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September 2016



Dear Parent/Guardian:

Welcome to Watkins Early Childhood Center! We look forward to working with you and your child this year. We trust this First Step experience will give your child a great foundation for his/her education.

Our program strives to assist each child in reaching his/her potential through social growth and language development. Instruction will help your child develop skills in reading, writing, math, physical education, science, speaking, critical thinking, listening, and the social sciences.

Please review this handbook carefully. It contains valuable information concerning policies and procedures that will be helpful to you and your child during the school year. Also, review the *NNPS Parent and Student Handbook (Rights & Responsibilities)* with your child.

A partnership between school and home is critical in our efforts to maximize student achievement. We encourage you to become involved in the numerous school and classroom activities offered throughout the year.

With your support, we look forward to a most successful and fulfilling school year.

Sincerely,

Sue Waxman, Principal
Watkins Early Childhood Center



**Newport News Public Schools
Philosophy and Mission Statement**

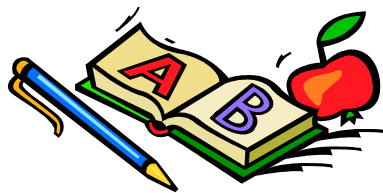
The Newport News Public School system is committed to the academic success of all students regardless of family structure, income, gender, or ethnic origin, and its mission is to provide them with the opportunity to achieve full development of their potential through the acquisition of values, attitudes, knowledge, and skills that are essential to becoming confident and productive adults, enthusiastic lifelong learners, active and constructive participants in the democratic process, and contributing members of their families, communities, and the world.

Smart, Safe Schools



**First Step Centers
Schedule**

School	Arrival	Dismissal
Denbigh	9:50	3:55
Lee Hall	8:00	2:05
Marshall	7:45	1:50
Watkins	9:50	3:55



**First Step Centers
Demographic Information**

School	Phone	# of Students / Teachers
Denbigh	886-7789	540 Students / 30 Teachers
Lee Hall	888-3329	180 Students / 10 Teachers
Marshall	928-6832	306 Students / 17 Teachers
Watkins	591-4815	540 Students / 33 Teachers

Home – School Communication & Partnerships



Parent and Student Handbook

Children are expected to follow the rules concerning behavior as outlined in the *NNPS Parent and Student Handbook*. Parents are required to sign a form confirming their review of the handbook with the child. Certain discipline infractions will become a part of the student’s record.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences between parents and First Step teachers play an important role in students’ success in school. The Early Childhood Centers require that parents attend at least two conferences, one in the fall and one in the spring. Appointments for conferences will be scheduled by teachers. Also, you may contact your child’s teacher to schedule a conference.



Monthly Newsletter and Monthly Activity Calendar

A monthly newsletter will be sent home at the beginning of each month. The newsletter contains information concerning upcoming events. An activity calendar also is sent each month, full of fun activities you and your child may do at home.

Monthly Reading Calendar

Each month, students will bring home a blank Reading Calendar. Please read to your child for a minimum of 15 minutes daily. After reading, put a smiley face in the block for the day. At the end of the month, return the completed calendar to your child’s teacher. **This calendar is one of the requirements found on your child’s progress report.**



Calls to Teachers

Teachers may not accept telephone calls or text messages. Calls to teachers will be accepted by the office and a message will be placed in the teacher’s mailbox. Teachers will return calls after school hours or earliest convenient time.

Emergency Telephone Numbers

It is very important for your child’s school to have **updated home, work, and emergency telephone numbers at all times**. If you move, change jobs, change babysitters, change your emergency contact person, etc., please contact the school and update your child’s information. Remember, if you move, a new “proof of address” must be brought to the office in order for your child’s records to be changed.



Withdrawal and Transfer

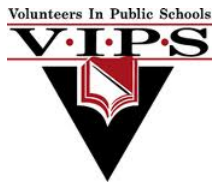
When students withdraw or transfer from their present school, parents are requested to notify the school office prior to the student's last day.

Change of Address

Please inform the office of change in address, telephone number, or any emergency information.



