

## **Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School**

### **Admission Policy**

Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School offers many opportunities for potential students and their families to learn about vocational/technical and agricultural education and the admission process at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School:

- \* Informational presentations are offered, when allowed, to eighth grade classes in local schools.
- \* Campus tours are scheduled, when allowed, for interested students with sending district School Counselors (individual tours may also be scheduled by families).
- \* Students interested in experiencing what a day at Smith Vocational is like are welcome to shadow during one of our specified shadow days (please call our school to reserve a spot).

An Open House is scheduled during the month of November to provide an opportunity for prospective students, their families, and sending school staff to learn about all of the vocational/technical and agricultural programs offered at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School.

Most eighth grade students who expect to be promoted to grade nine are eligible to apply for admission to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School. Students who reside in districts that do not offer a Chapter 74 exploratory program may apply for admission to an out-of- district school that has a Chapter 74 exploratory program. Incoming ninth grade students who reside in districts that offer a Chapter 74 exploratory program are required to attend the Chapter 74 exploratory program offered by their resident district. The one exception is for those incoming ninth grade students who are seeking to explore a specialized agricultural or natural resources program that is not offered by their district of residence. The two specialized agricultural programs that Smith Vocational offers are Animal Science and Agricultural Mechanics.

An admission process is in place to accommodate the possible needs and/or interests of all applicants and to determine which applicants may benefit most from the educational opportunities at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School. Although ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students follow the same procedure to apply for admission, space availability may be a limitation in some programs. It is important for all applicants in grades nine through twelve at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School to refer to the selection criteria contained in the Admission Policy.

Applications are available electronically through our website, [www.Smithtec.org](http://www.Smithtec.org), or a paper application may be obtained from the local school counselor, or contact the school to be mailed a paper application. Non-resident applications must be received by March 15<sup>th</sup> of the preceding school year (Massachusetts state guidelines for non-resident student tuition refer to M.G.L. c. 74)

## **Introduction**

An admission process is necessary in vocational/technical and agricultural schools where space is a limiting factor. Vocational/technical and agricultural programs are designed and equipped to serve a specific maximum number of students safely. As a result, Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School may lack both the space and flexibility to accommodate all interested applicants. Therefore, a selection process is necessary to determine which applicants may most benefit from such educational opportunities. All applicants applying to grades nine through eleven at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School will be evaluated using the criteria contained in the Admission Policy. Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School Board of Trustees annually approve this policy. Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School Admission Policy is on file at the Department Of Elementary and Secondary Education.

## **Equal Educational Opportunity**

Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School admits students and makes available to them its advantages, privileges and courses of study without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or homelessness in all aspects of employment and education.

If there is a student with limited English proficiency, a qualified representative from Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School will assist the applicant in completing the necessary forms and assist in interpreting during the entire application and admission process upon the request of the applicant, or Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School will make accessible, or provide an application, in the home language of the applicant. Please contact the Admissions Office at (413)587-1414 ex: 3414 or [ldevine@smithtec.org](mailto:ldevine@smithtec.org) if you have any questions or need help filling out the application form.

A student with a disability may voluntarily self-identify for the purpose of requesting reasonable accommodations and assistance during the entire application process. Neither a student's disability nor the primary language of their home will have any effect on their admission to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School.

## **Eligibility**

Any rising or current eighth, ninth, tenth, or eleventh grade student who is a resident of Northampton (including Florence and Leeds) may apply for admission to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School. Students may only be admitted to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School if they have been promoted to the grade they are seeking to enter, so students should be aware that their admission is conditional - if they are not ultimately promoted to enter the grade they have applied for, their admission will be rescinded. Residents of Northampton

who meet the minimum admission requirements are provided priority admission before non-resident students seeking admission. Priority admission is defined as ranking all applicants (resident and non-resident) and offering admission to the top 30 Northampton residents first; independent of whether these applicants are in the top 150 overall or not. Should the total number of Northampton students exceed the number of openings within Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, the criteria in the “Selection Process” will be in place.

The total number of ninth grade students enrolled annually will not exceed 150 students unless approved otherwise by the Board of Trustees. The total number of students outside of the Northampton school district accepted each year may change depending on the number of Northampton applicants.

Non-resident Applicants: Students who are not residents of Northampton (who are from tuition-districts) are eligible to apply for fall admission, or admission during the school year, subject to the availability of openings at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, provided they expect to be promoted to the grade they seek to enter by their local district. All students will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this Admission Policy.

Transfer Students: Transfer students from another Chapter 74 vocational technical and agricultural school are eligible to apply for fall admission, or admission during the school year to grades 9-12 at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School provided they expect to be promoted to the grade they seek to enter by their current school. Transfer students will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this Admission Policy and contingent on available seats within the program of their choice.

