

2018-2019

**Student and Parent
Handbook**

Table of Contents

<u>SECTION 1- MISSION/VISION</u>	4
<u>SECTION 2- SCHOOLDAY</u>	4-5
Early Arrivals	4
Student Departure	4
Closed Campus Policy	4-5
Part Time PSEO & Late Start/ Early Release Contract	5
<u>SECTION 3- ATTENDANCE</u>	5-7
Absences	5
Tardy Policy	6
Compulsory Instruction	6
Truancy Policy	6
Physical Education Attendance	7
Withdrawing a Child	7
Visitors	7
<u>SECTION 4- Transportation</u>	7-9
Riding the Bus	7
Bus Rules	7-8
Bus Safety	8
Bus Passes	8-9
Requesting A New Bus Stop or Modifying a Bus Stop	9
<u>SECTION 5- ACADEMICS</u>	9-14
K-12 Graduation Standards and Curriculum	9
AVID	9
STEM	9
PSEO	9
Standardized Testing	9-10
High School Graduation Requirements	10
Grades 6-12 Grading Scale	10-11
Report Cards	11
Homework	11
Planners	11-13
School Supplies	13
Textbook and Literature Books	13
JMC	14
Field Trips	14
Response to Intervention (RTI)	14
<u>SECTION 6- TECHNOLOGY POLICY</u>	15-16
Cell Phone Policy	15
Technology Hardware and Internet Use	15-16

<u>SECTION 7- STUDENT CONDUCT</u>	17-22
STEP Academy Behavior Responses	17
Description of Consequences Level 2 Behavior	18
Description of Consequences Level 3 Behavior	19-20
Description of Consequences Level 4 Behavior	20-21
Bullying	21
School Director's Authority on Discipline Matters	21
STEP Academy Offences Flow Chart	22
<u>SECTION 8- COMMUNICATION</u>	23
Frequent Communication	23
Telephone	23
Parent Teacher Conferences	23
<u>SECTION 9- FOOD & MEALS</u>	23-24
Breakfast and Lunch Program	23
Payments for Breakfast and lunch Program	23
Dietary Restrictions	24
Snack and Special Occasions	24
<u>SECTION 10- HEALTH AND WELLNESS</u>	24-25
Illness at Home/ Communicable Illness	24
Illness During School	24
Immunizations	24
Accidents	24
Medicine	24-25
<u>SECTION 11- SCHOOL & PERSONAL PROPERTY</u>	25
Lockers	25
Desks	25
Lost and Found	25
<u>SECTION 12- SAFETY</u>	25-26
Data Privacy	25
Harassment, Intimidation, Violence and Hazing	25
Student Sex Nondiscrimination	26
Lock down, Fire and Tornado Drills	26
School Closing	26
<u>SECTION 13- MICELLANEOUS ITEMS</u>	26-27
Handbook Revision	26
Birthday Celebrations	26
Distribution of Non School Sponsored Materials on School Premises	27
Divorce of Parents	27

Section 1- Mission/Vision

STEP Academy Vision

STEP Academy will...

- Ensure a safe and nurturing learning environment where all members are valued.
- Recognize every learner as an individual with unique qualities.
- Motivate students to academic excellence in reading, writing, and math.
- Provide enriching experiences in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM).
- Prepare students with the skills and knowledge to take college classes prior to high school graduation and/or be successful in a variety of post-graduate options.
- Provide high quality individualized programs to ensure success of all students.
- Collaborate with families and other partners to develop shared ownership of the learning community.
- Promote the development of responsible and contributing members of a global society.

STEP Academy Mission

STEP Academy will empower students to use their personal attributes and acquired knowledge to lead productive lives and become contributing members of the global community.

Section 2- School Day

<p style="text-align: center;">K-12 School Hours Monday-Thursday 7:30-2:30 Friday 7:30- 12:35</p>
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Early Arrivals

Safety is our number one concern. Supervision for students begins at 7:00 AM. Grades K-6 students should report directly to their classroom when they arrive. Grades 7-12 students should report to the cafeteria for breakfast when they arrive.

WE CANNOT ACCOMMODATE STUDENTS BEFORE 7:00. PLEASE DO NOT DROP OFF YOUR CHILDREN BEFORE THAT TIME.

Student Departure

Parents and guardians picking up students at the end of the day must check in at the security station. Families should wait outside of the school office and not in the parking lot.

Parents picking up their child during the school day must do so through the office. A parent or guardian must sign out any child leaving school before 2:25 PM. Picking up children before 2:25 PM, except with a valid excuse, is strongly discouraged.

Closed Campus Policy

No student, regardless of age, may leave the building without prior approval and signing out from the office.

Early Departure Procedure:

- Student must present a note from a parent or guardian explaining the early departure or a parent or guardian must call in the office.
- Student must obtain an early release pass from the office prior to the start of the school day (before 7:25).
- Parent or high school age student must sign out at the office prior to leaving, even if they have obtained an early release pass.
- Students who are PSEO or have an early release contract must sign out from the office each day prior to leaving.

Part Time PSEO & Late Start/Early Release Contract

Part time PSEO students should have a regular schedule on file in the counseling office. Late Start/Early Release Contracts are only available for seniors and only on a limited basis. Contracts must have all approval signatures and must be submitted to the counseling office prior to beginning late start/early release schedule. Failure to do so may result in unexcused absences and the resulting legal/academic/disciplinary consequences. A list of students who have permission to arrive late or leave early will be kept in the main office.

Section 3- Attendance

Absences

Should your child need to be absent or late, please call the STEP Academy Office at (651) 289-6120. If you call before 6:30 AM, please leave a voicemail message with your child's name, grade, and reason for absence. Any parent or guardian bringing a child to school after 7:30 AM must report to the office and sign the child in, before the child can be admitted to class.

- Students arriving after 7:30 will be marked **tardy**.
- Students coming to school after 9:00 but before 10:45 will be marked **absent for the morning**.
- Students leaving the school after 10:45 but before 1:25 will be marked **absent for the afternoon**.
- Students who are absent without a legitimate excuse will be marked **Absent Unexcused**.
- Students absent with a legitimate excuse will be marked **Absent Excused**.
- Students who are in ISS or OSS are considered **Absent Excused**.

Excused Absences are accepted for legitimate excuses including: illness, family emergencies, religious holidays, medical appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of school, court appearances, and family vacations. **Family vacations are strongly encouraged during regular school vacation periods.** The school must be notified prior to any vacation or the absence may be marked as unexcused. Medical verification is required if a child is absent for more than three days due to illness.

Unacceptable excuses recorded as Unexcused Absences include: babysitting, shopping, working at home, oversleeping, having no clean clothes, missing the bus, running late, car trouble, not knowing school schedule, and other incidences as determined by administration.

Guidelines for school attendance issues are:

1. If a student is absent, a parent or guardian must call school to report the reason for the absence. The absence will be considered unexcused if a parent or guardian does not report the student's absence within 72 hours, unless a medical verification note is provided upon the student's return to school. If a child is absent or tardy for more than two days, a school official will contact a parent or guardian to determine the reason. If a child is absent for three or more days due to illness, medical verification is required upon student's return.
2. After 15 consecutive days of absences [whether excused or unexcused], the law requires us to drop the child from our school roster.

