



Step by Step Preschool Handbook for Families

Updated: June, 2023

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About the Step by Step Preschool Program

The Step by Step Preschool is an early childhood program open to 3 and 4 year old children who reside in the town of Northwood. We provide a positive, community-based environment where children can acquire foundational learning skills. Target skill areas include: social, emotional, motor, language, self-help and cognitive. Our theme-based, developmental model particularly encourages language development and supports learning across all activities. Activities are adapted to meet the individual needs of all children.

Preschool Staff

The Step by Step Preschool program is staffed by certified educators with a background in early childhood and special education. In addition, we have a certified speech and language pathologist, a licensed occupational therapist and an occupational therapy assistant who facilitate small groups and provide both individual and group therapies in the integrated classroom. A school nurse is available through the Northwood Elementary School. We contract with the Strafford Learning Center and other local professional organizations to provide additional therapy staff as needed. Throughout the preschool day, each classroom is assigned a certified instructor and an assistant, with other therapists and paraprofessionals joining the class to provide instruction and/or support as needed.

Class Schedule

The Step by Step Preschool runs 2 sessions each day and offers enrollment for children to attend either two or three sessions per week (as space allows), following a school year calendar.

Location

The Step by Step Preschool is located in the Northwood Elementary School building. To access the classroom, visitors are asked to park in the back parking lot and enter through the red door next to the playground.

Contact Us

Step by Step Preschool
511 First NH Turnpike
Northwood, NH 03261
Classroom phone: (603) 942-8101
General preschool staff email: stepbysteprek@northwood.k12.nh.us
Website: <https://www.northwood.k12.nh.us/sau44/stepbystep/>

SAU #44 Northwood School District office
23A Mountain Ave.
Northwood, NH 03261
Office phone: (603) 942-1290
Website: <https://www.northwood.k12.nh.us/sau44>

Program Philosophy / Mission

The Step by Step Preschool is a child centered program where every child is recognized as an individual and is accepted and embraced for their uniqueness. We promote a sense of community within our classroom, and recognize that each and every child has something to learn and something to contribute. Our classrooms are environments where all children are encouraged to learn and play together, building positive peer relationships to last throughout their school years. We believe in multisensory, experiential learning which encourages children to stretch their imagination through hands on activities and play. We provide these experiences within the predictable structure of an early education program to establish important building blocks for later success.

Goals/Curriculum

The Step by Step Preschool uses research based curriculum to teach children skills that will promote success in kindergarten and beyond. We draw from the **New Hampshire Early Learning Standards: Birth through Five**, a project of the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Division for Children, Youth and Families, Child Development Bureau and the New Hampshire Department of Education, as well as the **New Hampshire Early Learning Curriculum Guidelines and Preschool Child Outcomes for Young Children with Disabilities Ages 3-5**, published by the Preschool Technical Assistance Network (PTAN) with support of the New Hampshire Department of Education/Bureau of Special Education/Preschool Special Education Office. While we plan activities that impact every developmental area of learning, we utilize the **Lively Letters** curriculum to emphasize specific literacy skills, **Bridges Math** and **Learning without Tears** to emphasize specific math skills, and **Handwriting without Tears** to emphasize specific writing skills. We also utilize **Second Step Curriculum** to support children's social-emotional learning.

Links to these references are provided here:

- <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/cdb/documents/nh-early-learning-standards.pdf>
- https://www.education.nh.gov/instruction/special_ed/documents/preschool_child_outcomes.pdf

Teaching Positive Behaviors

By supporting pro-social behaviors, teaching respect for people and property, establishing clear and consistent rules, and following through with fair and logical consequences, we limit behavioral difficulties. Of course, difficulties are sometimes experienced and we use these instances as opportunities for children to learn and practice positive behavior skills. All of our staff facilitate this learning through modeling, direct instruction, addressing behaviors consistently and respectfully, and acting as mediators between children with differing points of view. By utilizing these strategies, even very young children can learn to resolve differences successfully, first with assistance from adults and then independently.