Homeless, Foster Care, and Children of Military Families: Students who are classified as homeless, in the care and custody of the Department of Children and Families, or children of military families, will be evaluated according to the selection criteria in this Admissions Policy. Once the student is accepted and an approved non-resident tuition form has been received (if applicable), enrollment shall be immediate with or without required documentation being attained. Students transferring or placed on the waiting list will be enrolled immediately upon availability of an opening. The Admissions Counselor will notify the Homeless/Foster Care/Military Children liaison when applicants classified above apply to Smith Vocational to ensure no barriers to applying or enrolling exist.

Home Schooled Students: Students who are formally being home schooled may apply for admission at Smith Vocational, provided all Admission Policy criteria are followed. The home school student’s parent or guardian must submit a copy of the home school approval letter from the sending district’s superintendent; and if grades are not available, a portfolio or representative sample of the student’s body of work in English Language Arts, math, science, and social studies. The level of work must be appropriate for the grade level being applied for. A letter from the sending district’s superintendent attesting to this grade level is required. Home school students will receive the mean score (average) of all of the received and scored counselor recommendation forms as their “counselor recommendation score”.

School Choice: Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School does not participate in the inter-district school choice program. The inter-district school choice program, M.G.L. c. 76, S 12B, allows parents/guardians to send their children to schools in communities other than the city or town in which they reside.

## **Organizational Structure**

Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School is a public independent vocational/technical and agricultural school overseen by a Board of Trustees elected by the citizens of the City of Northampton. Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. We are committed to providing quality vocational/technical and agricultural programs.

The **Superintendent** of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School is:

Dr. Andrew Linkenhoker  
alinkenhoker@smithtec.org  
(413) 587-1414 ex: 3406

The **Principal** of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School is:

Mr. Joseph Bianca  
jbianca@smithtec.org  
(413) 587-1414 ex: 3413

The **Admission Coordinator** at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School is:

Lauren Devine  
ldevine@smithtec.org  
(413) 587-1414 ex: 3414

It is the responsibility of the Superintendent of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School to supervise the administration of the policies and procedures required to admit and enroll students, consistent with all applicable laws, regulations, and guidance.

Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School has an Admission Team appointed by the Principal and is comprised of the Assistant Principal, School Counselors, Vocational Director, and other staff as necessary.

The Admission Team's responsibilities include but are not limited to:

- Development and implementation of admission procedures
- Collecting applications from the local schools
- Processing of applications
- Acceptance of students according to the procedure and criteria in the Admission Policy
- Establishment and maintenance of a waiting list of applicants
- Disseminating information about Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School through local school assemblies and press releases

## **Recruitment Process and Admissions Communication**

Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School disseminates information about the school through a variety of methods:

- Fall visitations with an informational presentation to eighth grade students in local schools, when allowed.
- Scheduled group tours for interested students conducted by the Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School Admission Team in conjunction with sending district school counselors, when allowed.
- An Open House scheduled during the month of November. Prospective students and their parents/guardians and sending school staff, have an opportunity to visit all vocational/technical and agricultural programs, and speak with teachers and administrators as well as view a presentation about all academic and shop offerings.
- Parents/guardians may schedule individual visits at a mutually convenient time. To schedule an individual visit and tour, parents/guardians are encouraged to contact the guidance department.
- Distribution of brochures during the eighth grade visitations and at the annual Open House, describe vocational/technical and agricultural programs including academic courses, sports, cooperative work education, and special education services and programs.
- Interested students and their parents/guardians are also encouraged to visit the school's website ([www.smithtec.org](http://www.smithtec.org)), which is updated on a regular basis. The application for admission, admission policy, program of study, and additional information about services and activities offered at the school are accessible online, and may be translated into a number of languages.

## **APPLICATION PROCESS**

*For admission to the ninth, tenth, or eleventh grades*

Students interested in applying to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School for fall admission must:

- Non-resident students shall submit an application of admission to Smith Vocational no later than March 15<sup>th</sup> of the preceding school year and shall be subject to the admissions criteria [4.03(6)(b)]. The application may be obtained from the sending school's School Counselor, on the school's website ([www.smithtec.org](http://www.smithtec.org)) or by direct request and mailed to the student's home.
- Students residing in tuition districts are required to submit a Chapter 74 Vocational Technical Education Program Non-Resident Tuition Application (non-resident tuition application) to the sending district's Superintendent no later than April 1<sup>st</sup> of the preceding year. The Admission Team at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School is available to assist applicants with sections I and II of the non-resident tuition application.

It is the responsibility of the sending school's School Counselor of the local school to:

- Complete their portion of the application form and provide Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School with the student's current and previous years': unexcused absences, grades, discipline report, and a completed school counselor recommendation form.
- Forward the completed paper application form and student's supporting documents (if student is unable to complete the online application) to the Admission Team at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School by March 15<sup>th</sup> of the preceding school year.

