

The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School

Student/Parent Handbook

The Arc of Essex County's
Stepping Stones School

19 Harrison Avenue

Roseland, NJ

Phone: 862-210-8781

Fax: 862-210-8791

www.stepsstoneschoolnj.com



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THE ARC OF ESSEX COUNTY'S STEPPING STONES SCHOOL
MISSION & VISION

MISSION STATEMENT

The Arc of Essex County provides advocacy and services empowering individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families to realize a lifetime of personal achievement and full partnership in the community.

VISION STATEMENT

The Arc of Essex County, the leader in creating and delivering supports and services, is the premier choice of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, their families, and the community.

B. Stepping Stones Staff

PRINCIPAL

Sundra “Sunny” Beal
sbeal@arcessex.org
973-407-0935

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL

Lisa Kin
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(862) 210-8781

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Laura Reda
lreda@arcessex.org

SOCIAL WORKER

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(862) 210-8781

NURSE

Kathy Hart
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(973) 768-6338
Talia W. (part-time RN)

DIRECTOR

Robin Moses
rmoses@arcessex.org

PRESCHOOL:

Robin Moses- Teacher
rmoses@arcessex.org
Anabella K. Senior TA

TRANSITIONAL KINDERGARTEN:

Janeen Burke- Teacher
jburke@arcessex.org
Leia B. Senior TA

Primary:

Christine Bridge- Teacher
cbridge@arcessex.org
Maria D.- Senior TA

THERAPISTS

Alexis Soled – OT - asoled@arcessex.org
Katalyna Lorick OT- klorick@arcessex.org
Dora Csogor- PT -dcspgor@arcessex.org
Jillian Fonseca- ST - jfonseca@arcessex.org
Sandy Pease- ST- spease@arcessex.org

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CONTACTING TEACHER/THERAPISTS

To avoid interruptions to instruction, voice messages for staff can be left with the principal’s office 862-210-8781 and calls will be returned when the teacher/therapist is free. Staff members can be emailed with the understanding they have 24 hours to return an email response. ***Urgent messages, please contact the Principal at sbeal@arcessex.org or 973-407-0935.** Calls or texts can be made between 7:00 am and 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday only.



Stepping Stones School
19 Harrison Avenue - Roseland, NJ 07068

REVISED
7/5/2023

Phone: (862) 210-8781 **Fax:** (862) 210-8791 **Principal Cell:** (973) 407-0935

2023-2024 Calendar

School Hours: 8:50a-2:40p Early Dismissal: 1:00p
ESY (July and August) 8:30 am—12:30 pm

JULY 2023						
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AUGUST 2023						
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OCTOBER 2023						
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NOVEMBER 2023						
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DECEMBER 2023						
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- July 5** First Day of ESY
- Aug. 15** Last Day of ESY
- Sept. 4** Labor Day- School Closed
- Sept. 5 & 6** Staff Orientation- No students
- Sept. 7** First Day for Students
- Sept. 25** School Closed
- Sep. 28** Back to School Night
- Oct. 9** Columbus Day—School Closed
- Oct. 13** Fall Festival
- Oct. 19** Staff Development (1pm Student Dismissal)
- Oct. 31** Halloween
- Nov. 7** Election Day- School Closed
- Nov. 9 & 10** Conferences (1pm Dismissal- Students Only)
- Nov. 21** Thanksgiving Feast
- Nov. 22** Thanksgiving Break (1pm Dismissal) Students Only
- Nov. 23 & 24** Thanksgiving—School Closed
- Dec. 14** Holiday Party/Santa (1pm Dismissal) Students Only
- Dec. 22** Winter Break (1pm Dismissal) Students Only
- Dec. 25-29** Winter Break—School Closed
- Jan. 1** New Year’s Day Observed—School Closed
- Jan. 2** School Reopens
- Jan. 15** MLK Day Observed—School Closed
- Feb. 7** Staff Development (1pm Dismissal)
- Feb. 16** 1pm Dismissal
- Feb. 19 & 20** President’s Day- School Closed
- Mar. 13** Staff Development (1pm Dismissal)
- Mar. 21** World Down Syndrome Day
- Mar. 29** Good Friday- School Closed
- Apr. 1-5** Spring Break- School Closed
- May 14** Staff Development (1pm Dismissal)
- May 27** Memorial Day-School Closed
- June 5** Volunteer Luncheon (1pm Dismissal) Students Only
- June 14 & 17** 1pm Dismissal for Students
- June 18** Last Day of School/Graduation 1pm Dismissal for Students
- June 19– 28** School Closed

