



# Commonwealth School

Parent-Student Handbook

2018-2019

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## IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION

**Main number: (617) 266-7525**

**Fax: (617) 266-5769**

**Website: [commschool.org](http://commschool.org)**

**Email for general inquiries: [info@commschool.org](mailto:info@commschool.org)**

### ADMINISTRATIVE FACULTY AND STAFF

Note that email addresses are generally the first initial and last name followed by @commschool.org (e.g., John Doe is [jdoe@commschool.org](mailto:jdoe@commschool.org)). The faculty & staff directory at [commschool.org/directory](http://commschool.org/directory) includes contact information for all school employees.

ROLE	NAME	EMAIL USERNAME
Headmaster	Willam Wharton	bwharton
Assistant Head of School	Rebecca Jackman	rjackman
Director, College Counseling	Sophia Meas	smeas
Director of Finance	Sue Tibert	stibert
Director of Admissions and Financial Aid	Carrie Healy	chealy
Director of Development	Alisha Elliott	aelliott
Director of Strategic Communications	Melody Komyerov	mkomyerov
Director of Technology & Facilities	Jeff Racioppi	jracioppi
Dean of Faculty Hiring & Support	Mara Dale	mdale
Dean of Students	Josh Eagle	jeagle
Dean of Diversity and Inclusion	Bouchra Danielkebir	bdanielkebir

Director of Athletics, Wellness & Student Activities	Kathryne Tarnoff	ktarnoff
Academic Support Coordinator	Wendy Mechaber	wmechaber
School Counselor	Eben Lasker	elasker
Assistant to the Headmaster	Estrella Alves	ealves
Front Office Manager	Stephanie Poynter	spoynter
Assistant Director of Admissions	Lindsay Ewing	lewing
Director of the Annual Fund & Alumni/ae Relations/Parent Liaison	Carly Renshaw	crenshaw
Registrar/AP Coordinator/ Librarian	Emma Johnson	ejohnson
Head of Food Program	Heather Pierce	hpierce
Bookkeeper	Katherine Athey	kathey
Communications and Administrative Assistant	Sherline Heriveaux	sheriveaux
Development Assistant	Emma Bishop	ebishop
Maintenance	Gary Antoine	gantoine
Community Service Coordinators	Bouchra Danielkebir, Aaron Kerner	bdanielkebir, akerner
Projects Coordinator	Kathy Tarnoff	ktarnoff

# FACULTY 2018-2019

## ARTS

Caleb Colpitts, *drawing and painting, printmaking*

Rusty Crump, *photography*

Jacquelynne Curry, *dance*

David Hodgkins, *Convenor, Director of Music*

Samantha Nieto Vargas, *photography*

Kyla Toomey, *ceramics, sculpture*

Kate Ventimiglia, *drama*

Mark White, *jazz*

## ENGLISH

Catherine Brewster, *Convenor*

Mara Dale

Aaron Kerner

Rikita Tyson

Sasha Watson

## FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Donald Conolly, *Latin*

Cesar Perez, *Spanish*

Rui Shu, *Mandarin*

Monica Schilder, *Spanish*

Robert Vollrath, *French, Convenor*

Bouchra Danielkebir, *City of Boston*

Kathy Tarnoff, *Health and Community*

Bill Wharton, *Language and Ethics, Readings in Ethics*

## HISTORY

Audrey Budding

Barbara Grant, *Convenor*

Melissa Haber

Will Holub-Moorman

## MATH

Alex Ginzburg

Alan Letarte

Theo Paul

Matthew Poage, *computer science*

Robert Sherry, *Convenor*

## SCIENCE

Christopher Barsi, *Convenor, physics*

Samantha Burke, *biology*

Rebecca Jackman, *chemistry*

Wendy Mechaber, *biology*

Theo Paul, *physics*

John Wolff, *chemistry*

## ON SABBATICAL, 2018-2019

Anna Moss, *math and physics*

Susan Thompson, *drama*



# WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Grade:    Advisor:

Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
1	8:30-9:10	1	8:30-9:10	1	8:30-9:10	1	8:30-9:10	1	8:30-9:10
2	9:15-9:55	2	9:15-9:55	2	9:15-9:55	2	9:15-9:55	2	9:15-9:55
<b>Recess</b>		<b>Recess / Meeting</b>		<b>Recess</b>		<b>Recess</b>		<b>Recess</b>	
3	10:25-11:05	3	10:35-11:30	3	10:25-11:05	3	10:25-11:15	3	10:25-11:05
4	11:10-11:50			4	11:10-11:50	4	11:20-12:00	4	11:10-11:50
5	11:55-12:35	4	11:35-12:15	5	11:55-12:35	<b>Assembly</b>		5	11:55-12:35
<b>Lunch</b>		5	12:20-1:00	<b>Lunch</b>		<b>Class Meetings</b> 12:50-1:10		<b>Lunch</b>	
		<b>Lunch</b>				<b>Lunch</b>			
6	1:20-2:00			6	1:20-2:00			6	1:20-2:00
7	2:05-2:45	6	1:45-2:25	7	2:05-2:45	5	1:55-2:35	7	2:05-2:45
<b>Sports</b>		7	2:30-3:10	<b>Sports</b>		6	2:40-3:20	<b>Sports</b>	
						7	3:25-4:05		

Course	Teacher	Terms	M	Tu	W	Th	F
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# 2018–19 CALENDAR

## SEPTEMBER

3	Labor Day (no school)
4	New student orientation
5	School opens
13	Parents' back to school night, 6 p.m.
19	Yom Kippur (no school)
20-23	Hancock
24	Post Hancock holiday (no classes)
24-26	College visiting for 12s

## OCTOBER

8	Columbus Day (no school)
10	PSAT for 10s, 11s
11	Parent-Teacher conferences for 12s, 6pm
19	End of first quarter for 12s
26	End of first quarter for 9s, 10s, 11s
29-31	Quarter break (no classes)
29-31	College visiting for 12s

## NOVEMBER

1	Second quarter begins
12	Parent-Teacher conferences for 9s, 10s, 11s
16-17	Fall Play
21	Early dismissal (12:30 p.m.)
22-23	Thanksgiving (no school)

## DECEMBER

7	Winter concert, 7:30 p.m.
21	Skate into Vacation after school, Early Dismissal
24-Jan. 4	Winter Vacation

## JANUARY

7	Classes resume
9	College meeting for parents of 11s, 7 p.m.
18-25	Midyear exams

- 21 Martin Luther King Day (no school)
- 28-Feb. 1 Project Week (no classes)

## FEBRUARY

- 4 Third quarter begins
- 12 Parent-Teacher conferences for 9s and new 10s
- 18 Presidents' Day (no school)

## MARCH

- 1-2 Winter play
- 4-7 Senior Projects
- 6 Fourth quarter begins
- 8-22 Spring vacation
- 25 Classes resume

## APRIL

- 12 Spring concert, 7:30 p.m.
- 15 Patriots' Day (no school)
- 27 Prom

## MAY

- 6-17 AP exams
- 7 Parent reception and art show, 7 p.m.
- 17-19 Hancock
- 20 Post Hancock holiday (no classes)
- 24 Jazz concert
- 27 Memorial Day (no school)
- 30-Jun. 5 Final exams

## JUNE

- 1-5 Final exams
- 6 Beach Day
- 7 Graduation, 10:30 a.m.
- 11 New parents dinner

# WELCOME FROM THE HEADMASTER

*Dear Students and Parents:*

For a school whose founder professed there to be only one rule, “No roller skating in the halls,” this hefty Handbook may seem surprising. Charles Merrill’s rule was his formulation of Rabbi Hillel’s ancient response to the man who challenged him to teach him the whole Torah while he stood on one foot: “That which is hateful to you, do not unto another: This is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary. Go and learn it.” As explained below in the Introduction (see Philosophy), we still prefer discussion to dictate, principles to rules. But any community needs clear rules and procedures to guide and govern its daily life. And it is important that all members of the community know and understand them.

This Handbook offers a lot of information that students and families need and want to know about our schedule, personnel, programs, services, and expectations. There are also policies and practices that we are required to observe and disclose.

This Handbook is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to create, nor does it create, a contract or part of a contract in any way, including but not limited to, between Commonwealth School and any parent, guardian or student affiliated with or attending the School. Commonwealth School reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to add, revise and/or delete School policies before, during and after the school year.

That means that although in signing, as required, the enrollment agreement and the Handbook Acknowledgement form, you accept responsibility for understanding and abiding by the policies and procedures of this Handbook, it is not a legal document. And since any school worth its salt continually evolves, the policies and procedures described here may well change as the School deems necessary.

So please read this Handbook carefully. It tells you everything from what time we open our doors in the morning to how we cope with various sorts of crises. Remember, however, that it is a living document, shaped by years of discussion and practice, and, we hope, a spur to ongoing conversation and growth. As Commonwealth students and parents you now are part of that conversation, so we welcome any questions and comments you may have.

Yours truly,

William D. Wharton, *Headmaster*

# INTRODUCTION

## MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Commonwealth School is to educate young people from diverse backgrounds to become knowledgeable, thoughtful, and creative adults capable of careful analysis, fruitful cooperation, and deep commitment.

## GOALS

Our vision of Commonwealth is that it should be a school:

- With the highest standards of academic excellence.
- Where students learn to think for themselves and to exercise responsibility and initiative in their actions.
- With a community of talented teachers and promising students from diverse backgrounds.
- That takes maximum advantage of its rich urban setting.
- Where arts are a vital element of daily life.
- That equips students to use effectively the full range of tools for inquiry and research.
- That promotes physical and emotional health and fitness.
- That provides the friendly atmosphere of a small, supportive community.
- That helps students establish the foundation for rewarding and productive lives.

## PHILOSOPHY

Commonwealth is an extraordinary gathering of students and teachers dedicated to adventurous intellectual and artistic exploration. Small classes, gifted faculty, and high academic standards inspire young people to do their best work. Our curriculum hinges on rigorous analysis, discussion, research, and writing. The close relationships between students and advisors are the foundation of a community where, as the Headmaster says, “we set the bar high for students, and have the resources to help them clear it.”

Commonwealth asks students to assume responsibility and eventually take on leadership both in school—for their own learning and the life of the place—and in the larger community of our neighborhood and the city. In the classroom, we want students to learn to ask questions, put forth their ideas, make suggestions; as we used to say in our catalog, “a great class is one where everyone has spoken up.” The Headmaster’s door is open to any student or teacher with an idea or concern. We want our students—through our jobs program and our all-School Hancock weekends in Maine, through yearly projects and community service, and during their summers—to exercise their skills and their wills in larger settings.

The school’s founder, Charles Merrill, used to say that there was only one rule at Commonwealth, “No roller-skating in the halls,” a statement he explained to mean “Don’t be a fool, but think about your actions and how they affect others.” While the School now has more than one rule, it still prefers principle and discussion to statute and enforcement.

## SHORT HISTORY

Commonwealth was founded in 1957 by Charles E. Merrill, Jr., whose aim was to give students “a respect for hard work, intellectual exploration, and the process of self-education, while still encouraging them to be decent, socially responsible, generous people.” His insistence on self-respect, high academic standards, and independence of mind, and his commitment to the cause of civil rights, gave the School the focus on distinction in scholarship and active engagement in public affairs, qualities for which it has long been known.

Choosing to locate his new school in the Back Bay area of Boston rather than in a suburb, Mr. Merrill noted that “one goal of Commonwealth is to restore good secondary schooling to the city as an environment more stimulating and more realistic than the suburbs.” Mr. Merrill headed the School from its opening in 1958 until his retirement in 1981. He chronicled those years, as well as his own reflections on education and the times, in his memoir *The Walled Garden*.

A grant from the Charles E. Merrill Foundation in 1981 (Commonwealth’s founder was the son of Charles E. Merrill, founder of the financial services company Merrill Lynch) established an endowment for the school, creating a financial foundation that would sustain the School for the long term. Early in Commonwealth’s history, Mr. Merrill observed that one of the purposes of the School was “to share the decision-making process as much as possible with the faculty, so the teachers would grow as colleagues and not remain employees.” He invited his faculty to take on a large share of administrative duties, a tradition that, even as major administrative duties have become professionalized, has continued under his successors: Joseph Featherstone (Head of School from 1981 to 1983), Charles Chatfield (Head of School, 1983-1990), Judith Keenan (Head of School, 1990-2000), and William Wharton (2000-present).

The commitment to locate and persuade the most talented students from all socioeconomic, ethnic, and community backgrounds to come to Commonwealth has been paramount among the concerns of the faculty and trustees since the School opened. (See Appendix A for a longer history of the School.)

# SCHOOL LIFE

## SCHOOL DAY

The school building opens at 7:30 a.m. Classes begin at 8:30 a.m. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays classes end at 2:45 p.m. and are followed by sports. On Tuesdays, the school day is over at 3:10 p.m., and on Thursdays at 4:05 p.m. The building closes at 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. We instruct students to contact their parents if they are not going directly home after the school closing, sports, or any other after-school event, or if they are delayed en route. We urge parents to discuss such arrangements with their children. Commonwealth School's website ([commschool.org](http://commschool.org)) includes information on current and upcoming events, sports schedules, cancellations, directions to games, course listings, admissions, and a faculty-staff directory.

## SCHEDULE *(see page 9 for a full schedule)*

The school day consists of seven class periods of 40 to 55 minutes. During morning recess, held in the lunchroom from 10:00 a.m. to 10:15 a.m., students have refreshments and listen to announcements. Each grade holds its own class meeting once a week, and the whole School meets on Thursdays for an assembly, usually with an invited speaker, and on Tuesdays for an extended recess. All students are expected to attend both. Lunch, which includes vegetarian options, is served daily. Weekly menus can be found online by searching "Commonwealth School" at [myschooldining.com](http://myschooldining.com).

## SCHOOL SUPPLIES AND BOOKS

Parents are responsible for the cost of personal supplies needed by students for class work and projects. When the School supplies such items including source books, the items will be billed to the parents. The School will provide a list of textbooks and families are free to choose where to purchase them. Financial aid grants include the annual cost of books.

## STUDENT CUBBIES AND VALUABLES

Each student is assigned an open cubby for storage of books, notebooks and personal materials. All materials stored in cubbies should be properly identified. A student should never search another student's cubby. The areas around the cubbies are students' responsibility and should be kept clean. All cubbies are the property of the School and so are subject to search. Students should not leave valuable equipment, cash, or other items in their cubbies or unattended in their backpacks. Items and cash may be left with the front office for safekeeping.

## BUILDING SECURITY

Students and teachers enter the building by using coded cards at either the basement door of 151 Commonwealth Avenue or the Dartmouth Street entrance. We ask parents and visitors to ring the bell at 151 Commonwealth Avenue. Students should ask any visitors seeking to enter from the Dartmouth Street entrance to ring the bell at the Commonwealth Avenue door.

## OPEN CAMPUS

Commonwealth School is an open campus. Students may leave the building during the school day, though their attendance is, of course, required in classes, and they are expected to attend assembly, class meetings, recess announcements, jobs, and sports. All first-semester ninth graders and certain other students, however, are expected to work in the library during their free periods. Significant lapses in attendance during the school day usually come to an advisor's attention and are shared with parents.

## ATTENDANCE

In general, students should not miss school for reasons other than illness or family emergency. Please do not make holiday plans that include school days. When a student is absent from school, parents or guardians must call the front office at (617) 266-7525 by 8:30 a.m., even though parents or guardians may already have spoken with or emailed a teacher or advisor. The parent or guardian, not the student, should make the call. Any students who arrive late are asked to check in at the front office. Students who leave before their final class, whether because of illness, medical appointment, or other reason, should check out with the front office. To discuss problems arising from an extended illness, please contact the student's advisor or Dean of Students. In the case of absence for another pressing reason (religious observance or college interview), we ask students to let their advisor or teachers and the front office know beforehand and to make arrangements to complete missed work. Excessive absences may trigger a Leave of Absence; please note the Leave of Absence Policy in the Health and Wellness section of this Handbook.

## LIBRARY

The library is available to serve the needs and interests of students, faculty, staff, and families. Students learn to use various library resources within the context of their classes, and the Librarian and teachers are available to assist with research, reference material, and general questions about the library.

