

The Pathways School - Edgewood

2021-2022

Edgewood Community-Based
Parent/Student Handbook

The Pathways School – Edgewood
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Table of Contents

Pathways Schools Philosophy	2
Introduction	2
Site Policies and Procedures.....	2
School Hours	3
Absences.....	3
Use of Community Locations.....	3
Transportation	3
Meals and Snacks	3
Communication	4
Student Use of School Phones.....	4
Student Cell Phones and Electronic Devices	4
Dress Code	5
Consequences for Inappropriate Dress.....	6
Tobacco and Smoking Policy.....	6
Instruction.....	7
Behavior Management System.....	7
Edgewood Cares!	7
Earning Bonus Points	7
Recording Points	8
Motivational Activities.....	8
Reward Opportunities.....	8
Crisis Procedures	8
Safety Procedures	8
Modifying the Schedule	9
Behavior Intervention.....	9
Imminent Danger.....	9
Instructional Breaks.....	10
Student-Requested Break	10
Staff-Directed Break.....	10
AWOL.....	10
Not a Danger	11
Danger to Self or Others.....	11
Suspensions	11
Documentation of Crises	11
Motivational Activities.....	12
Rewards	12
Awards.....	12
Honor Roll.....	12
Perfect Attendance	12
Al Minnigh Student Achievement Award.....	12

Pathways Schools Philosophy

We believe that our students can learn, be successful, trust themselves and others, change, and take charge of their lives.

We believe that in order for students to do so, they must be taught the social, emotional, academic, and survival skills needed to live independently and productively in their families and communities.

We believe that our students are worthy of every effort that can be made on their behalf so that they may realize their own self-worth.

We believe that providing them with small, structured, safe, and caring environments is best for enabling this self-discovery and change.

We seek to establish close working relationships with families and/or guardians to facilitate communication, conflict resolution and training to meet their son's or daughter's needs.

For students as well as families our goal is to provide PATHWAYS to a better future.

Introduction

The Pathways School – Edgewood Community Based (EWCB) program is designed for students who have not experienced success in traditional school environments. Students typically enrolled in The Pathways School – EWCB program are young adults whose primary interest lies in making a successful transition from high school to post-secondary life. We provide a safe environment for students to have the opportunity to accomplish this goal. A safe environment must be free of threat of injury or intimidation and must be conducive to acquiring mature self-control and decision-making skills. Each student engages in the personal work of self-discovery and goal achievement.

On their educational journey, students may exhibit some inappropriate behavior. Punishment may not be appropriate. Some of the possible consequences of student choices are outlined. A student's behavioral issues are addressed on an individual basis.

We believe that healthful relationships are crucial to the successful implementation of our educational and therapeutic program. We are, therefore, committed to working with students and families to establish supports both at school and in the community. Community supports are essential for helping students with a successful transition to life after high school.

Site Policies and Procedures

At the Pathways School-EWCB program, we recognize that behavioral issues will present themselves from time to time. It is our belief that the consequences of all behaviors must reflect real-life situations as much as possible. In most cases, student behavioral concerns will be dealt with on an individual basis. The following policies are written to serve as guidelines when monitoring behavior and determining consequences.

School Hours

The Pathways School – EWCB’s school day is 8:05 AM to 3:05 PM for students, with the exception of Wednesdays, which has an early dismissal of 12:40 PM. Students are expected to be dressed and ready for pick-up at their home by 8:30 AM. If the student will be late or absent, parent/guardian must call school and EWCB staff before 7:30 AM and leave a message. Staff may wait up to fifteen minutes for a student. Parents/guardians will be notified each time the student is absent.

Absences

Refer to The Pathways Schools’ attendance policy in The Pathways Schools’ Parent/ Student Handbook for specific descriptions of excused and unexcused absences.

Use of Community Locations

The Pathways School – EWCB program uses a variety of public and community settings for school lessons and activities. The rules of conduct may vary greatly among these settings. Students are expected to follow the rules of both The Pathways Schools and the location.

In the community and at places of employment, the policies of that location take precedence over Pathways procedures. For example, the security guard of the Prince George’s County Public Libraries may take control of any situation at a library branch. In those instances, the staff’s primary responsibility is to advocate for the unique needs of the student and to communicate with the Principal, parents/guardians, and, at times, the local school system (LSS).

