THE NEXT STEP PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
SCHOOL POLICIES HANDBOOK
SCHOOL YEAR 2023-2024
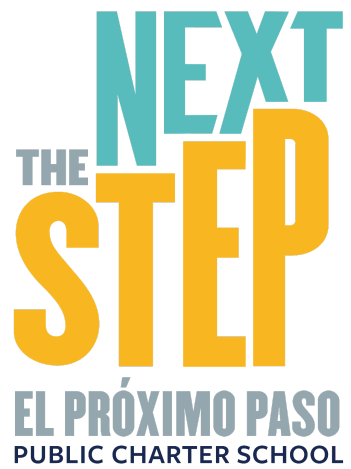
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MISSION, VISION AND VALUES

STAFF

STUDENTS

1. MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES
The Next Step Public Charter School
Student Handbook

School Principles and Expectations

Introduction

Purpose of the Student Handbook: This handbook contains important information for our students at TNS. These principles, procedures, policies, and expectations reflect our values and the fundamental practices of how we expect all members of our community to participate while here. We expect each student to read this handbook carefully. The expectations are clear, as well as the consequences for not meeting these expectations.

School Mission: Our mission is to provide students who face extraordinary challenges and who are not supported in traditional high schools with the opportunity to continue their education.

School Vision: We envision 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.

School Philosophy: We believe that everyone that enters our doors will have a place here in TNS where they have voice and choice in their learning. They will learn with time, patience, engagement through the building of connections and relationships, and everyone is responsible for our outcomes, both academic and community, because we are accountable to each other.

Core Values: Our philosophy is tied to our core values, which are the foundation of everything we do. Members of the TNS community agree to create and sustain a school culture that is inclusive, collaborative, and invested in continuous improvement. The core values are

● **Community:** We center our students in our work, recognizing and honoring the distinct contributions of all, and creating a place in which everyone feels welcome and included.
● **Collaboration:** We prioritize positive relationships, working together to expand our practices and knowledge.

- **Courage:** We advocate for ourselves and our community, connecting students to what they need and finding a way to get things done.
- **Trust:** We assume the good intent of one another and operate from a place of respect and transparency.
- **Equity and Excellence:** We are an unapologetically anti-racist, anti-bias organization. We strive to set students on life-changing trajectories by meeting the unique needs of each individual in our community.

TNS will use Restorative Practices as the foundation to create school culture, community, build relationships, and repair harm.

Restorative Practices/Restorative Justice:

Restorative Practices are processes that proactively create a sense of, and commitment to the community in order to prevent and address conflict and wrongdoing as follows:

● Involve and empower the affected community; however, participation is always voluntary (Could lead to other consequences).

● Challenge the mindsets of all involved to examine their roles, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, specifically around wrongdoing.

● Utilize techniques to proactively build community, such as recognizing and celebrating desirable community actions and behaviors and establishing community expectations.

Restorative Justice strategies challenge members of a school community to:

● Focus on the harms of wrongdoing more than on the rule or law that was broken.

● Encourage collaboration and reintegration, rather than punishment and isolation.

● Involve individuals who have harmed others in the decision making around consequences.

● Anticipate and address situations that may challenge a school community, such as physical conflict or re-entry of members into the community who have been apart for disciplinary reasons.

Five practical applications of Restorative Practices (RP) that will be used:

1. Social Discipline Window: Paul McCold and Ted Wachtel created the social discipline window framework as a tool to reflect on power dynamics in communities. This tool will be used to build a more positive, restorative community. This model describes four basic approaches to maintaining norms and setting behavioral boundaries. Each approach is represented as a combination of varying levels of boundaries and support. The restorative approach is characterized as doing things **With** students, rather than **To** or **For** them.

The expectation at TNS is that we make every effort to work **With** each other. There will be instances where a **To** approach is necessary (dangerous behavior, safety) and we expect all students to adhere to the requests at that time.

2. Affective Statements/Questions: Affective statements communicate how people feel. Affective questions require reflection on how one's behavior affects others. Students are taught how to make affective statements and to ask affective/restorative questions.

We understand that conflicts and disagreements will occur, and when they do, we will use our **Core Values through Affective Statements/Questions** to reduce harm and repair relationships.

3. Fair Process: The idea of fair process is that when those in charge (TNS staff) work and do things **With** students, everyone will be more accepting of the results, because they feel it was inclusive and fair. Your thoughts and ideas are important and should be included. The 3 principles of Fair Process are:

●   **Engagement:** Involving students in decisions that affect them by listening to their views and genuinely taking their opinions into consideration.
●   **Explanation:** Explaining the reason behind the decision to everyone who has been involved or who is/will be affected by it.
●   **Expectation Clarity:** Making sure that everyone clearly understands the decision and what is expected of them moving forward (Kim & Mauborgne, 2003).

As explained with the Social Discipline Window, there will be times when the adult in charge (TNS staff) will need to make a unilateral decision without the use of Fair Process, and students will need to respect and adhere to that decision. However,

when feasible, our goal is to use Fair Process to maintain student voice and choice in decision making.

4. Circles: Circles are used to build community and foster relationships.They are used in building relationships, engaging in academic content, check-ins/outs, decision-making (with Fair Process), conflict resolution, and more. It is an opportunity for the community in the circle to participate equally and without the typical hierarchy that is often present in schools.

5. Restorative Conference (Restorative Justice): This is the most structured meeting held in a circle format and is designed to repair harm. It involves the offender(s) and the victim(s) and may sometimes involve supporters. The offense that occurred is dealt with in this format. All parties involved learn how the actions of the offender impacted the victim and others in the community. It allows the victim to be supported when confronting the offender and for the offender to understand how their actions had a larger impact than just the victim.

It is not always clear who the victim and the offender are, but the circle allows the opportunity for all that participated and/or witnessed the behavior to participate in the solution.

Student Responsibilities:

● To use the principles of Restorative Practices and upholding our Core Values in everything interaction (social, academic, in writing, etc.)
● Attending school regularly
● Being on time to class and other school-related activities
● Submitting the appropriate documentation for absences and tardies
● Making up school assignments according to the teacher's timeline
● Being aware of all rules and expectations of the school and meet those expectations
● Volunteering information in matters related to the health, safety and welfare of fellow members of the community and its property
● Dressing according to the school's Dress Code Policy
● Using school facilities and school property with proper care
● Not interfering with the education of their fellow student body

Non-Discrimination Policy: In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title II Act of the Americans Disabilities Act of 1990, and the DC Human Rights Act of 1977, as amended, District of Columbia Official Code Section 2-1401.01 et seq. (Act) The Next Step PCS does not discriminate on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, personal appearance, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family status, family responsibilities, political affiliation, and disability. Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination that is prohibited by this policy.

Title IX Coordinator
Sahira Fernandez, LICSW
Chief of Student Support and Engagement
3047 15th Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 319-2249
Sahira@nextsteppcs.org

Students with an IEP or 504 Plan: Regarding students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a 504 Plan, it is important to note that while all students are expected to adhere to the principles and expectations outlined in this handbook, these students are entitled to additional rights and protections granted to them as part of the DC education system. In the case of any student who is 22 years old or younger and has an active IEP or 504 Plan, it is crucial that the Director of Special Education and the Special Education staff are involved in any meeting or discussion pertaining to disciplinary procedures for behavior or attendance. By collaborating with the leadership team, the Special Education team will ensure that suitable accommodations are implemented as an integral part of any disciplinary action taken.

