

PATHFINDER REGIONAL VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL
ADMISSION POLICY

I. INTRODUCTION

An admission process is necessary in 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, an institution 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 Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical High School will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this Admission Policy. The Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical High School District Committee approved this policy on

II. EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical High School admits students and makes available to them its advantages, privileges and courses of study without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability or homelessness status. Students with disabilities may voluntarily self-identify for the purpose of requesting reasonable accommodations during the entire application and admission process.

If there is a student with limited English proficiency, a qualified representative from Pathfinder will assist the applicant in completing the necessary forms and assist in interpreting during the entire application and admission process upon request of the applicant. 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 their admission to the school.

III. ELIGIBILITY

The Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical High School's administration will determine openings for grades 9-12. Pathfinder is in compliance with state and federal legislation guaranteeing equal access to public educational institutions.

In-District:

Any eighth, ninth, or tenth grade student who is a resident of the Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical School District—who lives in Belchertown, Granby, Hardwick, Monson, Palmer, New Braintree, Ware, or Warren whether with their parent/guardian or other relative, by themselves, or in a foster or group home, or in virtually any other living situation--who expects to be promoted to the grade they seek to enter by their local district is eligible to apply for fall admission as an in-district applicant. Any ninth or tenth grade in-

district applicant may apply for transfer admission during the school year for the grade in which they are currently enrolled. Resident students will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this admission policy. The sending school may be asked to verify an applicant's residency within the Pathfinder District.

Out-of-District:

Any eighth, ninth, or tenth grade student who is a resident in a city/town outside of the Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical School District (out-of-district students), who expects to be promoted to the grade they seek to enter by their local district is eligible to apply for fall admission. Out-of-district applicants will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this admissions policy and will be accepted per this admissions policy and M.G.L. c. 74 section 7 on a tuition basis provided there are vacancies in the program in which they are interested. If accepted, the sending town will pay the tuition pursuant to M.G.L. c. 74 section 7c. and the Massachusetts Guidelines for the Vocational Technical Education Program Nonresident Tuition Process Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 74.

School Choice:

The Pathfinder District is a participant in Massachusetts' school choice program. School choice applications will be evaluated according to the selection criteria contained in this admissions policy. All school choice students must be able to arrange transportation to Pathfinder or to a district bus stop.

Home School Students:

Students in grades 8-10 who are formally being home schooled may apply for admission to Pathfinder, including admission during the school year, by completing an application. The home school student's parent/guardian must submit a copy of the home school approval letter from the local school superintendent. Home school students will be accepted to Pathfinder according to the admissions criteria contained in this policy. Please refer to Section VI: Application Process for more information.

Vocational-Technical Transfer Students :

Students in grades 9-12 currently enrolled in state-approved Chapter 74 vocational technical programs who expect to be promoted to the grade they seek to enter by their vocational district are eligible to apply for fall transfer admission. Vocational-technical transfer applicants in grades 9-12 may also apply for transfer admission during the school year for the grade in which they are currently enrolled. Transfer students will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this admission policy, subject to space availability in the student's technical program.

IV. DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE/QUOTA

Pathfinder Regional Vocational-Technical High School is a public regional vocational-technical high school located on a scenic campus in Palmer, Massachusetts. Pathfinder is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and is committed to providing quality technical and academic programs. The Pathfinder District serves 8 towns. Each member town's percentage of seats in the ninth grade class will be the ratio of that town's grade k-12 enrollment (private and public) as compared to the total K-12 grade

enrollment in the district. The current allotment of students from each of the district towns is as follows:

| | |
|---------------|--------|
| Belchertown | 26.43% |
| Granby | 11.25% |
| Hardwick | 4.19% |
| Monson | 14.63% |
| New Braintree | 1.56% |
| Palmer | 18.88% |
| Ware | 14.98% |
| Warren | 8.08% |

It is the responsibility of the Pathfinder Superintendent to supervise the administration of the policies and procedures required to admit and enroll applicants in conformity with this admissions policy. Pathfinder has an Admissions Committee appointed by the Superintendent. The committee consists of the Guidance Director, Assistant Superintendent/Principal, Special Education Director, Director for Student Affairs and Vocational Coordinator.

