



**NORTHSHORE
EDUCATION
CONSORTIUM**

**Topsfield Vocational Academy
& STEP Program**

**248 Boston Street
Topsfield, MA 01983**

**1-978-887-8881
TVA / STEP Program x 1522**

**STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK
2021 / 2022**



September 2021

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

Welcome to Topsfield Vocational Academy for the 2021 - 2022 school year! I am writing to let you know of a few changes coming up as well as go over some of the usual rules here at the school for you and your students.

We have been lucky enough to have a lot of applicants for our middle school classroom and have currently accepted six new students for the upcoming school year. Our teachers, Michelle Butterworth, Lindsey Therberge and Brian Ross, have had many years experience with this age group. We are lucky to have this good match moving forward in the fall.

This spring we opened our screen printing shop with a great deal of success. Several students have really taken to the artistic and creative side of this vocational shop. Print shop teacher Kyle Smith has done a great job organizing and filling orders for our print shop customers.

Our last change for the upcoming school year will be the addition of an assistant principal position starting in November. We were lucky enough to hire Ms. Karen Polsonetti from the Manhattan New York Business Academy. I personally have had the pleasure of working with her in the past with at-risk youth and I expect it to be a good match for Karen here at TVA/STEP.

Some reminders...we are back to our pre-pandemic hours of 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. This will consist of six class periods per day including Math, ELA, Science, History, and an elective period which will change every six weeks. There is also an enrichment period which allows students to make up missed work due to their participation in our vocational shop programs.

Other reminders...students are required to turn in their cell phones 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. If your student does not come to school on their regular transportation but you would like them to be picked up at the end of the day, please call your respective bus company and let them know your student will need a ride home at the end of the day. 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.

Please be sure to read through our intake packet for additional information including school rules and dress code.

Any questions or concerns please feel free to call or email me. Looking forward to a great school year!

Regards,

Charles LeBuff

Charles LeBuff, Principal TVA/STEP programs

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Contact Names/Numbers/Email

Main Number (978) 887-8881			
Name	Title	Phone/ Ext.	e-mail
Charles LeBuff	Director / Principal	1522	clebuff@nsedu.org
Sue Martini	Executive Assistant	1521	smartini@nsedu.org
Tim Fontana	School Counselor	1531	tfontana@nsedu.org
Kathy Lombard	School Counselor	1528	klombard@nsedu.org
Paula Purcell	School Nurse	1525	ppurcell@nsedu.org

REFERRAL and ADMISSION PROCESS

STUDENTS IN THE TVA / STEP PROGRAM ARE GRADES 8 THROUGH AGE 22

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, 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 / STEP 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 / STEP 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 and personal success.

In order to support the TVA / STEP PROGRAM mission, the program contains the following components:

- An underlying philosophy that emphasizes building positive and meaningful relationships between all students and staff.
- 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.
- Structured and unstructured opportunities for social and emotional 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.

The TVA / STEP Program recognizes that learning, as well as personal growth and development, occur not only in the classroom, but during social experiences as well. Students at TVA / STEP often need adult support and guidance when certain psycho-social stressors are encountered and learn valuable social and life-skills in our therapeutic milieu.

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, self-disciplined behavior is necessary to succeed in life.
- We intend to teach our students that when we conduct ourselves responsibly and respectfully, there are usually positive outcomes.
- Conversely, when our behaviors and choices offend others or break the rules of our community, there are frequently negative consequences.

- The students' strengths and successes are praised and celebrated, while issues that interfere with academic and personal success are addressed within the context of caring and professional relationships between staff and students.
 - 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.
 - Students are not only supported with our program structure and embedded supports, but also within the structure of our school community.
 - We strive to strengthen and enhance the peer community through community building activities, opportunities for student involvement and leadership, as well as many types of community service and internships
 - Students are encouraged to take responsibility for participating in community events and contributing to a positive school environment.
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ABSENT LINE: (978) 887-8881 ext. 1521

Arrival

Students are expected to arrive at school between 8:00 and 8:15 a.m. Any student dropped off or arriving at school before 8:00 a.m. is likely to be unsupervised, thus creating a potentially unsafe situation.

