

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION STUDENT HANDBOOK

A Guide for CTE Students & Families • 2026–2027

LEARN → PRACTICE → APPLY → GROW

1. What Is Co-op?

Cooperative Education (Co-op) is a school-approved, credit-bearing CTE learning experience at an approved workplace. Eligible Chapter 74 CTE students apply program skills, learn occupational skills, develop professional habits, receive feedback, and demonstrate CTE competencies. The workplace is both a job and a learning environment.

2. Who Can Participate?

Co-op is available to eligible students in South Hadley Chapter 74 CTE programs. Students must:

- Meet applicable Massachusetts/DESE eligibility and CTE study requirements.
- Demonstrate CTE readiness, including safety, technical skills, professionalism, attendance/reliability, communication/teamwork, and independence/problem-solving.
- Be able to participate safely and responsibly in an authentic workplace.
- Obtain an approved placement related to the CTE program that provides meaningful learning and appropriate supervision.

Important: Meeting eligibility requirements does not guarantee a Co-op placement.

3. When Can I Start?

Co-op participation depends on CTE program progression and applicable Massachusetts requirements. The CTE teacher and Vocational Director/Co-op Coordinator determine when a student may enter the placement process. A student must receive school approval before beginning work as a Co-op student.

4. Co-op Readiness

Your CTE teacher reviews whether you are ready, ready with supports, or not yet ready.

Area	What Readiness Looks Like
Safety	Follows safety rules and uses equipment properly.
Technical Skills	Has foundational CTE skills and can learn new tasks.
Professionalism & Reliability	Attends, arrives on time, works responsibly, and follows expectations.
Communication & Teamwork	Listens, asks questions, accepts feedback, and works appropriately with others.
Independence & Problem Solving	Works without constant prompting and knows when to ask for help.

5. How Do I Get Into Co-op?

- 1. Talk with your CTE teacher** — Discuss career interests, skills, goals, possible workplaces, and areas for growth.
- 2. Complete the readiness review** — Your CTE teacher determines whether you can move forward or need additional skill development.
- 3. Complete the application** — Provide required information such as contact information, career interests, resume, experience, certifications, references, and transportation information.

4. Participate in the job search — Identify employers, apply, interview, follow up, and communicate professionally. Getting a Co-op placement is similar to getting a job because it is a real employment experience.

5. Complete worksite approval — The Vocational Director/Co-op Coordinator reviews duties, CTE connection, supervision, schedule, safety, learning opportunities, and required documentation.

6. Complete required documentation — Student/family, employer, and school complete required Co-op and applicable employment documentation.

7. Begin Co-op — Start only after all required approvals and documentation are complete.

6. Student Responsibilities

- Attend consistently, arrive on time, follow your schedule, and communicate appropriately about absences or delays.
- Follow all workplace safety procedures, use required PPE, use equipment only as trained/authorized, report unsafe conditions and injuries, and ask when unsure.
- Be respectful and professional; follow workplace policies, dress appropriately, maintain hygiene, use professional language, respect coworkers/customers, and protect confidential information.
- Listen, clarify instructions, accept feedback, communicate problems early, and contact the Vocational Director/Co-op Coordinator when school support is needed.
- Complete assignments, stay engaged, manage time, take appropriate initiative, learn from mistakes, and ask for help.
- Continue learning by practicing skills, learning new procedures/equipment, and applying CTE learning at work.

7. How Will I Be Evaluated?

Co-op is evaluated as a CTE learning experience, not simply by hours worked. Evidence may include weekly reports, employer evaluations, CTE competency assessments, worksite observations, work logs, reflections, skill demonstrations, and required assignments.

HOURS SHOW PARTICIPATION. • COMPETENCIES SHOW LEARNING.

8. Co-op Evaluation & Monitoring Cycle

Requirement	Student Responsibility
Weekly Co-op Time & Learning Report	Submit electronically by 9:00 AM each Monday for the previous workweek.
05-A Monthly Learning & Progress Record	Document workplace learning, hours, competency progress, and concerns.
05-B Midpoint Evaluation — January	Complete student reflection and participate in progress review.
05-C Final Evaluation — May	Complete final reflection/evaluation and required completion documentation.