Volunteers



Volunteers in Public Schools (V.I.P.S.) assist teachers with non-instructional duties. Please contact your child's school if you are able to participate in this program. All school volunteers are required to fill out a *TB Risk Assessment form* and complete a personal information data sheet prior to volunteering in the school. The school must have documentation of a negative TB test.



School Procedures

Nametags

Please send your child to school with his/her nametag **every day**. **It is very important your child and his/her means of transportation to and from school be identified every single day. Nametags are vital in case of emergency.** Nametags also serve as a source of communication between you and your child’s teacher, so please check your child’s nametag daily.

First Step Student Dress



Children will be painting, gluing, running, climbing, skipping, hopping, and jumping at school. Please make sure your child wears secure, sturdy shoes (tennis shoes preferred) and clothes that allows him/her to do all these activities comfortably and safely at school. Students **may not** wear flip-flops, thong-style sandals, slides, or other shoes without a back strap.

Breakfast & Lunch

Breakfast and lunch are available for all students beginning the first day of school.



Cafeteria

The cafeteria provides well-planned and balanced meals. Lunch may be paid for daily or in advance with cash or check in the cafeteria. You may also add funds to your child’s account with a check, debit or credit card at www.mealpayplus.com.

	Full Price: single/week	Reduced Price: single/week
Breakfast	Free	
Lunch	\$2.35/\$11.75	\$.40/\$2.00
Adult	L - \$3.50	

Dispensing Medicine in Schools

Parents should ask the doctor to schedule medication doses to be given other than during school hours, whenever possible. When this is not possible, the school will cooperate with parents to see that medication is given according to the doctor’s orders. A doctor’s order also is required for non-prescription medications administered at school. Forms are available from the school nurse.

Procedure for Taking Student Out of School During School Hours

All students are expected to stay in school until dismissal at the regular hour. No child is allowed to leave school early for any reason unless it is first cleared through the office. To leave school before the regular dismissal hour, a student should have a note from the parent stating the time the parent will be in the office to get the child. For the child’s safety, the child will not wait outside to



be picked up. You will need to sign your child out in the office. Unless the school receives notice in writing from you, only those listed on the emergency data card will be allowed to sign out your child. Identification will be required.

Guidance Counseling

The counseling program provides students with classroom guidance and personal/social counseling concerning developmental issues. The counselor also works with teachers and parents concerning adjustment issues, behavior, or family concerns which impact the child's learning. Several parent workshops are conducted by the counselor during the school year.

Emergency Procedures

Each school has an emergency operations plan to cover both natural emergencies (tornadoes, hurricanes, snow, icing, floods) and man-made emergencies (fires, bomb threats, civil disturbances, serious injuries, utility emergencies). This plan is available from each teacher and will be reviewed with students during the first week of each school year. In the event of any emergency, general rules of conduct are as follows:

1. Remain calm and quiet.
2. Listen carefully to teachers' directions.
3. Know the building evacuation route from your classroom.
4. Move quickly and quietly if asked to evacuate.



Remember, student cooperation is the most important factor to ensure safety in any emergency.

Lost and Found

The administration strongly urges **all articles of clothing, backpacks, lunchboxes, etc. be marked clearly inside with the student's name and room number in permanent ink.** All articles lost or found should be reported or turned in to the main office. Please send a note or call to inquire about lost articles as soon as possible.

Sending Money to School



It works best if money is sent to school in a sealed envelope with the student's name, amount, and purpose of the money. Place the envelope in your child's nametag and instruct him/her not to open it. The envelope will be delivered (as is) to the appropriate party.

Student Fund Raising

Monies collected from various fund raisers, go directly to the purchase of materials and programs to benefit all students at the respective early childhood center. All items become a part of our school's inventory. Fund raising activities which involve early childhood students in door-to-door solicitation are prohibited.

Student Attendance

Student Attendance Policy

Attendance on a daily basis is a mandatory requirement for all First Step students. Although our program participants have not yet reached the state mandated age for school attendance, the “Title I First Step Parent Agreement” clearly states parents will ensure their child will attend school each day on time and participate in the program according to the NNPS attendance policy.

Absences

First Step students are expected to be in school every day. Parents/guardians must contact their child’s school on the day of the child’s absence to inform the school of that absence. Please notify the school of pre-arranged appointments as soon as the date of such appointments is known.

