

STEMCivics Student Manual and Code of Conduct

Purpose of this Manual

Welcome to STEMCivics. We are delighted that you are part of our family. We believe people rise to expectations. We have great expectations for you, and we will do everything possible to ensure your experiences at STEMCivics will be rewarding.

The purpose of this manual is to give an overview of our expectations. This manual is not an all-inclusive set of rules. This manual will be amended from time-to-time, and we will inform you of amendments. We have every desire for you to be successful.

STEMCivics's Mission

The mission of STEMCivics is to use STEM as a motivator to inspire academic success, civic engagement, and ensure students are ready for college and careers.

Everyone plays a role in achieving this mission. STEMCivics places the highest value on honesty and integrity. We recognize that no one is perfect, we all make mistakes, yet it's how we learn from our mistakes that helps us grow. STEMCivics believes that the truth is a very strong shield, and by always be honest in your words and actions, you will enhance your opportunities for success here and beyond.

Culture

Three words describe the culture of STEMCivics: caring, collaborating, and community.

STEMCivics believes students and staff members perform at their best when they feel nurtured, when they have the opportunity to continually develop academically, socially, emotionally, professionally, and athletically. Thus, the environment at STEMCivics is one in which people demonstrate genuine care for each other, supporting one another, as we all move to the next level in everything we do. Culture can't be mandated; it can be only modeled. We expect everyone to be models.

STEMCivics believes the power of many is greater than the power of one. Collaboration is embedded in the project- and career-based learning activities at STEMCivics. Students and staff members will collaborate with students and staff from other schools, as well as will learn from mentors and volunteers from our friends and partner organizations.

STEMCivics believes citizens have a responsibility to enhance the lives of members of its community on the local, level, national, and global levels. Many projects at STEMCivics are designed to benefit Trenton and will be easily replicated to benefit other communities. Further, STEMCivics looks forward to participating in projects in developing countries, as students and staff members travel abroad in life-shaping activities.

ACADEMICS Philosophy

STEMCivics stresses science, technology, engineering, and math. There are no electives. Everyone takes the same program. We believe our curriculum will prepare students for success in STEM and non-STEM fields. We aim to enhance students' critical thinking and life-long learning skills, and believe STEM provides a strong foundation for such.

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Graduation Requirements

Science	20 credits including at least five credits in laboratory biology/life science; an additional laboratory/inquiry-based science course including chemistry, environmental science, or physics; and a third laboratory/inquiry-based science course
Math	20 credits including algebra I and geometry or the content equivalent* and a third year of math that builds on the concepts and skills of algebra and geometry and prepares students for college and 21st century careers
Engineering	20 credits
English	20 credits aligned to grade nine through 12 standards
PE / Health	3 ¼ credits in health, safety, and physical education during each year of enrollment, distributed as 150 minutes per week, as required by N.J.S.A. 18A:35-5,7,8
Visual / Performing Arts	5 credits
Social Studies	15 credits including satisfaction of N.J.S.A. 18A:35-1 and 2; five credits in world history; and the integration of civics, economics, geography and global content in all course offerings
Language	15 credits or student demonstration of proficiency
Financial, Economic, Business, and Entrepreneurial Literacy	2.5 credits
21st Century Life and Careers or Career Technical Education	5 credits

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Technology Literacy	Consistent with the Core Curriculum Content Standards, integrated throughout the curriculum
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* 150 hours of civic engagement activities

* 137.5 credits are required for graduation

B. Student Course Load and Sectioning.

The Program of Studies is outlined on our Web site. Every student takes a full set of courses.

Grading System

Major Assessments 40%,
Minor Assessments 30%,
Participation 20%,
Homework 10%

The grading system is an easily recognizable system: A thru F, with (+/-), correlated to a 100 point scale. When classes begin in the fall, each faculty member will distribute a course assessment guideline to students, clearly stating how student work is to be evaluated. This grading system still allows teachers to incorporate nonquantifiable factors into this final evaluation, including a student's overall synthesis of course material, contributions to the class, effectiveness in meeting deadlines, and consistency of effort.

A	93-100	Superior
A-	90-92	Excellent
B+	87-89	Exceeds course expectations
B	83-86	Very Good
B-	80-82	Fine Quality
C+	77-79	Good
C	73-76	Satisfactory
C-	70-72	Adequate
D	65-69	Minimally acceptable
F	0-59	Failing No credit

Incomplete Grade

An "incomplete" (I) grade indicates that the student owes the teacher some work. The student will receive a written comment, indicating an agreed-upon deadline for completing the work. The student must meet the deadline in order to receive a grade and credit for the course.

