



Student/Parent Handbook 2023-2024

**215 Hogan Drive
Torrington, CT 06790**

(860) 618-7411

Dear Parent/Guardian:

As you are aware, you have a child enrolled in school at Steps Middle & High School in Torrington, Connecticut. As per state mandate, we are required to provide you access to our Student and Parent Handbook. You can receive a copy of our handbook by:

- 1) Emailing Steps at East School at mannettin@edadvance.org
- 2) Calling (860) 618-7411.
- 3) Visiting our website, <https://steps.edadvance.org>

Steps Middle & High School appreciates and encourages your involvement in your child's education. If you have any questions regarding the Handbook or your student's education, please feel free to contact school administration.

Sincerely,



Mrs. Brett Fiore
Principal - Steps
(860) 618-7411 ext. 1256

Steps Middle & High School exists to promote the academic and social emotional success of special education and expelled students. Collaboratively with students, families, and districts, we provide quality, individualized services to meet the changing needs of our students.

Staff Directory

Staff Name & Title	Phone	Email
Brett Fiore Principal	ext 1256	fiore@edadvance.org
Andrew McNamar Assistant Principal	ext 1286	mcnamar@edadvance.org
Nicole Mannetti Administrative Assistant	ext 1259	mannettin@edadvance.org
Alysha Armstrong LCSW, Clinical Supervisor	ext 1147	armstrong@edadvance.org
Chelsea Powell MSW, Social Worker	ext 1140	powell@edadvance.org
Felicia Palmer BCBA, LBA		palmerf@edadvance.org
Erica Washington BCBA, LBA		washington@edadvance.org
Kim Gioia School Counselor	ext 1284	gioia@edadvance.org
Felicia Hegdemond School Counselor	ext 1284	hedgemond@edadvance.org



August 2023				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

2 student days 5 teacher days

February 2024				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	

19 student days 19 teacher days

September 2023				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

20 student days 20 teacher days

March 2024				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

20 student days 20 teacher days

October 2023				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

21 student days 21 teacher days

April 2024				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

17 student days 17 teacher days

November 2023				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

18 student days 19 teacher days

May 2024				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

21 student days 22 teacher days

December 2023				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

15 student days 15 teacher days

June 2024				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

6 student days 6 teacher days

January 2024				
Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

21 student days 21 teacher days

IMPORTANT DATES

- Aug. 25, 28 & 29 Staff Professional Development Days
- Aug. 30 ★ **First Day of School**

- Sept. 4 Labor Day – **No School**
- Sept. 14 Early Dismissal (PD)
- Sept. 28 Early Dismissal (PD)

- Oct. 9 Columbus Day – **No School**
- Oct. 12 Early Dismissal (PD)
- Oct. 26 Early Dismissal (PD)

- Nov. 7 Election Day (PD) – **Teachers Only**
- Nov. 9 Early Dismissal (PD)
- Nov. 10 Veterans Day – **No School**
- Nov. 22 Early Dismissal – Thanksgiving
- Nov. 24, 25 Thanksgiving Break – **No School**

- Dec. 14 Early Dismissal (PD)
- Dec. 21 Early Dismissal – Winter Break
- Dec. 22, 25-29 Winter Break – **No School**

- Jan. 1 Winter Break – **No School**
- Jan. 11 Early Dismissal (PD)
- Jan. 15 Martin Luther King Day – **No School**
- Jan. 25 Early Dismissal (PD)

- Feb. 8 Early Dismissal (PD)
- Feb. 16, 19 President's Holiday – **No School**
- Feb. 22 Early Dismissal (PD)

- Mar. 7 Early Dismissal (PD)
- Mar. 21 Early Dismissal (PD)
- Mar. 29 Good Friday – **No School**

- Apr. 11 Early Dismissal (PD)
- April 15-19 Spring Break – **No School**

- May 9 Early Dismissal (PD)
- May 23 Early Dismissal (PD)
- May 24 PD – **Teachers Only**
- May 27 Memorial Day – **No School**

- June 10* ★ **Early Dismissal -- Last Day of School**

- ▲ = Professional Development - No School for students
- = Early Dismissal - students released at 12:00 (Noon)
- = Holiday - No School

General Information

School Hours

School hours are from 8:00am to 2:00pm. Students are expected to remain in transportation vehicles until staff open front doors and are escorted into the building. Students arriving after 8:15am will be considered tardy. Parents who wish to pick up their child must sign the student out in the main office.