For **all absences**, a written note – providing the dates of and reasons for the child’s absence – is required from the parent/guardian within five (5) days of the child’s return to school. The purpose of the note is to determine whether or not the student’s absence is excused or unexcused. This note will be maintained until the end of the school year for documentation purposes.

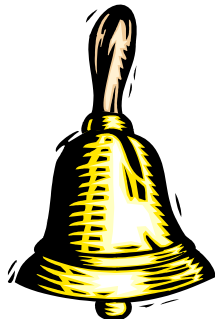


Excused Absences

- Illness
- Family Death/Emergency
- Exclusions/Suspensions
- Prearranged Appointments
- Religious Observances
- Exceptional Circumstances

Unexcused Absences

In compliance with the Code of Virginia 22.1-258, the school division has established procedures that school division personnel are required to follow when a student fails to report to school and no indication has been received by the school personnel that the parent is aware of and supports the student’s absence. The procedures may be found on pages 33 and 34 of the NNPS Parent and Student Handbook. The First Step staff follows these procedures in an effort to establish excellent student attendance patterns and achievement.



Transportation

Bus Transportation

The school bus drivers have the responsibility of transporting students to and from school each day. Students must load and unload at assigned bus stops. Transportation is provided to and from school, based on the home address of the child's parent/legal guardian. Students who violate proper safety standards or otherwise abuse the **privilege** of riding a school bus may be **suspended from riding the bus to and from school**. Inform your child of the proper attitude to take and to cooperate with the school bus driver and assistant to insure the safety of **all** students. Students may not change buses unless a note is sent to the school by the parent or legal guardian. Questions regarding transportation should be referred directly to the Transportation Department, 881-5052. Please review with your child the rules of conduct found in the ***Parent and Student Handbook***. **Parents are responsible for ensuring that someone is at the bus stops for First Step students.**

First Step Student Pick Up and Drop Off

Please Remember

A RESPONSIBLE PERSON MUST MEET THE SCHOOL BUS (OR PICK UP THE CHILD FROM SCHOOL AT DISMISSAL) ON TIME WITH THE YELLOW-PICKUP CARD AND ACCOMPANY YOUR CHILD HOME EVERY DAY. *Failure to do this on three (3) occasions will result in consequences.*

Please refer to the NNPS Parent and Student Handbook (page 7) for additional information regarding bus stop responsibilities and the "Three Card System."



STUDENT & STAFF WELLNESS POLICY

The Congressional mandate for school wellness policies is part of a larger effort to address growing concerns about the health of American children. We recognize that schools play a critical role in creating a healthy environment for the prevention of childhood obesity and for combating problems, like Type 2 diabetes, that are associated with poor nutrition and physical inactivity. **NNPS Policy ADF, Student and Staff Wellness** and **NNPS Policy ADF-P, Procedures for Student and Staff Wellness**.

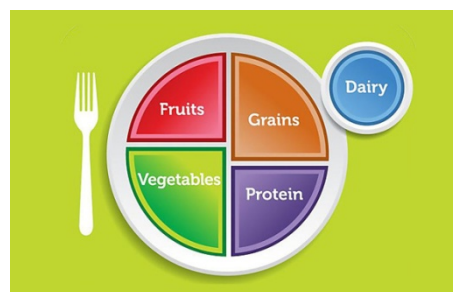
A la Carte Food and Vending Machine Requirements

- Beverages: Only 100 % fruit juices and skim or 1% milk, white or flavored, both not to exceed 16 ounces. Water or zero-calorie flavored water, any size.
- Snacks: Less than 35% calories fat; 10% saturated fat; no trans-fat; no more than 35% total weight from sugar; 300 calories or less per item.

In compliance with federal law, Public Law 108-265, Section 204, Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, NNPS has established a wellness policy for Newport News Public Schools that promotes student health and contributes to the reduction of childhood obesity. The components of the local wellness policy ADF include nutrition education, physical education, nutrition guidelines for all foods available during the school day, and other activities that promote student wellness.

Student and Staff Wellness

It is the policy of the School Board to develop the students' and staff's wellness by providing an environment that promotes and protects health, well-being, and the ability to work and learn by supporting proper nutrition, nutrition education, and regular physical activity.



