

J. Henry Higgins Middle School

85 Perkins St. Peabody, MA 01960

Middle School Career Pathway Exploratory Policy



H.O.P.E.

Every Student, Every Day.

Higgins Middle School Career Pathway Exploration Policy

Overview

Massachusetts state regulations ([603 CMR 4.00](#)) require sending districts to maintain a districtwide Middle School Pathway Exploration Policy that documents how middle school students in the district are made aware of, and gain exposure to, career technical education (CTE) schools and programs available to them in their district, regional, agricultural, and other public high schools.

Students who reside in Peabody have the opportunity to pursue CTE programming at:

- **Peabody Veterans Memorial High School (PVMHS)** is the city's main public high school, located in Peabody, Massachusetts.
 - Career Technical Education: CTE Programs: Cosmetology, Culinary & Baking Arts, Early Childhood Education, Electronic Engineering, Medical Assisting and Protective Service
 - Innovation Pathway: IP Programs: Business and Financing
- **Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School (ENSATS)** is a regional vocational-technical high school located in Danvers, Massachusetts.
 - Career Technical Education: CTE Programs: Advanced Manufacturing Technology , Animal Science , Automotive Collision Repair & Refinishing, Automotive Technology, Biotechnology, Carpentry, Construction Craft Laborer, Cosmetology, Culinary Arts, Dental Assisting, Design & Visual Communications, Early Education and Care, Electricity, Engineering Technology, Environmental Science & Technology, Graphic Communications, Health Assisting, Heating - Ventilation, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration, Horticulture, Information Support Services & Networking, Marketing, Masonry & Tile Setting, Metal Fabrication, and Plumbing

Admission into CTE programs at either school is conducted under a lottery system to ensure fair and equitable access for all students.

At Higgins Middle School, the Career Pathway Exploratory Policy is designed to support student awareness of their high school options and prepare them for future academic and career opportunities. At Higgins Middle School, students begin exploring future career and education options as part of the Massachusetts My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP). Starting in grade 6, students participate in activities that help them discover their interests, plan for high school, and consider postsecondary pathways such as college, technical training, or the workforce. This exploratory process helps students develop an understanding of career pathways while fostering informed decision-making about their educational futures.

Policy

Higgins Middle School, as part of the Peabody Public Schools district, collaborates with Peabody Veterans Memorial High School (PVMHS) and Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School (ENSATS) to ensure students and families are fully informed about available Career Technical Education (CTE) opportunities. This collaboration includes sharing admissions information, highlighting program offerings, and providing students with opportunities to interact with staff and students from both schools.

I. Statement of Goals

The Peabody Public Schools district is committed to preparing Higgins Middle School students for informed high school, postsecondary, and career decisions. This is a multi-year process that intentionally guides students in the development of an authentic secondary plan for success

The goals of this policy include:

1. **Equitable Access:** Provide all students in grades 6–8 with the opportunity to explore career options through self-identified interests, strengths, and skills. This will deepen student awareness of available high school CTE pathways and prepare them for informed decisions about future college and career planning.
2. **Family and Student Awareness** – Ensure that all students and families are fully informed about in-district, regional, and agricultural CTE options available to them.
3. **Student Exploration** – Provide students with the opportunity to explore career-connected coursework through four Higgins Exploratory Courses: *Introduction to Culinary, Introduction to CTE, Automation & Robotics, and Design & Modeling*. These courses expose students to a wide range of fields and hands-on experiences, fostering career awareness and exploration.
4. **Hands-On Career Experiences** – Provide students with a variety of experiences which may include but not limited to learning-by-doing activities, school tours, guest speakers, self-discovery assessments, and field trips. These experiences will expand student awareness of occupational fields and career planning pathways.
5. **Career Connected** – Promote career-connected learning that links middle school experiences to secondary success and long-term planning, helping students achieve their academic goals and lifelong success.

II. MYCAP & Career Exploration Courses

Higgins Middle School, is committed to ensuring that every middle school student is aware of and has equitable access to the CTE pathways offered at PVMHS and ENSATS. Career planning begins in grade 6 through the integration of the Massachusetts Career Advising Plan (MYCAP). Students engage in Enrichment lessons across all grade levels that build self-awareness, support career exploration, and encourage goal setting for secondary and postsecondary success. In addition, Higgins offers four structured Exploratory Courses that provide hands-on learning experiences and exposure to a variety of career fields. Through these opportunities, students are empowered to make informed decisions about high school course selections and long-term goals.

1. Exploratory Courses

Introduction to Career Technical Education Course

- 10-week Introduction to CTE course.
- Students engage in career exploration through hands-on activities connected to a variety of industries
- Coursework introduces some career competency-based skills and workplace expectations to spark student interest and self-discovery.
- Students have opportunities to hear from career guest speakers and participate in career awareness activities that highlight real-world pathways

Introduction to Culinary

- 10-week Introduction to Culinary Careers.
- Students engage in career planning and career discovery activities

- Coursework highlights transferable skills while introducing industries such as Culinary Arts, Hospitality, and Agriculture.
- Students engage in learning-by-doing to identify new interests, creating, planning, and cultivating food science while exploring all potential career pathways

Introduction to Automation & Robotics

- 10-week Project Lead the Way (PLTW) course.
- Students build and program robots using hands-on, project-based learning
- Students explore mechanical systems, energy, and computer programs through coding and programming
- Students participate in real-world problem solving and begin to build foundational skills for careers in STEM fields.

