

**THE NEXT STEP PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL  
SCHOOL POLICIES HANDBOOK  
SCHOOL YEAR 2018-2019**



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## **1. MISSION, VISION AND VALUES**

### **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.

### **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.

### **Values**

The Next Step/El Próximo Paso Public Charter School values academic achievement, collaboration and respect, persistence and responsibility, and structure and support.

## **2. STAFF DIRECTORY**

### **Management Team**

Mathis, Jonathan – Executive Director  
Melvin, Taunya – Chief Operating Officer  
Martínez, Juan Carlos – Chief of Talent and Outcomes  
Martínez, Arturo – Day School Principal  
Ramírez, Oscar – Night School Principal  
Shelton, Brandi – Director of Student Support & Engagement

### **Day Faculty**

Alcázar, Paula – ESL Teacher  
Bryson, Jill – GED Teacher  
Castañer, Angel – GED Teacher  
Castañer, Yanira – GED Teacher  
Csoma, Jessica – ESL/ELA Teacher  
Espinoza, Marcelo – GED/GED Teacher/Instructional Aide  
Epperly, Alex – ESL Teacher  
Fernández, Diego – Computer Literacy Teacher  
Franklin, LaShaun – ESL/ELA Teacher  
Henderson, Phyllis – ESL/GED Teacher  
Lane, Mary – ESL Teacher  
Lugo, John Anthony – GED Teacher  
Minter, Scott – ESL/GED Teacher  
Morris, Lila – GED Teacher  
Newbold, Greg – Day Special Education Teacher  
Ramírez, Carlos Rubén – GED Teacher  
Ríos, Daniel – GED Teacher  
Shelton, Fred – ESL Teacher  
Torres, Josué – GED Teacher  
Verástegui, Erick – ESL Teacher  
TBD – Instructional Aide  
TBD – Instructional Aide

### **Night Faculty**

Ball, Nicole – ESL Teacher  
Carias, Luis – Instructional Aide  
Hill, Denise – GED Teacher  
Jiménez, Katia – ESL Teacher  
Jiménez, Miguel – GED Teacher  
Killiany, Kenneth – ESL Teacher  
Moya, Ana – GED Teacher  
Ortega, Ana – ESL Teacher  
Oz-Sinai, Shira – GED Teacher  
Reed, Elizabeth – ESL Teacher  
Reyes, Jacqueline – ESL Teacher

Thomas, Homer – GED Teacher  
Wesley, Erik – GED Teacher  
Williams, Eugenia – GED Teacher  
TBD – GED Teacher  
TBD – ESL Teacher  
TBD – Instructional Aide  
TBD – Special Ed. Coordinator/Teacher

### **Academic Support Services**

Cuéllar, Michael – Night School Curriculum and Instruction Coordinator  
Edouard, Teddy – Day School Instructional Coach  
Flores, Elsa – Night Assessments Coordinator  
Gatica, María Paz – Day School Instructional Coach  
Harris, Lily – Director of Assessments  
Manrique, Beth – Day School Curriculum and Instruction Coordinator  
Pajares, Steve – Executive Assistant  
TBD – Night School Instructional Coach  
TBD – Night School Instructional Coach

### **Student Support Services**

Fernández, Sahira – Night Case Manager  
Conchola, Sesilia – Day Social Worker  
Carlos Juárez – Night Attendance and Transportation Coordinator  
González, Edson – Day Case Manager  
Hamadi, Adama – Day Case Manager  
Melgar, Josué – Attendance and Transportation Coordinator  
Soto, Vita – Night College & Career Readiness Advisor  
Trejo, Lita – Day Case Manager  
Choto, Dalia – Night School Case Manager  
TBD – Day College & Career Readiness Advisor

### **Central Office and Operations**

Brown, Joshua – Director of Administration  
Buckmon, Angelica – Night Security Guard  
Denny, Gary – Night Custodian  
Reyes, José – Building Manager  
Sanchez, Raymond – Day Security Guard  
Santos, Isabel – Day Custodian  
Shelton, Teandra – Night Security Guard  
Steadman, Kisha – Certified Food Handler  
Underwood, Paulina – Senior Specialist Enrollment, Communications & Marketing  
Ventura, Iris – Part-time Assessments Monitor/Administrative Assistant  
TBD – Maintenance Specialist  
TBD – Day Security Guard

**Data, Analytics & Technology**

Thomas Boswick – Data Analyst

Espinosa Joa, Miguel Angel – Technical Support

TBD – I.T. Support Specialist

**Child Care Program (Night School only)**

Ochoa, Maribel – Child Care Program Supervisor

Zelaya, Fidelina – Child Development Associate

Velásquez, Glenda – Child Development Associate

Núñez, Yarisá – Child Development Associate

Rivera, Dora – Child Development Associate

### **3. SCHOOL CALENDAR**

The Next Step Public Charter School operates year-round and is divided into two semesters and a summer session, which is an extension of semester two. Refer to The Next Step PCS 2018 – 2019 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 24. Students who are not DC residents will be required to pay tuition.

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 16-24 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**

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. NRS levels are determined by the National Reporting Service (NRS) for adult basic education. 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 an NRS level is determined, students are placed accordingly.

