

# **EDCO Youth Alternative Program**

## **Student Handbook**

## **Philosophy**

The EDCO Youth Alternative is a small education program devoted to working individually with students to help them grow and meet their goals in life. EDCO Youth Alternative staff believes that given the right setting and enough time, students can learn and change. In order to realize this belief, the EDCO staff works to provide an environment, which stimulates:

- Respect for one's self and others
- Honesty and open communication
- Personal responsibility for one's actions and progress
- Non-violent and thoughtful resolution of difficulties
- Tolerance for individual differences
- Value for academic skills
- Development of problem-solving and long-term planning skills

These are high ideals, which do not occur spontaneously. The EDCO staff uses the following strategies to accomplish these ideals:

- Establishing high and realistic expectations for achievement
- Confronting all issues immediately as they arise
- Providing students with professional counseling
- Using the help of parents and outside agencies
- Accurately and honestly describing and discussing the consequences of student's actions and goals
- Respecting students and expecting respect in return
- Enforcing rules in a fair and flexible way

The EDCO Youth Alternative has a tradition of caring and respecting its students. Students are encouraged to grow intellectually, emotionally, and socially. All members of the EDCO Youth Alternative community (staff and students) should expect to feel safe and should expect that their person, property, and opinions will be respected. EDCO staff and students are expected to contribute to creating an atmosphere of trust. The EDCO Youth Alternative has been a setting in which respect for rules and common decency is accepted by all staff and students. EDCO staff will always try to strike a balance between the rights of individual students and the general good of all students and staff.

Corporal punishment in public schools is illegal in Massachusetts. Corporal punishment at the EDCO Youth Alternative is prohibited. Staff may not hit, spank or

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physically punish students. Staff members may, however, use reasonable force if necessary to protect students, other persons or themselves from an assault by a student.

The EDCO Youth Alternative does not discriminate based on a student's race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability. All students have equal access to enrollment, courses and activities at the Youth Alternative.

### **GENERAL RULES, EXPECTATIONS AND INFORMATION**

The rules and expectations of the EDCO Youth Alternative are designed to create a safe and comfortable environment in which you learn and progress on your education and career goals. You are encouraged to review these rules carefully and make a commitment to live with them when you enroll in the EDCO Youth Alternative. Please ask questions to ensure that you understand all of the rules and expectations fully.

The EDCO Youth Alternative Student Handbook will define expected behavior by telling you what rules exist; by encouraging you to meet those expectations by following the rules; and by describing steps that will be taken if you break the rules.

#### **RESPECT FOR STAFF REQUESTS:**

Respect for staff requests is expected from you at all times. If a staff member asks you to leave a classroom---LEAVE and discuss it later. If a staff member doesn't give you permission to leave the classroom---DON'T. This also applies to you in situations outside of the classroom with any staff member. **RESPOND TO STAFF REQUESTS; ASK QUESTIONS OR PRESENT COMPLAINTS LATER!** You may be suspended for not responding to staff requests in these situations.

#### **FIGHTS/THREATS/HOSTILE WORDS/HORSEPLAY:**

Fighting with another EDCO students in and out of school will result in your termination from the Youth Alternative. Hostile words between you and other EDCO students will not be tolerated at the Youth Alternative. As a matter of course, you will be isolated from the other student(s) and will have a chance to discuss your concerns with a member of the staff. You will be required to resolve your differences (conflict resolution) before returning to class.

Horseplay, which is rough physical play, is inappropriate behavior at the Youth Alternative. This type of behavior may result in temporary suspension.

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### INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE:

Certain language is inappropriate at the Youth Alternative. If you refer to another student or staff member's nationality, race, sex, religion, or sexual orientation with inappropriate language with an apparent intent to offend, you must "process" the incident with the Wedico counselor. Disrespectful language to a staff member may result in suspension.

Non-directed epithets or vulgarity are especially inappropriate in a School-To-Career (STC) setting. Staff may address non-directed epithets or vulgarity with a take-five and patterns of such use will be addressed by a behavior contract.

Respectful language through speech, as well as your T-shirts, buttons, and other items, is expected at all times.

### DRESS POLICY

Students may not wear hats or hoods in classes. Students may not display any gang colors or clothing especially bandanas.

