

Worcester Public Schools

Career Vocational Technical Education (CVTE) Admissions Policy

For Chapter 74 programs at Worcester Technical High School and the Comprehensive High Schools

Revised and Approved October 2024

I. INTRODUCTION

An admission process is necessary for vocational-technical schools where space is a limiting factor. Vocational technical laboratories (shops) are designed and equipped to serve a specific maximum number of students safely. Consequently, a complex of such laboratories lacks both space and flexibility to accommodate all applicants' possible needs and interests. Therefore, when the number of applicants exceeds the student capacity in a given program, a selection process is required to determine which applicants will be offered admission and which applicants will be placed on a waiting list.

On June 22, 2021, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted new regulations for admissions to vocational-technical schools and vocational programs at comprehensive high schools. This policy was developed for the 2022-2023 admissions process to ensure transparency for students, families, and sending districts. The Worcester Public School Committee originally approved the policy on December 16, 2021 and approved a revision on October 6, 2022 and then another revision October, 2024. The policy is in effect for the students applying for admission to enroll from the 2025-2026 school year going forward. The School Committee will review this policy annually; the District will re-submit the policy (including any approved revisions) to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) by October 1.

II. EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Worcester Technical High School (WTHS) and the Chapter 74 programs at WPS comprehensive high schools admit students and make available to them their advantages, privileges, and courses of study without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

Students who lack proficiency in English (who are classified as “English Learners”) and parents of students who lack proficiency in English can request assistance from staff at the middle school they are enrolled in, WTHS or the appropriate comprehensive high school to complete the application process. Online application materials for WTHS and comprehensive programs will be accessible in at least the eight most commonly used languages within the district, and a qualified representative from Worcester Technical High School will assist the applicant in completing the necessary forms and assist in interpreting/translating during the entire application and admission process upon the request of the applicant.

Students with disabilities may voluntarily self-identify to request reasonable accommodations during the entire application and admission process. Information on limited English proficiency and disability disclosed voluntarily by the applicant to receive assistance and accommodations during the application and admission process will not affect their admission to the school.

III. ELIGIBILITY

Any eighth-grade student who is a resident of Worcester or who is currently accepted as a school choice student, can apply for Fall admission to the Career Technical Programs at the comprehensive high schools in Worcester or for admission to Worcester Technical High School. Eligible students will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this Admissions Policy.

Students enrolled in other Vocational-Technical schools can apply for transfer admission during the school year to grades 9-12 in a comparable program at WTHS or a comprehensive high school, provided they expect to be promoted by their current school to the grade they seek to enter. Transfer students will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this Admissions Policy.

Worcester Public Schools (WPS) is a school choice district. However, per the WPS Student Handbook, Chapter 74 programs at comprehensive high schools and Worcester Technical High School do not participate in the School Choice program. All applicants (whether current 8th graders or prospective transfer students) for WPS CVTE programs must reside within the boundaries of the District, or be enrolled as an approved school choice student, at the time their applications are submitted.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

WTHS is a WPS vocational-technical school governed by Chapter 74 of the Massachusetts General Laws. WTHS is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) and is committed to providing quality academic and vocational-technical programs. WPS also administers Chapter 74 CVTE programs within several of its comprehensive high schools. It is the responsibility of the WPS Superintendent of Schools to supervise the administration of the policies and procedures required to admit and enroll applicants in conformity with this Admissions Policy.

WTHS has an Admissions Committee appointed by the Principal. The committee consists of the Administration, Guidance, Special Needs, Vocational-Technical, and Academic Departments. Responsibilities of the Admissions Committee include:

1. Implementation of admissions procedures
2. Processing of applications
3. Acceptance of students according to the procedure and criteria in the admission policy
4. Establishment and maintenance of waiting list(s)

Chapter 74 programs at WPS comprehensive high schools each have their respective admissions committees to carry out similar responsibilities for their admissions processes.