Safeguard of Student Information: The Next Step PCS complies with all federal and state laws regarding the privacy of student information. Below you will find the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):

2. STAFF DIRECTORY

Management Team
Robledo, Dra. Vivian – Executive Director
Mitchell, Monique – Chief Operating Officer
Stepancic Fernandez, Sahira – Chief of Student Support and Engagement

Principals
Gatica Riquelme, Maria Paz- Day Principal and Curriculum Director
Cuellar, Michael- Evening Principal and Instructional Design Director

Day Faculty
Anderson, Marquise – Special Education Teacher
Alvarado Duran, Javiera-ESL/GED Teacher with ESL Focus
Aveni, Mario-Bilingual ESL/GED Teacher With Science Focus
Burke, Michelle EGED Math Teacher
Castañer, Angel – ESL/ Bilingual GED Teacher with Math and Social Studies Focus
Castro-Mendez, Maria Mercedes,- ESL/GEDTeacher with Bilingual Math and Science Focus
Creager, Michael- ESL/GED/Early College Teachers with Humanities Focus
Doyle, Mary Katherine - ESL/EGED Teacher with Humanities Focus
Espinoza, Marcelo – ESL/GED Bilingual Teacher with Early Literacy Focus
Killiany, Kenneth – ESL/GED Teacher with ESL Focus
Moya, Ana- ESL/GED Teacher with Math and Science Focus
Paba, Laura C. ESL/GED Teacher with ESL Focus
Ramírez, Carlos Rubén – ESL/GED Teacher with Science and Math Focus
Reyes Rodriquez, Glenda-ESL/GED Teacher with ESL Focus
Segovia Reyes, Alan-ESL/GED Teacher with ESL Focus
Shelton, Fred – ESL/GED Teacher with ESL Focus
Torres, Josué – ESL/GED Bilingual Teacher with Humanities Focus
Vargas-Ramos Martha-PT ESL/GED Bilingual Teacher with Math and Science Focus
Verástegui, Erick – ESL/GED Teacher with a focus on Humanities
Zhou, Cheng-ESL/GED Teacher with ESL Focus

Evening Faculty
Castillo, Denis- ESL/GED Teacher with ESL Focus
Cantu, Luz M.- ESL/GED Bilingual Teacher with Math and Social Students Focus
Cruz-O'Neill, Anieta- ESL/GED Spanish Bilingual Teacher with Humanities Focus
Figueroa, Juan Ramos-ESL/GED Spanish Bilingual Teacher with Math and Science Focus

Jimenez, Katia- ESL/GED Teacher with ESL Focus

Lopez-Marrero, Alfonso- ESL/GED Bilingual Teacher with Math and Science Focus

Ortega, Ana- ESL/GED Teacher with ESL Focus

Pelayo, Anyela- ESL/GED Spanish Bilingual Teacher with Math and Science Focus

Pineda, Alexandra – ESL Teacher with Bilingual Digital Literacy

Williams, Eugenia –ESL/GED Teacher with Humanities Focus

Academic Support Services

Flores Portillo, Elsa – Director of Testing Administration and Support

Guillen, Antony - Testing Administration and Support Specialist

Reyes, Douglas-Adult Literacy & Evening Instructional Coach

Fernández, Diego – Instructional Coach Day Program

Velasco, Ivanova –Senior Academic Project Manager

Student Support Services & Engagement

Student Support Services

Juárez, Carlos – Bilingual Case Manager

Marsandi, Genesis – Bilingual Case Manager

Mateo, Yarimar – Bilingual Case Manager

Perez Gonzalez, Diana – Bilingual Case Manager, McKinney-Vento

Perez, Yocaira – Bilingual Case Manager

Trejo, Lita – Senior Bilingual Case Manager

Career and Life Skills

Diaz, Claudia – Resource and Enrichment tCoordinator

Ramirez, Isis – Career & Life Skills Advisor

Soto, Vita – Director of Career and Life Skills

Child Care & Training

Maxwell, Elizabeth – Director of Childcare & Training

Velasquez, Glenda – Senior Child Development Associate

Enrollment

Alvarez-Dobson, Jarolyn – Senior Manager, Student Recruitment & Retention

Brown, Joshua – Senior Director of Engagement, Marketing, and Outreach

Cruz, Jocelyn – PT Student Recruitment and Retention Specialist

VanCleave, Kaleb – Student Recruitment and Retention Coordinator

Operations

Fonseca, Erick – Head Custodian

Mata, María – PT Food Service Handler

Padilla, Edwin – Building Manager

Randall, Jamar - Evening Custodian

Santos, Isabel – Day Custodian

Shelton, Teandra – Security Manager

Steadman, Kisha – Certified Food Handler

Taylor III, Frank – Security

Taylor, Mark – Custodian

Data and Outcomes

Boswick, Thomas– Director of Achievement, Governance, and Organizational Performance Data

González Chavez, Edson – Data Systems Analyst

Human Resources

Brown, Sherika - Recruitment and Compliance Specialist

Technology

Espinosa Joa, Miguel Angel – IT Administrator

Jackson, Terrence- It Specialist

Contractors

Holimatu Diallo- Nurse Day-Contractor

Karla Austin - Evening Nurse- Contractor

3. SCHOOL CALENDAR

The Next Step Public Charter School operates year-round and is divided into two semesters and a summer session. Refer to The Next Step PCS 2023-2024 school year calendar for a listing of holidays, breaks, and early dismissals. (Appendix A)

4. ENROLLMENT POLICIES

The Next Step does not discriminate on the basis of a student's race, color, religion, immigration or citizen status, national origin, language spoken, intellectual or athletic ability, measures of achievement or aptitude, sexual orientation, or disability.

Enrollment is free to all students who are residents of the District of Columbia and are between the ages of 16 and 30.

We enroll twice a year, once each semester. A public lottery is held after the closing of the enrollment period if there are more applicants than spaces available. Students not admitted each semester will be placed on a waiting list in the order of completion of enrollment package.

5. ACADEMIC POLICIES

Academic Program
The Next Step is a free Adult Basic Education (ABE) and General Education Development (GED) test preparation public charter school open to all residents in the District of Columbia, who are between 16-30 years old. The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools: Commissions on Elementary and Secondary Schools has accredited The Next Step PCS. Students who enroll can choose to register to take the GED test preparation in English or Spanish, or they can enroll to take English language classes. A student is said to have completed our academic program when he or she has passed the official GED Exam, given by the GED office. For English Language Learners, a student does not have to pass a particular test to complete our program, but he/she has to demonstrate English language dominance in four domains: speaking, listening, reading, and writing, after completing level 6, our highest level.

Incoming Students

NRS levels are determined by the National Reporting Service (NRS) for adult basic education. Upon matriculation, incoming students are tested using the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and are placed in one of six NRS levels depending on their academic skills in reading and mathematics. Additionally, for our Spanish Adult Basic Education and GED Preparation TNSPCS uses STAR Assessments, a nationally-recognized adaptive exam. Non-native English speakers are tested for English proficiency using the Test of Adult Basic Education – Complete Language Assessment System – English (TABE CLAS-E). Once the appropriate level is determined, students are placed accordingly.

Student Placement and Promotion Chart

Spanish GED Track: STAR Placement and Promotion Chart		
TNS placement	IRL	IML
1	k-1.9	k-1.9
2	2.0-3.9	2.0-3.9
3	4.0-5.9	4.0-5.9
4	6.0-7.9	6.0-7.9
5/6	8.0 -8.9	8.0 -8.9

English GED Track: TABE 11/12 Placement and Promotion Chart							
TNS placement	**NRS**	**GE**	**TABE Reading** Scale Score Range			**TABE Math** Scale Score Range	
1	1	K	300-441	300-371	300-448		300–374
		1		372-441			375–448
2	2	2	442-500	442-471	449-495		449–472
		3		472-500			473–495
3	3	4	501-535	501-518	496-536		496–516

		5		519-535		517–536
4	4	6	536-575	536-549	537-595	537–556
		7		550-562		557–576
		8		563-575		577–595
5/6	5	9	576-616	576-596	596-656	596–626
		10		597-616		627–656
5/6	6	11	617-800	617-709	657-800	657–729
		12		710-800		730–800

ESL Track: CLAS-E Placement and Promotion Chart			
Scaled Score	NRS Level	The Next Step Level	The Next Step Level
Reading: 225-394 Writing: 225-394 Listening: 230-407	1	Basic 1	Basic
Reading: 395-441 Writing: 395-441 Listening: 408-449	2	Basic 2	
Reading: 442-482 Writing: 442-482 Listening: 450-485	3	Intermediate 3	Intermediate
Reading: 483-514 Writing: 483-514 Listening: 486-525	4	Intermediate 4	
Reading: 515-556 Writing: 515-556 Listening: 526-558	5	Advanced 5	Advanced
Reading: 557-600 Writing: 557-600 Listening: 559-600	6	Advanced 6	

Course Offerings

The Next Step Public Charter School offers the following courses each semester for ABE/GED English test preparation, ABE/GED Spanish test preparation, and English for English Language Learners:

English Language ABE/GED Track	English for English Language Learners	Spanish Language ABE/GED Track
GED English Language Arts - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6 **GED Mathematics** - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6 **GED Science** - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6 **GED Social Studies** - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6	**Beginning:** **ESL 1 – Beginning Literacy** **ESL 2 – Low Beginning** **Intermediate:** **ESL 3 – High Beginning** **ESL 4 – Low Intermediate** **Advanced:** **ESL 5 – High Intermediate** **ESL 6 – Advanced** (Levels may be combined)	**GED English Language Arts** - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6 **GED Mathematics** - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6 **GED Science** - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6 **GED Social Studies** - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6

Enrollment In One To Two Courses

A student can be enrolled in classes in both the Day program and the Evening program. For example, take ESL in the day and GED in the evening. There will be ONE enrollment record for every student, and a student can be added to both day and evening courses.