### CLASSROOM RULES:

Teachers may set specific classroom rules individualized to their class and students are expected to adhere to those rules even if it is not a rule in another class. All classroom rules will be posted in the class so that they are visible at all times. Teachers may detain students for up to 1/2 hour after classes for reasons related to their classroom rules.

### WEAPONS:

Weapons are not allowed at the Youth Alternative. A weapon is a firearm, knife, razor blade, club studded belt or bracelet, explosive, mock gun, mace, tear gas or any other dangerous object with no responsible use to students. Possession of a dangerous weapon will result in a temporary suspension and possible termination. Possession of a firearm will result in termination from the Youth Alternative. Weapons confiscated by Youth Alternative staff are sent to the BPS Safety Section.

If there are 'reasonable grounds' for suspecting that a student is violating either the law or the rules for the EDCO Youth Alternative by carrying a weapon, a search of that student by a member of the Youth Alternative staff is justified under a 1985 decision of the United States Supreme Court (New Jersey v. T.L.O.) EDCO Youth Alternative staff will always apply a balancing test between a students' interest in personal privacy and the Youth Alternative's interest in maintaining safety and discipline in the classroom and other areas of the Youth Alternative.

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If there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that you are carrying a weapon and you refuse to allow an EDCO Youth Alternative staff member to search for it, you will be temporarily suspended and may be terminated.

Instruments or objects that may have a responsible use can also be irresponsibly used. Two or more fingered rings, nail clippers, nail files, lighters, laser beam objects, etc. should be kept in pockets or bags. If these items are seen, you will be asked to put them away. If these items are seen again, they will be confiscated by the staff member and returned to you at the end of the day if this is a first-time incident. If items are confiscated a second time, they will only be returned to your parent/guardian.

### **DRUGS AND ALCOHOL:**

Drug dealing at the Youth Alternative will result in termination from the Youth Alternative. Possession of drug paraphernalia used in drug sales and/or distribution such as cigars/blunts, scales, baggies, etc. will result in suspension and an investigation.

Drugs and alcohol are not allowed at the Youth Alternative. If you are caught or suspected of using drugs or alcohol you will be: (a) sent home; (b) your parents/guardians will be contacted; and (c) you will receive a Drug/Alcohol Warning. You are encouraged to address issues of drug/alcohol use to avoid a repeat of this situation. If you are caught or suspected of using drugs/alcohol again, you will be temporarily suspended and referred to a drug/alcohol counselor if you wish to remain enrolled at the Youth Alternative.

Possession of drug paraphernalia (pipes/cigars [blunts]/papers/roach clips, etc.) used in getting “high” with drugs or alcohol will result in a Drug/Alcohol Warning. The item(s) will be confiscated and only returned to your parent/guardian.

### **SMOKING:**

Smoking and the use of tobacco in school is against the law in Massachusetts. You may not smoke at the Youth Alternative, in the building, nor on field trips or going to the gym. Cigarettes etc. must be kept out of sight. Violation of the smoking rule will result in a “smoking” warning. A second smoking warning will result in a telephone call to your parent/guardian. A third smoking warning will result in a parental meeting after which a student contract for your improved performance will be developed. You will be temporarily suspended pending the parent meeting.

Cigarettes are not to be lighted in the building as you are leaving it. Violators of this expectation will have special dismissal arrangements.

### **VANDALISM AND GRAFFITI:**

Vandalism will result in immediate temporary suspension and possible termination from the Youth Alternative. In certain instances you will be given the opportunity to repair

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the damage that you have caused and thereby you will be permitted to remain at the Youth Alternative.

Graffiti is not permitted at the Youth Alternative. If you deface Youth Alternative property or building property, you must at a minimum clean your markings. You risk suspension or termination for defacing EDCO's premises, the elevator or building.

### **STEALING:**

Stealing in school will result in your immediate suspension and possible termination from the Youth Alternative.

### **SELLING:**

Selling items of any kind, without the expressed approval of the director is prohibited at the Youth Alternative. The director will clearly define any conditions for selling items.

### **BEEPERS, CELLULAR PHONES, BOOM BOXES, RADIOS, CD AND TAPE PLAYERS:**

Beepers and cellular phones are often a distraction to students and staff. If you bring a beeper or cell phone, walkie-talkie or similar device to school, you must check it upon arrival at the front desk with an EDCO or Wediko staff member. It/they will be secured during the school day and returned at its conclusion.