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Promotion and Retention

Students must acquire thirty (30) credits annually to move to the next grade. All courses shall follow the sequence outlined in the STEMCivics Program of Studies above.

STEMCivics believes the collaboration of school, parents, and students can identify a pathway for student success. By having ongoing communication, we can build on student strengths, keep students on the path to graduation, and identify issues that might inhibit such. We will seek to work in a proactive manner, communicating with parents and students, identifying enrichment opportunities and community resources that will meet students' needs to ensure they can successfully complete the program.

A minimum grade of D is required for credit.

Parents and students shall be notified in writing, each quarter, if the student is not passing a specific subject. If a student's academic performance indicates that he/she may not meet the required proficiency standards to successfully complete the course:

- The teacher will schedule a conference with the student and parent
- Factors affecting achievement will be reviewed
- An improvement plan will be developed
- The head of school will be notified
- Continual monitoring of performance and feedback to parents will be conducted

If by ten days before the end of the academic year, achievement has not reached the level for a student to acquire the thirty (30) credits for promotion, the parent will be notified in writing and a plan designed for students to make-up the credit by:

- Online coursework
- Summer school
- Independent study

Participation

To represent the school in any extracurricular activity (elected office, athletic team, play, etc.) a student must meet satisfactory standards of scholarship and citizenship. Each case in question will be decided individually by the administration and, when appropriate, in conference with the teachers, athletic coaches and advisors concerned. A student who is on academic probation may not run for elected office. For students to participate in schoolsponsored trips they must have all academic work up to date. No student may be barred from any regularly scheduled physical education activity for academic reasons without the approval of the administration.

Medical Leave/Incomplete

Extended absence due to illness or other medical conditions will result in a conference that will include the student's teachers and advisor. At that time, it will be determined whether a medical incomplete should be given. The head of school, in consultation with the faculty, will investigate ways for making up the credit.

Leave of Absence

The parents of a student considering a leave of absence for medical or other reasons, or wishing to participate in an outside program requiring an extended time away from STEMCivics, should contact the head of school in a timely manner and follow-up with a formal written request. The head of school will review the request on an individual basis.

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Unique Opportunities

STEMCivics has attracted an outstanding and diverse group of friends who are eager to support the school in its mission, thus providing unique opportunities for students. The group includes:

- government agencies on the national and state levels (the United States Geological Society and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection)
- the Liberty Science Center
- institutions within Princeton University (the PACE Center for Civic Engagement, and the Community-Based Learning Initiative)
- We Care Solar, an organization that orchestrates building solar-powered suitcases and their deployment to medical facilities in developing countries that do not have reliable electricity
- Scistarters and its sister group, Science Cheerleaders

Civics

In June 2012, the founder met with Rich Coley of ETS, co-author of the then just-published landmark study *Fault Lines in Our Democracy*, which identified a clear delineation of the profiles of voters and non-voters. In a sense, one group of citizens, those who vote, make decisions through the ballot box for another group of citizens -- those who don't vote.

The study concluded that voters are educated citizens and are civically engaged in various ways: volunteering in a

- non-profit organization or government agency
- civic or political organization
- education- or health-related organization

As the founder believes education and civic engagement are the bedrock of society, he decided to incorporate the relevant recommendations of the study into the school's program.

STEMCivics students will be contributing members of society through their volunteer work in these organizations while in high school. Students will develop throughout their adolescent years into adults who are active participants in the democratic process.

Missions:

STEMCivics students will have the opportunity to travel to other countries to participate in this unique experience. Selection is based on GPA and discipline records. The head of school may make exceptions.

College Counseling

STEMCivics expects every student to graduate and pursue further study in college, a trade school, or the military. The STEMCivics experience is targeted at ensuring students are ready to succeed in college and careers. Toward ensuring such, STEMCivics will provide students with a comprehensive four-year college guidance program that

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works closely with students and their parents, guiding them through the intricacies of the college admission process.

STEMCivics recognizes the importance of assisting students in finding the right match. Just as every two people are not right for each other as friends, though each person may be a terrific person, every student and every college are not right for each other, though each might also be terrific. The key is finding the right one for each student. As STEMCivics counselors will not only know each student, but will understand each student as well, they will play an integral role in the application process.

College guidance will include meetings with each student and family to develop a list of colleges to match individual talents with the unique resources of colleges and universities. In addition, throughout the year, STEMCivics hosts formal information programs as well as informal gatherings in an effort to keep families well-informed about the college admission process.

Each grade has its own focus relevant to preparing for college. STEMCivics will start working with students and parents from the ninth grade forward.

