**STEP**

**ESU #15 Alternative Education Program**

**305 East 1st (Office)**

**404 West 7th (LIFT attendance center)**

**McCook, NE 69001**

**(308) 345-7341 (Office)**

**(308) 345-5422, Ext. 1015 (LIFT)**

 **lalig@esu15.org**

 S UCCESS

 T HROUGH

 E EDUCATIONAL

 P ARTNERSHIPS

***An Alternative Learning Experience***

***“STEP to Success”***

**2021-2022**

STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK

 Paul Calvert Lacey Alig
 Administrator Director

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*SUCCESS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS*

*THE STEP PROGRAM*

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***STAFF***

***PAUL CALVERT– ADMINISTRATOR***

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***JOE IMUS – CLASSROOM INSTRUCTOR***

***LORI DACK-PEARSON – PARAPROFESSIONAL***

 *'STEP TO SUCCESS'*

*SUCCESS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS*

*OVERVIEW and INTRODUCTION*

The STEP program was developed and designed to be a preventative program for youth that are at risk of not achieving the credits needed to graduate with their peers. The STEP program serves students in the public school setting. The program provides a structured program and setting which will focus on developing behaviors and study habits which will allow the student to complete their required credits. The STEP program will provide students with the opportunity to achieve success both academically and behaviorally, in addition to offering a support system to the parents.

The STEP program works closely with the cooperating schools regarding those students who would be appropriate candidates and benefit from the STEP program. We also inform students of possible future interventions, if behaviors warrant such actions.

The STEP program works closely with the families regarding student behaviors and issues that impact the student’s academic achievements. Parental involvement is crucial and integral to the success and placement of a student in the STEP program. Through their support, and that of the home school, the student enters the program. Parents are actively encouraged to communicate with the school when questions or concerns arise.

The program is designed to educate students on how their choices affect others and result in consequences for themselves. The goal is for students to develop positive interaction skills with fellow classmates and their instructors while also developing problem solving skills. Students will be able to re enter their home school better equipped to achieve their academic and personal goals.

Attendance is mandatory for all students. Students are expected to attend for the designated time. If for some reason a student cannot attend school, the student must call the STEP or LIFT teacher to discuss the reason for his/her absence. All absences will be reported to the home school and parents.

If a student at any time becomes physically assaultive, runs away, etc., the proper law enforcement officials will be notified, as well as parents.

Students are expected to follow the rules and guidelines set forth by the STEP/LIFT facility. In addition to any specific rules and policies stated in this handbook, ALL policies of the originating school and McCook’s LIFT program also apply.

*SUCCESS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS*

***THE STEP PROGRAM***

***Mission*:**

Success Through Educational Partnerships (STEP), an alternative educational program through ESU #15, will provide an alternative academic and social environment to assist youth, who are at risk of failure in the traditional educational classroom.

STEP will forge a partnership with students, families, communities, and schools to facilitate support and cooperation in all educational planning. This plan will allow the student to experience success in academic and social skills by providing alternative learning opportunities.

STEP will provide a consistent academic and life skill program that emphasizes flexible and individualized curriculum, which will focus on social and academic development.

***Philosophy*:**

STEPis based upon the belief that students have a right to a free, appropriate education; and students can experience success when offered the appropriate environment. The STEP program will be student centered with an individualized curriculum. We believe in the following statements:

* ***Students learn best when actively engaged in the learning process.***
* ***Learning must be enhanced by providing life-long learning opportunities.***
* ***Our program requires a basic structure to provide stability for our students, while retaining flexibility to meet their individual needs.***
* ***Our program must continually evolve to meet the changing needs of our students.***

***Course of Study*:**

 The academic program offers programs in math, social studies, science, reading, english, writing, problem solving, communication, conflict resolution, social skills and independent living skills, in addition to other electives. Our curriculum is both computer based and book based to meet the individual needs of each student.

*SUCCESS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS*

***REFERRAL and SELECTION PROCESS***

Referral for possible entrance into the STEP Program can be made by any interested party. This includes the individual student, student's parent/guardian, teachers, counselors, or administrators.

A referral must be done in writing, using the appropriate forms. These forms are available online from the ESU #15 website or in the following offices of the home school:

\* Building Principals

\* Guidance Counselors

\* The STEP Facility

The referral form must be filled out completely to be considered for the screening process. Please return forms to any of the listed offices above.

***ELIGIBILITY***

Any student, grade 9 - 12, who is not having their academic needs currently met and is at risk of failure in the traditional educational program, could be considered for referral to STEP.

***SELECTION CRITERIA***

In order of importance, the following criteria will be used to determine acceptance

into STEP.