Family – Staff Partnership

Step by Step Preschool staff and families form a partnership to support each child's needs. Our goal is to foster an effective, open relationship with good communication through the following:

- **Open House:** An informal open house is held in the Step by Step Preschool each August, typically the week before school starts. This is an opportunity for children to explore the classrooms and for parents to meet the teachers before the school year starts. Annual paperwork, reminders / updates to program routines and policies are also presented.
- **Home-School Folder:** Upon enrollment, each child receives a pocket-folder for their backpack. This folder is used to send papers back and forth between home and school. Please be sure to check the folder daily and to send it back to school with your child the next day. You will typically find a daily activity sheet, which is helpful in facilitating conversations with your child about their school day. You will also find important notices and children's artwork periodically. Program staff check the folder daily, so you may include your own notes to them, as needed.
- **Step by Step Preschool Email list:** Each year, preschool staff create a Step by Step email group which is used to notify families of classroom announcements, cancellations and/or unexpected changes to the schedule (e.g., due to inclement weather). You may include several email addresses on the email sign up form. Participation is voluntary, but encouraged.
- **Classroom Community Book:** At the beginning of the school year we ask each family to help their child to create an All About Me page for the classroom community book. This book is always a popular one in the classroom, strengthening bonds as children enjoy learning about each other. Guidance for what to include on your child's page will be provided by classroom staff.
- **Teaching at Home:** Information about our classroom curriculums (Lively Letters for literacy skills, Bridges Math and Learning without Tears for math skills and Handwriting without Tears for writing skills) is provided to describe how the concepts are taught in the classroom and provide recommended strategies for families to support their children's learning at home. If you have questions or want additional strategies, just ask! As the class moves through letter curriculum, fun activities will be sent home targeting each letter. A reading log is also set up to encourage book sharing at home.
- **Step by Step Preschool Newsletter:** Step by Step staff create a monthly newsletter to keep families informed about upcoming events and to provide additional suggestions for carry over learning activities to do at home with your children.
- **Progress Monitoring:** Progress reports are provided to parents 2-3x each year. The format of these reports allows parents to see the progress their child is making on specific skills. For 3 year olds, monitored academic skills include: identifying colors, identifying shapes, identifying numbers, identifying letters, rote counting, counting with 1:1 correspondence, identifying first name in print, tracing/writing first name, drawing a picture of themselves. For 4 year olds, singing ABCs and identifying letters by sound are added.
- **Parent Conferences:** A day is designated on our school calendar for parent-teacher conferences each November. Additional conferences may be requested by a parent at anytime.
- **Home-School Communication:** Step by Step staff are dedicated to keeping families informed and staff will make themselves available to answer questions as they arise.

However, we ask your understanding in knowing that in-depth conversations may not be possible during busy drop off / pick up times. Our instructor/coordinator welcomes and responds to emails regularly at: stepbysteppek@northwood.k12.nh.us. Alternatively, we encourage families to set up a time for individual conversation either on the phone or in person.

- **IEP Progress Reports:** Progress reports for children with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are sent home on the schedule specified in the IEP. IEP progress meetings are scheduled at least annually but additional meetings may be requested by a parent at any time.
- **Field Trip Participation:** We typically plan 2 group field trips each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. Parents are required to supervise their child on the trip and to provide their own transportation. Siblings are welcome.

Enrollment and Placement

Placement in the Step by Step Preschool is determined by age as of September 30th of the current school year. If your child will be 3 or 4 years old as of September 30th, they are eligible to participate in the preschool program. This ensures that children are grouped according to their kindergarten enrollment year. Any child who will be 5 years old by 9/30 should be enrolled in kindergarten for the school year. Pending open seats, children may join the Step by Step Preschool anytime during the school year. Children with educational disabilities may be enrolled upon their 3rd birthday, throughout the year, as determined by state and federal law. When a session is filled (and for future-year sessions), a waitlist of interested children is maintained by the Preschool Coordinator and if/when a seat opens up, you will be contacted. Each spring, interest/enrollment letters are sent to the families on these lists for the following fall. Children who are enrolled in our 3 year old class are given priority for seats in the 4 year old class the following year. We do our best to accommodate requests for specific days of attendance but ask for families' understanding as we must ensure that our class sizes are appropriate from day to day.