Responsibilities of the Admissions Committee include:

- A. Determination of standards for admission
- B. Development and implementation of admission procedures
- C. Processing of applications
- D. Ranking of students
- E. Acceptance of students according to the procedure and criteria in the admission policy
- F. Establishment and maintenance of a waiting list of acceptable candidates

The Pathfinder Guidance Office is responsible for disseminating information about the school to the local sending schools through assemblies, press releases, etc and also for collecting applications.

V. **RECRUITMENT PROCESS**

Pathfinder disseminates information about the school through a variety of methods:

- a. Each fall visitations are scheduled at the local schools for an informational presentation to 8th grade classes by Pathfinder staff.
- b. An evening Open House event is scheduled annually in late Fall. The event provides prospective grade 5-8 students and their parent/guardian(s) with an opportunity to tour the Pathfinder facility, speak with students and staff, and view presentations/demonstrations of our technical offerings. This event is voluntary and free of charge.

- c. Each winter field trips for interested 8th graders from the local schools will be arranged with their school counselors so that students can tour Pathfinder and experience a typical day at the school.
- d. Parent/guardian(s) may schedule individual visits at a mutually convenient time.
- e. Print brochures describing Pathfinder offerings, including technical programs, academic courses, sports, cooperative education, and special education resources, are available in the Pathfinder Guidance Office and will be distributed to the local school guidance offices throughout the year. Brochures may also be requested by calling the school.
- f. A wealth of information about Pathfinder can also be found on the school website: www.pathfindertech.org. An application for admission and the school's Admissions Policy can both be accessed on the website.

VI. APPLICATION PROCESS

A.) FALL ADMISSION :

Applying for admission to Pathfinder to **begin classes next school year**:

1. Students interested in applying to Pathfinder for **Fall admission** to the ninth, tenth, eleventh or twelfth grade must:
 - a. Obtain an application from their local school guidance counselor or from the Pathfinder website as early in the school year as possible.
 - b. Return the completed application form to their local school guidance counselor/principal as soon as possible. **The deadline for priority admission is March 15th**. Applications received after March 15th will be handled as late applications. More information about late applications can be found below.
2. It is the responsibility of the local school guidance counselor to:
 - a. Complete their portion of the application form, including the Guidance Counselor Recommendation.
 - b. Forward the completed application to the Pathfinder Guidance Office as soon as possible, keeping in mind the March 15th deadline. Completed applications should include all required signatures.
 - c. Submit hard copies of official documentation in regard to each applicant's grades, attendance, and discipline as noted in items 3(a) and 3(b) below.
- 3(a). For applications to **grade 9** (fall admission) the following **hardcopy** information must be submitted to Pathfinder:
 - Report cards indicating **final grade averages** for grade 7, as well as report card grades for terms 1 & 2 of grade 8 in English Language Arts, or its equivalent, social studies, math and science.

- Attendance reports indicating the sum of **unexcused absences** for grade 7, plus terms 1 & 2 of grade 8.
 - Discipline reports indicating any **behavioral incidents** from grade 7 and from terms 1 & 2 of grade 8.
- 3(b). For applications to **grades 10, 11 & 12** (fall admission) the following **hardcopy** information must be submitted to Pathfinder:
- Report cards indicating **final grade averages** for the *previous* grade level, as well as report card grades for terms 1 & 2 of the *current* grade in English Language Arts, or its equivalent, social studies, math and science.
 - Attendance reports indicating the sum of **unexcused absences** for the *previous* grade level, plus terms 1 & 2 of the *current* grade.
 - Discipline reports indicating any **behavioral incidents** from the *previous* grade level, and from terms 1 & 2 of the *current* grade.

