

EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

In recognition of the diversified characteristics and needs of our students and with the keen desire to be responsive to them, the District School Committee will make every effort to protect the dignity of the students as individuals. It also will offer careful consideration and sympathetic understanding of their personal feelings, particularly with reference to their race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, homeless status, national origin, sexual orientation or physical and intellectual differences.

To accomplish this, the Committee and its staff will make every effort to comply with the letter and the spirit of the Massachusetts equal educational opportunities law which prohibits discrimination in public school admissions and programs. The law reads as follows:

No child shall be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to a public school of any town, or in obtaining the advantages, privileges and course of study of such public school on account of race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, homeless status, national origin or sexual orientation.

This will mean that every student will be given equal opportunity in school admission, admissions to courses, course content, guidance, and extracurricular and athletic activities.

All implementing provisions issued by the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in compliance with this law will be followed.

LEGAL REFS.: Title VI, Civil Rights Act of 1964
Title VII, Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972
Executive Order 11246, as amended by E.O. 11375
Title IX, Education Amendments of 1972
M.G.L. 76:5; 76:16 (Chapter 622 of the Acts of 1971)
BESE regulations 603 CMR 26:00
BESE regulations 603 CMR 28.00

CROSS REF.: AC, Nondiscrimination

KEEFE TECHNICAL SCHOOL ADMISSION POLICY
October 2014

I. INTRODUCTION

An admission process is necessary in vocational technical training programs where space is a limiting factor. Vocational technical training programs are designed and equipped to serve a specific maximum number of students safely. Consequently, a complex of such laboratories lacks both the space and flexibility to accommodate the possible needs and/or interests of all applicants. Therefore, a selection process is necessary.

All applicants to grades nine through twelve at Keefe Technical School will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this Admission Policy.

II. EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Keefe Technical School admits students and makes available to them its advantages, privileges and courses of study without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or homelessness.

If there is a student with limited English proficiency, a qualified representative from Keefe Technical School will assist the applicant in completing the necessary forms and assist in interpreting during the entire application and admissions process upon the request of the applicant.

Students with disabilities may voluntarily self-identify for the purpose of requesting reasonable accommodations during the entire application and admission process.

Information on limited English proficiency and disability submitted voluntarily by the applicant, for the purpose of receiving assistance and accommodations during the entire application and admission process, will not affect the applicant's admission to the school.

III. ELIGIBILITY

Any eighth, ninth, tenth or eleventh grade student who is a resident of the Keefe Technical School District (Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, and Natick) who expects to be promoted to the grade they seek to enter by their local district is eligible to apply for fall admission or admission during the school year subject to the availability of openings to Keefe Technical School. Resident students will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this Admissions Policy. Priority for admission is given to Keefe Technical School District residents according to the District Agreement.

Transfer students from other Chapter 74 state-approved programs are eligible to apply for fall admission or admission during the school year to grades 9-12 at Chapter 74 state-approved programs provided they expect to be promoted to the grade they seek to enter by their current school. Transfer students will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this Admission Policy. Out-of-district or nonresident students may apply. They will be evaluated according to the criteria contained in this admission policy and

according to M.G.L. c.74 s.8A (please see the "guidelines for Vocational Technical Education Program Nonresident Student Tuition Process Pursuant to M.G.L.c.74 located at www.doc.mass.edu/ctc/nonres.guidelines"). Priority for admission is given to Keefe Technical School residents.

McKinney-Vento

"Homeless students will be accepted to Keefe Technical School according to the selection criteria contained in this admission policy."

Home Schooled Students

Students who are formally being home schooled may apply for admission to Keefe Technical School, including admission during the school year, provided all Admissions Policy criteria are followed. The Home School student's parent(s)/guardian(s) must submit a copy of the Home School approval letter from the local school Superintendent-Director. Home Schooled students will be accepted to Keefe Technical School according to the selection criteria contained in this admission policy. Please refer to Section VI: Application Process for additional information regarding selection criteria.

School Choice

Keefe Technical School does not participate in the School Choice Program.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Keefe Technical School is a state approved regional vocational technical education delivery system which was established in 1972 to serve the Metrowest towns of Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton and Natick. Keefe Technical School is a member of the South Middlesex Regional Vocational School District and is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Keefe Technical School is committed to providing quality vocational technical programs.

It is the responsibility of the Keefe Technical School Superintendent-Director to supervise the administration of the policies and procedures required to admit and enroll applicants in conformity with this Admissions Policy.

Keefe Technical School has an Admissions Committee appointed by the Superintendent-Director. The committee consists of a member of the Administration, Guidance, Special Needs, Vocational Technical and Academic Departments. Responsibilities of the Admissions Committee include:

1. determination of standards for admission
2. development and implementation of admissions procedures
3. processing of applications
4. ranking of students
5. acceptance of students according to the procedure and criteria in the admissions policy
6. establishment and maintenance of a waiting list of acceptable candidates

The Keefe Technical School Admission Coordinator is responsible for disseminating information about Keefe Technical School through local school assemblies and press releases and for collecting applications from the local schools.

V. RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Keefe Technical School disseminates information about the school through a variety of methods:

1. Visitations with a recruiting video and student speakers present to 8 grade classes in local schools by a Keefe Technical School staff from admissions throughout the fall and early winter.
2. An Open House is scheduled upon completion of presentations and tours. Prospective students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) have an opportunity to visit all vocational-technical programs and speak with teachers as well as view a presentation about all offerings.
3. Parents(s)/guardian(s) may schedule individual visits at a mutually convenient time.
4. Brochures which describe vocational technical programs including academic courses, sports, cooperative education, and special education resources, are distributed during the 8th grade visitations and the Open House.

VI. APPLICATION PROCESS

APPLICATION PROCESS FOR FALL ADMISSION TO THE NINTH, TENTH, ELEVENTH OR TWELFTH GRADE

1. Students interested in applying to Keefe Technical School for fall admissions to the ninth, tenth, eleventh or twelfth grade must
 - a. obtain an application form from the local school Guidance Counselor or Keefe Technical School Guidance Department as early in the school year as possible.
 - b. return the completed application form to the local school Guidance Counselor by the deadline set by the Guidance Counselor.
 - c. attend an interview conducted at their local school by a Keefe Technical School admissions representative.
2. It is the responsibility of the local school Guidance Counselor to:
 - a. complete the designated portion of the application form.
 - b. forward the completed applications to the Admissions Coordinator at Keefe Technical School by April 1st. Complete applications should include:
 - i. Completed application form (including required signatures).

- ii. For application to grade 9 (fall admissions), the average of grade 7 and terms 1 and 2 of grade 8 marks in English Language Arts, Social Studies, Math and Science from the local school report card/transcript are required.

For application to grades 10, 11 or 12 (fall admission), the average of the previous school year and terms 1 & 2 of the current school year marks in English Language Arts, Social Studies, Math and Science from the local school report card/transcript are required.

For application to grade 9 (fall admission), the sum of grade 7 and terms 1 & 2 of grade 8 unexcused absences from the local school report card/transcript is required.

For application to grades 10, 11 or 12 (fall admissions), the sum of the previous school year and terms 1 and 2 of the current school year unexcused absences from the local school report card/transcript is required.

For application to grade 9 (fall admission), the disciplinary records of grade 7 and terms 1 and 2 of grade 8 are required from the local school guidance counselor.