Tuition Contract

Upon confirmation of enrollment, each family will receive a tuition enrollment contract. This contract must be signed and returned to the SAU office by the date indicated, with first month's tuition plus a deposit equal to another one month's tuition. The deposit will be credited for the last month of the child's attendance (typically the month of June, although it may be credited for another month if the child discontinues enrollment during the school year). Annual tuition balances remaining may be paid in full at the beginning of the school year or divided into 9 equal monthly installments (September-May). Payment is due by the first of each month to the SAU #44 office, with the first payment due by the first day of the program and the final payment due by 5/1.

Initiating payment is the family's responsibility - we do not send out monthly invoices. Checks should be made out to "Northwood School District" with the tuition month and child's last name (e.g., Sept - Smith) in the Memo. Payments may be mailed or hand delivered to the SAU

office at: 23A Mountain Ave. Northwood, NH 03261. If the office is closed, payments may be left in the locked box attached to the office door. Payments may also be made by credit card using the online payment service Cheddar Up: <https://tinyurl.com/4tshp2ct> It is important to pay your tuition on time. If a payment is late, the finance office will notify you by mail and/or phone that your payment is due by a designated date or your child will not be allowed to continue attendance. In the circumstance of an unexpected financial hardship, it is the family's responsibility to contact the Northwood School District Finance office to discuss an alternative payment plan. Students may be removed from the program if tuition payment is outstanding without prior approval, or beyond a timeline approved.

Scholarships are available for families in need. Contact the Director of Student Services for further information about scholarships and to request an application.

We understand that circumstances may arise when a child needs to be withdrawn from the program before the end of the school year (e.g., family move). In these cases, we ask that families provide at least 2 weeks notice to the Director of Student Services. Tuition is prorated monthly - if a child attends the program for **any portion** of a month, parents remain responsible for full payment that month. Enrollment deposits may be applied as the child's final payment.

Annual Paperwork

For the good health of your child, the Step by Step Preschool Program fully complies with the public health regulations of New Hampshire. Each child must have a Student Case History and a physical examination record on file before beginning to attend the program. This record must include your child's immunization history. For children 3 to 6 years old, this history must include written documentation of the completion of the immunization series: DTap, Polio, MMR, HIB, HepB and Varicella. The following forms need to be provided prior to any child's first day of school and updated yearly:

- Proof of Physical within the past year
- Up-to-date immunization record
- Emergency information card
- Pick up/drop off acknowledgement
- Permission to photograph/videotape
- Email address sign up

School Year Calendar

The Step by Step Preschool calendar is published by SAU #44. The current year calendar is distributed to families at the beginning of each school year, upon enrollment and is available on our website.

Transfers

Please notify school personnel or the SAU #44 office if you are planning to move. If you are moving out of the town of Northwood SAU #44 School District, the office will assist you with the transfer of student information to a new school where your child will be attending.

Daily Logistics

Step by Step Preschool Daily Activities

AM Class
Arrival Time
Name or Question of the Day
Attendance Taker
Math Group / Journal
Circle Time
Small Group Instruction
Indoor / Outdoor Play
Snack Time
Pack up / Departure

PM Class
Arrival Time
Sign In / Math Journal
Attendance Taker
Circle Time
Small Group Instruction
Lunch Time
Indoor / Outdoor Play
Name or Question of the Day
Departure

Arrival Time

- Finding names in print, taking off coat and backpack
- PM Class – Being responsible for their belongings by handing in folders, completing sign in, checking charts for table groups

Question of the Day and/or Name of the Day

- Theme-based activities working on identifying and talking about emotions, answering questions about ourselves, and getting to know each other to build our community
- Working on name identification, identifying first letter sounds, syllables (claps) and counting the number of letters in our names

Attendance Taker

- Moving classmates' pictures for "Who is in School Today" board, counting the number of students

Math Group / Journal

- Math curriculum activities
- Weekly Journal theme drawing

Circle Time

- Individual student helper jobs
- Story Time, Sing along, Music and movement, Calendar, Weather
- Counting the days in school

Snack/Lunch Time

- Peer group table discussions

Small Group Instruction

- Speech / Language, Fine Motor, Gross Motor, Literacy and Math Activities

Indoor / Outdoor Play

- Creative and collaborative social play with peers, Motor skills

Departure

- Collecting belongings, putting on coats and backpacks
- PM Class – Being responsible for their belongings by collecting their folders to take home

