



**NORTHSHORE
EDUCATION
CONSORTIUM**

Topsfield Vocational Academy

**248 Boston Street
Topsfield, MA 01983
1-978-887-8881**

**STUDENT AND PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK
2024 / 2025**



August 8, 2024

Dear Parent(s) and / or Guardian(s);

Welcome to Topsfield Vocational Academy for the 2024 - 2025 school year! We have had a great summer working, going on some community based field trips, and engaging in learning. I am looking forward to seeing everyone on August 28.

Last year we had the opportunity to expand our vocational opportunities and requirements even more and provide multiple off grounds job based opportunities for students. As a true vocational school with therapeutic support, our goal is to make sure we set students up for success. With the increase in vocational requirements, we were able to implement a stronger transition process for students, and help students develop a plan for after they graduate. Whether they decide to go to college or a trade school or if they plan to move right into the workforce, the staff at TVA are dedicated to helping students with these decisions and in teaching them the skills and tools they need to take the next steps.

In addition to adding to our off grounds vocational opportunities, we also established a community service program that allows all students to gain credit hours towards the community service graduation requirement. Not only does this opportunity help students with receiving the credits they need, but it also provides community building, a sense of belonging, and an opportunity to give back.

Also, I am working on developing a mission statement specifically designed for TVA. Creating opportunities for students is a key element. I hope to gather student, parent, staff, and community input as we spend the year creating our identity and developing a mission statement that represents who we truly are.

One of the things I love most about TVA is how unique we are. We provide amazing opportunities for students. The vocational program is what makes us Topsfield Vocational Academy, so with that in mind, it is the expectation and mandatory requirement that all students participate in job site training and work in one of our shops. Students have the flexibility to try many different paths in the vocational program before committing to one. If a student has an idea of what they would like to try, as we expand our vocational opportunities, we are working to find community connections and opportunities to meet those student requests.

Other reminders and expectations: please review the information in this handbook so both you and your child are aware of all our policies

- Students are required to turn in their cell phones and other electronic devices when they arrive and they will be returned at the end of the day. Refusing to do so could result in your student being sent home for the day
- Morning meeting is a requirement of the school day, especially if students would like to attend field trips and other fun activities
- In order to participate in our off grounds trips and activities, students must be in good standing. There can be no recent suspensions, students must be passing all their classes, and they must be present and in attendance to school and their classes

Please be sure to read through our Student Handbook for additional information and completely fill out and sign off on all the required information. In order to start school, we need to have all the forms from the intake packet signed and returned, along with a copy of your child's most recent physical. I am looking forward to seeing you all soon. Our first school event will be our Open House on Thursday October 10 from 5:00 to 7:00. A successful school involves all of us working together to support our students. It is going to be a great school year! Any questions or concerns please feel free to call or email me.

Be well,

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Contact Names/Numbers/Email

Main Number (978) 887-8881			
Name	Title	Phone/ Ext.	e-mail
Lynsey Page	Director / Principal	1522	lpage@nsedu.org
Irene Lynch	Executive Assistant	1521	ilynch@nsedu.org
Tim Fontana	School Counselor	1531	tfontana@nsedu.org
Kathy Lombard	School Counselor	1528	klombard@nsedu.org
Tracey Curtis-Pare	School Counselor	1526	tcurtis-pare@nsedu.org
Cassandra Fulford	Academic Coordinator	1521	cfulford@nsedu.org
Paula Purcell	School Nurse	1525	ppurcell@nsedu.org

REFERRAL and ADMISSION PROCESS

STUDENTS ATTENDING TOPSFIELD VOCATIONAL ACADEMY ARE IN ARE GRADES 9 THROUGH 12

To be considered for admission, a referral will be made by the Department of Special Education of the student's sending school district. The referral packet generally includes a current IEP, psychological and academic testing results, applicable school reports, including discipline, attendance, and transcripts, a psycho-social history, pertinent medical information, and reports from other collaterals (i.e. Programs, Therapists, DCF, DMH, DYS, etc.) This information is beneficial in evaluating the appropriateness of placement in our school.

After a thorough review of materials, if it is deemed that TVA may be an appropriate placement, an interview with the student and family/guardian/program will be scheduled.

After review of written materials and the interview a decision regarding admission will be made by the TVA team. Notice of acceptance or refusal will be communicated as soon as possible to both the family and the referring school district. Upon acceptance, the student's parent/guardian is asked to fill out a school permission packet and submit medical information including a recent physical and the student's immunization records. A student may start school after all required documents have been completed and submitted.

