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") and its equivalent state and local laws. It is The Next Step's policy not to discriminate against any qualified employee or applicant for employment because of an individual's disability or perceived disability, as long as the employee can perform the essential functions of the job with or without reasonable accommodations. Consistent with this policy of nondiscrimination, The Next Step will provide reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals with a disability(ies), who have made The Next Step aware of their disability, as defined by the ADA and its equivalent state and local laws, provided that such accommodations do not constitute an undue hardship on The Next Step.

Employees with a disability who believe they need a reasonable accommodation to perform the essential functions of their job should contact the Executive Director. The Next Step encourages individuals with disabilities to come forward and request reasonable accommodations.

SECTION 6 **INTERVIEWING AND HIRING**

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

All open positions at The Next Step will be posted internally simultaneous to external advertisement, while giving first preference to internal candidates in scheduling interviews and considering comparable qualifications.

HIRING PROCESS

Jobs will be posted by the HR Department, and receipt of and the first screening will occur within the HR department, in consultation with those responsible for filling the position, including the appropriate supervisor. Once a pool of candidates has been screened, interviewing for a specific position will begin, and will be scheduled through the HR department. In some cases, more than one interview will occur and, for some positions, staff input into the selection process will be considered and/or implemented. At the time of the interview process, if a candidate is seriously being considered for the position, references will be verified. In some cases, verification of credentials will also be necessary. All offers are contingent upon the successful completion of a criminal history background check. Further, no offers of employment contingent upon certain conditions being met, such as accommodations, fewer hours than the traditional 40 hour work week, or remote schedule may be negotiated without consultation of the HR department and approval of the Executive Director.

BACKGROUND CHECK

All pre-employment background screenings are conducted by a third party to ensure privacy. All screenings are conducted in strict conformity with the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and state and federal anti-discrimination and privacy laws. All reports are kept strictly confidential and are only viewed by individuals in TNS who have direct responsibility in the hiring process. All screening reports are kept and maintained separately from employee personnel files. Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), all background screenings are done only after a person has received a disclosure and has signed a release. In addition, applicants have certain legal rights to discover and to dispute or explain any information prepared by the third party background-screening agency. If TNS intends to deny employment wholly or partly because of the information obtained in a pre-employment check, the applicant will first be provided with a copy of the background report, a statement of rights, and the name, address and phone number of the consumer reporting agency to contact about the results of the check or to dispute its accuracy.

PROMOTIONS AND TRANSFERS

When appropriate, an employee may be promoted into a new position without a Job Vacancy Announcement being posted. This type of promotion is based on recommendation of the Supervisor/Principal to the Executive Director and/or the Executive Director's discretion. A promotion will be indicated when the new position is job related and in line with the employee's current duties/qualifications.

In some cases an employee may be asked to make a lateral transfer into another position for which he/she is qualified. This is most apt to occur in those instances when a grant funded position ends and another position is open, for which that person possesses the necessary qualifications. This type of transfer is also based on the recommendation from the Principal to the Executive Director.

In those cases where the job is unrelated and any Next Step employee(s) wishes to apply for a new position, application is encouraged. However, this will be done on a competitive basis. This is not to be considered a transfer or a promotion.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD

Every new employee will be given a reasonable length of time to learn the job. The probationary period is 90 days for all staff. Probationary periods can be extended at the discretion of a supervisor up to an additional 90 days. It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that this extension is communicated in writing in a timely fashion. After the probationary period an evaluation must be made regarding continued employment at The Next Step. While on probationary status, no rights are given to the employee regarding the employee grievance process except where prohibited by law.

If a Next Step employee applies for and is accepted into a new position or is promoted, a three-month probationary period for the new position will apply.

During the probationary period new employees accrue all benefits including vacation time and sick leave. However, these benefits cannot be utilized until the probationary period has ended, for a maximum of 90 days, as indicated by the DC Sick and Safe Leave Act, 2008 amended 2013. For internal promotions and transfers, benefits may be used per the usual rules for employees. Prior to moving out of probationary status, a performance appraisal will be carried out by the employee's supervisor.

At the time a new employee begins he/she will be given a job description. Once the probationary period is over, the job description may be modified based on a discussion between the employee and the supervisor.

ORIENTATION

New employee orientations will take place within a week of hiring date, or will be scheduled after two or more employees are hired.

On or before the first day of work all necessary tax forms and personnel forms must be completed. These forms can be obtained in The Next Step business office in conjunction with the HR Agency.

HEALTH EXAMS

In order to promote preventive health and wellness, all new employees must present the negative results of a tuberculosis exam, prior to beginning employment at The Next Step. Furthermore, The Next Step reserves the right to require periodic TB re-testing.

BACKGROUND CHECK

In order to meet requirements for The Next Step as a public charter school, all new Next Step employees must submit the receipt of a criminal record check issued by the D.C. Police Department or agree to an online background check, using a system with which TNS has a contract, before being hired. The Next Step reserves the right to require periodic updates of employee background checks, in accordance with federal and local regulations. Background checks will be performed individually and any questionable results will be reviewed and considered on a case by case base; however, conviction of a sexual or violent crime will be automatic disqualifiers for employment. All employment is contingent upon a successful background check.

"AT-WILL" EMPLOYMENT

Neither this manual nor any other TNS policy document confers any contractual right, either express or implied, to remain in the School's employ; nor does it guarantee any fixed terms and conditions of employment. Employment is not for any specific time and may be terminated at will, with or without cause and without prior notice, by The Next Step PCS or by the employee for any reason, at any time. Only The Next Step, in a writing signed by the Executive Director, can alter the at-will employment relationship. Furthermore, all offers of employment are contingent upon the successful passage of a criminal background screening.

SECTION 7 **PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION**

The Business Manager will oversee employee onboarding; however, the task of handling personnel records and related personnel administration functions at The Next Step Public Charter School has been assigned to an external HR agency with which the School has contracted. Questions regarding insurance, wages, and interpretation of policies may be directed to this agency.

Your Personnel File

Keeping your personnel file up-to-date can be important to you with regard to pay, deductions, benefits and other matters. If you have a change in any of the following items, please be sure to notify the Business Manager as soon as possible:

1. Legal name
2. Home address
3. Home telephone number
4. Emergency contact
5. Number of dependents
6. Marital status
7. Change of beneficiary/beneficiaries
8. Military or draft status
9. Exemptions claimed on W-4/State tax forms

Coverage or benefits that you and your family may receive under The Next Steps Public Charter School's benefits package could be negatively affected if the information in your personnel file is incorrect.

The Next Step Public Charter School refers to your personnel file when there is a need to make decisions in connection with promotions, transfers, layoffs, recalls, and or termination; it is to your benefit to ensure that your personnel file includes information about completion of educational or training courses, outside civic activities, and areas of interest and skills that may not be a part of your current position at the school.

You may view certain information that is maintained in your personnel file, and you may request and receive copies of all documents you have signed. Please ask the Business Manager to make arrangements for you with the HR agency.

SECTION 8 **ATTENDANCE**

HOURS OF WORK, ATTENDANCE AND ABSENTEEISM

All employees who work directly with the students must adhere to a strict schedule, specifying the time by which they need to report to work and clock in/out. The schedule will be specified by the Principal and/or the Executive Director. Any change in the schedule must be negotiated with the appropriate supervisor.

The normal work week for full time employees is forty hours, inclusive of a half-hour lunch break each day.

Travel time to and from work generally is not considered to be part of the workday. Travel time does count if it is job-related and occurs during the regular workday. Included in each eight hour day is a half-hour paid break. Teaching staff must take part of the break during the student lunch period. The remainder may be taken after students leave for the day, but cannot be taken at the end of the work day. Other staff must work out appropriate break times with their supervisors and be available to supervise students during lunch, as needed. Employees who work less than full time are not entitled to a paid break.

TIMECLOCKS, TIMESHEETS

1. ALL employees must use the **timeclock** when arriving and departing from the workplace. If an employee leaves the building on work business and returns directly, the clock should be kept running. An employee leaving on work business who will not return that day should punch out, then note the added time used for work business on his or her timesheet.
2. At the end of the pay period, *non-exempt employees only* need to verify the hours on their **timesheet**, make any necessary changes and sign the timesheet.
- 3.
4. The appropriate supervisor must sign all non-exempt employees' timesheets. The Principals, Executive Director or direct supervisor must authorize all leave taken. Staff should attach authorized leave request forms to their timesheets.
5. Although exempt employees do not need to fill out timesheets, HR will notify any employee who is missing a day's punch in/out and does not have an appropriate leave slip (sick leave, personal leave, annual leave, approved comp time, etc.) to cover that day.
6. Telework is a workplace strategy that is intended to provide flexibility to employees where such flexibility is consistent with the needs of The Next Step. Due to the nature of the work which the School performs, telework will rarely be approved. Telework whether for partial or full days must be approved by the Executive Director or Chief Operating Officer before the day on which the employee wishes to telework. An employee who teleworks without prior approval may be subject to discipline up to and including termination.
7. Due to the nature of the work performed in the school, teachers and case managers are requested not to take leave immediately before or after a school break or holiday. Any leave taken prior to a school vacation by the aforementioned groups will be considered personal, unpaid leave.

LATENESS

Teachers and student support services staff who work in the day program must report to work no later than 8:45 am on instructional days unless an alternate arrangement is approved or requested by the Principal or appropriate supervisor. On non-instructional days, arrival time will be specified by the Principal. If a teacher or a student support services staff arrives later than 8:45, corrective measures will be taken by the supervising Principal or appropriate supervisor. Night staff will be advised of their work hours by the principal, depending on their part-time or full-time status.

All other employees will work schedules that are specified by the Principal, Executive Director or their supervisor at the beginning of the school year. Other staff with specific work hours determined by their supervisor must similarly adhere to those hours or face corrective measures.

If an employee is late for a reason unacceptable to his/her supervisor on four or more occasions in any two-month period he/she will be subject to the following disciplinary action:

1. Arriving late four times within a two-month period: documented verbal warning,
2. Arriving late twice more, for a total of six times within the same two-month period: a documented corrective interview
3. Arriving late twice more for a total of eight times within the same two-month period: second documented corrective interview and possible discharge.