Office/Staff Hours

Staff is available from 7:15am to 2:45pm and may be reached by phone using their direct extension. Voicemail is available after hours or prior to school opening.

School Calendar

Attached to this handbook is the program's current school year calendar. Parents/Guardians are asked to maintain this calendar throughout the school year, so they are aware of upcoming early dismissals, holidays and vacations.

Planned Early Dismissals

As depicted in the school calendar, there are early dismissal days (twice most months on Thursdays) for staff professional development. Early dismissal time is 12:00pm. Lunch will be provided on early dismissal days.

School Ceremonies and Observances

The school recognizes the value of certain ceremonies and observances in promoting patriotism and good citizenship among the students. Therefore, activities in schools commemorating national holidays such as Memorial Day, Thanksgiving and President's Day are encouraged. Regarding the variety of religious beliefs, all are urged to be conscious of and respect the sensitivities of others.

Activities related to a religious holiday or theme will be planned to ensure that the activity is not devotional and that students of all faiths can join without feeling that they are betraying their own beliefs. Embracing and practicing activities that emphasize multiculturalism is encouraged throughout the school year.

Inclement Weather

In the event of an emergency closing due to weather or other unforeseen events, parents will be notified by phone using numbers provided on the emergency contact sheet. In the event of inclement weather, the school will follow Torrington Public Schools cancellation/delays. Should schools in your home district/town close due to weather, then the student will not be transported to school that day and the absence is excused for that day.

Attendance

Connecticut state law requires parents and persons having control of children between the ages of 5 and 18 must ensure that such children attend school regularly unless the parent or person having control of such child is able to show that the child is elsewhere receiving equivalent instruction in the studies taught in the public schools.

All students are expected to attend school daily; it is essential to success! In the event of an absence, **the parent/guardian should notify the school by 8:30 a.m.** Please submit a student absence form, which can be found on the Steps Middle & High School [website](#). School personnel will call home if no message has been received by this time.

Excused Absence from School

The first nine absences in a school year will be excused when a parent provides in writing within 10 school days approving the absence. For the tenth and further absences to be considered excused, the absence must be due to an acceptable reason. Acceptable reasons include:

- student illness (verified by a licensed medical professional)
- observance of a religious holiday
- death in the family or other emergency beyond the control of the student's family
- mandated court appearances (additional documentation required)
- lack of transportation usually provided by the school district
- extraordinary educational opportunities (pre-approved by the principal)
- visit with parent/guardian who is an active-duty member of the Armed Forces (as required by state law, some restrictions apply)

Mental Health Wellness Absences

Any student enrolled in grades Kindergarten to Twelve, inclusive, are permitted to take **two** mental health wellness days during the school year, during which day such student shall not be required to attend school. No student shall take mental health wellness days during consecutive school days.

Mental Health Wellness absences will be excused when parent or guardian permission is documented, regardless of the number of absences a student has accrued in the school year.

Unexcused Absence from School

Any absence that does not meet the criteria for an excused absence or a disciplinary absence (out-of-school suspension or expulsion) is unexcused.

Truancy

Truancy is defined as four (4) unexcused absences from school in any one month or 10 unexcused absences from school in any school year. When a student is identified as a truant, Steps Middle & High School, in conjunction with the home school district, will hold a meeting with the Parent/Guardian to review the student's attendance and next steps.

Health and Medical

Immunizations

Connecticut law mandates that all students be protected by adequate immunization against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, rubella, Hemophilus influenzae type B, hepatitis B, varicella and any other vaccine required by the schedule for active immunization adopted pursuant to state law.

Here is the [LINK](#) to required immunizations for Connecticut students for 2023-2024 School Year

Students who have not been immunized will not be admitted to school except in cases where the parent/guardian has provided a certificate from a physician stating that such immunization is medically contradicted. Homeless children are entitled to immediate enrollment even if the documentation of immunization is not immediately available.