V. RECRUITMENT PROCESS

1. WTHS

- a. WTHS disseminates information about the school through various methods, including but not limited to an annual Open House, various online platforms, school-based marketing, social media, and annual education of middle school counselors.
- b. WTHS will send annual email and social media communication to 8th grade families in their home language along with information on the school/district website describing the admissions process. A yearly Open House will be scheduled to allow prospective students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity to visit all of the school's vocational-technical programs and request to speak with teachers and view a presentation about all offerings. WPS provides a written translation in the district's eight most commonly spoken languages of all Open House materials. The most updated information will be available through the online platforms associated with WTHS and WPS.

2. Comprehensive High School Programs

- a. Each Chapter 74 program at the comprehensive high schools will offer tours or visit middle schools for prospective students who attend WPS middle schools. Informational and recruitment materials will be disseminated through social media, messaging platforms, and school-based marketing efforts.
- b. Each comprehensive high school that houses Chapter 74 programs will host annual Open House opportunities for parents and guardians to learn about each program, meet instructors, and see its facilities and equipment. Open

House materials will be available in at least the eight most commonly spoken languages within WPS.

VI. ADMISSIONS PROCESS

1. Fall Admissions Process for Ninth Grade

Students interested in applying to WTHS or a program at a comprehensive high school for fall admission to the ninth grade must complete an online application. To be eligible to apply, applicants must be Worcester residents, or approved school choice students, who provisionally meet WPS high school academic promotion requirements.

- a. Proportional Allocation of Seats (**WTHS only**)
 - i. Seats at WTHS will be allocated to each WPS middle school in proportion to the share each has of the overall WPS 8th grade fall enrollment.
 - ii. Worcester residents who are not enrolled as WPS students in 8th grade will be counted within the allotment of seats for the district middle school that corresponds to their home address.
- b. Tiered Selection Process (**for all programs**)
 - i. Criteria: All applicants are assigned to one of three tiers based on attendance and discipline/safety criteria (see Table 1 below). The actual selection process will be conducted separately for WTHS and each program at a comprehensive high school (as described in the following sections).

Table 1: Criteria Admissions Selection Tiers

Tier	Attendance	Discipline & Safety
1	No more than 26 (10%) total absences in 7 th and 8 th grade up until the time applications open.	No more than 20 total days of suspension between 7th and 8th grade combined under laws (MGL 37H, 37H 1/2, 37H 3/4) from 7th and 8th grade combined.
2	27-36 total absences in 7 th and 8 th grade up until the time applications open.	21-30 total days of suspension between 7th and 8th grade combined under law (MGL 37H, 37H 1/2, 37H 3/4) from 7th and 8th grade combined.
3	37 or more total absences in 7 th and 8 th grade up until the time applications open.	31 or more total days of suspension between 7th and 8th grade combined under law (MGL 37H, 37H 1/2, 37H 3/4) from 7th and 8th grade combined.

ii. WTHS Admissions Lottery:

1. Parents and caregivers will be notified of the lottery drawing date and time, via district communication tools and posts on the school and district website. This notice will be made at least thirty (30) days in advance of the public admissions lottery.
2. An online lottery will be conducted for applicants from each quadrant middle school. Lottery numbers will be computer generated and then randomly assigned to a slot by middle school using the online platform. Tier 1 students will be assigned first, followed by tier 2 and tier 3 applicants respectively. This process will be verified by a third party that is not a Worcester Public School employee.
3. Applicants who are enrolled in a WPS middle school will be included in that school's lottery regardless of their home school

assignment. Applicants not enrolled in a WPS middle school will be included in the lottery for the designated quadrant middle school that corresponds to their residential address.

