

TO: School Committee

FROM: Tim Piwowar, Superintendent

DATE: November 13, 2025

RE: Middle School Pathway Exploration Policy

In spring 2025, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education amended its regulations on vocational education (603 CMR 4.00). As part of the amended regulations, school districts that are members of regional vocational and county agricultural schools are required to develop a policy regarding middle school exploration of educational options.

The requirements of the policy are consistent with our existing practice in Westwood, and so the establishment of this policy does not make any changes; rather it codifies our practices in a manner consistent with the new regulations. The draft policy immediately follows below.

This policy is being presented for a first reading at the November 20 School Committee meeting, and it is my recommendation that the Committee waive a third reading, and move forward with a vote to adopt after the second reading at the December meeting.

I will be happy to answer any questions at our meeting on November 20.

POLICY - MIDDLE SCHOOL PATHWAY EXPLORATION

Policy Overview

The Westwood Public Schools is committed to ensuring that all middle school students and their families are well-informed about the wide range of educational options available to them for high school, including Career and Technical Education (CTE) and vocational programs. In compliance with Massachusetts state regulations (603 CMR 4.00) and guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), this policy outlines how our district provides students with awareness and exposure to CTE and vocational opportunities at local, regional, and agricultural public high schools.

High School Pathway Options

The following CTE schools are available to students based on their residence on their town of residence:

- **For residents of Avon, Braintree, Canton, Dedham, Holbrook, Milton, Norwood, Randolph, Westwood:**

- **Blue Hills Regional Technical School**

- 800 Randolph Street, Canton, MA 02021

CH74 Programs: Automotive Collision Repair & Refinishing, Automotive Technology, Computer Information Systems, Construction Technology, Cosmetology, Criminal Justice, Culinary Arts, Design and Visual Communications, Drafting/CAD, Early Education and Care, Electrical Technology, Electronics, Engineering Technology, Graphic Communications, Health Assisting, HVAC&R, Metal Fabrication and Joining Technologies

- **For residents of Westwood:**

- **Norfolk County Agricultural High School**

- 400 Main Street, Walpole, MA 02081

Agricultural Career Programs: Agricultural Mechanics, Animal Science, Environmental Science, Horticultural (Plant) Science

Middle School Career Exploration

The district's implementation of My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP) directly connects the exploration of CTE schools and programs to a student's broader academic and career goals. MyCAP is a structured process that helps students explore their interests, skills, and values starting in middle school. This self-discovery process guides students as they research high school pathways and make informed decisions about which school environment, whether a

traditional high school or a specialized CTE program or vocational program, that best aligns with their emerging goals.

Collaboration with Member Vocational Schools

All middle schools in the district will actively collaborate with member CTE/vocational schools to inform students about the CTE/vocational opportunities available to them. This collaboration includes:

- **Information Sharing:** Annually middle schools will provide member CTE/vocational schools with the names, addresses, and email addresses of all enrolled sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade students.
- **On-Campus Assemblies:** Each fall, all eighth-grade students will have the opportunity to attend assemblies on-campus at the middle school and hosted by the CTE/vocational school. These events will provide students with information about CTE programs and the application process.
- **School Tours (Blue Hills Showcase Event):** Each fall, interested eighth-grade students will have the opportunity to tour their regional vocational school. Transportation expenses will be covered by the vocational school. These tours will be scheduled during the school day and will be considered an excused absence.

Blue Hills hosts Showcase, a fall event held during school hours to ensure accessibility for all students. Attendees can participate in live, interactive demonstrations and spend 30 minutes exploring up to three of the 17 CTE programs offered at Blue Hills, while also learning about academic offerings. Thurston Middle School partners with Blue Hills to give its students the opportunity to take part in this hands-on experience.

- **Promotion of Events:** We will share information about vocational school Open House and informational events on the district website and through regular communication channels, such as principal newsletters.
- **Online Resources:** By October 15th each year, the district website will publish pertinent information about vocational school options, including links to admission applications, admissions policies, and open house/informational event schedules.
- **Providing Admissions Records to CTE Schools:** Middle schools will provide relevant information to member vocational schools for students who have applied. This may include documentation of student interest, attendance records, and discipline records in accordance with the vocational school's approved admissions policy and DESE guidance.

Thurston Middle School provides Blue Hills Regional Technical School with names, addresses, and email addresses of grade 7 and grade 8 students and families by October 15th of each school year.

Thurston Middle School guidance counselors guide students through the CTE admissions process by helping students complete their online application, and provide Blue Hills with relevant attendance and behavior information to ensure that students earn the additional weights in the upcoming CTE admissions lottery.

Maintenance of Records

Our district middle schools will maintain a record of all on-site presentations, assemblies, and student tours to CTE schools, along with other relevant information about collaboration between the district and member CTE/vocational schools. These records will be made available to DESE upon request.

Thurston Middle School collaborates with Blue Hills by providing them with names, addresses and email addresses of grade 7 and grade 8 students in a worksheet shared via email with admissions@bluehills.org. Thurston Middle School collaborates with Blue Hills by verifying which students will attend Showcase and maintaining a roster of participants.