Required Screenings

All students enrolled within EdAdvance schools who are in the specific grades identified below will be screened by October 27, 2023. If you do not want your child to be screened, please notify your child's school in writing, or contact the school principal for assistance in documenting your decision.

- Vision screen - All students in grades Kindergarten, One, Three, Four and Five
- Hearing screen – All students in grades Kindergarten, One, Three, Four and Five
- Scoliosis (curvature of the spine) **screen**: *** if no documentation in school record that a postural screen was performed by the child's outside healthcare provider in the same school year as the mandated screening is required
 - Female students in grades Five and Seven
 - Male students in grade Eight or Nine

Medications

Connecticut state law requires a written order by an authorized prescriber and the written authorization of the student's parent or guardian for school personnel to administer any medicinal preparation including over-the-counter, prescription and controlled drugs. This includes inhalers, epi-pens, and medications such as Tylenol or ibuprofen. Students are not allowed to carry or have medication in their possession unless the student self-administers the medication in accordance with a medication administration plan developed by school personnel in conjunction with the student's parents and prescriber. All medications, except those approved for self-administration, must be hand-delivered to the school nurse or other qualified personnel trained in medication administration by the parent or other responsible adult. All medications will be administered by the school nurse, or in the absence of such nurse, other qualified personnel.

Emergency Administration of Epinephrine or Opioid antagonist without Written Authorization

EdAdvance schools will maintain (1) epinephrine in cartridge injectors for the purpose of emergency first aid to students who experience allergic reactions and do not have a prior written authorization of a parent or guardian or a prior written order and (2) opioid antagonists for the purpose of emergency first aid to students who experience an opioid-related drug overdose, and do not have a prior written authorization of a parent or guardian or a prior written order of a qualified medical professional for the administration of such opioid antagonist. In accordance with all required laws regarding storage, administration, training and record keeping, a school nurse or, in the absence of a school nurse, a qualified school employee will be on the grounds of the school during regular school hours. A parent or guardian of a student may submit a request, in writing, to the school nurse and specify that (1) epinephrine and/or (2) opioid antagonist shall not be administered in an emergency to said student.

Home and School Partnership

Student success happens when school and families work closely together through communication and a common set of expectations. A collaborative partnership is critical to student success and contributes significantly to their educational and personal growth.

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

- Sign all papers that require a parent/guardian signature
- Ensure that all contact information (phone numbers, mailing addresses, and email addresses) are up-to-date with school
- Ask questions about what was learned in school each day
- Require regular school attendance
- Attend parent-teacher conferences and school events that involve your child
- Make sure your child comes to school well-fed and rested

Student Responsibilities

- The school personnel are responsible for your safety and well-being from the time you arrive until you depart from the school grounds. To meet this responsibly, we have policies in place to maintain a safe and positive school climate. As a student, it is your responsibility to follow and cooperate with these policies while under the supervision of school personnel.

Students are expected to:

- Attend school and all classes daily
- Participate in the behavior management program
- Follow all school rules and not disrupt the learning environment
- Respect the physical boundaries of each other and school personnel
- Communicate with others using respectful language and voice tone
- Expect consistent and reasonable consequences for noncompliance with school rules

Staff Responsibilities

- Guide the student's educational experience and fosters personal and academic growth
- Set high standards for students by providing a challenging curriculum
- Maintain an atmosphere that contributes to positive student behavior
- Communicate regularly with parents/guardians regarding a student's progress
- Provide positive support for the academic, social, and emotional growth of all students

Non-Discrimination and Unlawful Harassment Policies

Notice of Non-Discrimination

The Agency does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information or any other basis prohibited by law in any of its programs, activities and employment practices.

Any student who feels he/she has been denied an equal opportunity to participate in or benefit from the activities, programs or courses of study offered by the school district in violation of this policy should immediately bring his or her complaint to the attention of a Counselor, Building Principal or the Director of Special Education.

