



Next Step to Success Weekly Update



A Message from our Executive Director



Welcome Back!

As the school year begins, all of us at Next Step to Success are excited to welcome our students, families, and partners back for another year of growth, discovery, and achievement.

Summer gave us time to recharge, but our mission never rests. We return with program upgrades, new staff members, and an expanded network of community partners, all working together to serve our students better than ever. This year brings a renewed focus on GRIT goals and hands-on STEM programming, helping every student in grades 7–12 build the skills, confidence, and vision to

reach their next step, whatever that step may be. Everything we offer is free and built around one belief: every young person in Norfolk deserves the opportunity to succeed.

To our returning students, welcome home. To those who are joining us for the first time, we can't wait to meet you. And to our families, volunteers, and partners, thank you for trusting us with what matters most.

A new school year is a fresh start, full of possibility. Let's make this one count. See you Monday!

James Harris
Executive Director, Next Step to Success

Celebrating Our Community of Support



Every summer, Next Step To Success strives to grow and strengthen our support across Norfolk communities, building the partnerships that allow us to welcome more youth into our programming each year. A special shout-out this summer goes to:

Elizabeth River Crossings — whose support fueled our STEM programming this summer, giving our youth hands-on opportunities to explore science, technology, engineering, and math in ways that spark curiosity and open doors to future careers.

The Rotary Clubs of Norfolk and Town Center, along with Rotary International — whose generous grant is bringing a brand-new Wellness Room to life at our temporary home, giving our youth a dedicated space to decompress, reset, and prioritize their mental health as our program continues to grow.

The Hampton Roads Community Foundation — whose support is directly helping us expand our program, allowing us to reach and serve even more youth throughout the city.

The Landmark Foundation — whose generous gift continues to expand our capacity to serve even more youth across Norfolk.

Support like this doesn't just sustain our work — it grows it. Every partnership helps us open our doors a little wider, so more of Norfolk's youth have the chance to discover their next step to success.

And to every donor, volunteer, and community partner who has supported NSTS this year — whether through a gift, a grant, your time, or simply spreading the word — thank you! Your generosity, in every form, is what makes our mission possible.

NSTS Leadership Insights

A Note from Muhanma Garcia, Director of Director of Strategic Growth, Partnerships, and Youth Engagement

WELCOME TO YOUR NEXT STEP: 2026–2027 After-School Experience

Dear NSTS Families, Donors, and Partners,

Welcome to the 2026–2027 Next Step To Success After-School Experience! We are excited to begin another year of creating meaningful experiences, developing young leaders, building relationships, and providing opportunities that help our youth discover their next step to success. Whether your family is returning to NSTS, your organization is partnering with us for the first time, or you are a longtime supporter of our mission, we are grateful to have you as part of our community.

This year, we are focused on creating an experience that is not simply about what happens after school, but about what happens because of after school — from academic support and enrichment to leadership development, career exploration, wellness, culinary experiences, and community engagement.

The 2026–2027 NSTS After-School Program officially begins Monday, August 31st. Our team has spent the summer preparing our facilities, transportation, programming, staff, and partnerships for the new school year — and we're ready to welcome our youth back.

Program Overview

Next Step To Success offers after-school programming that goes beyond supervision, giving youth structured opportunities to learn, build skills, and connect with their community. Throughout the 2026–2027 school year, participants will have access to the following program areas:

- **Academic Enrichment** — Homework support, academic development, study skills, and support toward classroom success.
- **Leadership & Life Skills** — Structured opportunities to build confidence, decision-making, communication, responsibility, and leadership.
- **College & Career Exploration** — Exposure to colleges, careers, industries, professionals, internships, workforce opportunities, and postsecondary pathways.

- Community Engagement — Opportunities to connect with community leaders, organizations, businesses, and experiences throughout Norfolk and Hampton Roads.
- Culinary Arts & Wellness — Hands-on activities focused on healthy choices, creativity, teamwork, and practical life skills.
- Enrichment & Recreation — Activities focused on creativity, teamwork, physical activity, self-expression, and positive peer relationships.

This Year's Experience

The 2026–2027 program year is about intentional growth. We want our youth to leave NSTS each day with something they did not have when they arrived: a new skill, a new connection, a new idea, a new experience, a new goal, a new level of confidence. That is the NSTS experience.

How the Program Runs Day to Day

Consistency is central to how NSTS works. Youth are transported directly from school to our program each day (high schoolers at 2:00 PM, middle schoolers at 2:45 PM), and we ask that families support regular attendance — at least three days a week — and full participation from start to finish each day. This structure allows youth to build real relationships with coaches and peers and get the full benefit of the academic, leadership, enrichment, and recreational opportunities we provide. Families who need to arrange pickup outside our transportation routes simply notify our office in advance so we can plan accordingly.