Transportation

Students are transported to and from school-related activities by the staff of The Pathways School – EWCB. Each staff member drives their personal vehicle to transport students. Students, at times, may be transported in a Pathways van, cab, or other rented vehicle. Each staff person has discretion to set the specific rules of conduct within the vehicle, to include use of car radio, eating in the vehicle, etc.

Students must maintain safe, appropriate behaviors in order to continue to receive transportation provided by Pathways. If students exhibit unsafe or inappropriate behavior in a staff vehicle, transportation privileges may be suspended.

Meals and Snacks

If feasible, students will be provided lunch at the school site. Students may bring either a packed lunch or money to purchase meals. Students are permitted at staff discretion, to eat at during the day. At all times, students must follow the food and drink restrictions of the community settings. There will be occasions where meals are provided as incentives or as part of an activity or celebration. Students will generally know about these in advance. If providing meals and snacks presents a hardship for an individual student's family, the parent or caregiver is encouraged to contact the Principal.

Communication

Staff cell phones facilitate communication with staff and students who are off-site. Each CSS is assigned a cell phone. It is the policy of the Pathways School – EWCB program that the cell phones are turned on and worn/carried by staff **during school hours**. The cell phone numbers of staff are provided to the parents/guardians, employers, and others, as appropriate.

When parents/guardians want to communicate with their son or daughter, they are encouraged to call the school site first. In cases of emergency, the parents/guardians should contact the Principal directly. The Principal will then communicate the plan of action to the field staff and student.

Student Use of School Phones

There are times that students will need to use school phones during school hours. At no time are students permitted to use the phone without staff permission and supervision. They can use them under the following conditions:

- 1) Transition-related phone calls under the direction of staff.

Students can make these calls in the presence of a staff member.

- 2) Personal or other (i.e. parents/guardians, family, therapist, etc.)

Students must first obtain permission from staff. Then the phone number will be dialed under the supervision of staff and the student will be supervised during the conversation.

Student Cell Phones and Electronic Devices

In conjunction with The Pathways Schools' cell phone policy (see previous section); the following policy applies to students in the Pathways School EWCB program:

Cell phones should be off throughout the entire school day; on site or in the community. When on site, cell phones should not be seen or heard. In the community, students may ask staff permission to use their cell phones. If a student does not uphold this policy, the following may result:

1st offense: Phone call home.

2nd offense: Cell phone will be held by school staff until the end of the day; parent notified. If student refuses to give cell phone to staff, a one-day suspension will result.

3rd offense: Suspension and mandatory parent/guardian conference

Students are discouraged from bringing electronic devices, including but not limited to MP3 players, tablets, handheld gaming systems and laptop computers to school. Use must be in accordance with the Pathways Schools Acceptable Use Policy for Staff and Students Using Computers and Other Electronic Devices. Additionally, these

devices may only be used with headphones and with pre-approval of staff each time they are used.

Approval, at staff discretion, is based on

- 1) Nature of student lessons, activities, or assignments,
- 2) Non-interference with student learning and tasks,
- 3) Acceptable language, content, and message of the entertainment,
- 4) Student's pattern of success with following staff directions,
- 5) Respectful use of the device such as volume control, not speaking or singing, etc., and
- 6) Cooperation with staff and remaining on-task while listening to music.

Because locked facilities are not available, these devices are ***solely the responsibility of the student***. Students are not allowed to bring an unreasonable or excessive quantity of electronic devices and /or accompanying media. Staff may require students to select which few items to bring each day. Pathways is not responsible for lost, stolen, or broken items. Pathways discourages the gifting, loaning and/or trading of electronic device and/or accompanying media amongst students.

Dress Code

Students, as part of this program, are expected to dress appropriately for the school, career, and transition activities scheduled for the day. Successful career exploration requires neat, clean, and professional appearance. Certain outdoor activities and jobs may require specific clothing. During internship or job hours, students must comply with the dress requirements of the workplace. Staff discretion will determine the appropriateness of dress. The following criteria provide guidelines regarding inappropriate clothing:

Tops

- Tops should be continuous from neckline to waist. The entire mid-section and cleavage should not show. Undergarments must be covered fully.
- No clothing, to include jewelry and accessories, with vulgar language, obscene pictures, weapons, violence, drug/alcohol or drug paraphernalia and tobacco products.
- No identifiable gang/crew clothing or paraphernalia.
- No see-through clothing.