Number of School Days:

July	19	January	21
August	11	February	19
September	16	March	20
October	21	April	17
November	19	May	22
December	16	June	12

*This calendar provides 213 days of school and allows for 3 snow days. Additional snow days will be made up by reducing spring break starting with the last Friday of break. In the event snow days are unused they will be returned.

	Closed
	1:00 pm Dismissal
	Staff Orientation—School Closed
	Staff Development/1:00 Dismissal Students Only

JANUARY 2024						
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MARCH 2024						
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APRIL 2024						
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MAY 2024						
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JUNE 2024						
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STUDENT ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

The September through June school day is from 8:50 a.m. to 2:40 p.m. except on early dismissal days (1:00 p.m.) as noted on the school calendar. The Extended School Year (ESY) school day is from 8:30 am to 12:30 pm. Instructional paraprofessionals ensure students safely disembark from buses in the morning, escort students directly to their classrooms after all students have disembarked from their buses, and assist with a safe, orderly return to buses at the close of the school day. At dismissal, students wait in the designated area with the instructional staff until their buses are called.

Parents/Bus Drivers arriving after 9:00 a.m. must call the main office from their vehicle to notify of student arrival. An instructional staff member will meet the parent/driver at the outdoor disembarking area to escort the student into the building and to his/her respective classroom.

The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School maintains attendance in accordance with N.J.S.A 6A:32-8.1. Student attendance shall be recorded in the school register during school hours on each day school is in session. A school day shall consist of no less than four hours as per N.J.S.A 6A:32-8.3.

For planned early departures, parents must send a message via the Remind App, send an email, or call the main office. For non-planned early departures from school, parents must call the Main Office or Principal's cell phone. A staff member will bring your child downstairs to meet you for pickup. In order to ensure the safety of our students, no student is allowed to leave the school with an unknown person unless she/he is identified by the parents in writing. The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School reserves the right to ask for identification. The student must have an appropriate car seat/booster secured in the departure vehicle.

Any changes in transportation to and from the school will require approval from the sending district and your case manager. All changes must be reported to the Stepping Stones School main office.

The following guidelines describe our expectations for our students' conduct on buses:

- Students will be seated immediately upon entering the bus in the seats assigned by the driver.
- Seat belts and/or approved car seat restraints will be used and properly secured.
- Seat belts and/or approved car seat restraints will remain secured until the bus has arrived at its destination and is in the parked position.
- Students will talk softly and will be polite and respectful.
- Students will leave doors/windows closed unless they have permission from the bus driver to open.

According to N.J.S.A 18A:25-2, the principal may exclude a pupil from the bus for disciplinary reasons and his/her parents may provide transportation to and from school during the period of such exclusion. Parents will be notified of discipline problems occurring on the bus.

ABSENCE

Notification of unplanned absences are to be made to the main office number, 862-210-8781, by 8:00am and include an explanation of absence and expected date of return. Upon return to school the child must have a note explaining the illness and treatment received or explanation of the non-medical reason for the absence. Following a serious illness, accident or hospitalization, medical clearance to return to school is required.

ATTENDANCE

Good attendance is important to school success. Under New Jersey State Law, the only legal reasons for school absence are as follows:

1. Personal Illness
2. Quarantine
3. Death in the family
4. Religious holiday (previously arranged)

As per DOE requirements, any absence of five or more consecutive days or habitual tardiness must be reported to your sending school district.

EARLY DISMISSAL AND EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

When it has been determined that school will be closed or the opening time delayed due to inclement weather or an emergency condition, you and your bus company will receive a phone call from our automated voice system as early as possible.

Sometimes weather conditions change suddenly and we must end the school day early. The automated voice system will be activated. Please be sure to have a contingency plan if you are not at home and watch for changing weather conditions. Please be sure to keep all telephone numbers current with the school office. Also, please have cell phones turned on for easier access.