ABSENTEEISM

If an employee is unable to work all or part of the workday he/she must notify the school office. For day school staff you must notify the office by 7:00am. For night school staff you must notify the office by 3:00pm. If possible, employees must call personally and speak directly with their supervisor, or leave a message on his/her supervisor's voice mailbox. It is the employee's responsibility to call in. If he/she cannot do so due to illness, it is the responsibility of the employee to insure that a relative calls the office. Excessive absenteeism and corrective procedures are as follows:

1. In the case of an unexcused absence, the employee will meet the next day with the Principal, appropriate Supervisor or the Executive Director for a corrective interview.
2. An additional unexcused absence – develop a corrective action plan (could lead to termination).
3. A third unexcused absence – possible termination.

If an employee does not notify the school office for three consecutive days and does not report to work, the employee will be deemed to have voluntarily resigned.

Excused absences include:

1. Hospital confinement
2. Jury duty – submit form and turn over payment to The Next Step
3. Prearranged absence
4. Death in the immediate family
5. Illness
6. Family leave

SECTION 9

SALARY

SALARIES

Salaries for teachers and instruction support staff are determined according to the approved salary scale. The Principal, Executive Director and designated supervisor have discretion to negotiate salaries with staff and the final salary for all staff will be stated in the annual offer letter. Annual raises are subject to budget constraints and Board approval.

PAYDAY

Employees will be paid on a semi-monthly basis. Paydays are the fifteenth and the last day of the month or the immediately preceding business day if that day is a weekend or a holiday. Payment for a given semi-monthly period occurs at the following 15th or last day of the month.

PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS

Prior to the receipt of pay all necessary withholding documents must have been completed. All mandatory federal and state deductions will be taken out of the paycheck. Additional deductions include payment towards the health insurance policy and contribution to The Next Step retirement fund for those employees who choose to contribute through a payroll deduction.

SALARY ADVANCES

Requests for payroll advances must be made in writing using the Request for Payroll Advance form and must be approved by the Principal, appropriate supervisor or the Executive Director. Advances are made completely at the discretion of The Next Step management. The Next Step discourages requests for advances.

1. Only one salary advance may be given at a time to an individual employee.
2. A maximum of two advances may be given in any one year (July through June).
3. A maximum of \$1000 may be advanced at a time and must be repaid during the subsequent two pay periods.

SALARY ADJUSTMENTS

Salary adjustments due to certification or graduate credits will become effective on the first of the month following submission of all required documentation to the Principal.

Required documentation to be paid as a certified teacher is a teaching credential from the District of Columbia. Provisional credentials are not accepted.

Required documentation for post –master's salary adjustments is a transcript showing 30 additional hours in an area relevant to the person's job assignment.

SECTION 10

BENEFITS

Full time employees are eligible to participate in all benefit programs offered by The Next Step as are in place at any given time. A full-time employee is defined as an employee who works forty hours per week. Part-time employees are those who work less than forty hours per week. Part-time employees who work at least 20 hours per week are eligible for certain benefits as described under specific sections below.

Benefits are described here in general; specific descriptions, eligibility and coverage information is available in detail in related provider information. The Next Step PCS reserves the right to alter benefits from time to time due to cost or other considerations.

GROUP HEALTH INSURANCE

The Next Step maintains a group health insurance plan for certain employees. The employee portion of the insurance for individual, two party and family coverage is paid by way of payroll deductions. Health insurance includes some form of dental and vision coverage, as well.

Eligibility and Effective Date

Eligible employees are those who are permanent employees, if they are working at least 600 hours per year. Temporary employees are not eligible to participate in the group health insurance plan. Eligible employees are eligible for health insurance on the first of the month following their hire date. The effective date is dependent on the timely submission of all paperwork. If an employee does not come onto The Next Step health insurance within thirty days of hiring, he/she must wait until the open enrollment season to request enrollment in the health insurance. Further, the school assumes no liability for any federal or state fees that may become due following a lapse in coverage.

For full-time employees, The Next Step will pay 75% of the health insurance premium for all categories of employees.

The Next Step will pay a proportional amount of the premium for part-time employees of 30 hours or more, based on the hours that the employee works.

Employees with other coverage

For employees who do not need The Next Step's health insurance plan, The Next Step will offer dental coverage separately when possible.

Changing Coverage

Any change in coverage, from individual, to two-party or to family, must be requested in writing and submitted to the HR Department.

Specific benefits of the health plan may vary from year to year.

The cost of these benefits to employees may vary from time to time depending on, among other factors, benefit requirements, level of participation/coverage, and The Next Step's contribution, if any.

RETIREMENT PLAN

All permanent employees working 30 hours or more are eligible to participate in The Next Step retirement plan with TIAA/CREF. The Next Step employees may elect to have their own money withheld from their paychecks and remitted to the retirement company. In addition, after one full year of employment, The Next Step will contribute funds to the employees' retirement plan based on a percentage of the employee's salary and a 5 year graded scale with any full year of employment counting towards vesting. Furthermore, employees may start receiving matches or contributions upon enrollment when eligible. The contribution and vesting schedule is as follows:

Contribution Schedule (Eligible after 1 year of continuous service):

- 1) The Employer will make a 3% contribution regardless of employee contribution, upon employee eligibility, after one year of continuous employment.
- 2) The Employer will match up to 2% of employee contribution, for a maximum employer contribution of 5%, after one year of continuous employment.
- 3) The Employer will match up to 4.5% of employee contribution, for a maximum employer contribution of 7.5%, after three years of continuous employment.

5 Year Graded Schedule

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 1 st Year | 0% (become eligible after the 1st year, so vesting starts on year 2) |
| 2 nd Year | 20% vested (first year of eligibility) |
| 3 rd Year | 40% vested |
| 4 th Year | 60% vested |
| 5 th Year | 80% vested |
| 6 th Year | 100% (end of 5th year of eligibility = fully vested) |

OTHER BENEFITS

The Next Step PCS will offer other elective benefits for staff whenever possible. This may include:

- Flexible spending accounts
- AFLAC
- Life insurance

STAFF TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Next Step offers many opportunities for all staff to grow professionally in their fields. These opportunities begin the first day of work with orientation and continue with regular supervision, regularly scheduled weekly meetings, in-service training, and staff development workshops.

All teachers and staff are encouraged and expected to constantly develop their knowledge and skills. The Next Step supports its employees professionally by offering school-wide and individual training. [See Professional Development Policy for further information.]

Professional Development Opportunities:

- Stipends for trainings that are directly related to fulfilling a teacher's or staff member's professional duties, subject to supervisor's approval
- Compensatory time for attending recommended trainings on school-wide best practices

Responsibilities of Executive Director and Principal:

- Establish school-wide priorities for professional development for subsequent year in advance of budgeting process for instructional staff, administrative staff and school-wide development.

Responsibilities of Staff:

- Attend all mandatory in-house workshops and trainings.
- Investigate opportunities for individual professional development.

- Complete **Request for PD** and obtain approval from Principal or Executive Director for individual professional development
- Upon completion of training, provide a report to supervisor and prepare a staff PD session, if requested
- Provide feedback for improvement of professional development program
- Submit receipts for reimbursement in a timely manner

Out of Town Professional Development

As the budget and schedule permit, staff may be able to attend professional conferences or conventions. This must be arranged in advance and requires the permission of the Principal, Executive Director or direct supervisor.

The Next Step will reimburse costs of registration, travel to and from the conference, and accommodations for approved professional development opportunities or when a staff member is requested to represent The Next Step, based on Federal government per diem and mileage rates.

SCHOOL ISSUED TECHNOLOGY

Employees are financially responsible for all school property issued to them. Employees will ensure that all school property remains in good, working order. It is the employee's responsibility to notify the Business Manager within 24 hours should any school property be in need of repair or replacement. If school property is not returned in good working order at the time of resignation or termination, the price of repair or replacement will be the employee's responsibility.

School Issued Laptops

If a school issued laptop is stolen, employees are required to provide the Business Manager with a copy of the police report within 24 hours of the incident, for insurance purposes.

School Issued Cellular Phones

If a school issued cellular phone is lost or stolen, employees are required to report the incident to the Business Manager within 24 hours. Employees are responsible for the replacement of the equipment.

International Charges

While The Next Step assumes the monthly cost for cellular phone usage and MiFi data charges, employees are responsible for the cost of all international call charges, as well as, international usage. This includes calls/usage in Canada and Mexico. Employees should reimburse TNS within 15 days, via payroll deduction, should they incur any international charges.

CELLULAR PHONE POLICY

The provision of cell phones allows all faculty and staff at The Next Step a means of collaboration across the entire organization, including 24/7 access to members of the management team whenever applicable and necessary. For our Student Support and Engagement team, this access is especially important in support of students in crisis and engagement. Secondly, this benefit is not a standard in other organizations; it is used to encourage potential employees to join The Next Step and have an external expense covered as a savings to their personal budget.

Cellular Phone Purchasing

Employees are given two options when purchasing a device:

1. Staff may pick a phone of their choosing. The cost of the phone may be deducted from the employee's paycheck, in up to four separate installments.
2. The Next Step may loan a phone to staff members for the duration of their employment. The phone is to be returned, in working order and unlocked, upon separation from The Next Step. The school will choose the type of standard phone.

Cellular Phone Plans

The Next Step provides a standard phone plan for all employees, which includes unlimited calling and data. International calling is not covered in this plan (See Section 10: International Charges). Each line receives 3 GB for Monthly Hotspot/Phone as Modem Usage. If an employee exceeds the 3 GB allotted, they will be charged at a rate of \$14.99/GB in overage charges (Overage charges are based on vendor, and subject to change).

Lost, Stolen, or Damaged Devices

Employees who elect to purchase their own phone are responsible for insuring the device, and replacing it should any damage or loss occur.

School owned phones are insured, but it is up to employees to inform the Business Manager immediately should the device become lost, stolen, or damaged. The Next Step will replace the phone with a device of the organization's choosing. The cost of this device should not exceed the cost of the initial phone for the organization. If staff would like to purchase a phone that exceeds the cost of the replacement device, they may be paying the difference in costs.

Cellular Phone Safety

The Next Step understands that employees may use their cell phones for work-related matters, whether these devices belong to the employee or are issued by the organization. Employees are prohibited from using cell phones for work-related matters while driving. The Next Step is concerned for your safety and for the safety of other drivers and pedestrians, and using a cell phone while driving can lead to accidents.