9. What If There Is a Problem?

- Unsure how to do a task? Ask your workplace supervisor.
- Made a mistake? Tell your supervisor and learn from it.
- Conflict with a coworker? Communicate professionally and seek help if needed.
- Feel unsafe? Stop, follow workplace safety procedures, and notify the appropriate supervisor.
- Significant concern about the placement? Contact the Vocational Director/Co-op Coordinator.

10. Absences, Resignation & Placement Changes

If you need to miss work:

- Notify your workplace supervisor as soon as possible and follow the employer's communication procedure.
- Notify the school/Co-op Coordinator when required.
- Provide documentation when requested.
- Do not simply fail to show up.

If you are considering resigning or your employment ends, contact the Vocational Director/Co-op Coordinator as soon as possible. Leaving a placement may affect Co-op credit, grade, eligibility, or the ability to obtain another placement.

11. Can My Co-op Be Terminated?

Yes. A placement may be reviewed or ended because of serious safety concerns, repeated attendance problems, inappropriate workplace behavior, failure to meet employer or Co-op responsibilities, loss of employment, significant worksite changes, or circumstances affecting the safety or educational value of the placement. When possible, the school will work with the student to identify supports and solutions before ending a placement.

12. Family Responsibilities

- Understand that Co-op is an educational component of the student's CTE program.
- Support workplace attendance, professionalism, safety, and completion of required documentation.
- Ensure transportation arrangements unless the school establishes otherwise.
- Understand that employment and workplace requirements must be followed and placements are not guaranteed.
- Communicate significant concerns with the Vocational Director/Co-op Coordinator.

13. Co-op Checklist — Student Initials

Students should review each item with a parent/guardian and initial each completed item. This checklist supports the Co-op process; required forms and approvals must still be completed.

Before Co-op

Checklist Item	Student Initials
☐ Talk with my CTE teacher about Co-op.	_____
☐ Complete the CTE readiness review.	_____
☐ Complete the Co-op application and required student/family information.	_____
☐ Prepare or update my resume and career plan.	_____
☐ Identify potential employers and participate professionally in applications/interviews.	_____
☐ Obtain an approved Co-op placement before beginning work.	_____
☐ Complete required school/employer Co-op documentation.	_____
☐ Complete applicable Massachusetts employment documentation.	_____
☐ Establish a reliable transportation plan.	_____
☐ Complete required worksite safety/health orientation.	_____

During Co-op

Checklist Item	Student Initials
☐ Attend consistently and arrive on time.	_____
☐ Follow workplace safety procedures and use required PPE.	_____
☐ Follow employer policies and workplace expectations.	_____
☐ Communicate professionally with supervisors, coworkers, and customers.	_____
☐ Ask questions and accept feedback.	_____
☐ Complete work responsibilities and required learning reports/assignments.	_____
☐ Communicate promptly about absences, delays, concerns, or significant changes.	_____
☐ Participate in required monthly, midpoint, and other Co-op progress activities.	_____

End of Co-op

Checklist Item	Student Initials
☐ Complete the final Co-op evaluation and student reflection.	_____
☐ Demonstrate required CTE/workplace competencies.	_____
☐ Complete required documentation.	_____
☐ Confirm Co-op CTE credit/grade requirements.	_____
☐ Identify next career, education, or training steps.	_____

14. Important Things to Remember

- Co-op is a real job and a school learning experience.
- Your employer is investing time in your development.
- Attendance and reliability matter.
- Safety is non-negotiable.
- You represent yourself, your CTE program, and South Hadley High School.
- Ask questions when you are unsure.
- Feedback is part of learning.
- A Co-op placement is not guaranteed.
- Continued participation depends on meeting expectations.

15. Contact**Dr. Susan Brassard**

Vocational Director/Co-op Coordinator

South Hadley High School • Room #318 • Ext. 3723

sibrassard@shschools.com

(413) 538-5063

16. Student & Parent/Guardian Acknowledgment

We have reviewed the South Hadley CTE Cooperative Education Student Handbook. We understand that Co-op is both an employment experience and a CTE learning experience; participation is not guaranteed; school approval is required before a placement begins; attendance, safety, professionalism, workplace performance, required documentation, and evaluations are part of the program; and continued participation depends on meeting applicable expectations.