The above referral process is also applicable to all students being referred to our 45-day educational assessment program, as well as to our summer school program.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

MISSION STATEMENT

To build a respectful and responsible community dedicated to academic, vocational, and personal success.

In order to support Topsfield Vocational Academy's mission, the program contains the following components:

- A responsibility to maintaining a strong vocational background to gain important skills for success and maintaining employment, which is a requirement of the program
- Small, structured classrooms with a low student to staff ratio
- Individualized attention and programming within the context of the student's known and evolving academic, social, and emotional needs

- Student support services aimed at promoting academic success and personal development
- Clear and constructive school rules and expectations, with ongoing modeling by, and feedback from, caring, dedicated, trained professional staff
- A team approach to student success, which includes input from students, families, community collaterals as well as staff

Highlights of our Program:

- We strive to aid students in gaining insight into the various factors affecting their social and academic functioning, and to internalize the belief that respectful and self-disciplined behavior are necessary to succeed in life
- All staff are committed to helping students to develop skills and strategies that not only promote safe and adaptive responses to life and its many challenges, but also enhance relationships, and facilitate goal attainment especially with regard to a student's academic progress and performance
- We offer vocational opportunities and experiences to help students with preparation for not only life after high school, but also social skills and professional interactions
- We strive to strengthen and enhance the peer community through community building activities and opportunities for student involvement and leadership

ABSENT LINE: (978) 887-8881 ext. 1521

Arrival

Students are expected to arrive at school between 8:00 and 8:15 a.m.

- Students are considered in school the moment they arrive on campus (by bus, foot, car or bicycle). All school rules apply from the moment a student arrives on campus in the morning until they leave campus at the end of the day
- Students who exhibit problematic/unsafe behaviors on their bus/van will be subject to consequences such as short or long term loss of bus privileges
- Students are expected to take the bus transportation provided to them by their sending school district. Any alternative plans for transportation (parent/guardian drop off) must be communicated prior to the start of the day so transportation can be notified
- Students are not allowed to drive themselves to school unless they have been approved, signed off on the student contract, and had a meeting with the principal
- Parents/guardians who transport their children to school are asked to drop the student at the front door and wait until the student enters the building. At dismissal, parents/guardians should line their cars up in the middle parking lot (not in the line used for the numerous buses and vans)

Transportation

Student transportation needs are arranged through the special education department of your sending school district. If your student will be absent and does not need to be picked up by their van/bus, please call the number provided to you by your school district or transportation company. This courtesy call will prevent other students from unnecessary time

on the van/bus. Please also communicate with the transportation company if your student will not travel home on the bus/van if dismissed early or sent home sick or has another form of transportation for the day. Students who exhibit problematic/unsafe behaviors on their bus/van may be subject to consequences such as short or long term loss of bus privileges.

Student Driven Automobiles

A student car approval form must be filled out and approved before a student brings a car to school. This form is a contract stating the expectations for driving to school and the requirements necessary to maintain that permission. Driving is a privilege. In addition, students must present a valid driver's license and registration. Failure to do so will result in the loss of permission to drive to school. These forms are available in the main office. Students who fail to demonstrate safe operating procedures may lose their driving privileges. Additionally, student drivers may not transport any other student from school.

Dismissal

Students will be **dismissed at 2:00 p.m.**

Early Dismissal Procedure

- Please report any changes in your child's dismissal (i.e. early dismissal for an appointment or a change in transportation) to the school as soon as possible, via a written note stating the reason for and time of early dismissal and preferably with 24 hours notice. Please leave the information with the front desk and it will be directed toward the appropriate staff
- We ask that if your student is to be dismissed early please enter the main office, and the student will be called for dismissal and appropriately sign out of school
- If someone other than the parent or guardian is picking up the student, please indicate this on your note. Identification will be required if office personnel do not know or recognize the person picking up your student. Please note that all individuals who pick up students must be 18 years of age or older
- If a student walks out of school and/or off school property prior to dismissal and/or without the appropriate permission, disciplinary action could occur

COURSES/ CREDITS/ GRADING

Course Offerings:

TVA offers classes based on the grade level requirements outlined in the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Core classes include Math, Science, Social Studies/History, and English Language Arts. Elective classes are provided and have previously included Health, Technology, MCAS/other test Prep, to allow students to be exposed to a well-rounded education. Students that may need more academic support in a smaller environment and less transitions during the day, have access to classrooms that provide this support.