### **A Complete Application Includes:**

- For applications to grade 9 (fall admission), seventh grade report card and current grade 8 grades, seventh and eighth grade disciplinary reports, attendance records, and school counselor recommendation form from the local school are required.
- For applications to grades 10 and 11 (fall admission) all previous high school grades, disciplinary reports, attendance records, and a completed counselor recommendation form from the local school are required.
- Non-resident students (students residing in tuition districts) are required to submit a Chapter 74 Vocational Technical Education Program Non-resident Tuition Application (non-resident tuition application) to the sending district's Superintendent no later than April 1<sup>st</sup> of the preceding year. The Admission Team at Smith Vocational is available to assist with sections I and II of the non-resident tuition application in compliance with DESE (Department of Elementary and Secondary Education). Part III of the non-resident tuition application form must be completed by the Superintendent of the district of residence clearly indicating approval or disapproval. If the application is disapproved, the reason for disapproval must be clearly stated. The application must be returned to the receiving district and the parent/guardian within 10 business days.
- By April 1<sup>st</sup> the School Counselor of the sending school must notify the office of the Superintendent of the sending school district (with the exception of Northampton, including Florence and Leeds) of all students who have applied. It is the responsibility of the student's parent/guardian to submit the non-resident tuition form to the Superintendent of their sending district by April 1<sup>st</sup> of the preceding school year.

A copy of the non-resident tuition form remains in the sending district's file after signing off by the local Superintendent.

When applications are missing supporting documents, the following procedures will be followed:

- The Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School's Admission Team will notify the local school's school counselor that the application is incomplete and completion is requested.
- The applicant's parent/guardian will be notified by Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School's Admission Team in the event the problem is not resolved by the local School Counselor.

### **Transfer Students**

Students requesting to transfer into the ninth grade after the opening of school will be evaluated according to the same admission criteria as students entering the program at the beginning of the school year and will be accepted on a space available basis. Non-vocational program transfer students wishing to enter Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School may do so at the beginning of either tenth or eleventh grade on a space available basis and must meet regular admission requirements.

Applications from students who are enrolled in a state-approved (Chapter 74) vocational/technical high school program in another school (transfer students) will be considered for admission (including admission during the school year) if they relocate away from their current school and wish to pursue the same program of study at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School. Applications will be evaluated according to the provisions of this Admission Policy.

## Students Who Withdraw

Students who withdraw from Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School and who are attending, or not attending another high school, may reapply to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School following the procedures contained in this Admission Policy. Students who withdraw will be evaluated using the criteria contained in this Admission Policy.

## SELECTION CRITERIA

When more students apply to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School than there are available seats, Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School uses the following system to select students for admission. Completed applications are processed by the Admission Team using weighted admission criteria. Each applicant will be assigned a score derived from the sum of the sub scores of the following criteria:

### **A. Scholastic Achievement:**

For applications to grade 9 (fall admission), the average of grade 7 and terms 1 & 2 of grade 8 grades in English, social studies, mathematics and science from the local school report card/transcript are used. If a student failed a course and took credit recovery, the average grade from the failed course, with the grade from the credit recovery course, are used to create a final grade for that specific class.

Grade Averages	Points Earned
A or B (100-80)	10 points
C or D (79-60)	5 points
F (59-0)	0 points

### **B. School Attendance:**

Only unexcused absences are considered when reviewing school attendance data. Applicants receive the full 10 points for this criteria if they have 0-10 days of unexcused absences for a particular school year. 5 points are awarded for 11-20 unexcused absences. 0 points are awarded for 21 and higher unexcused absences.

For applications to grade 9 (fall admission), the Admission team evaluates unexcused absences from the local school report card/transcript from grade 7 and terms 1 & 2 of grade 8. For applications to grades 10, 11 and 12 (fall admission) the previous school year and terms 1 & 2 of the current school year of unexcused absences from the local school report card/transcript are used. For applications to grades 9, 10, and 11 (admission during the school year) the current school year to the date of the application and the previous school year unexcused absences from the local school report card/transcript are used.

### **C. School Discipline/Conduct:**

Only major disciplinary infractions are considered when reviewing school discipline data. Major disciplinary infractions are behaviors that lead to suspensions that fall under M.G.L. c.71 S.37H, or S.37H ½, or for suspension or expulsion for more than 10 days was imposed pursuant to M.G.L. c.71 S.37H ¾. Applicants receive the full 10 points for this criteria if they have no suspensions due to such major infractions for a particular school year. 0 points are awarded for infractions leading to suspension under c.71 S.37H, S.37H ½ & 10 or more suspensions under S.37H ¾ in a school year.