Skirts, Dresses, and Shorts

- Skirts, dresses, and shorts should reach finger tip length of one's extended arm

Pants

- Pants should be secured at waist – no sagging below waist to expose undergarments and/or body parts.
- Tights, stretch pants, leggings and the like, must be worn with clothing long enough to cover buttocks.

Tattoos

- Offensive and inappropriate tattoos, as determined by the Principal, must be covered.

Consequences for Inappropriate Dress

- Students will be expected to abide by the dress code.
- Those students who are not dressed appropriately will be expected to change their clothing before staff drive away from their home. If a student refuses to dress appropriately, he or she will receive school programming apart from other students for the day or receive a day of suspension, depending on the nature of the inappropriate clothing.
- Students will be asked to cover inappropriate clothing noticed during the school day. If the item cannot be suitably covered, the student may be taken home in order to change clothing and finish the school day.

Tobacco and Smoking Policy

It is against the law in the State of Maryland for students to use, distribute, or possess tobacco products during school. Tobacco products are defined as any substance containing tobacco, including cigarettes, cigars, smoking tobacco, snuff or smokeless tobacco.

The Pathways Schools are tobacco-free environments. We support the belief that both first and second-hand smoke pose a significant health risk. We encourage students who use tobacco to seek alternative means for addressing their desire. This policy is in effect during the school day, school sponsored activities, and field trips.

All tobacco products, lighters, and matches must be turned in to the CSS immediately upon pick-up. The CSS will inform the Principal, who will inform the parents/guardians that the student possesses these items.

The items will be returned to the student at the end of the day if (1) the student is aged 18 years or older, and (2) they were turned in voluntarily by the student.

The following consequences may result if a student is caught using tobacco or has tobacco products or paraphernalia in his/her possession and refuses to surrender said items to school staff:

1st Offense: Parent/guardian notified, future random searches.

2nd Offense: Parent/ guardian conference, future random searches, resources for smoking cessation program given to family.

3rd Offense: Suspension and mandatory parent/guardian conference.

If a pattern of non-compliance with the tobacco policy develops, a conference with a local school system representative may be requested. The purpose of this conference would be to determine whether this school placement continues to be appropriate.

Instruction

As expected, the plans for lessons do not always represent the actual instructional event. Therefore, throughout the instructional week, the Community Support Staff (CSS) uses the Gradelink online grade book and Individual Education Program (IEP) goal tracking sheets to record the actual subject taught, materials and time span of the activity. These documents are used for staff reference, IEP progress notation and development.

Behavior Management System

The Pathways Schools philosophy identifies what we believe students can achieve. The Behavior Management System is designed to help them realize these achievements. All students are expected to participate in the behavior management system. This system enables the students to have daily practice of the behavioral and academic skills necessary to ensure success in the learning environment. In addition, it provides a regular system of monitoring, by both staff and students, and an incentive of positive rewards as students experience and display their progress. Our policies regarding student conduct are in effect throughout the school day, work day, on field trips, and during any school-sponsored activities, including community-based instruction and activities.

Edgewood Cares!

The Behavior Management System is centered around the “Edgewood Cares!”(EC) incentive program. It is also supplemented by data collection from both classroom and common area observation data. Within the EC system students are asked to do the following:

- Communicate your needs appropriately**
- Accept responsibility**
- Respect yourself and others**
- Embrace others boundaries**
- Stay in your assigned area**

Earning Bonus Points

Each student has the ability to earn points throughout the instructional day. 1 point will be awarded by the Community Support Staff for demonstrating one of the Edgewood Cares behaviors. They also have the opportunity to earn up additional points per week by demonstrating the following: using coping skills/strategies independently; showing improvement in an identified area.

Recording Points

Student points are recorded daily by the Community Support Staff and then submitted weekly to the Therapist team. They then tally the points and notify students what they have earned for the week to save or make purchases in the virtual school store. The utilization of the point system is a tool for promoting and rewarding expected behaviors. It also encourages and allows students to experience mistakes without feelings of failure, to increasingly regulate their own behavior, and to begin to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Motivational Activities

Students have the opportunity to earn and participate in a variety of motivational activities throughout the school year. Students earn rewards, awards and activities based on their behaviors and academic performance. The Pathways School – EWCB attempts to match motivation and rewards typical of adult life. We recognize that students enjoy frequent acknowledgement for their successes. Therefore, we include a range of activities that are designed to motivate our students toward success and to reward their hard work in attaining their goals. For some students, contracts are developed to link clear expectations with desired rewards.