**Student Placement and Promotion Chart**

<b>TABE SCORE</b>	<b>NRS LEVEL</b>	<b>TNS LEVEL</b>
0 to 1.9 GE*	1	Basic
2 to 3.9 GE	2	
4 to 5.9 GE	3	Intermediate
6 to 7.9 GE	4	
9.0 to 10.9 GE	5	Advanced
11.0 to 12.9 GE	6	

\* GE = Grade Equivalent

<b>CLAS-E SCORE</b>	<b>NRS LEVEL</b>	<b>TNS LEVEL</b>
0 - 394	1	Beginning
395 - 441	2	
442 - 482	3	Intermediate
483 - 514	4	
515 - 556	5	Advanced
557 - 600	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
<b>GED English Language Arts</b> - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6 <b>GED Mathematics</b> - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6 <b>GED Science</b> - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6 <b>GED Social Studies</b> - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6	<b>Beginning:</b> <b>ESL 1 – Beginning</b> <b>Literacy</b> <b>ESL 2 – Low Beginning</b> <b>Intermediate:</b> <b>ESL 3 – High Beginning</b> <b>ESL 4 – Low Intermediate</b> <b>Advanced:</b> <b>ESL 5 – High Intermediate</b> <b>ESL 6 – Advanced</b> (Levels may be combined)	<b>GED English Language Arts</b> - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6 <b>GED Mathematics</b> - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6 <b>GED Science</b> - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6 <b>GED Social Studies</b> - Levels 1, 2, 3, 4, 5/6

### 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 2014 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 9/10, the 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 the scores mean.

1	2	3	4
Student has partially met the standard <i>with help</i> , but needs more practice to become independent.	Student has partially met the standard and needs more practice to be proficient.	<b>Student has met the standard and is ready for more difficult work.</b>	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 grading system where all grades are kept, and from which progress reports and final report cards are generated and handed to students each semester and at the end of the year. Teachers are required to measure each standard or skills 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 receive feedback on their progress in several ways. Each student meets regularly with his/her teachers to review performance data.

### Monthly Progress Updates

- Class grades / how well the student is meeting the standards of each level
- Missing assignments
- Attendance data, including absences, tardies and early dismissals
- Criteria for moving to the next level

### End-of-Semester Progress Reports

- Data from pre- and post-tests: TABE 9/10, TABE CLAS-E, GED Ready and other standardized assessments
- Report card with final grades: how well the student met the standards of each NRS level
- Attendance data, including absences, tardies and early dismissals
- Placement for next semester

## Assessments

The Next Step tracks student progress on various standardized assessments each semester. All students take the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) in English or Spanish at the end of the semester. 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) as well as the W-APT and WIDA ACCESS Test. In addition to subject-specific classroom assessments, and interim assessments, teachers determine student levels using adaptive computer-based platforms, such as *GED Academy*, *Achieve3000*, *Reading Horizons*, and *Kahn Academy*.

**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 abundant instruction and practice.

### **Promotion\***

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

- Demonstrate NRS level of the target level as evaluated by the TABE 9/0, TABE CLAS-E, and GED Ready examinations.

\*ESL NRS level does not affect promotion in Spanish language content courses

## **6. CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Next Step adheres to the Code of Conduct to support our values: Academic Achievement; Collaboration and Respect; Persistence and Responsibility; and Structure and Support. (Appendix B)

Violations of the code of conduct are handled using *Restorative Practices* in line with the severity of the infraction(s). *Restorative Practices* are preventative in nature, are used to repair harm done to the school community, and consequences are considered according to the code of conduct. **Students with and without disabilities follow the same code of conduct**; their disabilities are considered when addressing the code of conduct violation. The sequence of interventions upon code of conduct violations is as follows:

- In-class intervention by the teacher
- Out-of-class intervention by the teacher

- Restorative circle with principal with a written agreement
- Student Support Team meeting
- Student Support Team meeting with behavior/attendance intervention plan
- **Community conference, with potential suspension or expulsion**

Each potential infraction that would warrant any intervention above (I to VI) is listed on the Code of Conduct (see Appendix B). 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. 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 must engage in a restorative conference with the principal before re-entering class. After returning, the students must agree to repair the harm they caused, and it's up to them to come up with the solution to make things better. 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 takes the safety of students and staff very seriously. The only time an expulsion is considered is when:

- Students engage in verbal or physical sexual misconduct that is clearly unwanted and unwelcome (particularly if it's repetitive)
- Students display gang-related behavior or paraphernalia; actively engage in recruitment for their gangs, or cause harm to others as a result of proven gang-related activity on campus
- Students bring weapons to school with the intent to cause harm (these can be knives, machetes, fire arms (guns, rifles, automatic-weapons, etc.), and or biological weapons (harmful chemicals or substances)
- Students show up under the influence of illegal drugs or substances, or engage in the buying or selling of illegal substances on school property
- Students directly bully or threaten the safety of students and staff and refuse to engage in a restorative conference, or students physically assault another student or staff member

### **Appeals Procedure for Students Who are Suspended or Expelled**

A decision to suspend or expel a student will never be made without having a restorative conference with the student and parent/legal guardian. At the restorative conference a decision is made to suspend or expel a student, if they violated any of the infractions listed above which they do not want to repair via a restorative conversation, or if they violated one of the 5 infractions that warrant an expulsion. After a decision is made to suspend or expel a student, an appeal process is available to students and parents/legal guardians that do not agree with the consequence (See also “Filing Grievances” under Section 21. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT). Here are the steps to follow if a student/parent or legal guardian wants to appeal a decision to suspend or expel a student:

1. Student and parent/legal guardians must request a meeting with the principal to appeal the decision.
2. If the principal is not available, the student and parents/legal guardians can request a meeting with the designee of the principal. The case is then presented to an appointed official outside of the school, who is familiar with restorative practices, and he or she will make the determination to apply the consequence or to withdraw the consequence.
3. If the results of this appeal are not satisfactory or seem unfair to the student, parent/legal guardian, they can request a meeting with the Executive Director for further consideration.
4. In the event that the Executive Director’s decision is still not satisfactory to the student or parent/legal guardian, a request to meet with the Chair of the Board of Directors can be made.
5. If the issue is not resolved to the student’s and parent’s/legal guardian’s satisfaction, a formal complaint can be made at the DC Public Charter School Board.
6. A final decision will be made between the Chair of the Board of Directors of The Next Step PCS and the Executive Director of the DC Public Charter School Board to uphold or to reverse the decision initially made by the Principal or his or her designee.