What to Send to School With Your Child

Each child should come to school with a backpack/bag to hold their personal belongings. Children are best prepared with the following:

- **Appropriate clothing** - Preschool is meant to be an active experience. Please ensure your child comes to school wearing clothing and footwear that is comfortable, functional, washable, and safe for all of our activities (indoors and outdoors). When choosing school clothes, please remember that children will be encouraged to use craft materials such as markers, paint, glitter and glue. Children also participate in large movement activities and need to be comfortable to participate fully. Lastly, clothing should also be easy for your child to physically manage. Although adult help is available, all children are encouraged to be independent when putting their coat on/off, changing their shoes or using the bathroom.
- **Change of clothes** - Preschool experiences can be messy and accidents can happen! Keeping a weather-appropriate change of clothing in their backpack will help them adjust when the unexpected happens!
- **Labeling** - It is always good idea to label young children's clothing with their name.
- **Diapers/pull-ups & wipes** -Please provide these for your child, if necessary. Our staff will work with families to support each child to toilet train, as they are ready.
- **Outdoor Clothing** - Weather permitting, all children are expected to go outside during play time. Be sure your child is appropriately dressed for either indoor or outdoor play. If your child not well enough to play outside, they are not well enough to come to school. In the winter, children should come to school in a warm coat, boots, hats, mittens, etc. They may pack a change of footwear for the classroom, but all footwear **must** have hard soles that can be worn outside (in case of a fire drill).
- **Snack / Lunch** - Children who attend the morning session should bring a healthy snack and children who attend the afternoon session should bring a healthy lunch. Please provide single servings only, as children are discouraged from sharing food. If your child has any food allergies, just let us know. Please do not send candy, soda or anything with nuts.

Healthy Inspiration:

- **Grapes, apples, tangerines, bananas or pears** are the perfect portable fresh fruit treat.
- **Dried fruits or berries** are popular and sweet. Try traditional **raisins or Craisins** or try the less traditional **apricots, strawberries or banana chips**.
- Sliced **vegetables** with a dip like salsa, hummus or a flavorful salad dressing is a fun and exciting snack!
- **Popcorn bags** are sweet and salty in one - mix unflavored **popcorn** and a handful of **yogurt-covered raisins**.
- **Fruit parfaits** are delicious - layer fruit with yogurt and granola.
- **Low-sugar cereals** are great and "pop-able" when eaten dry. Try Cheerios, Kix or mini-wheats.
- **Pretzel pops** are fun. Top pretzel sticks with cheese cubes.
- **Cheese slices or cheese sticks** are healthy and provide needed calcium for growing bones.

Arrivals and Departures

Arrival - When dropping off your child, please park along the driveway and remain in your car with your child until a teacher opens the Step by Step Preschool door. Once staff are visible, you may bring your child to the door.

Departure - When picking up your child, again please park along the driveway and remain in your car until preschool staff open the Step by Step Preschool door. Once the door is opened, approach using the walkway. Children will be dismissed one at a time by staff at the door. This procedure is in place to ensure that each child is dismissed to an authorized adult.

Additional Arrival/Departure Notes:

- Due to safety concerns and scheduled playground use by the older Northwood Elementary students, preschool parents and children are asked **not** to utilize the playground before or after the preschool session.
- All cars **MUST** stop for school buses in the driveway when the bus stop sign is out and / or their lights are on. This is a law and is for the safety of the children.
- If you want to authorize anyone other than a parent/guardian to pick your child up from school, please make this designation in writing. In an emergency, please call the classroom to let staff know who to expect ahead of time.

Bus Transportation Services

We do not provide transportation to our tuition students, but some children enrolled in the Step by Step Preschool Program may be eligible for bus transportation services. If this is specified in your child's IEP, transportation is provided by Durham School Services transportation company within the town of Northwood. Please keep in mind that there is only one preschool bus route so the ride may be lengthy – your patience will be appreciated. Specific arrangements regarding time and place of pick-up/drop off will be made by school district personnel in conjunction with the transportation company. Parents may not make transportation changes directly with Durham Bus Service. **Any changes must be made through Step by Step / Northwood School Transportation Coordinator and will require a minimum of one-week notice.** In addition, all changes must be permanent. Please do not directly ask the bus driver to make changes.