For application to grades 10, 11 or 12 (fall admissions), the disciplinary records of the previous school year and terms 1 and 2 of the current school year from the local school are required from the local school guidance counselor.

For application to grades 9, 10, 11 or 12 (fall admissions), recommendations from the local school guidance counselor are required.

3. If incomplete applications are received, the following procedures will be followed:
 - a. The Admissions Office at Keefe Technical School will notify the local 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 Keefe Technical School Admission Office in the event that the problem is not resolved by the local school Guidance Counselor.
 - c. If after notifying the local school Guidance Counselor and parent(s)/guardian(s), the application remains incomplete for ten school days, the application will be voided.

APPLICATION PROCESS - FOR ADMISSION TO THE NINTH, TENTH, ELEVENTH OR TWELFTH GRADES FOR THE CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR*

- * applying for admissions during the school year to begin classes during the same school year, as opposed to applying for admissions one school year to begin classes the next school year in the fall.

1. Students interested in applying to Keefe Technical School for admissions for the current school year must:
 - a. obtain an application form from their local school Guidance Counselor or Keefe Technical School Guidance Department.
 - b. return the completed application form to their local school Guidance Counselor by the deadline set by the Guidance counselor.
 - c. attend an interview at Keefe Technical School. If the applicant or parent/guardian cannot provide transportation, a representative from Keefe Technical School will go to the local school to interview the applicant.
2. It is the responsibility of the local school Guidance counselor to:
 - a. complete their portion of the application form.
 - b. forward the completed applications to the Admission Coordinator at Keefe Technical School

Completed application must include:

- i. Completed application form (including required signatures)
- ii. For applications to grades 9, 10, 11 or 12 (admission during the school year), the prior school year and the current school year to the date of the application, marks in English Language Arts, Social Studies, Math and Science from the local school report card/transcript are required.

For application to grades 9, 10, 11 or 12 (admission during the school year), the prior school year and the current school year to date of the application, unexcused absences from the local school report card/transcript are required.

For application to grades 9, 10, 11 or 12 (admission during the school year), the prior school year and the current school year to the date of the application, the disciplinary record from the local school guidance counselor is required.

For application to grades 9,10,11 or 12 (admission during the school year), the local school Guidance Counselor's recommendation is required.

3. If incomplete applications are received, the following procedures will be followed:
 - a. The Keefe Technical School Admission Office will notify the local 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 Keefe Technical School Admission Office in the event the problem is not resolved by the local school Guidance Counselor.
- c. If after notifying the local school Guidance Counselor and parent(s)/guardian(s), the application remains incomplete for ten school days, the application will be voided.

LATE APPLICATIONS

Applications received after April 1st will be evaluated using the same criteria as other applications and the composite score will be integrated in rank order on the established waiting list.

OR

Applications received after the deadline will be evaluated using the same criteria as other applications and their composite score will be computed. They will be placed in rank order on a waiting list with other late applicants.

OR

Applications received after the deadline will be evaluated using the same criteria as other applications and the composite score will be computed. They will be placed in rank order on the established waiting list for the remainder of the school year.

TRANSFER STUDENTS

Applications from students who are enrolled in a state-approved (Chapter 74) vocational technical high school program in another school (transfer students) will be considered for admission (including admissions during the school year) if they relocate away from their current school and wish to pursue the same program of study at Keefe Technical School. All transfer applicants must be interviewed by a Keefe Technical School Admissions staff member. If the applicant or parent/guardian cannot provide transportation, an official from Keefe Technical School will go to the local school to meet with the applicant. Such applications will be evaluated according to the provisions of this Admission Policy.

WITHDRAWN STUDENTS

Students who withdraw from Keefe Technical School and who are attending or not attending another high school may reapply to Keefe Technical School following the procedures contained in this admission policy and will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this Admission Policy.

HOME SCHOOL STUDENTS

Students who are formally being home schooled may apply for admission to Keefe Technical School including admission during the school year, provided all Admissions Policy criteria are followed. The

Home School student's parent(s)/guardian(s) must submit a copy of the Home School approval letter from the local school Superintendent-Director **and** if grades are not available, a representative sample or portfolio of the student's body of work in English Language Arts or its equivalent, Math, Science, and Social Studies. Home-schooled students will be ranked on their portfolio/grades (34%), recommendation (33%) and applicant interview (33%).

VII. SELECTION CRITERIA

The Admissions Committee using weighted admissions criteria processes completed applications. Each applicant will be assigned a score derived from the sum of the sub scores of the following criteria:

A. Scholastic Achievement: Maximum 20 points

Grade Averages	Points
90 -100	5
80-89	4
70-79	3
60-69	2
0-59	0

For applications to grade 9 (fall admissions), the average marks of grade 7 and terms 1 and 2 of grade 8 in English, Social Studies, Mathematics and Science from the local school report card/transcript are used. For applications to grades 10,11 or 12 (fall admission), the average marks of the previous school year and terms 1 and 2 of the current school year in English, Social Studies, Mathematics and Science from the local school report card/transcript are used. For applications to grades 9,10,11 or 12 (admission during the school year), marks for the prior school year and the current school year to the date of the application in English, Social Studies, Mathematics and Science from the local school report card/transcript are used.

B. Attendance: Maximum 20 points

Number of Unexcused Absences	Points
0-10	20
11-20	15
21-30	10
31-40	5
41 plus	0

For application to grade 9 (fall admission), the sum of unexcused absences of grade 7 and terms 1 and 2 of grade 8 from the local school report card/transcript are used.

For application to grades 10, 11 or 12 (fall admission), the sum of unexcused absences from the previous school year and terms 1 and 2 of the current school year from the local school report card/transcript are used.

For application to grades 9, 10, 11 or 12 (admission during the school year), unexcused absences of the current school year to the date of the application from the local school report card/transcript are used.

C. School Discipline/Conduct: Maximum 20 points

Discipline/Conduct Rating	Points
Excellent 0 Detentions 0 Suspensions	20
Above Average 1 Detention and/or 0 Suspensions	15
Average 2-3 Detentions and/or 1 Suspension	10
Below Average 4-9 Detentions and/or 2-3 Suspensions	5
Poor 10+ Detentions and/or 4+ Suspensions	0

For applications to grade 9 (fall admission), the average of grade 7 and terms 1 and 2 of grade 8 assessments from the local school report card/transcript or from the local school Guidance Counselor's assessment are used. For applications to grades 10, 11 and 12 (fall admission), the average of previous school year and terms 1 & 2 current school year assessments from the local school report card/transcript or from the Guidance Counselor's assessment are used. For applications to grades 9, 10, 11 and 12 (admission during the school year), the current school year to the date of the application assessments from the local school report card/transcript or from the local school Guidance Counselor's assessment are used.

D. Local Guidance Counselor's Recommendation: Maximum 10 points

Rating by Guidance Counselor	Points
Excellent: Student is highly motivated, demonstrates excellent leadership skills, has outstanding work and study habits, maintains excellent citizenship, has respect for school policy and career/technical learning, and is a good example for peer mentoring.	10

Above Average: Student is motivated, has good attitude toward school and demonstrates leadership and independence regarding academic and career/technical learning. Student is responsible and a self-starter.	8
Average: Student successfully completes tasks, is attentive and motivated with a good attitude toward school and career/technical learning. Student will follow directions.	6
Below Average: Student is not motivated and attitude toward school and/or behavior is problematic. Student may not follow rules and directions consistently. Student's level of independence and responsibility is inconsistent.	4
Poor: Student is not motivated to attend school or to do assigned school Work. Attitude, behavior and work habits are less than desirable. Student may be a safety risk.	0

E. Interview Protocol: Maximum 30 points

A Keefe Technical School staff member will interview each applicant. Interviews for eighth graders will be held at the sending middle school. High school transfer students will interview by appointment at Keefe Technical School.