B.) CURRENT SCHOOL YEAR ADMISSION:

Applying for admission during the school year **to begin classes during the same school year**, as opposed to applying for admission to begin classes the next school year:

1. Students interested in applying to Pathfinder for admission for the current school year must:
 - a. Obtain an application from their local school guidance counselor, the Pathfinder Guidance Office, or the Pathfinder web-site.
 - b. Return the completed application form to their local school guidance counselor as soon as possible.
2. It is the responsibility of the local school guidance counselor to:
 - a. Complete their portion of the application form, including the guidance counselor recommendation.
 - b. Forward the completed application to the Pathfinder Guidance Office. Completed applications should include all required signatures.
 - c. Submit hard copies of official documentation in regard to each applicants' grades, attendance and discipline as noted in item 3 below.
3. For applications to **grades 9, 10, 11 & 12** (current school year) the following **hardcopy** information must be submitted to Pathfinder:
 - Report cards indicating **final grade averages** for the *previous grade level*, as well as all grades to date for the *current grade level* in English Language Arts, or its equivalent, social studies, math and science.

- Attendance reports indicating the sum of **unexcused absences** for the *previous grade level* and unexcused absences to date for the *current grade level*.
- Discipline reports indicating any **behavioral incidents** from the *previous grade level*, and discipline to date for the *current grade level*.

PLEASE NOTE: If the application is submitted before the completion of the first marking period of the year, information for the previous two grade levels must be provided.

Incomplete Applications:

If incomplete applications are received, the following procedures will be followed:

- a. The Pathfinder Guidance/Admissions Office will notify the local school guidance counselor responsible for submitting the application that the application is incomplete and will request completion.
- b. In the event that the local school guidance counselor does not resolve the problem, the Pathfinder Guidance/Admissions Office will notify the applicant's parent/guardian
- c. If after notifying the local school guidance counselor and parent/guardian, the application remains incomplete for ten school days, the application will be voided.

Late Applications:

In-district applications received after March 15th will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this admissions policy and their composite score total will be integrated in rank order with the established list of in-district applicants for their town.

Out-of-district applications received after March 15th will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this admissions policy and their composite score total will be integrated in rank order with the established list of out-of-district applicants. Out-of-district applications received after March 15th may not meet the April 1st deadline for local superintendent approval. Nonresident applicants must follow the process outlined in the Nonresident Student Enrollment process as outlined in the **Guidelines for the Vocational Technical Education Program Nonresident Student Tuition Process Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 74** located on the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education website: www.doe.mass.edu/cte/admissions

Withdrawn Students:

Students who have withdrawn from Pathfinder (transferred schools or quit school) and who are attending or not attending another high school and want to return to Pathfinder may reapply following the procedures contained in this Admission Policy. The application will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this Admission Policy.

VII. SELECTION CRITERIA

All applications will be assessed using weighted admissions criteria. Each applicant will be assigned a score derived from the average of the sub scores of the following criteria. The maximum number of points an applicant may earn is 100. All of the information upon which the selection criteria are based are provided by sending schools in the form of report cards and/or school discipline and attendance summary reports.

1. Scholastic Achievement (maximum 30 points)

| <u>Grade Averages</u> | <u>Points</u> |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| A (90 – 100) | 30 |
| B (80 – 89) | 20 |
| C/C+ (75 – 79) | 15 |
| C-/C (70 – 74) | 10 |
| D+ (60 – 69) | 05 |
| F (00 – 59) | 00 |

For applicants looking for fall admission, the *average* of the grades from the previous school year (final grade) and terms 1 & 2 for the current grade are used in determining a point value in each of the four subject areas: English Language Arts, or its equivalent, social studies, mathematics and science.

For applicants looking for admission during the current school year, the *average* of the grades from the previous school year and the grades to date for the current school year are used in determining a point value in each of the four subject areas: English Language Arts, or its equivalent, social studies, mathematics and science. If complete information for the first marking term of the current school year is not yet available (due to an application submitted early in the school year), grades from the previous two school years will be used.

The total score for Scholastic Achievement is the sum of the applicant's averages in English Language Arts, or its equivalent, Social Studies, Mathematics and Science. The maximum point total in this category is 30 points.