Introduction to Design and Modeling

- 10-week Project Lead the Way (PLTW) course.
- Students learn the engineering design process and apply it to hands-on projects
- Students experience 3D printing, modeling, and collaborative design challenges to design and create projects.
- Students participate in problem-solving, teamwork, and creative collaboration to build core practices in engineering careers.

2. Enrichment: MYCAP

- Grades 6–8: Students engage in scaffolded career readiness activities designed to help them reflect on their strengths, interests, and future goals. Through these tasks, students begin identifying secondary school options, practicing self-advocacy, and exploring a variety of career pathways.
- Students participate in career exploration using the MEFA Pathway platform, engaging in activities that connect to multiple industries.
- Coursework introduces diverse career fields to spark curiosity, self-discovery, and early goal setting.
- Students have opportunities to hear from guest speakers and participate in career awareness events that highlight real-world pathways and postsecondary options

III. Collaboration with CTE Schools

The Peabody Public School District ensures collaboration between J.Henry Higgins Middle School and:

- A. Peabody Veterans Memorial High School
- B. Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School

The goal of this collaboration is to ensure that all Higgins Middle School students and their families can make informed decisions about high school pathways

1. **Informational Sessions:** PVMHS and ENSATS are each offered the opportunity to host a minimum of one scheduled informational session at Higgins Middle School. Sessions are coordinated through:
 - a. Higgins Middle School Guidance Counselor at Large: ginolfih@peabody.k12.ma.us
 - b. Director of Counseling: finnd@peabody.k12.ma.us

2. **Application Information Sharing:** Higgins Middle School will distribute PVMHS and ENSATS application information and admissions processes to all 8th-grade students and families.
 - a. Notice of application availability is shared the week of **October 15** on the school website and through email.
 - b. Applications may be submitted beginning **November 1** and must be submitted no later than the required date of the secondary CTE school
3. **Mailing:** Upon request, Higgins Middle School provides PVMHS and ENSATS with students' mailing addresses and home language information to support participation in hosted events at the secondary schools.
4. **Key Dates and Opportunities:** Receiving schools (PVMHS and ENSATS) when providing Higgins Middle School with important information, such as lottery drawing date, open houses, information sessions, and other student opportunities, include posting a written notification with translation to:
 - a. Higgins Middle School Guidance Counselor at Large: ginolfih@peabody.k12.ma.us
5. **Public Posting of Information:** The Peabody Public Schools District ensures that all CTE-related information and communications are publicly available on the district's website and through email correspondence by **October 15** of each school year.
6. **Ongoing Guidance Support:** The Higgins Guidance Department will provide updates and reminders to families about admissions timelines and opportunities. Guidance staff will remain available to answer questions and assist families throughout the process.

IV. Secondary School CTE Access

Higgins Middle School students are provided with opportunities to tour CTE programs at:

- a. Peabody Veterans Memorial High School
 - b. Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School
1. **Open House:** Open houses are valuable opportunities for students and families to explore secondary school options. They provide the chance to tour facilities, meet current students and staff, ask questions, and learn about available programs.
 2. **Tour:** Higgins Middle School students may be provided with the opportunity to tour CTE programs at PVMHS and ENSATS during regular school hours at the discretion of the secondary school.

Note: If tours are organized and conducted during school hours, the host school will assume responsibility for transportation coverage.
 3. **Attendance:** Students will not receive an unexcused absence for participating in a CTE tour, provided the host school confirms attendance.

Providing records to CTE Schools and programs

J. Henry Higgins Middle School ensures that student information is shared with Career and Technical Education (CTE) schools in a way that is transparent and compliant with DESE guidelines. The process is designed to keep families informed, protect student privacy, and support a smooth admission process it includes:

1. **Sharing Student Records:** Secondary CTE schools may request sharing students' names and mailing addresses for grades 7–8, the Higgins Middle School students, to distribute event and admissions information directly to families.
 - Higgins Guidance Counselors will provide requested data to Secondary CTE schools by **October 15** of that school year.
 - Higgins Guidance Counselors will provide families with an **opt-out form** for those who do not wish to share their student's information.
 - Only students whose families have not opted out will have their information shared.
2. **Family Notification:** Secondary CTE schools providing information to families must do so in the district's recorded primary family languages. This ensures all families are able to access admissions and event information in a language they understand.
3. **Notifications:** If secondary CTE schools require Higgins Middle School to post event or admissions information, they must provide translated documents to the principal for review prior to guidance posting. This guarantees that all families have equitable access to important updates in their home language.
4. **Weighted admissions lottery,** Higgins Guidance Counselors will provide only the specific, policy-relevant information for students whose families have not opted out of data sharing:
 - a. Verification that the student has fewer than 27 unexcused, full-day absences over the prior 270 school days.
 - a. Confirmation that the student meets the discipline requirement of having no suspensions or expulsions within the prior 270 school days

Maintenance of Records

Peabody Public Schools will maintain thorough documentation of all on-site CTE information sessions and student tours of secondary CTE programs, as well as records of information shared with families regarding CTE opportunities.

Electronic records will be maintained within the Higgins Middle School Guidance Department and will include dates of information sessions, student participation in tours/dates, the distribution of student contact information to secondary CTE schools, and relevant collaboration with secondary CTE programs and districts.

***APPROVED: SCHOOL COMMITTEE VOTE OCT 28, 2025 FOR SCHOOL YEAR FY26-27
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