The School expects students to follow the proper procedures for borrowing library materials. Students will be held responsible for the cost of lost or unreturned books and materials.

Books circulate for a period of 28 days and may be renewed. Media (including CDs and DVDs) are checked out for 3 days. Copies of each textbook used at the School is on reserve and may be checked out for use in the library only. Reference books, reserve books, textbooks, magazines, and newspapers must remain in the library.

## LOST AND FOUND

An area for lost and found articles is located in the front office. Students (and/or parents) are asked to check regularly for items belonging to students. Items that remain unclaimed over a period of time will be removed and donated.



## EMERGENCIES AND SNOW DAYS

Commonwealth has engaged a service to notify households in the Commonwealth community about any school cancellation via phone and/or text message. This same system will be used in case of crisis or other events that affect the normal school schedule. To receive these alerts, please ensure that your contact information is kept up to date at the school by notifying the front office of any changes in phone, mobile phone, or email. In case of inclement weather, the decision to cancel school will be made by 6:00 a.m.

## FIRE DRILLS

The School conducts regular fire drills. When the fire alarm sounds, everyone in the building, without exception, must exit via the nearest door. Students in grades 9 and 10 should proceed to mustering stations on the Commonwealth sidewalk to the east of the school. Juniors and seniors should gather with their classes, on the Dartmouth Street sidewalk north of alley 424.

## VACATIONS

There are two weeks each of winter vacation (holiday season) and spring vacation (March).

School also closes for Yom Kippur (when it falls on a weekday), Columbus Day, Thanksgiving and the day after, Martin Luther King Day, Presidents' Day, Patriots' Day, and Memorial Day. In addition, there are no classes on the day after the fall and spring weekends in Maine, and on administration days, grading meetings, all-day parent-teacher conferences (on or around Veterans Day), and faculty development days, held after October and January exams. Sports may meet on these days.

## POLICY ON STUDENT DRIVING

Students may drive to and from school or school-sponsored events only with written permission. In order to grant permission for a student to drive, parents must complete the Driving Consent Form, which can be found at [commschool.org/schoolforms](http://commschool.org/schoolforms). Students who drive are asked not to take fellow Commonwealth students with them to or from school or School-related events.

# ACADEMIC PROGRAM

## REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

The 16-credit minimum for graduation includes four full courses in English, three in mathematics (including a year of calculus or statistics), three in history (including U.S. History in eleventh grade), three of foreign language (normally completing the third year of a language and beyond), and three in science (one each in biology, chemistry and physics, with at least one of these subjects taken in ninth or tenth grade). Ninth graders take three courses in rotation through the year: Language and Ethics, City of Boston, and Health and Community. New tenth graders also take Language and Ethics and part of Health and Community. Twelfth graders take the Headmaster's yearlong quarter-credit course, Readings in Ethics. Additional requirements each year include: one full-year course in the arts, participation in the fall and winter sports seasons, and the satisfactory completion of Project Week or a Senior Project (including the associated report). Each student must complete 30 hours of community service by the first day of eleventh grade. For further information regarding academic requirements, please see the School catalogue.

Generally, students carry 5 to 5.5 academic credits each year; the minimum is 4 academic credits annually. Juniors and seniors are required to take 3 full-credit courses, but are encouraged to take at least 4. The full faculty will review the course choices of any rising tenth or eleventh grader who signs up for more than 5.5 credits, and of any rising twelfth grader who signs up for more than 5.25 credits. While in many cases the faculty will approve these schedules, students should know that unusual course loads are subject to faculty approval.

## COURSE REGISTRATION

After spring vacation, the Assistant Head distributes course choice packets to students, who consult their parents and advisors before deciding on their programs for the coming year. If parents or students have questions, they should speak to their advisors, the Assistant Head, or any of the teachers. Full faculty approval is required for the course loads of any rising tenth or eleventh grader who signs up for more than five-and-a-half credits, and of any twelfth grader who elects more than five-and-a-quarter credits.

## STUDENT SCHEDULES

Students learn by early August from the Assistant Head whether it was possible to meet all of their course requests, and receive the information necessary to place book orders (see School Supplies and Books). Student schedules are distributed towards the end of August.

## DROPPING AND ADDING COURSES

Students may request changes to their program during the first semester of the academic year; any changes in program (adding/dropping courses or course section changes) should be undertaken in consultation with the academic advisor and with the approval of the Assistant Head. Students wishing to make an adjustment to their courses should complete a Course Change form; it must be signed by all those involved in a course change — student, advisor, and teacher— even if the course change is only a change in section. This form should be submitted to the Assistant Head for approval, and the Registrar will make the requisite changes and create a new student schedule (if necessary).

The deadline for changing or dropping courses without a penalty is the Grading Meeting at the

conclusion of the first semester. No course dropped before the end of grading meetings will appear on the student's transcript, and no credit will be awarded.

It is significantly more difficult to change a course after the beginning of the second semester, and any such proposals require Commonwealth faculty approval.

Requests for course withdrawals in the period from the beginning of the second semester through the spring break must be submitted by the student's advisor to the Commonwealth faculty for approval. If the request is granted, a grade of "W" will be recorded on the student's transcript.

Students cannot withdraw from a course after the end of the spring vacation. Students will receive a letter grade, a grade of Pass or Fail, or an Incomplete as determined by the course instructor.

A change of section in a given course cannot be effected after the spring vacation. Students who change sections in a given course in the four weeks preceding the midyear examination will receive a midyear grade consisting of 50% of the grade received in the first section and 50% of the grade received in the new section.

## STUDY HALLS

The School expects first-semester ninth graders and students in academic difficulty to spend their free periods in the library. In addition, we ask students with an abundance of free periods to commit some of them to quiet study in the library.

## TUTORING

Teachers and qualified students offer extra help in subjects taught at the School. Professional tutors are available through the School on a fee-for-service basis for students who need more sustained or specialized support. Please speak with the student's advisor or the Coordinator of Academic Support if a referral might be helpful.

## HOMEWORK

Students should expect to spend 40 minutes to one hour preparing for each academic class period. Commonwealth offers a twice-weekly evening proctored study hall, the Homework Project, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.—with dinner available beforehand—for students who want or need a quiet, structured setting for school work. This program begins in early September, though students may be allowed to join at other times. Students and families interested are asked to sign up for 10-week commitments, renewable at their discretion.

## TESTS AND EXAMS

Students take quizzes and write papers on a regular basis in all academic courses throughout the year. In some courses, teachers give in-class quarter exams in October and March. Midyear and final exams (in 3-hour slots) take place during scheduled exam weeks in January and May/June.

## GRADES

Teachers determine cumulative grades for students at the end of each quarter in advance of the Grading Meetings (see below). Grades are reported on a scale from A+ to E. A grade of D- or above is a passing grade. Students must receive a final grade of C- or above to be promoted into the next level of a course. A failing grade on a final exam will raise questions about readiness for the next course.

## GRADING MEETINGS

The faculty discusses every student in the school at least three times during the year: after first quarter, after the mid-year exams at the end of first semester, and after final exams at the end of second semester. Ninth graders, students in academic difficulty, and students whose work has changed appreciably during the third quarter are also discussed in March. Advisors lead short discussions about their advisees after reviewing the comments and grades that teachers have provided. If the faculty or the advisor feels that a section change or course load change would be appropriate this is the venue in which they will have those discussions.

## GRADING AND PROGRESS REPORTS

After the quarter, mid-year, and final exams, the School sends home reports to all families. These include a grade and comment from each teacher and a letter from the advisor. Ninth graders, students in academic difficulty, and students whose work has changed appreciably during the third quarter also receive grades and comments in March. It is hoped that parents will regard student progress in context, not solely on the report card grades, and that they will communicate with the advisor and teachers as necessary and appropriately, with any questions or concerns they may have.

## TRANSCRIPTS

Cumulative letter grades are used on report cards and transcripts. Students' permanent transcripts carry only final grades for the year. Ninth graders receive letter grades through the year, but their final freshman-year grades appear on transcripts as Pass (P)/Fail (E).

When the school sends out a transcript before the end of the year, as is the case for seniors applying to college, cumulative grades for the current year are issued for work done by the end of the most recently completed marking period.

## PROMOTION STANDARDS

The faculty and Headmaster make the decision regarding a student's placement and readiness to move from one level of the School to the next. The academic requirement for promotion is successful completion of a minimum of four academic credits and fulfillment of additional requirements for each grade, including arts, athletics, and a project.

## ACADEMIC WARNING

Any student whose semester report includes two grades of C- or lower or one failing grade (E) or whose overall record or pattern of work raises questions about long-term viability may be placed on academic warning. Generally, if the student's grades at the end of the following semester are not sufficiently improved for removal from academic warning status, the student will be permitted to continue at the School only with approval of the faculty. Each student who is placed on academic warning will work with the advisor and the Assistant Head to formulate a plan to assist the student. The student and his or her parents will be notified of the warning, as well as the features of any assistance plan.

Seniors who are in jeopardy of failing a year-long course, or who have failed a first semester course, may be required to withdraw from the School.

## STANDARDIZED TESTS

The school administers the PSAT to all tenth and eleventh graders in mid-October. The results from the eleventh grade PSAT tests are used by the National Merit Scholarship program to determine semifinalists and commended students. The School is responsible for registering students for, and the administration of, these tests.

SAT and SAT Subject Tests must be taken outside the School. The SAT or ACT is required for college admission. SAT Subject Tests are taken after the student completes the relevant courses. Students discuss with their advisors, college advisors, and teachers which SAT Subject Tests to take (most colleges require two). Students should register online at [www.sat.collegeboard.org](http://www.sat.collegeboard.org) for the appropriate tests. Standardized testing is covered in full in the School's College Handbook.

Students completing the following courses are generally prepared to take the corresponding Advanced Placement (AP) examinations: English 11, English 12, U.S. History, Modern European History, French 3, Spanish 3, Latin 3, Mandarin 5, Calculus 1 Advanced, Calculus 2, Calculus 2 Multivariable, Theoretical Calculus, Statistics, Chemistry 2 Advanced, Physics 1 Advanced, Computer Science 2, Economics, and Music Theory 3. Other tests will be offered to prepared candidates.

The School sends detailed information on testing and test preparation in the late fall to parents of tenth and eleventh graders, as well as to parents of ninth graders enrolled in courses that may prepare them for an AP Exam or SAT Subject Test.

## COLLEGE COUNSELING

The college counseling and admissions process formally begins in January of eleventh grade, when each student starts meeting with a college counselor and the parents of juniors attend the College Night presented by college counselors. Information about the process is available in the School's College Handbook.

# CO-CURRICULAR AND EXTRACURRICULAR PROGRAMS

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES

A number of student-run enterprises exist within the School. Students oversee publication of the literary magazine and the yearbook. Other regular groups include:

- Chess Club
- Commonwealth Cares (community service)
- Debate Team
- Diversity Committee
- Environmental Committee
- Gender-Sexuality Alliance
- Junior/senior prom and all-School dances
- Math Team
- Model UN
- Robotics Club
- Science Team
- Other organizations and activities, as interests develop

Generally, older students welcome and advise new students, and, when needed, serve as tutors for their schoolmates.

## PROJECT WEEK AND SENIOR PROJECTS

Project Week takes ninth, tenth, and eleventh graders into week-long immersions in the arts, business, academia, politics, and more. Seniors have a three-week Senior Project. Students work with their faculty advisors and project advisors to identify a topic, place, or person for the project, and students take the lead in contacting mentors and making arrangements. Once the week is over, each student writes a brief report on the experience. Completion of a Project and the associated project report each year is a graduation requirement. Many students use a faculty-led trip or student exchange as a project.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

Commonwealth has a graduation requirement of 30 hours of service to be completed by the end of tenth grade. Students have the option to participate in school-organized group projects as ninth graders, or design their own independent project. The School believes its students have a social responsibility, and the requirement aims to help students realize they can make a difference and to give them the tools to do so, gaining practical experience in the real world.

## SUMMER

Commonwealth encourages students to spend their summers productively. The summer plans coordinator maintains information and resources and can offer advice on various summer programs, schools, community service, and some paying jobs. Students receive a summer reading list comprised of both required and suggested books.



# STUDENT BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

At Commonwealth, we want students not only to be enthusiastic about their classes and to enjoy the relative freedoms that the School affords, but also to participate actively in the life of the School. Whether in or out of the classroom, lively engagement is far more rewarding than its opposite. The more students contribute, the less the School has to require.

We also aspire to be a community of civility and respect, where the students exhibit the judgment and maturity to treat all members of the community with consideration, and where they appreciate the folly of cliquy behavior, of inflating one's status by putting others down, and of other such competitive social games. Commonwealth has always been a school in which students have felt safe, a place that has allowed and encouraged students to be themselves rather than conform to any mold imposed by adults or peers.

The School wants students to take seriously the trust they are shown. Every abuse of trust is an argument for the proliferation of explicit rules and the curtailment of the freedom that students enjoy.

The School hopes that when teachers or advisors address students with respect to behavior that is out-of-bounds, those students will respond with efforts to ask about and understand the reasons for the concern. Honest communication is fundamental to the work we do.

The school responds to serious or repeated violations of trust with measures that may include warning, probation, suspension, or dismissal. The response may also include some form of restitution, counseling or other support to address underlying issues, or ongoing monitoring as determined by the Headmaster or his designee. Both the student and the student's parent(s) are involved in the discussions that precede disciplinary action so they can understand the behavior at issue, but decisions regarding student discipline are made at the sole discretion of the School. The terms of a disciplinary action are spelled out in a letter or email to the student and the family. Disciplinary probation means that a student is on notice that a further infraction could result in suspension or dismissal. During a period of suspension, a student is not allowed in school, and assumes all responsibility for missed work. Dismissal is permanent expulsion from the School, though the faculty may in some cases leave open the possibility of application for readmission in the future. Dismissal and suspension may become part of a student's permanent record, and thus be reported to colleges to which a student applies or has been admitted. Any serious disciplinary infractions or violations of academic integrity committed by seniors that result in sanctions are reported to colleges.

**Most of the disciplinary matters we face fall into one of the following areas:**

**1. Serious Disciplinary Violations.** Theft; possession, use or being under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol in School or while at any School-sponsored activity; and harassment of or cruelty to fellow students or teachers, whether in person or online, generally lead at least to suspension and disciplinary probation. The sale or distribution of drugs or alcohol in school or while at any School-sponsored activity is grounds for dismissal.

Theft, harassment, and cruelty of any form violate the mutual trust and respect we expect of all students. The School's policies on sexual harassment, harassment, hazing, bullying, and sexting spell out in more detail unacceptable behaviors and our procedures for addressing them.

*Please see Appendices B through E or the School's website for a copy of the School's policies on harassment, bullying, hazing, and sexting.*

The use of alcohol, marijuana, illegal drugs, and prescription drugs (when not taken as prescribed), aside from risking health and well-being, cultivates the corrosive habits of duplicity and concealment. We actively discourage use of illegal substances and tobacco products by Commonwealth students outside School as well. (Though not as strongly sanctioned as drug and alcohol use, use of tobacco products—including e-cigarettes and juuls—by students is prohibited in and near the School building.)

Students are not allowed to have weapons or other items at School that pose risk to oneself or others or that will disrupt any aspect of the School day.

**2. Violations of Academic Integrity.** Academic dishonesty, from copying during tests or exams to plagiarism on papers, is the presentation of another's words or work as one's own and violates the integrity of the central enterprise of the School: the learning we do together. We take academic honesty very seriously, especially considering that Internet access has made everything from cheating to unintentional plagiarism considerably easier and more widespread in schools and colleges. Teachers at Commonwealth often encourage students to work together on homework and other projects and to help each other, but such collaboration should involve the honest efforts of all parties and deepen students' understanding, rather than provide shortcuts to answers. Teachers also discuss regularly in class the proper use and citation of sources for information and ideas. When there is uncertainty about legitimate versus illegitimate collaboration or proper use of sources, students should consult their teachers. We expect students to take responsibility for insuring that the work they submit is their own, and that language and ideas from other sources are properly credited. The following list contains examples of plagiarism, but is in no way exhaustive.