Radio, CD player, and tape player etc. use with headphones is permitted at the Youth Alternative before classes begin, at breaks and after the end of your classes/commitments for the day. Improper use will result in a contact that will be similar to the rule regarding cell phones. Boom Boxes must be turned off upon entering the building and stored in the Program Director's office. Their use is not permitted at EDCO.

Radios, CD players, tape players etc. must be kept out of sight. If you do not keep them out of sight, you will be required to check the item(s) at the front desk.

### **TELEPHONES:**

Telephones are for business use only. To make a telephone call you must have the Program Director approve the call and enter the call in the telephone log. Telephone calls should be made during breaks. If you must use a telephone during class, you must get permission for the call in advance. In coming telephone calls to students are permitted only in emergency situations. Telephone books, not 411 are not to be used to find telephone numbers.

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### **PERSONAL PROPERTY:**

Your *personal property* is your responsibility. If you choose to leave your coat or other belongings in classrooms, offices, etc., you do so at your own risk. The EDCO Youth Alternative is not responsible for personal items left in classrooms, offices or hallways.

### **SCHOOL CALENDAR:**

The EDCO Youth Alternative follows the 180 school day requirement established by the State of Massachusetts. EDCO follows the Boston Public School schedule. If you have any questions about scheduled school days consult the School Coordinator or Program Director.

### **PROGRAM/SCHOOL HOURS:**

The EDCO Youth Alternative is a full-time program with classes from 8:15 to 12:15. This time allows for a 5 period schedule with 45 minutes for each class. Your school day will be described on your schedule of classes, which will be given to you during your orientation session. You may be required to remain at EDCO after 12:15 (1) to complete STC competencies including typing, (2) for Opportunity to Succeed (OTS), (3) for MCAS preparation, (4) for Tutoring, (5) for detention, or (6) to meet with the PIC counselor or other EDCO staff. As part of EDCO's full-time program, students after classes are expected to be involved in a *productive activity* such as work (above the table), sports, youth development activities, or one of the above after class EDCO activities.

### **INCLEMENT WEATHER:**

EDCO Youth Alternative classes will be canceled when the Boston Public Schools' high schools close for inclement weather. Please listen to the radio or watch early morning TV news reports for the listing of public schools that are closed because of inclement weather. If there is a delayed start to school for Boston Public Schools then EDCO will start school at 9:00 a.m.

### **ELEVATOR**

Mature and appropriate behavior is required on the elevator. If it is not kept clean individual students or all students may be prohibited from using it.

### **BATHROOM FACILITIES:**

You are expected to use bathrooms during your breaks or with the teacher's permission during class time. You may not smoke in them.

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### **FIRE DRILL:**

During a fire drill listen to the directions given by staff members and file out of the classroom in a quiet and orderly manner. Once out of the building, students should assemble in the parking lot area behind 650 Beacon Street where teachers and other staff members will take attendance.

### **LOITERING:**

Loitering (standing or hanging around) is not permitted directly in front of the building, in the lobby, or in the stairwell. Once school has started, you must come upstairs. You should be quiet when entering and leaving the building. Please keep the stairwell clean. Students are not permitted to stand or smoke in the doorway entrance to the building even if it is raining outside etc.

### **AREAS THAT ARE OF-LIMITS TO STUDENTS:**

The following areas are off-limits to you: the counseling room (except when making an authorized telephone call), the director's office, the school coordinator's office, and any items in those areas.

### **VISITORS:**

Visitors are not allowed at the Youth Alternative. [If you bring a friend to the Youth Alternative who is interested in enrolling in the program, your friend will be permitted to make an appointment and then your friend must leave the premises.]

### **EATING AND DRINKING IN CLASS:**

Eating and drinking in class is a privilege maintained by respecting teachers' standards of cleanliness and need for orderliness. Students may put drinks and food in the refrigerators before 8:15 and get them at break time or after school. The room is off limits at all other times.

### **LEAVING CLASS:**

Leaving class is allowed only with the teacher's permission. If you leave class frequently, your teacher will address that behavior with you.

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### BREAK TIME BEHAVIOR:

All rules and expectations of the EDCO Youth Alternative are in effect during break time and at all EDCO activities outside of 650 Beacon Street.