D. Student Health

It is school policy that the Stepping Stones School Nurse share appropriate health information with the school staff and the professionals who are designated as having "legitimate health interest" within the school, as well as other individuals who provide direct school health and education services to students.

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION DURING SCHOOL HOURS

If it is necessary for a student to take medication during school hours, only the school nurse or an assigned nurse, as per an IEP, will administer the medication in compliance with the following rules:

From the parent/medical professional:

- A written statement from the prescribing physician stating the medication, dosage, time and purpose of the medication AND
- The prescription and non-prescription medication must be labeled, be in the original bottle from the pharmacy and be in a sealed envelope AND
- The sealed envelope containing the prescription (s) and medication (s) will be given to the nurse either by the parent or put in the child's backpack to be given to the nurse upon arrival to school.

At the school:

- All medications are stored in a locked cabinet and are administered by the school nurse or assigned nurse.
- Students may not have medication with them in school.
- Empty medication bottles will be sent home with the student in his/her school bag in a sealed envelope.

IMMUNIZATION AND MEDICAL INFORMATION

The State of NJ DOE requires families to provide medical information for students. The following are required in order for students to attend school:

- Proof of DOE required immunizations
- Current Emergency Medical Treatment Release Form
- Medical Information Form
- Over the Counter Medication Form
- Student Immunization and Examination Form
- Health Contract

EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

When emergency medical treatment is necessary, a sick or injured student will be transported to a hospital by the parents (if available) or by local ambulance squad or police emergency unit. A current HIPAA Form and Emergency Medical Treatment/Release Form must be completed and returned to the school nurse.

EMERGENCY ADMINISTRATION OF EPINEPHRINE FOR FIRST-TIME ALLERGIC REACTIONS

Epinephrine may be administered to any student without a known history of anaphylaxis when the school nurse or trained designee in good faith believes that the student is having an anaphylactic reaction. The school nurse or trained designee shall be permitted to administer epinephrine via a pre-filled auto-injector mechanism to any student without a known history of anaphylaxis. This includes students whose parent(s)/guardian(s) have not submitted prior written permission or obtained prescribed medication as indicated in the rules under Emergency Administration of Epinephrine.

The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School shall maintain a supply of epinephrine auto-injectors that is prescribed under a standing protocol from a licensed physician or an advanced practice nurse in a secure but unlocked and easily accessible location. The supply of epinephrine auto-injectors shall be accessible to the school nurse and trained designees for administration to a student having an anaphylactic reaction.

We ask that you check your child for any early signs of illness. Please keep your child home from school if he/she shows the signs of an infection or illness.

HEALTH SCREENINGS

During each school year, the nurse conducts screenings for blood pressure, height and weight. Parents are notified of the screening and the results.

E. Stepping Stones School Policies

TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

- To treat students with respect and care as individuals
- To teach students the required content
- To provide appropriate motivation
- To provide the necessary discipline and model appropriate expectations
- To provide students with an orderly classroom

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

Stepping Stones is committed to meet all the requirements and obligations of each student's Individualized Education Plan as required by state statute. Key highlights are provided as follows:

- Academics/Required Courses: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Physical Education/Health.
- Goals and objectives correlate with NJ State Student Learning Standards.
- Instruction is individualized and based on each student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
- A wide variety of materials are available and instruction is presented in ways that are sensitive to varying student learning styles.

SCHOOL DRESS CODE

Students are expected to wear clothing that is comfortable, appropriate for their needs and activities of the day (to include therapies) which includes but limited to the following guidelines:

- Attire is neat, clean, and modest
- Wear clothing that is suitable for the season and weather conditions
- If wearing skirts, shorts or leggings should be worn underneath skirts
- Do not wear revealing clothing
- No inappropriate, suggestive or provocative language can be displayed on clothing
- Wear shoes that fit appropriate and can be worn for all therapies. PLEASE DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL IN FLIP FLOPS

All students should have a change of clothing sent to school that is appropriate for the season/weather conditions, and the right size, for emergencies.