Prohibition of Unlawful Harassment

Harassment is a form of discrimination. It is the policy of the administration to maintain a working and learning environment that is free from all forms of unlawful harassment based upon a student's race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information or any other basis prohibited by law.

Students are also prohibited from harassing teachers, administrators or other school personnel on the basis of race, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, genetic information, veteran status, marital status, ancestry, genetic information or any other basis prohibited by law.

Definition of Unlawful Harassment

Unlawful harassment means unwelcome and offensive conduct that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a student's performance and/or learning opportunities or that is sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent so as to create an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment. All forms of harassment are prohibited whether verbal, written, visual or physical and regardless of the medium through which it occurs.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

Unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature including physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person's will or where a person is incapable of giving consent, sexual advances, requests

for sexual favors and other inappropriate verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of a student's education
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by a student is used as a basis for educational decisions affecting that student's education
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, and/or is sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent that it creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive educational environment. A harasser may be a student, school employee, or any other person involved in or present for school sponsored events or programs. All members of the school community are responsible for helping to assure that sexual, racial and other unlawful harassment is avoided. Any student who feels that he/she has been harassed should immediately report it to any of the following: Social Worker, Building Principal, and/or Director of Special Education. Any person who has observed or otherwise become aware of conduct prohibited by this policy should bring the matter to the immediate attention of the building principal.

Complaints of Discrimination and/or Unlawful Harassment

For complaints of discrimination with regard to disability, please contact the Program Director or Human Resources.

All complaints will be promptly investigated in as confidential a manner as practical and appropriate corrective action will be taken when warranted. Any employee, student, volunteer or other individual under the control of the school system who is determined after an investigation to have engaged in harassment in violation of this policy will be subject to discipline, including possible dismissal or expulsion.

EdAdvance Title IX Coordinator: Aisha Alam
alam@edadvance.org
(860) 567 – 0863 ext. 1311

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Please visit this [LINK](#) to understand the entire process that is followed to report Child Abuse and/or Neglect.

Student Conduct

Students are responsible for conducting themselves properly in a responsible manner. Steps School has authority over students during the regular school day. Student responsibilities for achieving a positive learning environment in school or at school-related activities include:

1. Attending school regularly and punctually
2. Being prepared for each school day with appropriate materials and assignments
3. Showing respect toward self, staff and peers
4. Behaving in a responsible and respectful manner
5. Adhering to school rules, including all safety policies, and rules pertaining to the use of technology
6. Cooperating with staff investigations to ensure a safe and productive learning environment for all students

Students who violate these rules may be subject to restorative practice and/or disciplinary action and shall be referred, when necessary, to school administration.

Clothing

Students are expected to wear appropriate clothing to school. Students should not wear any article of clothing or jewelry which could interfere or be disruptive to the learning process, be unsafe to the student, makes reference to or represent gang-related colors, symbols or regalia, has drug, tobacco or alcohol references or has offensive or obscene words, phrases or sayings.

Smoking

Students shall not smoke or use tobacco products, including vaping paraphernalia, on school property or at any school-related or school-sanctioned activity. Any student found in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

Substance Abuse Policy

The school administration is authorized to provide discipline to students for:

1. Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling tobacco materials or electronic cigarettes
2. Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling alcoholic beverages
3. Using, possessing, distributing, purchasing, or selling any illegal drugs, vapes, edibles or controlled substances.

Students who are under the influence of any prohibited substance are not permitted to attend school and will be requested to be picked up from school. The student's school district will be immediately notified and will participate in conversations regarding discipline and placement.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices

The use of cell phones and other electronic devices may not be used during the school day without prior permission from school staff. Inappropriate or unauthorized use of personal cell phones or other electronic devices by a student during the school day may result in loss of device until dismissal and/or progressive disciplinary sanctions. Students are responsible for securing their personal possessions and the school assumes no responsibility.

Use of the Internet

Internet activity is closely monitored and regularly checked by the technology department. Students are expected to remain within the boundaries of educational websites. Violation may result in loss of use of internet and device usage in school.

Remaining in the Building

Students are expected to remain in the building at all times unless escorted by a staff member. If a student should leave the property, police and parents will be notified immediately. A parent meeting may be requested to review the incident and discuss next steps.