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

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>e-mail or phone number</b>
Arturo Martinez	Day Principal, The Next Step PCS	<a href="mailto:arturo@nextsteppcs.org">arturo@nextsteppcs.org</a> (202) 319-2249
Oscar Ramirez	Night Principal, The Next Step PCS	<a href="mailto:oscar@nextsteppcs.org">oscar@nextsteppcs.org</a> (202) 319-2249
Jonathan Mathis	Executive Director, The Next Step PCS	<a href="mailto:jonathan@nextsteppcs.org">jonathan@nextsteppcs.org</a> (202) 319-2249
John Ingold	Board Chair, The Next Step PCS	<a href="mailto:john.ingold@gmail.com">john.ingold@gmail.com</a>
Scott Pearson	Executive Director, DC PCSB	<a href="mailto:spearson@dcpcsb.org">spearson@dcpcsb.org</a>

	202-328-2660
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## **Code of Conduct – Students with Disabilities (Manifestation Determination Process and Due Process)**

Nothing herein shall exempt a student with a disability from disciplinary action.

In initiating disciplinary procedures applicable to all students, The Next Step PCS must ensure that the special education and disciplinary records of the student with a disability are transmitted for consideration by the person or person(s) making the final determination regarding the disciplinary action. At The Next Step PCS that person is the Principal or his or her designee. Such documentation may include, but not be limited to (with any required permission from parent/legal guardian): the student's current IEP, discipline file, cumulative file, anecdotal records from teachers or other school personnel, reports or recommendations from health or mental health clinicians. The person making the disciplinary decision will use restorative practices as the first disciplinary action. If the student is not willing to participate in a restorative conversation, then the Code of Conduct will apply for the required consequence.

If for any reason, temporary or permanent removal of a student from current placement is necessary, for more than ten (10) school days for disciplinary reasons, a manifestation determination meeting will be needed to determine if the subject behavior is related to the student's disability. If the result of the review is a determination that the behavior of the student with a disability was not a manifestation of the child's disability, the relevant disciplinary procedures applicable to students without disabilities may be applied in the same manner in which they would be applied to students without disabilities

The Next Step PCS must make sure a free appropriate public education is available to all eligible students with disabilities, including students with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school. When a student with a disability is removed from his or her current placement for more than ten (10) school days for disciplinary reasons, The Next Step PCS must continue to provide the specialized instruction and related services that are specified on the student's IEP.

Any interim alternative educational setting in which a student is placed must: (a) Be selected so as to enable the student to continue to participate in the general curriculum, although in another setting, and to continue to receive those services and modifications, including those described in the student's current IEP, that will enable the child to meet the goals set out in that IEP; and (b) Include services and modifications designed to address the behavior that led to the temporary removal from school, so that it does not recur.

If a disciplinary action is contemplated as decided in the manifestation determination meeting for a behavior of a student with a disability, or if a proposed disciplinary action involves removal of a student with a disability from his or her current placement for more than ten (10) consecutive school days:

- (a) Not later than the date on which the decision to take that action is made, the parents/legal guardians must be notified of that decision and of all procedural safeguards accorded by law; and
- (b) Immediately, if possible, but in no case later than ten (10) school days after the date on which the decision to take that action is made, a review must be conducted of the relationship between the student's disability and the behavior subject to the disciplinary action.

Within ten (10) school days of any disciplinary decision to remove a student with a disability from his or her current placement, The Next Step PCS, the parent/legal guardian, and relevant members of the student's IEP Team (as determined by the parent and the The Next Step PCS) must review all relevant information in the student's file, including the student's IEP, any teacher observations, and any relevant information provided by the parents to determine: (a) If the conduct in question was caused by, or had a direct and substantial relationship to, the student's disability; or (b) If the conduct in question was the direct result of The Next Step PCS failure to implement the IEP.

The conduct must be determined to be a manifestation of the student's disability if The Next Step PCS, the parent, and relevant members of the student's IEP Team determine that a condition in either 34 CFR 300.530(e)(1)(i) or (1)(ii), the manifestation determination meeting, was met.

If The Next Step PCS, the parent, and relevant members of the student's IEP Team determine the condition described in 34 CFR 300.530(e)(1)(ii), the manifestation determination meeting was met, The Next Step PCS must take immediate steps to remedy those deficiencies.

In carrying out a review, the IEP Team may determine that the behavior of the student was not a manifestation of such student's disability only if the IEP Team:

- (a) First considers, in terms of the behavior subject to disciplinary action, all relevant information, including: (1) Evaluation and diagnostic and results, or other relevant information supplied by the parents of the child; (2) Observations of the student; (3) The student's IEP and placement; and (4) Any other material deemed relevant by the IEP Team, including, but not limited to, school progress reports, anecdotal notes and facts related to disciplinary action taken by administrative personnel; and
- (b) Then determines that: (1) In relationship to the behavior subject to disciplinary action, the student's IEP, and placement were appropriate and the special education services, supplementary aids and services, and

behavior intervention strategies were provided consistent with the student's IEP and placement; (2) The student's disability did not impair the ability of the student to understand the impact and consequences of the behavior subject to disciplinary action; and (3) The student's disability did not impair the ability of the child to control the behavior subject to disciplinary action.

Either before or not later than ten (10) consecutive school days after taking a disciplinary action: (a) If The Next Step PCS did not conduct a functional behavioral assessment and implement a behavioral intervention plan for such student before the behavior that resulted in the suspension described above, The Next Step PCS must convene an IEP meeting to develop an assessment plan to address that behavior; or (b) If the student's parent disagrees with a determination that the student's behavior was not a manifestation of the student's disability or with any decision regarding placement, the parent may request a meeting.

