



## *Next Step to Success Weekly Update*



### A Message from our Executive Director



**James Harris**

As we move closer to the end of the school year, our focus at Next Step to Success remains on attendance, consistency, and finishing strong. Every day matters. Students who continue showing up, staying engaged, and participating fully are building the habits that will carry them successfully into our summer camp program and beyond. Momentum matters, and we want every student to head into summer feeling proud of what they accomplished this school year.

We also want to remind our students about the importance of treating one another with respect. Respect is the foundation of strong relationships, leadership, and

personal growth. The way we speak to one another, support one another, and handle challenges says a great deal about our character. At NSTS, we believe kindness, accountability, and respect should guide everything we do.

Our Brick Fundraiser is still ongoing, and we encourage families and community supporters to participate. Purchasing a commemorative brick is a meaningful way to support our students and leave a lasting legacy. It also makes a wonderful keepsake gift for someone born at the former DePaul Hospital site, helping preserve memories while investing in the future of Norfolk's youth.

Thank you for continuing to support NSTS and the students we serve.

James Harris, Executive Director



## Student of the Week: Meet Laylonnie!



Meet Leyalonnie — a 10th grader at Lake Taylor High School with a bright mind, a warm spirit, and big dreams on the horizon. For the past two years, Next Step to Success has been a place where she's grown, connected, and thrived. Get to know her in her own words.

1. What is your school and grade? **Lake Taylor 10th**
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? **Meeting new people who don't go to my school and the different programs.**
4. What is one goal you're working on right now? **Getting a summer job.**
5. Who inspires you the most, and why? **My older sister. She has been through a lot and still achieves and stays positive.**
6. What is your favorite subject in school? **History**
7. What activities or hobbies do you enjoy outside of school? **Softball**
8. What's your favorite book, movie, or song? Book/Movie – **Hunger Games.**
9. What does success mean to you? **Achieve everything that you have set a goal.**
10. If you could give advice to another student, what would it be? **Stay true to yourself.**
11. What do you see yourself doing in the future (career, dreams, or big goals)? **I would like to become an Archaeologist.**
12. Share a fun fact about yourself most people don't know! **That I enjoy all types of music.**
13. Is there someone at NSTS (staff or peer) who has made a big difference for you? **Coach Carly...**
14. If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be? **Understanding, Outgoing, and Humble.**
15. What makes you proud of yourself this week? **I am really proud that I increased my grades in school.**

Leyalonnie, we are so proud of the young woman you are becoming. From raising your grades to chasing your dream of becoming an archaeologist, you continue to show up with determination and grace. Keep being understanding, outgoing, and humble — the world needs exactly who you are. Next Step to Success is lucky to have you!

## NSTS Alumni Update: Larina



At Next Step to Success, our commitment to young people doesn't end when they leave the program. Through ongoing alumni engagement, mentorship, and follow-up support, we continue to walk alongside our graduates as they move through the Success Sequence.

Since 2024, 12 NSTS alumni have completed Step #1 of the Success Sequence by graduating high school and are actively progressing through Step #2 — whether through enrollment in universities, colleges, or trade schools, entering the workforce, or serving in the military. We are proud of each of them and grateful to still be part of their journey.

One recent update we are especially excited to share: Larina Franklin, Class of 2025, is currently a recruit in the 2026 Norfolk Sheriff's Academy. Larina's dedication to discipline, leadership, and service is a testament to the hard work she put in during her time at NSTS — and we couldn't be prouder to watch her thrive. Her journey serves as a reminder that success is not simply about reaching a destination, but about continuing to grow, lead, and create opportunities for yourself and others. We are incredibly proud of Larina and look forward to watching her continue to make a positive impact within the community.

Stay tuned as we continue to share updates on our alumni and the incredible paths they are forging.

## NSTS Leadership Insights



**Carly Gelles**  
**Director of Education**

Good afternoon families,

As we head into the last full week of school, this is the final major push for students to improve grades, complete missing assignments, and finish the year strong. We encourage all families to regularly check grades and have conversations with their students about what still needs to be completed before the school year ends.

Now is also the time to begin being proactive about any potential summer school needs. Waiting until the final days of school can make planning much more stressful, so we encourage families to begin discussing possible next steps early.

Please know that we are here to support you through this process. Families are welcome to reach out if they would like help reviewing what final efforts can still be made, discussing summer school plans, or exploring additional academic enrichment opportunities for the summer months.

Let's work together to help our students finish the year with focus, accountability, and confidence!

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**Kaelyn Hundley**  
**Director of Programming**

As we begin wrapping up the school year, it has been amazing to see our youth really opening up and building strong connections with the staff here at NSTS. We have been ending the year with some fun and engaging activities to help give youth a mental break after working so hard through SOL testing season.

We are incredibly proud of our youth and all of the hard work, growth, and determination they have shown throughout this school year. As always, our Homework Hub remains open for any youth who need last-minute study time or support completing assignments before the school year ends.

We are excited to celebrate the end of the 2025–2026 after-school year with all of our families during our End of Year Cookout! Please be sure to read the flyer and RSVP. We will also be hosting a Youth vs. Staff Basketball Game, and if you are interested in playing, please contact me at [khundley@nextsteptosuccess.org](mailto:khundley@nextsteptosuccess.org).

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**Muhanma Garcia**  
**Director of Operations**

**2026 Summer Program Update:** The countdown to summer is officially underway, and the team at Next Step To Success is excited to welcome our youth and families to another impactful summer experience filled with leadership, enrichment, mentorship, academic support, field trips, recreation, and unforgettable memories. This summer, NSTS will continue creating a safe, structured, and empowering environment where youth are encouraged to build confidence, strengthen resilience, develop leadership skills, and engage in meaningful opportunities that support their growth both inside and outside of the classroom.