2. **Attendance** (maximum 30 points)

| <u>Number of Unexcused Absences</u> | <u>Points</u> |
|--|----------------------|
| 0 – 5 | 30 |
| 6 – 9 | 25 |
| 10 – 12 | 20 |
| 13 – 15 | 10 |
| 16 - 20 | 05 |

For applicants looking for fall admission, the *sum* of **unexcused absences** from the previous school year and terms 1 & 2 of the current grade are used in determining the point value for the Attendance criteria.

For applicants looking for admission during the current school year, the *sum* of **unexcused absences** from the previous school year and those to date for the current school year are used in determining the point value for Attendance. If complete information for the first marking term of the current school year is not yet available (due to an application submitted early in the school year), the unexcused absences from the previous two school years will be used.

3. **School Discipline/Conduct** (maximum 30 points)

| <u>Discipline/Conduct Rating</u> | <u>Points</u> |
|---|----------------------|
| No discipline incidents | 30 |
| 1-3 minor incidents | 20 |
| 4-6 minor incidents | 15 |
| 1 suspension | 15 |
| Combination of 1-3 minor incidents and 1 suspension | 10 |
| Combination of 4-6 minor incidents and 1 suspension | 05 |
| More than 1 suspension | 00 |

For applicants looking for fall admission, the *sum* of **minor incidents and/or suspensions** from the previous school year and terms 1 & 2 of the current grade are used in determining the point value for the School Discipline/Conduct criteria.

For applicants looking for admission during the current school year, the *sum* of **minor incidents and/or suspensions** from the previous school year and those to date for the current school year are used in determining the point value for School

Discipline/Conduct. If complete information for the first marking term of the current school year is not yet available (due to an application submitted early in the school year), the discipline record from the previous two school years will be used.

Students who have been expelled from school will not be eligible for admission to Pathfinder.

Minor incidents - a minor incident shall include any disciplinary action that was taken by the school and appears on the student’s discipline record that did not result in a suspension or expulsion. Minor incidents will include, but are not limited to, demerits, detentions, Saturday school, etc.

Suspensions - a suspension shall be defined as a disciplinary action that was taken by the school and appears on the student’s discipline record as a suspension, whether it be an internal or external suspension.

4. **Local Guidance Counselor's Recommendation** (maximum 10 points)

| <u>Rating Categories</u> | <u>Points (0 – 5)</u> Above Average =4-5 Average = 3 Below Ave = 0-2 |
|---------------------------------|--|
| Study habits/work habits | 0-5 |
| Personal Responsibility | 0-5 |

The *sum* of points received from the recommendation in the categories listed above is used to determine the point value for the Local Guidance Counselor Recommendation criteria.

Since attendance and discipline records for Home School students do not traditionally exist as they do in the public/private school setting, the students will be assessed 50% on grades and 50% on recommendations. Parents or the person responsible for implementation of the home school curriculum submit grades for English Language Arts, or its equivalent, social studies, mathematics and science for the applicant that are comparable with other students applying from the same grade level in the community. If grades are not available, a representative sample or portfolio of the student’s body of work in English Language Arts, or its equivalent, social studies, mathematics and science, along with a curriculum guide must be submitted for review. The parent or home school coordinator should also complete the recommendation on the application.

VIII. SELECTION PROCESS

Overview:

- The Admissions Committee considers scholastic achievement, attendance, discipline and local Guidance Counselor's recommendation. Applications are reviewed, processed and assigned points by grade level. Applications are then rank-ordered and admissions decisions made based on the number of vacancies at each grade level for the following year.

All accepted students will take the Stanford Achievement test in English and math for placement purposes only.

In-District:

After a score for each in-district (resident) applicant has been determined, all resident applicants are placed in order of their composite score total by town of residence. Applicants are then accepted in order, specifically, the resident applicant with the highest score total is accepted first, the resident applicant with the second highest score total is accepted second, and so on until the minimum number of seats allotted to the district towns are filled. Each member town's percentage of seats in the ninth grade class will be the ratio of that town's grade k-12 enrollment (private and public) as compared to the total K-12 grade enrollment in the District. All resident applicants who have submitted applications by the March 15 deadline are classified as accepted, declined, or wait list. Initial acceptance letters are sent to the number of applicants determined to constitute the maximum number that can be safely distributed among the vocational shop areas in the school.