1. Parent/Students are all highly motivated to succeed at STEP.

2. Adequate aptitude for learning.

3. Poor academic performance.

4. Inadequate social skills.

5. Poor behavior adjustment.

***TARGET POPULATION***

Below are characteristics of at-risk students whose needs can be met through STEP:

* *Students who are at risk of dropping out of school.*
* *Students who have exhausted the educational opportunities in their own resident school.*
* *Students with a demonstrated need for consistency in instructional staff, curriculum, and/or scheduling.*
* *Students whose individual instructional needs do not fit the traditional means of instructional delivery.*
* *Students whose talents significantly exceed their performance.*

*SUCCESS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS*

***SCREENING and PLACEMENT PROCESS***

***ADMISSION COMMITTEE***

The Screening Committee for STEP will include the following people:

\* Superintendent, Principal, Counselor, and/or Teachers from home school

\* Representative from ESU #15

\* Teacher from STEP

\* Additional people as is deemed necessary by the Admissions Committee

***SCREENING AND PLACEMENT STEPS:***

Referrals will be reviewed by the ESU #15 Representatives and Instructor of STEP.

Students and parents will complete the assessment form.

Counselor will complete an academic assessment form, ***including current test scores of achievement in all academic areas.*** (The school will be responsible for administering tests so current performance scores can be reviewed.)

The screening committee will review the referral and determine eligibility for placement.

An interview with the Screening Committee for **BOTH PARENT AND STUDENT** is required for a referral to be considered.

Completion of student/teacher/parent placement contract and other required forms.

***\*\*\**** It is difficult to allow students to enter the STEP Program at random times during the school year. As a general guideline, students will be admitted at the beginning of the school year and at the semester break. However, individual cases can be reviewed and exceptions can be made if deemed necessary.

*SUCCESS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS*

 ***STUDENT BILL OF RIGHTS***

All students of STEP shall be protected by the following rights:

1. The right to impartial access to education, regardless of race, religion, sex ethnicity, age or handicap.

2. The right to personal dignity shall be recognized and respected in the provision of all care and education.

3. The right to confidentiality and personal privacy.

4. The right of access to student records.

5. The right to refuse participation in any research project without compromising access to services.

6. The right to initiate a complaint or grievance procedure and the appropriate means of requesting a hearing or review of the complaint.

7. The right to request the opinion of a consultant at the student's expense, or to request an in house review of the goals.

8. The right to a translator in the language the student understands.

9. The right to an emotionally safe environment.

*SUCCESS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS*

***CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS***

1. Ability to work independently

2. Attendance

3. Acceptable behavior

***ABILITY TO WORK INDEPENDENTLY***

In order to accomplish the goals of our school, STEP students need to demonstrate the ability to work independently in the program. This includes being able to set daily, weekly, and long term goals and working to achieve these goals with the guidance of the STEP staff. Reasonable progress toward these goals is expected.

Due to the small staff, all academics will be handled on an individualized basis. It is imperative that STEP students can achieve success on their own.

***ATTENDANCE***

Students accepted into the STEP program will attend the LIFT attendance center. It is mandatory that the student attends the LIFT Program every day on time.

***ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR***

We believe that being able to behave in an acceptable manner at school will increase the likelihood for enjoying and being successful in life also.

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*SUCCESS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS*

***POLICIES and PROCEDURES***

***SCHOOL POLICIES***

1. Respect school property.

2. Arrive at school no earlier than **7:50 A.M**.

3. Upon arrival at school, enter the school **immediately.**

4. Do not loiter around other school complex facilities.

***CLASSROOM POLICIES***

1. Be on time and be prepared.

2. If daily goals are not being met, homework assignments will be required.

3. Daily assignments are to be completed to the best of the student’s ability, and any grade below 80% will not be acceptable and must be corrected.

4. The student will contribute creatively, appropriately and productively to any independent or group activity.

***DRESS CODE***

Students are expected to dress in a way that promotes a learning atmosphere.

(Students should not dress in a manner that is dangerous to the health and safety of anyone or interferes with the learning environment or teaching process in the school.)

Following is a list of examples of attire that will not be considered appropriate:

1. Clothing that shows an inappropriate amount of bare skin or underwear (midriffs, spaghetti straps, sagging pants) or clothing that is too tight, revealing or baggy, or tops and bottoms that do not overlap or any material that is sheer or lightweight enough to be seen through, or otherwise of an appropriate size and fit so as to be revealing or drag on the ground.
2. Shorts, skirts, or skorts that do not reach mid-thigh or longer.
3. Clothing or jewelry that advertises or promotes beer, alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs.
4. Clothing or jewelry that could be used as a weapon (chains, spiked apparel) or that would encourage “horseplay” or that would damage property.
5. Clothing or jewelry which exhibits nudity, makes sexual references or carries lewd, indecent, or vulgar double meaning.
6. Clothing, jewelry, piercings, or tattoos that are gang related.