Credits

Students receive credit/grades on a quarterly basis for any subject for which a grade of 60% or above is achieved. If the student's final grade at the end of the year is 60% or above, the student will receive credit or a passing grade for the full year.

Additional credit earning opportunities are available via Mentoring, Independent Studies, Volunteering, and Internships.

Grades

Each teacher has a method of grading students that takes into account attendance, class participation, test and quiz grades, applicable project grades, completion of class assignments, and conduct.

Community Service

Students are required to do community service every year as part of their graduation requirements. A minimum of 5 hours each year (20 total for all 4 years of high school). Multiple opportunities will be offered to students throughout the course of the school year and during ESY. Community service is not a Vocational Opportunity and students will not be paid.

Field Trips

Students take occasional field trips by bus for recreational and learning purposes. All field trips should be considered a school "class" occurring off campus, and all school rules and expectations will remain in place. Staff will review any changes in expectations with the students and, as needed, with parents/guardians, before the trip. A permission slip for field trips is enclosed in the Student Information Packet. This will provide permission for all field trips for the school year.

Progress Reports

IEP progress reports are sent home on a quarterly basis.

Report Cards

Report cards are sent home and to the sending district at the close of each quarter. Grade equivalents, credits, and attendance data are outlined on the report cards.

School Records

Student record regulations ensure parents and students the right to confidentiality, inspection, amendment and destruction of student records.

MCAS

The following information can be found on the Department of Education Website:

Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System

Overview

The Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) is designed to meet the requirements of the Education Reform Law of 1993. This law specifies that the testing program must

- *test all public school students in Massachusetts, including students with disabilities and English Language Learner students;*
- *measure performance based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework learning standards;*
- *report on the performance of individual students, schools, and districts.*

As required by the Education Reform Law, students must pass the grade 10 tests in English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics and one of the four high school Science and Technology Engineering tests as one condition of eligibility for a high school diploma (in addition to fulfilling local requirements).

In addition, the MCAS program is used to hold schools and districts accountable, on a yearly basis, for the progress they have made toward the objective of the No Child Left Behind Law that all students be proficient in Reading and Mathematics by 2014.

Graduation

In order for students to receive a diploma, they must meet the graduations requirements of their sending school district

Transcripts:

Official transcripts, necessary for college and other post high-school opportunities, are available through the guidance department of your sending school district. Your school counselor can help your district compile a final transcript.

BREAKFAST/ LUNCH

Breakfast

TVA offers a free breakfast each morning. The breakfast program runs from 8:00 am to 8:30 am.

Lunch

- TVA provides lunches to students free of charge. There is a charge for desserts
- Refrigerators are available for students who choose to bring lunch
- Microwaves are available to heat items as needed

PERSONAL PROPERTY / ELECTRONICS

Cell phones

TVA recognizes that many of our students have cell phones for personal and family communication. Cell phones must be powered off and turned into staff each morning. This is a requirement for all students and a student could be subject to disciplinary consequences for not complying. This includes all smart watches as well.

Electronic Devices (Such as Switches, PSPs, etc.)

- Students are allowed to use these items during bus rides & break times. This is a privilege and can be taken away if a student cannot use the item responsibly
- **Students who choose to bring personal electronic devices to school do so at their own risk.** Many of these devices are quite expensive. NSEC takes NO RESPONSIBILITY for lost, stolen, damaged, broken, or other problems that occur with electronic devices
- Students are provided with a chromebook to use in school each day. A permission form is required for each student to sign off on accepting responsibility for appropriate use, and any loss of damage
- The use of headphones is subject to the specific program and classroom expectations and may vary based on the individual needs of the student

Other Valuables

- Students are discouraged from bringing valuable items to school. This includes jewelry, large amounts of money, MP3 Players, Game Boys, etc. Students should not bring items to school to sell, trade or buy. In addition, we strongly discourage lending or borrowing of valuables. Students who bring valuables to school do so at their own risk.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Inclement Weather/School Closing

- NEC schools will be closed if the Town in which they are located closes school due to a weather emergency
- NEC may choose to close ALL NEC schools even if not all host towns are closed
- If an NEC school is open, but some towns are closed, those towns may choose not to transport students. This is the town's decision and is considered an excused absence. Parents/Guardians can choose to bring their child to school if the school is open
- Given the fact that our schools are in multiple locations and students come from multiple towns, we generally DO NOT do late starts or early releases due to weather, even if districts do so. Please be aware that this may affect your child's transportation
- Communication regarding school closures will take place primarily via automated email, text, and voicemail alerts, so it is essential that we have the correct information on file. In addition, we will post on WBZ and our website

Telephone Usage and Messages –

- If a parent/guardian needs to reach their student during the school day, please call the student's teacher or the main office staff. 978-887-8881

Ext. 1522 (Principal)
Ext. 1521 (Main Office)

Change of Address

Please notify the school as soon as possible with any change in home/program address or telephone number. For student safety it is critical that we have accurate information regarding contact names and numbers in case of emergency.