Standards-Based Grading

The Next Step uses standards-based grading to evaluate student progress. A standard describes what a student must be able to do to prove he or she can master a specific skill at a particular level of difficulty. The Next Step curriculum is based on the most current GED Standards, and the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), with a focus on the most important skills necessary for passing the GED and being ready for college or career training. For students who only choose English language as their core focus, the curriculum is based on the Test of Adult Basic Education Complete Language Assessment System - English skills (TABE CLAS-E).

As part of measuring student progress, students will receive both formative and summative assessments to determine how well they are meeting the standards of their level of placement. These assessments may include teacher-generated assessments, interim assessments, developed in-house, and standardized assessments such as the TABE 11 and 12, STAR Assessments, TABE CLAS-E, the GED Ready test, and the GED official examination.

Proficiency Levels
Students are evaluated on a scale of 1 to 4 for each standard. A student must be able to meet a standard at a level 3 or above before moving to a more difficult standard. The table below describes what each score number means.

1	2	3	4
Student has partially met the standard *with help*, but needs more practice to become independent.	Student has partially met the standard and needs more practice to be proficient.	Student has met the standard and is ready for more difficult work.	Student has exceeded the standard and is already working at a higher level.

Progress reports indicate which standards students have mastered at a particular level, and which standards need more practice in order to become proficient. All grades are entered in *Schoology*, the Learning Management System (LMS) used at The Next Step PCS. All grades are kept on our LMS, and from which progress reports and final report cards are generated and handed to students each semester and at the end of the school year. Teachers are required to measure each standard or skill for mastery and are required to record between one and three items measured under each standard or skill taught in class.

Feedback
Students at The Next Step PCS receive feedback on their progress in several ways. Each student meets regularly with his/her teacher(s) to review performance data.

Monthly Progress Updates
- Class grades that indicate how proficiently the student is meeting the standards of each level
- Missing assignments
- Attendance data, including absences, tardiness, and early dismissals
- Criteria for moving to the next level

End-of-Semester Progress Reports
- Data from pre-test and post-tests: STAR test, TABE 11/12, TABE CLAS-E, GED Ready and other standardized assessments
- Report card with final grades that indicate how proficiently the student has met the standards of each NRS level
- Attendance data, including absences, tardiness, and early dismissals
- Placement for next semester

Assessments

The Next Step PCS tracks student progress on various standardized assessments each semester. All students take the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) in English and the STAR (Renaissance) Assessments in Spanish at the end of the semester, depending on the program they enrolled in. Students in levels 5/6 take the GED Ready and Official GED Test. English Language Learners take the TABE Complete Language Assessment System – English (TABE CLAS-E). In addition to subject-specific classroom assessments, and interim assessments, teachers determine student levels using adaptive computer-based platforms, such as *GED Academy*, *Achieve 3000*, amongst others.

Formative assessments include assignments such as quizzes, homework, classwork, journal entries, and class discussions. These are intended to provide the student practice in using new skills as well as feedback for teachers to adapt instruction.

Summative assessments include tests, projects, presentations, portfolios, or essays. These assignments demonstrate what a student can do individually after appropriate instruction and practice.

Promotion*

Students at the Next Step are supported in learning at their own pace. Students have the opportunity to move up each semester when they meet the following criteria:

- Demonstrate NRS level of the target level as evaluated by the TABE 11/12, TABE CLAS-E, STAR Assessments, and GED Ready examinations.

6. CODE OF CONDUCT

Students are expected to adhere to and practice the following Code of Conduct:

- Enter building and go through the metal detector;
- Use elevators only if you have a physical disability or are using a stroller;
- Clean up and leave the cafeteria as clean as when you walk in, respect and follow instructions from all staff;
- Maintain zero level noise and walk on your side in the hallway;
- Depart school grounds immediately unless you have a scheduled meeting with a staff member;
- Maintain lobby area clear at all times and address visitors with respect;
- Show respect for the rights, property and safety of yourself and others;
- Respect and appreciate diversity of all students and staff members;
- Express yourself with proper language and gestures;
- Exhibit behavior that avoids all forms of intimidation, harassment, racism, and discrimination; Dress according to school dress code and uniform policy;
- Promote positive behavior;
- Refrain from possession of and being under the influence of drugs or alcohol in school property; Attend classes, activities and events and be prepared and punctual.

Disruptive Behavior Not Permitted

- Profanity
- Disrespect
- Failure to obey instructions
- Forging notes or excuses
- Non-attendance in school or in specific classes
- Loitering in school
- Stealing
- Fighting, shoving, pushing, or scuffling
- Bullying

Other acts of misconduct that are disruptive or that can potentially harm someone

THE NEXT STEP PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

BEHAVIORS

(Behaviors in the "Thumbs Up" columns are acceptable expectations. Behaviors in the "Thumbs Down" columns have consequences as outlined to the right of the table)

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

👍 Use technology responsibly 👎	
• Use computers for classwork only • Handle laptops with care • Follow instructions • Request computer for supervised in-class or after-school work • Shut down computer properly • Save your work appropriately • Print for classwork only • Print according to teacher's instructions • Communicate with teacher if there is a problem with your computer or printer	• Conducting any activities that are not part of the assignment (ie: FaceBook, Youtube, personal email, etc.)
	• Listening to music without permission
	• Eating or drinking when using the computer
	• Taking a computer or any other form of technology out of the classroom without permission

👍 Use time effectively 👎	
• Socialize at appropriate times • Make appointments for before or after school • Prioritize responsibilities • Take care of personal business before and after school • Start working right away and stay on task • Ask for a break if you really need one	• Playing around during class
	• Roaming the hallways
	• Taking excessive bathroom and water breaks
	• Sleeping
	• Visiting other classrooms or offices without permission or an appointment

BEHAVIORS

(Behaviors in the "Thumbs Up" columns are acceptable expectations. Behaviors in the "Thumbs Down" columns have consequences as outlined to the right of the table)

PERSISTENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY

👍Take responsibility for your words and actions; when you make a mistake, take steps towards correcting it 👎	
• Be honest • Accept your mistakes • Accept responsibility for your part in a	• Blaming others for your actions
	• Cheating

conflict	• Lying
	• Plagiarizing

👍 **Recognize when you need help and reach out** 👎	
• Ask for help when you don't understand something • Use resources (dictionary, notes, technology, books, classmates, teacher, staff) to help you when you have a question or a problem • Raise your hand in class to ask a question • Meet with your teacher after or before school to ask for extra help • Ask your case manager for help with problems inside or outside of school at the appropriate time	• Shouting out a question or answer or unrelated comment in class
	• Sitting quietly without working when you don't understand something
	• Putting your head on your desk or sleep in class
	• Picking a fight with a staff member or another student when you don't understand something
	• Copying the answers from another student's paper
	• Asking another student or friend or family member to do your homework
	• Rushing through an assignment
👍 **Strive to overcome your personal challenges** 👎	
• Reflect on your learning and how you learn best • Focus on your studies when you are in school • Take care of yourself physically, socially, and emotionally • Recognize what you need to work on and make a plan • Work hard • Come to school everyday • Reach out when you need help • Keep trying • Ask for a break when you need one • Find appropriate channels to resolve personal problems at appropriate times • Get permission to take a break when you really need one	• Fighting in school
	• Using your problems as excuses for not moving ahead
	• Talking about outside issues during class time
	• Blaming external factors for not moving ahead

BEHAVIORS
(Behaviors in the "Thumbs Up" columns are acceptable expectations. Behaviors in the "Thumbs Down" columns have consequences as outlined to the right of the table)
STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT

👍 Keep the hallways calm and quiet 👎	
- Walk quietly in the hallway - Transition purposefully from one place to the next Respect students working in the hallway	• Running in the hallway
	• Making a lot of noise in the hallway
	• Shouting in the hallway
	• Hanging out in the hallway
	• Playing with athletic equipment in the hallway