The Dress Code

Students must wear STEMCivics attire, which is:

A STEMCivics-sanctioned shirt

Pants: black or khaki, worn at the waist level; no rips permitted where skin shows through; no jeans permitted

For the freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, we are returning to our original dress code for tops: the outer layer MUST show the STEMCivics logo (no personal sweatshirts or jackets in the building). Seniors may wear their personal sweatshirt or jacket in the halls as in the past (senior privilege).

Skirt or Shorts: Black or khaki, hem exceeds the fingertips when hands at the sides (no rips permitted); no jeans permitted

Footwear: Classes of '22, '24, '25: black or predominantly black shoes or sneakers

Classes of '18, '19, '20: any colored shoes or sneakers (no sliders, sandals, flip flops, etc.)

STEMCivics athletic attire for physical education

STEMCivics clothing is sold through Bits N Pieces in Trenton, located at 4 N. Broad Street. The phone number is 609-392-6500.

Lockers and Valuables

We strongly encourage students not to bring valuables (jewelry, money, electronic equipment, etc.) to school; STEMCivics is not responsible for any valuables lost or taken from a student at school. In order to provide a place to store school and personal items, we assign a locker to each student. Bookbags, backpacks, calculators and other personal items should be put in lockers and locked. Students are to respect the privacy of another student's locker and not go into it without the permission of that student.

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Computers and Acceptable Use

The 1:1 environment at STEMCivics will provide a Chromebook or other primary learning device.

ACCEPTABLE USE OF THE INTERNET

Purpose

To support its commitment to providing avenues of access to the universe of information available, the school's system of electronic communication shall include access to the Internet for students and staff.

Limitation of Liability

The Internet constitutes an unregulated collection of resources that changes constantly, so it is not possible to totally predict or control the resources that users may locate. The board cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information or the appropriateness of materials that a user may encounter. Furthermore, the board shall not be responsible for any damage users may suffer, including but not limited to, loss of data or interruptions of service. Nor shall the board be responsible for financial obligations arising through the unauthorized use of the system.

Rights and Responsibilities

The computer system is the property of the school, and all computer software and hardware belong to it. Therefore, the school retains the right to monitor all access to and use of the Internet.

Access to the System

This acceptable use policy shall govern all use of the system.

World Wide Web

All students and employees of the board shall have access to the Web through the school's networked or standalone computers. To deny a child access, parents/ guardians must notify the building principal in writing.

Classroom E-mail Accounts

Students shall be granted e-mail access through classroom accounts only. To deny a child access to a classroom account, parents/guardians must notify the building principal in writing.

Individual E-mail Accounts for Students

Students will have individual STEMCivics accounts.

Acceptable Use

Student Safety Practices

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Students shall not post personal contact information about themselves or others. Nor shall students engage in any kind of personal contact with individuals they meet online. Attempts at contact from such individuals shall be reported immediately to the staff person monitoring that child's access to the Internet. Personal contact information includes but is not limited to names, home/school/work addresses, telephone numbers, or personal photographs.

Prohibited Activities

Users shall not attempt to gain unauthorized access (hacking) to the school system or to any other computer system through the school system, nor shall they go beyond their authorized access. This includes attempting to log in through another individual's account or accessing another's files.

Users shall not deliberately attempt to disrupt the school's computer system performance or destroy data by spreading computer viruses, worms, "Trojan Horses," trap door program codes or any similar product that can damage computer systems, firewalls, servers or network systems.

Users shall not use the school system to engage in illegal activities.

Users shall not access material that is profane or obscene, that advocates illegal acts, or that advocates violence or hate. Inadvertent access to such material should be reported immediately to the supervising staff person.

Users shall not plagiarize material that is available on the Internet. Plagiarism is presenting another's ideas/words as one's own.

Users shall not infringe on copyrighted material and shall follow all dictates of copyright law and the applicable policies of the school.

Prohibited Language

Prohibited language applies to public messages, private messages, and material posted on web pages.

Users shall not send or receive messages that contain obscene, profane, lewd, vulgar, rude, inflammatory, or threatening language.

Users shall not use the system to spread messages that can reasonably be interpreted as harassing, discriminatory or defamatory.

System Security

Users are responsible for their accounts and should take all reasonable precautions to prevent unauthorized access to them. In no case should a user provide his/her password to another individual.

Users shall immediately notify the supervising staff person or data processing department if they detect a possible security problem. Users shall not access the system solely for the purpose of searching for security problems.

Users shall not install or download software or other applications without permission of the supervising staff person.

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Users shall follow all school virus protection procedures when installing or downloading approved software.

System Limits

Users shall access the system only for educational, professional or career development activities. This applies to discussion group mail lists, instant message services and participation in Internet "chat room" conversations.

Users shall check e-mail frequently and delete messages promptly.

Privacy Rights

Users shall respect the privacy of messages that they receive and refrain from reposting messages without the approval of the sender.