Interviewers must make their scoring without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation or disability or homeless status.

English Language Learners (ELL) will be provided translator services throughout the process.

A maximum of 30 points with 5 maximum points per question may be awarded to applicants. The applicant's interest in vocational-technical education, motivation toward school and their future, and the thought given to the selection of vocational programs will be taken into consideration in assigning the following scores:

Rating	Points
Excellent	30
Above Average	25
Average	15
Below Average	10
Poor	5

After points are given in each area, the points are totaled for each applicant. A maximum total of one hundred (100) points can be earned.

VIII. SELECTION PROCESS

The Admissions Committee at Keefe Technical School will examine, discuss, and make recommendations for action on the applicants.

Based on scholastic achievement, record of unexcused absences, school behavior, and local guidance counselor recommendation, and interview, each applicant is assigned a point total based on student grade level. The point totals are listed in rank order from highest to lowest. The applicant with the highest point total is accepted first followed by the next on the list and so on until all openings are filled. All applicants are accepted, declined, or placed on a waiting list. Applicants who are accepted are notified by mail and given ten (10) days to respond favorably to the acceptance.

If an acceptance is declined, admission is offered to the next applicant on the waiting list. This list is in descending order of points assigned according to the selection criteria. Applications received after the initial deadline (April 1) will be evaluated using the same criteria as other applications and the composite score will be integrated in rank order on the established waiting list.

All applicants whose applications are received by May 15, are notified of their status by a letter to their parent(s)/guardian(s) with proper notice to the local sending school principal by June 1. All notifications will state that the admissions decision is conditional on meeting the requirements noted in the Enrollment section of the policy.

IX. ENROLLMENT

In order to enroll at Keefe Technical School for the fall, applicants must have successfully passed English Language Arts or its equivalent, mathematics, and been promoted by their local school district to the grade they seek to enter. Students who fail English Language Arts or its equivalent or mathematics will be required to take and pass comparable make-up course(s) in a summer school program provided by their local school district or another school district.

Acceptance and enrollment at Keefe Technical School is conditioned upon the accuracy and completeness of a student's application. Keefe Technical School reserves the right to revoke its conditional acceptance of a student, at any time, if it determines that the student, the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), or the student's sending school district provided inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading information during the application process.

X. CAREER TECHNICAL PROGRAM PLACEMENT

All ninth grade students who enroll at Keefe Technical School participate in a Career Exploratory program designed to help them learn about their talents and interests relative to a variety of different career technical programs. Through Career Exploratory, all students explore all career technical programs here at Keefe Technical School. In addition, career technical instructors evaluate students during the exploratory program using the Career Exploratory Shop Evaluation Rubric. On this rubric, each student is rated based on Conduct/Cooperation/Professionalism, Time Management/Preparation, Safety, and Task Completion/Workmanship and Effort/Employability, with each category valued at a 10 point maximum, for a total possible score of 100 points earned during each of the exploratory programs which creates Career Exploratory.

The Career Exploratory program consists of the student choosing three shop selections and five others that will be assigned to them that run four consecutive periods each day every other week. Students will be evaluated by using the Career Exploratory Shop Evaluation Rubric. The career exploratory program will run for over three-fourths of the freshmen year. Once students pick a choice they feel will benefit them they will explore that choice to ensure success. If that student does not feel they made the correct selection during this time period they will have the opportunity to research other programs within the exploratory period. After the student has spent the allotted time the teacher using a secondary evaluation tool will select their final class.

Students are admitted into the career technical program of their choice based on a ranking that includes the grade the student earned on the chosen exploratory shop, highest cumulative shop average of all shops taken by the student in the exploratory program, best overall average effort, and best overall average conduct.

It is the district's goal for students to be placed in their first choice shop. If this goal cannot be met, shops are ranked based on students' first choice career technical program selection. A waiting list will be maintained of students for oversubscribed programs. When an opening becomes available, the list will be reviewed by the Admissions Committee and the highest ranking student will be offered placement in that program.

After placement, students continue to explore the shop in which they were placed for the remainder of the school year in order for them to continue to learn about their talents and interests. Students who wish to transfer from one shop to another may apply for transfer. Transfer requests will be considered subject to the availability of openings in the requested shops. Each transfer applicant will be interviewed and counseled individually to determine the appropriateness of the transfer for the particular student.

All placements in Grades 10, 11, and 12 are subject to career technical program availability. Students who wish to move from one career technical program to another during the school year may apply for a transfer by meeting with their guidance counselor and bringing in a signed permission statement from a parent/guardian. In making decisions about transfers from one career technical program to another, the school will consider space availability in the career technical program, a student's discipline record, record of unexcused absences, and current grades. The Guidance Office will consult with the Career Technical Coordinator during this process.

XI. REVIEW AND APPEALS

The applicant's parent(s)/guardian(s), upon receipt of a letter from Keefe Technical School indicating that the applicant was not accepted or was placed on a waiting list, may request a review of the decision by sending a letter requesting a review to the principal within thirty days of receipt of the letter. The principal will respond in writing to the letter with findings of the review within thirty days. If, after the review, the parent(s)/guardian(s) wish to appeal the finding of the review, this may be done by sending a letter requesting that they be scheduled to appear before the District School Committee to appeal the principal's findings.

The District School Committee will respond in writing to the parent(s)/guardian(s) with a scheduled date for the appeal within thirty days of receipt of the letter. The District School Committee will respond in writing to the letter with their decision on the appeal within thirty days of the District School Committee meeting when the appeal was presented.

The applicant's parent(s)/guardian(s), upon receipt of a letter from Keefe Technical School indicating that the applicant was not accepted or placed on a waiting list for a particular program (shop/major), may request a review of the decision by sending a letter requesting a review to the Superintendent-Director within thirty days of receipt of the rejection/wait letter. The Superintendent-Director will respond in writing to the letter with the findings of the review within thirty days.

ADMISSION OF TRANSFER STUDENTS

The school district will enroll and place students who have left Commonwealth charter schools by adhering to the same policies and procedures in place for any other student enrolling in the school district including, but not limited to, examination of the course of study and level of academic attainment of the student when determining the student's appropriate grade placement or eligibility for high school graduation.

To the same extent provided for other students enrolling in the school district, students who enroll in the school district from a Commonwealth charter school shall be subject to the graduation requirements of the school district, may have certain graduation requirements waived, and may make-up certain graduation requirements.

LEGAL REFS.: Chapter 12, Section 11 of the Acts of 2010

HOMELESS STUDENTS: ENROLLMENT RIGHTS AND SERVICES

To the extent practical and as required by law, the district will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school. Homeless students will be provided district services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and comparable pre-school programs, Title I, similar state programs, special education, bilingual education, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs and school nutrition programs.