The Next Step PCS must arrange for an expedited hearing, which must occur within twenty (20) school days of the date the complaint requesting the hearing is filed, in any case described in this section when requested by a parent. In reviewing a decision with respect to the manifestation determination, the hearing officer must determine whether The Next Step PCS has demonstrated that the child's behavior was not a manifestation of such child's disability.

A disciplinary hearing officer may recommend the removal of a student with a disability from his or her current placement for not more than forty-five (45) days if the hearing officer: (a) Determines that The Next Step PCS has demonstrated by substantial evidence that maintaining the current placement of such child is substantially likely to result in injury to the child or to others; (b) Considers the appropriateness of the child's current placement; (c) Considers whether The Next Step PCS has made reasonable efforts to minimize the risk of harm in the student's current placement, including the use of supplementary aids and services; and (d) Determines that the interim alternative educational setting meets the requirements described in the placement hearing above.

In recommending the removal of a student with a disability from his or her current placement to an alternative education setting for disciplinary reasons, the hearing officer must apply the standards set out in the hearing where the recommendation was made to remove the student from not more than forty-five (45) days above.

When a parent requests a hearing regarding a disciplinary action to challenge the interim alternative educational setting or the manifestation determination, the student must remain in the interim alternative educational setting pending the decision of the hearing officer or until the expiration of the time period provided (i.e., 45 days), whichever occurs first, unless the parent and The Next Step PCS agree otherwise.

If a student is in an interim alternative educational setting for disciplinary reasons and school personnel propose to change the student's educational placement after expiration of the interim Alternative Setting for disciplinary reasons, during the pendency of any proceeding to challenge the proposed change in placement, the student must remain in the current placement (the student's placement prior to the interim alternative educational setting), except if the placement is dangerous for the student, as outlined below.

If school personnel maintain that it is dangerous for the student to be in the current placement (placement prior to removal to the interim alternative education setting) during the pendency of the due process proceedings, The Next Step PCS may request an expedited hearing.

A student who has not been determined to be eligible for special education and related services under this part and who has engaged in behavior that violated any rule or code of conduct of The Next Step PCS, may assert any of the applicable protections provided for in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, as amended, if The Next Step PCS had knowledge (as determined in accordance below), that the student was a student with a disability before the behavior that precipitated the disciplinary action occurred.

The Next Step PCS is deemed to have knowledge that a student is a student with a disability if: (a) The parent of the student has expressed concern in writing (unless the parent is illiterate or has a disability that prevents compliance with the requirements contained in this clause) to supervisory or administrative personnel of The Next Step PCS, or a teacher of the student, that the student is in need of special education and related services; (c) The parent of the student has requested an evaluation of the student; or (d) The teacher of the student or other personnel of The Next Step PCS has expressed specific concerns about a pattern of behavior or performance of the student to the Coordinator of Special Education or to other The Next Step PCS personnel.

The Next Step PCS is deemed not to have knowledge that a student is a student with a disability if: the parent of the student has not allowed an evaluation of the child pursuant to 34 CFR 300.300 through 300.311 or has refused services under Part B of the IDEA; or the student has been evaluated in accordance with 34 CFR 300.300 through 300.311 and determined to not be a child with a disability under Part B of the IDEA.

If The Next Step PCS does not have knowledge that a student is a student with a disability prior to taking disciplinary measures against the student, the student may be subjected to the same disciplinary measures applied to children without disabilities who engaged in comparable behaviors.

If a request is made for an evaluation of a child during the time period in which the student is subjected to disciplinary measures under this chapter, the evaluation must be conducted in an expedited manner.

If the student is determined to be a student with a disability, taking into consideration information from the evaluation conducted by The Next Step PCS and information provided by parents, The Next Step PCS must provide special education and related services in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, as amended, except that, pending the results of the evaluation, the child must remain in the educational placement determined by school authorities.

Nothing in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, as amended, shall be construed to prevent D.C. law enforcement and judicial authorities from exercising their responsibilities with regard to the application of federal and state law to crimes committed by a child with a disability.

Nothing in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, as amended, shall be construed to prohibit The Next Step PCS from reporting a crime committed by a student with a disability to appropriate authorities. In reporting a crime committed by a child with a disability to appropriate authorities, The Next Step PCS must ensure that copies of the special education and disciplinary records of the child are transmitted for consideration by the appropriate authorities to which it reports the crime.

*Note: The process outlined above was modeled and drafted following the DCPS policy (<https://dcps.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/dcps/publication/attachments/DCMR-Chapter-25-Title-5-Final-Rulemaking-2009.pdf>)*

## **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. Proper attire promotes respect for oneself and others, builds school spirit, and ensures students have a respectable presence in The District of Columbia and the surrounding metro area. 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 waiver request shall be in writing from the parent/legal guardian or student and approved by the principal and/or principal's designee on an annual basis. In considering a waiver request, the principal and/or principal's designee have the right to request additional documentation from medical officials and/or religious leaders.

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 in a manner that is age and developmentally appropriate. Students shall wear attire in a manner that is neat, clean, properly fitted, age-appropriate and suitable for the learning environment.