**Important Summer Program Information:** An email was sent earlier this morning to all families currently enrolled or placed on the waitlist for the upcoming 2026 Summer Program. Families can expect additional communication in the coming days regarding:

- Detailed Summer Program Calendar
- Daily Drop-Off & Pick-Up Procedures
- Field Trip Dates & Permission Slips
- Program Expectations & Special Events

**Mandatory Virtual Meeting:** To ensure all families and youth are fully prepared for a successful summer, participation in one Virtual Summer Program Introduction & Expectations Meeting is required.

- Meeting Date: Wednesday, June 10, 2026, at 5:30pm
- Make-Up Session: Thursday, June 11, 2026, at 5:30pm
  - Families may RSVP using the following link: [Summer Orientation RSVP Form](#)

During the meeting, families will review:

- Summer program expectations
- Attendance procedures
- Daily schedules
- Safety guidelines
- Communication protocols
- Field trip expectations

**First Day of Summer Program - Monday, June 15, 2026 | Youth drop-off begins at 8:00am | Program activities begin promptly at 9:00am**

To ensure youth fully participate in group activities and daily programming, families should arrive no later than 9:30am for drop-off.

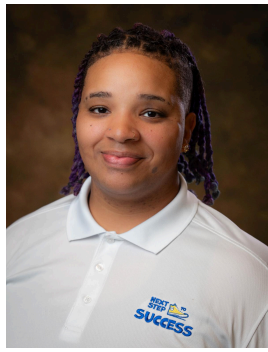
**Attendance Matters:** Daily attendance is required to maintain placement within the NSTS Summer Program. Youth are expected to attend Monday through Friday unless there is a medical emergency or an approved absence confirmed by leadership. Consistent attendance ensures youth fully benefit from academic enrichment, mentorship, leadership opportunities, recreational activities, field trips, and overall program engagement throughout the summer experience.

Need Assistance? If families have any questions, concerns, or attendance-related matters, please contact the NSTS Main Office: 757-995-2111

We are looking forward to an incredible Summer 2026 and cannot wait to continue empowering youth, strengthening families, and building brighter futures together.

## Culinary Corner

From the Coordinator of Culinary Arts, Chef B



# THIS WEEK'S CONFIDENCE CAFE MENU

GOOD FOOD. GOOD VIBES. STRONGER FUTURES. WE EAT. WE THRIVE!

#HowYouEating

## MONDAY

CHICKEN SANDWICHES & FRIES  
WITH PUDDING CUP



## TUESDAY

HARD OR SOFT BEEF TACOS AND CHURRO BUNDT CAKES



## WEDNESDAY

WINGS & SALAD  
WITH FUDGE BROWNIE



## THURSDAY

BAKED CHICKEN MASHED POTATOES AND CORN



## FRIDAY

PERSONAL PAN PIZZA  
STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE ICE CREAM BARS



**THANK YOU**  
FOR BEING PART OF OUR CONFIDENCE CAFE FAMILY!

LET'S EAT, LAUGH & GROW TOGETHER!

WE CAN'T WAIT TO SEE YOU AT THE TABLE!

## Save the Date — NSTS End of Year Celebration & Start of Summer Cookout! R.S.V.P. Soon!



We want to see ALL of your beautiful faces on Friday, May 29th at 3:30 PM as we come together to celebrate the end of an incredible school year and kick off summer in the best way possible — with good food, great people, and amazing youth! 🎉

Join us for an afternoon full of fun as we show off our students' incredible creativity at our Art Showcase, and get competitive with Cornhole, Can Jam, Jenga, and Connect Four. The highlight of the day will be a very special recognition ceremony honoring our graduating seniors as they take their next big step, as well as our outstanding Students of the Week who have gone above and beyond throughout the year. We are so proud of each and every one of them!

This is also a wonderful opportunity for families to meet the incredible community partners who walk alongside our youth every single day — the people, organizations, and programs that make Next Step to Success the special place it is. Come put a face to the names you have been hearing about all year!

This is a celebration for our entire NSTS family — students, families, staff, partners, and friends. You do not want to miss it!

Click the image above to RSVP by Sunday, May 25th. We cannot wait to celebrate with you!

**From DePaul's Legacy to the Next Generation's Future**

**NEXT STEP TO SUCCESS**

# BUY A BRICK!

**CEMENT YOUR LEGACY & INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION!**

**LEAVE YOUR MARK.**  
Support Next Step to Success and have your personalized brick become a lasting part of our foundation.

**ORDER YOUR BRICK TODAY!**  
[NEXTSTEPTOSUCCESS.ORG](http://NEXTSTEPTOSUCCESS.ORG)

**JERRY FITZGERALD**  
BORN AT DEPAUL  
MARCH 25, 1985

## Were You Born at the Historic DePaul Hospital?

For generations, DePaul Hospital was more than a building. It was where families began, where first breaths were taken, and where lifelong stories started.

If you or someone you love has a connection to DePaul, this is your opportunity to honor that legacy in a meaningful and lasting way. Next Step to Success is proud to carry that history forward as we transform this historic space into a place where young people can grow, learn, and build their futures. By purchasing a commemorative brick, you become a permanent part of this next chapter — celebrating the past while investing in the future of Norfolk's youth.

Each brick tells a story. Each name becomes part of the foundation.

**Honor your DePaul story. Invest in their future. Purchase your commemorative brick today.**

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