Homeless students are defined as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship;
2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
3. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
4. Being abandoned in hospitals;
5. Awaiting foster care placement;
6. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
7. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings;
8. Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples.

The Superintendent-Director shall designate an appropriate staff person to be the district's liaison for homeless students and their families.

To the extent feasible, homeless students will continue to be enrolled in their school of origin while they remain homeless or until the end of the academic year in which they obtain permanent housing. Instead of remaining in the school of origin, parents or guardians of homeless students may request enrollment in the school in the attendance area in which the student is actually living, or other schools. Attendance rights by living in attendance areas, other student assignment policies, or intra and inter-district choice options are available to homeless families on the same terms as families resident in the district.

If there is an enrollment dispute, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian shall be informed of the district's decision and their appeal rights in writing. The district's liaison will carry out dispute resolution as provided by state rule. Unaccompanied youth will also be enrolled pending resolution of the dispute.

Once the enrollment decision is made, the school shall immediately enroll the student, pursuant to district policies. If the student does not have immediate access to immunization records, the student shall be admitted under a personal exception. Students and families should be encouraged to obtain current immunization records or immunizations as soon as possible, and the district liaison is directed to assist. Records from the student's previous school shall be requested from the previous school pursuant to district policies. Emergency contact information is required at the time of enrollment consistent with district policies, including compliance with the state's address confidentiality program when necessary.

Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If the school of origin is in a different district, or a homeless student is living in another district but will attend his or her school of origin in this district, the districts will coordinate the transportation services necessary for the student, or will divide the costs equally.

The district's liaison for homeless students and their families shall coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families; other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies. This coordination includes providing public notice of the educational rights of homeless students in schools, family shelters and soup kitchens. The district's liaison will also review and recommend amendments to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students.

LEGAL REFS.: Title I, Part C
 No Child Left Behind Act, 2002

SCHOOL CHOICE

It is the policy of this school district **not** to admit non-resident students under the terms and conditions of the Interdistrict School Choice Law (M.G.L. 76:12B.) This decision must be reaffirmed annually prior to June 1st by a vote of the District School Committee following a public hearing. In the event the District School Committee votes to participate, the following local conditions would apply:

1. That by May 1 of every school year, the administration will determine the number of spaces in each school available to choice students.
2. That by June 1 of every school year, a public hearing will be held to review participation in the school choice program.
3. That resident students be given priority placement in any classes or programs within the district.
4. That the selection of non-resident students for admission when the number of requests exceeds the number of available spaces be in the form of a random drawing. There will be two drawings for this purpose. The first will take place during the last week of the current school year but no later than July 1st. The second will be conducted during the week immediately preceding the opening of the next school year and will be based on the possibility of unexpected additional openings.
5. Any student who is accepted for admission under the provisions of this policy is entitled to remain in the district until graduation from high school except if there is a lack of funding of the program.
6. The District School Committee affirms its position that it shall not discriminate in the admission of any child on the basis of race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, ancestry, athletic performance, physical handicap, special need, academic performance or proficiency in the English language.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 71:6; 71:6A; 76:6; 76:12; 76:12B
BESE Regulations 603 CMR 26.00

STUDENT ABSENCES AND EXCUSES

Regular and punctual school attendance is essential for success in school. The Committee recognizes that parents of children attending our schools have special rights as well as responsibilities, one of which is to ensure that their children attend school regularly, in accordance with state law.

Therefore, students may be excused temporarily from school attendance for the following reasons: illness or quarantine; bereavement or serious illness in family; weather so inclement as to endanger the health of the child; and observance of major religious holidays.

A child may also be excused for other exceptional reasons with approval of the Principal or designee.

A student's understanding of the importance of day-to-day schoolwork is an important factor in the shaping of his character. Parents can help their children by not allowing them to miss school needlessly. Accordingly, parents will provide a written explanation for the absence or tardiness of a child. This will be required in advance for types of absences where advance notice is possible.

In instances of chronic or irregular absence reportedly due to illness, the school administration may request a physician's statement certifying such absences to be justified.

Student Absence Notification Program

The Principal, by whatever title he may be known, will notify a student's parent/guardian within 3 days of the student's absence in the event the parent/guardian has not informed the school of the absence.

The Principal, by whatever title he may be known, or designee shall make a reasonable effort to meet with any student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has missed five (5) or more unexcused school days (a school day shall be equal to two (2) or more class periods in the same day) in a school year. The meeting shall be to develop action steps to improve student attendance and shall be developed jointly by the Principal or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The parties may seek input from other relevant school staff and/or officials from relevant public safety, health and human service, housing, and nonprofit agencies.

Dropout Prevention

No student who has not graduated from high school shall be considered permanently removed from school unless the Principal has sent notice to a student, and that student's parent/guardian, who has been absent from school for ten (10) consecutive days of unexcused absence. The notice shall be sent within five (5) days of the tenth consecutive day of absence and shall offer at least 2 dates and times within the next ten (10) days for an exit interview with the Superintendent-Director or designee, the student, and the student's parent/guardian. The notice shall be in both English and the primary language of the home, if

applicable. The notice shall include contact information for scheduling the exit interview and shall indicate the parties shall reach an agreement on the date/time of the interview within the ten (10) day timeframe. The timeframe may be extended at the request of the parent/guardian and no extension shall exceed 14 days.

The Superintendent-Director or designee may proceed with any interview without a parent/guardian present, provided the Superintendent-Director has documented a good faith effort to include the parent/guardian.

The Superintendent-Director or designee shall convene a team of school staff to participate in the exit interview and shall provide information to the student and, if applicable, the student's parent/guardian on the detrimental effects of early withdrawal from school and the alternative education programs and services available to the student.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. [76:1](#); 76:1B; [76:16](#); 76:18; [76:20](#)

EXCLUSIONS AND EXEMPTIONS FROM SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

The District School Committee shall take such action as is reasonable and appropriate to enforce the School attendance requirements subject to the exclusions and exemptions set forth in the General Laws.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L.76:1

STUDENT RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The District School Committee has the responsibility to afford students the rights that are theirs by virtue of guarantees offered under the federal and state constitutions and statutes. In connection with rights, there are responsibilities that must be assumed by students.

Among these rights and responsibilities are the following:

1. Civil rights--including the rights to equal educational opportunity and freedom from discrimination; the responsibility not to discriminate against others.
2. The right to attend free public schools; the responsibility to attend school regularly and to observe school rules essential for permitting others to learn at school.
3. The right to due process of law with respect to suspension, expulsion, and decisions the student believes injure his rights.
4. The right to free inquiry and expression; responsibility to observe reasonable rules regarding these rights.
5. The right to privacy, which includes privacy with respect to the student's school records.

It is the District School Committee's belief that as part of the educational process students should be made aware of their legal rights, and of the legal authority of the District School Committee to make and delegate authority to its staff to make, rules regarding the orderly operation of the schools.

Students have the right to know the standards of behavior that are expected of them, and the consequences of misbehavior.

The rights and responsibilities of students, including standards of conduct, will be made available to students and their parents through handbooks distributed annually.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 71:37H; 71:82 through 71:86

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN DECISIONMAKING

Class, school or student government organizations, such as student councils, class officers, and other organizations appropriate to the age of the students, may be formed to offer practice in self-government and to serve as channels for the expression of student ideas and opinions.

