



Next Step to Success Weekly Update

Message from our Executive Director



James Harris

As we begin Week 14, I'm excited to share the tremendous growth we're seeing across the Next Step to Success program. Each week, our students are showing greater confidence, stronger participation, and a deeper sense of ownership in the NSTS community. Their progress is a powerful reminder of what's possible when young people are given support, structure, and encouragement.

Our *Student Ambassadors* continue to set the tone for leadership within the program. Their professionalism during tours, their pride in representing NSTS, and their willingness to help and guide their peers have made a lasting impact. They are becoming true role models showing others what leadership looks like in action.

We're also thrilled to celebrate the energy and enthusiasm of our newly formed NSTS *cheerleaders*. This team has brought an incredible spirit to the program building teamwork, confidence, and excitement as they practice and prepare for future showcases. Their dedication is already inspiring other students to step outside their comfort zones and try new things.

Together, our ambassadors and cheer team are helping shape a vibrant, positive culture that reflects the very best of NSTS. We couldn't be prouder.

James Harris, Executive Director



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From the Director of Education



This week, we're shining a spotlight on one of our incredible team members, Jerniya. She brings an energy to Next Step to Success that our youth instantly connect with. Through Old Dominion University and the Federal Work-Study program, she's become a steady, encouraging presence in our building—someone who shows up with purpose and heart every single day. She has a natural way of guiding students, celebrating their wins, and nudging them forward when things feel tough. Outside of NSTS, she's all about creativity, cozy downtime, and family life, and she brings that same grounded, genuine spirit into her work with our youth. Her outlook on growth, grit, and grace makes her exactly the kind of mentor our students look up to.

What inspired you to start working with Next Step to Success?

I've been working with children for almost two years now, and it's something I genuinely enjoy. Seeing how I can influence those younger than me in a positive way is what motivates me. Knowing that I can help guide them and make an impact is what inspired me to join Next Step to Success.

What has been your favorite memory or moment with the youth so far?

My favorite moments are when the students I've been working with come to me excited about their grades and show me how they're improving. Those moments let me know they're actually taking something from our time together, and it reminds me why I volunteer.

What do you hope the students take away from their time with you?

I hope they learn to be as persistent as I am with them whether it's schoolwork or other things they have going on in their lives. I want them to take that persistence and use it reach their goals and push through any challenges they may face.

What do you like to do outside of volunteering?

Outside of volunteering, I enjoy baking, watching movies or series, and spending time with my family.

If you could give the students one piece of advice, what would it be?

Appreciate failure it means you're growing. Nobody gets better without failing a few times. Treat failure like feedback , not a final decision. And always respect everyone. You never know who's watching or what opportunities might come your way because of the type of person you are.



Programming Update

This week at Next Step to Success, our youth participated in an all-group life simulation activity. Each youth was given a scenario card that listed their profession and how many children they had. They then rotated through different tables where they selected transportation, housing, phone



Operations Update

Updated program calendar for the 2025-2026 program year has been sent to families regarding adjustments to better support our students, streamline communication, and keep everyone informed about important dates, events, holidays, and youth free days.

bills, streaming services, and many other real-life expenses. This was a fun, hands-on activity that helped them learn about financial decisions.

We also had Tom Crockett from Together We Can come in to take photos of all our youth. These photos will be used for the work portfolios they previously created. Youth were also able to participate in Karate and Chess this week. Chess is in its final weeks, and it has been awesome to see their growth.

Please take a moment to review the updated calendar in efforts to keep up with dates that help us maintain smooth daily operations and ensures our youth get the most out of their time in the program.

Save The Date:

- 12/12/2025: No Youth Day
- 12/18/2025: NSTS Holiday Dinner
- 12/22/2025 – 12/26/2025: NPS Winter Break (*NSTS Closed*)
- 12/29/2025 – 12/31/2025: No Youth Days
- 1/5/2025: NSTS reopens for regularly scheduled programming

Reminders

- Please ensure your information is always up to date in TraxSolutions.
 - If you need assistance accessing your account, contact our main office at (757) 995-2111
- Transportation routes are essential for ensuring smooth daily operations.
 - If there are any changes, or if your youth will not be attending, please call or email using the contact information above.

Requests

- Please complete the NSTS Family Satisfaction and Impact Survey (Extension through the Holidays).
 - Your feedback is vital for program planning, funding, and partnerships that help us continue providing the highest quality care and services to youth across Hampton Roads.
- Stay connected with us on social media:
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Staff Spotlight

☀ Staff Spotlight: Carly

- 1. What inspired you to join Next Step to Success?** I always enjoyed working with kids and wanted to take my work beyond the classroom.
- 2. If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be?** Energetic, passionate and whimsical
- 3. What's one lesson you hope every student you work with carries with them?** The only person you should compare yourself to is the person you were yesterday.
- 4. Who was a mentor or role model in your own life, and how did they shape you?** My day. Watching him work as an educator made me want to follow in his footsteps.
- 5. What's your favorite way to spend a Saturday when you're not working?** Playing with my kids.
- 6. If you could have dinner with any historical figure or celebrity, who would it be and why?** Jason Reynolds – His ability to write in a way that draws in an often-ignored audience.
- 7. What's a fun fact about you that most people don't know?** I am actually quiet at home – sometimes!
- 8. If you had to pick a theme song for your life, what would it be?** Anees, Free Me
- 9. What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?** To be authentically as yourself because everyone else is taken
- 10. Finish this sentence "Working at Next Step to Success means..."** Supporting children to reach their potential.
- 11. What's your all-time favorite TV show or movie?** Miss Congeniality
- 12. If you had a superpower for a day, what would it be?** Teleportation

Culinary Corner

From the Coordinator of Culinary Arts



Good Afternoon NSTS Family,

Your favorite kitchen crew is back with another week of flavor, love, and a little sprinkle of Chef B magic! 😊✨

Check out what's cooking in the NSTS Kitchen this week:

🍝 **Monday – Chicken Alfredo**

Creamy, cheesy, and a youth favorite every single time!

🔥 **Tuesday – Isaiah's Jambalaya**

Our very own youth chef special! Big flavor, big pride — y'all know Isaiah puts his FOOT in this one!

🍗 **Wednesday – Wings & Wedges**

Crispy, saucy, seasoned... just say less. A mid-week classic

🍞 **Thursday – Chicken Sandwiches & Wedges**

Golden, crunchy, delicious — these sandwiches never miss!

As always, thank you for rocking with the kitchen and keeping the vibes positive, hungry, and fun. Let's make this week smooth, joyful, and full of good food + good energy! 💛💙

If you need anything or have ideas, you know where to find me — in the kitchen making magic happen! 😊👨🍳

— **Chef B & The NSTS Kitchen Crew**

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