Emergency Response Drills

Lockdown drills, fire alarm drills and evacuation drills are important safety precautions that are practiced at regular intervals throughout the school year. The purpose of these drills is for students and staff to practice safety procedures in order to limit confusion and build cooperation should unforeseen emergencies occur during the school day.

Vandalism

A student who vandalizes school property may be required to pay restitution and/or restore property to its prior condition, in addition to receiving program consequences. Police involvement may result from any such action.

Pesticide Management

Please contact the Program Director for specific information about concerns with Pesticide Management.

Search and Seizure

To protect the safety of students and school personnel, school authorities may search students and their belongings and may seize contraband materials discovered in the search in accordance with Connecticut law and the authority and guidelines established by the United States Supreme Court, and other federal and state laws.

Out of School Suspension

An authorized member of the administrative staff may suspend a student, from school or from transportation services, whose conduct endangers persons or property.

Breakfast and Lunch

All students are eligible for breakfast and lunch provided by the school. Students may bring lunch from home as well.

Management of Life-Threatening Food Allergies

Some students have serious, life-threatening food allergies. It is important that you follow any guidelines provided to you. For more information, please contact the Program Director.

Wellness

Student wellness, including good nutrition and physical activity, is promoted through the educational program, school activities, and our meal program. A program of physical education is included within the school day.

Social/Emotional/Behavioral Support System

All students are expected to participate in the school-wide behavior management system. The behavior management system is a tool to measure how well a student is progressing towards mastery of his or her IEP. The behavior management system consists of:

- **Positive Behavioral Classroom Supports & Point System**

The purpose of the classroom support system is to help students in making positive choices, develop problem solving skills, and provide consistent feedback based on compliance with the school and classroom rules.

The point system, if being utilized with a student, is a tool to track the student's academic and behavioral participation in the program. Students are able to earn points throughout the entire school day. This may include, but is not limited to; morning meetings, counseling, academic classes, parent meetings, and all other school activities throughout the day.

- **Student Progress Monitoring**

All staff maintain standardized student behavioral data on each enrolled student during every period or session each day. Students are assessed across a wide range of categories including Responsibility, Respect/Safety, Work Completion, and Personal Goals. Student behavioral data is compiled, shared, and interpreted by staff in a team setting to gauge student readiness regularly.

Students are expected to respectfully participate and follow staff directions in all classes. Should a student's behavior become disruptive to the educational environment, the student may be removed from the classroom.

- **Counseling**

All students will receive both individualized and flexible counseling by a comprehensive therapeutic treatment team. Students are offered the opportunity to participate in additional groups throughout the school year to address their individualized social-emotional needs.

- **Crisis Management**

All staff are certified in to perform emergency physical management and/or seclusion in accordance with Physical and Psychological Management Training (PMT).

Use of Seclusion and/or Restraints

In the event that a student demonstrates behaviors causing imminent risk of danger to oneself or others, verbal de-escalation will be used to try and halt the escalation of risk behaviors. However, should the verbal de-escalation techniques not work, and the student continues to display unsafe behaviors, school administration and/or clinical staff may authorize the use of seclusion and/or restraint in order to prevent injury to the student or others.

Restraint

“Physical Restraint” means any mechanical or personal restriction that immobilizes or reduces the free movement of a person's arms, legs or head, including, but not limited to, carrying or forcibly moving a person from one location to another. No school employee shall use a physical restraint on a student except as an emergency intervention to prevent immediate or imminent injury to the student or to others, provided the restraint is not used for discipline or convenience and is not used as a substitute for a less restrictive alternative.

Seclusion

“Seclusion” means the involuntary confinement of a person in a room, from which the student is physically prevented from leaving. No school employee shall place a student in seclusion except as an emergency intervention to prevent immediate or imminent injury to the student or to others, provided the seclusion is not used for discipline or convenience and is not used as a substitute for a less restrictive alternative.

Any use of restraint or seclusion is documented and maintained in our records, as required by the Connecticut State Department of Education.