The District School Committee will take into consideration student opinions in establishing policies that directly affect student programs, activities, privileges and other areas of School life especially sensitive to students, such as senior privileges.

Students will be welcomed at District School Committee meetings and granted privileges of speaking commensurate with the privileges extended to the general public.

LEGAL REFS.: M. G.L. 71:38M

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING

As appropriate to the age of students, class or school organizations and school government organizations, such as student councils, may be formed to offer practice in self-government and to serve as channels for the expression of students' ideas and opinions.

The Committee will take into consideration student opinions in establishing policies that directly affect student programs, activities, privileges and other areas of student sensitivity.

Students will be welcomed at Committee meetings and granted privileges of speaking in line with the privileges extended to the general public.

Student Council acting as the Student Advisory Committee

As required by state law, the Committee will meet at least once every other month while school is in session with its student advisory committee, which is composed of five students elected by the high school student body. The chair of the student advisory committee shall be an ex-officio nonvoting member of the District School Committee without the right to attend executive sessions unless such right is expressly granted by the District School Committee.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 71:38M

CROSS REF.: BDF, Advisory Committees to the District School Committee

STUDENT DISCIPLINE

The District School Committee believes that all students deserve every opportunity to achieve academic success in a safe, secure learning environment. Good citizenship in schools is based on respect and consideration for the rights of others. Students will be expected to conduct themselves in a way that the rights and privileges of others are not violated. They will be required to respect constituted authority, to conform to school rules and to those provisions of law that apply to their conduct.

The Principal shall include prohibited actions in the student handbook or other publication to be made available to students and parents.

Principals and staff shall not use academic punishment of any form as a consequence to inappropriate behaviors/actions by students.

The Principal may, as a disciplinary measure, remove a student from privileges, such as extracurricular activities and attendance at school-sponsored events, based on the student's misconduct. Such a removal is not subject to the remainder of this policy, law, or regulation.

The Superintendent-Director shall provide each Principal with a copy of the regulations promulgated by DESE and shall have each Principal sign a document acknowledging receipt thereof, which shall be placed in their personnel file.

Suspension

In every case of student misconduct for which suspension may be imposed¹, a Principal shall consider ways to re-engage the student in learning; and avoid using long-term suspension from school as a consequence until alternatives have been tried. Alternatives may include the use of evidence-based strategies and programs such as mediation, conflict resolution, restorative justice, and positive behavioral interventions and supports.

Notice of Suspension:

Except for emergency removal or an in-school suspension of less than 10 days, a Principal must provide the student and the parent oral and written notice, and provide the student an opportunity for a hearing and the parent an opportunity to participate in such hearing before imposing suspension as a consequence for misconduct. The Principal shall provide both oral and written notice to student and parent in English and in the primary language of the home if other than English. The notice shall include the rights enumerated in law and regulation. To conduct a hearing without a parent present, the Principal must be able to document reasonable efforts to include the parent.

Emergency Removal

A Principal may remove a student from school temporarily when a student is charged with a disciplinary offense and the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school, and, in the Principal's judgment, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption.

¹ Except for offenses referenced in the note at the end of this policy.

The Principal shall immediately notify the Superintendent-Director in writing of the removal including a description of the danger presented by the student.

The temporary removal shall not exceed two (2) school days following the day of the emergency removal, during which time the Principal shall: Make immediate and reasonable efforts to orally notify the student and the student's parent of the emergency removal, the reason for the need for emergency removal, and the other matters required in the notice as referenced in the applicable regulation; Provide written notice to the student and parent as required above; Provide the student an opportunity for a hearing with the Principal that complies with applicable regulations, and the parent an opportunity to attend the hearing, before the expiration of the two (2) school days, unless an extension of time for hearing is otherwise agreed to by the Principal, student, and parent; Render a decision orally on the same day as the hearing, and in writing no later than the following school day, which meets the requirements of applicable law and regulation.

A Principal shall also ensure adequate provisions have been made for the student's safety and transportation prior to removal.

In School Suspension – not more than 10 days consecutively or cumulatively

The Principal may use in-school suspension as an alternative to short-term suspension for disciplinary offenses.

The Principal may impose an in-school suspension for a disciplinary offense under this provision, provided that the Principal follows the process set forth in regulation and the student has the opportunity to make academic progress as required by law and regulation.

Principal's Hearing – Short Term Suspension of up to 10 days

The hearing with the Principal shall be to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequences for the infraction.

At a minimum, the Principal shall discuss the disciplinary offense, the basis for the charge, and any other pertinent information.

The student also shall have an opportunity to present information, including mitigating facts, that the Principal should consider in determining whether other remedies and consequences may be appropriate as set forth in law and regulation.

The Principal shall provide the parent, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the Principal should consider in determining consequences for the student.

The Principal shall, based on the available information, including mitigating circumstances, determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, what remedy or consequence will be imposed.

The Principal shall notify the student and parent of the determination and the reasons for it, and, if the student is suspended, the type and duration of suspension and the opportunity to make up assignments and such other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of removal, as required by law and regulation. The determination shall be in writing and may be in the form of an update to the original written notice.

Principal's Hearing – Long Term Suspension of more than 10 days but less than 90 days (consecutive or cumulative)

The hearing with the Principal shall be to hear and consider information regarding the alleged incident for which the student may be suspended, provide the student an opportunity to dispute the charges and explain the circumstances surrounding the alleged incident, determine if the student committed the disciplinary offense, and if so, the consequences for the infraction.

At a minimum, in addition to the rights afforded a student in a short-term suspension hearing, the student shall have the following rights: In advance of the hearing, the opportunity to review the student's record and the documents upon which the Principal may rely in making a determination to suspend the student or not; The right to be represented by counsel or a lay person of the student's choice, at the student's/parent's expense; The right to produce witnesses on his or her behalf and to present the student's explanation of the alleged incident, but the student may not be compelled to do so; The right to cross-examine witnesses presented by the school district; The right to request that the hearing be recorded by the Principal, and to receive a copy of the audio recording upon request. If the student or parent requests an audio recording, the Principal shall inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made and a copy will be provided to the student and parent upon request.

The Principal shall provide the parent, if present, an opportunity to discuss the student's conduct and offer information, including mitigating circumstances, that the Principal should consider in determining consequences for the student.

The Principal shall, based on the evidence, determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense, and, if so, after considering mitigating circumstances and alternatives to suspension as required by law and regulation, what remedy or consequence will be imposed, in place of or in addition to a long-term suspension. The Principal shall send the written determination to the student and parent by hand-delivery, certified mail, first-class mail, email to an address provided by the parent for school communications, or any other method of delivery agreed to by the Principal and the parent.

If the Principal decides to suspend the student, the written determination shall: Identify the disciplinary offense, the date on which the hearing took place, and the participants at the hearing; Set out the key facts and conclusions reached by the Principal; Identify the length and effective date of the suspension, as well as a date of return to school; Include notice of the student's opportunity to receive education services to make academic progress during the period of removal from school as required by law and regulation; Inform the student of the right to appeal the Principal's decision to the Superintendent-Director or designee, but only if the Principal has imposed a long-term suspension. Notice of the right of appeal shall be in English and the primary language of the home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate, and shall include the following information: The process for appealing the decision, including that the student or parent must file a written notice of appeal with the Superintendent-Director within five (5) calendar days of the effective date of the long-term suspension; provided that within the five (5) calendar days, the student or parent may request and receive from the Superintendent-Director an extension of time for filing the written notice for up to seven (7) additional calendar days; and that the long-term suspension will remain in effect unless and until the Superintendent-Director decides to reverse the Principal's determination on appeal.