Please have all clothing and other personal items labeled with your child's first and last names. Please send in clean clothing as soon as possible to replace any clothes sent home.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY EDUCATION

Instructional activities involving religious holidays emphasize the historic, cultural and seasonal aspects of the holiday. Presentations are appropriate for the various ages and attainments of the students and are balanced, unbiased and sensitive to religious diversity. At parents' request, students are not required to participate in holiday activities. Similarly, with prior notice, students will be excused from any event/activity that is considered by parents to be counter to their religious teaching. Information about students' anticipated absence for religious observance should be directed to the principal.

FACILITATED RECESS

Facilitated recess is provided daily for all students. During inclement weather, students may have facilitated recess indoors. Weather permitting, students will have recess outdoors in assigned areas. Students will be supervised at all times. Please ensure your child is dressed appropriately for all weather conditions.

VISITORS

Parents/Guardians are welcome as visitors during the school day, however, interruption of instruction should be considered. For planned/unplanned visits, contact the Principal via email at sbeal@arcessex.org or phone at 862-210-8781. Upon arrival, from outside of the building, the parent/guardian is to call the office or the Principal to confirm arrival. A school representative let you in and sign the Visitor Log. For security purposes, doors cannot be left open and no one should hold the door for anyone not previously authorized to visit the school. Parents/Guardians must sign out in the Visitor log upon departure.

LUNCH

Lunch is NOT provided at the School. All students must bring with them each day a prepared lunch that is nutritious and within the limitations of the student's feeding needs, as per IEPs and feeding studies, that is in a sealed storage container. Your child's teacher will provide the therapeutic feeding schedule.

PERSONAL PROPERTY

Please be sure that all personal property is *labeled for identification*. Students are discouraged from sharing personal belongings with bus mates. The Stepping Stones School cannot be responsible for lost items or items not returned, such as toys, iPads, cell phones or other electronics. If your child brings such items to school, they should be given to the classroom teacher for safekeeping.

F. Behavior and Discipline; Nurtured Heart- Positive Behavior System

BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School implements a student discipline policy to establish standards, policies, and procedures for positive student development and behavioral expectations on school grounds, and, as appropriate, for conduct away from school grounds. Every student enrolled at The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School shall observe the rules and regulations and the discipline imposed for infraction of those rules.

This policy will be reviewed, and updated as needed, annually with faculty/staff. Annual dissemination (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.1(a)4) of the Student Code of Conduct will occur via e-mail to parents. Hard copies will be made available upon request. The school district will submit an annual report on student conduct to N.J.D.O.E, if any incidents occurred.

Each Students IEP (Individualized Education Plans) shall be implemented in accordance with the components of the applicable plans for students with disabilities, as per N.J.A.C. 6A:7.1 (a)6. A student's disability and the role it plays in student misconduct must always be taken into consideration prior to disciplining a student. Student discipline will be enforced with equity and will be applied without regard for race; color; religion; ancestry; national origin; nationality; sex; gender; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; mental; physical or sensory disability or by any other of the applicable plans. (N.J.S.A 10:5)

The Arc of Essex County 's Stepping Stones School approves the use of comprehensive behavioral supports that promote positive student development and the students' abilities to fulfill the school's behavioral expectations.

Behavioral supports include, but are not limited to, positive reinforcement, whole language and multisensory strategies. Supports are put into place to ensure appropriate behavior and academic success.

The Social Worker is available to consult with teachers regarding weekly social emotional goals and to develop strategies to move students toward achievement of these goals. The Social Worker is able to meet with students on an as-needed basis, in addition to sessions required by the Individual Education Plan.

All staff have been trained on the laws of the State of New Jersey mandate (N.J.S.A 18A:6-1) that no person shall inflict corporal punishment upon a pupil. The Arc of Essex County 's Stepping Stones School will not permit or condone physical or verbal abuse of its pupils by any member of the staff.

When serious disciplinary actions must be taken, as per N.J.A.C 6A:16-6.2(b)3, the parents and Child Study Team case managers shall be notified by telephone and in writing. The Arc of Essex County complies with statues and laws that guarantee due process in these disciplinary matters. The administration and case managers will review this with the parent/guardians, if necessary.