In the event a student's behavior remains escalated to the point that he/she is not responding positively to our emergency procedures, Emergency Medical Services and/or EMPS may be called to provide needed support. The Parent/Guardian will be informed immediately should such service be required.

For more information, please visit [THIS LINK](#). Hard copies available upon request

Notifications

School records and confidentiality

Copies of the Agency's policy are available at the school counseling office. Consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the student records policy affords parents of students and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to education records. They are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records. Parents of minor or dependent children and eligible students are entitled to review educational records upon request made to the school principal.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records when the parent or eligible student believes such records are inaccurate, misleading or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights. A request for an amendment to educational records should be made in writing to the school principal and identify the record(s) at issue and the reason for the request.
3. The right to consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records except to the extent that the law authorizes disclosure without consent. For example, written consent prior to disclosure is not required in the following circumstances:
 - a. To other school officials within the Agency who have legitimate educational interest. A school official is a person employed by the Agency or a contracting school district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the Board of Directors; a person or company with whom the school district has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, bus contractor, medical or educational consultant or therapist); or a person serving on a Board committee, or as a hearing officer in discipline cases, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has the ability to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.
 - b. Upon request to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.
 - c. To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena, provided that the school makes a reasonable effort to notify the parent or eligible student of the order or subpoena prior to compliance therewith.
 - d. To parties in a health or safety emergency.
4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by school officials to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-5920

Notice of Intent to Release Directory Information without Prior Consent

Bullying at Behavior & Steps Middle & High School

Steps Middle & High School is dedicated to promoting and maintaining a positive learning environment where all students are welcomed, supported, and feel socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically safe in school.

Bullying Prohibited

Bullying is prohibited on school grounds, at a school sponsored or school related activity, function or program whether on or off school or Agency grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a local or regional board of education, the Steps Middle & High School or the Agency , or through the use of an electronic device or an electronic mobile device owned, leased, or used by the local or regional board of education, Steps Middle & High School or the Agency.

Bullying is also prohibited outside of the school setting if such bullying results in any of the following: (i) creates a hostile environment at school for the student against whom such bullying was directed, (ii) infringes on the rights of the student against whom such bullying was directed at school, or (iii) substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school or the Agency. Any form of discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying is strictly prohibited.

Definitions

“Bullying” means an act that is direct or indirect and severe, persistent or pervasive, which (1) causes physical or emotional harm to an individual, (2) places an individual in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm, or (3) infringes on the rights or opportunities of an individual at school

Bullying shall include, but need not be limited to, a written, oral or electronic communication or physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics.

“Cyberbullying” means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile devices or any electronic communications.

“Mobile electronic device” means any hand-held or other portable electronic equipment capable of providing data communication between two or more individuals, including, but not limited to, a text messaging device, a paging device, a personal digital assistant, a laptop computer, equipment that is capable of playing a video game or a digital video disk, or equipment on which digital images are taken or transmitted.

“Electronic communication” means any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo-electronic, or photo-optical system.

“Hostile environment” means a situation in which bullying among students is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the school climate.

“Out of the school setting” means at a location, activity, or program that is not school related, or through the use of an electronic device or a mobile electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by Steps Middle & High School or a local or regional board of education.

“Safe School Climate Coordinator” means the individual appointed by the Agency’s Executive Director from existing staff who is responsible for:

- Implementing the program’s Safe School Climate Plan;
- Collaborating with the safe school climate specialists, local member Boards of Education, the Agency, and the Superintendent of Schools and the Executive Director to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying in the school.
- Providing data and information to the State Department of Education regarding bullying, in accordance with state law; and
- Meeting with the safe school climate specialists at least twice during the school year to discuss issues relating to bullying in the school district and to make recommendations concerning amendments to the district’s Safe School Climate Plan.

Safe School Climate Plan

Steps’ Safe School Climate Plan consists of this policy as well as the administrative regulations developed by the Executive Director to implement this plan.

Reporting Procedures

Any student who believes he or she has been the victim of bullying may report the matter to any school employee. Students may anonymously report acts of bullying to school employees.

Parents or guardians of students may also file written reports of suspected bullying.