Superintendent-Director's Hearing

A student who is placed on long-term suspension following a hearing with the Principal shall have the right to appeal the Principal's decision to the Superintendent-Director.

The student or parent shall file a notice of appeal with the Superintendent-Director within the time period noted above (see Principal's hearing – Suspension of more than 10 days). If the appeal is not timely filed, the Superintendent-Director may deny the appeal, or may allow the appeal in his or her discretion, for good cause.

The Superintendent-Director shall hold the hearing within three (3) school days of the student's request, unless the student or parent requests an extension of up to seven (7) additional calendar days, in which case the Superintendent-Director shall grant the extension.

The Superintendent-Director shall make a good faith effort to include the parent in the hearing. The Superintendent-Director shall be presumed to have made a good faith effort if he or she has made efforts to find a day and time for the hearing that would allow the parent and Superintendent-Director to participate. The Superintendent-Director shall send written notice to the parent of the date, time, and location of the hearing.

The Superintendent-Director shall conduct a hearing to determine whether the student committed the disciplinary offense of which the student is accused, and if so, what the consequence shall be. The Superintendent-Director shall arrange for an audio recording of the hearing, a copy of which shall be provided to the student or parent upon request. The Superintendent-Director shall inform all participants before the hearing that an audio record will be made of the hearing and a copy will be provided to the student and parent upon request. The student shall have all the rights afforded the student at the Principal's hearing for long-term suspension.

The Superintendent-Director shall issue a written decision within five (5) calendar days of the hearing which meets the requirements of law and regulation. If the Superintendent-Director determines that the student committed the disciplinary offense, the Superintendent-Director may impose the same or a lesser consequence than the Principal, but shall not impose a suspension greater than that imposed by the Principal's decision. The decision of the Superintendent-Director shall be the final decision of the school district with regard to the suspension.

Expulsion

Expulsion is defined as the removal of a student from school for more than ninety (90) school days, indefinitely, or permanently as allowed by law for possession of a dangerous weapon; possession of a controlled substance; assault on a member of the educational staff; or a felony charge or felony delinquency complaint or conviction, or adjudication or admission of guilt with respect to such felony, if a Principal determines that the student's continued presence in school would have a substantial detrimental effect on the general welfare of the school.

Any student expelled from school for such an offense shall be afforded an opportunity to receive educational services and make academic progress.

Academic Progress

Any student who is suspended or expelled shall have the opportunity to earn credits, make up assignments, tests, papers, and other school work as needed to make academic progress during the period of his or her removal from the classroom or school. The Principal shall inform the student and parent of this opportunity in writing, in English and in the primary language of the home, when such suspension or expulsion is imposed.

Any student who is expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days, whether in school or out of school, shall have an opportunity to receive education services and make academic progress toward meeting state and local requirements, through the school-wide education service plan.

The Principal shall develop a school-wide education service plan describing the education services that the school district will make available to students who are expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days. The plan shall include the process for notifying such students and their parents of the services and arranging such services. Education services shall be based on, and be provided in a manner consistent with, the academic standards and curriculum frameworks established for all students under the law.

The Principal shall notify the parent and student of the opportunity to receive education services at the time the student is expelled or placed on long-term suspension. Notice shall be provided in English and in the primary language spoken in the student's home if other than English, or other means of communication where appropriate. The notice shall include a list of the specific education services that are available to the student and contact information for a school district staff member who can provide more detailed information.

For each student expelled or suspended from school for more than ten (10) consecutive days, whether in-school or out-of-school, the school district shall document the student's enrollment in education services. For data reporting purposes, the school shall track and report attendance, academic progress, and such other data as directed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Reporting

The school district shall collect and annually report data to the DESE regarding in-school suspensions, short- and long-term suspensions, expulsions, emergency removals, access to education services, and such other information as may be required by the DESE.

The Principal of each school shall periodically review discipline data by selected student populations, including but not limited to race and ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, English language learner status, and student with a disability status in accordance with law and regulation.

LEGAL REF: M.G.L. [71:37H](#); [71:37H ½](#); 71:37H ¾; 76:17; 603 CMR 53.00

STUDENT DRESS CODE

The responsibility for the dress and appearance of the students will rest with individual students and parents.

They have the right to determine how the student will dress providing that attire is not destructive to school property, complies with requirements for health and safety, and does not cause disorder or disruption. The administration is authorized to take action in instances where individual dress does not meet the stated requirements.

This does not mean that student, faculty, or parent groups may not recommend appropriate dress for school or special occasions. It means that students will not be prevented from attending school or a school function, or otherwise be discriminated against, so long as their dress and appearance meet the requirements set forth above.

CARE OF SCHOOL PROPERTY BY STUDENTS

Payment for Damage done by Students to School Property

Any student who has been found to have intentionally or through negligence caused physical damage to any School property will be responsible to reimburse the School District for the full cost to repair said damage.

Any senior who fails to make such payment will not be allowed to participate graduation ceremonies.

LEGAL REFS.: M. G.L. 266:98

STUDENT CONDUCT ON SCHOOL BUSES

The District School Committee and its staff share with students and parents the responsibility for student safety during transportation to and from school. The authority for enforcing District School Committee requirements of student conduct on buses will rest with the Principal.

To ensure the safety of all students who ride in buses, it may occasionally be necessary to revoke the privilege of transportation from a student who abuses this privilege. Parents of children whose behavior and misconduct on school buses endangers the health, safety, and welfare of other riders will be notified that their children face the loss of transportation privileges in accordance with regulations approved by the District School Committee.

STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Within the school setting, students enjoy the constitutional right of freedom of expression, including the right to express their views in student publications, provided such expression does not cause, or threaten to cause by reasonable forecast by school officials, any disruption or disorder in the school. Additionally, such constitutional right of freedom of expression does not include expression which is obscene, defamatory, or advocates violence or illegality where such advocacy is imminently likely to incite the commission of such acts to the detriment of school security, or which can reasonably be forecast to cause substantial disruption or material interference with school activities.

The District School Committee will at least annually review their support of student publications, and encourage student publications not only because they offer an educational activity through which students gain experience in reporting, writing, editing, and understanding responsible journalism, but also because they provide an opportunity for students to express their views subject to the limitations as contained in this policy.

Student publications will be encouraged to comply with the rules for responsible journalism. Students shall affix their names to all articles or editorials written by or contributed to by them. The Superintendent-Director will establish guidelines that are in keeping with this policy and provide for review of student publications prior to their distribution, to address matters that are not protected forms of expression.

Each student publication shall contain the following: "Pursuant to state law, no expression made by students in the exercise of such rights shall be deemed to be an expression of school policy and no school officials shall be held responsible in any civil or criminal action for any expression made or published by the students."

Distribution of Literature

The time, place and manner of distribution of literature will be reasonably regulated by the Principal.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 71:82

GANG ACTIVITY/SECRET SOCIETIES

The goal of the District School Committee is to keep District schools and students free from the threats or harmful influence of any gang. For purposes of this policy, gang is defined as any group, secret society, organization or association that advocates drug use, violence, ethnic intimidation, or disruptive or illegal behavior. The Principal or his/her designee shall maintain supervision of school premises to deter intimidation of students and confrontations between members of different gangs.