If you must make a work-related call while driving, you must wait until you can pull over safely and stop the car before placing your call. If you receive a work-related call while driving, you must ask the caller to wait while you pull over safely and stop the car. If you are unable to pull over safely, you must tell the caller that you will have to call back when it is safe to do so.

Hands-Free Equipment

Employees may use hands-free equipment to make or answer calls while driving without violating this policy. However, safety must always be your first priority. We expect you to keep these calls brief. If, because of weather, traffic conditions, or any other reason, you are unable to concentrate fully on the road, you must either end the conversation or pull over and safely park your vehicle before resuming your call.

SECTION 11 **TIME OFF**

HOLIDAYS

All Next Step staff will receive the holidays listed below:

1. New Year's Day
2. Martin Luther King Day
3. Presidents' Day
4. Memorial Day
5. Independence Day
6. Labor Day
7. Columbus Day
8. Veteran's Day
9. Thanksgiving Day
10. Day after Thanksgiving
11. Christmas Day

10 MONTH/12 MONTH EMPLOYEES

All salaried full and part-time employees are classified as 10 or 12 month for purposes of calculating leave accrual. 10 month employees are defined as staff who work directly with the student population, including student support service providers and teachers. 10 month employees' vacation times follow student vacation breaks, indicated by the school calendar. 12 month employees are staff who do not directly work with students. These include certain operational, administrative, and other staff. 12 month employees are not tied to student vacation breaks. Each employee's category will be made clear upon hiring, and in his/her annual offer letter.

Exact dates of work for the school year will be determined by the academic calendar. All staff must be present for stipulated professional development and planning days, as well as graduation and special events. In the event that TNS exceeds the number of days set aside for unexpected weather events, make-up days may need to be scheduled on previously designated holidays, vacation days or weekends. All staff are expected to attend these make-up days.

A fiscal year is defined as, July 1st of each year through the following June 30th of the following year. If an employee's start date is after July 1st, the beginning of the fiscal year, their leave accrual will be pro-rated based on their actual start date.

The balance of unused vacation, if any, at the date of an employee's termination or resignation will be paid upon the termination.

SICK LEAVE

The Next Step will provide paid sick leave to full time and part time employees for absences related to physical or mental illness, injury or medical condition of an employee or family member, to obtain medical diagnoses or preventive medical care for the employee or a family member, or to obtain social or legal services pertaining to stalking, domestic violence, or sexual abuse of the employee or the employee's family member.

Sick leave may be used for doctor's appointments and to care for a sick family member. Doctors' appointments should be scheduled before or after working hours whenever possible. Staff must punch in and out for appointments made during the work day.

10 MONTH FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES

The Next Step 10 month full-time employees will follow the school calendar for breaks between academic sessions. Full-time, 10 month employees will accrue a total of 10 days of sick leave per school year. In addition, up to three of the ten annual sick leave days may be used for personal leave during each school year. Full-Time, 10 month employees may carry over a balance of sick leave into the new fiscal year, but no more than 80 hours will be accrued or available for use within a given fiscal year. 10 month employees are requested not to use personal days prior to or immediately following a holiday or vacation period.

10 MONTH PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

Part-time employees will accrue 20 hours of sick leave per school year. Part-time employees may carry over a balance of sick leave up to 40 hours into the new fiscal year, but no more than 40 hours will be accrued or available for use within a given fiscal year. An employee who carries over 40 hours will not begin to accrue additional sick leave until the balance is reduced below 40 hours. 10 month employees are requested not to take time off prior to or immediately following a holiday or vacation period.

12 MONTH FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES

Full-time, 12 month employees will accrue 8 hours of sick leave per month for twelve months, for a total of 12 days of sick leave per school year. Full-Time, 12 month employees may carry over a balance of sick leave up to 96 hours into school year 2019-2020, but no more than 96 hours will be accrued or available for use within school year 2019-2020. . An employee who carries over 96 hours into school year 2019-2020 will not begin to accrue additional sick leave until the balance is reduced below 96 hours.

12 month employees will accrue vacation leave at the rate of 10 hours per pay period, for a total of 30 days of vacation leave in school year 2018-2019. 12 month employees may carry over a balance of 120 hours of vacation leave into school year 2019-2020, but no more than 120 hours will be accrued or available for use within school year 2019-2020.

Leave Scheduling

When the need for leave is foreseeable, employees must submit a request at least 10 days in advance, or as soon as possible. If the request for leave is unforeseeable, an employee must provide notice prior to the start of the shift for which the paid leave is requested. If an emergency arises, the employee must notify The Next Step of the request before the start of the employee's next work shift, or within 24 hours of the onset of the emergency, whichever is sooner. The Next Step may require employees seeking three or more consecutive days of paid sick leave to provide appropriate certification supporting the reason for leave.

Supervisors must approve all vacation of staff they supervise. The Executive Director, or his/her designee, will approve vacation leave for the Principals and staff s/he supervises. Leave is granted at the supervisor's or Executive Director's discretion. Advance notice of desired vacation time is required as follows:

Zero - five days: 2 weeks' notice
Six - ten days: 1 months' notice
Eleven - 20 days: 2 months' notice

COMPENSATORY TIME

Compensatory time (hours worked in excess of the minimum required hours for a pay period) may be accrued by all teachers, counselors and support services providers only when approved in advance by the Principal or the direct supervisor. Teaching staff may earn compensatory time only when attending meetings or staff development sessions requested by the Principal during "non-work" time. They may accumulate up to eight hours of compensatory time. This comp time must be pre-approved.

Compensation for exempt, administrative employees is based on a guaranteed weekly salary. It is assumed that the work of exempt employees will generally be accomplished within a regular work week, but the nature of the work and responsibilities involved require flexibility in the number and scheduling of hours worked. In general, the weekly salary is intended to compensate an exempt employee for all hours worked and the normal fluctuations in work schedule encountered in the fulfillment of the usual responsibilities of an exempt position.

In certain cases, it may be appropriate to compensate an exempt employee for an unusual number of hours worked in excess of the normal work week over a period of several weeks and/or an unusual number of hours worked over a weekend in addition to the normal work week. For exempt, administrative staff, comp time will only be allowed after a major project, which required significant extra hours or weekend work. (Examples could be the enrollment crunch for a registrar or conference attendance on a weekend.) Supervisors will approve such comp time--one or two days to be taken within a defined period. Comp time will not be approved in an hour for hour match, i.e. one hour of comp time for one hour worked. Therefore, any day off aside from these limited circumstances will count against annual leave.

Extra hours worked without prior approval by the Principal/supervisor are not eligible for compensatory time accrual. Unused compensatory time at June 30th of each year may not be carried over to the next year. Compensatory time may only be used to take time off from work. Unused compensatory hours are not paid for at the time of termination of employment.

PARENTAL LEAVE

It is the policy of The Next Step to provide paid parental leave to eligible employees to care for their newborn or adopted child. Maternity/Paternity leave must be taken within three months of the birth of the baby. Written requests for leave must be made as soon as possible and at least one month in advance. The request should indicate the type of leave desired, the approximate dates, and the length of time requested. The request shall be made to the Principal or Executive Director.

Maternity/Paternity Pay Benefits:

The amount of parental leave will depend on an employee's length of service with The Next Step. Paid parental leave will accrue as follows:

- 15 days (3 weeks) paid leave after one year of continuous service
- 30 days (6 weeks) paid leave after two years of continuous service

This paid parental leave will count against any entitlement the employee may have for unpaid leave under any other policy, such as The Next Step's family medical policy listed below.

Any unused vacation or sick leave accrued to date may be used for maternity/paternity leave. No annual or sick leave will accrue during this time, but health benefits will be maintained.

Teachers will leave lesson plans for the period they plan to be absent and every attempt will be made to have the substitute teacher work with the regular teacher before their leave begins.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

The District of Columbia and federal Family and Medical Leave Act (collectively, "FMLA") provide eligible employees with unpaid leave for certain family and medical reasons during a 12-month period. During this leave, an eligible employee is entitled to continued group health plan coverage, as if the employee had continued to work. At the conclusion of the leave, subject to some exceptions, an employee generally has a right to return to the same or to an equivalent position.

This policy is intended to comply with both federal and D.C. FMLA. In most instances, the protections of the federal FMLA are superseded by the D.C. FMLA. In instances where the FMLA provides greater protection, the FMLA provisions prevail and are reflected in this policy. Federal FMLA and D.C. FMLA will be integrated for purposes of this policy. D.C. FMLA leave runs concurrently with federal FMLA leave.

Employee Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for FMLA leave, an employee must have been employed by The Next Step:

- for at least 12 months (which need not be consecutive); and
- for at least 1,000 hours during the 12-month period immediately preceding the commencement of the leave.

Special exceptions for employees who have worked less than one year may be granted by the Executive Director.

Events Which May Entitle an Employee to FMLA Leave

Employees may be entitled to take FMLA leave for any or a combination of, the following reasons:

1. the birth of the employee's child or to care for the newborn child;
2. the placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care or to care for the newly placed child;
3. to care for the employee's spouse, child or parent (but not in-law) with a serious health condition;
4. because of the employee's own serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform one or more of the essential functions of his or her job;
5. because of any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that an employee's spouse, child or parent of the employee is on active duty or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty in the Armed Forces; and/or
6. to care for a "covered service member" who is the employee's spouse, child, parent, or next-of-kin with a serious illness or injury ("military caregiver leave").
7. Other reasons covered under the FMLA.

A "serious health condition" is an injury, illness, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care or continuing treatment by a health care provider.

A "covered service member" means a member of the Armed Forces who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness.

A "qualifying exigency" is deemed to occur when the employee's spouse, parent, son or daughter is on covered active duty or on call to covered active duty status, resulting in the need for the employee to take time off work to address issues related to short notice deployment, make arrangements for child care, attend certain school activities, handle certain financial or legal arrangements, attend counseling sessions, attend military ceremonies or informational briefings, spend short periods of time for rest and recuperation leave during the period of deployment or participate in certain post-deployment activities.

Regarding FMLA leave, due to a call of active duty or to care for a covered service member, The Next Step will comply with the FMLA in good faith and may update this policy in accordance with regulations released by the Department of Labor. Leave because of reasons (1) or (2) must be completed within the 12-month period beginning on the date of birth or placement. Leave because of reason (5) must be completed within 12 months of the leave start date.