N.J.S.A 18A:37-2. When staff recommends termination of a student's placement at The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones because the school can no longer meet the student's academic or behavioral needs, or the current continued placement is deemed unduly disruptive and unsafe to other students or staff, The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones will comply with all due process procedures and statues, as per 6A:14-2.8. These will be reviewed with the case manager, parent(s)/guardian(s) and students if the need arises. As per N.J.A.C. 6A:14-2.8(b), district board of education personnel may consider, on a case-by-case basis, any unique circumstances when determining whether or not to impose a disciplinary sanction or order a change of placement for a student with a disability who violates a district board of education code of conduct.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT SYSTEM

The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones utilizes a school-wide plan (N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.1(b)), entitled Nurtured Heart®. This behavior program provides reinforcement to target behaviors through positive reinforcement of desired behaviors.

The Nurtured Heart program requires staff take three crucial stands to influence appropriate student behaviors:

- Crucial Stand #1: "Absolutely NO!"- I refuse to give my time, energy and relationship to negative behavior.
- Crucial Stand #2: "Absolutely YES!"- I will constantly recognize the success and achievement that children are displaying no matter how small and present them with clear undeniable evidence of their value and how great they are.
- Crucial Stand #3: "Absolutely CLEAR!"- I will have clear and consistent consequences for children when a rule has been broken.

The Nurtured Heart program suggests techniques for maintaining an environment of positivity.

- Proactive Recognition or Canons: celebrate rules NOT broken
- Creative Recognition: celebrate requests that are honored
- Active Recognition or Kodak Moment: actively stating what you see out loud, notice actions and emotions that are going well
- Experimental Recognition or Polaroids: adding to active recognition, celebrating what they are doing well even though the student may not realize what they are doing.

G. Student and Parental Rights and Responsibilities

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

As per N.J.A.C 6A:32-8, 12.1, 13.1, all students are expected to fulfill these expectations:

- Attend school and be appropriately dressed
- Come to school prepared to learn
- Demonstrate respect for people and property
- Take responsibility for their own behavior
- Use time and resources responsibly
- Participate actively in our positive behavior management system; Nurtured Heart
- Follow school bus safety procedures

STUDENT ENRICHMENT

Community based instruction such as trips are planned by the classroom teachers; both individually or collaboratively when appropriate, to supplement the student's educational experiences as well as integration in to the town's community. Parental permission to participate is obtained. Parents must notify school of any medical conditions that would preclude participation in any type of field trip. Classes are transported in a van or a leased vehicle with a licensed bus driver. Public transportation may be taken for trips when appropriate. Special programs and a variety of assemblies and guest speakers are frequently incorporated in the curriculum.

ROLE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

Stepping Stones believes that the education of children is the shared responsibility of the school, the student, the parent(s)/guardian, and the sending district. To ensure best possible educational results for each child, there must be effective communication between the home and school. We recognize the crucial role that parent(s)/guardians have in shaping the character and values of their children.

By law, parents are entitled to be included in the development of their child's educational plan. Your involvement in our school is always welcomed. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are also responsible for their child's punctuality, attendance, cleanliness and dress.

PARENTAL CONNECTIONS

Parents have an important role in their student's success in school. We encourage frequent contact with parents through attendance at Back-to-School Night, conferences and a daily exchange with teachers and therapists through the Remind app and email. We also welcome phone calls from parents. Please note that teaching and therapy staff are only able to return communications before or after school hours.

Parents will receive information concerning activities and how to get involved in school activities. Parent participation is welcomed and needed. Please call Stepping Stones School directly to obtain information about how to participate.

Parents are their children's first teacher and they play an influential role in their education. Here are some ways we suggest to be involved and enhance your child's school experience:

- Make sure your child gets enough rest and sleep
- Establish a morning routine that includes a healthy breakfast. Allow for a calm start to the day and on-time bus pick-up
- Provide a quiet place and regular time where your child can do homework, if applicable. Check to see that the homework is done
- Monitor social networking sites your child may visit. Monitor for appropriate language and content

- Practice social skills
- When possible, attend school meetings and events
- Take time to talk with your child each day about things that have happened
- Monitor the time your child spends on electronic devices, i.e., iPads, Kindles, etc.
- Plan to spend time reading to or with your child regularly
- Accentuate the positive!
- Become involved with the Candle Lighters, an organization that supports Stepping Stones and Camp Hope (www.thecandlelighters.org)