When your child is being picked up or dropped off, please be mindful the bus driver has a strict time schedule to follow. Conversations should not exceed a few minutes. If you have a question or concern regarding your child's transportation please contact Step by Step Preschool staff at 942-8101, Northwood Transportation Coordinator Debbie Lee at 942-5488, or Durham School Services at 895-9664. We will be happy to assist you. Children who take the bus to/from preschool will be escorted by preschool staff when boarding /disembarking, for safety.

IF YOUR CHILD WILL NOT NEED SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION TO AND/OR FROM SCHOOL DUE TO ILLNESS OR OTHER REASONS, YOU MUST CONTACT DURHAM SCHOOL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION AT 895-9664 AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THEY GREATLY APPRECIATE THIS INFORMATION TO HELP ENSURE SMOOTH TRANSPORTATION SERVICE.

School Health Guidelines

The following guidelines are designed to assist you in making the decision when to keep your child home from school. This is to protect your child's health and well being as well as the health of the other children at school from unnecessarily contracting illnesses or diseases from an ill child. Please keep your child home from school if they have any of the following symptoms:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Any fever (if another symptom is not present at this time, chances are one will appear shortly)
- Excessive lethargy

Children should remain home for 24 **medicine-free** hours following the last appearance of the symptoms above (vomiting, diarrhea, fever). Please do not give your child Tylenol (or a similar product) before sending them to school. This could mask a fever and/or pain, which would inhibit both your and our ability to properly assess your child.

If your child has any of the following illnesses, please follow the guidelines provided:

Covid-19 – Families are expected to monitor themselves and their children closely and especially before sending children to school each day, for symptoms of Covid-19. Covid-19 is most commonly spread through respiratory droplets when an infected person talks, coughs, sneezes, or sings. Keep your child home from school if any symptoms of Covid-19 are present. Common symptoms of Covid-19 are: fever/chills (measured 100.0 F or higher), cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose or nasal congestion, diarrhea, muscle or body aches, fatigue, headache, new loss of taste or smell, nausea or vomiting. Individuals can contract Covid-19 and remain asymptomatic, but they can still be contagious. For this reason, ***if your child or anyone in your household tests positive for Covid-19, keep your child home from school (even if no symptoms are present)*** and contact the Director of Student Services immediately to discuss current quarantine expectations and a timeline for their return to preschool.

- **Severe Cold** is indicated by symptoms such as: croupy or persistent hacking cough, a fever during the night, yellow/green phlegm being coughed up or yellow/green discharge from the nose. Please keep your child home.
- **Sore Throat** with other accompanying symptoms such as: fever, swollen glands of the neck, reddened throat with any white patches and/or headache. Please keep your child home. If a child has any combination of these symptoms, they should be seen by a physician.
- **Strep Throat** – The only way to diagnose strep throat is with a throat culture. A child may return to school 36 hours after beginning medication. Please inform classroom staff if your child was diagnosed with strep throat, since it is contagious.
- **Conjunctivitis (Pink eye)** is indicated by symptoms such as: itching, reddened, watery eyes; crusty or sticky eyelids in the morning. A child should be seen by a physician and may return to school after receiving 2 doses of medication.
- **Impetigo** is a contagious infection of the skin, mouth or nostrils characterized by open sores that spread and form a yellow crust. A child must have a physician's note stating it is safe for him/her to return to school.
- **Head Lice** – Parents are encouraged to check their children's heads for lice if the child is symptomatic. If your child is found to have head lice, please report this to classroom staff. School staff may check a child's head if the child is demonstrating symptoms. You will be

notified by telephone or other available means if your child is found to have head lice. If the case is severe, or if a child is uncomfortable and their discomfort interferes with their learning/ability to participate in school activities, we may ask you to come and pick them up. Verbal and written instructions for treatment will be given which will include recommendations for treatment that are consistent with New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services recommendations. Children will be allowed to return to school after proper treatment.