### ATTENDANCE:

Boston Public School attendance rules apply at EDCO. Regular attendance is required to pass your classes. You should be absent only for personal illness or hospitalization, family emergencies, court appearances etc. Your parent/guardian should call EDCO (617-262-9562) if you will be absent. You must bring a note from your parent/guardian, doctor, etc. which includes the dates) of your absence(s), an explanation of the reason for your absence(s) and a telephone number to verify the note. EDCO staff verifies all excuses. Make sure that when you arrive at school you are noticed by the attendance taker. You are expected to arrive on time for your first period class. Your parent/guardian will be notified if you are absent.

Some parents/guardians think that any absence will be excused as long as the parent sends a note. **This is not true.** Here are a few examples of **unexcused absences** even if the parent sends a note:

- (1) Student needed to baby-sit.
- (2) Repetitive and chronic absence due to illness or injury; In these cases, the parent must submit a letter from a health care provider verifying that the student was too sick or injured to go to school.
- (3) Extension of a religious or cultural holiday beyond the designated days or days on the school calendar
- (4) Family vacation.
- (5) Trip(s) to the visit distant relatives.

### Attendance Definitions:

If you arrive by 8:15 you will be marked Present (**P**).

If you arrive between 8:16 and 8:30 you will be marked Tardy (**T**).

If you arrive between 8:31 and 9:00 you will be marked absent but with a Technical Absence (**TA**). See Buy-Back policy below. You are encouraged to remain at the Youth Alternative and attend classes. If you choose to leave your parent/guardian will be informed.

If you choose to stay, you may not later choose to leave early. When you choose to stay, you must adhere to all school rules.

If you arrive at 9:01 or later you will be marked absent (**A**) and not permitted to stay for the day. The program director makes any *extremely rare* exceptions to this rule. If an exception is made it will be counted as a **TA**.

EYA uses Verizon time at **617-637-1234**.

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### BUY-BACK POLICY:

The EYA Buy-Back Policy is an attendance incentive policy to encourage and reward good attendance. This policy enables you to buy-back or cancel out technical absences during a quarter. Every **two P's** (days marked present) buy-back **one TA** (days marked technical absent). There is no limit to the number of technical absences you may buy-back. **TA's** that are *bought back* are counted as \_\_\_\_\_ . If **TA's** are not *bought back* they are counted as unexcused absences.

“Constructively present (CP)” is a designation used for students who are absent from school for school related business (e.g. physical examination for a job, signing out of a home school, etc.) The director grants approval for a "CP". All visits to your home school must be approved in advance by the program director.

### BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS “NC” POLICY

1. Any student with more than three unexcused absences in a marking term will receive a grade of "NC" (no credit) for the term if the student otherwise earned a passing grade. If the student has not earned a passing grade, s/he will receive an "F" for the term.
2. If a student receives an "NC" for one or more marking terms, but does not exceed twelve unexcused absences for the year, the "NC" will be converted at the end of the school year to the grade the student would have otherwise received.
3. Final, End-of-Year Grades: A student cannot get an NC for the final, end-of-year grade.
  1. If the student has more than twelve unexcused absences for the year but has otherwise passed the course for the year, s/he may earn credit for the course, and a passing grade, by passing the final exam for the course at the end of the year.
  2. If the student has more than twelve unexcused absences for the year and has otherwise failed the course, s/he must receive an "F" for the **year**.

### ATTENDANCE AND BPS SUMMER SCHOOL:

Students who have more than forty absences during the school year are not eligible to take BPS summer school courses. Other eligibility rules must be met too.

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### EARLY DISMISSAL:

Early dismissal is granted by the program director in special circumstances. You must be present at the Youth Alternative for three (3) full 45-minute classes in order to be marked present for that day. You are expected to make-up the work that you miss.

### CUT-OUT:

The Youth Alternative premises are on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of 650 Beacon Street. You may not leave the EYA premises for any part of the class day without authorized permission. Students may not leave the building to put money in parking meters. Between the end of classes (12:15) and the start of after class activities (12:30) students may leave the building. **It is a cutout** if students are scheduled for after class activities and do not return.

A written warning is given the first time you cut-out. The second time you cut-out you will be suspended and a meeting with your parent/guardian must occur to review your interest in remaining in the EDCO program.

### TAKE-FIVE:

A take-five is when a teacher tells you to leave the room for 5 minutes of quiet, reflective time. If your overall behavior is inappropriate i.e. *not okay* (for example, if you are talkative, sleepy, or in some other way distracting to your teacher or other students) you will be given a warning. The teacher will say, ***“That behavior’s not okay.”*** The teacher will then tell you what behavior is expected of you. If your overall behavior continues to be inappropriate, i.e. *not okay*, you will be given a take-five.