Tardy Policy

Visits to the counseling office, administration offices, nurse's office, or main office must be pre-scheduled or accompanied by a pass from a classroom teacher. Stopping in during passing time may result in an unexcused tardy.

- 3 unexcused tardies = 1 unexcused absence

Excused Tardies: Student is escorted by a staff member who is vouching for the student's whereabouts or the student has a signed pass from a staff member indicating the time the student left which is no more than 2 minutes prior to classroom entry time.

Unexcused Tardies: Student is late to class without being escorted or having a signed pass from a staff member.

Compulsory Instruction

Parents are responsible for making sure that their children attend school every day. In accordance with the Minnesota Compulsory Instruction Law, M.S. 120A.22, students are **REQUIRED** to attend all assigned classes every day school is in session. Parents are obligated to compel the attendance of their child at school and those who fail this obligation to provide for instruction of a child may be subject to prosecution. Minnesota law defines a student as "truant" if he/she is absent from instruction at school without valid excuse for seven days within a single school year.

Truancy Policy

Excessive absences and tardies will be recorded in the following manner:

- 3 unexcused tardies = 1 unexcused absence
- 3 unexcused absences (9 tardies or combinations of unexcused absences and tardies) = Truancy Early Intervention with no academic consequences
- 5 unexcused absences (15 tardies or combination of unexcused absences and tardies) = Probationary Truancy and student's grade will drop one letter grade in each class 5 unexcused absences have been recorded in a single quarter.
- 7 unexcused absences (21 tardies or combinations of unexcused absences during the current term) = Truancy
 - Upon the seventh unexcused absence, the student will receive a grade of "no credit" ("NC") or "fail" ("F"). The student will have the option of receiving an "NC" if the student has no further absences or tardies in class and meets all course requirements. An "NC" will have no effect on the student's grade point average. Or, the student may receive an "F" if the student does not meet all course requirements. An "F" grade will have a negative effect on the student's grade point average.

Truancy Early Intervention: When a student has shown a pattern of 3 unexcused absences, a phone call will be made to the student's home, and STEP Academy's Truancy Early Intervention letter detailing Minnesota's Compulsory Education Law and STEP Academy's academic truancy consequences will be mailed home.

Probationary Truancy: When a student has shown a pattern of 5 unexcused absences, a parent and student meeting is held informing the family of the next legal steps that will be taken by the school should the student continue to not meet state mandated attendance requirements. At this meeting, the family will be given written information on Minnesota's Compulsory Education Law and STEP Academy's academic truancy consequences.

Truancy: STEP Academy will mail written notice to the student's parent or guardian referring to Minnesota's Compulsory Education Law and STEP Academy's academic truancy consequences and report the student as a habitual truant with the county of residence.

It is our goal to work with families to improve school attendance. Studies have shown that regular school attendance is one of the major factors in predicting student success.

Physical Education Attendance

Students are required to have appropriate footwear for PE class. This includes tennis shoes for both boys and girls enrolled in PE class. Not having appropriate footwear for class constitutes an unexcused absence.

Students needing to sit out for a PE day must have a written note from a parent. Students will not be allowed to sit out and bring a note the following day

Any student needing to miss PE for more than three consecutive days must have a written note signed by a physician indicating the reason for excuse and expected return to participation date. Physician documentation will excuse a student for the duration noted. This will be given to the teacher, who will provide expectations for the absence. At the middle and high school levels, students missing an extended amount of time due to injury or illness may be re-assigned to an alternative class in order to receive credit.

Withdrawing a Child

In the event that you wish to withdraw your child from STEP Academy, we ask that you notify the school of your child's withdrawal date. If you are moving out of the area, please share your new address as well. All books and materials borrowed from STEP Academy must be returned to individual teachers or the office prior to a student's departure. Failure to return books and/or materials borrowed may result in having a hold placed on the student transcript until the item(s) have been returned or reimbursement has been paid.

Visitors

Safety is our number one concern at STEP Academy. All visitors are required to sign-in with their first and last name at the security station or main office. Visitors to the school will be given a "Visitor" label to wear while in the building or on the property. Persons found without the "Visitor" label by any staff member will be stopped, questioned, and escorted to the office to register. Visitors may only enter through the office entrance to the building (the entrance between the Church and the school). Parents and guests are considered visitors during the school day. Siblings, relatives, and friends are discouraged from visiting school except during designated school activities.

Section 4- Transportation

Riding the Bus

Riding the school bus is a privilege. School bus safety is of primary importance. Students are expected to act safely and responsibly at all times while waiting for or riding the bus. Older students should be aware of younger students and act as role models for bus safety and behavior.

Bus Rules

All school behavior rules apply on the bus. In addition, students must adhere to the following rules:

1. Follow directions of the driver. (If designated by driver, students must sit in assigned seats.)
2. Keep all objects and parts of your body inside the bus.
3. Stay in your seat with your feet on the floor while the bus is in motion.

4. No inappropriate language, loud talking, or screaming.
5. Do not eat or drink on the bus, and do not litter or damage the bus.
6. No throwing things, shoving, fighting, or teasing.

In the event that a student breaks a rule:

First Incident: Driver verbally warns the student.

Second Incident: Driver will issue a report to the school for student misbehavior. Parent/guardian will be notified.

Third Incident: One-day suspension from riding the bus.

Fourth Incident: Five-day suspension from riding the bus.

Fifth Incident: Suspension of riding privilege for remainder of the school year.

Severe Disruption:

The following inappropriate behavior will result in automatic suspension of transportation privileges:

- A. Physical harm to another student
- B. Property damage.
- C. Physical harm or threat of physical harm to driver (may result in arrest).
- D. Refusal to obey driver or verbal abuse of driver.
- E. Disruption; which creates a safety hazard.
- F. Possession of any dangerous weapon.

Students receiving a suspension from bus service are still required to attend school. In this case, a student's parents or guardians are responsible for arranging safe and reliable transportation to and from school. Failure to comply will result in the absence being recorded as an unexcused absence.

Bus Safety

School buses shall be operated in accordance with state traffic and school bus safety laws and the procedures contained in the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Model School Bus Driver Training Manual. Only students assigned to the school bus by the school district shall be transported. The number of students or other authorized passengers transported in a school bus shall not be more than the legal capacity for the bus. No person shall be allowed to stand when the bus is in motion.

STEP Academy provides students with age-appropriate school bus safety training as described under section 123B.90. STEP Academy bus and bus stop rules will be provided to each family. Parents and guardians are asked to review the rules with their children.

Bus Passes

Students must take their assigned bus to and from school unless they have specific permission from a parent or guardian AND the school office.

Children wishing to ride a different bus or get off at a different stop are required to have a dated and signed note from a parent or guardian. The signed note should be brought to the office where a bus pass will be issued. Bus pass must be given to the driver of the bus as the child boards the bus. Please note: Getting a bus pass in the office is not a valid excuse for being tardy to class.