The Superintendent-Director shall establish open lines of communication with local law enforcement agencies so as to share information and provide mutual support in this effort within appropriate legal guidelines.

The Superintendent-Director shall provide in-service training to help staff members identify gangs and gang symbols, recognize early manifestations of disruptive activities, and respond appropriately. Staff members shall be informed about conflict management techniques and alerted to intervention measures and community resources that may help students.

Symbols

The District School Committee finds that gang symbols are inherently disruptive to the educational process, and therefore prohibits the presence of any insignia, apparel, jewelry, accessory, notebook or other school supply, or manner of grooming which by virtue of its color, arrangement, trademark, or any other attribute denotes membership in gangs. The District School Committee further prohibits any demonstration of gang membership through the use of hand gestures, graffiti, or printed materials. This policy shall be applied by the Principal or his/her designee as the need for it arises. A student may be suspended or expelled for failure to comply with the provisions of this policy.

Prevention Education

The District School Committee realizes that students may become involved in gangs without understanding the consequences of such membership. Early intervention is a key component of efforts to break the cycle of such memberships. Therefore, gang violence prevention information shall be made available in the elementary, middle, and high schools as appropriate.

SECRET SOCIETIES

Fraternities, sororities and/or secret societies shall not receive District or building recognition in any manner.

A student may be suspended or expelled for failure to comply with the provisions of this policy.

PROHIBITION OF HAZING

In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 536 of the Acts of 1985, the District School Committee hereby deems that no student, employee or school organization under the control of the District School Committee shall engage in the activity of hazing a student while on or off school property, or at a school sponsored event regardless of the location. No organization that uses the facilities or grounds under the control of the District School Committee shall engage in the activity of hazing any person while on school property.

Any student who observes what appears to them to be the activity of hazing another student or person should report such information to the Principal including the time, date, location, names of identifiable participants and the types of behavior exhibited. Students and employees of the District are obligated by law to report incidents of hazing to the police department.

Any student who is present at a hazing has the obligation to report such an incident. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action by the school against that student and could involve suspension from school for up to three days.

Any student who participates in the hazing of another student or other person may, upon the approval of the Superintendent-Director of Schools, be suspended from school for up to ten (10) school days.

Any student determined by the Principal to be the organizer of a hazing activity may be recommended for expulsion from school but will receive no less disciplinary action than that of a participant.

In all cases relating to hazing, students will receive procedural due process.

LEGAL REF.: M.G.L. 269:17, 18, 19

BULLYING PREVENTION

The South Middlesex Regional Vocational Technical School District is committed to providing a safe, positive and productive educational environment where students can achieve the highest academic standards. No student shall be subjected to harassment, intimidation, bullying, or cyber-bullying.

“Bullying” is the repeated use by one or more students or school staff members of a written, verbal, or electronic expression, or a physical act or gesture, or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target’s property;
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him/herself, or of damage to his/her property;
- creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

“Cyber-bullying” means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a:

- wire
- radio
- electromagnetic
- photo-electronic or photo-optical system, including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages or facsimile communications.

Cyber-bullying shall also include the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or knowingly impersonates another person as author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Cyber-bullying shall also include the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions enumerated in the definition of bullying.

Bullying and cyber-bullying may occur in and out of school, during and after school hours, at home and in locations outside of the home. When bullying and cyber-bullying are alleged, the full cooperation and assistance of parents and families are expected.

For the purpose of this policy, whenever the term bullying is used it is to denote either bullying, or cyber-bullying.

Bullying is prohibited:

- On school grounds;
- On property immediately adjacent to school grounds;
- At school-sponsored or school-related activities;
- At functions or programs whether on or off school grounds
- At school bus stops;
- On school buses or other vehicles owned, leased or used by the school district; or,
- Through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased or used by the District;

Bullying and cyber-bullying are prohibited at a location, activity, function or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by the District if the act or acts in question:

- create a hostile environment at school for the target;
- infringe on the rights of the target at school; and/or
- materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

Prevention and Intervention Plan

The Superintendent-Director and/or his/her designee shall oversee the development of a prevention and intervention plan, in consultation with all district stakeholders, which may include teachers, school staff, professional support personnel, school volunteers, administrators, community representatives, local law enforcement agencies, students, parents and guardians, consistent with the requirements of this policy, as well as state and federal laws. The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be reviewed and updated at least biennially.

The Principal is responsible for the implementation and oversight of the bullying prevention and implementation plan within his or her school.

Reporting

Students, who believe that they are a target of bullying, observe an act of bullying, or who have reasonable grounds to believe that these behaviors are taking place, are obligated to report incidents to a member of the school staff. The target shall, however, not be subject to discipline for failing to report bullying.

The school shall have a means for anonymous reporting by students of incidents of bullying. No formal disciplinary action shall be taken solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Parents or guardians, or members of the community, are encouraged to report an incident of bullying as soon as possible.

A member of a school staff shall immediately report any instance of bullying the staff member has witnessed or become aware of to the school principal or their designee.

Investigation Procedures

The Principal or their designee, upon receipt of a viable report, shall promptly contact the parents or guardians of a student who has been the alleged target or alleged perpetrator of bullying. The actions being taken to prevent further acts of bullying shall be discussed.

The school Principal or a designee shall promptly investigate the report of bullying, using a Bullying/Cyber-bullying Report Form which may include interviewing the alleged target, alleged perpetrator, staff members, students and/or witnesses.

Support staff shall assess an alleged target's needs for protection and create and implement a safety plan that shall restore a sense of safety for that student.

Confidentiality shall be used to protect a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or is witness to or has reliable information about an act of bullying.

If the school Principal or a designee determines that bullying has occurred he/she shall take appropriate disciplinary action and if it is believed that criminal charges may be pursued against the perpetrator, the principal shall consult with the school's resource officer and the Superintendent-Director to determine if criminal charges are warranted. If it is determined that criminal charges are warranted, the local law enforcement agency shall be notified.

The investigation shall be completed within fourteen school days from the date of the report. The parents or guardians shall be contacted upon completion of the investigation and informed of the results, including whether the allegations were found to be factual, whether a violation of this policy was found, and whether disciplinary action has or shall be taken. At a minimum the Principal or his/her designee shall contact the parents or guardians as to the status of the investigation on a weekly basis.

Disciplinary actions for students who have committed an act of bullying or retaliation shall be in accordance with district disciplinary policies.

The school shall document any incident of bullying that is reported per this policy and a file shall be maintained by the Principal or designee. A monthly report shall be provided to the Superintendent-Director.

Confidentiality shall be maintained to the extent consistent with the school's obligations under law.

Retaliation

Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying, shall be prohibited.

Target Assistance

The South Middlesex Regional Vocational Technical School District shall provide counseling or referral to appropriate services, including guidance, academic intervention, and protection to students, both targets and perpetrators, affected by bullying, as necessary.

Training and Assessment

Annual training shall be provided for school employees and volunteers who have significant contact with students in preventing, identifying, responding to, and reporting incidents of bullying.

Age-appropriate, evidence-based instruction on bullying prevention shall be incorporated into the curriculum for all students.

Publication and Notice

Annual written notice of the relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to students and their parents or guardians, in age-appropriate terms.