👍 Use the pass system responsibly 👎	
- Ask staff for a pass to use the bathroom, drink water, see a case manager, go to the main office, or when you need to leave the classroom or an activity - Ask the principal upon for a tardy pass when you arrive late	• Walking in the hallway during class time without a pass
	• Leaving the building without a pass

and provide the reason you are late - Ask your principal for an early dismissal pass when you need to leave early and provide the reason you need to leave early - Be mindful of classmates waiting for the hallway pass Return the pass to its proper place	• Entering a class late without a pass
	• Taking a pass from a staff member without asking permission
	• Leaving the pass in an inappropriate place
	• Leaving The Next Step premises
	• Concealing the pass when in your possession

BEHAVIORS

(Behaviors in the "Thumbs Up" columns are acceptable expectations. Behaviors in the "Thumbs Down" columns have consequences as outlined to the right of the table)

👍 Follow school routines and systems 👎	
• Be in class on time • Transition from class to class when the bell rings • Use the pass system appropriately • Complete assigned work • Participate in class • Attend Monday Community Meeting • Participate in Community Days and Special Events • Eat breakfast and lunch during breakfast and lunch times • Attend classes from 9 am to 3 pm or 9	• Coming to class late or leaving class early
	• Eating in the classroom
	• Drinking anything except water in the classroom
	• Eating outside food for breakfast if you come to school late

am to 1 pm • Come back from lunch on time • When you enter the building, empty your pockets, pass through the metal detector, open your bag for security to check, and lift your arms to be wanded	• Using your cell phone during class
	• Smoking in the school or on school property

	• Leaving class, school, or field trip without permission
👍 **Honor the dress code** 👎	
• Wear clothing that covers your chest, stomach, back side and thighs • Footwear should be comfortable and are safe, especially when needing to move quickly in case of an emergency	• Wearing clothing with drug related, gang related, or offensive messages
	• You may be asked to change out of flips into other sandals

BEHAVIORS

(Behaviors in the "Thumbs Up" columns are acceptable expectations. Behaviors in the "Thumbs Down" columns have consequences as outlined to the right of the table)

COLLABORATION AND RESPECT

👍 **Keep The Next Step free of smoke, drugs, alcohol, weapons, gang activity, and negativity** 👎

• Come to school ready to learn • Stay free of drugs, alcohol, weapons, and gang affiliation • Be positive • Work with others • Be a positive influence on others • Encourage healthy behavior and habits	• Coming to school under the influence of drugs or alcohol
	• Using drugs or alcohol in school or school zone
	• Bringing drugs or alcohol to school or school zone
	• Selling drugs in school or in school zone
	• Bringing weapons (anything that can be used to hurt someone) to school or in school zone
	• Actively engaging in gang activity in school or in school zone
	• Recruiting others to join a gang in school or in school zone
	• Representing your gang in school or in school zone

	• Making references to drugs or alcohol in school

Take care of school facilities and equipment and use them responsibly 👍 👎	
• Keep the school clean • Throw trash in the trash cans • Clean up after yourself • Use the bathroom appropriately • Keep school furniture clean and in working order • Keep laptops clean and in working order • Clean the microwave if you leave a mess • Enter staff space with permission and under supervision • Ask staff to access the refrigerator	• Throwing trash on the floor
	• Leaving food and drinks on the tables
	• Urinating on the floor of the bathroom or toilet seat
	• Writing, drawing, damaging or scratching the desks, chairs, furniture, or walls of the school
	• Leaving laptops unattended
	• Putting gum under the chairs or tables

Use respectful words and actions with all classmates and staff members
👍 👎

• Speak appropriately and respectfully in school • Address students and staff member respectfully • Listen to others even if you don't agree with them • Keep your hands to yourself	• Cursing at other students or staff
	• Using offensive words, gestures, or actions
	• Raising your voice to other students or staff
	• Bullying (including cyber bullying) other students or staff
	• Walking away from staff when they are speaking to you
	• Talking back to other students or staff
	• Poking or pushing other students or staff
	• Engaging in sexual harassment
	• Spreading rumors
	• Gossiping

👍 **Ask permission to use other people's property** 👎	
• Ask to use other people's pencils, erasers, pens, paper, stapler, glue, tape, dictionary, notebook, ruler, calculator, computer, phone, etc. • Respect other people's property	• Taking anything that does not belong to you
	• Using other people's things without asking and getting permission
	• Sitting at staff's desk or chair without permission

	• Taking things from staff's desks without permission
	• Using school phones without permission

Student Infractions/Consequences for Behaviors Against TNS Core Values & Academic Expectations:

The sequence of interventions for Infractions and School Violations are as follows:

Order	Intervention
1	In-class intervention by teacher
2	Out-of-class teacher conversation
3	Parent/Guardian contacted (minors only)
4	Student Support Team meeting with behavior/attendance intervention
5	Restorative circle with principal and written agreement (including parent conference for minors)
6	Potential suspension or expulsion

Each potential infraction that would warrant any intervention above (1 to 4) is listed on the Code of Conduct. In most cases, issues are resolved with restorative circles, community conferences, and/or with written agreements before relying on suspensions or expulsions.

Suspensions
In the spirit of using Restorative Practices, the school refrains from suspending students unless the infraction poses a threat to self or the community at large. Students are sent home for the day, only when they refuse to participate in a restorative circle after they have committed an infraction. They may return to school the next day and will engage in a restorative conference with the principal before re-entering class. As part of the conference, students will be asked to develop solutions to repair the harm caused by the incident that occurred. It can be apologizing

for committing an infraction or agreeing not to do it again or coming up with more creative alternative solutions.

Expulsions
The Next Step PCS takes the safety of students and staff very seriously. Times, when an expulsion may be considered, are when:

Expellable Offenses	Potentially Expellable
Possession of a weapon on school grounds	Verbally assaulting a staff member
Committing arson	Sexual misconduct, other than physical, that violates Title IX and/or the harassment policy
Possession of, buying or selling of drugs on school grounds	The display of gang-related paraphernalia and/or the attempt to recruitment students for gang membership or gang-related activity
Physically assaulting/attacking another student or any staff member	Mutual fight between students that causes bodily injury needing medical support
Physical sexual misconduct/assault on school grounds	
Gang-related activity on school grounds	

Definitions:
Gang-related activity: Tagging/graffiti , wearing gang colors, making gang signs or symbols, recruiting

Weapons: knives, machetes, firearms (guns, rifles, automatic weapons, etc.), and or biological weapons (harmful chemicals or substances)

Students with Disabilities: Infections and Interventions

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees appropriate education for children with disabilities while providing procedural safeguards. Students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 plans follow the same interventions and consequences as their peers, unless specified in their plan.

The IEP or 504 plan outlines modifications and accommodations for classroom interventions and consequences. Recurring behavior patterns prompt a review of the plan for necessary adjustments, with guidance from the Special Education Office.

In cases of potential suspension, The Next Step PCS reviews the student's special education and disciplinary records. A comprehensive assessment determines if suspension is appropriate, ensuring prompt notification to the parent and involvement of the Special Education Office.

For removal exceeding ten school days, a Manifestation Determination Review (MDR) meeting is arranged to evaluate if the behavior is linked to the student's disability. A suspension may be lifted if the behavior is disability-related or applied if unrelated, following standard disciplinary procedures.

Within ten school days of disciplinary action, an IEP meeting is convened if no previous assessment was conducted. Parents can request a meeting if they disagree with the determination or placement decision.

The Next Step PCS facilitates an expedited hearing within twenty school days from the complaint filing date, assessing if substantial evidence supports that the behavior is unrelated to the disability.

The hearing officer may recommend up to forty-five days of removal if appropriate factors are considered. The student remains in the interim alternative educational setting during proceedings unless safety is at risk.

When proposing a change after the interim alternative setting, the student stays in their current placement unless it poses a danger. An expedited hearing may be requested if the placement jeopardizes the student's well-being.

Students not yet identified as eligible for special education still have protections if prior knowledge of their disability existed. The Next Step PCS is deemed to have knowledge

based on specific criteria, while lack of consent or evaluation results indicates no knowledge.

When lacking knowledge, disciplinary measures may apply, but an expedited evaluation is conducted upon request. Upon determination, appropriate special education services are provided based on the evaluation.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act does not restrict law enforcement or prohibit reporting crimes committed by students with disabilities. The Next Step PCS transmits records to relevant authorities when reporting crimes.