4. Students will be accepted or placed on the waiting list for their respective quadrant middle school in the random order their name is drawn based on their tier designation.
5. There may be cases when 8th grade siblings may apply for admission to WTHS from the same quadrant middle school and are assigned to the same tier for the lottery. As the tiered lottery is a random drawing, one sibling may be accepted for a seat allocated to their school while the other sibling(s) might be placed on the waiting list. If this occurs, the parent/guardian may notify the WTHS administration of the circumstance and provide legal documentation of the applicants' sibling status. After a review of the documentation, WTHS may then allocate additional seats to accommodate any sibling(s) who were placed through the lottery on the waiting list. In this case, all siblings must enroll in Worcester Technical High School's Chapter 74 program to maintain their admissions slot. This does not qualify for students assigned to different tiers.

iii. Admissions Selection for Comprehensive High School Programs

1. Parents and caregivers will be notified of the lottery drawing date and time, via district communication tools and posts on the school and district website. This notice will be made at least thirty (30) days in advance of the public admissions lottery.
2. An online lottery will be conducted for applicants from each tier for each Chapter 74 program. Lottery numbers will be computer

generated and then randomly assigned to each applicant using the online platform. Tier 1 students will be assigned first, followed by tier 2 and tier 3 applicants respectively. This process will be verified by a third party that is not a Worcester Public School employee. *Applicants will not be drawn separately by feeder school for the programs at the comprehensive high schools.*

3. Students will be accepted or placed on the waiting list for their respective tier in the random order their name is drawn based on their tier designation.

2. Admissions Process for Tenth, Eleventh, and Twelfth Grade Students for a Chapter 74 CTE program.

- a. Eligibility: Prospective applicants must be currently enrolled in a Chapter 74 Vocational/Technical program or school in order to be eligible, and there must also be open capacity in the relevant program and trade each student has studied at their previous school.
- b. Students interested in applying for admission for the current school year must:
 - i. Contact the Worcester Public Schools Parent Information Center for the necessary paperwork and approval process.
 - ii. The Parent Information Center will communicate to Worcester Technical High School and/or the Comprehensive High School with the appropriate program regarding space in the program and the eligibility of the student. The student must be on grade level and on track for current promotion to the next grade level at the time of transfer request.

- c. For applications to grades 10, 11 & 12 (admission during the school year), the current school year marks in English language arts, social studies, math, and science from the sending school report card/transcript are required.
- d. For applications to grades 10,11 & 12 (admission during the school year), the current school attendance records from the sending school is required.
- e. For applications to grades 10, 11 & 12 (admission during the school year), the current school discipline record is required.

3. Incomplete Applications. If incomplete applications are received, the following procedures will be followed:

- a. The WTHS Admissions Office will notify the sending school Guidance Counselor responsible for submitting the application, that the application is incomplete and will request completion.
- b. The applicant's parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified by the Worcester Technical High School Admission Office in the event the problem is not resolved by the sending school Guidance Counselor.
- c. If after notifying the sending school Guidance Counselor and parent(s)/guardian(s), the application remains incomplete for ten school days, the application will be voided.

4. Home-Schooled Students: Applications from resident students that are enrolled in an approved Home-School program who apply to WTHS and/or a CVTE program at a comprehensive high school will follow the procedures contained in this admission policy and will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this Admission Policy.

5. Application Window: Applications to all CTE programs at the comprehensive high schools and to Worcester Technical High School will open the first day that WPS students return from December break. Applications will close at the end of the final school day prior to the WPS February break. The lottery selection process will occur on the second Wednesday of March for all programs and for WTHS. The results will

be viewable immediately after the process through the online application program.

Results will be posted on the district website the Friday following the lottery selection.

IX. ACCEPTANCE, ENROLLMENT, AND WAITING LIST PROCEDURES

1. **Admissions Offers and Acceptance:** WTHS and comprehensive high school programs will notify parents and caregivers of their students' conditional acceptance via US Postal Service and electronic mail. Parents and caregivers must notify WTHS and/or the comprehensive high school program of their decision to accept or decline the offer of admission within fourteen (14) calendar days from the date on the admissions offer letter. If no response is received after 14 days, WTHS or the comprehensive program will assume the offer has been declined and will proceed to offer that student's space to an applicant from the waiting list.
2. **Enrollment:** In order to enroll at WTHS or a comprehensive high school for the fall, applicants must meet WPS promotion requirements from their sending school for the grade level they wish to enter. Under no circumstances will students be allowed to matriculate without successfully passing their courses in English language arts or the ESL equivalent and mathematics for the school year immediately preceding their enrollment in the CVTE program. Upon receipt of final year-end marks, WTHS and comprehensive programs may withdraw admissions offers for students who do not meet WPS promotion requirements. WTHS or comprehensive program staff will notify admitted students' parents and caregivers of such withdrawal actions by telephone, US Postal Service, and electronic mail. When offers of admission are withdrawn for any reason, students' spaces will be offered to applicants from the appropriate waiting list. Note: completion of summer school would not negate admissions withdrawal as slots may already be filled from the waitlist.
3. **Waiting Lists:** Waiting lists will be established at WTHS and for each program at the comprehensive high schools following the procedures described above (see Section