After completion of the first round of admissions, the remaining applicants from district towns will be combined with those from non-district towns and a new rank ordering of applicants by admission scores will be completed. Once the number of confirmed acceptances from the first round of applicants is determined, a second round of acceptance letters will be sent out to the number of students on the revised list needed to fill out the ninth-grade class. During this process steps will be taken to ensure that member districts' minimum allotments are filled. The priority for selection of students for an admission when students have received the same score on their application will always be given to students from district towns.

Out-of District:

Out-of-district applications are processed after in-district applications have been assessed and processed. After June 15th of each year, if vacancies exist following the first round of admissions for resident applicants, excess spaces shall be distributed to acceptable candidates who do not reside in the district. Applicants will be selected from the out-of-district list according to composite score total received. Students will be notified in writing if they have been accepted, declined, or placed on the waiting list.

School Choice:

School Choice applications are processed after in-district applications have been assessed and processed. After June 15th of each year, if vacancies exist following the first round of admissions for resident applicants, excess spaces shall be distributed to acceptable candidates who do not reside in the district. Applicants will be selected from the out-of-district list according to composite score total received. Students will be notified in writing if they have been accepted, declined, or placed on the waiting list.

The Pathfinder School Committee will vote no later than June 1st of each year if changes in the School Choice policy are to be made for the admissions cycle for the following school year. This will include determining the number of seats that will be available. All School Choice applicants will be evaluated and ranked using the criteria set forth in this admissions policy.

Students who begin their enrollment as School Choice students may remain as School Choice students at Pathfinder throughout their enrollment providing they continue to reside outside of the district. Students who begin their enrollment as in-district residents and move outside of the district during their enrollment, may either request to become School Choice students or apply to attend as a nonresident student according to the *Vocational Technical Education Nonresident Student Tuition Process* pursuant to M.G.L. c.74 (see *Out-of-District Applicants* in Section III above). All School Choice students must be able to arrange transportation to Pathfinder or to a district bus stop.

IX. ENROLLMENT

In order to enroll at Pathfinder for the fall, accepted applicants must:

- pass both English Language Arts, or its equivalent, and mathematics for the year at the sending school district
- be promoted by the sending school district to the grade level to which the student has been accepted

Any student who does not meet these requirements must participate in a sanctioned summer school program to satisfy some or all of the missing requirements. Arrangements must be made with the Pathfinder guidance office for an official transcript of the summer school grades to be forwarded to their sending school and to the Pathfinder Guidance Office *prior* to the start of school.

In the event that there are more acceptable candidates than there are spaces available, a waiting list shall be maintained. The waiting list shall be based on the rank order of the student's score total. Acceptable candidates shall be those who also meet the basic requirements for acceptance at the end of the current school year. These basic requirements are defined as:

- having passed both English Language Arts, or its equivalent, and mathematics for the year at the sending school district (failing one or both courses requires that the student successfully pass the course/courses in a summer school program)

promotion by the sending school district to the grade level to which the student has applied

Students will be placed on a waiting list beginning with the first round of acceptances in April and will remain on the waiting list until the following January. A student may request to be removed from the waiting list at any time.

~ IMPORTANT NOTES ~

Prior to the first day of school, in accordance with Massachusetts State Law, updated Immunization records of *accepted* students should be forwarded to Pathfinder's School Nurse.

Also, any documentation concerning 504 Accommodation Plans or Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for *accepted* students should also be forwarded to Pathfinder's Special Education Department immediately after acceptance.

X. VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL PROGRAM PLACEMENT

Grade 9:

All grade 9 students will participate in a half-year exploratory program designed to help them learn about their talents and interests relative to a variety of technical programs. Students will explore the top 10 technical areas as listed on their application and will spend two weeks in each area—one period of related theory each day during the academic week, followed by a full week in the shop. Each two week period is considered one exploratory cycle. The students will be evaluated by the related theory and shop instructors and will receive an evaluation/grading sheet at the completion of the each exploratory cycle; for each exploratory cycle, the student will receive a Related Theory Average and a Shop Average, as well as a Combined Average for that particular technical area.