By following IDEA's procedures, The Next Step PCS ensures equitable treatment, interventions, and support for students with disabilities

7. DRESS CODE

I. Purpose

The Next Step PCS believes that a safe and disciplined learning environment is the first requirement of a high-performing school. While the school does not require students to wear uniforms, proper attire is expected for all school activities inside and outside of the building while representing The Next Step PCS. While attending The Next Step PCS, students should concentrate on learning rather than on what they are wearing.

II. Appearance

A student's dress and/or appearance will:

- Support, not disrupt, the learning environment
- Constitute no threat to health or safety
- Be tasteful and refrain from being provocative or obscene
- Reflect practices of good hygiene and cleanliness

III. Exceptions

Reasonable consideration shall be made for those students who, because of a sincerely held religious belief or medical reason, request a waiver of a particular guideline for dress or appearance.

The principal shall make reasonable accommodations when students are involved in special duties, activities, or projects approved by the school. This would include but not be limited to athletics, career and technical education, special events, and other activities that require non-conforming dress in school or during a school-sponsored event.

IV. School Expectations

The staff at The Next Step PCS will implement the school's dress code policy. Students shall wear attire in a manner that is neat, clean, and suitable for the learning environment.

V. Clothing

- Clothes may not have insignias, logos, labels, words, or pictures related to gangs, drugs, or themes that may be considered offensive
- Clothes shall ensure that no part of the body is not inappropriately exposed

8. ATTENDANCE POLICY

Purpose

Strong attendance at The Next Step PCS is vital to academic success. There is evidence that a direct relationship exists between attendance and academic success. However, we also understand that our students face barriers and have competing priorities that can interfere with attending classes. The attendance policy outlines expectations regarding daily attendance and accountability related to absences.

Attendance Expectations

Students are expected to attend class every day for the duration of their scheduled classes. If a student is going to be absent, they should notify their teacher or case manager prior to the absence and complete an Absence Excuse Form as soon as possible after the absence and within two weeks of the absence. Excuse forms submitted more than two weeks after the absence will not be accepted.

Students under the age of 18 will be withdrawn if they accumulate 20 or more consecutive unexcused absences.Students 18 and over will be withdrawn if they accumulate 20 unexcused absences during the semester. Upon withdrawal, students will no longer be eligible for school services such as food pantry, meals, child care, and transportation assistance.

Several interventions are in place to assist students with their attendance before withdrawal is considered. The *Attendance Interventions* section details the series of actions that will be taken prior to withdrawal considerations.

Any student who is withdrawn has the option of re-enrolling in subsequent semesters or academic years if seats are available during the enrollment season and they meet the enrollment requirements.

Attendance Procedures

Attendance is recorded daily via Quickbase. Upon arrival, students are required to scan their TNS ID at the attendance station to document their attendance and time of arrival. Students who do not have their TNS ID with them will have to check in with a member of the Enrollment Department during their break or after class to enter their attendance manually. Additionally, teachers will use Quickbase to record class attendance.

Early Dismissal

Students must speak to the principal if they need to leave school before the end of the school day. Students under the age of 18 must have permission from a parent or legal guardian to be granted early departure from school.

Absences

After an absence, students or parents/legal guardians of minor students should complete an Absence Excuse Form providing the dates and reasons for the absence. The purpose of the note is to determine whether the absence will be excused. Absence Excuse Forms must be completed within two weeks of the absence. Excuse forms submitted more than two weeks after the absence will not be accepted.

Absence Excuse Forms may be submitted without documentation for up to 10 absences per semester. After 10 absences, documentation must be provided.

A. *Excused absences:* The following represent acceptable reasons for a student's absence to be excused:

- ***Health related reasons*** – Illness and health care appointments.
- ***Prearranged Appointments*** – Appointments with social services or other state agencies.
- ***Family Death or Emergency*** – Death in the family, or a personal or family emergency beyond the student's control.
- ***Religious Observances*** – Religious holidays or events
- ***Childcare*** – Daycare/school closing, child medical appointment or illness
- ***Legal*** - Lawyer appointments, court dates or other legal related matters

B. *Unexcused Absences:* The following explanations (not exhaustive) may not be accepted as excused absences:

- Weather related if the school is open
- Failure to attend, or departing field trips early, without permission
- Work related absences

Leave of Absence

Principals may approve a leave of absence for situations in which an exemption from attendance appears to be in the best interest of the student and his or her family. A student may request a leave of absence if they need to be absent for over two weeks. A leave of absence may be granted for up to 5 weeks, with the exception of parental leave, which allows up to 8 weeks of absences. A student may request a leave of absence for the following reasons

- Medical
- Legal
- Pregnancy/Parental leave
- Extreme personal/family situations
- Death in the family

Prior to the student's absence, the student's service provider must complete a Leave of Absence Request in Quickbase. The request will document the reason and dates of absence. The principal will approve or deny the request.

If the leave of absence is approved, the Senior Manager of Student Recruitment & Retention will notify the teachers and other related staff members via email.

Minor students will be marked as "absent excused" for the duration of their leave. Adult students will be withdrawn from school and re-enrolled upon return. If the student does not come to school on the return date, the service provider will attempt to contact the student. If the student does not return to school by the third school day after the return date, the student will not be allowed to re-enroll during that semester.

Attendance Incentive Program

The Next Step offers an incentive program to encourage students to have strong attendance. Students that have a monthly attendance rate of 80% or higher will be recognized and will be entered in a raffle for a $100 gift card during the first Community Meeting of the month. The prizewinner must be present to receive the gift card and names will be picked at random until the prizewinner is present.

Attendance Interventions

The Next Step implements a tiered approach to support students in addressing barriers to enable them to attend class regularly. Cultivating strong attendance is a school wide effort and all staff are responsible for encouraging daily school attendance. The Senior Manager of Student Recruitment and Retention is responsible for ensuring proper interventions are implemented consistently to support students.

Absences	School Response (All responses must be documented in Quickbase)
After each absence, students or parents/legal guardians will receive a notification via an automated text message with the link to the Absence Excuse Form.	
3	Phone call from teacher(s) to student or parent/legal guardian
5	Phone call from Service Provider to student or parent/legal guardian
10	Phone call from Student Retention & Recruitment Coordinator *Minors - Enrollment Department will notify OSSE within two business days of a student's 10th unexcused absence.
15	Phone call from principal

	*Minors - Enrollment Department will notify the Court Social Services Division of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and the Office of the Attorney General Juvenile Section within two business days of a student's 15th unexcused absence.
20+	Student withdrawal *Minors will be withdrawn after 20 full-day consecutive unexcused absences. The Enrollment Department will notify the parent/legal guardian.

9. Laptops and Hotspots

Students who attend the school in-person will use laptops assigned by the classroom. The laptops should be returned to the classroom at the end of class. Students can not take the classroom assigned laptops home.

Students who attend the school's evening GED program will receive laptops to complete online asynchronous work outside of the classroom. On Fridays, the students in the evening GED program do not have in-person classes. However, they have assignments to complete. The school will request a return of those laptops at the end of each semester to install any needed updates. The laptops will be loaned out to students who will attend another evening semester of school.

Students who attend school fully remote can request a laptop if needed. Laptops assigned to students must be returned at the end of each semester to install any needed updates and such. The laptops will be loaned out to students who will attend another evening semester of school.

Students receiving a requested laptop can also request a mobile hotspot. The IT Manager will assess the need for a hot spot, and make a determination if the hotspot would be granted. All hotspots must be returned at the end of each semester. If needed, the student will receive another hotspot if they are returning for another semester, and there is a need for one.

10. ONLINE LEARNING OPTIONS

Online Synchronous Learning Option in SY 2023-24

Who is eligible?

Any active student of The Next Step Public Charter School who is facing unique challenges and exceptional circumstances, and is temporarily or indefinitely unable to return to in-person learning, is eligible for distance learning at The Next Step PCS. Eligible reasons include:

- ☐ Childcare and child-related health issues
- ☐ Work schedule conflicts
- ☐ Indefinite housing and/or transportation issues
- ☐ Personal matters including (but not limited to): mental health or psychological needs, family emergencies, domestic issues, traveling outside the United States
- ☐ Exceptional circumstances for students with disabilities as recommended by the Special Education department

How do they apply?