- Paraphrasing without citation, and overly-close paraphrasing even with a citation.
- Presenting another's argument as one's own without citation.
- Copying from Wikipedia or any other source that is publicly shared, for example, through a Creative Commons license.
- Copying from another's homework, lab report, or class work, regardless of the scope of the assignment.
- Copying solutions from a text or solution manual, or using a solution manual without permission from the teacher.
- Incorrectly attributing ownership in a citation.
- Relying on Google Translate in a foreign language course.

We consider inadvertent, unintentional plagiarism as seriously as we do efforts meant to deceive.



**3. School Participation.** Except when illness or some unforeseen emergency prevents it, students must attend, on time, all classes, class meetings, School meetings, assemblies, jobs, sports, and required library study periods. Teachers may penalize a student who is tardy. A pattern of lateness or unexcused absence may lead, after warnings from teacher and advisor, progressively to a conference with the Headmaster, a meeting with parents, and, eventually, disciplinary probation. In class, students are expected to participate constructively and to avoid any behavior that impedes classmates' learning.

**4. Community Life.** We ask that the following restrictions be observed out of respect for each other, the building, and the public nature of our work together. Students should not:

- Mislead or otherwise deceive teachers and classmates.
- Use smartphone or other devices with earphones while in the school building, unless for school work.
- Use mobile phones for calls in the building during school hours.
- Act in rough or boisterous manner.
- Make excessive noise or use foul language.
- Gamble.
- Engage in intimate, inappropriate, or provocative sexual behavior.
- Deface or damage any part of the building or furniture or property of another in any way.
- Vandalize computer hardware or software.
- Bring any food or drink beyond the designated areas—the lower level and, on the first floor, the Dartmouth lobby.
- Use areas reserved for visitors (i.e. the front Commonwealth lobby).

This list is not exhaustive. Responses to violation of these restrictions vary in proportion to the seriousness of the infraction.

### **PROCEDURE FOR ADDRESSING SERIOUS VIOLATIONS.**

Suspected disciplinary violations will be brought to the attention of the Headmaster, who will generally refer them to the Disciplinary Committee for review. All cases involving questions of academic integrity will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee. The Disciplinary Committee comprises the Dean of Students, Assistant Head, and four other members of the faculty; normally, at least four committee members will hear each case. Should the student's advisor or the faculty member involved in the case be on the disciplinary committee, s/he will recuse her/himself. The committee will convene as promptly as possible to review the case, meeting if necessary with the student and any faculty members involved. The student's advisor will serve as the student's advocate during the process. After deliberating, the committee will present a brief of the case and a proposed disciplinary response to the full faculty and the Headmaster. The Headmaster will make a final decision, and will meet with the student and the student's family to make sure that they understand the behavior at issue, and to lay out disciplinary action the School will take.

In some situations, including when the nature of the case is particularly sensitive or the timing of the event requires immediate action, the Headmaster may delegate an investigation to the Dean of Students, an outside appointee, and/or make a decision about a disciplinary response without convening the Disciplinary Committee.

Students and parents understand and accept that a student may be required to go on a non-disciplinary leave such as during the course of an investigation. A non-disciplinary leave should not be considered a conclusion by the school of any wrongdoing. During a non-disciplinary leave, the School will work with students to continue their educational experience to the extent possible such as through tutoring, online learning and other methods.

Students are expected to cooperate in investigations. Students are expected to be honest, but honesty is not necessarily a mitigating factor in determining whether a disciplinary response is appropriate.

No adverse action will be taken against a student for making a good faith report of misconduct. The school will respond to any retaliation against a complaint of serious misconduct as a disciplinary matter. A student may violate this anti-retaliation provision regardless of whether the original complaint turns out to be true or the retaliation was not intended to be harmful.

While the School does not, as a rule, monitor students' behavior outside of the school or school functions, we reserve the right to sanction a student whose behavior raises fundamental concerns about his or her judgment and/or negatively affects the experience of any student at the School.

## PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Disciplinary matters and student issues are handled directly by teachers, administrators, and appropriate staff. If a student is having an issue with another student, parents should not attempt to deal with the other student directly about that matter. Doing so may put a student in an intimidating situation and is best resolved, when appropriate, through a School administrator. Please speak to the appropriate School administrator for guidance with respect to any questions about contacting another student or parent about a School-related matter.

Once a year, the Headmaster will share with the community the general nature of disciplinary cases reviewed by the Disciplinary Committee in the previous semester.

## PARTIES

Commonwealth strongly believes that student parties must be chaperoned. We ask parents to make sure that the parties their children attend will be properly supervised. We urgently request that parents not serve alcohol to Commonwealth students. To this end, the Parents Committee developed the Chaperone Policy, and the Parent Liaison compiles and distributes a list each year of those households pledging to follow the policy. The Chaperone Policy can be found at [commschool.org/schoolforms](http://commschool.org/schoolforms).

## COMPUTER AND INTERNET USE: COMMONWEALTH'S COMPUTER USE POLICY

Commonwealth provides all students with access to computers and the Internet, and with e-mail and Google Drive accounts. Whether physically on campus or off campus, whether linked to the School's network from in school or from a remote location or not at all, or using their own personal computer or communication device on or off campus, students are expected to abide by the school's behavioral guidelines. Information stored in School accounts is the property of the School, and students should in no circumstances enter, read, or tamper with others' e-mail or accounts.

School-owned equipment and networks, and the use of e-mail, computers, and the Internet while on campus are to be used for work that is consonant with the School's purpose. Schoolwork and research are examples of legitimate use. Such uses as gaming; use of social network sites; shopping; downloading or installing programs, music, or other materials without permission; changing system settings; and accessing offensive material are not legitimate uses. Students should also restrict activities that may tax the School's bandwidth, such as watching videos, to what is necessary to or consonant with their schoolwork. Note again, that these guidelines apply both to use of the School's computers and of students own devices while in the School building, whether or not they are using the School's wireless or internet access.

In addition, students should not have any food or drink around the computers and should not, without permission, open the machines or detach or add peripherals.

The violation of another's electronic privacy or such behavior as cyber bullying will be treated like any other breach of trust, i.e., like cheating or theft. The response to inappropriate use and other misbehavior will vary depending on the exact nature of the offense.

# STUDENT SUPPORT

## THE ADVISOR SYSTEM

Each student has a faculty advisor who helps support and guide the student; who serves as a channel of communication between parents and the school; and who advocates for the student's best interests. Advisors meet regularly with advisees, one-on-one, to review progress, to share good news, to address challenges, and to help with planning. A student's advisor is the first person a parent should contact if he/she has questions about life at the School. We encourage parents to be in touch with advisors by email or phone with questions or concerns about their child.

The admissions team assigns an advisor to each new student before the beginning of the school year based on their knowledge of the student from the admissions process. At the beginning of their second semester, new students are given the opportunity to request a change to their advisor; many students remain with their originally assigned advisor, but some will make a shift. Returning students are also invited to request advising shifts at this time, but they can also request a change of advisor at any point in the year. The Assistant Head coordinates the assignment of advisors.

## STUDENT LIFE TEAM

The Dean of Students consults with parents, advisors, faculty and students regarding social and emotional adjustment within the school setting, as well as learning issues (including applications of educational testing). The Coordinator of Academic Support oversees academic support including professional tutoring, academic accommodations, and educational support for all students with individualized learning plans. The School Counselor is available for short-term counseling to students and consultation to parents and faculty about student emotional issues and wellbeing.

## ACADEMIC AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

The Commonwealth curriculum is designed to challenge and develop students' intellectual abilities in a number of different ways. The growth we see over a student's years at Commonwealth rarely comes without some challenges and setbacks along the way. At Commonwealth, we recognize that such moments of trial are normal: a young person's development is rarely linear. Students at Commonwealth, therefore, regularly need and seek academic support from an advisor or teacher, whether in a subject specific area or with more general skills. Our Student Life Team also frequently works with students and families to support the learning process. The Coordinator of Academic Support facilitates connecting students with tutors and coaches who work with students to strengthen particular academic domains. The School Counselor often meets with students to talk through the emotional dimension of tackling the work at Commonwealth.

## ACCOMMODATION

The School is committed to ensuring that qualified students with disabilities are provided with equal access to all of the School's programs and services, in accordance with applicable law. For students who need additional support or curricular adjustments, the School requires documentation indicating that the student's disability substantially limits a major life activity, including learning. Students who present the School with appropriate documentation of disability will be granted those requested academic accommodations that are supported by the documentation and considered reasonable in this educational setting. Any adjustments to the academic program would be made through an interactive process between the student and the Assistant Head, Dean of Students, and Coordinator of Academic Support. In general, no waivers of academic graduation requirements will be granted to students.

Even after supportive services and accommodations have been put in place, a student may still not be able to fulfill his or her academic requirements satisfactorily. In such instances, the student's advisor, the Headmaster, and other support personnel may notify the student's parents that the accommodations put into place may not suffice to ensure the student's success at the School. At that time, the Headmaster and other appropriate personnel, the student (if age appropriate), and his or her parents will discuss whether it makes sense for the student to continue at the School. If there is a disagreement, the School will decide, in its sole discretion, whether to issue a re-enrollment agreement to the student.

## OUTSIDE TESTING/EVALUATION

In some instances, a student's academic difficulties may indicate that outside testing or evaluation of the student is appropriate. In such instances, the School can help parents explore potential resources and may make the necessary arrangements for such testing or evaluation.

When parents arrange for such outside testing or evaluation, the School strongly recommends that this information be shared with the School, in order to ensure the School's ability to assist the student.

## PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

We encourage students to talk over issues and concerns with their advisors or other faculty members. Faculty members usually consider such conversations to be private, and the School generally supports the privacy of faculty/student discussion as essential to honest and open communication, while balancing the inappropriateness of keeping secrets, an example of behavior that can be considered a boundary violation. (See Ethical Standards below.) Private or otherwise confidential information, however, may be disclosed to the Headmaster, appropriate administrators, outside professionals, law enforcement officers, parent/guardians or others when there is a compelling reason for doing so, including, without limitation, in cases of health and safety emergencies (when students or others are in imminent danger of harm); when there is concern about an individual's ability to function academically, emotionally, physically, and/or mentally within the School environment; or when legal requirements demand that confidential information be revealed.

## ETHICAL STANDARDS

A key strength of a small school like Commonwealth is the close collaboration between adults and students: teachers and staff get to know the students well and the collegial, friendly spirit encourages full engagement in the life of the school inside and outside the classroom. The faculty and staff hold themselves to high standards, since maintaining that supportive environment entails a special responsibility on the adults to act ethically—to work with students always mindful of their roles and their authority as teachers and mentors. In 2017-18, the faculty and staff adopted the following set of Ethical Standards for Working with Students. The faculty and staff regularly undertake workshops and training to ensure that the guidelines remain a part of the living culture of the school community.

### Ethical Standards for Working with Students

We hope these principles will help us understand and uphold healthy relationships with students at Commonwealth. We agree, at a minimum, to abide by the expectations of behavior outlined in the Employee and Faculty Handbooks. These standards, in contrast, should guide the less straightforward judgments we all make every day in our dealings with students. We recognize that no one makes these judgments perfectly every time. These standards aim to help us avoid patterns of behavior that may be legal but can still do harm, and can signal a larger or growing problem for a teacher. By paying attention to them, we can maintain the warm and collegial relations we enjoy with our students but also maintain an atmosphere of trust and security.

#### **Both in person and in other interactions with students, we will:**

1. Always seek to foster students' growth, learning, and autonomy.
2. Act as role models, in a manner consistent with the mission of the school, including in our dealings with other adults.
3. Take responsibility for maintaining healthy boundaries with students and consistently conveying to them that while we care about them, our roles are limited to teaching and advising.
4. Act in full awareness of the imbalance of power in relationships between adults and students, including recent graduates.
5. Take responsibility for meeting our own emotional needs, not putting students in a position where they are doing so.
6. Help each other, seek help, or both, when uneasy about whether boundaries are being maintained, or when some action seems like an abuse of power.
7. Act promptly, using the school's resources, if the well-being or safety of any member of the community seems threatened.

Faculty and staff are expected to raise concerns with each other, with the school leadership, with an outside designee, or with the trustees about any suspected or actual breaches of these principles by a colleague. The School urges students to share any concerns about possible inappropriate behavior with a trusted adult or with a student leader who can pass it on,

assured that they can do so safely and confident that the response will be timely, thoughtful, and constructive. Parents or other adults are urged to share any relevant concerns about unethical behavior they observe or hear about with the Headmaster, Assistant Head of School, or Dean of Students.

A Student Safety Committee comprising three members of Commonwealth's board of trustees ensures that the school stays up to date in promoting a healthy, safe environment for students, and that the school leadership addresses any concerns about or violations of the ethical standards in an effective and timely manner.

The more the expectation is of open and constructive discussion and response to such matters, the more all be assured about the health and safety of the students and the school community.

## HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Commonwealth has no school nurse or other medical personnel on site who have specialized medical training. In the event of a serious injury or medical emergency, first aid is



administered and transportation to one of the nearby hospitals is arranged.

The School does consult with medical professionals as necessary to develop and maintain its health-related policies and practices. Student health forms are reviewed annually by a consulting nurse in order to confirm that all forms are complete and up-to-date.

## HEALTH RECORDS, REGULATIONS, AND ACCESS

School health records serve two purposes: information must be on file with the School to comply with state health and immunization regulations, and the School requires a current record for each student in order to facilitate the handling of an emergency situation. State regulations require that, upon entering School for the first time, each student has a complete physical exam, including Mantoux (tuberculosis) testing. State law mandates that each student's immunizations be current or s/he may be asked to leave School. Specific information about the Massachusetts of Public Health immunization requirements is available from the state and/or a pediatrician's office. Each student must complete and return a Health and Immunization Form that is updated on an annual basis. Parents are also required to complete the Emergency Release Form, the Universal Authorization Form, and provide an annual report from the student's physician.

These documents **MUST** be returned to the front office by August 15th. A student will not be allowed to attend the School if it has not received these forms. All necessary forms are distributed before the school year via e-mail and may also be downloaded at [commschool.org/schoolforms](http://commschool.org/schoolforms).

As a condition of enrollment, parents and students must agree to release the student's health-related information, including drug and alcohol and counseling-related information, to other school personnel when, in the opinion of health care professionals, it is appropriate for the health, safety, or welfare of the student or the school community. The School is sensitive to the privacy of this information and is committed to protecting the confidentiality of students and their families by restricting the use of, and access to, this information for necessary medical management only, in accordance with applicable law.

## CHANGES IN STUDENT HEALTH DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR

Should there be changes in a student's physical or emotional health and/or medications during the school year, parents are expected to share that information with the school by submitting an updated physician's report.

## EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Parents are expected to keep Emergency Forms up-to-date. If any of this information changes during the course of the school year, please let the front office know. Please remember, it is most important that the School have current home, work and mobile phone numbers



for parents/guardians, or others (relatives, friends, or neighbors) who routinely assume temporary care of the student if the student's parent(s) cannot be reached.

## ILLNESS DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

In order to maintain a safe and healthy environment for students and staff, please do not send students to school with any of the following: fever of 100.0 degrees or greater, vomiting, diarrhea, persistent cough, profuse discolored discharge from nose or eyes, or persistent pain. Students who develop a fever of 100.0 degrees or greater, vomiting, or diarrhea will be asked to go home. Students must be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning to school. Parents are expected to notify the School if their child contracts any contagious illness such as strep throat, flu, chicken pox, or head lice.

Students who become ill at school should go to the front office, and someone there will then contact parents or an emergency contact before permitting them to leave the school. A student who becomes ill during the school day should not leave the school otherwise.

## MEDICATION

Medication of any type may not be taken by students at school or at School-sponsored events without the written permission of a parent or legal guardian on the Emergency Release form. For prescription medication, the student's physician must also provide written authorization for the student to self-administer the medication. Students are responsible for administering their own prescription medications. Students should bring prescription medication only in the containers in which the medication was dispensed by the pharmacy (with their names and the prescribed dosage on the label). Misuse of the right to self-administer medication(s) will result in immediate revocation of said privilege(s). The School will not assume any responsibility for students not in compliance with this medication self-administration policy.

Misuse or unauthorized possession of medicine, especially prescription drugs, is considered tantamount to using illegal drugs, alcohol, or tobacco.