In order to maintain students' safety:

- Students will not be allowed to go home by a different method without either written permission from the parent or guardian or verbal permission from the parent or guardian is given directly to office personnel and a pass is written from the main office.
- Students will not be allowed to board a different bus or vary their bus stop without presenting a valid bus pass from the school office to the bus driver.
- Students who wish to obtain a bus pass must do so before 12:30 to prevent a delay of the bus's scheduled departure time.

Requesting A New Bus Stop or Modifying a Bus Stop

Bus routes are designed to maximize efficiency for the number of students and locations that are served and minimize transportation costs. We are not able to offer doorstep service to most students. We recognize that many parents would greatly appreciate a more convenient bus stop location. Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate most requests for the following reasons:

- A proposed change would increase the bus schedule by more than one minute.
- A proposed change would negatively affect other students.
- A proposed change would benefit fewer than five students.

Parents who still wish to request a new bus stop should fill out the bus stop modification form available on our website. Request processing takes two to three weeks.

Section 5- Academics

K-12 Graduation Standards and Curriculum

STEP Academy maintains an academically rigorous program. All classes offered at STEP Academy are based on Minnesota content area standards or other applicable standards where Minnesota standards are not available. Minnesota Graduation Standards can be viewed at the Minnesota Department of Education website (<http://education.state.mn.us>).

In addition, various curriculum materials are used to teach content standards. Specific curriculum, books, and technology tools used in classes are shared on syllabi sent home with students when they begin each class.

Questions related to standards and curriculum can be directed first to content area and classroom teachers and then to our Academic Dean.

AVID

AVID stands for Advancement Via Individual Determination. AVID is a high school course that prepares students for college and career readiness and success. Students participate in activities that incorporate strategies focused on writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading to support their academic growth. AVID strategies are also implemented school wide to help students develop skills that lead to more academic success and rigorous learning.

STEM

STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. One of STEP Academy's commitments is to offer students opportunities to discover, problem solve, and study STEM concepts. These opportunities come in a variety of forms including: hands-on labs, project-based learning, field experiences, STEM elective courses instead of traditional fine arts credits, and outside partnerships providing real-world connections. The outcome of this focus has been the encouragement of STEP Academy students to enter STEM career fields.

PSEO

Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO): The PSEO program is a dual credit program that allows high school students to simultaneously earn high school and college credit through enrollment in and successful completion of college-level courses on a college campus or online. Students may take PSEO courses on a full- or part-time basis. The PSEO program

provides students with a greater variety of class offerings as well as the opportunity to pursue more challenging coursework than may be available at the high school. The tuition, fees and required textbooks are at no cost to students.

STEP Academy students are encouraged to take advantage of the PSEO program during their 11th and 12th grade years. More information about PSEO at STEP Academy can be found on the STEP Academy webpage.

<https://stepacademymn.org/students/pseo-information/>

Standardized Testing

Testing is used in schools to measure student achievement. State tests are given to students in a district once a year, based on their grade level and subject area. Classroom tests are given by individual teachers on a more regular basis and may include quizzes, mid-terms, chapter tests, and final exams, among others. Both types of tests give educators an idea of how well their students are learning the concepts presented to them in the classroom.

STEP Academy uses the following tests throughout the school year to meet state required testing requirements and to track student progress in learning the concepts presented to them in their day to day learning.

- **FastBridge:** The FastBridge tests are used three times per year to track students' progress in the areas of math and reading. These tests are also used with students who are receiving intervention services in order to track and monitor their weekly or monthly growth.
- **ACT Aspire:** The ACT Aspire is given to students in grades 8 and 10 in the fall to fulfill state college and career readiness requirements. This test also helps predict student scores on the ACT in eleventh grade, which allows teachers to help better prepare students to take the ACT by knowing which areas students need more support in.
- **ACT:** The ACT is given to all 11th grade students, and any 12th grade students who have never taken the ACT, in the spring. The ACT is an entrance exam used by most colleges and universities to make admissions decisions. The purpose of the ACT test is to measure a high school student's readiness for college, and provide colleges with one common data point that can be used to compare all applicants.
- **ACCESS for ELLs 2.0:** The ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 and Alternate ACCESS for ELLs are the assessments developed by the WIDA consortium and administered to English learners in order to measure progress toward meeting Minnesota's standards for English language development, developed by the WIDA consortium. Most English learners will take the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0, but English learners who received special education services and meet the participation guidelines may take the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs.
- **MCA:** The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments (MCA) and alternate assessment Minnesota Test of Academic Skills (MTAS) are the state tests that help districts measure student progress toward Minnesota's academic standards and also meet federal and state legislative requirements. Students take one test in each subject. Most students take the MCA, but students who receive special education services and meet eligibility requirements may take the alternate assessment MTAS instead. The MCA is given each spring to students in grades 3-11 in the areas of math, reading and science.

High School Graduation Requirements

Each credit at STEP Academy is equal to a one class-period, yearlong class. Beginning in 2017-2018, high school students are eligible for six credits per year.

Quarter= 0.25 credit Semester= 0.5 Credit Quarter 1+ Quarter 2= Sem 1 grade
Quarter 3 + Quarter 4= Semester 2 grade Semester 1 + Semester 2 = 1 credit

Credit Requirements for Students Graduating in 2019

21.5 credits must be earned in the following areas:

3 Math credits <i>Algebra 2, Geometry, and 1 Higher Level Math</i> <i>*Students must take a math class in 11th grade</i>	3.5 Social Studies credits <i>1 World History, 1 U.S. History</i> <i>1 Civics/Human Geography, .5 Economics</i>
4 Language Arts credits <i>1 credit each in Language Arts 9, 10, 11, 12</i>	3 Science credits <i>1 Physical Science, 1 Biology, 1 Chemistry or Physics</i>
2 World Language credits	.5 Physical Education credit .5 Health credit
1 STEM credit	4 Elective credits

Credit Requirements for Students Graduating in 2020 and beyond

24 credits must be earned in the following areas:

3 Math credits <i>Algebra 2, Geometry, and 1 Higher Level Math</i> <i>*Students must take a math class in 11th grade</i>	3.5 Social Studies credits <i>1 World History, 1 U.S. History</i> <i>1 Civics/Human Geography, .5 Economics</i>
4 Language Arts credits <i>1 credit each in Language Arts 9, 10, 11, 12</i>	4 Science credits <i>1 Physical Science, 1 Biology, 1 Chemistry, and 1 Physics</i>
2 World Language credits	.5 Physical Education credit .5 Health credit
2 STEM credits	4.5 Elective credits

Grades 7-12 Grading Scale

Letter	Percentage	GPA	Letter	Percentage	GPA
A+	97-100	4.0	C	73-76	2.0
A	93-96	4.0	C-	70-72	1.66
A-	90-92	3.66	D+	67-69	1.33
B+	87-89	3.33	D	63-66	1.0
B	83-86	3.0	D-	60-62	0.66
B-	80-82	2.66	F	0-59	0.0
C+	77-79	2.33			

Report Cards

Report cards are issued four (4) times per year after each 9-week grading period. A student receiving an "incomplete" will have two (2) weeks from the end of the grading period to make up the assignments and assessments.