PRISE

New Jersey Administrative Code for special education (N.J.A.C. 6A:14) and the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004) are laws that ensure children with disabilities receive a free, appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. An important part of these laws provides parents with the right to participate in their children's education. You and representatives of your school district are team members who are responsible for developing an appropriate educational program for your child. The PRISE document describes the state and federal laws affecting the provision of special education to help you understand your rights in the special education process. With this knowledge, you will be prepared to take an active role in your child's education. This document has been developed for you by the Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, in an effort to provide the most comprehensive and up to date information. The document is periodically revised to reflect changes in the law, provide additional information that would be of use to you, and to provide the information in a more clear and concise manner. If you need additional help in understanding your rights, contact information for the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN), Disability Rights New Jersey (DRNJ), the County Offices of the New Jersey Department of Education and your local school district. To view the document in its entirety, please visit:

www.state.nj.us/education/specialed/form/prise/prise.pdf

FERPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. Some tenants of FERPA are as follows:

- Parents have certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."
- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):

- School officials with legitimate educational interest
- Other schools to which a student is transferring
- Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes
- Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student
- Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school
- Accrediting organizations
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena
- Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
- State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.
- Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them.
- Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying

The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School is a highly unique educational setting specializing in programs to meet the needs of students with specific special needs. Our school is comprised of students with multiple disabilities, including but not limited to, learning disabilities, cognitive disabilities, intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, and/or delays in language and speech impairments.

There may be cases in which a behavior/action by a student appears to be an act of harassment, intimidation or bullying, however, the core root of the behavior is the student's documented disability. The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School will decide as to whether they believe the student's reported behavior/actions are directly the result of their disability, before invoking the processes detailed in the HIB policy.

When a written harassment, intimidation or bullying complaint is lodged and received by the Superintendent of The Arc of Essex County 's Stepping Stones School, he/she will convene a meeting with the Anti-Bullying Coordinator (Social Worker), school-based Anti-Bullying Specialist (Assistant Principal), the school-based School Safety Team, the Principal and the person making the complaint, to determine whether the student's disability is the cause of the reported action/behavior. If the outcome of this meeting is that the student's disability caused the action/behavior, the building-based School Safety Team will develop a behavior plan to address the behavior. If the team deems that the action/behavior is not the result of the student's handicapping condition, this policy will be adhered to and all the appropriate steps will be followed. If the team determines this is not the case of harassment, intimidation or bullying, the parents will be notified of this determination.

For more on The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying policy, please contact the Assistant Principal.

REPORTING MISSING AND ABUSED CHILDREN

It is the policy of The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School to report children missing from school without explanation promptly to parents, the sending school district, the police and the State Department of Education. Absences of more than five days or habitual tardiness are reported to your sending school district. If

a child is missing while in school, the teacher shall immediately notify the administration, which will, in turn, notify the local police, the parents and your child's case manager.

The State of New Jersey requires that school personnel report to the local police and Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) suspicions of child abuse and/or neglect. The Stepping Stones Schools policy complies with this responsibility to report suspicions. Any staff member may notify DCP&P and DCP&P will investigate the reported problem. The sending school district will also be notified so that coordinated interventions on behalf of helping the child can begin promptly if found necessary. The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School provides staff with in-service training on the identification of signs of child abuse or neglect, reporting procedures and their responsibilities with regard to reporting.

SUBSTANCE USE/ABUSE

The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School provides a drug-free environment and has adopted policies and procedures to protect the welfare of all students, recognizing that the misuse of substances by students or staff impedes education.

The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School prohibits the use, possession, and/or distribution of drugs, alcohol, tobacco or controlled substances at school on school property or at a school event.

The Stepping Stones School enforces New Jersey's no-smoking code at school, on school premises, on school trips, and at activities. Neither students nor staff may have any smoking paraphernalia in their possession at school, on school trips and after-school activities.

WEAPONS

As per N.J.S.A. 6A:16-5.5, 5.6, 5.7, any object deemed by Stepping Stones School Staff to be a weapon will be immediately confiscated by the administration. Parents, Child Study Teams and, if necessary, the police will be notified, with disciplinary action taken. The Arc of Essex County's Stepping Stones School fosters a safe school environment and will conduct investigations of any physical or verbal threats made to staff or students.