Parents/Guardians can request full policy manual and can request translation

Release of Student's Name

The Northshore Education Consortium does not issue the names, addresses and personal information about students to any outside agencies without the consent of the student and parents in accordance with Massachusetts Law 603 CMR 230.07 (4).

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

The following are the expectations for student behavior and presentation while at school:

- **Demonstrate respect at all times**

In order to maintain a positive and supportive school community, all students are expected to act in a respectful manner towards peers and staff. Understanding that this can be challenging during times of distress, there are many support services available that can assist the student in learning and using appropriate coping and self-management skills

- **Use Respectful Language**
- **Treat people with kindness, courtesy, respect, and dignity**
- **Never ridicule, embarrass, bully or hurt other people**
- **Accept personal differences and choices**
- **Solve problems without violence**
- **Take responsibility and accountability for your actions and your academic success**

By enrolling at TVA, students have acknowledged a desire to obtain an education in an alternative setting. Success can only be truly achieved with daily attendance, completion of assignments, engagement in the vocational requirement, and self-advocacy. While there are many resources available to you to help you optimize your education, most of it is up to you.

TVA has created certain guidelines and protocols to maintain school safety and the integrity of the program.

Students must make sure they adhere to the following guidelines:

- **There is only one student in the bathroom at a time**
- **Students are subject to search if they are suspected to be in possession of an item not allowed in school**
- **Students are to use respectful language towards staff and peers. Discriminatory and/or sexualized language will not be tolerated**
- **Students are required to follow the school's dress code (see policy)**
- **Students are expected to attend all classes and not wander the hallways; students have access to breaks and counselors when needed**
- **Students are expected to attend the Morning Meeting. If a student does not have staff permission to miss the meeting, extra curricular (trips) and vocational opportunities could be jeopardized**
- **Students are expected to participate in the vocational requirement**

The vocational program is an integral part of being a part of TVA. Participating in work each week is mandatory and all students must participate. If students choose not to participate, a Team Meeting will be held to discuss whether a vocational program is the right placement for the student.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS, RESPONSES AND CONSEQUENCES

Our educational program rules and expectations are:

- 1 To promote individual social/emotional growth
- 2 To maintain a healthy and safe school environment

To reach these goals, students receive logical or natural consequences for their behavior. The consequences are divided into three categories that relate to the infraction and that also incorporate restorative practices, education around the incident, and strategies to change the behavior.

Category 1: behaviors will be managed in the classroom directly with the staff in an effort to build relationships and maintain classroom management and class expectations. Staff will communicate directly to parent/guardians any concerning classroom behavior

- Inappropriate classroom language
- Inappropriate language directed at a staff or student
- Refusal to work without classroom disruption
- Head down/sleeping
- Other distracting behaviors that interrupts peer learning
- Wandering and unsupervised space
- Violation of school policies; bathrooms, phone refusal, dress code violations

Potential Consequences

- Potential loss of assignment credit
- Potential loss of privileges; working and field trips
- PBIS and restorative in class practices
- Education and understanding of triggers and how to avoid the common behaviors
- Behavior plan, if determined by the team
- Anti-discrimination and/or anti-bullying/harassment education

Category 2: behavior in class resulting in removal from class

- Verbal assault that makes others feels uncomfortable or upset
- Inappropriate computer usage: videos and language
- Continuous disruptive behavior that is not responsive to redirection

- Physically touching and violating boundaries and personal space
- Disruption to classroom environment or refusal to work after redirection if disrupting classroom
- Wandering and unsupervised space: if behavior continues, dismissal and potential team meeting
- Violation of school policies; bathrooms, phone refusal, dress code violations