Reward Opportunities

Weekly

- Virtual school store purchases

Monthly

- Optional Friday Activities

Per Semester

- Each semester we will host a “Semester Jam”. Students will vote on a list of preferred activities suggested by their peers and approved by administration.

Crisis Procedures

The Pathways School – EWCB holds a high standard for student interaction. Whenever a student is unable (whether emotionally, physically, or otherwise) to participate fully in the activities planned and scheduled for that time, we expect that student to inform staff respectfully and promptly, to negotiate plausible alternative activities that address legitimate learning outcomes, and to make appropriate choices to remain productive in school. We expect a similar process between students and staff when they experience disagreements.

Safety Procedures

It is essential that students feel safe in their learning environment in the community. In order for that to happen, it is necessary for staff, students, and families to work together. We will do everything we can to promote a safe environment. The use of cameras will be used as available as an additional safety measure.

In addition, as stated in our manual, weapons, drugs, tobacco products, matches, lighters, laser pointers, dice, and any other contraband items are not allowed. Purses and backpacks will be checked on an as needed basis. Any student who willfully attempts to conceal an item into a staff persons' vehicle will have the item confiscated, as well as face the appropriate consequence.

No drawings, photos, or catalogs containing materials related to weapons or pornography will be allowed in school. No glass or ceramic containers will be permitted with breakfast and lunch. Cell phones must be turned in or turned off. No gang writing/symbols or anything that would be generally considered disturbing or offensive can be written on the property of the student, staff, or community location where the student is receiving instruction.

Should a student exhibit behavior compromising the safety of himself/herself, and/or others, the parents/guardians will be notified as soon as possible. They may be requested to give consent for the student to be driven home by staff. The administration has the right to notify the police for assistance if needed.

Bullying, posturing, taunting, mocking, gesturing, and any form of harassment, including harassment related to sexual identity, etc. will not be tolerated. Threats of any sort, regardless of intent, will also be taken seriously. Consequences will be given. Police may also be notified and legal action may be taken.

Modifying the Schedule

Students are encouraged to participate in the generation of each week's schedule. It is believed that students will improve in self-advocacy so that over time the schedule will increasingly reflect the learning styles and habits of each individual. However, at times, the planned activities no longer fit the student's primary need. At those times, the CSS has discretion to negotiate modifications to the planned schedule. Usually, these modifications consist of switching the order or location of activities.

Behavior Intervention

At times, modifying the student's schedule is not adequate. It is always our expectation that students remain in programming and complete the school day. In those instances, when this is not possible, the CSS contacts a therapist either for guidance or to request an unscheduled therapy appointment for the student. The therapist will honor unscheduled appointments when they do not conflict with another scheduled therapy appointment. If there is a conflict, the student will be seen by another staff member as a way to resolve the situation.

Imminent Danger

In cases of imminent danger to self or others, staff works to maintain the safety of the students, the staff, and the community. When on-site, staff assesses if going to a community based setting will deescalate the situation while maintaining the safety of students, staff, and others. In those instances, staff, student, and Principal make a precise plan for the remainder of the day.

Instructional Breaks

Time-outs are used to provide a student an opportunity to refocus on the activity. Time-outs may be used for incidents where negotiation between student and staff is not successful, such as when a student refuses to participate in the activity, when the student's behaviors are interfering with his/her or others' learning, and when the student's emotional state is not conducive to learning. These breaks in the individualized instruction are an opportunity for the student to reevaluate the behavior, to consider the consequences of not completing the tasks, and to make choices of how to engage successfully in the activity. There are two types of time-outs: student-requested and staff-directed.

Student-Requested Break

A student who needs a break may initiate a student-requested time-out. The student, usually, requests to leave the instructional space for the time-out. The student must respectfully state the exact location to which he/she is retreating, **within eyesight of the staff member** and the duration requested. Although Pathways staff honors a student's self-awareness of needing a break, all staff has discretion in approving the request, including location and duration. A time-out will not be granted if the staff has the opinion that the student is merely avoiding his/her work or if the staff believes that safety or security is jeopardized. Because it is the staff's responsibility to monitor the student during the time-out, **the student must remain within the line of sight and hearing** of the staff at all times. It is the student's responsibility to return from time-out at the agreed time.

