



Next Step to Success Weekly Update

A Message from our Executive Director



James Harris

As we continue to grow, Next Step to Success is reaching new heights in both enrollment and the depth of opportunities we provide. This growth reflects the strength of our mission and the collective effort of our students, families, staff, and community partners. With more students engaging each day, the energy and impact of our program continue to expand in meaningful ways.

With that growth, consistent attendance is more important than ever. Showing up each day allows students to fully benefit from the academic support, enrichment, and mentorship that drives real progress. It is through daily participation that students build relationships, strengthen skills, and stay committed to their personal development.

A key part of that development is each student's GRIT goal with a commitment to perseverance, responsibility, and follow-through. These goals are not achieved in isolation; they require consistency, effort, and support. We encourage families to continue reinforcing the importance of attendance and to ask their child about their GRIT goals and progress.

We also invite our community to support our ongoing work through our Brick Fundraiser. Each brick purchased represents a lasting belief in a student's future and helps us continue expanding opportunities for our youth.

Thank you for growing with us.

James Harris, Executive Director



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Next Step to Success- NSTS



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www.nextsteptosuccess.org



Youth Spotlight: Emmanuel



Emmanuel, a 10th grader at Maury High School, has been a part of Next Step to Success for the past two years. Known for his sense of humor and positive energy, he enjoys building friendships and staying active in NSTS programming. Whether he's participating in activities or working toward his goals, Emmanuel continues to show growth and determination!

1. What is your name and grade? **10th Maury HS**
2. How long have you been a part of Next Step to Success? **2 Years**
3. What do you like most about coming to NSTS? **Making friends and doing the activities.**
4. What is one goal you're working on right now? **Getting a job.**
5. Who inspires you the most, and why? **My mom, because she believes in me.**
6. What is your favorite subject in school? **Math**
7. What activities or hobbies do you enjoy outside of school? **Basketball and Football.**
8. What's your favorite book, movie, or song right now? **Movie: Spider man**
9. What does success mean to you? **To move forward with your dreams.**
10. If you could give advice to another student, what would it be? **Try your hardest...**
11. What do you see yourself doing in the future (career, dreams, or big goals)? **Being an entrepreneur.**
12. Share a fun fact about yourself most people don't know! **I love to cook and clean!**

13. Is there someone at NSTS (staff or peer) who has made a big difference for you?

Coach Jontel

14. If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be? **Funny, Happy and Sad.**

15. What makes you proud of yourself this week? **Working on my grades.**

With dreams of becoming an entrepreneur, Emmanuel is focused on moving forward and putting in the work to reach his goals—starting with improving his grades and securing a job. Inspired by his mom’s belief in him and supported by mentors like Coach Jontel, Emmanuel is learning the value of effort, perseverance, and staying committed to his future.

NSTS in Action: St. Paddy's Day Cooking and Craft.



Coach Spotlight: Jontel



Coach Jontel brings leadership, patience, and a deep commitment to shaping the next generation through his work at Next Step to Success. Inspired by the organization’s mission to create opportunities for youth, he leads by example—encouraging students to think before they act, stay disciplined, and believe in their future. Guided by the work ethic of his mother and a passion for mentorship, Coach Jontel is a steady and impactful presence in the lives of the students he serves.

1. What inspired you to join Next Step to Success? **The vision of the organization to give them opportunities for success.**
2. If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be? **Patient, Leader and Understanding**
3. What’s one lesson you hope every student you work with carries with them? **Think prior to reacting.**
4. Who was a mentor or role model in your own life, and how did they shape you? **My mom – Just seeing her work ethic. She paved the way for me.**
5. What’s your favorite way to spend a Saturday? **In the gym**
6. If you could have dinner with any historical figure or celebrity, who would it be and why? **Barack Obama – To pick is brain on how he always stayed so calm in the midst of chaos.**
7. What’s a fun fact about you that most people don’t know? **Country music is my therapy. It calms me down.**
8. If you had to pick a theme song for your life, what would it be? **Tennessee Whiskey – Chris Stapleton**
9. What’s the best piece of advice you’ve ever received? Algebra 2 teacher – Ms. Spenser - **Do what you have to do now so you can do what you want later.**
10. Finish this sentence “Working at Next Step to Success means...” **Shaping the lives of the next generation.**
11. What’s your all-time favorite TV show or movie? **Stranger Things/Italian Job**
12. If you had a superpower for a day, what would it be? **Super Strength.**