Users shall not publish private information about another individual.

School Furnished Electronic Devices

The school may furnish students electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, notebooks, cellular telephones, or other electronic devices. Users are hereby given notice that the electronic device may record or collect information on the student's activity or the student's use of the device if the electronic device is equipped with a camera, global positioning system, or other feature capable of recording or collecting information on the student's activity or use of the device.

Discipline philosophy

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The discipline philosophy is based on a three-fold concept: (1) identifying and addressing the cause of the misconduct (2) sanctioning the misconduct, demonstrating clear and consistent consequences and holding students accountable for their actions, and (3) learning from the experience so that students' conduct is appropriate going forward.

STEMCivics believes eliminating inappropriate behavior involves identifying the causes of the misbehavior. Embedded in the culture of caring, collaborating, and community is the care for each other, and this entails understanding students. STEMCivics will maximize its personnel resources, using everyone's knowledge about students who misbehavior, to get to the root of the problem.

We believe all students have the right to attend school in a safe and secure setting.

Suspension/Expulsion

Any pupil who is guilty of continued and willful disobedience, or of open defiance of the authority of any teacher or person having authority over him, or of the habitual use of profanity or of obscene language, or who shall cut, deface or otherwise injure any school property, shall be liable to punishment and to suspension or expulsion from school.

Conduct which shall constitute good cause for suspension or expulsion of a pupil guilty of such conduct shall include, but not be limited to, any of the following:

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- Continued and willful disobedience;
- Open defiance of the authority of any teacher or person, having authority over him;
- Conduct of such character as to constitute a continuing danger to the physical well-being of other pupils;
- Physical assault upon another pupil;
- Taking, or attempting to take, personal property or money from another pupil, or from his presence, by means of force or fear;
- Willfully causing, or attempting to cause, substantial damage to school property;
- Participation in an unauthorized occupancy by any group of pupils or others of any part of any school or other building owned by any school district, and failure to leave such school or other facility promptly after having been directed to do so by the principal or other person then in charge of such building or facility;
- Incitement which is intended to and does result in unauthorized occupation by any group of pupils or others of any part of a school or other facility owned by any school district;
- Incitement which is intended to and does result in truancy by other pupils;
- Knowing possession or knowing consumption without legal authority of alcoholic beverages or controlled dangerous substances on school premises, or being under the influence of intoxicating liquor or controlled dangerous substances while on school premises; and
- Harassment, intimidation, or bullying.

Our HIB policy and contact information for the coordinator are on our Web site's Home Page and sent to parents via e-mail. In exacting HIB sanctions, STEM Civics takes an especially dim view of situations where *a real or perceived power imbalance exists* between the parties, and will dispense severe penalties in these instances and in instances where a third party or others exacerbate an existing situation.

Attendance

Students attend 90% of the time to receive credit for the course. As there are 180 days in the school year, students must be present in class at least 162 days (said differently, students absent more than 18 days risk losing credit for the course).

Questioning Students

In order to protect students' rights during the time they are under school control, the head of school shall interview every person who wishes to question a student on school property during the school day.

Law Enforcement Officers

- A. If a law enforcement officer has an arrest warrant, the head of school shall ensure that all procedural safeguards as prescribed by law are observed. No student shall be taken from the school without the knowledge of the head of school. The head of school shall make every reasonable effort to notify parents/guardians. The lead person shall be informed whenever such apprehensions take place.
- B. If a law enforcement officer has a juvenile complaint or wants to question a student on school property, the head of school shall request that the questioning be delayed if possible until the parents/guardians can be present. If the officer refuses and the head of school is convinced that the situation justifies

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questioning, he must attempt to have the parents/guardians informed immediately and shall remain with the student during the questioning.

- C. If the law enforcement officer is an agent of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P), the agent shall determine whether the presence of a parent/guardian or school employee is appropriate.

Private Persons

If a private person wishes to question a student on school property during the school day, generally parents/guardians shall be notified of the request and give their permission before the head of school will permit the private person to question the student. In cases involving possible harm to another student which might be prevented by early information, the head of school may permit such questioning if the parent/guardian cannot be reached. The head of school shall be present during the questioning.

Student Records

Parents/guardians have the right to review their children's records and make copies of any items. Documents may not be removed from files. We ask that parents/guardians contact us in advance if they choose to review their children's files. In instances that parents/guardians believe material should be expunged from a file, they must contact the head of school.

Leaving Campus for Lunch:

- Students may leave campus only during lunch.

As STEM Civics is responsible for the safety and security of all students, it is critical that students do not leave campus without authorization. Students who violate this rule are subject to severe sanctions, up to and including expulsion.