### V. Clothing

#### Shirts:

- Shirts may not have insignias, logos, labels, words, or pictures related to gangs, drugs, or themes that are offensive
- Shirts must be appropriately sized
- Shirts shall be long enough to cover the midriff when sitting or standing. Furthermore, shirts must cover the chest and back so that part of the body is not inappropriately exposed

#### Pants and Undergarments:

- Pants, jeans, denims, skirts, skorts, jumpers, capri length pants, shorts are acceptable. The length of these articles of clothing shall be **no shorter than three inches** above the top of the knee when standing

- Pants, jeans, denims, skirts, skorts, jumpers, capri length pants must be free of graphics and embroidery. With the exception of small labels, they may not have insignias, logos, words, or pictures that are offensive
- Clothing must be appropriately sized. No baggy or sagging pants or shorts will be allowed. No “low rise” clothing will be allowed
- Pants, jeans, denims, skirts, skorts, jumpers, capri length pants must be worn with the waistband at or above the hip bone
- Leggings and footed tights may be worn only as an accessory under skirts, skorts, dresses, shorts, pants, or capris
- No jeggings will be allowed to replace pants, etc.
- Undergarments may not be visible at any time
- Clothing shall be worn appropriately (not inside-out or backwards; no rolled up pants legs, etc.)
- No see-through or mesh clothing that will reveal the body or will reveal undergarments shall be allowed

Headwear, hats and other accessories:

- No headwear and no sunglasses shall be worn inside school building
- No bandanas shall be allowed
- Only school activity buttons approved by the principal may be worn by students

The Next Step Polo Shirts:

- Students might be given, free of charge, one polo shirt with The Next Step PCS logo upon enrollment
- Students may wear The Next Step PCS polo shirt to attend school if they choose, but it's not required
- Students who wish to purchase additional shirts from The Next Step PCS with the school's logo may do so for a small fee of \$5.00. Only checks, money orders or credit or debit cards will be accepted. No cash will be accepted for the purchases of The Next Step PCS polo shirts

VI. Enforcement:

All of The Next Step PCS staff shall ensure that the dress code policy is enforced in a consistent manner and require the student and the student's parent/legal guardian to take appropriate action to remedy situations determined to be in conflict with this policy.

Students entering the building with questionable attire will be asked to wait at the lobby. The security guard will inform the principal and the principal will take appropriate action, as follows:

Disciplinary action:

1. **First Infraction:** Students shall be informed that they have violated the policy. They will be given an over-sized Next Step Shirt before being allowed to go to class. They must keep that over-size shirt on until the end of the school day. They must return the shirt to the principal or to the receptionist before exiting the building.
2. **A second Infraction:** Students will be informed that they have violated the policy for the second time, and they will be sent home to change and will have the opportunity to come back with adequate attire. They will be given the opportunity to change into acceptable clothing by calling a parent/legal guardian/family member/friend to bring acceptable clothing, while she/he waits in the principal's office. If no one can be contacted to help the student, the student will be sent home.
3. **A third Infraction:** A third infraction of the policy may be considered as defiance, and a restorative conference will be held.
4. **A fourth (and additional) Infraction:** A fourth or additional infraction of the policy may be categorized a serious offense and the student may be excluded from participating in certain school activities. A fourth infraction will be a sign that the student does not want to connect with the school community. A community conference will be held and a contract will be drafted. If student doesn't follow the contract, they may be withdrawn from the school.

## **8. ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **Attendance Policy**

Strong attendance at The Next Step PCS is vital to academic success. Students are expected to come to school on time every day ready to learn to achieve their goals.

There is evidence that a direct relationship exists between attendance and academic success. The more students are present, on time and in the classroom; the more opportunities they have to achieve their goals. We also understand that from time to time it is inevitable to be absent. The attendance

policy outlines expectations regarding daily attendance, tardiness and accountability related to absences for both day and evening programs.

### **Attendance Procedures**

#### **Day Program**

A full school day schedule at The Next Step is from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Students are required to be present during the full school day, which is defined as the entirety of the instructional hours regularly provided on a single school day. A part time day schedule is available for adult students, from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm. Both full and part time students are required to be in class by 9:00 am. All students that enter the building are required to pass through security. Students are required to check-in daily by swiping their ID cards at the scanning station to verify attendance. Students who fail to check-in will be counted as absent and that absence will be documented as unexcused. Students are not permitted to swipe ID cards for other students who may be late or absent.

Students who are not in class by 9:00 am are considered to be late to school. Once they enter the building, a pass will be printed at the scanning station and students should take that pass to go to class. Students who arrive late are offered a school issued breakfast. Students are given 5 minutes to eat breakfast in the cafeteria and are then expected to report to class. Teachers collect tardy passes directly from students and document tardiness in *Schoolology*.

Adult students who arrive after 9:15 am will be given a warning the first time they arrive late. The second time they arrive late, a restorative conversation will take place with the attendance and transportation coordinator and/or with the principal. On the 5th tardy, the student will be asked to go home for the day. They will be asked to return the next day, but before they are permitted to go to class, they will be required to have a Restorative conversation with the attendance and transportation monitor and/or with the principal. On the 10<sup>th</sup> tardy another restorative conference will take place and an attendance contract will be drafted. If the student does not meet the terms of the contract, withdrawal from school will take place, and the student will be allowed to re-enroll for the next semester or the next school year, whichever comes first.

#### **Evening Program**

The Next Step evening program schedule is from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm, Monday through Thursday. Students are required to be on time and in class by 6:00 pm. All students that enter the building follow the same security procedures as the day program.

Students who are not in class by 6:00 pm are considered late to school. A pass will be printed at the scanning station indicating their time of arrival and students should take that pass to go to class. Late arrivals for evening students are tracked and documented in accordance with the day program. Students who have arrived late are offered a school issued dinner. Students are given 5-10 minutes to eat dinner in the cafeteria and are then expected to report to class. Teachers collect tardy passes and document tardiness in Schoology. Teachers integrate tardy students into class.