VI-1-b). Waiting lists will remain active until October 1st of the year following their being established, at which time they will expire.

- a. WTHS will maintain a separate waiting list for each of the six WPS quadrant middle schools. When an opening arises for any reason (e.g., due to a declined or withdrawn offer of admission, or a withdrawal from the school), WTHS staff will offer admission to the next applicant on the waiting list corresponding to the student who created the vacancy. If at any time there are no more applicants on the waiting list for a particular quadrant middle school, the next applicant from the next school's waiting list will be offered admission (based on alphabetical order of feeder school's name). If that student declines, then the next student from the next school will be offered admission, and so on until an applicant accepts admission.
- b. Each Chapter 74 program housed at one of the comprehensive high schools will maintain a waiting list for applicants from all feeder schools. When an opening arises for any reason (e.g., due to a declined or withdrawn offer of admission, or a withdrawal from the school), designated staff from the program offer admission to the next applicant on the waiting list. In the unlikely event that there are no other applicants on the waiting list, the program may recruit from the school's regular enrollment to fill any available seats.

X. VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL PROGRAM PLACEMENT (Only Applicable to WTHS)

All ninth-graders who enroll in WTHS participate in a vocational-technical exploratory program designed to help them learn about their talents and interests relative to a variety of different vocational-technical programs. Students initially explore each vocational program in the first quarter of the school year.

The student's top four (4) choices from the first quarter career exploration program, together with two (2) choices taken from the total available shops are scheduled for the entire

exploratory period (which is composed of Quarter 2 and part of Quarter 3). Students are evaluated and scored (0-100 points) using the standardized Student Evaluation – Exploratory rubric by each shop during each shop exploratory rotation. At the end of this six-shop exploratory, each student selects their program preferences on the shop selection form one through six from the programs they explored. Students are admitted into the shop of their choice based on the grade point total they received. For example, a student with a point total of 100 would be admitted before a student with a point total of 80. If a shop fills, based on the highest point total before a student gets his/her first choice, the Director of Career Vocational Technical Education then moves to the students' second through sixth choice depending upon whether there is an opening in the shop. Again, each student is admitted based upon their overall point total.

If a student's combined point total in all shops does not qualify them to be placed in their second- through sixth- choice shop because the shops were filled by students with higher point totals, the Director of Career Vocational Technical Education will meet with the student and present a list of the shops with openings which the student can explore and ask the student to choose one of them. Again, students selecting shops from among the shops with openings, which the student explored, will be admitted based on their point totals. The process continues until all students are placed. In the event of a tie, a blind lottery will decide the assignment of students to the available seats in a particular shop.

Students who wish to transfer from one shop to another during the school year may request to transfer using a standardized form from their guidance counselor. Transfer requests will be considered subject to the availability of openings in the requested shops, and career plan. Each transfer applicant will be interviewed and counseled individually to determine the appropriateness of the transfer for the particular student.

XI. REVIEW AND APPEALS

Applicants will be placed into tiers prior to the lottery being drawn. Once applicants have been assigned a tier, they may appeal that assignment by first contacting the middle school they are coming from. The middle school designee will review the tier requirements and the student application and will reply to an appeal request within 5 school days.

If after the review, the parent/guardian wishes to appeal the findings of the review, they may do so by sending a written request to the WPS Executive Director's office to appeal the middle school's finding. The Executive Director's office will respond in writing within 5 school days with their decision on the appeal. These appeals must occur more than 1 week prior to the lottery being drawn. Appeals received within one week or after the lottery is drawn will not be considered.