## ASTHMA AND ALLERGIES

The School is not an allergen-free environment. Parents/guardians are expected to notify the School of all known allergies and asthma on the Emergency Release Form, and in the case of a life-threatening condition, parents must help the School formulate a management plan. If a student requires an EpiPen, a parental consent form and a physician's order should be filled out prior to the student's entry to school. The Epi-Pen must be provided by the parent/guardian, and will be kept in an easily accessible place. Students with life-threatening food allergies may consider providing their own lunches and their own snacks while at school, but should note that the School is not a nut-free facility. See Appendix H for more information on Allergen Awareness and Response Policies.

## MEDICAL EMERGENCIES/AMBULANCE POLICY

The School will attempt to contact parents regarding serious illness or injury, but in

circumstances that warrant immediate attention when the School is unable to reach the parents/guardians, designated emergency contacts, or the student's physician, an ambulance will be called, the student will be taken to the nearest hospital emergency room, and at least one parent will be notified as soon as possible. Emergency situations arising on campus will generally be referred to a nearby hospital. The School neither diagnoses nor treats injuries that occur on non-School time, but does offer temporary first aid for problems that arise during School.

## CONCUSSION/HEAD INJURY POLICY

Commonwealth School seeks to prevent concussions and provide a safe return to school activities for all students after an injury, particularly after a head injury. When a student suffers a concussion, the family, in consultation with the student's physician, should work with the Dean of Students and the student's advisor to formulate a plan for monitoring and care, at which point the Assistant Head will be involved in the discussion. At times a concussion may require adjustments to a student's academic program.

In order to manage athletic injuries effectively and consistently, the School has created procedures to educate the School community and prevent and treat head injuries. See Appendix G for the complete Concussion/Head Injury Policy.

## POLICY ON MEDICAL LEAVE

A student may take a medical leave in the case of serious illness, bodily injury, or mental health condition, as determined by objective medical evaluation. A student's family may request such a leave at the recommendation of medical professionals. Additionally, if in the School's judgment, a student is exhibiting symptoms that make the student unable to participate in required academic or extracurricular activities without imposing an undue burden on the School's resources, the School may recommend that the student be evaluated and subsequently placed on a medical leave. Discussion of a leave of absence should begin under the following circumstances:

- When a student has mental health or physical symptoms that prevent him or her from functioning academically;
- When a student has a physical or mental health condition that seriously interferes with his or her attendance at school (more than six total days of absence in one quarter, or eight days in two consecutive quarters, will usually trigger such a discussion);
- When a student behaves in ways that can be considered self-destructive or dangerous to others; or
- When a student is not engaged in treatment that the School has made a condition of attendance, after the student has been evaluated by medical and/or mental health professionals who have deemed such treatment appropriate.

This initial discussion of a medical leave often involves the student's advisor, the Dean of Students, the Assistant Head of School, the student's parents, and sometimes the student;

it should establish for School personnel what steps the family is taking to ensure that the student is well enough to participate fully in life at Commonwealth; and should establish for the family what further steps the School may take if the problem does not improve. Depending on the nature of the leave, the student's advisor or the Dean of Students will be the primary point of contact during the leave.

Decisions about granting or requiring a medical leave, or reinstating a student who has been on leave, rest with the Headmaster, Assistant Head, and Dean of Students. The School will be guided by the principal goal of a medical leave: to give the student the opportunity to regain health and thereby function consistently, productively, and safely at the School. In the absence of a treatment plan that meets these needs in the view of the School, the School may require the student to withdraw. In the case of behavior that is self-destructive or dangerous—for example an incident of serious self-harm—Commonwealth is likely to require a leave of substantial duration to be determined by the School, based on the student's situation. Given the limitations on the School's resources, under such circumstances we do not permit a partial return to school.

A medical leave plan will include provisions for the student's return to school. While a student on leave is excused from attending class, the School will establish a plan for allowing the student to make up missed material, either while on leave or on return, as appropriate. While the School will strive to minimize academic disruption, the School may require that a student drop a course or courses if a prolonged absence will make it impossible for the student to complete the course. (cf. Graduation Requirements on attendance.) To return to school from a medical leave, the family must provide a thorough, written professional evaluation of the student's current mental health or medical condition from the physician, psychiatrist, or other professional who treated the student during the medical leave.

The School's decision about reinstatement will depend on its confidence that the student will be able to function in school without unduly taxing the School's support and supervisory resources. The School reserves the right to require additional evaluation by a physician or mental health consultant of its choosing. The guiding principle of re-admission from a medical leave is the School's confidence that the student can return safely; and that the student's return will not compromise the student's continued recovery, interfere with the School's ability to serve other students' needs, or place an undue burden on the School. As a corollary to this principle, a student whom the School determines can safely participate in the regular school day may nevertheless be restricted from participation in a residential-style School activity such as an overseas trip or Hancock.

## **CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING**

The School is committed to the highest standards of care for its students. In accordance with the law, Commonwealth is committed to ensuring that students are protected from inappropriate or hurtful actions by adults responsible for their care. Please see Appendix F for a full description of the Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting policy and procedure.

# ATHLETICS

The goal of Commonwealth's athletics program is to provide a variety of programs at both competitive and noncompetitive levels. Commonwealth considers athletics an important part of the overall educational experience at the School. Sports can provide a student with a sense of pride and accomplishment through the hard work and competitive spirit that the athletic arena provides. Athletics enhance the overall educational experience and build well-rounded students and leaders. Integrity, fairness and respect – these are the principles of good sportsmanship. With them, the spirit of competition thrives, fueled by honest rivalry, courteous relations and graceful acceptance of the results. Commonwealth's athletics program seeks to complement the School's rigorous and rewarding classroom experience.

All sports meet on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoons between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. Students are expected to participate in a minimum of two athletic seasons each year. This requirement should be completed in the fall and winter seasons. For those who complete the requirement in fall and winter, participation in a spring sport is optional. Sports offered each season are based on student interest and are subject to change. With the exception of the boys' and girls' soccer and basketball teams, all sports are coed. Students who have a long-standing commitment to a sport not offered at Commonwealth (for example, crew, ice skating, or gymnastics) may petition to receive credit for an independent sport by speaking with the Director of Athletics and Wellness.

## SPORTS SEASONS

- **Fall Sports:** first or second week of September through the last week in October;
- **Winter Sports:** second week in November through the last week in February;
- **Spring Sports:** first week in April through mid-May.

*(Seasons for varsity sports may differ slightly, as scheduling demands require adjustments.)*

## ABSENCES FROM SPORTS

There are a number of legitimate reasons for a student to be excused from participation on a given day:

- Absence from school;
- Leaving school early because of illness;
- Observance of a religious holiday;
- Injury; and/or
- Doctor's and dentist's appointments.

It is expected that students and their parents will do their best to avoid scheduling conflicts. Students with more than three excused absences in a season may be required to make up these absences in the spring season.

It is the student's responsibility to inform the Director of Athletics and Wellness and the Front Office Administrator in a timely fashion why the student was absent and provide a note or email from a parent if the absence was due to an outside commitment. (Contact information is on page 2 of this handbook.)

Except in special cases, absence for any reason other than those listed above will be considered an unexcused absence. A student with more than one unexcused absence in a sport season will not receive credit for that season, and will be expected to complete the year's sports requirement in the spring season.

Satisfying the annual athletic requirement is a prerequisite for progressing to the next grade. A senior who has not satisfied this requirement will not receive a diploma. As indicated above, it is possible to take an independent sports credit under certain conditions. The athletics director will provide further information upon request.

See the Athletics section of the website for a list of sports offered, locations, and other information.

## **ELIGIBILITY**

All students must have on file a medical form completed and signed by a medical doctor stating that the student is physically able to participate in physical education classes and athletics. No one will be allowed to participate until this form is on file. A student should be in School by 10:00 a.m. of a given school day in order to participate. In addition, students must attend at least 50% of their classes on a given day to be eligible for participation in athletics and all extracurricular activities on that day.

## **CONCUSSION/HEAD INJURY POLICY** *(see Health and Wellness and Appendix G)*

## SPECIAL EVENTS

The School sponsors special events for students and families. In all cases of School-sponsored events, the behavioral expectations described in this Handbook apply.

### ALL-SCHOOL EVENTS

Each year, the School presents two theater productions, two choral-orchestral concerts, a jazz concert, a dance recital and a spring exhibition of student art. Depending on the year, students and teachers participate in Museum Day (visits to museums in the Boston area), Diversity Day, and Impromptu Day when they usually attend a play, film, or concert. Beach Day is held, weather permitting, the day before graduation.

### HANCOCK: ALL-SCHOOL WEEKENDS IN MAINE

Hancock is for the whole School, and involves two long weekends each year at a lakeside camp in southern Maine, the setting for some of the School's most vivid and lasting memories. Known for sentimental and historical reasons as "Hancock," these retreats add a new dimension to the School's sense of community. We step back from the usual fast pace of school to find new friendships and strengthen existing bonds.

### EXCHANGES AND TRIPS

Learning a foreign language at Commonwealth often includes the chance to experience a foreign culture through one of our exchanges and trips. Students from high schools in Granada, Spain, and Strasbourg, France, visit Commonwealth and stay with Commonwealth families; during spring break in March, the School's own students travel to France and Spain with faculty chaperones.

While not every exchange happens every year, the aim is for all the participants to experience it from both sides. When the French and Spanish students are in Boston, students and teachers offer special classes and sponsor social events. Students of Latin often travel to see antiquities in Rome and Pompeii on another chaperoned trip in March. We also offer a trip every other year in June to Peru for students of Spanish, and, on occasion, a March trip to China for students of Mandarin Chinese.

### DANCES

Commonwealth students organize a Junior-Senior Prom each spring and other dances through the year. The Prom Committee plans the entire event, including the theme, menu, decoration, and entertainment, and raises the funds needed for the party. An adult advisor helps guide the planning, and faculty and staff (and sometimes parents) volunteer to chaperone the event.

In all cases, the behavioral expectations described in this Handbook apply. The following rules apply at all School-sponsored dances, including the Prom:

- When they arrive at the venue, students will leave all bags and coats in the

designated area and will not have access to them until they leave.

- Once students arrive at a dance, they must stay in the designated area.
- Students may not leave a dance early and then return.
- Students need to share their arrival and departure transportation plans, and we ask that students not drive themselves or other students.

Students must complete and return a signed Prom Permission Form to the School the week before the Prom. Please visit the School's website ([commschool.org](http://commschool.org)) for more information about Prom.

### **SCHOOL GATHERINGS OUTSIDE SCHOOL** *(Not sponsored by School)*

It is important to remember that, despite their desire for independence, students still need clear boundaries and guidance, and the following section provides some ideas to consider when hosting or participating in social events off-campus, including cast parties following a Commonwealth play. These guidelines are designed to be practical:

- Always be at an event or party in your own home.
- Clearly establish ground rules and expectations with your child before the party takes place (before your child goes to any social event).
- When hosting a party, always generate a guest list and do not admit uninvited guests.
- Make sure there is plenty of food and non-alcoholic beverages and planned activities.
- Establish and back up a specific starting and ending time to the party.
- Be aware of and alert for signs that alcohol, tobacco, or drugs have been used by guests, despite all the precautions you have taken.
- If your child is invited to a party, you should contact the parent giving the party and:
  - Communicate your feelings of support and your policies to your child.
  - Take an unequivocal stand on drug, tobacco, and alcohol use, and make sure students understand your position completely.

**Note:** While it is customary for a family to host a cast party following a school play and the director of the play may help set some behavioral expectations for the students involved, since the School does not provide chaperones for the event, we do not consider it a school-sponsored event.



## GRADUATION

The School provides a special opportunity for friends, relatives, and their extended family to celebrate the graduating students. Graduation, a formal occasion, takes place at 10:30am on the first Friday in June at the First Church in Boston, located at the corner of Marlborough and Berkeley Streets. While the School does not issue tickets or limit the number of family members who may attend, families are asked to be mindful that space is limited. Any group (i.e. family and friends of a graduating senior) larger than six should notify the front office.



# COMMUNICATION

## EMAIL

Email accounts are available to all students who comply with the School's policy on acceptable use. The School reserves the right to monitor any email sent or received through the School's computer network.

## PARENT-TEACHER MEETINGS

Parent-Teacher meetings are organized either as brief conferences in which parents can meet individually with teachers and advisers, or as group meetings focused on a single question such as college admissions. If more discussion time is needed, parents can always arrange for a further, more detailed talk, either on the phone or at school. Evenings for parent-teacher conferences are scheduled as follows:

- Twelfth-grade parent-teacher conferences: Thursday, October 11, 6:00 p.m.
- Ninth-to eleventh-grade parent-teacher conferences: Monday, November 12, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- Parent-Teacher Conferences for ninth graders and other new students: Tuesday, February 12th, 5:00 p.m.
- College Meeting: Wednesday, January 9, 7:00 p.m. Eleventh-grade parents meet to discuss the college admission process. Interested tenth-grade parents may also attend.
- Parents are strongly encouraged to attend the conferences and meetings.

The Parents Committee also hosts the fall and winter Parent Forums and a number of additional events. (*See below.*)

## PARENTS COMMITTEE AND PARENT EVENTS

There are a number of parent events throughout the school year hosted by the School and the Parents Committee.

The Parents Committee, co-chaired in 2018-19 by Erin O'Boyle P'19 and Robin Ewald P'21, brings parents from all grades together for discussion, events, and volunteer opportunities. The Committee fosters a strong connection and dialogue between current parents and the School.

## 2018-2019 Parent Events

- Back to School Night. In September, this evening includes dinner, remarks from the Headmaster, and 10-minute sample classes with teachers. Administrators are also available to answer questions throughout the evening.
- Hancock Coffees are hosted for parents on the morning as the students load the buses for Hancock in both the fall and the spring. Parents are invited to enjoy a light breakfast and coffee in the Library after dropping their children off.
- Potlucks for the parents of each class are hosted by 4 families in October and November.
- Parent Forums, featuring faculty master classes and/or guest speakers, usually occur twice per year. Exact dates will be announced in the fall.
- A Faculty and Staff Appreciation Luncheon is hosted by the Parents Committee in January 2019. This festive annual event honors the work of the faculty and staff and is entirely organized by parent volunteers.
- Parent coffees are hosted in the winter and spring by Commonwealth families in their home. These gatherings are a great way to get to know other parents in your area and in varying grades.
- Parent Reception and Art Show Opening. In May, this program includes the opening of the Student Art Show opening and talks by several graduating seniors. Parents of students who will enter Commonwealth the following year are also invited.
- Mermaid Mixers are hosted in the spring by two or three Commonwealth families at their homes. These are fun (often themed) parent gatherings that serve as fundraisers for The Commonwealth Fund, the School's annual giving initiative.

The Parents Committee also holds four meetings per year. These take place both in the evening and in the morning and include time to talk with the Headmaster, discussions and presentations on various topics about the Commonwealth experience, event planning, and more. Invitations to these meetings will be emailed closer to the meeting dates.

This is not a complete list of all parent events and volunteer opportunities. Invitations to all activities and events will be emailed throughout the year. Please contact Carly Renshaw, the Parent Liaison, at [crenschaw@commschool.org](mailto:crenschaw@commschool.org) if you have any questions or would like to get involved. See the School Calendar and check the school website for dates and more information.

## THE SCHOOL DIRECTORY

The School distributes a list of addresses and phone numbers for students and their families. This list is for use by the School community only and should not be distributed to those not affiliated with the School.

## MESSAGES TO STUDENTS

The School forbids cell phone use for calls in the school building during the school day. We strongly discourage texting that may distract a student from classes or work. If parents would like to leave a message for a student during the school day, please call the main office at (617) 266-7525 and ask that a note be posted on the student bulletin board. Except in an emergency, School staff cannot search for a student when a call is made to the School.

## PARENT-ADVISOR COMMUNICATION

We urge parents to contact students' advisors with any questions or concerns by phone during school hours or by email, but to be respectful of advisors' private time before and after school hours (except in emergency situations). Parents should expect a response to a non-urgent email or call within 24 hours (or Monday morning for messages sent over the weekend). Response times may be longer over vacations.