- **Other contagious diseases** - Parents must report any diagnoses of the following to classroom staff:
 - Mumps, measles, or rubella
 - Scarlet fever
 - Scabies, Ringworm
 - Chicken pox (a child may return to school 6 days after the last pox appears)

Additional Health Notes:

- If a child is well enough to be in school, they will be expected to go outside if the group is going out. Always make sure that your child is dressed appropriately for the weather and please do not request that they stay inside during recess time. For a specific concern regarding outdoor play, you will need a doctor's note.
- Please notify staff of any injuries (e.g., bumps, bruises, cuts, etc.) sustained away from school.
- If your child becomes ill or injured while at school, classroom staff will contact you or one the individual(s) noted on the child's emergency form. If classroom staff determine that your child has symptoms described in the guidelines above or is not feeling well enough to participate in the program, you will be asked to come and pick them up. If you cannot be reached, the person you specify on the emergency form will be called to pick them up. The decision to send your child home will always at the discretion of classroom staff. Transportation of an ill child is the parent's responsibility.
- In general, children should not require that non-prescription or prescription medication be administered during their time in preschool. If your child has a severe allergy or other condition that may require emergency medication or medical care, please make an appointment with preschool staff (and school nurse, if needed) in advance to discuss an appropriate medical emergency care plan.

Absence Call In Procedure

If your child is going to be absent from school, please inform us by calling the classroom and leaving a message for us at: 942-8101 or emailing preschool staff at: stepbysteprek@northwood.k12.nh.us

IF YOUR CHILD TAKES THE BUS AND WILL NOT NEED SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION TO AND/OR FROM SCHOOL DUE TO ILLNESS OR OTHER REASONS, YOU MUST CONTACT DURHAM SCHOOL SERVICES TRANSPORTATION: 895-9664 AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THEY GREATLY APPRECIATE THIS INFORMATION TO HELP ENSURE SMOOTH TRANSPORTATION SERVICE.

School Cancellations

In the event of inclement weather, the decision to cancel the Step by Step Preschool session is made by the Northwood School District Superintendent of Schools. If there is a delayed start, the morning preschool session is cancelled. If there is an early release planned, the afternoon preschool session is cancelled. Cancellation information is posted on the WMUR news station which is readily accessible through their website (www.wmur.com) or mobile app. Step by Step Preschool staff also do their best to notify parents by email, using the voluntary email list.

Birthday Celebrations

- **Celebrations at school** - Families are welcome to send in a prepackaged snack for the group to celebrate their child's birthday. Please let the classroom teacher know of your plans ahead of time so that arrangements can be made, if needed, for any children with food allergies.
- **Party invitations** – Children will only be allowed to pass out party invitations at school if they are inviting all the children in the class. If you are not inviting all the children in the class, your child will not be allowed to hand out invitations themselves as this can lead to others feeling left out. Please contact preschool staff to make alternative arrangements and upon request, staff may discretely put invitations in children's home folders / backpacks.

Medical Emergencies

Very rarely does an emergency occur that requires the services of an ambulance or emergency personnel but in such an event, the following procedure will be followed:

- Northwood ambulance services will be called to transport the child to the closest hospital.
- Parents, physicians, or persons listed on the emergency form will be contacted and notified of the situation.

Emergency Preparedness

Fire drills and shelter drills are practiced on a regular basis during the school year. In case of a fire or other emergency, the preschool follows the Northwood School emergency response plans and procedures.

Other Policies/Procedures

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Policy/Law

In accordance with NH law (RSA 169-C:29), all school staff are considered “mandated reporters”. This means that they are obligated by law to report to DCYF any situation where they have reason to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected. Furthermore, anyone participating in good faith in the making of a report is immune from any liability, civil or criminal, that might otherwise be imposed. (RSA 169-C:31 and RSA 161-F:47)

Complaints Procedure

If you have any concerns regarding your child’s experiences in the preschool, you should contact preschool staff. If, after doing so, you still feel that the issue has not been appropriately addressed, you should contact the Director of Student Services. If the issue is still not resolved, you may contact the SAU #44 Superintendent of Schools.

Drugs, Alcohol and Smoking Policy

In accordance with NH RSA 155:66 and RSA 126-K:7, use of tobacco products and e-cigarettes is prohibited in all public school facilities and on the grounds of all public school facilities. Please note that school grounds extend to parking areas. Neither illicit drugs nor alcoholic beverages are permitted on school property or during school events (including field trips) at any time.