Homework

STEP Academy students receive homework regularly. We believe that homework is an integral component of a college prep education experience. It contributes to a child's growth as student and supports a commitment to the educational process.

How Does Homework Help Kids and Families?

Homework:

- Provides integral practice for skills, concepts, and information learned in class.
- Prepares students for upcoming class topics.

- Compels students to work independently, develop self-discipline, and build confidence in their abilities.
- Requires students to take initiative and responsibility for completing a task.
- Establishes regular homework routines and organizational skills increasing student commitment to their own learning.
- Allows parents to play an active role in their child's education and helps them to witness their child's progress.
- Develops responsibility, accountability, self-confidence, and time management

What Do Professional Organizations and Researchers Say?

- The National Parent Teacher Association: “National PTA and its constituent associations support teachers, schools, and districts in promoting the design of meaningful homework that will advance a spirit of learning with a focus on quality assignments to motivate students based on grade and ability.”
- Research Report from Harris Cooper (Review of Educational Research, 2006): “10-20 minutes per night in the first grade, and an additional 10 minutes per grade level thereafter (e.g., 20 minutes for second grade, 120 minutes for twelfth). High school students may sometimes do more, depending on what classes they take.”
- Robert Marzano & Debra Pickering (Educational Leadership, 2007): “Homework has decades of research supporting its effective use.” This article cites seven research studies that support the positive effects of homework on student achievement.

What Does Homework Look Like at STEP Academy?

STEP Academy adheres to the National Education Association’s suggestion that effective homework plays three roles: practice, preparation, or extension.

Practice: Lessons are taught while at school, and students take assignments home to perform independent practice related to those concepts. Example: math assignments

Preparation: Assignments are given to students in order to prepare them for an up-coming lesson. Example: reading a section in a text book that will be discussed the next day

Extension: Assignments extend a concept or topic that has already been taught. Example: Students learn about Newton’s Laws in science and are assigned an article to read and respond to about how Newton discovered the laws.

STEP Academy Homework: What Can I Expect?

Please note: Times are approximate. Some students work faster or more slowly than others. Also, there will be times during the year when students will receive no homework or increased homework. This chart is provided only as an average estimate.

Grade	Homework Time Per Night
K-1	10-20 minutes
2-3	20-30 minutes
4-6	40-60 minutes
7-8	60-80 minutes
9-12	90-120 minutes

Teachers, especially at the elementary level, may provide homework on a weekly basis, for example, going home on Monday and due on Friday. Some teachers of older students also try to give students a few nights to complete assignments. No matter the age, if your child claims he or she has no homework, it is always of academic value to require your child to read for recommended homework time.

STEP Academy’s policy is that homework is assigned at the individual teacher’s discretion. Teachers give assignments and may or may not give class time to work on them. However, teachers will always give due dates for major assignments and reminders of upcoming due dates.

Students who have a valid absence from school have up to two (2) days for every day absent to make up assigned class work and one week (5 school days) to make up tests or quizzes. However, it is always best to get caught up as quickly as possible. Parents are encouraged to make arrangements to pick up homework if a child is ill for more than two (2) days.

Planners

Students are provided with a student planner each year. Planners are a required part of student organization at STEP Academy. Teachers will be checking to make sure students fill them out thoroughly each day, until each student shows mastery of the habit. Parents or guardians should check student's planner nightly to see what homework is due and to coach the child on building the habit of homework completion. This planner is also used as our hallway pass system so students are always expected to have it in their possession while at school. Students who lose their planner must replace it by purchasing one at the Assistant Academic Dean's (Mrs. Tholen) office for \$5.

Student Passes:

- Students will receive 10 passes per quarter.
- Passes do not carry over from quarter to quarter.
- Students who lose their planner and purchase a new one will be permitted 2 passes for the remainder of the quarter in which the planner is purchased. Students may not purchase a new planner in order to get more passes.
- Students caught using a planner other than their own will automatically be denied the pass and will be put on the no pass list for the remainder of the quarter.
- Students will be placed on a No Pass List for the remainder of the semester should any of the following occur:
 - Students routinely abusing planner passes:
 - wasting time in the hall when given a pass (2+ min at locker, 5+ minutes in bathroom)
 - going to a location other than where the pass was written for.
 - using your phone
 - Receive 9 tardies
 - Found to be abusing prayer time will be placed on the no pass list for the remainder of the semester. Should the student lose pass privileges within the last 2 weeks of a semester, they will automatically be put on the no pass list for the following semester.

School Supplies

Students need to have the necessary school supplies with them every day to help them be successful in school. School supply lists are available in the office and posted on the website. There may be specific items requested by classroom teachers for projects. In that event, families will be notified of this in advance.

Text Books & Literature Books

STEP Academy provides textbooks and literature books for students. Books are an expensive and valuable resource for the school. Please remind your child to take good care of the materials loaned to him or her. If textbooks are damaged, destroyed, or lost while checked out to the student, he or she will be required to pay for the cost of the book. Parents are required to sign the textbook agreement as their understanding of this policy.

JMC

JMC is the online grading and student information system used by STEP Academy. Through this system, parents and students are able to view grades and attendance. Parents will be able to sign up for the JMC parent portal at Open House or at any time by contacting or visiting the school office. Students will receive their login information and be taught how to use JMC during the first month of school.

Teachers' record assignments as quickly as possible, but longer assignments take time to grade and offer feedback. For larger assignments, you might see a HI (Handed In) or a P (Pending, assignment will be given at a later date) notation recorded in place of a letter grade until assignments can be corrected. Teachers make every effort to correct and record assignments within a week of the due date. If you have questions about a grade after that time, please contact the teacher directly. It is recommended that families check JMC frequently and contact individual teachers if concerns arise over grades, student progress, or work completion.

Field Trips

Academic Field Trips

Due to their supplemental educational nature, field trips are considered a privilege for students at STEP Academy. In order to attend a field trip, your child must meet all classroom requirements. Classroom teachers will communicate requirements and expectations to the students prior to each trip. Students not able to attend a field trip are required to attend school for that day or receive an unexcused absence.

PRIDE Field Trips

PRIDE field trips are not based on a specific class or unit of study, but as a reward for students who demonstrate PRIDE on a daily basis. Students who show PRIDE meet the following qualifications:

Personal Responsibility Respect Integrity Determination Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer than 9 tardies during the semester. • No more than 3 visits to the reflection room. • No suspensions (ISS or OSS) • Student has a passing grade in all classes at the end of the semester.
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The school will notify parents of all scheduled field trips in advance. As a parent/guardian, you retain the right to prohibit your child from attending such field trips as long as you give the school written notice. Certain fees for field trip attendance may be required to offset the costs. Should the cost be a burden, please notify your child's teacher.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

STEP Academy believes in providing the highest quality of education for every student. To meet this goal, we use a three-tiered approach to instruction in math and reading. Each tier seeks to provide appropriate support for students in learning the core curriculum.