Leave under FMLA must be requested as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days after the need, and should be coordinated with the HR department.

Calculating Available Leave

For purposes of leave for reasons (1) through (4), an eligible employee may take up to 16 weeks of leave in the designated 24-month period. For purposes of leave for reason (5), an employee may take up to 12 weeks of leave within the designated 12-month period. For purposes of leave for reason (6) above, an employee may take up to 26 weeks of leave within the designated 12-month period.

The designated 24 month period during which an employee may take 16 weeks of family and medical leave is calculated as a 24-month period rolling back from the date of the requested leave.

For leave entitlements that are limited to a 12-month period, the designated 12-month period is calculated as the 12-month period that begins on the first date the employee uses leave for that reason.

Limitations on FMLA Leave

Leave to care for a newborn or for a newly placed child must conclude within 12 months after the birth or placement of the child.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse

In the event that an employee has a substance abuse problem, a medical leave of absence will be granted if the employee has not been terminated for cause and the employee is enrolled in an acceptable treatment program. The employee will be considered for continuation of employment or rehire after medical certification of treatment. He/she will not be guaranteed a job if leave is not granted under FMLA. Rehiring depends on whether or not there is a job open for which the employee is qualified and whether leave was approved under FMLA.

Intermittent or Reduced Work Schedule Leave

Intermittent FMLA leave is leave taken in separate blocks of time. A reduced work schedule leave is one that reduces an employee's usual number of hours per workweek or hours per workday. Leave to care for a newborn or for a newly placed child may be taken intermittently or on a reduced work schedule provided The Next Step agrees with an individual leave request. Leave because of an employee's own serious health condition, or to care for an employee's spouse, child or parent with a serious health condition, may be taken all at once or, where medically necessary, intermittently or on a reduced work schedule. If an employee takes leave intermittently or on a reduced work schedule basis, the employee must, when requested, attempt to schedule the leave so as not to unduly disrupt The Next Step's operations. When an employee takes intermittent or reduced work schedule leave for foreseeable planned medical treatment, The Next Step may temporarily transfer the employee to an alternative position with equivalent pay and benefits, for which the employee is qualified and which better accommodates recurring periods of leave.

Required Documentation

When leave is taken to care for a family member, The Next Step may require the employee to provide documentation or statement of family relationship (e.g., birth certificate or court document).

An employee may be required to submit medical certification from a health care provider to support a request for FMLA leave for the employee's or a family member's serious health condition.

If The Next Step has reason to doubt the employee's initial certification, The Next Step may:

- (1) with the employee's permission, have a designated health care provider contact the employee's health care provider in an effort to clarify or authenticate the initial certification; and/or
- (2) require the employee to obtain a second opinion by an independent provider at the The Next Step's expense.

If the initial and second certifications differ, The Next Step may, at its expense, require the employee to obtain a third, final and binding certification from a jointly selected health care provider.

During FMLA leave, The Next Step may request that the employee provide recertification of a serious health condition at intervals in accordance with the FMLA. In addition, during FMLA leave, the employee must provide The Next Step with periodic reports regarding the employee's status and intent to return to work. If the employee's anticipated return to work date changes and it becomes necessary for the employee to take more or less leave than originally anticipated, the employee must provide The Next Step with reasonable notice (i.e., within 2 business days) of the employee's changed circumstances and new return to work date. If the employee gives The Next Step notice of the employee's intent not to return to work, the employee will be considered to have voluntarily resigned.

Before the employee returns to work from FMLA leave for the employee's own serious health condition, the employee may be required to submit a fitness for duty certification from the employee's health care provider, with respect to the condition for which the leave was taken, stating that the employee is able to resume work.

FMLA leave or return to work may be delayed or denied if the appropriate documentation is not provided in a timely manner. Also, a failure to provide requested documentation of the reason for an absence from work may lead to termination of employment.

Use of Paid and Unpaid Leave

FMLA provides eligible employees with up to 26 workweeks (depending on the reason for the leave) of unpaid leave. If an employee has accrued paid leave (e.g., vacation or Sick Leave) the employee must use any qualifying paid leave first. "Qualifying paid leave" is leave that would otherwise be available to the employee for the purpose for which the FMLA leave is taken. The remainder of the FMLA leave, if any, will be unpaid FMLA leave and it will be the employee's decision to use accrued vacation leave in lieu of not being paid. Any paid leave used for an FMLA qualifying reason will be charged against an employee's entitlement to FMLA leave. This includes leave for disability or workers' compensation injury/illness, provided that the leave meets FMLA requirements. The substitution of paid leave for unpaid leave does not extend the leave period.

Designation of Leave

The Next Step will notify the employee that leave has been designated as FMLA leave. The Next Step may provisionally designate the employee's leave as FMLA leave if the Next Step has not received medical certification or has not otherwise been able to confirm that the employee's leave qualifies as FMLA leave.

Maintenance of Health Benefits

During FMLA leave an employee is entitled to continued group health plan coverage under the same conditions as if the employee had continued to work. To the extent that an employee's FMLA leave is paid, the employee's portion of health insurance premiums will be deducted from the employee's salary. For the portion of FMLA leave that is unpaid, the employee's portion of health insurance premiums may be paid in accordance with The Next Step's rules for leave without pay.

Return from FMLA Leave

Upon return from FMLA leave, The Next Step will place the employee in the same position the employee held before the leave or an equivalent position with equivalent pay, benefits and other employment terms.

Limitations on Reinstatement

An employee is entitled to reinstatement only if he/she would have continued to be employed had FMLA leave not been taken. Thus, an employee is not entitled to reinstatement if, because of a layoff, reduction in force or other reason, the employee would not be employed at the time job restoration is sought.

Failure to Return to Work Following FMLA Leave

If the employee does not return to work following the conclusion of FMLA leave, the employee will be considered to have voluntarily resigned. The Next Step may recover health insurance premiums that the Next Step paid on behalf of the employee during any unpaid FMLA leave except

The Next Step's share of such premiums may not be recovered if the employee fails to return to work because of the employee's or a family member's serious health condition or because of other circumstances beyond the employee's control. In such cases, The Next Step may require the employee to provide medical certification of the employee's or the family member's serious health condition. For further information or clarification about FMLA leave, please contact the HR administrator.

ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE, LEAVE WITHOUT PAY

Administrative leave with pay is authorized at the discretion of the Principal or the Executive Director, for situations not covered by other leave policies, and where it is deemed important that other leave allowances may not be used or are not available. Requests for leave under this policy must be in writing.

Leave without pay (LWOP) is a temporary non paid absence from duty granted by The Next Step at the employee's request and at the convenience of The Next Step. LWOP does not affect your job position, however it may affect health insurance and other benefits. No LWOP for more than one week will be granted during the first three months of the probationary period without arranging this prior to the first date of employment.

During LWOP the employee is absent from work and earns no compensation or leave credit. The Principal or Executive Director may approve LWOP for an employee, not to exceed sixty days, to be determined according to the individual circumstances and The Next Step's needs.

BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

Immediate family is defined as spouse, partners, children, foster children, parents, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, cousins, parents-in-law and brothers and sisters-in law. Bereavement leave is granted for a maximum of two days off to attend funeral services within a 150-mile radius of The Next Step and five days if the funeral is outside a 150-mile radius of The Next Step. Staff may be granted up to two weeks depending on the circumstance.

The Principal or direct supervisor, in consultation with the Executive Director, will consider requests for any additional time off. Any such additional absence will be granted without pay or through use of annual leave.

ATTENDANCE AT A FUNERAL OF A RELATIVE OF A NEXT STEP STAFF PERSON

In certain circumstances leave with pay may be granted to The Next Step staff to attend a funeral of a relative of a Next Step staff person. The Executive Director or the Principal may grant leave with pay.

RELIGIOUS OCCASIONS

Requests for time off to observe religious holidays should be made to your supervisor at least two weeks in advance. Either annual leave or leave without pay can be used.

JURY DUTY

When staff are called for jury duty, The Next Step will pay regular wages less the amount of jury pay received.

If a staff member is summoned as a witness in proceedings related to The Next Step business, time off with pay is allowed, but any fee paid for such appearance will be given to The Next Step. If service as a witness is unrelated to The Next Step business the time shall be leave without pay, or annual or personal leave if the employee so elects.

VOTING

Two hours may be taken for voting. Staff should notify their supervisor of this on the day prior to the election. Any time taken over two hours may be charged to annual leave.

CLOSING DUE TO INCLEMENT WEATHER

The Next Step will be closed due to inclement weather such as snow, hurricane, etc. at the discretion of management. Employees are paid as if it were a regular workday. Staff will be notified by either cell phone text alert, email and posting on The Next Step Website. Management will notify staff of all school closures.

If closure for inclement weather creates the need to add instructional days in order to meet the legal minimum of such days, management will adjust the calendar and all staff will be expected to work the instructional days added to compensate for the snow days.

SECTION 12 **EXEMPT / NON-EXEMPT EMPLOYEES**

EXEMPT EMPLOYEES

All employees – whether part time or full time – are classified as exempt or nonexempt for purposes of overtime and minimum wage requirements. Nonexempt employees will be paid overtime in accordance with federal and DC law.

Exempt employees are compensated on a salary basis. Their compensation will not vary regardless of the number of hours worked in a workweek. Exempt employees are not eligible to receive overtime compensation.

To meet business schedules and needs, it may be necessary to require nonexempt employees to work overtime. All overtime must be pre-approved by the employee's supervisor or manager. Non-exempt staff who work unauthorized overtime are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

If an improper deduction is made from the pay of an exempt employee due to calculated lack of leave, for example, employees will not become

"non-exempt" and they may bring any complaint to the attention of the CFO and/or their supervisor for resolution. Improper deductions will be promptly repaid. In addition, the CFO will track and keep current all leave balances which employees can verify and/or dispute.

"Non-Exempt" And "Exempt" Employees

At the time of hire, all employees are classified as either "exempt" or "non-exempt." This is necessary because, by law, employees in certain types of jobs are entitled to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of forty hours (40) per work week. These employees are referred to as "non-exempt" in this employee handbook. This means that they are not exempt from (and therefore should receive) overtime pay.

Exempt employees are Supervisors, executives, professional staff, technical staff, directors, and others whose duties and responsibilities allow them to be "exempt" from overtime pay provisions as provided by the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and any applicable state laws. If you are an exempt employee, you will be advised that you are in this classification at the time you are hired, transferred or promoted.

