

NEXT STEP GOES REMOTE



INSIDE

STAYING OPEN



Using technology to continue services

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



A look at how staff are adapting to maximize learning

TUTOR OPPORTUNITIES



Announcing tutor training and online tutoring

STAYING OPEN THROUGH THE SHUTDOWN

Our building may be closed, but Next Step has been finding innovative ways to serve students through the COVID-19 shutdown. Students are continuing to study, teachers are continuing to teach, and tutors are starting to tutor again. In the past week one student graduated, six new students enrolled, and more than fifty Next Step college students resumed their classes online.

In the weeks since the shelter-in-place order, we have been on a journey. Like many of you, we have experienced moments of confusion and worry. And, like many of you, we have found our way through to moments of inspiration and determination. Initially, we wondered how we could possibly operate without being together. As you know, Next Step is based on relationships and being physically apart felt like an insurmountable barrier. However, we soon realized that our work is too important to put on hold. Our students are striving for a better future, an endeavor which is all the more critical in these uncertain economic times.

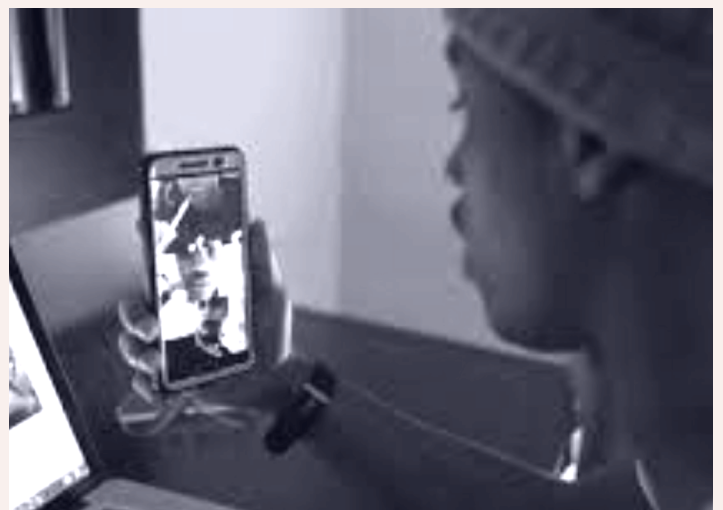
Next Step made the bold decision to move operations to a remote format and keep our staff working. Day-to-day routines look very different now, but we are working hard to facilitate student progress despite the disruptions.

HIGHLIGHTS OF EFFORTS OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS

- Our high school partner, Opportunity Academy, continues to operate, and HiSET / GED students are determined to be ready to take their tests as soon as exams resume.
- Tutoring and group class sessions are happening remotely. Staff have piloted various formats over the last few weeks. Students are connecting with instructors on the phone, via Zoom, over email, and through Face-time (pictured bottom right). With donated computers and tablets, students without technology have been provided with devices to keep them connected. We have learned a few things and are ready to pass on tips to tutors who are wanting to try their hand at remote instruction!
- Staff have been dropping off assignments to students all over the city. Leaving work on someone's porch while they wave and clap from a window has been one of the most rewarding moments during these difficult times.
- Students with transportation are able to pick up and drop off assignment while maintaining social distancing. During scheduled pick up times, students call the front desk to let us know they are waiting behind a socially-distanced drop-off table. Staff can safely answer the door while students are more than 6 feet away, and work is turned in for grading and new assignments given all while maintaining social distancing. A student picking up work this week stated, "You are heroes! I was sure my dreams would be on hold, but this [continuing to study] has turned a nightmare into a blessing for me." Behind our masks, the smiles of staff and students alike are evident during these exchanges!

You are heroes! I was sure my dreams would be on hold, but this has turned a nightmare into a blessing for me

- New students are being enrolled over the phone, and assessments are now available online. Our new enrollees include a homeless 17-year-old who had no access to technology and her former school has no resources to help. With dreams of college this year, she reached out for alternative ways to graduate on time. Another enrollee is a 36-year-old mother of three who has lost her job during this crisis and decided to make the most of confinement by completing her diploma and becoming more employable. She requested assignments that align with her eldest daughter's online school work as she wants to tutor her during this home-study period.
- The Learning Center building is receiving love and care during the break. This has been an opportunity to deeply clean, organize and do small repairs. The center will be sparkling clean and in tip-top shape when you return!



STAFF SPOTLIGHT: KAREN MATZA

Next Step staff have sprung into action finding new ways to continue reaching students during the shelter-in-place order. One prime example is Karen Matza, our reading specialist. Always up for a new challenge, Karen immediately set up a "classroom" in her home and commenced online teaching sessions with her students.

Karen uses *Zoom* to continue phonics, spelling and reading comprehension lessons with her students - some of whom join her in their pajamas! For some students, this was an easy transition. With a strong existing relationship and Karen's guidance they have made the leap to meeting online pretty seamlessly. For others, a lack of technology and computer literacy is a barrier. Karen's solution? She drove to student's homes to drop off tablets and computers and is training students over the phone in how to use them.

Karen embodies the Next Step spirit and nothing will keep her from carrying out our mission.



Karen Matza, Next Step's reading specialist, teaching from home.

ANNOUNCING ONLINE TUTOR OPPORTUNITIES



Share your expertise



Want to share your tutor tips with other volunteers in an online workshop? Fancy hosting an online tutor discussion? We want to hear from you! Let Lisa know and she will work with you to set it up.

Remote Tutoring

Next Step students are eager to keep tutoring remotely. A few volunteers have piloted online tutoring, and people love it! Would you like to try? Email Peggy or Lisa to let us know you are interested and aim to attend our online training *Tips and Ideas for Tutoring Remotely* (see below).

Online Tutor Training

Stay connected and keep your tutoring skills fresh by attending one (or all) of our new online tutor workshops:

- *Tips and Ideas for Tutoring Remotely*

Wednesday, April 15th at 11:30 - 12:15 with Lisa

- *Establishing a Teaching Focus and Avoiding Overload*

Wednesday April 22nd at 11:30 - 12:00 with Karen

We will email out Zoom links to these workshops with more to come in the future!