Tier 1: Core curriculum instruction provided for all students including periodic support for students occasionally needing multiple opportunities to master content.

Tier 2: Core curriculum instruction plus small group interventions provided regularly for students at risk or needing targeted support in order to master content.

Tier 3: Core curriculum instruction provided in the regular classroom or in modified environment delivering systematic, individualized instruction for students with intensive needs.

Students needing supplemental instruction or intervention will be monitored frequently to ensure they meet grade level expectations. All students continue to participate in the core curriculum content even if they are receiving additional academic interventions. Parents will be notified if their child qualifies for intervention services.

Section 6- Technology Policy

Cell Phone Policy

1. Phones/Device MUST be on silent or turned off and placed in assigned pocket or in backpack at the start of class.
2. Students may charge phones/device only using the provided power strip if available.
3. Students may NOT retrieve phones/device until class is dismissed or permission has been given by the teacher.
4. Phone/device will be confiscated immediately if:
 - a. Student does not put phone/device into the assigned pocket and is caught using it during class.
 - b. Student removes any phone/device from any slot at any time during class without teacher permission.
5. Confiscated phones/devices will be turned in to the Dean of Students. A parent/guardian will need to pick up the phone/device from Dean of Students during the regular school day, 7am to 3pm.
 - a. This also applies if you are using a friend's phone/device. If you loan your phone/device to a friend and it is confiscated due to misuse, it will be turned in to Dean of Students and a parent/guardian will need to pick it up.
 - i. Example: If Student A borrows Student B's phone and the phone/device is confiscated from Student A, then Student B will have to have a parent pick up the phone/device from Dean of Students during regular school hours, 7am to 3pm.
6. Any student who refuses to hand over a phone/device when requested by a staff member will be sent to Dean of Students and a parent/guardian will be called. Refusing to hand over a phone/device a second time will result in the student being required to turn in the phone/device to the office immediately upon arriving at STEP Academy.
7. All phones and devices are required to be turned in during any state standardized test. Failure to do so may result in the following:
 - a. The individuals or entire classroom's tests to be invalidated.
 - b. Individual will be given ISS for the remainder of the school day.

Technology Hardware and Internet Use

Technology use is a privilege at STEP Academy. In order to be eligible to use provided technology at STEP Academy, students and parents must sign and return the Internet Use Agreement within the first TWO WEEKS of school.

Government Laws

- I will use computers and other electronic devices in conformity with laws of the United States and the State of Minnesota. Violations include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Criminal Acts-These included, but are not limited to "hacking" or attempting to access computer systems without authorization, sending harassing/bullying email or text messages, cyber-stalking, child pornography, vandalism, and/or unauthorized tampering with computer systems.

- Libel Laws-Publicly defaming people through the published material on the internet, email, social sites, etc.,
- Copyright Violations-Copying, selling or distributing copyrighted materials without the express written permission of the author or publisher or engaging in plagiarism.

Netiquette and Responsible Use

- I understand that passwords are private. I will not allow others to use my account name and password, or try to use that of others.
- I will be polite and use appropriate language in my virtual learning environments, online postings, and other digital communications with others. I will refrain from using profanity, vulgarities or any other inappropriate language as determined by school administrators.
- I will use communications (e.g. blogs, wikis, podcasts, chat, instant-messaging, social sites, discussion boards, virtual learning environments, etc.) responsibly.
- I will not use computers, handheld computers, digital audio players, cell phones, personal digital devices, or the Internet to send or post hate or harassing mail, pornography, make discriminatory or derogatory remarks about others, or engage in bullying, harassment, or other antisocial behaviors either at school or at home.
- I understand that I represent the school in all my online activities. I understand that what I do on social networking websites should not reflect negatively on my fellow students, teachers or on the School. I understand that I will be held responsible for how I represent myself and my school on the internet.
- I understand that masquerading, spoofing, or pretending to be someone else is forbidden. This includes, but is not limited to, sending out email, creating accounts, or posting messages or other online content (e.g. text, images, audio or video) in someone else's name as a joke.
- I will use technology resources responsibly. I will not retrieve, save, or display hate-based, offensive, or sexually explicit material using any School computer resources. I am responsible for not pursuing material that could be considered offensive. I understand that I am to notify an adult immediately if by accident I encounter materials, which violate appropriate use.
- I will use technology resources productively and responsibly for school-related purposes. I will avoid using any technology resource in such a way that would disrupt the activities of other users.
- I will refrain from attempting to bypass, or circumvent, security settings or internet filters, or interfere with the operation of the network by installing illegal software, or web-based services and software not approved by the School.
- I understand that vandalism is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to modifying or destroying equipment, programs, files, or settings on any computer or other technology resource.
- I will respect the intellectual property of other users and information providers. I will obey copyright laws and guidelines. I will not plagiarize or use other's work without proper citation and permission.
- I will refrain from the use of or access of files, software, or other resources owned by others without the owner's permission.

- I understand that I am prohibited from taking photos or videos of other students and/or staff without their consent. I also will not publish or post online, any photos or videos of students and/or staff without their consent.
- I understand that the Internet is a source of information that is both true and false; and that the school is not responsible for inaccurate information obtained from the Internet.
- I understand that School Administrators will deem what conduct is inappropriate use if such conduct is not specified in this agreement.
- I agree to abide by all Internet safety guidelines that are provided by the school and to complete all assignments related to Internet safety.
- I will abide by these rules and conditions when using my personal equipment and/or network connection, with regards to any communication, information, or content, whether I am on school premises or not.

Section 7- Student Conduct

Philosophy

STEP Academy utilizes a Positive Behavior Interventions & Support (PBIS) prevention model of behavior practices. It is based on the premise that all students can benefit from well-implemented, evidence-based practices for improving behavior. A set of positively stated universal expectations for behavior are established to support all students. These expectations are based on the core values of PRIDE- Personal Responsibility, Respect, Integrity, Determination, and Excellence.

STEP Academy Behavior Responses

Level 1 Classroom Responses	Re-teach and practice expected behaviors, visual and verbal cues, increased proximity, logical consequences, conflict resolution, environmental adjustment, time out, decreased privileges, behavior conference, call home
Level 2 Reflection Room Responses	Parent contact/meeting, lunch detention*, adult escort, behavior contract, in school suspension** (ISS), out of school suspension*** (OSS)
Level 3 Reflection Room Responses & Administration Involvement	Parent contact/meeting, long term behavior contract, in school suspension** (ISS), out of school suspension*** (OSS), meeting with other administrators, discussion of expulsion
Level 4 Reflection Room Responses, Administration Involvement, & Possible Outside Agency	Parent contact/meeting, long term behavior contract, in school suspension** (ISS), out of school suspension*** (OSS), meeting with other administrators, discussion of expulsion, possible referral to outside agency (police, chemical dependence, etc.)