## CALENDARS

A detailed listing of sports events, assemblies, performances, exam periods, etc. is posted on our website at [commschool.org/calendar](http://commschool.org/calendar).

## ASSEMBLIES

Parents are welcome to attend Thursday assemblies, which are usually at 12:00 noon. Please consult the School's website calendar for information on speakers.

## CURRENT FAMILY CONTACT INFORMATION

Parents are expected to notify the front office of any change in telephone number (home, work, or mobile) in order to support efficient communication in case of an emergency. If a parent is going to be away from home for an extended length of time, please provide a forwarding address and telephone number, as well as information regarding who will be responsible for the student and how that person may be reached in case of illness or other emergency.

## MULTIPLE HOUSEHOLDS

In order for the School to communicate most effectively with parents and to support each student, it is important for teachers and administrators to be aware of students who spend time in more than one household. Please be sure to communicate to the School about primary caregivers in the event of an emergency and whether special co-parenting arrangements exist. The School requests that parents keep the School informed of any and all living and custody arrangements and any changes to those arrangements that may affect the student's educational experience at the School. Unless otherwise specified, each parent for whom the School has current contact information will receive a copy of the student's report card as well as other informational mailings and electronic communications during the year.

# GENERAL INFORMATION

## ACCREDITATION

The School is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges and is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools and the Association of Independent Schools of New England.

## GOVERNANCE

The School is a non-profit corporation governed by a Board of Trustees. It is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees to develop long-term strategy and assess the performance of the School consistent with the School's mission and philosophy. The Trustees oversee the School's financial health, physical grounds, and planning. The Trustees also establish tuition. The Board of Trustees is responsible for the selection of the Headmaster and works in close collaboration with the Headmaster to develop policies, though the Headmaster is responsible for the implementation of policy and the day-to-day operations of the School.

For a current list of the School's Board of Trustees, please visit the School's website.

## BACKGROUND CHECKS

With student safety as a priority at the School, the School conducts state and national criminal history and sex offender registry checks on all current and prospective faculty and staff of the School who may have "direct and unmonitored access to children," including any individual who regularly provides school-related transportation to students.

The School requires any volunteers who will work closely with students to undergo a state criminal background check or "CORI" (Criminal Offender Record Information) and a state sex offender registry check or "SORI" (Sexual Offender Registry Information). It is also School policy to require that volunteers with direct and unmonitored access to students undergo a fingerprint-based check, which is run through the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and provides access to national criminal history databases. Examples of the types of volunteer activities requiring a background check include, but are not limited to, field trips and working with students in the classroom. A background check is typically not necessary for parent volunteers involved with larger School functions at which many adults are present or in instances where there is only the potential for incidental unsupervised contact with students in commonly used areas of the School grounds.

These background checks require the completion of a brief application form and verification of a government-issued photographic identification, and are only conducted with the consent of an individual employee or volunteer. A volunteer's service, and an individual's employment, is contingent upon successful completion of the checks, which may take several days or weeks to process. Completed CORI and fingerprint-based check forms must be returned to the Business Office at least two weeks in advance of volunteering.

## NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Commonwealth School has a longstanding policy of nondiscriminatory admission of students. The School admits qualified students of any race, color, religious affiliation, national and ethnic origin, ancestry, sex, mental or physical disability, gender identity or sexual orientation to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the School. The School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious affiliation, national and ethnic origin, ancestry, sex, mental or physical disability, gender identity or sexual orientation or any other status protected by applicable law in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, financial aid and loan program, and athletic or other school administered programs.

## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The School strives to provide a safe and supportive environment that will help students succeed academically and socially. To that end, the School promotes respect for all people, and will not tolerate harassment or bullying based on race, color, religious affiliation, national and ethnic origin, ancestry, sex, mental or physical disability, gender identity or sexual orientation, whether the bullying or harassment takes place on or off campus. This includes cyberbullying. Particularly with respect to transgender and gender non-conforming students, the School will work closely with students and their families to honor their wishes with respect to use of School facilities, participation in athletics, accuracy of student records, use of preferred name and pronouns, and privacy, in accordance with applicable law, and to the extent that the School's facilities reasonably permit.

## STUDENTS AGE 18 AND OLDER

Some students enrolled at the School will reach the age of 18 before graduation. In the United States, age 18 is the age of majority, which means that legally, an 18 year old student is able to enter into contractual obligations on the student's behalf (and is required to abide by those obligations). Therefore, the School requires all students, upon their 18th birthday, to review the Enrollment Agreement that their parents or legal guardians signed on the students' behalf and execute an Addendum to that Agreement, which provides:

- Permission for the School to discuss and release information and records to the student's parent(s) and legal guardian(s) about any issues relating to the student's enrollment at the School, including, but not limited to, academic records, academic performance, health matters, disciplinary issues and financial matters;
- Authorization for the School to interact with the student's parent(s) and legal guardian(s) as if the student were under the age of 18.

The student's parent(s) or guardian(s) will also continue to be responsible under the terms of the student's Enrollment Agreement.

## STUDENT RECORDS AND TRANSCRIPTS

Students' records are kept on file at the School. While a student is enrolled at the School, original copies of all School records will be accessible only to parents and School personnel. Parents may receive copies of their student's file upon written request. At a parent's written request, the School will send copies of the file to other schools to which parents may apply on behalf of the student.

## PUBLIC RELEASE OF STUDENT INFORMATION

From time to time the school distributes information about student accomplishments (including, but not limited to, National Merit Scholarship Program recognition and other academic honors; participation in theater, music, athletics, or other extracurricular programs; and graduation). Information is sent to news media in the student's hometown and also posted to the school's website and social media outlets. When appropriate, information released to news media or shared on our social media channels may include photographs of students and captions that include the student's name.

The school will often use a third-party service, Merit Pages, to distribute this information. When an accomplishment is posted to Merit Pages, the student will be notified by email. Students may wish to claim their individual pages, which display all of the achievements that have been sent for a student. Photographs of students taken by school staff and faculty, or by photographers hired by the school, are used in school publications such as admissions and marketing materials and the alumni/ae magazine. Student works of art are also used in some publications.

Students and parents are considered to have granted permission for the release of names and images as outlined above unless a written notice withdrawing that permission is sent to the Director of Communications.

## ASBESTOS NOTIFICATION

The government requires that schools protect students and staff from asbestos and make available to you, in the form of an Asbestos Management Plan, proof that we are doing the job correctly.

In accordance with this EPA/AHERA rule, the School has been inspected for the presence of asbestos-containing material. The inspection was conducted by a licensed, accredited inspector and management planner. At present there is no visible friable asbestos-containing material in any area of our building where students and staff can go.

## ANNUAL GIVING

Like most independent schools, Commonwealth holds an Annual Giving fund drive, beginning in October and ending in June. We are grateful that in recent years, almost all of Commonwealth's families have participated. Monies raised each year make up more than 10% of the School's budget, paying for what tuition, fees, and endowment income do not cover. All current families, alumni/ae families, and alumni/ae are approached for a gift.

# FINANCIAL INFORMATION

## ENROLLMENT AGREEMENTS

The signed enrollment agreement constitutes a legally binding agreement between the parties, and the parents' obligation to pay the tuition in accordance with the terms of the contract is absolute. In the event that the parents of a student fail to honor their tuition payment obligation in a timely manner, the student may be suspended from School during the period while the non-payment continues, or dismissed from School (at the sole discretion of the Headmaster).

## TUITION ASSISTANCE

Commonwealth is committed to helping families effectively meet the cost of the School education to the extent that the School's resources permit. Families who demonstrate that their financial resources are insufficient to pay the full cost of tuition are eligible to apply for financial assistance. To apply for financial aid or receive additional information about aid, parents should contact the Director of Admissions and Financial Aid. Additional information is available on the School's website.

## TUITION BILLING SCHEDULE

Tuition is due in full by July 1, 2018 or may be paid in installments as follows:

- Two Payment Plan: Full academic year's tuition and fees in two payments – 50% by July 1, 2018 and 50% by November 15, 2018.
- Ten Payment Plan: Full academic year's tuition and fees in ten equal payments through Tuition Management Systems, from May 1, 2018 through February 1, 2019.

Students may not attend classes, take examinations, or graduate unless tuition is paid in a timely manner consistent with the enrollment agreement.

## BILLING

No student will be permitted to begin School in September unless the tuition has been paid in full or a family is participating in one of the payment plans and is current with payment. The School does recognize that families may experience extenuating financial circumstances. While the School is willing to work with families in these instances, all accommodating payment plans must be approved in writing by the Headmaster and payments must be received on a regular basis.

If an account is more than 60 days overdue, it will be brought to the attention of the Headmaster. He will review the case with the Business Manager. They make appropriate arrangements regarding collection, and may decide the student will not be permitted to return to School the following semester or for the remainder of the School year. No student



is permitted to re-enroll if there is an outstanding account balance from the previous School year. Furthermore, the School will not release any student records, to the extent permissible by law, and may litigate for monies due.

### **STUDENT ACCIDENT INSURANCE**

The School provides parents with an opportunity to participate in an elective Student Accident Plan. Information about the plan is included with enrollment materials.

### **TUITION REFUND PLAN**

The Tuition Refund Plan offers enrolled families an insurance policy for recovering tuition in the event of certain absences, withdrawals, or dismissals. Insurance information and an application are included with the enrollment agreement. The plan is required of all families who do not pay tuition in full by July 1st.



## RE-ENROLLMENT

Re-enrollment at the School is not automatic. A student is promoted to the next grade when he or she has satisfactorily met the expectations of his or her current grade, when the School feels it can continue to meet the student's needs, and when the behavior and comportment of the student and family are consistent with the School's policies.

### RE-ENROLLMENT POLICY

Re-enrollment decisions are usually made each February. A decision to re-enroll a student and to subsequently forward a re-enrollment agreement to the parents is based upon a student's record and engagement throughout the prior year, and upon the effectiveness of the collaboration between families and the school in supporting the student (See the Parental Comportment section below). On occasion, re-enrollment agreements are held until later (usually April or May) when the School decides that an appropriate decision about placement can be made.

In some cases, it may be determined that it is not in a student's best interests to continue at the School. This difficult conclusion is reached only after extremely careful consideration. While parents are obviously involved in this process, the School will make the ultimate decision, and will assist, if possible, in the process of locating an appropriate alternative school.

Families should understand that the School reserves the right not to offer a re-enrollment agreement for a student if the parents have been uncooperative or if their actions have in any way undermined the effectiveness of our teachers, or if re-enrollment is not in the School's best interests.

If parents decide to withdraw a student for any reason, they must notify the Headmaster in writing of their decision.

### LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Families who take a leave of absence from the School of a year or more may be expected to apply to the School for readmission. In such a case, the student will be considered on a space-available basis, as well as within the context and competition of the applicant pool for the student's grade level. Enrollment decisions, regardless of a family's prior or current relationship to the School, are always made in the School's sole discretion.

### PARENTAL COMPORTMENT AND SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL POLICIES

At Commonwealth, we believe that a positive relationship between the School and a student's parents or guardians is essential to the fulfillment of the School's mission. We recognize that effective relationships are characterized by clearly defined responsibilities, a shared commitment to collaboration, open lines of communication, mutual respect, and a common vision of the goals to be achieved.

Commonwealth understands and appreciates that parents and guardians will do their best to meet the expectations and responsibilities expressed in this policy. Nevertheless, Commonwealth at all times reserves the right to dismiss a student whose parent, guardian, family member or other adult involved with the student, in the sole judgment of the School, fails to comply with this or any other policy or procedure of the School, engages in conduct either on or off the School's property that could undermine the authority of the School's administration, and/or otherwise behaves in a manner that is inappropriate for a member of the School community. The School reserves the right to refuse re-enrollment of a student if the School, in its sole discretion, believes the actions of a parent or guardian on or off the School's property make impossible a positive, constructive relationship, or may otherwise interfere with the School's accomplishment of its mission and/or educational goals.

To assist in creating the most effective relationship, the School expects that parents will observe the following guidelines:

- Share in the School's vision.
- Provide a home environment that supports the intellectual, physical, and emotional growth of the student.
- Participate in the establishment of a home/School and community relationship built on communication, collaboration, and mutual respect.

## APPENDIX A: HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL

Commonwealth School was founded by Charles Merrill and opened its doors in September of 1958 to 39 students. Though advised to locate the School in one of the suburbs, Mr. Merrill chose the Back Bay area of Boston. “One goal of Commonwealth,” he wrote in 1959 to Porter Sargent, the educational consultant, “is to restore good [coeducational] secondary schooling to the city as an environment more stimulating and more realistic than the suburbs and to ... combine educational efficiency with a sense of cultural richness.” Within a year enrollment reached 65, and by 1962, 90. The following year the faculty had grown to 15, and, by 1975, the School numbered 125 students.

The following words of Mr. Merrill offer his perspective on the first 17 years of the School’s history:

I started Commonwealth in September of 1958 after a year of planning, organization, and remodeling. I had a mixed bag of objectives which, essentially, I still believe in. Could one build a school with a respect for hard work, intellectual exploration, and the process of self-education while still encouraging students to be decent, socially responsible, generous people? My wartime experience in Italy and my acquaintance with post-war Vienna and Warsaw had given me an awareness of both the fragility and strength of culture and the need to give young people an understanding of the past that eventually they could pass on to their own children. Education is to train the leadership cadres of the future and bring in new blood, especially from ignored groups.... In administration, a purpose of the School was to share the decision-making process as much as possible with the faculty so the teachers would grow as colleagues and not remain employees.

Through Mr. Merrill’s tenure Commonwealth gained a reputation for intellectual rigor and excitement. It was a school that prized curiosity and scholarship, and as a result it attracted very bright students from all over the Boston area. The School from the beginning also was known for its progressive social and political stances: Mr. Merrill sought out and enrolled promising minority students well before diversity had entered the nation’s educational vocabulary, and he paid attention to bringing in students from different religious backgrounds. (One report to the Board from the 1960s listed the number of Jewish and Christian students, as well as the breakdown of students by ethnicity.) In the mid-60s, under the direction of Tim Barclay, a Commonwealth science teacher, the School ran a summer program called Urban School, which concentrated on improving the writing and mathematical skills of inner-city children. Noted educational reformers Jonathan Kozol and John Holt taught at the Urban school during its seven-year run. Mr. Merrill’s own activism—and the U.S. History course he taught to juniors—inspired many Commonwealth students to participate in the various social and political causes of the 60s and 70s, from civil rights (he made it possible for one student to take part in what became known as the Mississippi Summer of 1964) to opposition to the Vietnam War to disarmament to environmental

activism. The Bible course that he taught for all 9th and 12th graders exposed students to the larger religious questions he cared deeply about: overcoming our narrow self-interest and our worship of worldly success; devoting our lives to good, meaningful work; and facing squarely and thoughtfully larger questions about our place in the world and our relationship to God.

From the beginning, Mr. Merrill's interest in shared decision-making and his granting to faculty the freedom to teach their courses in their own distinctive ways attracted a parade of outstanding teachers to Commonwealth. Their interests and enthusiasms helped shape the curriculum, often in ways that Mr. Merrill would not have chosen. He was not, for example, particularly interested in offering Latin, preferring instead the teaching of Russian and modern languages. But Seymour Alden, an outstanding historian and Classicist, attracted a steady stream of students to the study of Medieval History and Latin. Charles Chatfield, who would eventually become Headmaster, introduced in the late 1960s the approach of close reading in English, which he had learned from Reuben Brower at Harvard. Thanks to the hiring of other scholars of that approach, Commonwealth English students today still learn to approach texts with meticulous care and attention to the workings of language. And in the arts the tradition of offering life drawing with nude models was launched, despite Mr. Merrill's reluctance, at the initiative of a teacher. His devotion to the principle of academic freedom won him the respect of the faculty, and subsequent Heads have respected and observed it.