For all applicants to grade 9 (fall admission), the student's discipline record, documenting the number of out-of-school suspensions from grade 7 and quarters 1 & 2 of grade 8, is used. For applications to grades 10, and 11 (fall admission), the student's discipline record, documenting the number of out-of-school suspensions from the previous school year and quarters 1 & 2 of the current school year, is used. For applications to grades 9, 10, and 11 (admission during the school year), the student's discipline record, documenting the number of out-of-school suspensions from the current and prior school year to the date of application, is required.

### **D. School Counselor's Recommendation:**

A member of the guidance department from the sending school will complete a recommendation based on a rubric on the application form.

<b>Rating</b>	<b>Points</b>
Excellent	90-100
Above Average	80- 89
Average	70- 79
Below Average	60- 69
Poor	0-59

### **The Admission Criteria is Weighted as Follows:**

Scholastic Achievement: 1.0

School Attendance: 1.5

School Discipline/Conduct: 1.5

School Counselor Recommendation: 1.0

### **Selection Process**

The Admission Team at Smith Vocational will evaluate, discuss and make recommendations for action on all completed applications. The admission team takes into consideration each applicant's scholastic achievement, attendance, discipline record, and sending school recommendation. Each student then receives an overall admission score where they are ranked



against all applicants based on that score. The top 150 students are offered admission and given one month to register. That process will continue until we have 150 students are registered /all seats are filled.

In the event there are more acceptable candidates than there are spaces available, a waiting list shall be maintained.

If/when an opening should occur, applicants from the waitlist will be accepted to fill the available seat(s). Those applicants shall be accepted in order of their place on the waitlist determined by their overall admission score. If there is a tie for admissions a random lottery is used to identify which student(s) will be offered admission and which student(s) will be placed on the waiting list. All applicants who have a completed application shall be accepted or waitlisted. Late applicants may be notified after all others; notifications for these students may extend into the summer. Applications received after March 15th are considered late applications and will not be processed until/if we no longer have a waitlist.

### **Enrollment and Conditional Enrollment**

In order to enroll at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School for the Fall, applicants must have been promoted to the grade they wish to enter by their local school district. Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School has the right to contest records.

### **Vocational/Technical Program Admission/Exploratory Programs**

All ninth grade students who enroll in the fall at Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School participate in a vocational/technical and agricultural exploratory program designed to help them learn about their talents and interests relative to a variety of vocational/technical and agricultural programs. Students initially explore each vocational/technical and agricultural shop for one day. Students then list their top exploratory choices and explore each of them for an entire week.

Students are evaluated and scored (0-100 points) by their shop teacher during the exploratory week in each shop. At the end of this four (4) week exploratory period, each student selects their program of choice, as well as a second and third choice from the four (4) explored shops. Students are admitted into the shop of their choice based on the student's exploratory grade rank in that shop. In a situation where two (2) or more students attained the same grade rank, attendance will be the determining factor.

Vocational teachers evaluate each of their students throughout the exploratory (one week exploratory) process. Students are evaluated and scored (total of 0-100 points for each exploratory week). While there is some flexibility in the scoring categories, each shop must choose one rubric and maintain that same rubric to grade their students for the entire exploratory process. All shops are required to use the same four categories which are: shop expectations and workplace safety (maximum of 20 points), participation/engagement (maximum of 20 points), career aptitude (maximum of 20 points), task competition (maximum of 20 points). Each shop then must choose 2 of the following 4 categories to grade their students for the remaining 20%: clean up (maximum of 10 points), professionalism (maximum of 10 points), punctuality/preparedness for tasks (maximum of 10 points), and homework (maximum of 10 points).

Students who wish to transfer from one shop to another shop during the school year may apply for a transfer. Transfer requests will be considered subject to the availability of openings in the student's desired shop. Each transfer applicant will be interviewed and counseled individually to determine the appropriateness of the transfer for the particular student.

Students on an individual basis and as necessary, who enroll in Smith Vocational after grade 9, may explore one or more vocational technical programs that have openings. This "mini" exploratory could last from two to three days before the student makes a program selection.

### **Review and Appeals**

The applicant's parent/guardian, within 15 days of receipt of a letter from the Admission Team of Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School indicating that the applicant was not accepted, may request a review of the decision by sending a letter to the Admission Team requesting an appeal meeting with the Principal. The Principal will schedule a time to meet with the student and parent/guardian and complete an interview. The interview is to gain insight into the students' motivation for applying to Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School, and reasons for selecting a particular vocational/technical area. After the meeting, the Principal will respond in writing with their decision within fifteen days following the appeal meeting.

### **Maintenance of Records**

Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School maintains records of all students who apply, enroll, or are waitlisted, as well as their score on admission criteria, to facilitate analysis of its admissions system and compliance with applicable laws and regulations. Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School will provide this information to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education upon request.

*Updated and approved by vote September 19, 2023*