With few exceptions, to be exempt an employee must (a) be paid at least \$47,476 per year (\$913 per week), and (b) be paid on a salary basis, and also (c) perform exempt job duties [The employee's primary duty must be the performance of office or non-manual work directly related to the management or general business operations of the employer or the employer's customers]; and (d) the employee's primary duty includes the exercise of discretion and independent judgment with respect to matters of significance.

These requirements are detailed in the FLSA Regulations (promulgated by the U.S. Department of Labor). Exempt employees fall into four categories—executive, professional, administrative and some computer related positions. Most employees must meet all four of the above "tests" to be exempt.

SECTION 13 **REQUESTS FOR EXPENDITURES**

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Teachers are allowed to spend up to \$50 on classroom supplies or educational materials per year without prior approval. The request for expenditure form should then be completed in order to be reimbursed.

All employees who wish to request funds must complete the request for expenditure form which a member of the Management Team must approve. Management Team members also handle various portions of the overall budget.

CREDIT CARDS

Management Team members each have a business credit card, which can be used for school purchases, with normal budgetary approval and proper submission of receipts. Management team members should be very vigilant in the use of the credit card and should know its whereabouts at all times. The Management Team is responsible for all expenditures on the credit cards. Any fraudulent charges must be reported immediately.

MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT

The Next Step will reimburse staff for work related use of the staff member's personal automobile at the IRS approved rate for business travel in effect at the time the travel is done. Requests for reimbursement should be submitted on the reimbursement form. Staff must maintain a mileage log for any mileage reimbursement claimed as established per the school year.

PARKING TICKETS

The Next Step does not pay parking tickets for staff while driving their own vehicles.

PER DIEM

A reasonable per diem will be provided for staff traveling out of town on school business, based on federal per diem rates.

SECTION 14 **DRESS CODE**

All teachers and staff are expected to model professional standards of dress for the students.

Teachers and staff should not wear hats or bandannas, ripped or torn clothing, strapless or low-cut shirts, short skirts, beach-style flip-flops, or athletic wear, such as shorts and printed t-shirts, when working with students in the classroom. Athletic wear and hats may be appropriate for field days or extracurricular activities.

SECTION 15 **COMMUNICATIONS**

ACCESS TO PERSONNEL FILES

All requests for employment verification should be referred to the Business Manager or HR Agency. Employee personnel files are strictly confidential. No unauthorized personnel shall have access to employee personnel folders. Every staff person has the legal right to examine his/her own personnel file upon request. The contents cannot be duplicated or removed, except by permission of the Executive Director or a court order.

RESPONDING TO REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION FROM LAW ENFORCEMENT

Any request for information concerning a student or staff by a law enforcement agency should be referred to the Executive Director. The Executive Director should review such requests and, in all cases when there is an appropriately executed warrant or subpoena, should provide

all information requested.(See: Visitor's Policy)

LOBBYING, ORGANIZATION SPONSORSHIP, ENDORSEMENT, STAFF SERVICE ON BOARDS OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES, LOBBYING EFFORTS

Due to The Next Step's non-profit status, lobbying is not permitted. Any request for The Next Step sponsorship of an activity, event or endorsement of a political candidate must be brought to the Executive Director for clarification and direction. The Executive Director will discuss the request with the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees. No staff member can speak on behalf of The Next Step regarding this request.

Any Next Step employee who wishes to serve on a Board of Directors, Advisory Board, etc., who was not requested to do so by the Executive Director, may use The Next Step name for identification purposes only.

NON-SOLICITATION POLICY

The Next Step Public Charter School prohibits the solicitation, distribution, and posting of materials on or at TNS's property, by any employee or non-employee, except as may be permitted by this policy. The sole exceptions to this policy are charitable and community activities supported by TNS management and TNS sponsored programs.

Employees may engage in solicitation and distribution of materials under the following conditions:

- Participation in organizing events for another employee. This may include: adoption/birth of child, promotion, retirement, death, mourning, etc.
- Support for a cause, charity, or fundraising event sponsored, funded, organized, or authorized by TNS
- Joining a group of employees for an authorized non-business purpose (recreation, volunteering, etc.)
- Participation in employment related activities or groups protected by law (trade unions, etc.)

TNS prohibits soliciting and distribution of materials that hinder productivity, or is disruptive, offensive, or obscene. This includes:

- The sale of goods for personal profit
- Soliciting support or funding for political campaigns
- Unauthorized posting of non-work related materials on company bulletin boards
- Solicitation or distribution of non-business literature towards students, partners, and vendors
- Proselytizing others to groups or initiatives that violate non-discrimination and equal opportunity policies

The Next Step employees have the right to refuse assistance or participation to any extracurricular, non-TNS sponsored activities or organizations. Employees should not be forced or harassed into supporting fundraising events, collections, purchasing of merchandise, or any other non-organization sponsored activities.

TNS may take disciplinary actions, ranging from reprimand to termination, against employees who don't conform to this policy. Issues that may trigger

INTERVIEWS WITH THE ELECTRONIC OR PRINT MEDIA

If any staff person is contacted for an interview with electronic or print media, he or she must inform the Principal or direct supervisor, who in turn will contact the Executive Director. Refer to TNSPCS' media policy (Business Office) for further details.

TELEPHONE USE

Proper use of the telephone is an important part of everyone's job. The Principal should emphasize the importance of answering the phone using the name of The Next Step.

Phone use for personal needs should be limited to essential calls. Do not accept any collect calls except from students who are incarcerated or in crisis. Employees will be billed for long distance, personal calls.

FAX USE

Sending and receiving fax materials for personal use is prohibited, except when specifically authorized by the Principal or direct supervisor.

E-MAIL USE

The e-mail system has been installed for use in the conduct of business, and is the property of The Next Step Public Charter School. The e-mail system is not intended for personal purposes. Employees are hereby informed that all messages transmitted or received on the e-mail system, of whatever nature, may be stored, monitored, or disclosed at any time by The Next Step.

DOCUMENTS

All documents created or edited in connection with TNSPCS employment are property of the school. All work documents must be saved on the school's network system at all times to ensure accessibility and back-up.

SECTION 16 PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

New employees will be given a job description. At the end of the probationary period, the employee and the Principal or appropriate supervisor will evaluate the employee's performance based on the job description.

Instructional staff will be evaluated once they complete a full year of employment, and once a year thereafter.

Non-instructional staff will work with their direct supervisor to create three to five SMART goals by July 31st of every year. SMART goals are performance goals that can be measured and evaluated. Supervisors will work with employees to review and update SMART goals twice a year. Supervisors will offer feedback continuously, adhering to TNS's Performance Evaluation Review Cycle:

Setting Goals	1 st Review of Goals	2 nd Review of Goals	Performance Appraisal
July 31st	October 1 st – November 30th	February 1 st – March 31st	June 30th

Performance evaluations are a participatory process and it is expected that employees will submit Feedback Forms on a monthly basis. The intent of the feedback form is to document and discuss employee progress towards achieving SMART goals. Feedback Forms should be completed by employees prior to meeting with their supervisor monthly. Supervisors will also provide feedback on employee progress during each monthly, in-person, feedback session.

Unsatisfactory performance evaluations should be reported to Human Resources, and may lead to a "probationary" period. The Supervisor will clearly articulate the shortcomings in the employee's performance. The Supervisor and the employee will make a written plan for addressing these shortcomings. The plan should be reviewed after a month. If the Supervisor is still not satisfied, further action may be warranted, up to and including, termination of employment.

Your supervisor is continuously evaluating your job performance. Day-to-day interaction between you and your Supervisor should give you a sense of how your Supervisor perceives your performance.

During formal performance reviews, your supervisor will consider the following things, among others:

- Attendance, initiative and effort
- Knowledge of your work
- Attitude and willingness
- The quality and quantity of your work
- Meeting deadlines

The primary reason for performance reviews is to identify your strengths and weaknesses in order to reinforce your good habits and develop ways to improve in your weaker areas. This review also serves to make you aware of and to document how your job performance compares to the goals and description of your job. This is a good time to discuss your interests and future goals. Your supervisor is interested in helping you to progress and grow in order to achieve personal as well as work-related goals. Professional development needs should be discussed and documented during annual reviews.

In addition to individual job performance reviews, The Next Step Public Charter School periodically conducts a review of job descriptions to insure that any changes in the duties and responsibilities of each position are documented.

Compensation Adjustments

Wage & salary increases are based on a variety of factors, including cost-of-living increases, availability of funds, market comparisons, etc.

SECTION 17 DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Next Step recognizes that disputes may call for various forms of resolution.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Staff are encouraged to use restorative practices to resolve conflicts or address issues between and amongst staff, whenever possible.

MEDIATION

The Next Step encourages the use of mediation when disputes between co-workers and between employees and the Principal, Executive Director or direct supervisor cannot be resolved directly by the parties or through the school's Restorative Practices. The Executive Director or his/her designee or the Principal, at his or her discretion, will determine whether mediation is appropriate and will secure the services of a mediator.

Participation in mediation does not waive an employee's or the Principal's, Executive Director's, or direct supervisor's right to proceed with the formal complaint process or disciplinary process set forth below.

FILING A GRIEVANCE

In situations in which an employee wishes to bring a complaint or grievance to the attention of the Principal or Executive Director or direct supervisor, the following procedure is to be utilized:

If the complaint is against a co-worker:

1. If an employee feels that an issue requires an action or explanation, the employee should first discuss it with his/her supervisor. The supervisor should offer suggestions regarding resolution of the situation. This could include a meeting with the co-worker, a meeting between the co-worker and the supervisor, or any other possible measure aimed at resolving the situation.
2. If the employee does not consider the answer or action to be satisfactory, then the employee should fill out the Employee Grievance Form and present it to the supervisor for action. The supervisor will have ten calendar days from the date of the grievance to respond

to the employee, in writing, concerning the grievance. If a complete answer is not possible within the ten-day period, a new date must be established in agreement with the employee.

3. If the situation remains unresolved for a period of thirty days from the original date of the grievance, the supervisor must refer it to the Executive Director. The employee may also request a meeting with the Executive Director. The decision of the Executive Director is final.
4. Agreements will be kept in the confidential personnel files in the Executive Director's Office and or the confidential personnel files.