To determine the Related Theory Average, the related theory instructor will be assessing students in the following 8 areas (0-100 points in each area):

1. academic foundation (ability to grasp concepts);
2. math (math skills necessary to meet success in the technical area);
3. reading (comprehends the related text);
4. completes class assignments and homework;
5. classroom behavior;
6. participation and contribution to classroom discussion;
7. performance on weekly work (quizzes, tests, worksheets, assignments);
8. student responsibility (prepared for class with books, pen/pencil, homework, agenda, etc).

The grades from the eight related assessment areas will be *averaged* to determine the Related Theory Average. The maximum Related Theory Average a student can earn is 100 points.

Final shop placement is a competitive process. At the completion of the exploratory program in January, students are asked to select their top three shop choices so that final placements can be determined. Students will be ranked according to the Combined Average that they received during the exploratory process in their first choice shop. For example, a student with a point total of 98 would be admitted before a student with a point total of 93. If a shop fills, based on point total, before a student gets his/her first choice, the student would then be considered for his/her second (or third choice), depending on openings in the shop and the student's point total in the shop in relation to the point totals for other students that requested that shop. In the case of a tie over one remaining slot in a shop, the student with the higher Shop Average from their exploratory in that particular shop would receive the slot.

To be eligible for placement in a particular shop area students must earn a 70 or above in both the Related Theory Average and the Shop Average. If a student does not earn the scores of 70 in his/her shop choice and space is available in the shop, the student will be admitted on a provisional basis.

Upperclass Students and Grade 9 Students Accepted after Exploratory:

Students who enroll in Pathfinder and did not participate in the exploratory program or who are unsure of his/her career interest, may explore one or more technical programs that have openings by making a request to his/her guidance counselor. An exploratory will be developed to allow the student to explore a shop or shops before making a program selection. The student will spend two weeks (one academic week in related theory, one week in shop) in each shop. Students will be evaluated using the same evaluation/grading sheet as the grade 9 exploratory. If the number of enrollees seeking a particular shop exceeds the number of openings, the Combined Average received by the students (rank order) would determine the enrollee or enrollees who are placed in the particular shop.

Shop Transfers:

Students who wish to transfer from one shop to another during the school year may apply for a transfer through his/her guidance counselor. Transfer requests will be considered subject to the availability of openings in the requested shop. Each transfer applicant will be interviewed and counseled individually to determine the appropriateness of the transfer for the particular student. If available, the student's exploratory grades earned in that shop will also be reviewed. If necessary, the counselor may set-up a meeting with the student, parent/guardian(s), and teachers to further discuss the matter.

XI. REVIEW and APPEALS

General Admissions:

The applicant's parent/guardian(s), upon receipt of written notification from Pathfinder indicating that the applicant was not accepted or placed on a waiting list, may request a review of the decision by sending a letter to the Assistant Superintendent-Director/Principal within fifteen days of receipt of the letter. The Assistant Superintendent-

Director/Principal will respond in writing to the request with the findings of the review within fifteen days.

If after the review, the parent/guardian wishes to appeal the findings of the review they may do so by sending a letter requesting that they be scheduled to appear before the school's Superintendent-Director to appeal the previous decisions. The Superintendent-Director will respond in writing to the parent/guardian with a scheduled date for the appeal within fifteen days of receipt of the request. After this additional appeal has been heard, the Superintendent-Director will then respond in writing with the decision on the appeal within fifteen days of when the appeal was heard.

Students Not Accepted into Selected Shop Area/Placed on Shop Waiting List:

If an applicant was not accepted into a particular vocational program or was placed on a waiting list for a particular program, the applicant's parent/guardian may request a review of the decision by sending a letter requesting a review to the Assistant Superintendent-Director/Principal within fifteen days of the placement. The Assistant Superintendent-Director/Principal will respond in writing to the letter with the findings of the review within fifteen days.