As his retirement approached, Mr. Merrill began to plan for the change in administration. Extensive repairs and renovations were made in the building, in order to hand it over to the school's next Head in good condition. The Merrill Foundation put the School on an independent financial footing through a \$2 million gift that established its endowment. This gift has been supplemented by Mr. Merrill's generous annual support, which continued until his death in 2017. He also gave notice that in the future faculty and staff would have to take on new administrative functions. Mr. Merrill himself had always been willing to manage an enormous range of detail, from selecting trustees to teaching virtually every student in the School, writing cover letters home for student reports three or four times a year, guiding the School's finances (which included making up the annual deficit out of his own funds), speaking to all applicants, looking after repairs to the building, writing recommendation letters for all seniors, and staying in the closest touch, as a counselor, with all students, as well as his faculty. (The full administrative roster of the school during most of his tenure comprised Ellen Cole, who for thirty-eight years served as de facto Assistant Head, part-time bookkeeper Rose Rubinoff, and, overseeing building and maintenance, math/science teacher Dane Morgan.) He realized that his successor would face new challenges and might not be inclined or able to cover as many bases as he did. Although Mr. Merrill's "mixed bag of objectives" remains at the core of School life, through the headships of Joseph Featherstone (1981-83), Charles Chatfield (1983-90), Judith Keenan (1990-2000), and most recently William Wharton (2000-present), there have been shifts in administrative procedures, in educational emphasis, and in the underlying financial support of the School. Each of these shifts has reflected a balance of respect for the traditions established by the founding Headmaster, his successors' vision for the School, and Commonwealth's evolving sense of its students' needs and its place in the educational community.

One shift was the growth in the importance of the arts. In 1975, the 125 students of Commonwealth were taking, on the average, fewer than one course apiece in the arts. By the mid-80s the number grew significantly. As word got around, the School began to attract an increasing number of students who were looking for both academic rigor and a chance to pursue serious work the arts. For this the School can credit the dedication of demanding teachers who were trained as professionals and were devoted to both the mastery of technique and the primacy of the imagination in the arts.

Efforts to attract students of color have taken a variety of shapes. Around the time of Mr. Merrill's departure, Anthony Hill, an African-American alumnus from the class of 1970, proposed a program that he and others hoped would persuade more disadvantaged students to apply to Commonwealth. He called it "The Middle Passage." During the academic year the Head, several faculty, and a group of Commonwealth alumni/ae (both black and white) worked up a program linking Commonwealth with two Boston middle schools to attract twenty 7th graders and twenty 8th graders to the School for eleven consecutive Saturday mornings between January and March. Using local teachers and Commonwealth student aides, the program, initially under the direction of Elaine Gibson '72, ran successfully for eleven years.

The decade after Charles Merrill's retirement from Commonwealth saw not only such programmatic developments, but also a number of challenging institutional transitions, most of which stemmed from the departure of its powerful founder. Joseph Featherstone, a deeply thoughtful educator, led the school for two years. He was succeeded by Charles Chatfield, a long-time English teacher and college counselor, who steadied the School over his seven-year tenure, supporting its tradition of first-rate teaching, working to bring in younger teachers who could provide the next generation of leadership to Commonwealth, and seeking talented teachers of color. The Chatfield Fellowship, which for years after his retirement supported the hiring of teaching interns, recognized his commitments. Mr. Chatfield retired in 1990, followed a year later by the retirement of his wife, Polly Chatfield, a long-time teacher of history, English, and classical languages.

Shortly after her arrival in 1990, Judith Keenan, who had come to Commonwealth from a senior advisory position on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, undertook a series of measures that aimed at building the School's institutional strength without sacrificing its intellectual spirit. Mrs. Keenan set strict, but still generous, limits on financial aid; and built more professional admissions, business, and development offices. She also undertook the creation of a more formal framework of support for students who faced academic and emotional struggles during their time at Commonwealth, naming Kate Bluestein as Commonwealth's first Director of Student Life and hiring the School's first consulting psychologist/learning specialist. These and other measures help see the school through its transition from an exciting experiment to a thriving, viable institution. Another hallmark of Ms. Keenan's legacy was the establishment of the understanding that civility and mutual respect were as important to the School community as intellectual prowess.

In the early-1990s Mrs. Keenan charged alumni/ae trustees Leslie Tuttle and Anthony Hill to explore ways to revitalize Commonwealth's connection with the city so that it would more fully reflect the School's commitment to introducing students to the world outside its walls and making them, in Charles Merrill's words, "decent, socially responsible, generous people." In response to their proposal, and funded by a grant from the MacArthur Foundation, Commonwealth started "City of Boston," a new course required of all 9th graders that explored the city's development and neighborhoods, in part through extensive field trips. Their plan also led to the creation of a community service requirement. Another curricular change reflected Mrs. Keenan's conviction that every Commonwealth student needed some significant grounding in non-Western history: the traditional tenth-grade course on the European Renaissance was replaced by a course on Medieval World History, which included the study of China, the Islamic World, and Africa as well as Europe. In 1990, the hiring of Farhad Riahi, an Iranian exile with a distinguished career as a physicist in pre-revolutionary Iran, to teach physics marked the beginning of a buildup of Commonwealth sciences that has brought it in recent years to the forefront among area schools. Like her predecessors, Mrs. Keenan worked vigorously, with some success, to recruit teachers from diverse backgrounds.

Mrs. Keenan also undertook to upgrade the physical plant. In 1993, the Commonwealth Avenue entrance was restructured to make the first floor of the School wheelchair-accessible. A survey of the School's space followed in the summer of 1994; it led to a master architectural plan for the building.

In 1996 Commonwealth launched its first major Capital Campaign, a \$2.2 million effort that funded much-needed improvements to the school building at 151 Commonwealth Avenue. It also provided additional funding for financial aid and for faculty and program support. In undertaking the Campaign, Mrs. Keenan worked closely with Polly Chatfield, who in 1994 had resumed her services to Commonwealth as Chair of the Board of Trustees.

By the late 1990s the success of the Campaign, the renewal of the facilities, the growing competitiveness of admissions, and the strengthening of its support services for students secured Commonwealth to a position of respected leadership among area independent schools. The strong support of the Schrafft Foundation, the Paci family, and trustees and alumni/ae who contributed to funds honoring Judith Keenan and Polly Chatfield have allowed the School to sustain its strong commitment to attracting students, especially those from the city, whose families could not otherwise afford a Commonwealth education.

Mrs. Keenan stepped down in 2000 to return to Washington, DC. Her successor, William Wharton, had come to Commonwealth as a teacher in 1985 and served as Admissions Director from 1993-2000. Mr. Wharton's priorities early in his tenure as Headmaster included strengthening college placement and building the School's Annual Fund. He increased the resources devoted to college advising. Assisted by Director of Development Patricia Sharaf (a parent of an alumna), who had joined the staff during the Capital Campaign, Commonwealth developed a fuller program of encouraging involvement of alumni/ae and parents with the School, including local alumni/ae receptions in major cities and more comprehensive reunion weekends.



Other initiatives during Mr. Wharton's tenure have centered around his commitment to strengthening and supporting faculty, his respect for the School's historical commitment to diversity, and the need he and others identified to ensure students' well being. The last fifteen years have seen the creation of the Hughes Faculty Projects, summer grants for faculty study. Dramatic growth in the Annual Fund has made possible the steady strengthening of faculty compensation. The School began to develop more systematic support and evaluation of faculty and staff, including the assigning of faculty mentors for new teachers, annual conversations with the Headmaster, and, most recently, the development of a peer-review program. Commonwealth developed closer relations with city charter schools and other programs that directed growing numbers of students of color to the School through the first decade of the 2000s. In addition, the School now offers more active support to students who receive substantial financial aid. This effort has included scholarships for projects and summers, and more vigorous evaluation and support of new students who arrive with less developed academic skills. In response to concerns of younger teachers and students, Commonwealth instituted in 2002 a ten-week seminar for 9th graders, Health and Community, to encourage literacy about drugs, alcohol, sexuality, stress management, and other matters of importance to adolescent health and safety.

In 2003-2004, with the participation of trustees, parents, faculty, and alumni/ae, the School developed a Long-Range Plan, adopted in May 2004, that called for substantial efforts to build a stronger community of alumni/ae and parents; to strengthen the endowment so that the School could continue to improve faculty compensation and increase the level of financial aid; to improve facilities and tools available to students; and to continue to raise Commonwealth's visibility in the Boston independent school market. As part of the plan, a group of alumni/ae oversaw the creation of an Alumni/ae Association and a group of parents convened the School's first formal Parents' Committee. Commonwealth also hired its first professional Librarian and named a Director of Communications. A review of School governance as part of the planning process gave rise to efforts to make more systematic the review of the Headmaster's performance and to strengthen the orientation and involvement of all trustees.

In the spring of 2005, the Board voted to undertake a major capital campaign, Engaging Minds, Changing Lives, the main goal of which was to double the endowment from \$7.5 million to \$15 million. The cornerstone gift for this campaign was a \$2 million grant for endowment from the Malone Family Foundation, which was earmarked for scholarship assistance for academically gifted students who could not otherwise afford Commonwealth. In the end the campaign raised \$8.5 million. The campaign closed at the 50th Anniversary Celebration of Commonwealth's opening in October 2008, an event at the Cyclorama in Boston's South End that drew over 850 guests.

In late 2011 the Board began a new round of strategic planning, a three-year process that developed a new plan for the \$9 million renovation and upgrade of the school's two brownstone and laid out plans for a new capital campaign, The Power of Place, that would also raise money to strengthen faculty compensation and recharge funds for professional development, and raise fund to endow or provide multi-year resources for additional financial aid and support services for scholarship students eligible for aid, including Chatfield Cultural

Scholarships for exchanges and projects, Homework Project, and academic support services. The strategic plan also led to the creation of Capstone Projects, year-long guided independent study projects for a select number of seniors, the expansion of the role of Director of Faculty to bolster faculty evaluation and support.

In the year following the adoption of the strategic plan another committee reviewed Commonwealth's ability to deliver on its historic commitment to diversity as an increasingly competitive educational landscape made it increasingly difficult to attract the numbers of students of color and students from disadvantaged backgrounds that it had as recently as a half decade earlier. The result of that effort was a framework to revitalize Commonwealth's social mission, which was presented to the Board in May 2016. In the coming year the leadership will focus on the campaign, continuing progress with building renovation, and strengthening the school's ability to attract and effectively include students and teachers from diverse backgrounds, while continuing to lead and sustain the lively intellectual life of the school community.

In late November 2017, Charles Merrill passed away at age 97. Six weeks later at a memorial service in Boston, family and friends celebrated his achievements, which included substantial contributions to African-American education in the United States, support for education and freedom of thought and expression in Poland, and the founding of Commonwealth. Activist Marian Wright Edelman recalled her long friendship with Mr. Merrill, which began when he funded her year's study in Europe when she was an undergraduate at Spelman College and he was Chairman of the Board at Morehouse College. Krakow publisher Henryk Wozniakowski spoke of Mr. Merrill's financial and moral support through the Cold War years for Polish poets and writers both in Poland and in exile. And Bill Wharton spoke of the enduring power of Mr. Merrill's founding vision for Commonwealth. That vision—with its emphasis on “hard work, intellectual exploration, and the process of self-education while still encouraging students to be decent, socially responsible, generous people” and the goal of training students “from ignored groups” to be leaders—guided Commonwealth through its first half century and still guides it today.



# APPENDIX B: POLICY PROHIBITING HARASSMENT

## HARASSMENT

Commonwealth School is committed to providing faculty, staff and students with an environment that supports respect for the individual and academic freedom and where all members of the School community may pursue careers or studies free from harassment. Thus, harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or any other legally protected basis is strictly prohibited.

Harassment may take many different forms. Some examples are:

- Verbal conduct such as epithets, derogatory comments, slurs, or unwanted comments and jokes;
- Visual conduct such as derogatory posters, cartoons, drawings or gestures;
- Physical conduct such as blocking normal movement, restraining, touching, or otherwise physically interfering with the work or studies of another individual; or
- Retaliation by any of the above means for having reported harassment.

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is another form of harassment and is also prohibited by the School (see full definition below). Commonwealth School is committed to providing faculty, staff and students with an environment that supports respect for the individual and academic freedom, where all members of the community may pursue careers or studies free from sexual harassment or offensive conduct of a sexually-oriented or sex-based nature, regardless of its form or manner. Sexual harassment of faculty, staff or students occurring in the School or in other settings in which they may find themselves in connection with their employment or studies is strictly prohibited. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment or retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated.

Commonwealth takes allegations of harassment of any kind very seriously. Any person found to be engaging in harassment, or who aids and abets or incites such conduct, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or expulsion.

Please note that while this policy sets forth the School's goals of promoting an environment that is free from harassment, the policy is not designed or intended to limit the School's authority to discipline or take remedial action for conduct that we deem unacceptable, regardless of whether that conduct satisfies the definition of harassment.

## DEFINITION OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment consists of sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or academic status;
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment or academic decisions affecting such individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment in which to work or learn.

Specific behaviors and particular patterns of behavior that Commonwealth considers inappropriate (and potentially sexual harassment) include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Attempted or actual sexual assault or coerced sexual acts;
- Undesired, intentional touching of any kind or manner;
- Propositions or any sexual advance that is unwelcome;
- Sexually-oriented comments about one's body or appearance;
- Sexual innuendo, derogatory remarks, obscenities, or offensive gestures;
- Improper questioning about one's personal or private life;
- Comments or gossip about one's sexual activity;
- Jokes of a lewd, offensive, or sexual nature;
- Spoken or written abuse related to one's gender;
- Visual leering or ogling;
- Showing or displaying pictures, drawings, or objects of a sexual or offensive nature;
- Repeatedly asking a member of the school community out for a date, after he or she has said "No"; and/or
- Any other sexual conduct which interferes with one's work or academic performance, the School environment, or other conditions of employment or academic status.

## SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Sexual misconduct is a broad term that encompasses unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature that is committed without consent, as defined below. Sexual misconduct can be committed by a person of any gender, and it can occur between people of the same gender or different genders. Any sexual misconduct that endangers the health or wellbeing of another student may result in dismissal. Examples of sexual misconduct include:

- **Sexual Assault:** Non-consensual sexual intercourse or sexual contact.
- **Sexual Exploitation:** Taking non-consensual sexual advantage over another, including secret videotaping, sharing private nude pictures with third parties, or knowingly exposing another to sexually transmitted disease.
- **Dating Violence:** Violence by a person who has been in an intimate or romantic relationship with the victim.
- **Stalking:** Course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for their safety or suffer substantial emotional distress.
- **Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome conduct or behavior that is personally offensive or threatening and that has the effect of impairing morale, interfering with a student (or employee's) work or school performance, or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive school environment. Examples include offensive sexual language or jokes, or gestures of a sexual nature. For more details, please see the school's Sexual Harassment Policy below.
- **Sexting (See Appendix E):** The use of technology devices to send any written message or image that contains explicit representations or references to sexual conduct, sexual excitement, or nudity. The law prohibits anyone (regardless of age) from disseminating obscene or pornographic images of minors, and the school may contact law enforcement should any student violate this policy.

All sexual advances (overt or otherwise) between adults and students are prohibited, on or off campus, even if a student encourages or appears to encourage such advances. Sexual behavior between adults and students is considered a severe breach of trust and will be dealt with as such.

**Bystander Responsibilities:** The School expects that any student who is present, witnesses, or has knowledge that sexual misconduct is occurring or has occurred, will take reasonable steps to stop any sexual assault or misconduct from occurring or prevent it from going any further. Students are expected to report knowledge of any sexual assault or misconduct to a responsible adult at the school. Every effort will be made to maintain privacy.

It is important to note that some sexually intimate behaviors violate state laws and school personnel may be required to report such instances to state or local authorities. Students should note that the age of consent in Massachusetts is 16.

**Consent:** If students choose to engage in sexual activity, each person involved must verbally communicate consent clearly and voluntarily at every stage of a sexual encounter. They must understand and abide by the rules of consent which include:

- Consent cannot be inferred by silence or the absence of “no.” Clear consent, given through affirmative words, is necessary.
- Consent to some sexual acts does not imply consent to others, nor does past consent to a given act imply present or future consent. Consent must be ongoing and can be revoked at any time.
- Consent obtained by threat, coercion, or force does not constitute consent.
- Consent cannot be obtained from someone who is asleep or otherwise mentally or physically incapacitated, whether due to alcohol, drugs, or some other condition.

## COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

Any student who believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual or other harassment, or who has observed such harassment, regardless of whether the offensive act was committed by another student, teacher, vendor, or visitor, should notify the Headmaster, Assistant Head of School, or the Dean of Students as soon as possible after the offensive behavior occurs. Any student who does not feel comfortable reporting the conduct to one of the people designated above should notify another teacher or member of the administration. The Headmaster, Assistant Head of School, or the Dean of Students are also available to discuss any concerns and to provide information about this policy and the complaint process.

As described in more detail in the Discipline section of this handbook, there shall be no retaliation for a good faith complaint made about harassment or sexual harassment. To the extent possible, all complaints and related information will remain confidential, except to those individuals who need the information to investigate, educate, or take action in response to the complaint.

## INVESTIGATION OF ALLEGATIONS OF HARASSMENT

When the School receives a complaint of harassment, we will promptly investigate the allegation in a fair and expeditious manner. The School may use internal or external resources to do so. As described in the Discipline Section of this handbook, the School may refer the resolution of a harassment or sexual harassment complaint against a student to the Discipline Committee or Dean of Students, it may appoint an outside investigator. Students are expected to cooperate with any investigation. The investigation may include interviews with the person filing the complaint, the person or persons against whom the complaint was made and with any students, faculty or staff who may have witnessed the reported incident or incidents. Our investigation may also include a review of documentation (paper and ink or electronic), or any other information, which the investigator believes to be relevant. When we have completed our investigation, we will, to the extent appropriate, inform the complainant and the alleged harasser of the results of that investigation.

The School strives to release information arising out of a complaint or investigation of harassment or sexual harassment only on a need-to-know basis. Students should be aware, however, that information must be shared in order for an effective investigation to be conducted and that in some circumstances, disclosure of such information may be required by law. In addition, any person who receives a complaint of harassment or sexual harassment from a student or who otherwise knows or has reason to believe that a student is or has been subjected to sexual harassment is expected to report the incident promptly to the Headmaster, Assistant Head of School, or the Dean of Students for investigation.

### **RESPONSES TO A VIOLATION OF THE HARASSMENT POLICY**

If, as the result of an investigation, it is determined that an individual has engaged in improper or unlawful conduct, the School may take disciplinary action as it deems appropriate under the circumstances, up to and including immediate discharge or expulsion. The School may also recommend that students involved in an incident of harassment or sexual harassment (either as the alleged victim, perpetrator, or bystander) undergo professional counseling as a condition of remaining enrolled at the School.

## APPENDIX C: PROHIBITION AGAINST HAZING

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires secondary schools to provide students and families enrolled at the School with a copy of the state law defining and prohibiting hazing. All members of the School community are reminded that these laws include a requirement to report promptly any alleged incidents of hazing. Students are briefed on this matter during assemblies and team meetings.

*Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 269, §§17-19 are reproduced below.*

### SECTION 17

Whoever is a principal organizer or participant in the crime of hazing, as defined herein, shall be punished by a fine of not more than three thousand dollars or by imprisonment in a house of correction for not more than one year, or both such fine and imprisonment.

The term “hazing” as used in this section and in sections eighteen and nineteen, shall mean any conduct or method of initiation into any student organization, whether on public or private property, which willfully or recklessly endangers the physical or mental health of any student or other person. Such conduct shall include whipping, beating, branding, forced calisthenics, exposure to the weather, forced consumption of any food, liquor, beverage, drug or other substance, or any other brutal treatment or forced physical activity which is likely to adversely affect the physical health or safety of any such student or other person, or which subjects such student or other person to extreme mental stress, including extended deprivation of sleep or rest or extended isolation.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section to the contrary, consent shall not be available as a defense to any prosecution under this action.

### SECTION 18

Whoever knows that another person is the victim of hazing as defined in section seventeen and is at the scene of such crime shall, to the extent that such person can do so without danger or peril to herself or others, report such crime to an appropriate law enforcement official as soon as reasonably practicable. Whoever fails to report such crime shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars.

### SECTION 19

Each institution of secondary education and each public and private institution of post-secondary education shall issue to every student group, student team or student organization which is part of such institution or is recognized by the institution or permitted by the institution to use its name or facilities or is known by the institution to exist as an unaffiliated student group, student team or student organization, a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen; provided, however, that an institution’s compliance with this section’s

requirements that an institution issue copies of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations shall not constitute evidence of the institution's recognition or endorsement of said unaffiliated student groups, teams or organizations.

Each such group, team or organization shall distribute a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen to each of its members, plebes, pledges or applicants for membership. It shall be the duty of each such group, team or organization, acting through its designated officer, to deliver annually, to the institution an attested acknowledgement stating that such group, team or organization has received a copy of this section and said sections seventeen and eighteen, that each of its members, plebes, pledges, or applicants has received a copy of sections seventeen and eighteen, and that such group, team or organization understands and agrees to comply with the provisions of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

Each institution of secondary education and each public or private institution of post-secondary education shall, at least annually, before or at the start of enrollment, deliver to each person who enrolls as a full-time student in such institution a copy of this section and sections seventeen and eighteen.

# APPENDIX D: BULLYING PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PLAN

## I. INTRODUCTION

At Commonwealth School, we expect that all members of our school community will treat each other with civility and respect.

Commonwealth aims to be a school that is free of bullying and any other verbal or physical misconduct that disrupts any student's learning or undermines anyone's sense of safety. Commonwealth School's Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan, set forth below, is published in response to the Massachusetts law against bullying and is an integral part of our efforts to promote learning and to prevent behavior that can impede the learning process. Our Plan spells out Commonwealth School's comprehensive approach to addressing bullying, cyber bullying, and retaliation.

This Plan is consistent with broader protections at Commonwealth against discrimination, harassment, bullying, and retaliation that appear in our Parent-Student Handbook and our Employee Handbook. It is important that this Plan be well understood by all members of the Commonwealth community. The Headmaster is responsible for the implementation and administration of the Plan. Questions and concerns related to this Plan may be referred to him, to the Assistant Head of School, or to the Dean of Students.

## II. POLICY AGAINST BULLYING, CYBERBULLYING, AND RETALIATION

The School will not tolerate any form of bullying or cyberbullying, nor will we tolerate retaliation against any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying or cyber bullying.

Bullying and cyberbullying are prohibited on school grounds and at school-sponsored events, activities, functions, and programs. Bullying and cyber bullying also are prohibited on buses and other vehicles owned, leased, or used by the school, and through the use of technology or an electronic device owned, leased, or used by the School.

In addition, bullying and cyber bullying are prohibited at a location, activity, function, or program that is not school-related or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased, or used by the School, if the bullying creates a hostile environment at school for a targeted student; infringes on the rights of a targeted student at school; or materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the School.

The School recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status,



homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, pregnant or parenting status, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The School has policies that prohibit harassment based on such characteristics, but reiterates that bullying or cyber bullying based on such characteristics is explicitly prohibited.

### III. DEFINITIONS UNDER THE LAW

The following definitions are drawn from the Massachusetts law against bullying.

**Bullying.** Bullying is defined as the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the targeted student or damage to the targeted student’s property;
- Places the targeted student in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- Creates a hostile environment at school for the targeted student;
- Infringes on the rights of the targeted student at school; or
- Materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school.

**Cyberbullying.** Cyberbullying is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, fax machines and the Internet. It includes, but is not limited to, e-mail, instant messages, text messages, and Internet postings, whether on a webpage, in a blog, through social media outlets, or otherwise and specifically includes instances where a person impersonates another as the author of any electronic communication or document, where the content creates any of the “bullying” conditions described above. Cyberbullying also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the “bullying: conditions enumerated described above.

**Hostile Environment.** A hostile environment is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student’s education.

**Perpetrator.** A student or a member of school staff, including, but not limited to, an educator, administrator, school nurse, dining hall worker, custodian, bus driver, athletic coach, advisor, or paraprofessional who engages in bullying or retaliation.

**Retaliation.** Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

**Victim.** A student against whom bullying or retaliation has been perpetrated.

#### IV. LEGAL DEFINITIONS AND SCHOOL POLICY

It is important to bear in mind that stricter standards of behavior may apply under Commonwealth School's policies in order that we may prevent and address inappropriate verbal and physical conduct before a student has been subject to bullying as it is defined under the law. For example, although the law defines bullying as "repeated use" of certain expressions, acts, and/or gestures, the School reserves the right to apply disciplinary measures and other corrective action in a case of a single expression, act or gesture (especially with respect to cyber bullying), if the School determines that it is of sufficient severity to warrant disciplinary measures or other remedial action or that the repetition of that expression, act, or gesture might reasonably result in bullying as defined under the law. Any changes in the definition of terms do not expand a victim's rights under the law.

#### V. PREVENTION OF BULLYING AND CYBERBULLYING

At Commonwealth, students learn that as members of our community they have a right to be treated with civility and respect. Our school culture emphasizes respect for differences, including those associated with the protected characteristics described in Section II of this Plan. Teachers are clear in their expectations for student behavior. Parents are asked to reinforce standards for membership in the Commonwealth community. Each fall, the Parent-Student Handbook is distributed to families and discipline policies are reviewed with students. This handbook includes explicit policies around the acceptable use of technology at Commonwealth, and prohibitions against bullying, cyber bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, and hazing, how to report such misconduct, and procedures for maintaining student safety while investigating such allegations.

An annual "discipline assembly," daily announcements, and class meetings include presentations designed to make sure that students are well informed about what is expected of them and to reinforce positive conduct.

Health and Community classes, taken by all ninth graders, include discussion of peer relationships and empower students to take action if they feel targeted or if they witness other students engaging in bullying or other unacceptable behavior.

The administration and faculty recognize that it is essential that expectations for student conduct extend to every part of the school building, all off-campus school activities and to cyberspace.

## VI. REPORTS OF BULLYING, CYBERBULLYING, OR RETALIATION

Any student who is the target of bullying or cyber bullying or has witnessed an incident of bullying or cyberbullying or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyberbullying is strongly encouraged to promptly report the matter orally or in writing to the Headmaster, Assistant Head of School, the Dean of Students, or to any other faculty or staff member with whom the student is comfortable speaking. Also, any student who is subject to retaliation in violation of this policy or who knows of another student who has been subject to retaliation is urged to report it as soon as possible. An advisor or other staff member who learns of such conduct is expected to report the incident immediately to the Headmaster, Assistant Head of School, or the Dean of Students (as detailed further below).

A parent of a student who is the target of bullying or cyberbullying or of a student who has witnessed or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyberbullying is strongly urged to promptly notify the Headmaster, Assistant Head of School, or the Dean of Students. Furthermore, any parent who has him- or herself witnessed bullying or cyberbullying or has relevant information concerning such an incident is strongly urged to come forward to the Headmaster, Assistant Head of School, or the Dean of Students. A parent should also report any incident of retaliation in violation of this policy to the Headmaster, Assistant Head of School, or the Dean of Students.

Any member of the faculty or staff of the School who witnesses or otherwise becomes aware of bullying or cyberbullying or who becomes aware of retaliation against a student who reported such misconduct is required to report it immediately to the Headmaster, Assistant Head of School, or the Dean of Students. There are to be no exceptions.

Upon receiving a complaint of bullying or cyberbullying from a student, parent, or member of the faculty or staff, the Headmaster, after consultation with the Assistant Head and Dean of Students, may refer the issue to the Discipline Committee for resolution according to the Discipline section of this handbook. Alternately, the Headmaster may refer the matter to the Dean of Students or appoint an outside investigator.

Faculty and staff may not make reports under this policy anonymously. The school also urges students and their parents not to make reports anonymously. Although there are circumstances in which an anonymous report can be better than none at all, it is far more difficult to determine the facts of what occurred if complaints are made anonymously, and no disciplinary action shall be taken against a student based solely on an anonymous report. Additionally, false reports of bullying, cyber bullying, and retaliation are prohibited and may subject the reporter to discipline.

Students and parents are encouraged to bear in mind that the School takes seriously its policy against retaliation against anyone reporting or involved in an investigation of bullying or cyberbullying and will investigate such allegations as described below.

## VII. RESPONDING TO A REPORT OF BULLYING, CYBERBULLYING, OR RETALIATION

**A. Preliminary Considerations.** When a complaint of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation is brought to the attention of the Headmaster, Assistant Head of School, or the Dean of Students, an assessment is made as to whether any initial steps need to be taken to protect the well-being of students and to prevent disruption of their learning environment while the investigation is being conducted. As appropriate, strategies such as increased supervision may be implemented to prevent further bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation during an investigation.

**B. Obligation to Notify Parents.** It is the policy of the School to notify the parents of any student who is an alleged victim and the parents of any student who may have been accused of engaging in such behavior promptly after a complaint has been made.

**C. Investigation.** An impartial investigation of the complaint is conducted by the Discipline Committee, or a party designated by the Headmaster, including the use of an outside resource. That investigation may include (but will not necessarily be limited to) interviews with the person who made the complaint, with the alleged victim, with the person or persons against whom the complaint was made, and with any students, faculty, staff or other persons who witnessed or who may otherwise have relevant information about the alleged incident. Depending on the circumstances, the Discipline Committee, or the designated investigator may choose to consult with other teachers and/or the School Counselor. While the school cannot promise strict confidentiality because information must be shared in order to conduct an effective investigation, the school shares information concerning complaints of bullying, cyber bullying, and retaliation only on a legitimate, need-to-know basis.

**D. Resolution, Notification, and Follow-up.** Following interviews and any other investigation undertaken, as the School deems appropriate, the Discipline Committee, Dean of Students, or designated investigator will determine whether and to what extent the allegation of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been substantiated. If it is determined that the policy set forth in this Plan has been violated, appropriate disciplinary action and/or other remedial action will be determined and implemented in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Discipline section of this Handbook.

The goal of an investigation and any disciplinary or other remedial process that is imposed following that investigation is to correct the situation to the extent it is reasonably possible, to take such steps as can be taken to prevent there being a repetition of the incident, and to prevent the victim(s) and others who participated in the investigation from being subject to retaliation. In appropriate circumstances, such as when a crime may have been committed or a student may have been subject to abuse or neglect of the type that is reportable under Massachusetts laws, law enforcement or another appropriate government agency may be notified.

Upon completion of the investigation, the Headmaster, Assistant Head of School, or the Dean of Students will communicate with the victim(s), the student or students against whom the complaint was made, and their parents to report the results of the investigation and, where disciplinary or other corrective action is determined to be appropriate, and to inform those involved of the steps that will be taken to correct the situation. Involved students (victims, perpetrators, and their family members) will also be provided with referrals to counseling resources, as deemed appropriate. The amount of information provided in these meetings may be limited by confidentiality laws protecting student records.

Follow-up contacts will be made with any student found to have been targeted in violation of this policy and his/her parents to inquire as to whether there have been any further incidents, and if so, appropriate, additional steps will be taken to curb the ongoing misconduct.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

This Plan is intended (1) to prevent bullying and cyberbullying among our students, (2) to encourage students and their parents to have confidence in the School's procedures and to come forward promptly whenever a student is subject to conduct that is prohibited by this or any other school policy; and (3) to implement appropriate discipline and other corrective measures when they are found to be warranted.

## APPENDIX E: PROHIBITION AGAINST SEXTING

The School prohibits students, regardless of age, from using technology devices (whether owned by the student or the School, and whether through use of the School's network or outside of the School's network, and whether used on or off campus) to send any written message or image that contains explicit representations or references to sexual conduct, sexual excitement, or nudity (commonly known as "sexting"). Massachusetts law prohibits anyone (regardless of age) from disseminating obscene or pornographic images of minors, and the School reserves the right to contact law enforcement should any student violate this policy.

## APPENDIX F: CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING PROCEDURE

Under Massachusetts law, all professionals responsible for the care of children are required to report suspected abuse or neglect of children under the age of 18. Massachusetts law requires professionals responsible for the care of children (including, but not limited to, teachers, school administrators, guidance counselors, etc.) to make a report to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) when, in their professional capacity, they have reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 is suffering from abuse or neglect (defined below). The responsibility to report rests both on the School and also on all professionals responsible for the care of children who are associated with the School.

The following procedure is established to ensure that reports are made in a timely and effective manner, and that information about students and their families is treated in a way which is respectful of their privacy.