Adult students who arrive after 6:15 pm will be considered tardy and will be given a warning the first time they arrive late. The second time they arrive late, a restorative conversation will take place with the attendance and transportation coordinator or with the principal. After 5 tardies, the student will be asked to go home for the day. On the 10<sup>th</sup> tardy a restorative conference will take place and an attendance contract will be drafted.

### **Early Dismissal**

#### **Day and Evening Programs**

Students are expected to be in school from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm (full time, day), or 6:00 pm to 9:00 (evening) unless they have an early departure pass. Part time students will have a different dismissal time, depending on the schedule each semester. Students under the age of 18 must have permission from their parent or guardian to be granted an early departure from school. Students who request early departure for an appointment or due to illness must get an early departure pass from the attendance and transportation coordinator and scan their IDs on their way out to register time of departure. If the attendance and transportation coordinator is not available, a student may request an early departure pass from the registrar. The attendance and transportation coordinator/registrar document the reason for leaving early.

**Adult students** may request an early dismissal pass for an official purpose, as detailed under “Excused Absence” below. If he or she leaves for any other reason (i.e. work, or other inexcusable reasons) their departure will be counted as an unexcused absence. **Adult students** who leave 15 minutes before their last class ends for the day without an excuse, or without an early dismissal pass, will be given a warning by the attendance and transportation coordinator and/or principal. The second time, they will engage in a restorative conversation with the attendance and transportation coordinator and/or the principal. When the student reaches 10 early departures, without an excuse, a restorative conference will be held and a contract will be drafted.

## Attendance Interventions

All staff are responsible for encouraging daily school and classroom attendance and the attendance and transportation coordinator is responsible for ensuring proper interventions are implemented consistently to support students.

## Intervention Process

**\*\* See table**

## Absences

For students who are considered minors (under the age of 18), parents/legal guardians are encouraged to notify the school of pre-arranged appointments as soon as the dates of such appointments are known. Students who are 18 years old or older are encouraged to follow the same protocol for themselves.

A written or officially issued note providing the dates of and reasons for the student's absence is required the day the student returns to school. The purpose of the note is to determine whether or not the student's absence is excused or unexcused. The attendance and transportation coordinator will determine whether the absence is excused or unexcused based on whether or not the student provides valid documentation upon his or her return. See excused and unexcused absences below.

If a student leaves school without permission, or if he or she fails to return to school after lunch, the parent/legal guardian will be notified, and a restorative conversation will need to take place before the student is allowed back in class.

If an **adult student** leaves school without permission, or if he or she fails to return to school after lunch, the student will be counted absent. A restorative conversation will take place before they are allowed back in class.

**A. Excused absence** means that the student has a formally written document that speaks directly to the date(s) he or she was absent and that document has been submitted to the attendance and transportation coordinator the day on which he or she returns to school. The following conditions represent acceptable reasons for a student's absence to be considered as excused:

- **Illness** – When a student is unable to attend school due to an illness, a note written by the student (age 18 or older), by the parent/legal guardian (under age 18), or by a health professional documenting the illness is required. **Note: An adult student may only write up to 5 excuses due to illness; otherwise a doctor's note is required.**

- **Chronic/Extended Illness** – For students who are absent due to chronic illness, a disability, maternity leave or because of a need for homebound services, the adult student or parent/guardian must complete a **Chronic/Extended Illness Notification Form** with the principal at the beginning of enrollment into The Next Step or upon the onset of the student's condition that affects regular attendance. Documentation from a physician or healthcare provider is required.
- **Prearranged Appointments** – For appointments with the court, social services or other state agencies and appointments with health care providers, official documentation must be presented to the attendance and transportation coordinator.
- **Family Death or Emergency** – For absences because of a death in the family or an emergency beyond the family's control, the adult student or parent/legal guardian must notify the school and provide documentation for the absence(s).
- **Religious Observances** – Absences due to observances of religious holidays should be pre-arranged by the adult student, or parent/legal guardian and the attendance and transportation coordinator should be notified.
- **Exceptional Circumstances** – The principal may approve pre-arranged absences for situations in which an exemption from attendance appears to be in the best interest of the student and his or her family:
  - Severe injury
  - Moving to a new residence (including unexpected homelessness)
  - Travel due to adjustment of immigration status
  - Passport and/or identification renewal

Prior to the student's absence, the **adult student** or parent/legal guardian must complete the **Request for Exceptional Circumstance to Attendance Form**. The adult student or parent/legal guardian will document the rationale for the absence and date(s) of absence. The principal will provide the approval or non-approval on the form. In documented extenuating circumstances, the principal may approve an absence after the fact as exempt from the sanctions of the attendance policy.

For those circumstances which cause the student to be absent and prior request for approval is not possible, the adult student or parent/legal guardian must complete the **Request for Exceptional Circumstance to Attendance Form** as soon as the student knows about the potential absences, and needs to submit a

valid note excusing the absence. Upon return to school, the student must bring a valid excuse for the absences, if they have not already submitted one.

**B. Unexcused Absence** means that a student has failed to report to school and/or provide proper notification or documentation to the principal or attendance and transportation coordinator. **After their 10th absence**, adult students are permitted to write up to five (5) excuses starting on their 11th absence, not to exceed 5 total excuses. Students will be required to bring their excuse note the very day they return to school, after they have been absent.

The following explanations (not exhaustive) will not be accepted as excused absences:

- Running late to school
- Failure to attend or departing field trips without permission
- Work obligations
- Child Care of siblings or extended family members

When students who are under 18 years of age are absent without an excuse after 10 school days, the attendance monitor alerts their service provider, who then refers the students to a community-based agency.

When a student reaches 15 unexcused absences and is under 18, the attendance and transportation coordinator sends a referral form with the appropriate documentation to the Court Social Services Division of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) Juvenile Section DC Superior Court and The Next Step waits for court intervention before withdrawing, consistently following up with the student and their parent to encourage attendance. Withdrawing or unenrolling a student of compulsory school age (under 18) will not take place, unless the student has accumulated 20 consecutive unexcused full days of school.