When a teacher gives you a take-five, you must leave the class quietly, quickly, and respectfully. If you are unable to do so, your behavior will result in your being kicked out of class for the rest of the period (see kick-out policy below). In some limited circumstances, a staff member may decide that a student needs to leave the room immediately without first being given a warning. [A take-five is intended to help you refocus so you can return to class and your work.]

Teachers can give one of two different kinds of take-fives: a ***teacher take-five*** or a ***counselor take-five***.

In a ***teacher take five***, the teacher feels the student only needs 5 minutes out of class to refocus, wake-up, settle down, etc. The teacher does not feel there are any issues to discuss and that the student will be able to use the time effectively on their own and then return to class without incident. In such situations, the teacher escorts the student to a chair directly outside of the classroom. At the end of 5 minutes, the teacher will come to escort the student back to the classroom. The student doesn’t need to check in with a counselor (unless the student is disruptive while sitting for the take-five).

In a ***counselor take-five***, the teacher feels the student needs to check in with a counselor to discuss the problem the student is having in acting appropriately in class. In such situations, the teacher will give the student a take-five card. The student is expected to bring the take-five card to the front desk and give it to the staff member there. You will then be told where to sit. A take-five requires that you sit quietly for 5 consecutive minutes. If you are talkative or out of your assigned seat, your 5 minutes will not begin until you are

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seated quietly. Being able to sit quietly for 5 minutes shows that you are ready and able to refocus in your class. When you have been able to sit quietly for 5 consecutive minutes, a staff member (usually a counselor) will check-in with you about why you were given a take-five and what you can do to participate in class successfully and **avoid a kick-out**. The staff member will decide when you may return to class and will then walk you back to your classroom.

### KICK-OUT:

A kick-out is when the teacher tells you to leave the class for the remainder of the period. As with a time-out, you must respond to the teacher's direction by leaving the room quietly, quickly, and respectfully. There are three situations in which you will be kicked-out of class:

- 1) When you are given a time-out and you do not leave the class quietly, quickly, and respectfully.
- 2) When you have already been given a time-out in the period and your behavior continues to be not okay upon your return. You will not be given a second warning. Such behavior demonstrates that you are unable to participate appropriately in class.
- 3) When your behavior is judged by the teacher to be verbally or physically aggressive.

When your teacher kicks you out you must report to the front desk and let the staff member there know that you have been kicked-out. You will then be told where to sit. The staff member will check-in with your teacher and you about the events that led to your kick-out.

You may be required to meet with your teacher before you may return to class. If you miss two classes because you miss a required meeting, the Director may decide to suspend you until you attend the required meeting, the Director may decide to suspend you until you attend the required meeting.

### SUSPENSION:

Suspension means that you are sent home and not permitted to resume normal school activities for a period of time (up to ten days). Any student faced with suspension will be given a hearing from the Program Director, during which the student will be informed of the reason for the hearing and will be given the opportunity to present his or her side of the story. Your parent or guardian will be contacted.

If you are suspended, the length of the suspension will be based on the amount of disruption that was caused by your actions, the type of infraction of the rules or expectations, and the number of previous offenses, etc. All classroom work from the time that you are out of the program must be made up.

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### **TERMINATION:**

Termination means that your enrollment at the EDCO Youth Alternative will come to an end. You will be encouraged to return to your home high school and enroll in courses there or to seek enrollment in another alternative program to earn a high school diploma or a GED certificate.

Any student faced with termination has the right: (a) to written notice of the charges; (b) to a formal hearing (c) to be represented by lawyer or advocate (at the student's expense); d) to adequate time to prepare for the hearing; (e) to access documented evidence before the hearing; (f) the right to question witnesses; and (g) to a reasonably prompt, written decision including specific grounds for the decision.

You may be suspended and in some incidents terminated from the EDCO Youth Alternative for the following infractions and other infractions described in this handbook:

- Not complying with staff directives
- Disrespectful language to a staff member
- Grievous horseplay
- Carrying a weapon
- Drug dealing
- Possessing and/or using drugs or alcohol
- Fighting, threats, intimidation
- Stealing
- Vandalism
- Smoking in school (on the third offense)