Carly Gelles Director of Education

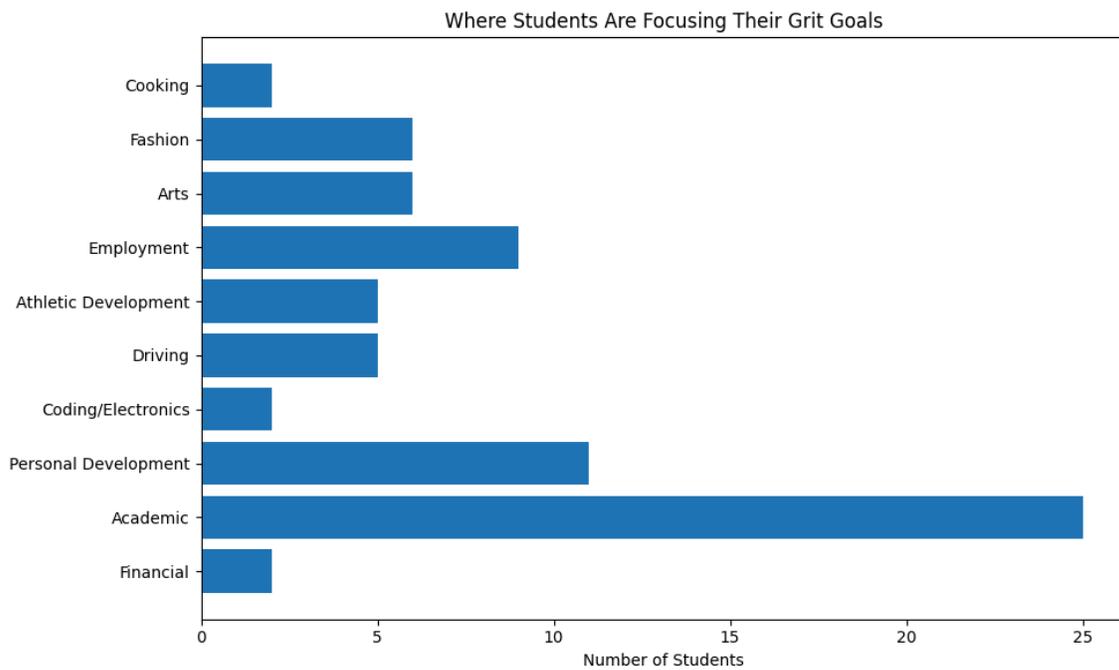
Good afternoon Next Step families,

As a reminder, students are out of school on the 20th as the grading period has come to a close. Over the next week or so, report cards will be released, and we encourage families to review grades together and stay engaged in your child's academic progress.

At Next Step, each student sets a Grit Goal—a personal goal they are working toward throughout their time in the program. These goals are unique to each student and reflect what they want to improve, achieve, or explore.

Below is a snapshot of where our students are currently focusing their energy and effort through their Grit Goals.

Thank you for your continued partnership and support.





Program Update Kaelyn Hundley

This week may have been a shorter one with only three program days, but it was certainly busy and impactful for our youth. We had the opportunity to visit the Chrysler Museum of Art and welcomed several of our valued community partners, including the Elizabeth River Project, The Up Center, and Vital Pivots. Through these experiences, our youth demonstrated a strong growth mindset by embracing new opportunities, engaging with confidence, and building meaningful connections.

Our middle school group continues working with Together We Can to develop their portfolios as they prepare for the transition into high school, showing focus and excitement for what's ahead.



Operations Update Muhanma Garcia

Program Participation & Summer Enrollment

To help our program run smoothly each day, consistent attendance is important. Our daily planning for meals, activities, field trips, and dismissal relies on accurate participation counts. While we understand youth may occasionally have appointments or school commitments, please keep the following guidelines in mind:

- **Early Pick-Up: Youth must be picked up by 5:00 PM to fully participate in daily programming.**
- **Late Arrival: Youth arriving late must arrive no later than 3:30 PM.**

Enrollment for the Next Step to Success Summer Program 2026 is now open for youth currently enrolled in our after-school program. Families can enroll by logging into TraxSolution and selecting Summer Program 2026. For questions, please contact Muhanma Garcia at mgarcia@nextstptosuccess.org.