***CELL PHONES/TELEPHONE***

There is no phone available for student use except in case of emergency. Cell phones are to be shut off or put in airplane mode when entering the school building. If **parents** need to contact students during the school day, they are to call the school. Students are to follow LIFT cell phone policy.

***TORNADO DRILL PROCEDURES***

During the year, we will conduct tornado drills in accordance with the State Regulations. At the conclusion of the drill, we will quietly return to the classroom and resume our work.

***FIRE DRILL PROCEDURES***

In compliance with State Fire Marshal regulations, STEP/LIFT will hold fire drills. As the fire alarm sounds, students and staff will exit the building in a quiet, orderly fashion according to the building regulations. When given the all-clear signal from an authorized person, we will quietly return to the classroom and resume our work.

***MEDICATION POLICY***

Designated school personnel will be allowed to give medication to students. All medication will be housed with the LIFT instructor and secured during non working hours. NO medications will be given without a medication permission form.

We encourage parents to give medication at home. Three times a day dosage may be given before school, after school and at bedtime. If your child needs to take medication at school, a few rules apply: (Please help us ensure safety in the administration of medication at school.)

1. All medication will be kept with the LIFT instructor.

2. No medication will be given without a signed note from the parent or guardian, indicating the medication to be given, the amount to be given, and the time to be given.

3. The medicine should be sent to school in the original container appropriately labeled by the pharmacy or physician.

4. Before over-the-counter, non-prescription medication can be administered, the permission form MUST BE SIGNED.

***SEARCH POLICY***

STEP staff will conduct a pat search of students and their belongings on a random basis and/or if there is a reason to believe the youth possesses any type of contraband. Safety of all youth and staff is a priority.

***TRANSPORTATION POLICY***

Students that drive to the LIFT building will park to the north of the building or on the street. Students being dropped off or being picked up will be at the same locations. Students are to ring the buzzer and enter through the front door which will remain locked during school hours for safety purposes.

***ATTENDANCE POLICY***

1. An absence is considered excused if the STEP/LIFT instructor has been notified prior to the absence.

2. In the event of an unexpected absence, the student/parent must call STEP/LIFT, or notify the instructor, prior to 8:30 a.m. on the school day that he/she will be missing. If the school/instructor is not notified of an absence before 8:30, the absence will be considered unexcused. (Cell phone “mal-functions”, “dead batteries”, falling asleep, parent was going to call etc., are not acceptable excuses for not calling.) The third unexcused absence per semester will result in an immediate suspension.

3. Greater than equivalent to 10 days absent from STEP per semester will result in a suspension. Parents and the student’s home school will be notified of all absences.

4. Extended leave such as family leave, bereavement, or maternity/paternity needs to be discussed and determined on an individual basis.

5. Being 10 minutes tardy or greater to any class period counts as an absence for that class period. Being absent for 8 class periods is equivalent to one full day absence.

6. Excessive absences from STEP can result in dismissal from the program, additional assignments to be completed outside of class, and/or makeup time.

7. Communication is the key to our success with attendance. When in doubt, talk to the staff. *All* cases will be handled individually.

***TARDINESS***

STEP has a “no excuse” tardy policy. When a student is not physically present after 8:00 and ready to start work, the student will be recorded as tardy. The student should call to let the STEP/LIFT staff know they are going to be late, Habitual tardiness will result in a suspension and/or removal from the program. Being late returning from lunch will be handled in the same manner.

***LATE START or CANCELLATION DUE TO WEATHER***

The STEP Program will follow the same schedule as McCook Public Schools when there is no school due to the weather or a late start. If the student’s home school makes changes due to the weather in their area, those students living outside of McCook city limits will be handled on an individual basis. The student and the parent will receive a text if there is a schedule change due to weather.

***SUSPENSIONS AND DISMISSALS***

Grounds for suspensions and dismissals are detailed within the various sections in this handbook. Parental notification in relation to these events is always a priority and will take place as soon as is reasonably possible.

A **suspension** occurs when a student is not allowed to be present during regular class hours. The student does not return to the classroom until a meeting has been arranged with the student, parent, STEP teacher, ESU administrator, and representative from the home school. In the event of a suspension, the parent and home school are notified immediately. At the meeting, clear guidelines will be outlined that must be met in order for attendance to continue. Please note: The meetings are arranged in the timeliest manner possible, but various schedules do need to be accommodated and there may be unavoidable delays in scheduling a meeting.

A **dismissal** occurs when the guidelines that are outlined in the above mentioned meeting are not met. Generally a second meeting will not be arranged. The dismissal is effective at the point in time that the guidelines are not met.