Staff should not be reluctant to make use of this procedure in order to establish a hearing on a situation which they believe needs to be resolved.

If the complaint is against your supervisor:

1. If the situation involves the Principal/supervisor and/or the nature of the problem cannot be properly discussed with the Principal/supervisor, then the employee may discuss the situation with the Executive Director.
2. Follow the same steps as described above.

If the complaint is against the Executive Director:

1. Contact the Chairperson of the Board of Directors.

DISCIPLINARY POLICY

Employment at The Next Step is "at-will," and may be terminated, with or without cause, and without prior notice, by TNSPCS or by the employee, for any reason, at any time. When the circumstances call for some form of disciplinary action, The Next Step follows a progressive discipline policy, designed to provide a structured corrective action process to improve and prevent a recurrence of undesirable employee behavior, and performance issues.

Outlined below are TNSPCS's progressive discipline policy and procedure. The Next Step reserves the right to combine or skip steps, depending on the severity of the infraction.

1. Documented Verbal Warning – Creates an opportunity for the immediate supervisor to schedule a meeting with an employee to bring attention to their existing performance, conduct, or attendance issue. The supervisor will discuss the nature of the violation of TNSPCS's policy and procedures. The supervisor will clearly describe expectations, and steps the employee must take to improve performance or resolve the infraction, through the use of an action plan. The supervisor will prepare written documentation of this meeting, and the employee will be asked to sign this document, to demonstrate his/her understanding of the infraction. The documentation will be placed in the employee's personnel file.
2. Documented Corrective Interview – If the employee fails to correct any performance, conduct, or attendance issues, outlined in the initial Documented Verbal Warning and action plan, the supervisor will hold a Documented Corrective Interview. This step involves more formal documentation of the performance, conduct, or attendance issues, and consequences. The supervisor will meet with the employee to review any additional infractions, outlining the consequences if the employee continues to fail to adhere to the established action plan. The supervisor will prepare written documentation of the meeting, and the employee will be asked to sign this document, to demonstrate his/her understanding of the infraction. The documentation will be placed in the employee's personnel file.
3. Second Documented Corrective Interview and Possible Discharge – If the employee fails to correct the infraction, outlined in the first Documented Corrective Interview and accompanying action plan, the supervisor will hold the Second Documented Corrective Interview, reviewing any additional infractions with the employee. The supervisor will prepare written documentation of the meeting, and the employee will be asked to sign this document to demonstrate his/her understanding of the infraction. At this point, the supervisor may recommend immediate termination of the employee.

SECTION 18
TERMINATION

TERMINATION DUE TO RESIGNATION

Though employment is "at-will," it is requested that employees give at least two weeks' notice and submit the resignation in writing to the Principal or other supervisor, and Executive Director.

It is requested that the Principal and members of the Management Team give at least two months' notice of his or her intention to resign. Employees must dispose of all irrelevant files and paperwork that will not be used by their successor and leave their workspace clean, before participating in an exit interview with the Business Manager.

The Business Manager will conduct an exit interview to discuss why the employee is leaving. TNS will retrieve all keys, manuals, case files, etc., and terminate access to all school databases, networks and software. If the Principal is resigning, the Executive Director will follow these procedures.

RESIGNATION AFTER UNSATISFACTORY PROBATIONARY PERIOD

Based on evaluation, the supervisor may determine that an employee did not pass his/her probationary period. In these cases the employee will be given the option to resign rather than be terminated.

TERMINATION DUE TO DISCHARGE

The approach The Next Step takes to discipline may vary according to the seriousness of the offense, the circumstances under which it occurred, employee duties, employee's length of employment and employee's overall work record, including any prior disciplinary action. The Next Step reserves the right to administer discipline in any manner it deems appropriate. Certain offenses may justify a suspension without pay or termination of employment, without going through the usual steps of progressive discipline.

If the Principal believes that someone should be discharged, he/she will notify the Executive Director. The Principal will make the final decision.

OPTION TO RESIGN RATHER THAN TO BE DISCHARGED

In some cases the Principal may offer the individual the option to resign rather than be terminated. This will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

TERMINATION FOR CAUSE

Any employee may be terminated for cause, without notice, for serious misconduct or violations of TNS policy, including but not limited to the following:

1. Staff has been absent from work for three consecutive days without attempting to contact supervisor.
2. Theft of The Next Step property or money, or theft of another employee's money or property on The Next Step premises.
3. Possession or sale of alcohol or any non-prescribed mood altering drugs on The Next Step premises.
4. Reporting to work under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
5. Insubordination to a supervisor.
6. Willful violation of safety issues that impact the safety of The Next Step students, staff or school property.
7. Assaulting or engaging in a fight with another staff person or student of the school.
8. Misconduct during or after working hours which adversely reflects on the reputation or goodwill of the school.
9. Excessive absenteeism or tardiness.
10. Use of improper or profane language on The Next Step premises.
11. Any form of harassment or intimidation of another staff or client.
12. Willful violation of the school's Equal Employment Opportunity Policy.
13. Intentional falsification of one's own or another's time card.
14. Habitual neglect of duties or continued incapacity to perform them.
15. Action caused by or resulting from conflict of interest.
16. If proven guilty or admits to physical/sexual/mental abuse of a Next Step student or staff person.

SEVERANCE PAY

In all cases, the Principal or Direct Supervisor, in consultation with the Executive Director, will determine whether or not the staff person involved is entitled to severance pay. Generally, severance pay will be two weeks for employees who had passed their probationary period.

PAYMENT OF LAST PAYCHECK AND UNUSED VACATION TIME

Terminated employees will be paid for the number of hours of vacation leave accrued as of the date of termination. Sick leave and comp time will not be paid. Any outstanding loans, payroll advances or vacation advances, or funds owed for property not returned, will be subtracted from the last paycheck.

OPTION TO PURCHASE LAPTOP

The option of purchasing a used laptop will be at the school's discretion.

REDUCTIONS IN FORCE

If layoffs of personnel are necessary, the Executive Director should explain the reason, assist in identification of new employment and explain benefits such as unemployment insurance and health insurance coverage.

If an employee is laid-off due to a reduction in force and the employee is called back within a three-month period, the employee will not lose seniority and his/her time of services will be taken into account for calculating all benefits.

SECTION 19 **STAFF RELATING TO STUDENTS**

All staff shall conduct themselves in an appropriate manner while working with students regarding the following:

EMPLOYMENT

Staff may not offer employment to a student.

DATING

Staff may not date students. Dating should be understood as romantic involvement. This does not mean that staff and students cannot socialize in school sponsored activities, such as parties and graduation ceremonies.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Staff may not offer students alcohol or drugs, on or off The Next Step site. Staff may not drink or use drugs while with The Next Step students.

If The Next Step sponsors an event at a place where liquor is served and students are present, all The Next Step staff and the establishment should work to insure that underage youth are not served any alcoholic beverages.

STAFF LOANS TO STUDENTS

Staff should not loan money to students. Staff should refer students to the social worker who is in charge of the emergency fund. If this is not possible the staff person should use his/her best judgment. The Principal should be notified as soon as possible. In no event should staff loan students more than five dollars.

STUDENTS LIVING WITH A NEXT STEP STAFF PERSON

Students may not live with staff who are unrelated.

STAFF ABUSE OF STUDENT

If any internal or external accusation of child abuse is made of a staff person the following steps will be taken:

- The Principal, Executive Director and Chairman of the Board will be immediately informed.
- An official report will be made to authorities according to the law within twelve hours. An internal report of the accusation or admission will be documented in the employee's personnel file.
- Within one day of the accusation or admission the staff person will be placed on administrative leave with pay for up to five days. During that five-day period an internal investigation will be carried out by the Principal and Executive Director with the parties involved.
- Based on the findings, a decision will be made regarding dismissal. If the situation is still not resolved after five days, the Executive Director, in consultation with the Chair of the Board of Trustees, will decide whether or not additional administrative leave or leave without pay will be granted.

In the event that a staff person is accused of abusing a student and it is determined that a physical or psychological evaluation is necessary, The Next Step will pay for this expense with the agreement that results of the testing be provided to The Next Step Executive Director.

PROFESSIONAL BOUNDARIES

The Next Step believes that educators hold a position of trust when teaching students and are expected to maintain a higher standard of care and conduct than most members of the public. The Next Step seeks to serve students and families in a way that is ethical and professional at all times. Staff should consistently build from the strength and resiliency of students. The relationship between the student and the staff person (teacher, administrator, maintenance, security and support providers) is a professional one. Boundaries are expected in order to protect both parties from the potential (or supposed) abuse of power, control or influence. Although this policy gives specific, clear direction, it is each staff member's obligation to avoid situations that could prompt suspicion by students, parents, colleagues or school leadership.

Every employee is in a position of authority in the student/staff member relationship – regardless of the student's age - and it is imperative that each employee understands his/her responsibility in establishing and maintaining the professional boundaries and redirecting or remedying if a student pushes the boundaries. Staff members must understand their own responsibility for ensuring that they do not cross the boundaries as written in this policy. Disagreeing with the wording or intent of the established boundaries will be considered irrelevant for disciplinary purposes. Thus, it is crucial that all employees of The Next Step learn this policy thoroughly and apply the lists of acceptable and unacceptable behaviors to their daily activities. Although sincere, competent interaction with students certainly fosters learning, student/staff interactions must have boundaries surrounding potential activities, locations and intentions.

A "**professional boundary**" is the edge of appropriate or professional behavior, transgression of which involves the staff person stepping out her/his role as teacher, administrator, maintenance person, and security person or support provider.

A "**boundary violation**" is harmful or potentially harmful to the student and/school community. It constitutes exploitation of the student. Similarly, a boundary violation may arise from the staff person or from the student.

Duty of Care

In the context of education and care, teachers and staff persons have a responsibility to provide minors and young adults with an adequate level of protection against harm. The Next Step employees are required to ensure that the physical and emotional welfare of students is safeguarded, and that their own behavior is guided by this duty of care both within and beyond the school setting.

Professional Boundaries

The Next Step employees rely on the fostering of positive relationships between staff and students to promote academic and social emotional success. Learning and support settings are places where all staff can have significant influence in the lives of students because the relationship involves regular contact over relatively long periods of time. It is the responsibility of employees to understand how to foster positive, appropriate relationships in ways that do not compromise students' welfare.