Staff-Directed Break

A staff member will direct a time-out when a short break from instruction may improve the quality of the teaching/learning process. The location of staff-directed time-outs varies according to the specific nature of the incident. Staff may accompany the student on a brief respite, such as a walk, a purchase of a snack, etc. Other times the student may sit quietly for the time-out. **At all times, the student must remain within the line of sight and hearing of the staff person.**

At times that the student still feels unprepared to continue the activity, the staff and student may discuss alternative activities. All time-outs are recorded by the CSS.

AWOL

"AWOL" is a term borrowed from the military, meaning Away With-Out Leave. Whenever a student leaves the assigned instructional space, s/he is considered AWOL. We consider this behavior to be very serious. Because most activities are implemented in community settings, supervision of students to ensure safety is critical. As described above, we understand that at times students need to take a respite from their work. We make a simple, yet significant distinction between (1) a student requesting to leave and (2) a student leaving without staff knowledge. The former is acceptable. The latter requires staff intervention.

Staff's primary responsibility is to assess whether the student poses a threat of danger to self or others. Staff assumes threat of danger when there is insufficient assurance that the student is not a threat of danger. If the student poses no such threat, the student is

permitted up to fifteen minutes to return safely to the assigned area. This type of AWOL is documented. A collaborative conversation between the CSS, teacher, and therapist determines the consequences and follow-up. When a student goes AWOL repeatedly, the Principal determines the appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including recommendation for discharge.

Not a Danger

If the student does not return to the assigned area within fifteen minutes, the staff person will contact the Principal. This type of AWOL is documented on a Student Behavior Report. The Principal, in collaboration with the team including Pathways' Executive Director, Therapist, Teacher, and CSS, will determine the appropriate course of action. The Principal may telephone parents/guardians or the police; it may be determined that student has walked home. A re-entry conference will be held with parents/guardians to determine and assure continued safety and compliance to school rules.

Danger to Self or Others

If the student poses a threat of danger to self or others while leaving without permission, the staff person immediately contacts the Principal, who may contact the police. In these cases, the parents/guardians are notified as soon as feasible. A re-entry conference with student and parents/guardians will be held to determine and assure continued safety and compliance to school rules. These AWOLs are recorded on the Student Behavior Report, which are filed in the student's permanent record and at The Pathways Schools' Administrative House.

Suspensions

In response to certain behaviors and incidences, a student may be suspended from school or transportation. An incident of aggression, derogatory slurs, gross or repeated infractions of Pathways Schools' policies are some examples of offenses resulting in suspensions. Suspensions are counted as unexcused absences in terms of completion of a school program. Five or more unexcused absences in a quarter may result in an "N" grade. Excessive days of absence may interfere with meeting graduation requirements. Whenever students are suspended, parents/guardians and the LSS are notified.

Documentation of Crises

All behavioral incidents are documented. The staff who witnessed the incident will complete the documentation using other forms, such as Student Behavior Report, Suicide Prevention/ Intervention Report or Suspension Notice. These reports are maintained in the permanent student record and are filed at The Pathways Schools' Administrative House. Some reports are sent to the LSS.

Motivational Activities

Students have the opportunity to earn and participate in a variety of motivational activities throughout the school year. Students earn awards and activities based on their behaviors and academic performance. The Pathways School – EWCB attempts to closely match motivation and rewards typical of adult life. However, we recognize that students enjoy frequent acknowledgement. Therefore, we include a range of activities that are designed to motivate our students toward success and to reward their hard work in attaining their successes.

Rewards

Points are earned on the daily Edgewood Cares point sheets. There are reward opportunities monthly and per semester. Examples of reward opportunities include a special lunch, enjoying a “semester jam,” or going on special field trips. Additional privileges may be developed throughout the year in order to motivate particular individuals.

Awards

A variety of awards and certificates are used to mark achievements made by students. These and other awards are presented during our community group or in other group settings, so that peers and staff and sometimes families can celebrate each student’s successes.

Honor Roll

At the end of each quarter those students who have earned a grade point average of 3.0 (B average) or better will be placed on the Honor Roll. They will receive a certificate and an Honor Roll pin in acknowledgement of their accomplishment. Honor Roll students are also taken to breakfast/lunch as a group with a teacher, therapist, and administrative staff person.

Perfect Attendance

At the end of each quarter those students who attended school every day during the quarter will be awarded for their exemplary attendance record. They will receive a certificate and a Perfect Attendance pin.

AI Minnigh Student Achievement Award

The AI Minnigh Student Achievement Award- Student of the Year award is presented to a student from each Pathways site who has demonstrated outstanding improvement in academics, behavior, therapy, volunteerism and/or vocational training.