When an **adult student** over 18 reaches 10 unexcused absences, the attendance and transportation coordinator makes a recommendation for withdrawal. If the student is non-attending and reaches 10 unexcused absences, the attendance and transportation coordinator makes a recommendation for withdrawal and sends a letter home to the student stating that they have been withdrawn. Students withdrawn due to excessive absences are welcome to reapply for the following semester and they start the new semester with an attendance support plan.

## **9. ATTENDANCE INCENTIVE PROGRAM**

The purpose of the incentive program is to have strong attendance and reach the goal of 80% attendance individually and 80% as a school. Students will be recognized for having perfect attendance weekly and by semester. Students that have perfect attendance for the week will be recognized at the Monday Community Meeting. Their names will be called and one name will be picked at random to receive a \$20 gift card. The prizewinner must be present to receive the gift card and names will be picked at random until the prizewinner is present. Students that have perfect attendance for a semester will receive a \$100 gift card at the opening Community Meeting of the following semester.

## **10. PASS POLICY**

The purpose of the pass policy is to ensure that students transition smoothly from one place to another and staff can recognize where they are going to optimize the time in the classroom.

### **Tardy Pass**

Students who come to school late, after 9:00 a.m. for day school and 6:00 p.m. for night school will get a tardy pass from the scanning machine, and they will need to take it to their teacher to allow them in class.

### **Early Departure Pass**

Students cannot leave the building without a pass. Students need to request early departure passes from their service providers. The service provider will document the reason and grant the student an early departure pass if appropriate. Students will show the pass to the attendance and transportation coordinator or registrar when leaving and they will document the early departure.

### **Student Support Pass**

Students who need to see a service provider or counselor during class time due to an emergency must obtain permission from their teacher. The teacher will write the students name, reason for referral, and time. The student will give the pass to the service provider or counselor and he/she will write the return time, sign the pass and will tell the student to give the pass to the teacher when they return to class. The service provider or counselor will document the visit.

### **Office Referral Pass**

Students who need to see the Principal or registrar during class time, or students who are sent to the office must have an office referral pass. The teacher will write

the students name, reason for referral, and time. The student will give the pass to the Principal or registrar and he/she will write the return time, sign the pass and will tell the student to give the pass to the teacher when they return to class. The Principal will document the visit.

## **11. TRANSITIONS**

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. YOUNG PARENT PROGRAM**

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)

## **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 will 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. The student-teacher ratio should be eight to one, or five to one in more challenging situations. 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. GED EXAM AND GED EXAM POLICY**

### **1) Eligibility**

All students who earn a score of level 5 or 6 on the Reading and/or Total Math sections of the TABE are considered to be part of the GED program. Any student who earns a score of level 5 or 6 on the Reading section of the TABE will be enrolled in level 5/6 Language Arts and Social Studies classes. Any student who earns a score of level 5 or 6 on the Total Math section of the TABE will be enrolled in level 5/6 Math and Science classes.

### **2) Student Privacy**

The assessments department will assist all GED students in creating accounts via MyGED.com. The assessments department will keep records of each student's login information and will have access to each GED student's account. If the student forgets or changes his or her password, he or she must notify the assessment department promptly. No other members of school staff will have access to the student's MyGED.com account.

### **3) Documentation**

Students are responsible for providing the requisite documentation to prove both identity and D.C. residency. The assessments department will manage the collection of these documents and will not share this information with other staff members without the students' consent. The assessments department will work with students and - with the students' consent - with the student support team to help students acquire the necessary documentation. Students must turn in all documents by the deadline imposed by the assessments department.

### **4) GED Ready**

Students in the GED program will take the GED Ready practice test(s) in the subjects for which they are eligible at the dates and times scheduled by the assessments department. Any student who earns a score of NRS level 5 or 6 on the Reading section of the TABE will be eligible to take the GED Ready in Language Arts and Social Studies. Any student who earns a score of NRS level 5 or 6 on the Total Math section of the TABE will be eligible to take the GED Ready in Math and Science.

The only case in which students may be eligible to take GED Ready tests in subjects for which they are not eligible based on TABE scores is when that student has already passed both of the Official GED tests in the subjects that they were eligible for. Although the students who fall into this category are not considered to be in level 5/6, they will have special schedules allowing them to focus on the subjects they're still missing and **they will be allowed to attempt the GED Ready** for their two remaining subjects. If they pass the GED Ready, they will be eligible to take the Official GED, but if not, they will need to continue to work on their TABE and pre-GED skills in those areas in order to hopefully move up to GED level 5/6 the following semester.

The Next Step PCS will provide funding for the GED Ready via test vouchers. No retakes of the GED Ready exam will be offered until the next scheduled testing session. Make-up

tests for students with excused absences will be offered at the discretion of the assessments department. The assessments department will not honor any GED Ready test that a student takes in a subject for which they are not eligible nor any GED Ready test that a student takes on their own time outside of official school administration.

**5) Official GED**

Students who earn a score of **145 or above** on their GED Ready test in a certain subject will be eligible to take the Official GED test in that subject. The assessments department will schedule students for their Official GED tests at the DC OSSE GED Testing and Verifications Office. The Next Step PCS will provide funding for the Official GED tests via test vouchers for eligible students. If a student needs to cancel/reschedule his or her exam, it is mandatory that he or she notifies the assessments department immediately. If possible, students should notify the assessments department **24 hours in advance** of their exam start time in order to receive a refund.

**6) 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 assessments department will communicate information regarding any special schedules for GED students directly to teachers and staff as soon as possible. Students who have passed three Official GED subjects are eligible for an abbreviated schedule.