01. Students should contact their service provider to seek support. Teachers or staff can also submit referrals to student service providers.
02. The Next Step PCS will use QuickBase to process applications. Once service providers receive referrals from teachers or staff, they will plan goals with students, document reasons, note extenuating circumstances to be considered, and add valid evidence.
03. Service providers will complete the Authorization for Distance Learning Routine form in QuickBase, stating the rationale for the student request.
04. A generic notification will be sent to principals, teachers, and service providers after the request has been processed.
05. Approved students will receive an email from QuickBase including the following details: distance learning routine dates, how to log into Schoology and Zoom, EdTech leader information, and service provider information.

Who approves?

Case Managers after reviewing the request information given by the students.

What duration is allowed?
The maximum duration of the Distance Learning Routine is <u>one full semester.</u> Additional semesters need to be reviewed with case managers.

How will teachers be notified?
Teachers will be notified when students are approved for distance learning in two ways: (i) notification from QuickBase via email; and (ii) through the updated attendance roster of each class. When taking attendance, teachers will identify students' names approved for the *distance learning routine*.

<u>Online Asynchronous Learning Option in SY 2023-24</u>

Who is eligible?

- ☐ GED students level 4-6
- ☐ Work schedule or geographic conflicts
- ☐ Ability and willingness to complete work independently

How do they apply?

06. Students should contact their service provider to seek support. Teachers or staff can also submit referrals to student service providers.
07. The Next Step PCS will use QuickBase to process applications. Once service providers receive referrals from teachers or staff, they will plan goals with students, document reasons, note extenuating circumstances to be considered, and add valid evidence.
08. Service providers will complete the Authorization for Distance Learning Routine form in QuickBase, stating the rationale for the student request.
09. The Principals will receive the QuickBase request form via email for review and approval.
10. Upon approval by the Principals in QuickBase, a generic notification will be sent to principals, teachers, and service providers.

11. If not approved by the Principals, the service provider assigned to the student will receive a notification of the non-approval of the request, with a request for additional information/ meeting.
12. Approved students will receive an email from QuickBase including the following details: distance learning routine dates, how to log into Schoology and Zoom, EdTech leader information, and service provider information.

Who approves?
The Principals approve the request for a distance learning routine.

What duration is allowed?
The duration of the Distance Learning Routine is <u>one full semester.</u> Additional semesters need to be reviewed

How will teachers be notified?
Teachers will be notified when students are approved for distance learning in two ways: (i) notification from QuickBase via email; and (ii) through the updated attendance roster of each class. When taking attendance, teachers will identify students' names approved for the *distance learning routine*.

11.   TRANSITIONS PROGRAM

The transitions program is designed to help Next Step students and alumni make and implement short and long-term plans for post-secondary and vocational paths. A full-time transitions specialist provides guidance on college, employment and vocations, and helps students access financial resources to continue their education.

12.   CASE MANAGEMENT

Service providers complete an in-depth needs assessment of each student to evaluate what social, physical, and emotional supports will enable the student to grow academically. Service providers connect students with social services and help students navigate the process.

13.   PARENTING SUPPORT

The Next Step supports expecting and parenting students through academic and extracurricular programs. The Next Step also provides pregnancy support and parenting classes. The aim of the program is to increase academic success, improve graduation rates, and prevent subsequent unplanned pregnancies.

14.   FOOD PROGRAM

The Next Step provides a free breakfast, lunch, and dinner program in accordance with Federal Law and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy. (Wellness Policy Appendix C)

School Breakfast and Lunch

The Next Step Public Charter School (TNS) participates in the following federally funded programs: National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the Seamless Summer Option Program (SSO).

During the summer, TNS will operate breakfast and lunch under SBP and NSLP, respectively. And the school will fund the Supper program. Breakfast and Lunch will be offered free to students attending The Next Step's day program. Supper will be offered free to students enrolled attending The Next Step's evening program.

If you would like to receive meals while attending TNS, please fill out a meal application and return it to Monique Mitchell, the Chief Operating Officer, via hard copy at the security desk or via email: **mmitchell@nextsteppcs.org**

If you do not plan to eat school meals, you may want to fill out a meal application as they have been helpful in the past for some students applying for scholarships,

pandemic EBT, and other services that request a free or reduced-price lunch application approval. Filling out the meal application does not require that you eat school meals.

Click https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/16fdgWPdCvmT3NAoueIZglimmETFOehnc for the meal application link. Click on "Lunch Application.English" or "Lunch Application.Spanish". The form is fillable electronically. When you are finished, save the document and email it to mmitchell@nextsteppcs.org

Meal applications will also be provided in your profile folder given by the case managers. All students attending TNS will be offered meals at no charge, regardless of the FARM application review status.

If you would like to mail the completed lunch application, please send it to the following address:
The Next Step Public Charter School
3047 15th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20009
Attention: Monique Mitchell

15.   RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

The Next Step uses restorative practices to build community, to have open dialogue, to repair harm when conflict occurs, and to increase academic achievement. Restorative practices provide a structure to solve problems between two parties, or when trouble arises in a classroom or in the school community. Restorative practices strategically involve a process for people to come together, face to face, to discuss problems that arise and to agree on how to make things right. Restorative practices do not replace the code of conduct, but they emphasize a process during which students are held accountable for code of conduct violations and offer a chance for them to repair the harm they have inflicted upon each other and upon the school community.

The Next Step also uses restorative practices in its classrooms to build relationships and trust, and to allow learning to take place more effectively. Restorative practices can take different forms, in a continuum, such as proactive circles, content circles, responsive circles, restorative conversations, and community conferences.

- **Proactive circles** happen inside and outside the classroom. They promote communication and bonding as a community.

- **Content circles** can be used in the classroom to introduce a theme or to debrief a unit. Special topic circles can address issues such as gender, race, or bullying. Healing and celebration circles support collective processing of significant events such as death. Circles support a more productive learning environment by generating shared values, understanding, and empathy. They also build emotional literacy, as well as communication and listening skills.
- **Responsive circles** are used to respond to conflict between two or more people, or within the classroom or school community.
- **Restorative conversations** are used to repair harm. Conference mediators use the questions below to address the problem and everyone involved in the conflict participates and arrives at an agreement.
- **Community conferences** take place with more serious incidents. It is a voluntary one-time circle meeting convened by an outside facilitator that may include students, parents, school staff, and others affected by an incident – anything ranging from fights and bullying to truancy and student-teacher problems. The questions below are used in community conferences and those involved create an agreement to repair the harm.

The above are a few examples of how restorative practices are used. There is more to it than shown here, but overall these practices help to create a sense of belonging within a community and help reduce suspensions and expulsions. The process is voluntary, and students and staff may opt out from using restorative practices and instead rely on using traditional disciplinary actions according to the code of conduct and or the employee handbook.

The following restorative questions are used in restorative practices in order to make things right:

To respond to challenging behavior
- What happened? What were you thinking of at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?

To help those harmed by others' actions
- What did you think when you realized what had happened?
- What impact has this incident had on you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

16.   DE-ESCALATION PROCEDURE

Staff need to think preventively in their approach to potentially difficult situations. The first sign of a problem between two or more students will result in removal from the classroom or group. Staff should mediate the situation if possible, and students will be warned that if the behavior continues, they will be asked to leave the classroom or group for a period of time determined by staff. If students are off-site and mediation needs to occur, staff will escort students back to school and /or school staff will pick students up to take them back to school.

If a physical fight occurs, staff members should try to stand between students, guiding them in opposite directions. Other staff members should guide remaining students away from the situation. If a student does not walk away, a staff member should try to stay in front of him or her as other students are guided away. Staff should block students and try not to touch them. Students involved in the fight need to attend a community conference before returning to school. If students in the groups are provoking and encouraging the situation, they, in addition to the students directly involved, will participate in a community conference.

17.   STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM

The Student Support Team meets regularly to support students whose attendance, behavior, or academic needs are affecting their performance. The team consists of teachers, parents or guardians, counselors, administrators, service providers, and other support staff who meet with the individual student to identify strengths and concerns and create an intervention plan.

