



Next Step to Success Weekly Update

Message from our Executive Director



James Harris

Executive Director Weekly Update – Week 12

As we enter Week 12, I want to extend heartfelt gratitude to our students, families, staff, and partners as we approach the Thanksgiving holiday. This season reminds us of the importance of community, connection, and the shared commitment that makes Next Step to Success such a special place. We are truly thankful for the continued trust and support that allow us to empower our young people each day.

This week, our martial arts program has continued to build confidence, discipline, and self-control among our students. The energy in the room is incredible as young people challenge themselves, learn new skills, and celebrate each other's progress. Similarly, our partnership with Vital Pivots Basketball gives students an exciting outlet for teamwork, fitness, and leadership. The growth we're seeing,

both on and off the court, is inspiring.

As we head into the holiday break, we encourage families to take time to rest, reflect, and enjoy time together. NSTS is grateful for the opportunity to serve this community, and we look forward to returning refreshed and ready to continue supporting our students' success.

Wishing everyone a safe and meaningful Thanksgiving.

James Harris, Executive Director



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Student Spotlight: Alyjah

This week, our student spotlight is Alyjah, a 9th grader at Granby High School.

1. What is your name, School and grade? **Granby High School, 9th**
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? **The People**

4. What is one goal you're working on right now? **Getting better at sports**
5. Who inspires you the most, and why? **Mr. Muhanma – He always knows what to do.**
6. What is your favorite subject in school? **Science**
7. What activities or hobbies do you enjoy outside of school? **Playing Sports**
8. What's your favorite book, movie, or song right now? **Book – Dog Man**
9. If you could give advice to another student, what would it be? **Never give up/Keep trying**
10. What do you see yourself doing in the future (career, dreams, or big goals)? **I don't know**
11. Share a fun fact about yourself most people don't know! **I look and act older than I am.**
12. Is there someone at NSTS (staff or peer) who has made a big difference for you? **Mr. Muhanma**
13. If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be? **Hard working, attentive and understanding**
14. What makes you proud of yourself this week? **The amount of sleep I got!**

We're so proud of the example Alyjah sets for their fellow Success Stories!

From the Director of Education



This week at Next Step To Success, our students continue to make steady progress in the Homework Hub, and we are actively seeking dedicated volunteers—particularly those with strengths in history, math, and science—to support our youth during academic time, as well as volunteers to help monitor and engage students in the gym from 2:00–4:00 PM each afternoon. Your involvement makes a tremendous difference in creating a safe, enriching environment for our young people.

Additionally, if you have any questions or concerns regarding your child's academic needs or would like to discuss additional support, please reach out to me directly at [**cgelles@nextstepstosuccess.org**](mailto:cgelles@nextstepstosuccess.org)

Thank you for your continued partnership in helping our youth thrive!





This week at Next Step to Success, our youth engaged in activities centered around growth, confidence, and community.

We were excited to welcome back the Hampton Roads Chess Association, as our chess sessions picked up again this week. Our youth jumped right back in, sharpening their strategic thinking and problem-solving skills.

Our Juniors and Seniors successfully completed their resume and work portfolios with the support of Heather Fine from Together We Can. Their hard work and commitment to preparing for future opportunities truly showed.

Our Student Ambassadors had a special experience attending a Norfolk Admirals hockey game, where they even had the chance to meet one of the players.

The middle school youth did a fantastic job helping set up and decorate for the Gratitude Dinner. Thank you to everyone who contributed and helped make the event memorable.

We are also excited to share that Martial Arts has officially begun this week. Our youth are eager to continue developing their skills, discipline, and confidence as the program progresses.

Thank you all for another productive week and for your continued commitment to supporting our youth.

OPERATIONS UPDATE

• **Thanksgiving Support**

As we enter Thanksgiving week, our team remains committed to ensuring youth and families receive continued support. Please direct any urgent needs to the leadership prior to the holiday closure.

• **Thank You for Attending Our Annual Gratitude Dinner**

A heartfelt *thank you* to everyone who joined us for our Annual Gratitude Dinner. Your presence made the evening truly meaningful, and we're grateful for the community spirit and connection shared by all.

Save the Dates

- **Youth Free Day: *Wednesday, November 26, 2025***
- **NSTS Closed: *Thursday, November 27, 2025 & Friday, November 28, 2025***





Staff Spotlight



Staff Spotlight: Tanese

1. What inspired you to become a Success Coach at Next Step to Success? **All for the kids**
2. If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be? **Spontaneous, Tenacious and Determined**
3. What's one lesson you hope every student you work with carries with them? **Remember you are great**
4. Who was a mentor or role model in your own life, and how did they shape you? **My fourth grade teacher – Discipline and responsibility**
5. What's your favorite way to spend a Saturday when you're not working? **Sleeping, cleaning and cooking**
6. If you could have dinner with any historical figure or celebrity, who would it be and why? **My Grandmother – Wish I had a little more time with her.**
7. What's a fun fact about you that most people don't know? **I play volleyball, basketball and ran track**
8. If you had to pick a theme song for your life, what would it be? **Living my life like its golden!**
9. What's the best piece of advice you've ever received? **Listen to others and use your own vision**
10. Finish this sentence "Working at Next Step to Success means..." **Go above and beyond for the youth in our community.**
11. What's your all-time favorite TV show or movie? **Love and Basketball**

Culinary Corner

From the Coordinator of Culinary Arts



Hey Team & NSTS Family,

We're rolling into **Week 12** with a *short & sweet* schedule — but trust, the flavor is still FULLY activated! This week is all about good vibes, easy eats, and heading into Thanksgiving with grateful hearts.

☐ **HEADS UP:**

We're only open:

☐ **Monday, Nov 24th**

☐ **Tuesday, Nov 25th**

Closed for Thanksgiving Break:

☐ **Nov 26th–28th**

Go enjoy your families, your naps, your plates, and your second plates! ☐ 😊

☐ **WEEK 12 LINEUP:**

- ☐ **Support and Feed Catering**

- A HUGE thank you to them for blessing us with Monday's catered meal!

- The love, the support, the FOOD — chef's kiss. We appreciate y'all!

- ☐ **Little Caesars Pizza**

- Tuesday = "keep it simple, keep it cheesy" energy.

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We may only be open two days... but we're still serving community, comfort, and good energy like always. When we come back, y'all already know — MORE FLAVOR is loading.

Have a warm, joyful, and safe Thanksgiving!

With gratitude & good seasoning,

Brittany "Chef B" Brown

Cement Your Legacy with a Brick at St. Vincent de Paul House

Be part of our history and our future! Through our Brick Fundraiser, you can honor a loved one, recognize a business, or leave a family legacy by purchasing an engraved brick. Each brick will be placed on the new St. Vincent de Paul House campus, creating

a lasting tribute while supporting Next Step to Success youth programs.

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

BUY A BRICK



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



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