**7) Retesting**

Students who have attempted an Official GED subject test one or two times and wish to re-test are required to wait a period of 30 calendar days before they can attempt the same subject. If a student has attempted the same Official GED subject test three or more times, he or she must wait a period of 60 calendar days between subsequent administrations of the same subject test. In all cases of retesting, students must earn a score of 145 or higher that was achieved since the date of their most recent failed Official GED attempt.

**8) GED Graduates**

Students who pass all four sections of the Official GED during the course of a semester may choose one of the following options.

**Option #1:** Students who pass all sections of the Official GED may choose to withdraw from The Next Step PCS. The assessments department will administer the TABE to these students as soon as possible after the student has passed the Official GED. In some cases, if a student passes the GED close to the end of the semester, the assessments department may elect to have the student take the TABE with the rest of their class during post-testing.

**Option #2:** Students who pass all sections of the Official GED may choose to remain in the same track and program for the rest of the semester. These students are expected to continue to abide by all relevant school policies while enrolled at The Next Step PCS. They may receive a special or abbreviated schedule based on their post-secondary plan

and academic interests. If possible, these students may receive tutoring and/or have time for independent study based on their post-secondary plan. These students are required to take the TABE with the rest of their class during the school-wide post-testing period at the end of the semester.

Please note that students who pass all sections of the GED and are interested in switching into another track or program must wait until the next semester to do so. They should indicate this switch on their enrollment application. The assessments department will schedule testing with these students as part of the standard enrollment process. In addition, regardless of the option that they choose, it is required for all GED passers to take the TABE in order to participate in the graduation ceremony at the end of the semester.

## **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 at any time. 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 is an Open House each semester for parents and guardians to meet teaching staff, service providers, and administrative staff.

- 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 is 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.

### **Policy Making**

- Parents and guardians are invited to monthly focus groups for school feedback and evaluation. Parents are actively involved in developing the parent involvement and student policies.
- One parent representative serves on the board of trustees.
- Parents and guardians are asked to fill out a parent satisfaction survey every semester.

### **Parent Resources and Workshops**

- The Next Step student and parent 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 the following procedure is to be utilized:

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 Board Chair of The Next Step PCSB.

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

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>e-mail or phone number</b>
Arturo Martinez	Day Principal, The Next Step PCS	<a href="mailto:arturo@nextsteppcs.org">arturo@nextsteppcs.org</a> (202) 319-2249
Oscar Ramirez	Night Principal, The Next Step PCS	<a href="mailto:oscar@nextsteppcs.org">oscar@nextsteppcs.org</a> (202) 319-2249

Jonathan Mathis	Executive Director, The Next Step PCS	<a href="mailto:jonathan@nextsteppcs.org">jonathan@nextsteppcs.org</a> (202) 319-2249
John Ingold	Board Chair, The Next Step PCS	<a href="mailto:john.ingold@gmail.com">john.ingold@gmail.com</a>

## **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):
  - School officials with legitimate educational interest;
  - Other schools to which a student is transferring;
  - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
  - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
  - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
  - Accrediting organizations;
  - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
  - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
  - 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)

### Attendance Interventions

Number of absences	What to do for staff	What to do when the student returns to school
<b>1<sup>st</sup> absence</b>	Phone call/Message/E-mail to student by Attendance and Transportation Coordinator (ATC)	Student must have a note to give to ATC to be excused. If no note, ATC pulls student and explains policy.
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> absence</b>	Phone call/Message/E-mail to student by ATC	Student must have a note to give to ATC to be excused. If no note, ATC pulls student and explains policy.
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> absence</b>	ATC informs service provider. Case manager will attempt to contact student or parent and report to ATC	Student must have a note to give to ATC to be excused. If no note, ATC pulls student and explains policy. 1st warning is signed.
<b>4<sup>th</sup> absence</b>	START discusses student and service provider reports findings.	Student must have a note to give to ATC to be excused. If no note, ATC pulls student and explains policy.
<b>5<sup>th</sup> absence</b>	Home visit by ATC	Student must have a note to give to ATC to be excused. If no note, ATC and service provider pulls student and explains policy. 2 <sup>nd</sup> warning and Intervention plan is signed.
<b>6<sup>th</sup> absence</b>	Letter sent home (with school and MPD letterhead)	Restorative conference with service provider and ATC.
<b>7<sup>th</sup> absence</b>	START to discuss	Student must have a note to give to ATC to be excused. If no note, ATC pulls student and explains policy.
<b>8<sup>th</sup> absence</b>	ATC calls home to remind of home visit, letter, and warning of withdrawal (for adult students)	Restorative conference, with principal, service provider, teachers and ATC. Attendance contract is signed and 3 <sup>rd</sup> warning signed.
<b>9<sup>th</sup> absence</b>	ATC calls home to remind of home visit, letter, and warning of withdrawal (for adult students).	Student must have a note to give to ATC to be excused. If no note, ATC pulls student and explains policy.
<b>10<sup>th</sup> absence</b>	START to discuss withdrawal for adult students. ATC calls student to inform of possible withdrawal.	Student must have a note to give to ATC to be excused. If no note, ATC pulls student and explains policy.
<b>11<sup>th</sup> absence</b>	Adult student withdrawn. Withdrawal letter sent by ATC.	N/A
<b>15<sup>th</sup> absence</b>	ATC will communicate with family, and send a letter to the Court of Social Services Division and to the Office of Attorney General Juvenile Section.	AFTER THE 20 <sup>TH</sup> CONSECUTIVE ABSENCE, A STUDENT OF COMPULSORY AGE WILL BE WITHDRAWN.

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_

**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: \_\_\_\_\_