17. Massachusetts Child Labor Laws — Parent/Guardian Awareness

The following summary is provided for student and parent/guardian awareness. Co-op students must comply with applicable Massachusetts and federal child labor requirements. The requirements below are particularly important because Co-op students may work in occupational settings where certain duties, equipment, hours, or work environments are restricted for minors.

Important: This summary does not replace current Massachusetts or federal law. Applicable law and current state requirements control.

Prohibited Jobs for Persons Under 18

Persons under 18 may not perform certain prohibited work, including the following:

- Drive a vehicle, forklift, or work assist vehicle (except golf carts in certain circumstances).
- Ride as a passenger on a forklift.
- Operate, clean, or repair power-driven meat slicers, grinders, or choppers, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Operate, clean, or repair power-driven bakery machines, except certain countertop models and pizza dough rollers.
- Work 30 feet or more above ground or water, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Handle, serve, or sell alcoholic beverages.
- Use circular, chain, or band saws; guillotine shears; wood chippers; or abrasive cutting discs, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Use power-driven woodworking machines, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Use, service, drive, or work from hoisting machines.
- Operate or load power-driven balers, compactors, or paper-processing machines, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Use power-driven metal-forming, punching, or shearing machines, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Use buffing or polishing equipment, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Manufacture brick, tile, or kindred products.
- Manufacture or store explosives.
- Work in excavation, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Work in forest firefighting, forest fire prevention, timber track operations, or forestry service.
- Work in wrecking, demolition, or shipbreaking.
- Work in logging, sawmilling, or mining.
- Work in slaughtering, packing, or processing meat and poultry, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Work in railway operations, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Work in roofing or on/about a roof, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Work in foundries or around blast furnaces, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Work manufacturing phosphorus or phosphorus matches, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Work where exposed to radioactive substances.
- Work as a firefighter or engineer on a boat, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Oil or clean hazardous machinery in motion, except where a student-learner exemption applies.
- Work in any job requiring possession or use of a firearm.

Student-Learner Exemptions

Where a student-learner exemption applies, the work must be incidental to the student's training, intermittent and for short periods, performed under the direct and close supervision of a qualified and experienced person, and include safety instruction by the employer as part of the training.

Work Hours for 16- and 17-Year-Olds

The handbook's current reference provides the following work-hour requirements:

- On nights preceding a regularly scheduled school day: work only between 6:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m.
- If an establishment stops serving customers at 10:00 p.m., a minor may work until 10:15 p.m.

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- On nights not preceding a regularly scheduled school day: work only between 6:00 a.m. and 11:30 p.m., except in restaurants and race tracks, where the limit is midnight.
- Maximum 48 hours per week.
- Maximum 9 hours per day.
- Maximum 6 days per week.
- After 8:00 p.m., minors must be directly supervised by an adult in the workplace who is reasonably accessible, subject to applicable exceptions.

Cooperative Education Employment Permit

The current handbook reference states that teens under 18 must obtain a work permit from the school district where they live or attend school and that, for Cooperative Education, minors employed in cooperative education require a special Cooperative Education Employment Permit. The superintendent of the school district where the minor is enrolled in a Chapter 74 program issues the permit.

Parent/Guardian Reminder

Parents/guardians should review the duties, schedule, worksite, and safety expectations of the proposed Co-op placement. Students should never be assigned work that is prohibited for their age or outside the conditions of an applicable student-learner exemption. Questions about a proposed task or placement should be raised with the workplace supervisor and the Vocational Director/Co-op Coordinator before the student performs the task.

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

STUDENT & PARENT/GUARDIAN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

2026–2027

By signing below, the student and parent/guardian acknowledge that they have received and reviewed the South Hadley CTE Cooperative Education Student Handbook and understand the expectations of the Co-op program.

- Co-op is both an employment experience and a CTE learning experience.
- Co-op participation and placement are not guaranteed, and school approval is required before a student begins a Co-op placement.
- The student is responsible for meeting the expectations of the employer, CTE program, school, and Co-op program.
- Continued participation requires attendance, safety, professionalism, workplace performance, required documentation, and evaluations.
- Follow applicable Massachusetts and federal child labor requirements.

Student Name: _____ **Student ID Number:** _____

Student Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Submit this signed page to the Vocational Director/Co-op Coordinator.