**

***Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | February 12, 2021 |
| **Subject:** | Career/Vocational Technical Education (CVTE) Update |

As part of the continued work regarding potential changes to the Career/Vocational Technical Education (CVTE) admissions regulations, 603 CMR 4.03(6), the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Department) has collected and analyzed waitlist data from CVTE programs, and collaborated with stakeholders to explore approaches for increasing equitable access to high-quality vocational technical education in Massachusetts. This memorandum proposes an updated timeline for amending the vocational admissions regulations and provides context for the special meeting discussion on these topics that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education will hold on Monday, February 22, 2021, at 5 p.m.

The Department acknowledges and appreciates the thoughtful engagement and ongoing dialogue with the Massachusetts Association of Vocational Administrators (MAVA) and vocational school leadership, particularly during the past several months. These key stakeholders have regularly met with Department staff to discuss their current recruitment, application, and admissions policies and practices. Their collaborative efforts have helped to improve the Department’s data collection and analysis and allowed for the exchange of a variety of ideas that will inform the upcoming policy decisions.

**1. Timeline for Amending the Vocational Admissions Regulations (603 CMR 4.03(6))**

The Department projects the following timeline of activities:

* Ongoing: Conduct stakeholder engagement with student, parent, and advocacy groups; educators; associations of industry professionals; the Vocational Technical Education Advisory Council; and other interested parties.
* February: Update the Board on the Department’s waitlist data collection and analysis.
* February–March: Conduct simulations using waitlist collection data to inform collaborations with CVTE schools and programs.
* March: Bring proposed regulatory amendments to the Board for initial discussion and a vote to solicit public comment.
* Spring: Review public comments and revise proposed amendments as needed.
* June: Bring final proposed regulatory amendments to the Board for a final vote.

**2. CVTE Waitlist Data Collection and Analysis**

The amended vocational technical education regulations approved by the Board in February 2020 included a new requirement that vocational programs report waitlist data to the Department. *See* 603 CMR 4.03(9) (“Vocational technical secondary schools that have more applicants than available seats shall maintain a waitlist for the current school year for eligible students who do not gain admission to the school, and report such data to the Department.”) The Department began collecting this waitlist data in fall 2020 to better understand which students apply, but do not gain admission, to Massachusetts CVTE programs. The Department has conducted multiple rounds of consultation with vocational schools and districts in an effort to produce an accurate, clear, and informative report.

The report that the Department will provide in advance of the special meeting will include summary information regarding the data collected, as to statewide and Gateway City CVTE applications submitted and completed, admission offers, acceptances, and enrollment. The data help to broaden our understanding of application gaps (number of applicants out of total catchment pool) and offer gaps (offers of admission out of applicants) across subgroups of student populations. Both student demand and current admissions criteria affect statewide and local outcomes.

The Department is also creating an interactive data tool to help vocational schools and programs visualize their own school-level information to support local analysis of patterns of recruitment, admission, and enrollment. We anticipate that this tool will be available in the next several weeks at [Career/Vocational Technical Education Reporting & Data Resources](https://www.doe.mass.edu/ccte/cvte/data/).

**3. Special Meeting on CVTE**

The Board’s special meeting on February 22 will provide members with the opportunity to review and discuss these issues in depth. The Department will present further information to help provide context for the continuing discussions on vocational admissions. This overview will include information on aspects unique to Massachusetts CVTE such as the exploratory process, program selection, and scheduling. We will also review data trends with respect to enrollment and the new waitlist data.

Department staff, including Elizabeth Bennett, Associate Commissioner for College, Career, and Technical Education, and Caitlin Looby of our legal team, will be present at the meeting to address the Board and answer questions.

**Attachment:** 603 CMR 4.03(6)(a) – Current MA Regulation on Vocational Admissions

**ATTACHMENT A**

**603 CMR 4.03(6)(a) – Current MA Regulation on Vocational Admissions**

(6) **Admission of Students**

(a) Each vocational technical school and comprehensive school which is selective in terms of admission to its secondary vocational technical programs shall develop and implement an admission policy that is consistent with the Department’s “*Guidelines for Admission Policies of Vocational Technical Secondary Schools and Comprehensive Secondary Schools”* that are incorporated into 603 CMR 4.00 by reference. The policy must be approved by the Department prior to implementation. The policy shall be published in the Program of Studies and a copy shall be provided to each student applicant and their parent/guardian. The policy must include the following:

1. The criteria to be used in selecting students and the process for application and admission to the school. Each selective vocational technical secondary school in Massachusetts shall use a combination of selection criteria to determine which applicants have an ability to benefit, and therefore be admitted to the school unless the school opts to use first come-first served or a lottery for admissions. The criteria used shall include academic grades, attendance record, discipline/conduct record, recommendations from the sending-school school counselor, and may include a student interview, provided however, that no one criterion exceeds 50% of the total. Resident students who meet the minimum requirements for admission shall be admitted prior to acceptance of any non-resident students seeking the same course of study. Schools shall condition admission on a student having been promoted to the grade that they have been admitted to enter. Schools may condition admission on a student having passed courses in English Language Arts or its equivalent and mathematics for the school year immediately preceding their enrollment in a selective vocational technical school or program;
2. A description of the Exploratory Program;
3. The criteria and process to be used in selecting students for admission to particular vocational technical education programs commonly referred to as vocational technical majors within the selective vocational technical secondary school or comprehensive secondary school; and
4. **A Review Process and an Appeal Process.** A process at the school district level for students and parents/guardians to review and appeal the decision to deny the student admission to the school or program shall be included. The district shall maintain documentation as to the specific admission requirements that were not met, and must provide such documentation to the Department or to the student's parent/guardian upon request.