Families Are Part of the Experience

Our work does not happen without our families. Throughout the year, families receive regular communication on program schedules, attendance, transportation, special events, academic and enrichment activities, and youth accomplishments — helping ensure every family stays connected to their young person's experience.

Let's Celebrate Our Youth

Every young person has a story worth celebrating, and we look forward to highlighting those stories throughout the year.

Our Commitment

One Community. One Purpose. One Next Step. When NSTS, families, and youth work together, we create an environment where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

Let's start Day #1 strong and make 2026–2027 an incredible year!

Your future doesn't happen by accident. Take the Next Step.

A Note from Carly Gelles, Director of Education

I hope everyone had a great first week back at school! As we begin the new school year, I want to make sure every family feels confident reaching out whenever academic questions or concerns come up — whether it's a specific grade, a teacher conversation, or just wanting a second set of eyes on how your youth is doing. Please don't hesitate to contact me directly at any point throughout the year.

Academic monitoring remains one of our core commitments at NSTS. We'll be tracking student grades and academic progress consistently throughout the year, not just at report card time, so we can catch challenges early and celebrate wins as they happen. I want to sincerely thank our parents for providing the documentation that allows us to do this — it makes a real difference in how quickly we can step in and offer support when a student needs it. Our goal isn't just to monitor from a distance; it's to work hand-in-hand with families to make sure our youth stay on track, remain engaged, and continue putting their best effort forward academically.

Looking ahead, I'll be sharing regular updates throughout the year on financial aid openings and deadlines, scholarship opportunities, college and career exploration events, and other resources designed to help our students prepare for whatever comes after high school — whether that's college, a trade program, or entering the workforce. These deadlines can move quickly, so I'll do my best to give families as much lead time as possible. Stay tuned, and as always, thank you for partnering with us in your student's success.

A Note from Kaelyn Hundley, Director of Programming

The halls may be a little quiet right now, but our team has been busy preparing for the return of our youth! We hope everyone had a wonderful first week of school, and we are looking forward to welcoming our returning youth and meeting all of the new faces joining us this year.

As we get ready for another year of after-school programming, our focus remains on helping young people build the skills they need to be successful — not just in the classroom, but in life. Through Grit, Growth Mindset, Agency, Optimism, Success, and Giving Back, we want our youth to discover their strengths, build confidence, set goals, and recognize that they have the power to shape their own future. We are excited to continue creating opportunities for youth to explore new interests, develop new skills, build meaningful relationships, and challenge themselves to try something new.

We want to continue growing the community around our youth. We have volunteer opportunities available, and we are always looking for new partners who want to share their time, talents, or expertise. Have a skill, hobby, career, or passion you would love to teach our youth? Reach out and let's make it happen!

A special thank you to all our returning partners, volunteers, donors, families, and supporters. Your continued belief in our youth helps us create experiences and opportunities that can make a lasting impact. August 31st can't come soon enough. Bring on After School 26-27 — we're ready! 





CONFIDENCE CAFÉ WEEKLY MENU

AUGUST 31 – SEPTEMBER 4

MONDAY

Baked Chicken & Gravy

Green Beans • Rice • Cornbread

TUESDAY

Walking Tacos

WEDNESDAY

Wings & Wedges

THURSDAY

Meat Loaf

Mashed Potatoes • Corn

Mashed Potatoes • Corn

FRIDAY

No Youth

Back to school means back to the Confidence Café — and Chef B is ready! Starting Monday, August 31st, our youth will be greeted each afternoon with fresh, made-with-love meals designed to fuel their bodies and their confidence. From Baked Chicken & Gravy to Walking Tacos and Wings & Wedges, this week's menu is proof that good food is part of how we set our youth up to succeed. Welcome back, everyone — let's make it a great year!

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

WERE YOU BORN AT DEPAUL HOSPITAL?

Your story started here. Now, help write the next chapter.

Then



Our Future



From a Legacy of *care...* To where *futures* are built.

**HONOR THE PAST.
INVEST IN THE FUTURE.**

Purchase a commemorative brick
and be part of transforming the historic
DePaul Hospital site into the future home
of Next Step to Success.



Leave a Lasting Legacy



Honor a Loved One or Family



Support Norfolk's Youth

JANE FORREST
BORN AT DEPAUL
MAY 15, 1992

SCAN TO

**BUY YOUR
BRICK
Today!**



**NEXT
STEP**  **TO
SUCCESS**



St. Vincent de Paul House
Future Home of Next Step to Success

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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