Boundary	Examples of violation
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inappropriate comments about a student's appearance, including excessive flattering comments ▪ Inappropriate conversations or inquiries of a sexual or romantic nature or

	<p>sexual innuendo (e.g. questions about a student's sexuality or his/her/their sexual relationship with others)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offensive or discriminatory treatment of, or manner towards, student(s) based on their perceived or actual gender and/or sexual orientation ▪ Use of inappropriate pet names ▪ Humiliation ▪ Obscene gestures and/or profane language ▪ *Correspondence of a personal nature via any media (e.g. phone, text message, letters, email, internet postings) that is unrelated to the staff member's role. <p>*This does not include class cards, bereavement cards, etc.</p>
Personal Disclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussing personal lifestyle details of self, other staff or student(s) unless directly relevant to the learning topic and with the individual's consent
Physical Contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Unwarranted, unwanted or aggressive touching of a student personally or with objects ▪ Initiating, permitting or requesting inappropriate or unnecessary physical contact with a student (massage, brushing/braiding hair, tickling) ▪ Initiating or permitting sexual and/or romantic advances towards or from a student
Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inviting, allowing or encouraging students to spend time at the staff member's home or at social gatherings ▪ Allowing students access to a staff member's personal internet locations (e.g. social networking sites) ▪ *Attending students' homes or their social gatherings ▪ *Being alone with a student outside of a staff member's responsibilities ▪ *Transporting a student unaccompanied <p>*Unless authorized by principal or supervisor</p>
Targeting individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tutoring students outside of school setting and without principal or supervisor's knowledge ▪ Giving personal gifts or special favors ▪ Singling the same students out for special duties, field trips or responsibilities ▪ Offering and receiving care (day, overnight, weekend) to/for the children and/or siblings of students (or your own children) as respite
Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Taking on a welfare role that is beyond the scope of the staff member's position or that is the responsibility of another staff member (e.g. case manager, social worker, administrator) or an external professional ▪ Photographing, recording or filming students via any medium when not authorized by leadership to do so and without required student or parental consent (in writing)
Possessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Uploading or publishing still/moving images or audio recordings of students to any location without student, parental (in writing) and/or leadership team consent.

Employees have a duty to disclose on an ongoing basis any current, proposed or pending situation that may compromise professional boundaries, including but not limited to the offering of shelter to a student, the adoption of a student, the placement of a student for foster care or a dating relationship with a student. You must make this disclosure as soon as it becomes apparent that a professional boundary violation has occurred or may occur. Disclosures should be made in full to your immediate supervisor. The School will determine under the circumstances the appropriate next steps, including, but not limited to, changing the student's track, reassignment of the employee and termination of employment.

Social Media Sites

Teachers and staff are required to consider the electronic social environments they utilize as part of The Next Step community.

Teachers and staff must appreciate that no matter what protections they place around access to their personal sites, their digital postings are still at risk of reaching an unintended audience and being used in ways that could complicate or threaten employment with The Next Step. Teachers and staff should be aware of the following expectations in considering their use of social networking sites:

- ✓ They have considered the information and images of them available on their sites and are confident that these represent them in a light acceptable to their role in working with youth and young adults. Employees should be courteous to co-workers, students and families. Avoid using statements that could be viewed as malicious, obscene, vulgar, profane, intimidating, discriminatory or harassing or hostile on account of race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, age, veteran status, disability, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, marital status, national origin, ancestry, familial responsibilities, political affiliation or other protected characteristic, and ensure that your postings are consistent with The Next Step's policies on equal employment opportunity and harassment.
- ✓ They do not have current students as 'friends' on their personal/private sites
- ✓ Comments on their site about their workplace, colleagues or The Next Step students, if published, would not cause harm or

embarrassment to others, violate the privacy and dignity of students, risk claims of defamation or harm the reputation of The Next Step as a school and community

- ✓ Do not identify yourself as a Next Step employee on personal social media sites to preserve the distinction between your personal life and your professional role. To the extent that there is any question whether an employee's use of social media is personal in nature or as an employee, you must state in clear terms that the views expressed are your alone and that they do not necessarily reflect the views of the School.

- ✓ Maintain privacy settings to control access to your personal social media sites. Be mindful, however, that there are limitations to privacy settings. Private communication published on the internet can easily become public. Furthermore, social media sites can change their default privacy settings and other functions. As a result, employees should ensure that they understand the rules of the social media site being utilized.

- ✓ All School policies, including those regarding the protection of confidential information and prohibiting discrimination and harassment apply to employees' use of social media. You are prohibited from disclosing information on any social media network that is confidential or proprietary to the School or to a third party that has disclosed information to the School. For example, employees must not disclose or post personally identifiable student information. Also, to the extent that an employee discusses The Next Step on social media, you must make clear that you are not speaking on behalf of the School.

- ✓ You are prohibited from displaying the School logo, linking to the School's website, or posting any School material on any personal social media site without permission from the School. Also, you may not post images of co-workers without the co-worker's consent. You also are prohibited from posting any non-public images of the School's premises, property, students, and families. You are prohibited from acting as a spokesperson for the School or posing as a representative of the School.
- ✓ To preserve the School's tax exempt status, employees should not accept donations or contributions via their personal social media sites. If someone wishes to make a donation to the Next Step, you should direct them to the School's website .

An employee, who is responsible for a social media posting that fails to comply with the guidelines set forth in this policy or that otherwise causes harm to the School, will be subject to discipline up to and including termination. Employees will be held responsible for the disclosure, whether on purpose or inadvertent, of confidential or proprietary School information, information that violates the policy rights or other rights of a third party, and for the content of anything posted on the social media. Further, employees may be liable for monetary damages for such disclosure.

Anything posted on an employee's website or web log or other internet content for which the employee is responsible for, is be subject to all School policies, rules, regulations, and guidelines.

Employees should let their supervisor, the Human Resources Department, and/or Administration know if they encounter incorrect information about the School that might randomly appear online. Employees themselves should not attempt to correct any such information that appears online about the School that is not theirs.

Nothing in this policy is intended to prevent non-supervisory employees from union organizing activity or from discussing the terms and conditions of employment for the purposes of concerted action, consistent with the National Labor Relations Act and other applicable laws. While the School views its compensation practices as confidential business information with respect to those outside of the School, employees may disclose compensation information internally or to their employee representatives or in response to inquiries from applicants.

Home Visits

Staff members, specifically support service providers, should ensure that the following home visiting protocols for The Next Step are adhered to. A home visit should place no one at unreasonable risk and that identified minor risks are consciously managed. A summary of general expectations is provided below:

Inform:

- Home visits must be authorized by the provider's supervisor and documented by the provider and The Next Step must have information about when and where visits are taking place

Prepare:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All available information about the safety of the proposed visit must be considered ▪ Cell phones must be taken and The Next Step staff ID must be visible ▪ When appropriate, the resident should be informed prior to visit
Protect:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Do not enter the residence if the intended resident is not home ▪ Do not enter areas that do not have a visit exit ▪ Have a colleague accompany you unless you have communicated to your supervisor that you are comfortable traveling alone ▪ Document the visit

SECTION 20
SAFETY, HEALTH and FOOD

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

The Next Step seeks to establish a policy for the uniform management of medical emergencies and to identify procedures that can be implemented for prevention and management of medical emergencies. Please refer to section below regarding staff and or students who fall seriously ill at The Next Step.

- a. A first aid kit is readily available in the Principal's office, nurse's suite and all staff restrooms.
- b. The school will keep in an accessible place a local directory of emergency telephone numbers for easy reference use during a medical emergency. This list includes numbers for the poison control center, emergency medical services or ambulance, police/fire department and emergency room.
- c. The school will have multiple staff members who are certified to perform CPR.
- d. The school will have multiple staff members who are trained in standard first aid according to Red Cross guidelines.

If an injury occurs, first aid should be administered and the accident reported immediately on the incident report form.

STAFF OR STUDENT BECOMING SERIOUSLY ILL WHILE AT THE NEXT STEP

If a Next Step staff or student becomes seriously ill while on the premises 911 will be contacted immediately. First aid should be provided if appropriate. Contact the Principal and Executive Director immediately. The event should be documented once the health emergency has been dealt with.

CATASTROPHIC ILLNESS – INCLUDING HIV/AIDS – IN THE WORKPLACE

The following is The Next Step policy about employees with catastrophic illnesses, including HIV/AIDS:

1. Staff with any catastrophic illness should be able to continue working as long, as they are physically able to perform the job;
2. The Next Step will attempt to provide reasonable accommodation for staff with catastrophic illnesses, which might include flextime or job sharing;
3. Confidentiality of staff with long term illnesses will be maintained, allowing them to determine who should have information about their diagnosis;
4. HIV antibody or antigen testing as a condition of employment will be prohibited; and
5. Staff with a catastrophic illness will be treated with compassion and understanding.

DEATH OF A NEXT STEP STAFF PERSON

The Next Step will provide any and all assistance in meeting the difficulties encountered when death of an employee occurs.

The following payments are to be made to the next of kin where allowed by law:

- Wage through date of death
- Vacation earned but not taken through date of death
- Any other amounts due to the deceased employee
- Life insurance

The Next Step staff will be granted leave with pay to attend the funeral.

FOOD

Students are offered three free meals per day. TNSPCS contracts with a food vendor in compliance with NSLP (National School Lunch Program) requirements for all meals. Meals comply with the Health School Act and NSLP requirements. Food may never be used as an incentive with students.

See “food policy and procedures” within the “wellness plan” for details on meal procedures for students, field trips, special events, etc.

SECTION 21

SECURITY

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

See the “emergency response plan” for detailed plans and staff responsibilities in case of fire, bomb threat, fights and other specific emergency situations. All staff must be familiar with these plans and know their responsibilities in specific situations in order to guarantee student and staff safety.

SECURING THE NEXT STEP FACILITIES

All teachers are required to lock their classrooms at the end of the day. A security guard is on duty at all times that the building is open at the front entrance. Students use the front stairwell only. The rear stairwell is for staff usage only, or in case of emergency. All stairwell doors are required to be kept closed at all times due to fire prevention rules. ALL STAFF, STUDENTS and VISITORS are required to pass through the metal detector upon entering the building, and place any baggage through the baggage scanner.