***Lunch Detention**

Student eats lunch in a room other than the cafeteria.

****In School Suspension (ISS)**

Student reports to school, but does not attend regular classes. Instead, the student spends the day in the Reflection Room or another supervised office. Student works on daily work in this alternative location.

*****Out of School Suspension (OSS)**

Student does not report to school.

Description and Consequences Level 2 Behavior

Offense	Description	First Consequence, Second Consequence, etc.
Dangerous Conduct	Behavior that impacts the safety of the student, other students, or staff. This includes disregarding safety signs or rules, entering dangerous areas (the road during arrival/dismissal), participating in behavior that could inflict harm to others, etc.	1. Parent Contact, conversation regarding behavior with student. 2. 1 week of lunch detention. 3. Adult escort in area where behavior occurs and behavior contract. <i>If a student is escorted on to the bus and proceeds to get off the bus, student will be escorted to the office and will need to be picked up. After second offense, student will lose bus privileges for the remainder of the term or three weeks whichever is greater.</i>
Disruptive Behavior	Behavior that disrupts or interferes with the educational process or school procedures. Disruption includes sustained loud talk, yelling, screaming; blurting out, excessive noise including the use of poppers, play-fighting, and/or sustained out-of-seat behavior.	1. Parent Contact, conversation regarding behavior with student. 2. 1 week of lunch detention. 3. ISS for remainder of school day and following school day. 4. OSS, Parent meeting, and behavior plan.
Inappropriate Language & Gestures	Profanity, verbal messages and/or gestures, including swearing, name calling, or use of words in an inappropriate way including in a language other than English.	1. Parent Contact, conversation regarding behavior with student. 2. 1 week of lunch detention. 3. ISS for remainder of school day and following school day. 4. OSS, Parent meeting, and behavior plan.
Insubordination & Defiance (Level 2 or 3)	Refusal to follow directions or work, talking back, rude to an adult, refusal to stop in the hallway or other area when approached by an adult.	1. Parent Contact, conversation regarding behavior with student. 2. 1 week of lunch detention. 3. ISS for remainder of school day and following school day. 4. OSS, Parent meeting, and behavior plan.

Harassment	Language, gestures or other actions that the student can be reasonably expected to know is hurtful or discriminatory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent contact, conversation regarding behavior with student. 2. Parent meeting and 1-2 days of ISS. 3. Parent meeting with administration and OSS as determined by the level of severity.
Noncompliance during safety drills.	Student intentionally does not follow safety procedures and protocol during a school safety drill such as: Lock downs, fire, and bus safety demonstrations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent contact and review of safety procedures. 2. Parent meeting to review procedures and 1 week of lunch detention. 3. ISS for remainder of school day or on the following school day should the offence occur during the last half of the school day.

Description and Consequences Level 3 Behavior

Offense	Description	First Consequence, Second Consequence, etc.
Bullying	Behavior that meets Minnesota Statute for bullying. (See Bullying section for details)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 5-10 days OSS, parent meeting. 2. Behavior contract for remainder of school year. 3. Board meeting to discuss expulsion and potential filing of criminal charges.
Threats	Explicit or implicit speech (verbal, electronic, or written) or action that may threaten to do injury to another person or that intimidate another person through fear of harm or making another do something against their will.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent contact and ISS for remainder of day. 2. ISS for remainder of school day and following school day. Behavior contract for remainder of quarter or 3 week span, whichever is longer. 3. 1-3 days OSS and parent meeting. 4. 5-15 days OSS, Board meeting to discuss expulsion.
Fights & Aggression	Actions involving physical force on another person where injury may occur (e.g. hitting, pushing, grabbing, kicking, scratching, hair-pulling, striking with an object, etc.).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 1-3 days OSS and parent meeting. 2. 3-5 days OSS, parent meeting, and behavior contract. 3. 5-15 days OSS, Board meeting to discuss expulsion.
Disruption of Standardized Testing Session	Student deliberately impacts the integrity of the test. This includes, but is not limited to: talking, possessing an electronic device other than allowed for testing, distracting tapping or noise making, looking at a peers test, helping a peer answer a question, asking for support in answering a question, getting out of seat without permission, going into backpack or binder while test session is active.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student is moved to a different location in the room and a parent is notified of student's disruption of test. Students test may be marked invalid. 2. ISS for remainder of school day. 3. 1-3 days OSS and parent meeting.
Vandalism & Theft	Student deliberately damages, destroys, or takes school property or property belonging to another.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ISS for remainder of school day and Parent meeting, damage reimbursement. 2. 3-5 days OSS, parent meeting, and behavior contract. Also see technology policy.

Attendance Violation (On-site)	Student leaves class and/or lunch without permission, comes into class and/or lunch later than five minutes after the class begins without a signed pass, remains out of class longer than five minutes with a classroom pass, or fails to report to class without permission but does not leave the school grounds.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student is marked absent unexcused for the hour. Parent contact. One week lunch detention. 2. Parent meeting with truancy explanation and behavior contract.
Attendance Violation (Off-site)	Student leaves school without permission or remains outside of the building without permission.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent meeting, ISS upon return until parent pick up, OSS for following school day. Behavior contract in addition to attendance policy consequences. 2. Meeting with director to discuss further steps including potential expulsion.
Failure to Serve Consequence	Student is assigned a disciplinary consequence and fails to comply with it (reports to school after suspension or skips ISS)	<p>Lunch Detention:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent Contact 2. Additional week. 3. ISS remainder of day. <p>Bus Suspension:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If student rides bus when they are suspended they will spend the day in ISS and serve the bus suspension the following school day plus an additional day. <p>ISS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ISS must be served in school upon return. (Failure to report to school when assigned ISS does not fulfill ISS consequence.) <p>OSS:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ISS in director's office and parents must pick up. Student will not be allowed to ride the bus home.

Description and Consequences Level 4 Behavior		
Offense	Description	First Consequence, Second Consequence, etc.
Sexual Harassment	Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for favors, verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature in person or through electronic communication (e.g., making obscene comments or gestures, displaying obscene pictures or written material) when it adversely affects a student's educational opportunities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parent meeting with Administration. 5-10 days OSS. *Authorities may be notified. 2. Board meeting to discuss expulsion and authorities notified with filing of potential criminal charges.