- 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 are discouraged, but if necessary a request must be in writing and approved by the TVA / STEP director and the sending school district to avoid any complications.
- 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).

Student Driven Automobiles

A student car approval form must be filled out and approved before a student brings a car to school. 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. If you are unable to send a written note with your child, it is best to call your child's school counselor and confirm that staff is aware of the change so that there is minimal confusion. If you are unable to reach your student's school counselor, 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, 1 x one day out of school suspension may be incurred.

COURSES/ CREDITS/ GRADING

Course Offerings:

TVA / STEP 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.

Credits

Students receive credit/grades on a quarterly basis for any subject for which a grade of 65% or above is achieved. If the student's final grade at the end of the year is 65% or above, the student will receive credit or a passing grade for the full year.

Examples:

50 minute class 1 x per week = .25 credits per quarter

50 minute class 2x per week = .5 credits

50 minute class 5 x per week = 1.25 credits per quarter

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.

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 walking field trips for the school year.

How attendance affects grades:

Missed class time means missed learning opportunities and missed assignments. Students who miss excessive days or classes during a quarter can expect lower grades. If a student is absent more than 8 times from a class in a quarter, he/she must meet with each teacher in order to develop a contract to obtain missed information, materials

and make-up work to ultimately earn a passing grade and credit. Once a student is absent in excess of 13 days, although a numerical grade will be assigned for determining final grades, a passing quarterly grade cannot be earned.

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 graduation 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:

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

Lunch:

- The TVA / STEP Program 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

Electronic Devices (Such as I Pods, Game Boys, PSPs, etc.)

- Students are allowed to use these items during bus rides & break times.
- **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 may bring CD games for the computer to school and use them at break time. These games must be screened and approved by staff in the Technology or Media Lab. No swearing, obscenities, or inappropriate graphic content will be allowed.
- The use of headphones is subject to the specific program and classroom expectations and may vary based on the individual needs of the student.

Cell phones

The TVA / STEP Program 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.

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:

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.

Sexuality Issues

The Director will, prior to any course or curriculum that primarily involves human sexual education or human sexuality issues, will notify Parents/Guardians of TVA/STEP Program

students in writing. Such notification will include a brief description of the curriculum and will inform parents/guardians that they may exempt their child from any portion of the curriculum without penalty. Parents/guardians may arrange with the Director to inspect and review instructional materials of those curricula.

Parent(s) 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).

SUPPORT SERVICES

School Counselor:

Sessions can be scheduled according to individual needs.

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 (See section below)**
- **Be considerate of other people**
- **Treat people with civility, courtesy, and dignity.**
- **Never intentionally ridicule, embarrass, bully or hurt other people.**
- **Accept personal differences and choices.**

- **Solve problems without violence.**
- **Take Responsibility for your actions and your academic success.**

By enrolling at TVA / STEP, 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, and self-advocacy. While there are many resources available to you to help you optimize your education, most of it is up to you.

- **Follow through on your commitment**
- **Answer for your own action**
- **Take care of your own matters.**
- **Be trustworthy.**
- **Always use your head.**
- **Don't put things off.**

- **Demonstrate Integrity**

Integrity is a quality characterized by honesty, reliability, and fairness. Your integrity is something you demonstrate over time.

- **Have personal standards and live up to them.**
- **Be honest, reliable, and loyal;**
- **Have the moral courage to stand up for what is right**
- **Do not cheat, steal, or lie.**

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS, RESPONSES AND CONSEQUENCES

***"You are free to make your choices,
You are not free to escape the 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 the most normal, logical or natural consequences for their behavior. All staff will assign consequences on a case-by-case basis.

Discipline System

Depending upon the level of behavior and the disruption and/or impact upon the school and other students, various levels of disciplinary response will be utilized. This can start at very low-level responses that include verbal re-directions and dismissal from class for short periods of time. Additionally, in school detentions/after school detentions and suspensions can be implemented.