Annual written notice of the bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be provided to all school staff. The faculty and staff shall be trained annually on the bullying prevention and intervention plan applicable to the school.

Relevant sections of the bullying prevention and intervention plan relating to the duties of faculty and staff shall be included in the school employee handbook.

The bullying prevention and intervention plan shall be posted on the South Middlesex Regional Vocational Technical School District website.

LEGAL REFS.: Title VII, Section 703, Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended
Federal Regulation 74676 issued by EEO Commission
Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972
603 CMR 26.00
M.G.L. 71:37O; 265:43, 43A; 268:13B; 269:14A

REFERENCES: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Model
Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

CROSS REFS.: AC, Nondiscrimination
ACAB, Sexual Harassment
JBA, Student-to-Student Harassment
JIC, Student Discipline
JICFA, Prohibition of Hazing

ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND DRUG USE BY STUDENTS PROHIBITED

A student shall not, regardless of the quantity, use or consume, possess, buy or sell, or give away any beverage containing alcohol; any tobacco product, including vapor/E-cigarettes; marijuana; steroids; or any controlled substance. The District School Committee prohibits the use or consumption by students of alcohol, tobacco products, or drugs on school property or at any school function.

Additionally, any student who is under the influence of drugs or alcoholic beverages prior to, or during, attendance at or participation in a school-sponsored activity, will be barred from that activity and may be subject to disciplinary action.

The school district shall utilize, in accordance with law, a verbal screening tool to screen students for substance abuse disorders approved the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. The tool shall be administered by trained staff on an annual basis at two different grade levels. Parents/guardians shall be notified prior to the opening of school each year. Parents/guardians shall have the right to opt out of the screening by written notice prior to or during the screening. All statements made by a student during a screening are confidential and shall not be disclosed except in the event of immediate medical emergency or in accordance with law. De-identified results shall be reported to the Department of Public Health within 90 days of the completion of the screening process.

This policy shall be posted on the district's website and notice shall be provided to all students and parents of this policy in accordance with state law. Additionally, the district shall file a copy of this policy with DESE in accordance with law in a manner requested by DESE.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L.71:2A; 71:96; 272:40A

CROSS REFS.: IHAMB, Teaching About Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco
GBEC, Drug Free Workplace Policy

PREGNANT STUDENTS

The School District wishes to preserve educational opportunities for those students who may become pregnant and/or take on parenting responsibilities.

Pregnant students are permitted to remain in regular classes and participate in extracurricular activities with non-pregnant students throughout their pregnancy, and after giving birth are permitted to return to the same academic and extracurricular program as before the leave.

The South Middlesex Regional Vocational Technical School District does not require a pregnant student to obtain the certification of a physician that the student is physically and emotionally able to continue in school.

Every effort will be made to see that the educational program of the student is disrupted as little as possible; that health counseling services, as well as instruction, are offered; that return to school after leave is encouraged; and that every opportunity to complete high school is provided.

LEGAL REFS.: M.G.L. 71:84
 Title IX: 20 U.S.C. § 1681
 34 CFR § 106.40(b)

INTERROGATIONS AND SEARCHES

Interrogations and Arrest on School Grounds

1. In the event a police officer seeks to interrogate a person on School grounds, search a locker or a person, or arrest a person in relation to any event which occurred off the School grounds during non-school hours:
 - a. The police officer will be required to identify him/herself. In addition, the police officer will be requested to explain why it is necessary to conduct the investigation during School hours.
 - b. Unless such notice would interfere with a police investigation, the student's parents should be notified prior to an interrogation of the student.
 - c. The Superintendent-Director-Director or his/her designee must be present during any interrogation or search of a locker or desk by a police officer.
 - d. The School will comply with a duly authorized warrant for arrest. In the event of the arrest of a student, the student's parents must be informed as soon as practicable that the police are taking custody of the student.
2. The police should be requested to investigate any possible crimes which have occurred in School or on School grounds. Since the School is an educational institution and not an investigative agency, the following procedures should be followed in the event of any criminal activity in the School:
 - a. A request should be made to the police department to conduct an investigation.
 - b. Prior to the interrogation or arrest of any student, the parents of the suspected student must be notified.
 - c. The Superintendent-Director-Director or his/her designee must be present during any interrogation or search of a locker or desk by a police officer.
 - d. Should a student be arrested, the parents of the student must be informed as soon as practicable that the police are taking the student into custody.
3. The Superintendent-Director-Director or his/her designee must be immediately informed of any police investigation occurring in the School.

Students and their personal belongings, including student vehicles, are subject to search by School personnel to the extent there exists a reasonable basis for suspecting that the search would reveal evidence that the student has violated the law or School rules. In the event of the search of a student or his/her belongings, the parents of the student will be notified as soon as practicable following the search.

Except as otherwise necessary due to exigent circumstances, all searches of students will be conducted by a school administrative staff member in the presence of another adult. In all cases the nature of the search must be reasonably related to the object sought and must not be excessively intrusive in light of the age and gender of the student.

In the event a student is found to be in possession of an object or substance that may give rise to a crime, such object or substance will be given to the police. Other objects or substances which are prohibited by School rules or which are otherwise disruptive to the School environment may be held by School officials for later return to the student's parents.

School lockers and desks, which are assigned to students for their use are provided as a privilege for convenience only, and remain the property of the School department and the student should, therefore, have no expectation of privacy in these areas including areas within a locker or a desk. Such areas are subject to canine searches and to random searches by School officials at any time. Such search may be undertaken either within or outside the presence of the student and shall be under the direction of the Superintendent-Director-Director of his/her designee.

LEGAL REFS.: United States and Massachusetts Constitutions

NOTE: For additional information, refer to the Student Handbook.

LOCKERS

The locker and its space are the property of the school. Student lockers are subject to inspection, and the administration retains a duplicate of the combination, or a master key, which permits them to open every locker. The locker may be opened at any time, with or without your presence, under the direction of the school Principal. Do not place valuable items in your locker. They are not secure and the school takes no responsibility for anything lost from your locker. Padlocks are your responsibility. There is a \$5.00 replacement fee for lost or stolen locks. Students may only use school-issued locks with the exception of physical education and athletics.

Searches of Lockers, Students and School Property – The Principal or his designee retains the right to search lockers, desks, student vehicles, or other storage if there is reason or cause to believe that the student has in his/her possession any item, the possession of which would constitute a violation of school rules or a criminal offense under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

STUDENT COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

The District School Committee recognizes that there may be conditions in the school system that are in need of improvement and that students should have some means by which their concerns may be effectively expressed, considered, and dealt with fairly. Such means, if well conceived and understood in advance, can do much to maintain harmonious relationships among the schools and the students and community.

The traditional "open door" policy in the public school system will be continued. Students--and their parents and/or guardians--who believe that a student has received unfair treatment may bring forward their grievance. Appeals of individual disciplinary cases will be required to follow the district's policy on student discipline. Any applicable provisions of the Massachusetts General Laws or federal law will be followed by school officials in conducting hearings and reviews of student grievances. In general, procedures will begin with the authority imposing the penalty (for example, Principal or teacher) and may ultimately be referred to the Superintendent-Director and on to the District School Committee if applicable.

Every attempt will be made to seek a satisfactory solution to any legitimate grievance in a friendly and informal manner.

CROSS REF: JIC Student Discipline