Program Growth & Enrollment

We are excited to share that Next Step to Success currently has 120 youth enrolled in our after-school program. We appreciate the continued support of our community and would like to recognize Ghent School, Norview Middle School, Northside Middle School, and Maury High School for their recent student enrollments.

Please remember that enrollment is not complete until families meet with staff in person to confirm information and finalize registration in TraxSolution. New participants begin on Mondays, and enrollment will continue until program capacity is reached.

We encourage families and community members to continue sharing information about Next Step to Success with others who may benefit from our programs.

For more information or to apply: [Click Here](#)

JOIN US FOR SUMMER 2026!
For Youth Ages 13-18
3401 Tidewater Dr. • Norfolk, VA 23509
(757) 995-2111

Your Summer Starts Here!
Beginning June 15th, youth will embark on an exciting 8-week summer experience designed to challenge, inspire, and empower them to become confident leaders.

What Your Camper Can Expect:

- Daily transportation to and from home
- Breakfast, Snack & Lunch included
- Transportation Pick-up begins at 8:00 AM
- Camp programming: 9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

GRIT • GROWTH MINDSET • OPTIMISM • SUCCESS • COMMUNITY SERVICE • AGENCY

Culinary Corner



From the Coordinator of Culinary Arts, Chef B

Hello Families & Team,

Get ready... because next week's menu is bringing the flavor, the fun, and ALL the good vibes! 🥰✨ Our youth are in for a treat with meals that are hearty, exciting, and full of variety!

Here's what's cooking:

- 🔥 **Steak & Baked Potatoes** (Loaded or Plain – your choice!)
 - Sweet finish: **Cinnamon Rolls**
- 🌮 **Taco Day!** (with Mexican Rice & Beans)
 - Dessert: **Churros** (yes, the GOOD kind 🥰)
- 🍗 **Wings & Wedges**
 - Dessert: **Brownies** (warm, chocolatey goodness!)
- 🍝 **Spaghetti, Garlic Bread & Salad**
 - Cool treat: **Italian Ice Cups**
- 🍷 **Sausage Breakfast Sandwiches**
 - Side: **Yogurt Parfaits** (fresh & delicious!)

We're excited to keep serving meals that bring everyone together, spark joy, and keep our youth energized and engaged. 🙌

As always, thank you for your continued support—we can't wait to see everyone enjoying these meals next week!

With excitement,

Chef B & The Team 🧑🍳 ✨

Bricks That Build Futures



For generations, the St. Vincent de Paul House has stood as a place of compassion, service, and hope in our community. Originally established as a resource for families and individuals in need, the building has long been rooted in the belief that everyone deserves dignity, support, and the opportunity to move forward. Today, that same spirit lives on through Next Step to Success, as the space continues to serve as a foundation for growth, learning, and second chances.

Through the NSTS Brick Fundraiser, we invite our community to become a permanent part of this legacy. Each engraved brick represents a name, a family, a business, or a message of encouragement—laid literally into the path of progress at the St. Vincent de Paul House. Funds raised through this campaign directly support NSTS programming, helping us provide enrichment, mentorship, and life-changing opportunities for youth and families in Norfolk.

The images below offer a preview of the engraved bricks and the location where they will be permanently installed. Bricks will be laid along the walkway at the St. Vincent de Paul House, creating a visible and lasting tribute to the individuals, families, and supporters who believe in the mission of Next Step to Success. Each brick becomes a meaningful part of the path forward, symbolizing community support and shared commitment to building brighter futures.

Your brick is more than a donation—it's a lasting symbol of belief in our mission and the people we serve. Join us in honoring the past while building the future. Purchase a brick today and leave your mark on a place where the next step toward success begins.

NEXT STEP  TO SUCCESS

BUY A BRICK



*CEMENT YOUR LEGACY &
INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION!*



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