USDA's MyPlate

Implementation of this policy will proceed through the Superintendent's development of procedures and practices to accomplish the following:

- Engage students, parents, staff and community members, to the extent possible, in practices that promote good health and wellness.
- Provide each student with opportunities, support and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
- Ensure that foods and beverages sold or served at schools meet the nutrition recommendation of the *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
- Ensure that the school division provides nutrition education and physical education to foster lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity; and establishes linkages between health education and school meal programs and related community services.

MEDICAL & ILLNESS CONCERNS FROM THE FIRST STEP NURSE

Help us provide a healthy and safe environment.

- A **Plan of Care** will be developed to meet your child's specific medical needs at school, if necessary. All parents with students who have documented or suspected health problems must speak directly to the school nurse.
- **Food allergies** are a major concern for all of us. Please notify the teacher and school nurse if your child has any food allergy especially milk, eggs, peanuts, wheat, soy, tree nuts, walnuts, almonds, fish, and/or shellfish.



- **Illness concerns**

Any morning that your child appears to have symptoms of illness, he/she should remain at home.

Do not send your child to school if. . .

1. S/he vomits or has diarrhea at home during the night or in the morning before school.
2. S/he has a fever at night or in the morning before school. Your child needs to be **fever free for 24 hours** without medication before returning to school. Please do not give your child fever-reducing medication (Tylenol) and send him/her to school. (This procedure is approved by the school division's medical adviser).
3. S/he has a large amount of thick mucus draining from the nose.
4. S/he has a **persistent cough**.
5. S/he was ill enough to be treated by a doctor or taken to the emergency room the day before.

When your child is sent home from school for illness, please keep him/her home the next day. However, it is not appropriate to have young children decide whether they are well enough to attend school. If you have questions about sending your child to school, please feel free to call the school nurse.

- **Medication procedure**



NNPS has a policy for administering medicine at school. You will need to pick up a medication form from the school nurse as she cannot administer any medication without a doctor's order. At no time should medication be sent to school with a student (backpack, bus driver, etc.). Medication must be brought to the nurse by an adult.

FIELD TRIP INFORMATION FROM THE FIRST STEP NURSE

Health guidelines for field trips:

1. Medication concerns on the field trip need to be discussed with the nurse before the day of the field trip.
2. All field trips may not be appropriate for all children, especially those with specific medical problems. For example, asthma, allergies, diabetes, and other chronic illnesses, which are poorly controlled, may be aggravated by certain conditions such as weather changes or environmental factors (dust, pollen, hay, and animal hair). It may be prudent for your child to be excused from attending a particular field trip or it may be best for a parent or designated adult to participate in the field trip and be available to assist the child.
3. **It is absolutely necessary** to have a current phone number for a parent or adult who will be available to respond to an emergency call if needed on the day of the field trip.



The field trip permission slip should include the following information:

Are there any medical reasons why your child should not attend this field trip?

_____ Yes (explain) _____

_____ No

I can be contacted at (phone number) _____ during the field trip. If I am unavailable, please call _____ at _____.

(name)

(phone number)

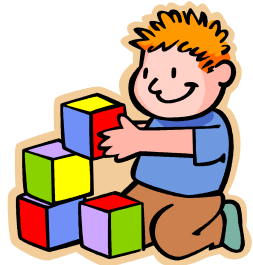
Parent's Signature _____



Instructional Program Information

First Step Curriculum

First Step combines Harcourt Publishing Pre-K curriculum and a division-developed curriculum. They are aligned to the **Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Comprehensive Standards for Four-year-Olds**, Pre-K PALS (Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening State Assessment), and NNPS Reading Stages, and support the Kindergarten Standards of Learning.



Program Effectiveness

The program currently serves 67% of the school division's kindergarten population. Readiness checklists have indicated students who have been through the First Step program are better prepared to enter kindergarten. Testing results show First Step students reach or exceed the benchmark score more often than students without preschool experience.



Virginia's Foundation Blocks for Early Learning: Comprehensive Standards for Four-Year-Olds has just been revised (June 2013). You can find the latest version at

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/instruction/early_childhood/

(It is the first link under *Resources*.)