School employees who witness acts of bullying or receive reports of bullying are required to orally notify the safe school climate specialist (or another school administrator if the safe school climate specialist is unavailable), not later than one school day after such school employee witnesses or receives a report of bullying, and to file a written report not later than two school days after making such oral report.

Investigation

The safe school climate specialist shall investigate or supervise the investigation of all reports of bullying and ensure that such investigation is completed promptly after receipt of any written reports.

The safe school climate specialist shall review any anonymous reports. No disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

The investigator shall assess whether there is a necessity to take immediate measures to prevent further allegations of bullying or retaliation of any kind while the investigation is pending.

The investigator shall remind involved parties that any form of discrimination and retaliation against an individual who reports or assists in the investigation of an act of bullying is strictly prohibited.

After a prompt investigation, the investigator should ascertain whether the alleged conduct occurred and whether such conduct constitutes bullying as defined by this policy.

Response to Verified Acts of Bullying

If it is determined that bullying has occurred, the school will take prompt corrective action that is reasonably calculated to stop the bullying and prevent any recurrence of such behavior. As part of such remedial action, the offender may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action which may include, but is not limited to, one or a combination of the following: counseling, awareness training, warning, suspension, or expulsion.

Safe School Climate Specialist:

Kim Gioia, School Counselor
gioia@edadvance.org
(860) 618-7411 ext. 1284

EdAdvance Safe School Climate Coordinator:

Annette Miserez-Dillon
adillon@edadvance.org
(860) 567-0863 ext. 1040

Notification of Rights Under (“PPRA”) The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment

The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232h, affords parents and eligible students (i.e. students over 18 or emancipated minors) certain rights with respect to the administration of student surveys, the collection and use of personal information, and the administration of certain physical exams. These rights include:

- The right of a parent to inspect, upon request, a survey created by a third party before the survey is administered or distributed by a school to a student;

- The right of a parent to inspect, upon request, any survey concerning one or more of the following confidential topics: a. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student’s parent; b. Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student’s family; c. Sex behavior or attitudes; d. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior; e. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships; f. Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as those with lawyers, doctors, physicians, or ministers religious practices; g. Affiliations, or beliefs of the student or the student’s parent; or h. Income, other than as required by law to determine eligibility for certain programs or for receiving financial assistance under such programs;

- The right of a parent to inspect, upon request, any instructional material used as a part of the educational curriculum;

- The right of a parent to inspect, upon request, any instrument used in the collection of personal information from students gathered for the purpose of marketing, selling or otherwise providing that information to others for that purpose. Personal information means individually identifiable information including, a student or parent’s first and last name, a home or other physical address; a telephone number or a social security number;

- The right of a parent to be notified of the specific or approximate dates of the following activities, as well as the right of a parent or eligible student to opt-out of participation in these activities: a. Activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected from students for the purpose of marketing or selling that information (or otherwise providing that information to others for that purpose); b. The administration of any survey containing confidential topics (see #2, above, a-h); or c. Any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening that is required as a condition of attendance, administered by the school and unnecessary to protect the immediate health and safety of a student. Such examinations do not include a hearing, vision, or scoliosis screening or other examination permitted or required by State law. Parents and eligible students may not opt-out of activities relating to the collection, disclosure, and/or use of personal information collected from students for the exclusive purpose of developing, evaluating, or providing education products or services for, or to students or educational institutions, such as the following: a. College or other post-secondary education

recruitment, or military recruitment; b. Book clubs, magazines, and programs providing access to low-cost literary products; c. Curriculum and instructional materials used by elementary and secondary schools; d. Tests and assessments used by elementary and secondary schools to provide cognitive, evaluative, diagnostic, clinical, aptitude, or achievement information about students; e. The sale by students of products or services to raise funds for school-related or education-related activities; f. Student recognition programs.

To protect student privacy in compliance with the PPRA, Steps has adopted policies regarding these rights. Parents and/or eligible students who believe their rights have been violated under the PPRA may contact:

Family Policy Compliance Office U.S. Department of
Education 400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-4605
Reference: 20 U.S.C. § 1232h