School expectations

Consequences will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the staff and team. When appropriate, a behavior plan may be developed by the team to address behaviors and encourage change and growth. When verbal redirection and specific requests are not sufficient to help students follow school rules and expectations, and negative choices are made, a variety of consequences can result. The level of response is directly related to how disruptive, destructive or dangerous a student may be:

Dismissal from Class: A student may be dismissed from class if his/her behaviors are disruptive and hinder other students from learning. If a teacher dismisses a student from a class, they may be asked to take a break and/ or to check in with staff. If a pattern of behaviors leading to repeated class dismissal is evident, the student will also meet with his/her school counselor.

In-School Detention

In-School Detentions usually occur when a student has demonstrated an inability to meet the schools expectations for conduct. The student support staff, based on the student's behavior and attitude, determines length of time.

This is an opportunity for students to:

- Focus on schoolwork away from the mainstream.
- Demonstrate their ability to cooperate with staff and comply with school expectations.
- Think through, process, and internalize alternatives to their inappropriate behavior.

A student who refuses to attend in-school detention when requested or who disrupts detention will receive further disciplinary action.

The following actions may result in suspension:

- Violating any of our school’s safety policies
- Leaving the TVA / STEP Program school building or designated community worksite without permission
- Refusal to cooperate with search due to suspicion of weapons, drugs, alcohol, contraband or threatening a student or staff person.
- Destruction of Property
- Pulling a false fire alarm
- Behavior requiring Physical restraint
- Bullying/Harassment of another student
- Dangerous behaviors especially if they result in injury to another person or destruction of property

Individualized Behavior Plans: **If the team determines that a more individualized and specific plan will best help a student meet school expectations, an Individualized Behavior Plan will be written and reviewed with the student and family/guardian.**

<p style="text-align: center;">OTHER EXPECTATIONS</p>
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Use school property responsibly.

Students are expected to treat all school materials and property with care and respect. Any student who willfully damages the school or personal property or steals school or personal property will be held responsible for repairing and/or paying for the damages or returning the stolen item(s). When damage or theft has occurred the following may happen:

- Parental notification
- Suspension
- Police notification
- Community service to repair or contribute to property maintenance

Respect Physical Boundaries

For the safety and comfort of all students, it is a school wide policy that there is no physical contact of any kind. The one exception to this rule is courteous handshakes or “high 5’s”. There is absolutely no horseplay, hugging, hand holding or other form of person-to-person contact allowed.

Use Respectful Language

All members of TVA / STEP Program are expected to use appropriate language. Swearing and disrespectful manners of communication are never acceptable. Those who continue to use unacceptable language will receive consequences per the disciplinary code.

Follow Classroom Behavior Expectations

The TVA / STEP Program teachers have the freedom to determine the behavior expectations of their own classrooms within the guidelines of the school mission. Students failing to meet the stated expectations will receive consequences as determined by the teacher and the school discipline system.

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 and/or detracts from the learning environment will not be permitted.

The following are prohibited:

- Clothing that depicts illegal activities, drugs, alcohol, obscenities or violent themes.
- Students' faces must be visible in class, this includes not wearing sunglasses.
- Clothing/accessories that are known to represent gang affiliations.
- Clothing that exposes undergarments.
- Clothing that does not cover a student’s midriff.
- Clothing that is revealing or provocative in nature
- Open back shirts or shirts with straps that are less than two fingers in width
- Skirts and shorts that do not reach the bottom of the length of the student’s arm and hand when extended by their sides.
- There should be no risk of clothes falling down (i.e. baggy pants). Secure clothing with a belt or as otherwise necessary.

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 label your student’s clothing if you are concerned he/she may misplace them.
- 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 older 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 daily notebooks, 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 TVA / STEP Program Handbook for the 2021 - 2022 school year.

Student Name (please print)

Date

Student Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

***This page must be returned to school by the close of the next school day.**