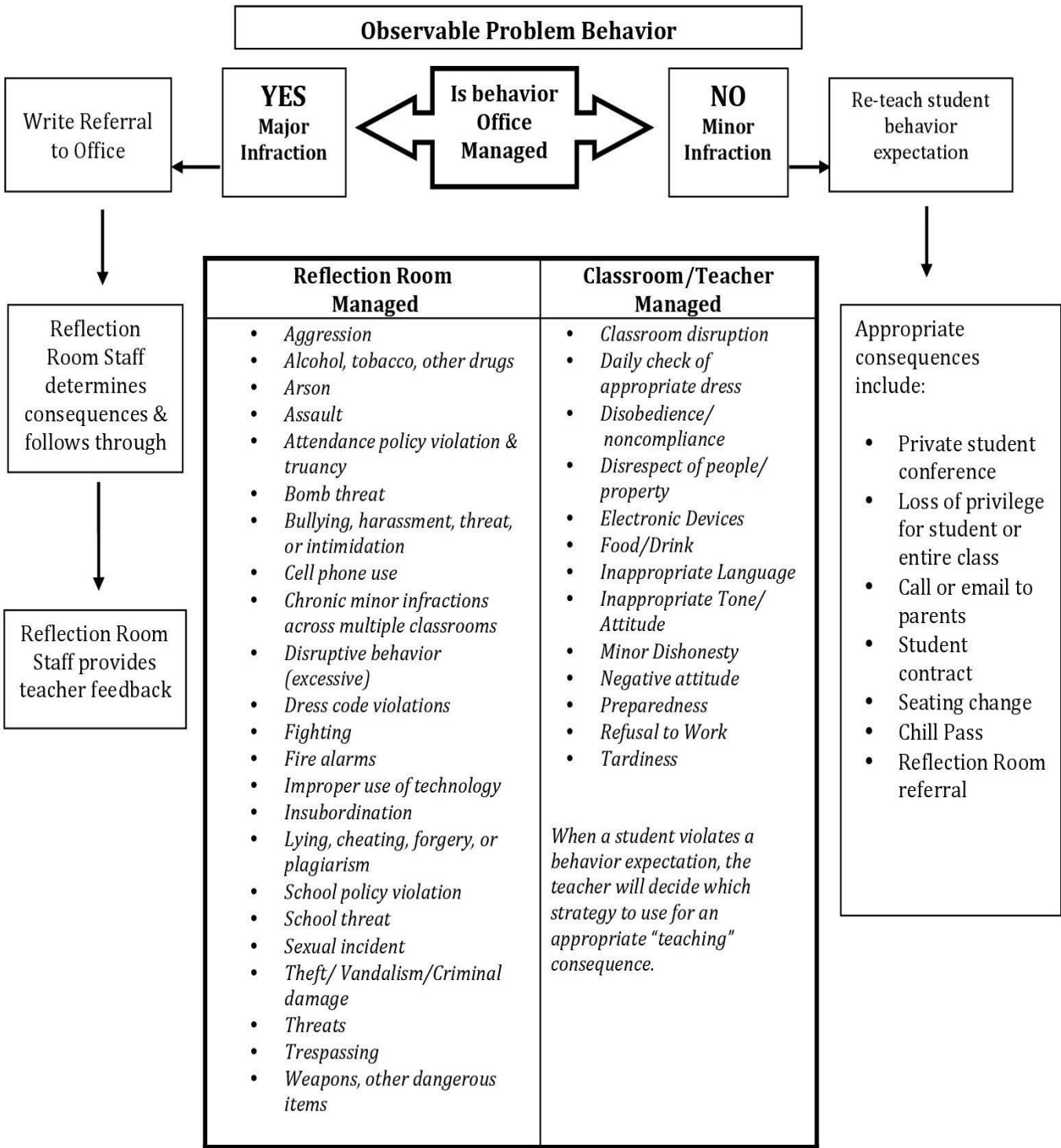
Terroristic Threat	Direct or indirect threat to commit an act of violence with the intent to terrorize another individual or group, cause evacuation of school property including buses or to cause terror with reckless disregard of the risk of causing such terror or inconvenience.	1. 10-15 days OSS and board meeting to consider expulsion and authorities notified with potential filing of criminal charges.
Weapons	No weapons are allowed on the school grounds except those carried by an official police officer.	1. 10-15 days OSS and board meeting to consider expulsion and authorities notified with potential filing of criminal charges.
Fire Alarm/ Extinguisher & 911 Call	Intentional act of setting off the school’s fire alarm system, engagement of the fire extinguisher, or call 911 without emergency.	1. Parent meeting with Administration, 10 days OSS, Authorities notified with potential filing of criminal charges and reimbursement to STEP Academy of any or all fines associated with infraction. 2. Board meeting to discuss expulsion and authorities notified with potential criminal charges.
Tobacco & Alcohol	Use or possession of any tobacco, alcohol, or illegal drugs.	1. ISS for remainder of school day and following school day, parent meeting. 2. 3-5 days OSS and referral to chemical awareness program.
Fire Infractions & Arson	A student will not possess, handle, transmit, conceal, or use any form of lighter, explosive, firework or firecracker, intentionally, by means of starting a fire, cause harm to any property or person, or participate in the burning of any property or person.	1. 5-15 day OSS, board meeting to discuss potential expulsion.

Bullying

According to Minnesota Statute, bullying behavior must include all of the following.

- Behavior is student to student.
- Behavior happened on school grounds, at a school activity, OR is cyber bullying that disrupts the student’s learning environment at school.
- Conduct is “intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming “ that is “objectively offensive.”
- The conduct is between students where an “imbalance of power” exists including: someone who is older, someone who has more popularity or status, someone who is bigger in size or physically stronger, someone in the majority (rather than the minority) at the moment, someone with more skills or ability, someone who has a weapon, or people who group together with others to have strength in numbers.
- The conduct is repeated offensive conduct, forms a pattern, materially and substantially interferes with a student’s educational opportunities, or ability to participate in school activities, or to receive school benefits, or privileges.

STEP Academy Major & Minor Offenses Flow



Section 8- Communication

Frequent Communication

Should you have a concern, please feel free to call or email the individual teacher, email addresses are posted on the website, or contact the school office. We encourage parents to contact teachers frequently and directly.

Parents do not have to wait for scheduled conferences to meet with teachers. Please call ahead to make an appointment to meet with your child's teacher. Keep the lines of communication open.

Telephone

Students needing to call parents must do so through the main school office. Teachers will not be interrupted during the instructional day with telephone calls. It is best to leave a message and your child's teacher will get back to you. Parents wishing to leave a message for a teacher must do so by going through the office.

Student Messages: Parents who need to contact student must do so through the school office. This should only be done in the event of emergencies. Please make plans in advance to avoid interruptions in the classroom. All messages must be left with office personnel.

Parent Teacher Conferences

Two parent-teacher conferences are scheduled throughout the school year, Fall and Spring. Teachers are required to make the attempt to conference with every parent three times within the school year.

Section 9- Food & Meals

See the STEP Academy web site for our complete nutrition policy. www.stepacademymn.org

Breakfast & Lunch Program

It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to provide breakfast and lunch for their children. Proper nutritional intake is essential for adequate learning to occur. It is the policy of STEP Academy to offer breakfast and lunch. The STEP Academy School Nutrition Department strives to produce quality meals at a reasonable cost.

All children in school can participate in the school breakfast program on a daily basis. The cost of a full paid breakfast meal is \$1.90. All children in school can participate in the school lunch program on a daily basis. The cost of a full paid lunch meal is \$2.90.

Menus are available in the office and posted on the website. Students may bring cold lunches from home. STEP Academy is a closed campus. This means that all students will remain on the school grounds for the entire school day and will not be able to leave the building to go get food. Students are also not allowed to have food delivered to the school for any reason.