VIDEO SURVEILLANCE

In order to promote the safety of staff, students, and visitors, The Next Step PCS reserves the right to utilize security cameras in work areas for specific business reasons, such as security, theft protection, or protection of proprietary information. Workplace video surveillance does not include coverage of areas designated for employees’ health or personal comfort, including: restrooms, breakrooms, etc., Security cameras will not be used to film employees engaged in workplace marches, rallies, or during any protected concerted activities.

In the event that security footage is used as a part of a student’s behavioral record, the footage will be maintained in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (See: Section 22)

KEYS

Staff may not duplicate or lend a key to anyone at any time. Requests for access to different parts of the building, with supervisor approval, must be made to either security, maintenance, or the Business Office.

DAMAGE/LOSS PREVENTION

In case of burglary or theft on the site notify the Principal and COO or Executive Director immediately. The police must be contacted and a report written. Fill out the Property Damage or Loss Form and give it to the Principal. The Principal must pass it to Executive Director. If The Next Step property is stolen it is crucial that this be reported immediately to The Next Step COO so that steps can be taken to notify The Next Step insurance company.

The COO will maintain an equipment inventory and serial numbers for items worth \$1000 or more.

All staff should notify the Principal immediately in all of the following instances:

- Theft or loss of The Next Step property
- Damage of The Next Step property
- Theft of staff member's or student's property.

Please provide written details using the Incident Report Form and the attached Property Damage or Loss Report.

Any unusual event deserves immediate investigation or attention by the Principal. All matters will be kept confidential.

See the “technology handbook” for more details on appropriate use of technology, equipment acquisition and maintenance, etc.

See “security protocols” for staff, student and visitor entry procedures, guard duties, and other details.

SECTION 22

STAFF CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONALISM

The Next Step seeks to strengthen students and families at all times. The Next Step staff should consistently build from the strength and resiliency of students. The Next Step staff view students through their assets, rather than as problems to be fixed. The Next Step students are viewed as partners in problem solving, not passive recipients of service.

Staff at The Next Step have the responsibility to:

1. Maintain high standards of professional conduct.
2. Balance the wants, needs and requirements of students, institutional policies, and laws, having as their ultimate concern the long-term well being of The Next Step students.
3. Seek appropriate guidance and direction when faced with ethical dilemmas.

Staff at The Next Step, in their professional preparation and development, shall:

1. Accurately represent their areas of competence, education, training and experience.
2. Recognize the limits of their expertise and confine themselves to the performance of duties for which they are properly trained and qualified, making referrals when situations are outside their areas of competence.

3. Be informed of current developments in their fields, and ensure their continuing development and competence.

Staff at The Next Step, in their relationships with students, shall:

1. Understand and protect the civil and human rights of individuals. Not discriminate with regard to race, national origin, color, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, political opinion, immigration status or disability.
2. Recognize how staff's own cultural and value orientations affect their interactions with people from other cultures.
3. Demonstrate cross-cultural sensitivity, treating differences between educational systems, value systems and cultures with respect.
4. Maintain the confidentiality, integrity and security of The Next Step's students' records and of all communications with The Next Step students. Secure student's permission before sharing information with others inside or outside The Next Step unless disclosure is authorized by law or institutional policy, or mandated by previous arrangement.
5. Refrain from becoming involved in personal relationships with students when such relationships might result in either the appearance or the fact of undue influence being exercised on the making of professional judgments.
6. Accept only gifts which are of nominal value and which do not appear to influence the manner in which professional responsibilities are exercised, while remaining sensitive to the varying significance and implications of gifts in various cultures.

In professional relationships staff shall:

1. Show respect for the diversity of viewpoints found among colleagues, just as they show respect for the diversity of viewpoints among their students.
2. Refrain from unjustified or unseemly criticism of colleagues, other schools and other organizations.
3. Use the school's office space, title and professional associations only for the conduct of official business.
4. Make certain when participating in joint activities that collaborators receive due credit for their contributions.

When administering the school, staff shall:

1. Clearly and accurately represent the goals, capabilities and costs of the school.
2. Recruit staff who are qualified to offer the services promised, train and supervise staff responsibly, and assure by means of regular evaluation that the staff are performing acceptably and that the overall program is meeting its professed goals.
3. Strive to establish standards and activities that are appropriate and responsive to student need.
4. Encourage and support staff participation in professional development activities in line with The Next Step values.
5. Stay abreast of developments in law and regulations that affect the school and its students.

In making public statements, staff shall:

1. Clearly distinguish, in both written and oral public statements, between personal opinions and opinions representing The Next Step.
2. Provide accurate, complete, current and unbiased information.

Staff who counsel students shall:

1. Clarify the counselor's role to all parties and limit advice to matters within the mandate, making appropriate referrals when necessary.
2. Fully inform all students, at appropriate times, of the types of information The Next Step is required to furnish to governmental organizations, and furnish those agencies with only the information required by law and regulation.
3. Decline to reveal confidential information about students unless required by law.
4. Assist students in making prudent decisions, providing all information that might widen their range of choices, promoting legal actions.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

1. In General – As a Next Step employee, you owe a strict duty of loyalty to the School. You may not directly or indirectly benefit from or possess any interest in any contract, agreement, or transaction relating to the property, facilities, or operation of The Next Step. The failure to comply with this policy is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of employment.

2. Outside Employment – Employment outside the School is allowed to the extent that the outside employment does not pose a conflict with employment by the School. Conflicts of interest, time, competition, or confidentiality will not be tolerated because any conflict would be detrimental to The Next Step as a whole. Outside employment is strictly prohibited whenever it conflicts with the business or other interests of the School or raises the appearance of, or potential for, any conflict of interest. Outside employment must be fully disclosed to and discussed with the Executive Director or Principal, and any questions regarding outside employment should be directed to the Executive Director or Principal. The failure to comply with this policy is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of employment.

3. Employment of Relatives – The School does not prohibit the employment of persons who are related either by marriage or blood, or whose relationship with the employee is similar to that of persons who are related by blood or marriage. However, administration may disallow employment placement where one would be directly supervised by a relative, or the relationship creates the potential for favoritism or conflict of interest. Therefore, employees must disclose to the Executive Director a relationship by marriage or blood to another employee, or other similar relationship.

4. Employment Discussions – Employees are not permitted to discuss matters of employment such as wages, performance evaluations, or grievances with persons in their capacity as students. Failure to comply with this policy is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination of employment.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT

By virtue of employment at The Next Step Public Charter School, staff may have access to records that contain individually identifiable information about a student, the disclosure of which is prohibited by the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA).

Student records are highly confidential, and anyone granted access to them by The Next Step are expected to abide by FERPA, as well as general confidentiality practices. In order to ensure that student record information is protected, staff are asked to review the following information:

1. Access to individual student level information is limited to only staff with approved security access. Requests from others for a student's phone number, address, or other protected information should be directed to the principal or designee in charge.
2. Social Security numbers are to be protected at all times.
3. All documents including any personal identification information must be destroyed properly with the use of a shredder.
4. Access to student information is for the purpose of conducting the approved business of The Next Step PCS. Information on a student may not be accessed for any other reason, nor shared with anyone for any other purpose, except by school authorities in accordance with FERPA or in case of legal order (warrant or subpoena).
5. At no time should confidential student information be given out over the phone or faxed.
6. Confidential information should not be left out in the open within view of others who have not been approved to access information by The Next Step.

The intentional disclosure by staff of confidential information to any unauthorized person violates federal law, state law, and The Next Step Public Charter School's policy, and could constitute just cause for criminal or civil penalties.

SECTION 23 **STAFF PARTICIPATION**

All staff must participate fully in the life of the school, helping create a healthy school community. This includes various meetings and collaborative activities, including:

- Staff Meetings – Held weekly, attendance mandatory. Staff meetings are for school wide check-ins, department reports, key announcements and other agenda items, as needed.
- Management Team meetings – The Executive Director designates key school leadership to participate in the Management Team for purposes of overall school supervision and strategizing, budgeting, compliance issues, hiring needs, etc. This group is comprised of the Executive Director, the two Principals, the Director of Curriculum and Instruction, the Director of Student Support Services and the Chief Operating Officer.
- Professional Development – Teachers attend weekly professional development after school. Topics include assessments, lesson-planning, curriculum development, instructional technology, classroom management and instructional strategies. All-school professional development is conducted periodically on topics such as emergency response, school culture and diversity, etc.
- Content Teams – Teachers meet regularly to collaborate on curriculum development and alignment. Content teams include ESL, language arts, math, life skills, science and social studies.
- SST Teams – Student Support Teams meet weekly to support students whose attendance, behavior or academic needs are affecting their performance. The team consists of teachers, parents or guardians, administrators, case managers and other support staff who meet with the individual student to identify strengths and concerns and create an intervention plan.
- SOC Team – Students of Concern group meets to discuss students identified at risk due to non-attendance or other issues.
- Other committees – Ad-hoc committees are formed to plan events and special activities, and for other purposes, as needed. All staff are expected to participate in these groups.

Each group will designate a committee chair who will: convene the group, set group standards, ensure group communication, create agendas, prepare materials, assign roles and tasks, facilitate discussion and review actions, assignments and next steps.

Other committee members will arrive on time for meetings, be prepared, participate fully, take on tasks, communicate clearly and provide constructive suggestions.

SECTION 24
PERSONNEL MANUAL REVIEW PROCEDURE

The Next Step Public Charter School will review the personnel policies and practices with staff participation at least every two years. The revision of the policies and practices may occur whenever necessary.

Attached is a form to be completed and signed and returned to the Principal once you have reviewed this manual. This will occur within one week after your first day of work. This form will be placed in the personnel file.

This document is to certify that I have reviewed all The Next Step Public Charter School personnel policies and procedures included in the Personnel Manual, and that I will comply with all regulations included herein. I acknowledge that I have entered into my employment relationship with The Next Step PCS voluntarily and that there is no specified length or definite duration of my employment with the School. As such, the employment relationship may be terminated at will by me or TNS at any time with or without cause.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

SECTION 25
RELATED FORMS and DOCUMENTS

[All forms and policies are on the staff wiki page]

Leave request form
Comp time request form
Timesheets
School Property Agreement Request
for Professional Development PD
Implementation Form
Expense request form
Reimbursement form

Organizational Chart Personnel
Categories Professional
Development Policy Wellness
policy
"go-to" list of staff
Emergency Response Plan
Security protocols
Operations Guide
Financial Policies and Procedures