Reasons for referral:
- Teacher referral for behavioral concerns, or three or more office referrals
- Teacher referral for academic concerns or suspected learning disability
- Attendance concerns

Responsibilities of SST Team Leaders:
- Facilitate SST meetings, with time for positive feedback, concerns, and strategies
- Assemble data for the meeting, including
  - Attendance record of absences, late arrivals, and early dismissals
  - Discipline record of write-ups or suspensions
  - Test scores and classroom performance
  - Team member observations, concerns, and strategies tried
- Decide next steps and set date to reconvene
- Create behavior plans and contracts

- Communicate results of meeting to teachers, parents and staff

Responsibilities of all SST Members:
- Meet promptly at designated time and place for meeting
- If you can't attend, inform the SST Coordinator and try to designate a replacement
- Be prepared to give specific and constructive feedback about the students you work with

Responsibilities of Classroom Teachers:
- Keep data (attendance, classwork, observations) on students of concern and communicate your concerns with colleagues and the SST Coordinator
- Keep up to date on which of your students are in the SST process
- Implement interventions consistently
- Keep data on effectiveness of interventions

Responsibilities of Case Managers:
- Participate in SST meetings for students on your caseload
- Be prepared to give specific and constructive feedback about the students you work with
- Follow-up with SST recommendations for interventions such as counseling, health care, court referrals, or home visits
- Give regular updates about students on your caseload to SST members and teachers
- Manage behavior plans

(SST Flow Chart Appendix D)

18.   FIELD TRIP POLICY

Field trips are opportunities to enhance or introduce a curricular theme. Field trips require preparation and follow-up. Students who miss the preparation will not be allowed to go on the field trip.   At least one teacher should be designated, prior to departure, to take students who do not follow the rules back to school or stay with students who refuse to return to school. School policies and code of conduct and the rules of field trip destination need to be strictly followed. Teachers will warn students one time if rules are not being followed. More than one warning warrants return to school and subsequent SST meeting. Students who refuse to return to school will need to participate in a community conference before returning to school.

19. TEST INTEGRITY AND GED POLICIES

TEST INTEGRITY

The Next Step / Testing Administration and Support Department does not tolerate any form of testing dishonesty and is committed to protect test integrity. The test content and material must be secured at all times and students are responsible for meeting all the testing requirements and following the testing rules and proctors guidelines.

If a student attempts to cheat or share testing content, the **Testing Administration and Support Department and principals** have the right to review the test recording/environment, interview the persons involved, request a Restorative Circle dialogue with all parties involved, and decide to invalidate the test or retest the student.

Testing Rules

   Cheating is prohibited.
   Virtual Testing Students:
   Consent to be proctored and recorded during testing
   Will follow all virtual testing guidelines and meet all requirements
   In-Person Test takers will be monitored at all times
   Food and drinks are not allowed during testing
   No watches, phones, and headphones are allowed
   No unscheduled restroom breaks are permitted.
   You will not copy, reproduce, or discuss the content of
   the test with anyone, including the proctor and teachers.

GED POLICIES OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

The GED policies and testing calendar provide structure and support to GED Level 5 students. These policies and calendars have the following in mind: Official GED waiting periods, GED Ready expiration date, school-wide events, Official GED registration process, and graduation planning. Every student in the GED Program should follow these policies and testing calendar and contact the Testing Administration and Support if they have any questions or concerns.

ELIGIBILITY

Students who earn level 5/6 on the Reading or Math sections of the TABE or STAR are considered part of the GED Program.

STUDENT PRIVACY

The Testing Administration and Support Department will assist GED Level 5 students in creating GED accounts and keep records of each student's login information, and no other school staff members will have access to the student's records. Students must notify the Testing Administration and Support Department if they change their password.

OFFICIAL GED REGISTRATION DOCUMENTS

Students are responsible for providing proof of identity and D.C. residency for Official GED registration. The Testing Administration and Support Department will work with students, case managers, and the enrollment team to help students acquire the necessary documentation. The Testing Administration Department will not share this information without the student's consent.

GED READY

Students in the GED program will take the GED Ready practice test(s) in the subjects they are eligible for at the dates and times scheduled by the Testing Administration and Support Department.

> Any student who earns level 5 or 6 on the TABE or STAR Reading section will be eligible to take the GED Ready in Language Arts and Social Studies.
> Any student who earns level 5 or 6 on the TABE or STAR Math section will be eligible to take the GED Ready in Math and Science.

The only case in which students may be allowed to take GED Ready tests in subjects they are not qualified for based on TABE/STAR scores is when they passed all their eligible Official GED tests and are in level 4 classes for the remaining subjects. Students in level 3 or 2 on the remaining subjects are given special schedules to improve the skills needed for the missing subjects.

The Next Step PCS provides funding for the GED Ready. GED Ready scores are valid for 60 days from the day you take the test. No retakes will be allowed until the next scheduled testing session. Make-up tests for students with excused absences are offered at the discretion of the Testing Administration and Support Department.

OFFICIAL GED TESTING

Students who earn a score of 145 or above on their GED Ready test will be eligible to take the Official GED test, and the Next Step PCS will provide funding for the Official

GED tests. The Testing Administration and Support Department will schedule or support students in scheduling their Official GED tests at the DC OSSE GED Testing and Verifications Office. If students need to cancel/reschedule their exam, they must notify The Testing Administration and Support immediately.

ATTENDANCE

GED students who have not yet passed all four Official GED subject tests must adhere to the same attendance policy as all other students. The Testing Administration and Support will communicate information regarding any special schedules for GED students directly to teachers and staff as soon as possible; students who passed two Official GED subjects are eligible for an abbreviated schedule.

RETESTING

Students who have attempted an Official GED subject test one or two times and wish to re-test are required to wait 30 calendar days before attempting the same subject. If students attempt the same Official GED subject test three or more times, they must wait 60 calendar days between subsequent administrations of the same subject test. The Testing Administration and Support Department will not honor GED Ready or GED Official tests that a student takes in a subject for which they are not eligible nor any GED test that a student takes on their own time outside of official school administration

GED GRADUATES

Students who pass all four sections of the Official GED during a semester may choose one of the following options (Graduate students directed to the CLS Department for support in obtaining their GEDtranscript/ diploma and for post-secondary planning).

Option #1: Students who pass all sections of the Official GED may choose to withdraw from The Next Step PCS.

Option #2: Students who pass all sections of the Official GED may choose to remain in school and switch to the ESL track for the rest of the semester. These students must abide by all relevant school policies while enrolled at The Next Step PCS. They must take the CLAS-E test to determine their ESL placement level and test with the rest of their class during the school-wide post-testing period.

20.   WITHDRAWAL POLICY

The Next Step works hard to retain all students, but students may be withdrawn from the rolls of The Next Step for the following reasons:

- Passed GED
- Work reasons
- Excessive absences
- Move from DC
- Transfer to another school
- Family/Personal Problems
- Expelled

21.   PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

The Next Step PCS strives to involve parents/legal guardians in school activities, decision-making and their children's education, as well as to offer community and educational resources to students' families. The purpose of the parental involvement policy is to encourage parental involvement to increase student's academic successes.

Participating in School Activities
Parents/legal guardians are welcome to visit The Next Step anytime.
In addition, the following structured activities and meetings are scheduled:
- A New Student Orientation session is held at the beginning of each semester to review student policies, including attendance requirements and all rules and regulations as well as opportunities for parent involvement. A copy of parent and student handbook, the class schedule, school calendar, provided to students and parents/legal guardians.
- There are parent-teacher-student conferences at the middle and end of each semester to review students' academic progress as well as attendance and behavior data.
- There are special events, including semester celebrations, heritage celebrations, student exhibits and performances, and winter and summer graduations.
- There are meetings and communication with service providers scheduled as needed regarding students' social and emotional health needs, case management needs, and behavior issues. This includes home visits, as necessary. Parents/legal guardians are encouraged to visit school or communicate with service providers at any time.

Communication
All communications are conducted in English or Spanish, depending on the native language of the family. Most staff are bilingual. All written communications are in English and Spanish, primarily.

- Service providers communicate regularly with parents/legal guardians by telephone regarding attendance and behavior. The day a student is absent, the registrar phones the student's residence that morning.
- Service providers will visit a student's home if there is serious attendance, behavior, family or other issue detected, as well as during a student's maternity leave.
- Letters are sent home regarding No Child Left Behind (NCLB), highly qualified teachers, school policies, and school activities.

Parent Resources and Workshops
- The Next Step School Policies and Student Handbook includes parent resources such as health clinics, where and how to apply for health insurance, immunization centers, dental clinics, food distribution centers, day care centers, mental health resources, and resources for legal and immigration issues
- The Next Step offers workshops for parents/legal guardians on parenting, understanding teenagers, substance abuse, suicide, anger, depression, peer pressure, family counseling, cultural and religious sensitivity, tenant rights, financial literacy, first time homebuyer opportunities, college access and other topics of concern to parents of adolescents.