Potential Consequences

- Time out/break
- Check in with the principal/counselor
- Missing class and academic credit for the day
- In-School suspension in the SSC
- Depending on the situation either the counselor or the principal will communicate with families
- Mediation between teacher and student or students and student could occur
- A meeting with the teacher before the student returns to class is required
- Education and understanding of triggers and how to avoid common behaviors
- Behavior Plan, if determined by the team
- Anti-discrimination and/or anti-bullying/harassment education

Category 3: behaviors that result in an out of school suspension up to 10 days

- Physical Assault on staff or student
- Nicotine Vaping: caught in the act or refusal to turn in device
- THC Vaping
- Possession of a nicotine vape:
 - If students turn it in when they arrive in the morning, there will not be a consequence
 - Vapes will be collected and only returned to parental/guardian (nicotine only, THC vapes will not be returned)
- Under the influence of Drugs and Alcohol
- Possession of Drugs and Alcohol
- Possession of Weapons: If pocket knife, tool, etc is unintentionally brought to school and then turned in the morning, potential for no disciplinary action
- Property damage in excess of \$250
- Property damage under \$250
- Bullying and harassment
- Use of discriminatory language against another student or staff
- Verbal assault: threats and other excessive language towards staff or other students
- Off grounds without permission
- Inappropriate computer usage
- Any behavior that creates a disruptive/unsafe school environment that has been assessed by school staff ie; wandering and unsupervised space use to the extent that it needs to be a removal from the program
- Pulling a false fire alarm
- Violation of school policies; bathrooms, phone refusal, dress code violations

Potential Consequences

- Out of school short term suspension up to ten days
- Investigations; bullying, harassment, discrimination, Title IX
- Nurse and Principal evaluation and assessment
- Threat or safety assessment
- Potential request for evaluation
- Repayment of items damaged and restorative practices to fix damage and repair relationships
- Potential police notification and involvement
- Loss of privileges
- Confiscation of items
- Mediation, if needed
- Diversion
- Education around discrimination, bullying, social media, smoking cessation will also be provided
- Behavior plan, if determined by team
- Anti-discrimination and/or anti-bullying/harassment education

If your student is suspended from school they will still have access to their school work in google classrooms. They are strongly encouraged to complete their work so that they will not fall behind in their academics.

Bullying and Harassment: please review the NEC bullying policy in the NEC Handbook.

PROHIBITION AGAINST BULLYING AND RETALIATION Acts of bullying, which include cyberbullying, are prohibited: (i) on school grounds and property immediately adjacent to school grounds, at a school sponsored or school-related activity, function, or program whether on or off school grounds, at a school bus stop, on a school bus or other vehicle owned, leased, or used by a school district or school; or through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, and (ii) at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by a school district or school, if the acts create a hostile environment at school for the target or witnesses, infringe on their rights at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of a school. Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying is also prohibited.

Reporting any Bullying or Harassment can be done using the form located in the NEC Policy Manual or by contacting the Principal.

DRESS CODE

We ask everyone to dress in a manner appropriate to a school environment. Students should dress in clothing that is clean and safe. Clothing that is provocative, represents weapons, alcohol and drugs, promoting the use of any illegal substance and represents any form of discrimination, and/or detracts from the learning environment will not be permitted.

Any attire deemed inappropriate by staff will be discreetly addressed and, if the concern cannot be addressed at school, the student may be required to return home to change or have appropriate clothing brought to school. When possible, students will be offered clothing that has been donated to the school.

The following are guidelines regarding student attire

- Please send your student with warm clothing during the winter months (coats, hats, gloves. etc.) so they may spend time outside during break time if weather permits
- Encourage students to dress appropriately given the weather, as well as the school dress code
- If backpacks, coats or other personal items become a distraction to the learning environment, students will be asked to keep these items in their homeroom or the student support center

Parent/Guardian Participation

Parents/Guardians are valuable members of our team at the Northshore Education Consortium. Some means of communication with parents/guardians may include emails, written progress reports, report cards, parent meetings, phone calls, home visits and yearly team meetings. We encourage parents to contact us with any pertinent information regarding their child. This may include medication changes, changes in family dynamics or other school/home issues. Parents/guardians are also encouraged to be in contact with their student’s team to get updates, address concerns or simply discuss their progress. We believe ongoing communication is vital to the success of students.

Student Handbook Signature Page

I have read and understand all the information provided to me in the Northshore Education Consortium Parent/Student Handbook and the Topsfield Vocational Academy Handbook for the 2024 - 2025 school year.

Student Name (please print) **Date**

Student Signature **Date**

Parent/Guardian Signature **Date**

***This page must be returned to school before a student can begin attending**