***GRADING SCALE***

100% - 94% = A

93% - 87% = B

86% - 80% = C

79% - 00% = Failing or retake

*SUCCESS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS*

***STUDENT and PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES***

***STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES***

* Attend school every day, unless I am ill or am out of town.
* If I am going to be absent or tardy for any reason, I will **PERSONALLY** call STEP **before** 8:00 AM to explain my absence.
* Behave in an appropriate manner at all times.
* Remember that aggressiveness and inappropriate gesturing are unacceptable.
* Use appropriate language. Profanity and inappropriate innuendos are unacceptable.
* Treat faculty, staff, fellow students, and visitors with respect.
* Respect my life space and the privacy of others.
* Do not interrupt others when they are speaking.
* Dress appropriately (refer to dress code).
* Do not use, or have in my possession, tobacco, alcohol, or any other illegal substances while on the premises or neighborhood of STEP/LIFT.
* Academic Assignments are assigned each day. Students are responsible to complete them to the best of their abilities. You must earn no lower than an 80% or the work must be redone.

***PERSONAL BELONGINGS***

Students are responsible for the safe-keeping of all their personal belongings.

***FAMILY INVOLVEMENT EXPECTATIONS***

We believe that students stand a far greater chance of success with a supportive and involved family. We believe it is vital for a student's family to work with the staff as a partner in the change process.

Families should voice any concerns to the director/teacher of STEP. Differences should not be discussed in front of the student, as we believe this creates a division and an opportunity for the student to manipulate all parties. We also expect parents to attend staffing. (A convenient time will be arranged around work schedules.)

***PARENT/TEACHER/STUDENT CONFERENCES***

Parents/guardians are expected, as per agreement, to consult with the teacher about their student's progress. Conferences will be scheduled on a rotating basis every five to six weeks. Parents are encouraged to contact STEP staff for an appointment anytime they have a question or concern regarding their student. Grade reports are issued at the end of each quarter.

***DUE PROCESS FOR DISCIPLINE***

Any student, parent or guardian who is aggrieved by any disciplinary action shall have the right to an informal conference with the appropriate school authority. At such a conference, the student, parent/guardian shall respond to questions by school personnel and shall be entitled to question them in return. Any student, parent/guardian seeking further considerations after this conference shall, upon two school days prior notice, have the right to make a formal protest, either in writing or in person to the Board of Education at its next regular meeting. Such protests shall be heard in an open meeting unless a closed session is specifically requested by the student and/or parent/guardian. The Board of Education shall notify the student and/or parent/guardian in writing of the decision within ten school days.

***SUPPLY LIST***

These supplies are to be brought to STEP with you ON YOUR FIRST DAY

* 1 Package - pens (blue or black) 12 count or more
* 1 Package - pencils (#2) 12 count or more
* Spiral notebooks for computer classes. This binder or notebooks will not be permitted to leave the classroom.
* 1 Set of earbuds or headphones to listen to the Odysseyware videos.

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*SUCCESS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS*

***STEP SCHEDULE***

(at LIFT attendance center)

 Class times

 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday:

 Admittance: 7:50 a.m.

 Classes begin: 8:00 a.m.

 Lunch Break: 1:00-1:30 p.m.

 Classes dismiss: 3:30 p.m.

 Wednesday:

 Admittance: 7:50 a.m.

 Classes begin: 8:00 a.m.

 Lunch Break: 12:37 p.m.-1:13 p.m.

 Classes dismiss: 2:00 p.m.

STEP

SCHOOL CALENDAR

2021 – 2022

August 13-16 Teacher Work Days

17 Staff Day at ESU #15

 18 First Day for students Dismissal @ 2:00

September 6 NO SCHOOL – Labor Day

 15 No SCHOOL- In-service Day

October 7-8 Parent/Teacher conferences

15 End of 1st Quarter – 2:00 dismissal

November 24-26 NO SCHOOL – Thanksgiving Break

December 22 End of 2nd Quarter

2:00 dismissal - Christmas Break

 23-31 NO SCHOOL – Christmas Break

January 1-4 NO SCHOOL – Christmas Break

 5 Second semester begins

February 18 NO SCHOOL – Winter Break

March 8 End of 3rd Quarter – 2:00 dismissal

 9-10 Parent/Teacher Conferences

11 NO SCHOOL – Spring Break

April 15-18 NO SCHOOL – Easter Break

May 19 Last Day for Students – End of 4th Quarter – 2:00 dismissal

 22 Teacher Work Day

23, 24 Possible Make-up Days for Snow Days

*(School start time is 8:00. School dismissal time is 3:30. 2:00 dismissal every Wednesday.)*