### PROCEDURE

When an employee learns of a situation of possible neglect or abuse, the employee should consult immediately with the Headmaster (or an appropriate administrator) about the situation so that appropriate action can be taken to protect the child and timely reports can be made to DCF. The Headmaster (or the appropriate administrator) will review the information immediately and may consult with the Assistant Head of School, the Dean of Students, or the School Counselor, and, if appropriate, the child's family, legal counsel and/or a consultant specializing in the care and protection of children. If the abuse or neglect is suspected to come from the student's family, an approach to protecting the student will be defined and the family may be notified of the School's obligation to report the information to DCF.

If the Headmaster determines that a report should be made to DCF, the Headmaster (or his or her designee) will generally make the first report to DCF by telephone call. As required by law, a written report will follow within 48 hours after making the oral report. However, by law, anyone who has a reasonable belief that a student is being abused or neglected may make a report to DCF at any time. School personnel, as "mandated reporters," are obligated to make a report to DCF if they have a reasonable belief that a student is being abused or neglected. In the event it is not clear whether conduct reaches a level of reportable abuse or neglect or there is a disagreement between an employee and the School's administration, any party who believes that the incident rises to the threshold for making a report is expected to make the report. Once again, the responsibility to report rests both on the individual professional and the School.



## DEFINITIONS

**Abuse.** DCF regulations (110 C.M.R. § 2.00) define abuse as the non-accidental commission of any act by a caretaker upon a child under age 18 which causes, or creates a substantial risk of, physical or emotional injury; or constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth; or any sexual contact between a caretaker and a child under the care of that individual. This definition is not dependent upon location (i.e., abuse can occur while the child is in an out-of-home or in-home setting).

**Neglect.** The term “neglect” means failure by a caretaker, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to take those actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, emotional stability and growth, or other essential care; provided, however, that such inability is not due solely to inadequate economic resources or solely to the existence of a handicapping condition. This definition is not dependent upon location (i.e., neglect can occur while the child is in an out-of-home or in-home setting).

**Physical injury.** The term “physical injury” means death; or fracture of a bone, a subdural hematoma, burns, impairment of any organ, and any other such nontrivial injury; or soft tissue swelling or skin bruising, depending on such factors as the child’s age, circumstances under which the injury occurred and the number and location of bruises; or addiction to a drug or drugs at birth; or failure to thrive.

**Emotional injury.** The term “emotional injury” means an impairment to or disorder of the intellectual or psychological capacity of a child as evidenced by observable and substantial reduction in the child’s ability to function within a normal range of performance and behavior.

**Caretaker.** A “caretaker” can be a child’s parent, step-parent, guardian, or any household member entrusted with the responsibility for a child’s health or welfare. In addition, any other person entrusted with the responsibility for a child’s health or welfare, both in and out of the child’s home, regardless of age, is considered a caretaker. Examples may include: relatives from outside the home, teachers or school staff in a school setting, workers at day care, and child care centers (including babysitters), foster parents, staff at a group care facility, or persons charged with caring for children in any other comparable setting.



## APPENDIX G: CONCUSSION/HEAD INJURY POLICY

The goal of this policy is to ensure that the School will follow the “when in doubt, sit them out” philosophy and recommend that a student with a suspected brain injury consult with a healthcare professional.

Educational materials about head injuries and concussions will be posted on the School website at [commschool.org/concussionpolicy](http://commschool.org/concussionpolicy) so the School community will:

- Understand a concussion and the potential consequences of this injury;
- Recognize concussion signs and symptoms and know how to respond;
- Learn about steps for returning to activity (play and school) after a concussion; and
- Focus on prevention and preparedness to help keep athletes safe season-to-season.

### PRE-PARTICIPATION HEAD INJURY REPORTING FORMS

Students/parents must provide a history of the student’s head injury to the School before the beginning of the school year by completing and submitting the “Pre-Participation Head Injury/Concussion Reporting Form for Extracurricular Activities,” which can be found on [commschool.org/schoolforms](http://commschool.org/schoolforms). Students will not be allowed to participate in athletics until a completed form is submitted.

### NEUROPSYCHOLOGICAL AND BASELINE TESTING

The ImpACT test (Immediate Post-Concussion Assessment and Cognitive Test) is a computerized neurocognitive test that has been scientifically validated to measure the effects of sport related concussion. Note that ImpACT is not a substitute for a thorough medical evaluation, treatment, or extensive neuropsychological assessment, and it is not a stand-alone assessment protocol. In order for the ImpACT test to have utility to evaluate the possibility of a concussion, the School recommends, if scheduling permits, that all student athletes participating in contact sports take a baseline concussion test prior to participation in contact sports.

The School uses ImpACT to test pre-season baseline and/or post-injury neurocognitive function, including memory, attention, visual motor speed and reaction time.

This test will be administered by the School post-injury, once the athlete is symptom-free, and compared to the baseline testing results. The results of the post-injury test will be used to objectively evaluate an athlete’s condition and assist with return to play decisions.

## HISTORY OF MULTIPLE CONCUSSIONS ON PRE-PARTICIPATION FORM

Current evidence indicates that youth who have suffered one or more concussions are more likely to suffer a subsequent one. Therefore, the decision to allow a student athlete who reported a history of multiple concussions on the student’s “Pre-Participation” form to participate in athletics should be made only after consultation with the student’s physician or primary care provider; the sports medicine or concussion specialist, if involved; the neuropsychologist, if involved; the appropriate School staff, and the parents. Options may include switching positions, limiting contact in practices, or changing sports altogether to minimize the risk of re-injury. The focus of the Commonwealth School is on protecting the health and safety of the student and avoiding long-term consequences that can occur from repeated concussions.

## IDENTIFYING HEAD INJURY OR SUSPECTED HEAD INJURY AND REMOVING FROM PLAY

If a student athlete receives a blow to the head and any signs or symptoms are present—or if the student is suspected of having a head injury—the student will be removed from play/practice and will not return to play/practice that day. Parents/legal guardians will be notified and referred, if appropriate, to a primary care physician or if unavailable, the emergency room.

## MEDICAL CLEARANCE FOR RETURN TO PLAY

If it is determined that an athlete has a concussion or suspected concussion, the student will not be permitted to participate in athletic practices or events until the student is cleared for participation by a physician. Each student will need to submit a completed “Post Sports- Related Head Injury Medical Clearance and Authorization Form” in order to participate in the School’s athletics program.

Student athletes may not go from being sidelined with a concussion to full play until the student has followed the recommended process from the treating physician regarding return to full academic and extracurricular athletic activities. Each student athlete will likely have his/her own course of recovery, which may depend upon prior medical history of concussion. The “return to play” process shall include instructions for students, parent(s) and School personnel addressing physical and cognitive rest and graduated return to academics and athletics.

## PROGRESSION OF RETURN TO PLAY:

- Test 1: (30% to 40% maximum exertion): Low levels of light physical activity.
- Test 2: (40% to 60% maximum exertion): Moderate levels of physical activity. Treadmill jogging, stationary bike, or elliptical for 20 to 25 minutes.
- Test 3: (60% to 80% maximum exertion). Non-contact sports specific drills. Running, high intensity stationary bike or elliptical for 25 to 30 minutes. Completing regular weight training.
- Test 4: (80% maximum exertion). Limited, controlled sports specific practice and drills.
- Test 5: Full contact and return to sport with monitoring of symptoms.

To reiterate, the underlying philosophy of these policies is “when in doubt, sit them out”. Failure to comply with the letter or spirit of these policies could result in forfeiture of games. If students or parents have concerns that the policies are being violated, they should contact the Headmaster.

## APPENDIX H: COMMONWEALTH ALLERGEN AWARENESS AND RESPONSE POLICIES

Commonwealth School's allergen awareness and response policy focuses on prevention and emergency response in order to prevent student exposure to known allergens and to respond properly and safely to any instance of allergic reaction. Although this policy was written for, and is focused on, preventing and responding to allergic reactions to food, Commonwealth School is aware that equally severe anaphylaxis reactions can occur in response to other allergens such as latex, insect venom, medication, exercise, and cold.

We ask families to help us protect their children from food-based and other allergens by sharing information fully about their children's known allergies, and/or any prior allergic reactions that they may have had and by encouraging their children to be active participants in their own self-care and prevention. Commonwealth School will take every precaution to inform students about ingredients in foods served both at school and away from school. We ask all students to discuss any allergen-based concerns with their advisor and/or other faculty and staff and, for those students who have food-based allergies, with the Head of the Food Program.

### RESPONSIBILITIES OF FAMILIES WHOSE STUDENTS HAVE KNOWN ALLERGIES

Families of each student with known allergies must indicate all known allergens on the student's medical form. In addition, the student's physician must fill out and return a Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan, signed by the physician and parents. This form must be updated every year that the student is at Commonwealth, and can be found on [commschool.org/schoolforms](http://commschool.org/schoolforms).

For students who have been prescribed epinephrine (Epipen) by their physician, we ask them to bring one set of Epipens (in the original packaging with the student's name on the label) to the Commonwealth front office at the start of each school year. The Epipens will be securely stored for emergency use for the duration of the school year; if unused, they will be returned to each student at the conclusion of the school year.

### FOODS SERVED AT COMMONWEALTH

**Food Preparation Procedures:** The Head of the Food Program will prepare and serve food consistent with the goal of keeping every student safe from ingesting any known food allergens. The Head of the Food Program will ensure that all appropriate cleaning and sanitizing protocols are followed to prevent cross-contamination during food preparation. The kitchen staff will immediately report errors such as cross-contact with an allergen and errors in the ingredient list or menu to the Headmaster, who will then inform students and parents.

## COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES AND STUDENTS

The Head of the Food Program will provide online lunch menus, which can be found by searching “Commonwealth School” at [myschooldining.com](http://myschooldining.com).

Foods containing any of the eight major allergens will be identified on the posted menu and in the food service line: cow’s milk, egg, peanuts, tree nuts (e.g., walnuts, pecans, almonds, and cashews), fish, shellfish, soy, and wheat.

All food labels, recipes, and ingredient lists used to prepare meals and/or recess items will be available for review in a binder that is stored adjacent to the Commonwealth kitchen. In addition, the Head of the Food Program will maintain current contact information for vendors and suppliers in this binder.

The Head of the Food Program will read all food labels, re-checking labels with each purchase for potential food allergens, and will keep food labels from all foods served to students for at least 24 hours after serving the food in case a student has a reaction.

All students will be instructed about the location of food labels and weekly menus, reminded to address any questions about food ingredients with the Head of the Food Program, and informed about the allergen response team that is in place should the student start to feel ill from consuming food while at school.

## STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES TO PREVENT FOOD ALLERGEN CONSUMPTION AT SCHOOL

In addition to having a Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan form on file, all students with known food allergies should review their food allergy(ies) and any previous symptoms with their advisor. Their advisor will help them schedule a follow-up conversation in the kitchen/dining area with their advisor, the Head of the Food Program, the Allergy Policy Coordinator, and a parent or guardian if he or she would like to attend.

During this meeting, the student will become familiar with food safety precautions that are in place at the school, e.g., the food ingredient binder, the posted weekly menu, the system for labeling the eight major food allergens, and the separate area of the dining hall that has been set aside for serving peanut and tree nut-containing foods. In addition, the student will be introduced to the members of the school’s support team who have been trained to assist with EpiPen injection should a student require epinephrine.

Students are also responsible for checking ingredients on any/all foods in the lunchroom prior to eating them for the first time. Should there be any doubt, students are to ask the Head of the Food Program prior to consumption, in order to insure their safety.

## STUDENT RESPONSE FOLLOWING CONSUMPTION OF ANY FOOD ALLERGEN

A student who feels any allergy-related symptoms at school (particularly following consumption of food) should tell a faculty member, who will assist the student and alert one of the identified support team members in order to obtain immediate help. Secondarily, the faculty member involved will inform the student's advisor.

For a student with a known food allergy who has been prescribed an EpiPen, the school will assist the student in administering epinephrine and call 911 for emergency response. At the same time, the school will call the student's parents or other emergency contact. Following such an incident, the Head of the Food Program will be notified that a student has had an allergic reaction, the incident will be reported to the Board of Health, and Commonwealth will review the circumstances of the incident with the school's consulting nurse and consider strategies to further reduce risk to that student.

## WITHIN-SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Students who have known food allergies will be included on a school list of students with allergies that will be posted in a private location in the kitchen and in the front office. If a student should begin to feel any symptoms following food consumption while in the dining area, they should speak immediately to the kitchen staff. The kitchen staff will send the student to the front office. When a student comes into the front office complaining of physical discomfort, the front office staff will check the list to see if the student has a known allergy. For students with known food allergies, the staff will consult the student's Food Allergy Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan and compare the symptoms that the student describes with those associated with food allergen reaction.

If the student has symptoms consistent with his or her food allergy emergency care plan, the front office staff will then encourage the student to use an EpiPen and will call 911. Should a student be unable to self-administer, one of the trained support team members will administer the EpiPen dose; check that the call to 911 has been placed; and then call the student's parents, the student's physician, and the school's consulting nurse, when possible.

Should there be any confusion about whether a student's symptoms are in response to an allergen, the school will follow the recommendation of the Massachusetts Department of Education manual, *Managing Life-Threatening Allergies in Schools* (2016) to give an epinephrine auto injector and obtain emergency medical attention for the student.

## STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM

Following guidelines proposed by our consulting school nurse, Commonwealth will identify a school support team to ensure that there will be trained staff present in the school and/or off-site who can respond knowledgeably to any student experiencing an allergic reaction. Commonwealth does not have a nurse in attendance at the school.

This Support Team will include a subset of teachers/advisors (including the Athletic Director), front office staff, kitchen staff, and several key administrative personnel.

These individuals will be trained by the school nurse to administer epinephrine by auto injector in a life-threatening situation during the school day and will attend a training review and informational update twice a year. The training will include, but not be limited to, procedures for risk reduction, recognition of the symptoms of a severe allergic reaction, proper use of the auto-injector, requirements for proper storage and security of the Epipen, and record keeping.

The Headmaster will approve the policies developed by a school nurse with designated responsibility for management of the program (“responsible school nurse”) governing administration of epinephrine by auto injector. In accordance with state law, this approval will be renewed every two years and will provide written assurance to the Department of Education that the requirements of the regulations will be met.

The school shall maintain and make available upon request by parents a list of those school personnel authorized and trained to administer epinephrine by auto injector in an emergency. The school will document the date and time of any Epipen administration, ensure safe disposal of the used injector, and submit a written report to the Department of Public Health each time epinephrine is administered to a student.

Epinephrine will be stored securely (but not locked) in a cabinet in the Front Office, along with copies of the student’s FARE form.

## **FOOD ALLERGY AWARENESS AT HANCOCK**

Several days before departing for Hancock, any student with known food allergies should meet with the faculty responsible for menus at Hancock to go over the list of foods that will be served at each meal and to check the ingredients in each recipe. Students will then know at which meals to look for allergen-free preparations of particular menu items, e.g., egg-free or gluten-free preparations. Before going through the serving line at camp, each student with food allergens should also check in with the faculty who worked on that meal to confirm that allergen-free versions of the menu items were prepared appropriately.

Students with food allergies who wish to do so may bring their own food to Hancock; refrigerator, freezer, and pantry storage are available during our stay at the camp. Foods brought by a student for personal use should be clearly labeled with the student’s name. Foods that require refrigeration should be transported to Hancock in a cooler to ensure food safety. Upon arriving at camp, the student should then communicate with the faculty in charge of the pantry during Hancock (faculty food czar), so that appropriate food storage can be arranged and the student will know where his or her food is located.

## EPIPENS AT HANCOCK

We urge students who have been prescribed Epipens to bring two sets of Epipens, labeled with the student's name, to Hancock. One set should be brought to the front office at Commonwealth a week before we depart for Maine. These Epipens will be brought to Hancock with us and stored in a secured office just above the camp's dining hall. Should a student have a reaction requiring an Epipen while in or near the dining hall, faculty and/or the nurse will be able to help the student administer the epinephrine.

The second set should remain with the student—either on his or her person or in his or her tent/cabin. All emergency response procedures that are in place at Commonwealth School will be followed during our stay at Camp Winona.