Filing a Grievance (*see list of contacts on the next page*)

In situations in which a student or parent/legal guardian wishes to bring a complaint or grievance to the attention of The Next Step PCS:

1. If a student or parent/legal guardian feels that an issue requires an action or explanation, the student or parent/legal guardian should first discuss it with the principal. This could include a meeting, email or phone call, or any other possible measure aimed at resolving the situation.

2. If the student or parent/legal guardian does not consider the answer or action to be satisfactory within a period of thirty days from the original date of the grievance, the issue must be referred to the Executive Director of The Next Step PCS. The student or parent/legal guardian may also request a meeting with the Executive Director of The Next Step PCS. The decision of the Executive Director of The Next Step PCS will determine the next course of action, and or any final decisions.

3.   Agreements will be kept in the confidential files in the Executive Director of The Next Step PCS's Office.

If the complaint is against the Principal:

If the situation involves the principal and the nature of the problem cannot be properly discussed with the principal, then the student or parent/legal guardian may discuss the situation with the Executive Director of The Next Step PCS, by following the steps above.

If the complaint is against the Executive Director:

If the complaint is against the Executive Director of The Next Step PCS, the student or parent/legal guardian may contact The Next Step's Board Chair. The student or parnet.legal guardian may request a meeting with the Board Chair.

The following is a list of people that students, parents/legal guardians can contact to file a grievance:

Name	Title	e-mail or phone number
	Chief of Academic Officer	
Dra. Vivian Robledo	Executive Director, The Next Step PCS	vrobledo@nextsteppcs.org
Steve Cartwright	Board Chair, The Next Step PCS	steve.cartwright@gmail.com

22.   FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

The Next Step adheres to The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99). It is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records

unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.

- Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records, which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.

- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):

  o School officials with legitimate educational interest: school employee in an administrative, counseling, supervisory, academic, student support services, research position, or support personnel to these positions; or
  A person employed by or under contract to the agency or school to perform a special task.
  o Other schools to which a student is transferring;
  o Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
  o Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
  o Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
  o Accrediting organizations;
  o To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
  o Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
  o State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

(US Department of Education)

Appendix A: School Calendar

The Next Step Public Charter School
School Calendar 2023 - 2024

August 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

September 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

October 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

November 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

December 2023

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

January 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

February 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29		

March 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

April 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

May 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

June 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

July 2024

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31	1	2	3

List of Important Dates

Date	Event
Aug 7 - 23, 25	No School for Students and 10-Month Staff
Aug 24	New Teacher Orientation
Aug 28 - 29	Professional Development for Staff - No Students
Aug 30 - Sept 1	Departmental Planning for Staff - No Students
Sept 4	Labor Day
Sept 5	First Day of Semester I & Student Orientation
Oct 9	Indigenous Peoples' Day
Oct 19	Half Day for Students & Afternoon PD for Staff
Oct 20	Mental Health Day
Nov 10	Veterans' Day
Nov 22 - 24	Thanksgiving Break
Dec 15	Students and Staff Half Day
Dec 25	Christmas
Dec 18 - 29	Winter Break
Jan 1	New Year's Day
Jan 2	No School for Students and Staff - Building Closed
Jan 15	Martin Luther King Jr. Day
Jan 25	Graduation
Jan 26	Last Day of Semester - Students and Staff Half Day
Jan 29 - 30	Professional Development for Staff
Jan 31	Departmental Planning for Staff - No Students
Feb 1	First Day of Semester II
Feb 19	Presidents' Day
Mar 15	Mental Health Day
Apr 5	Half Day for Students & Afternoon PD for Staff
Apr 15 - 19	Spring Break
Apr 17	Emancipation Day
May 24	Mental Health Day
May 27	Memorial Day
June 19	Juneteenth
June 27	Graduation
June 28	Last Day of Semester - Students and Staff Half Day
Jul 1 - 2	No School for Students and 10 - Month Staff
Jul 3 - 5	Summer Break
Jul 8 - Aug 1	TNS Summer Institute
Aug 2	Departmental Planning for Staff - No Students

Key

Color	Description
	New Teacher Orientation
	First Day of Semester
	Last Day of Semester - Students and Staff Half Day
	Graduation
	Post Testing for Students
	Interim Testing for Students
	Professional Development for Staff - No Students
	Departmental Planning for Staff - No Students
	TNS Summer Institute - Half Day for Students
	Half Day for Students & Afternoon PD for Staff
	Students and Staff Half Day
	Staff Mental Health Day - Building Closed
	No School for Students and Staff - Building Closed
x	No School for Students and 10 - Month Staff

Instructional Days

Month	Days	Month	Days
Sept	19	Feb	20
Oct	20	Mar	20
Nov	18	Apr	17
Dec	11	May	21
Jan	17	Jun	19

Total Number of Instructional Days - 182 Days

Snow Days

Mar 15, Apr 15 -16, Apr 18, and May 24 - **5 Days**

Day Program Hours

9 am - 3 pm, Monday - Friday

Evening Program Hours

6 pm - 9 pm, Monday - Thursday

Other Program Hours

1 pm - 6 pm, Monday - Thursday

The Next Step PCS (TNSPCS) will be closed for all students and all employees on dates highlighted in red. TNSPCS employees are not required to use PTO when the building is closed.

Important Testing Dates

Date	Test
Nov 7 - 9	Interim Testing
Jan 23 - 26	CLAS-E Post Testing
Jan 23 - 26	TABE Post Testing
Apr 9 - 11	Interim Testing
June 25 - 27	TABE Post Testing
June 25 - 27	CLAS-E Post Testing
July 30 - Aug 1	TABE Post Testing

El Próximo Paso
THE NEXT
STEP
PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

The Next Step Public Charter School

Chronic/Extended Illness Notification Form

Some illnesses that affect students are expected to cause a certain number of absences from school that exceeds the number allowed by The Next Step. In an effort to maximize the academic participation and performance of all students, without adding any unnecessary burdens on families, this form was created. It entitles some students to miss a limited number of days, as expected by the student's doctor or health care provider.

The Next Step realizes that while these conditions do exist, not all chronic illnesses warrant school absences.

Some basic requirements should be fulfilled for this form to be accepted:

1. The student's medical or mental health condition may worsen if sent to school.
2. The student will cause potential harm to him/herself or others if sent to school.
3. The student's condition cannot be improved or controlled by regular, approved and treatment measures, i.e. seizure medicine, pain medicine, asthma prevention medication
4. The student's main physician or healthcare provider is aware of the number of missed days and understands that this is unavoidable in view of the nature of the illness.

Illnesses that will not be excused include but are not limited to: headaches, menstrual cramps, eczema, allergies, ADHD, urinary tract infections, mild and moderate asthma.

Each time a student is absent due to the chronic condition, the adult student or parent/legal guardian must send a note stating that the absence was due to the diagnosed chronic medical condition.

To be filled out by physician:

Patient's/Student's name:
_____ Date of birth:_____
Main   Diagnosis:_____
Program:_____
Reason why this patient/student cannot attend school:_____
_____

Has this patient/student been admitted to a hospital this past year for this condition? If so, when?

_____

Is this patient/student regularly followed up with in your office for this condition?
Yes_____   No_____

His/Her next scheduled appointment is: _____(at least twice a year)
Based on my personal knowledge of _____ and his/her medical condition,
I allow him/her to miss_____days every month, not to exceed_____days a school year without the need to come to my office on these days.

Name of treating physician_____

Physician contact number_____

Physician signature_____ Date_____

Appendix D: Request for Exceptional Circumstance to Attendance Form

The Next Step Public Charter School

Request for Exceptional Circumstance to Attendance Form

Student's Name: _____

Date of Request: _____

Program: _____

_____

Reason for Absence:

_____

_____

Date(s) of Absence: _____

Full Day: ☐   Part Day: ☐   Time Departing: _____

                                                                Time Returning: _____

(Student must follow the school's normal early dismissal and late arrival procedures.)

For absences of up to 3 days per year, the principal may determine whether the absences will be excused or unexcused. This completed form should be submitted to the principal in advance or within **2 (two)** days of returning to school.

For absences in excess of three days, the principal in consultation with the administrative directors will determine if the absences will be excused or unexcused. If the request is for 15 consecutive days or more, the written request should be submitted 2 weeks in advance or within **2 (two)** days of returning to school.

Student Signature: _____

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature: _____

Disposition: Approved: ☐   Disapproved: ☐

Principal Signature: _____

This document is to certify that I have received all The Next Step Public Charter School policies handbook.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____