Payments for Breakfast & Lunch Program

Students may purchase meals anytime. Families are required to pre-pay by depositing funds into their children's account(s) or by cash payment. Pre-payment of meals is required on all lunch accounts. A schedule of meals costs per month is provided to be paid monthly in advance. Free and reduced price meals are available to students who qualify. Households may apply for free/reduced meals any time before or during the school year.

A balance statement for student meal accounts will be sent to the parent/guardian at the beginning of each month. If at any time during the month the account balance is \$ 0.00 a reminder will be sent. If payment is not made, a 2nd notice will be given in the lunchroom and hand will be stamped. If the account is overdue \$-5.70 for full paid/ \$-2.00 Reduced is still not paid, the account will refer to the main office for further action.

Dietary Restrictions

Peanut free and lactose meals are available upon request. To comply with the dietary requirements of the majority of the student body, all food served at STEP Academy is pork free. Other food restrictions will try to be accommodated upon request.

Snacks/Special Occasions

On rare occasions, classroom teachers may have parties in their classrooms where students may be snacks or beverages to share. This will be done on a very limited basis and families will be notified in advance.

Section 10- Health and Wellness

Illness at Home / Communicable Illness

Control of communicable illness among children is a prime concern. In order to protect the all students, children who experience one of the following symptoms should stay at home for at least 24 hours after they experience the following symptoms:

- Diarrhea, vomiting or an upset stomach
- Signs of a newly developing cold or severe coughing
- A fever over 100 F (37.8 C)
- Unusual or unexplained headache, irritability, fatigue or loss of appetite.

Illness during School

If your child should become sick at school, we will allow him/her to rest in the office. Should no improvement be seen and/or your child has a temperature, we will notify you using the telephone numbers provided on your child's emergency form. Please keep the emergency form up-to-date.

Immunizations

In accordance with the School Immunization Law (Minnesota Statute 121A.15), students may not enroll nor remain enrolled in school without having provided documentation of required immunizations. All students are expected to be in compliance on the first day of their entry into school this fall with the exception of students transferring into school. Students transferring may have up to 30 days to provide immunization information.

Accidents

If a student is injured at school, s/he will be given appropriate first aid. Depending upon the severity of the injury a parent may be notified by telephone. When the parent cannot be reached, a member of the school staff may transport the injured student home (if an adult is present), to the hospital, or to a doctor's office. In the case of an emergency, students may be transported to a hospital or doctor's office by ambulance or other means of transportation. If possible, the family physician listed on the office records shall be contacted. The School Board assumes no responsibility for medical treatment of students.

Medicine

- We are only allowed to administer drugs to the child that it is prescribed to. All medication must be in the original bottle. The name of the student and the dosage must be clearly stated on the container.
- We cannot administer OTC (over-the-counter) drugs unless the name of the student and the dosage is clearly stated on the container with a note from the parent. Or unless have a written prescription from a doctor in the name of the student and a written parent authorization.

Section 11- School & Personal Property

Lockers

Lockers should be kept clean. No valuables should be stored in lockers.

School lockers are the property of the school district. Inspection of the interior of lockers may be conducted by school authorities for any reason at any time, without notice, without student consent, and without a search warrant.

The personal possessions of students within a school locker may be searched when school authorities have a reasonable suspicion that the search will uncover evidence of a violation of law or school rules. The school must have the combination for lockers if student chooses to lock his/her locker.

Desks

School desks are the property of the school district. Inspection of the interior of the desks may be conducted by school authorities for any reason at any time, without notice, without student consent, and without a search warrant.

Lost and Found

The school maintains a lost and found area.. Encourage your child to check lost and found. Lost and found items will be on display for parents at the fall and winter conference periods. We donate lost and found items at the conclusion of each conference period and at the end of the school year.

Section 12- Safety

Data Privacy

STEP Academy recognizes its responsibility in regards to the collection, maintenance and dissemination of pupil records and the protection of the privacy rights of students as provided in federal law and state statute. A complete copy of STEP Academy District Policy, "Maintenance and Release of Pupil Records" is available upon request in the Executive Director's office.

Harassment, Intimidation, Violence and Hazing

It is the policy of STEP Academy to maintain a learning and working environment that is free from religious, racial or sexual harassment and violence. It is the policy of STEP Academy to maintain a learning environment that is free from hazing. It is the policy of STEP Academy to maintain a learning environment that is free from bullying and intimidation in all forms, including, but not limited to forms involving electronic devices and Internet use.

Student Sex Nondiscrimination

Students are protected from discrimination on the basis of sex pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972 and the Minnesota Human Rights Act. STEP Academy provides equal educational opportunity for all students, and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of sex. No student will be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity operated by the school district on the basis of sex. It is the responsibility of every employee to comply with this policy.

Any student, parent or guardian having questions regarding the application of Title IX and its regulations and/or this policy should discuss them with the school's Title IX coordinator.

Lock down, Fire and Tornado Drills

Fire and tornado drills are held regularly during the school year. Procedures for these drills will be reviewed with students so they are aware of what action is necessary.

School Closing

(Before School) If school needs to be closed due to weather, we will make every attempt to notify families as soon as possible, before 6:00 am, whenever possible. We will notify you through an automated phone call. Please make sure that the office has your current phone numbers. The following television and radio stations will also broadcast closing information on STEP Academy:

- TV (WCCO - Channel 4)
- RADIO (WCCO - AM 830)

(During School) When serious weather strikes or other emergencies arise requiring the school to be closed early, announcements will be broadcast using the methods listed above. It is crucial that your child know where to go if this situation arises so we are not sending him/her to a locked or empty house. Please go over a safety plan with your child in the event that this occurs.

Section 13- Miscellaneous Items

Handbook Revision

STEP Academy has the right to amend this handbook as the need arises. A revised handbook or an insert to the handbook will be made available to parents in the school office. It is the duty of parents and students to obtain and familiarize themselves with the most current handbook.

Birthday Celebrations

We discourage birthday celebrations in the school to minimize disruptions and to ensure equity among students of all economic backgrounds and to ensure equity among students whose birthdays fall within the school calendar and those whose birthdays fall outside the school calendar.

Distribution of Non School Sponsored Materials on School Premises

The school district recognizes that students have the right to express themselves on school property as long as the educational objectives and the responsibility of the school are not impeded.

Requests for distribution of non-school-sponsored material will be reviewed by the administration on a case-by-case basis. A copy of the material must be submitted for approval to the principal at least 24-hours in advance of desired distribution.

Divorce of Parents

It is the responsibility of both parents to keep open lines of communication concerning the welfare of their child(ren) attending STEP Academy. Under Minnesota Statute 120A.22, the non-custodial parent, upon request, has the right of access to, and to receive copies of, school records and information, to attend conferences, and to be informed about the child's welfare, educational progress, and status. STEP Academy will only provide custodial parent the aforementioned information unless the non-custodial parent makes a written request. We are not required to hold a separate conference for each parent.