

[ALL LAYOUT IS STRICTLY SAMPLE]

A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO LIFE
AND WORK
AT
[YOUR SCHOOL NAME]

[visual?]

20xx–xx Edition

Prepared for the benefit of the faculty members of

[school name]
[school address]
[school website]

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[SAMPLE CONTENT THAT WE LOVE]

“What we are after is an awakened consciousness, differing in each individual, an excitement in thinking, reading, and writing for their own sake, new discoveries, new enthusiasms, the casting off, or the retention with better understanding, of the old. What we want is to stimulate the love of mental adventure and constructive doubt, to create emotional satisfaction in the things of the mind, to reveal through books the variety and the wonder of human experience.

“How we do these things matters not at all. The numberless ways of their accomplishment reside in the numberless personalities of those of us who teach. The one thing that does matter is that we shall be awake and alive, alert and eager, flexible and unperturbed, likable and exciting.”

—Mary Ellen Chase, *A Goodly Fellowship* (1939)

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1. SCHOOL VALUES AND ASPIRATIONS

SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

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WHO WE ARE [descriptive language from school website or viewbook]

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CORE VALUES OR STANDARDS [if the school has articulated and published these]

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STANDARDS FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING [if the school has articulated and published these]

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STRATEGIC GOALS OR PRIORITIES [if the school is currently operating under a defined and published “strategic plan” or other such document]

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2. CALENDARS

MAJOR CALENDAR DATES, 20xx–xx

[start/end dates, vacations, parent conferences, holidays, special events]

HOW DOES IT FEEL? A WALK THROUGH A YEAR AT [school name]

[edit, delete, add freely; this is written for a school on a trimester calendar, so be sure to adjust for your own]

AUGUST/Pre-classes

- Check on status of textbook orders with department head; rush order texts if necessary
- Complete any summer reading for opening meetings
- As soon as contact information is available, phone advisees and families to introduce yourself
- Start setting up your classroom—boards, borders—whatever décor seems appropriate
- Attend new student/family orientation events for your division and/or grade(s)
- Opening faculty meetings

AUGUST – SEPTEMBER/early Fall

- First “weeks” of classes interrupted by photos, orientation events/trips—lots of “getting to know you”
- Prepare course prospectus for each course
- “No-Homework” nights may occur—first night of Rosh Hashanah; Yom Kippur
- College representatives on campus to meet Seniors, usually during middle (“lunch”) and G blocks; may create occasional conflicts for students
- “Parent Night”—*prepare as necessary*

OCTOBER/mid Fall

- “Parent Night”—*prepare as necessary*
- Seniors will be off visiting colleges, missing some class days
- Mid-term feedback for students
- College recommendations for seniors should be wrapped up
- Observations for evaluation begin in earnest
- Parent Conferences—*prepare and organize materials, check schedule updates regularly*
- Athletic early releases begin; these cascade after the time change from DST to EST in November
- Anticipate the end of Term I when planning assignments and assessments; try not to bury your students or yourself at the end of the term

NOVEMBER/late Fall

- Anticipate the end of Term I when planning assignments and assessments; try not to bury your students or yourself at the end of the term
- Admission tour season begins in earnest—be prepared for brief drop-in visits; *you may be asked to participate in specific events*

- November 1 and 15 are Early Decision application due dates for many colleges—stressed seniors
- Some Varsity fall teams may be in tournaments
- Division plays can mean stressed students, extension requests—be firm but humane; faculty should make a point of attending
- Be alert for special schedules
- Some Upper School winter sports begin practice
- Grandparents and Friends Day means a dog-and-pony show for classes during the visit times; check the schedule and the list of names
- Senior grades are due before any others—***this is extremely urgent, so be ready!***

DECEMBER/between Thanksgiving and December Break

- Term II begins after Thanksgiving break
- First week after Thanksgiving involves comment correction
- Winter sports and afternoon programs begin
- Three very swiftly flowing weeks
- Begin to be alert for snow days—notification via radio, TV, or Internet; local news outlets may offer ways of setting up automatic school-closing messages to your mobile phone
- Plan curriculum so units or projects end at start of December Break
- Some faculty absences for NAIS People of Color Conference (“PoCC”)
- Students hear from Early Decision/Early Action schools—agony and ecstasy
- Be alert for special schedules
- Try to arrange work to minimize your own homework over break
- Holiday-related events of a musical and cultural nature

JANUARY/early Winter

- The long, dark days of winter begin; dreams of snow days begin
- “No Homework” night for juniors on College Night
- Try to get some exercise, find opportunities to be out in sunlight
- School athletic events are cheap entertainment

FEBRUARY/mid Winter

- A busy, busy month—brace yourself!
- Be alert for special schedules
- The end of Term II looms—schedule projects and assignments so as not to bury yourself or your students at the very end of the term
- Numerous student performances—Division plays and concerts—mean lots of rehearsals and student stress; faculty should try to attend some of these—see your advisees, at the least
- Evaluation process ends with reports given to evaluated teachers

MARCH/between end of Term II and Spring Break

- The worst of winter is over, but a long week lies between you and vacation
- Winter sport tournaments may linger into the middle of this
- Set aside time for grades and comments as well as preparing for Term III courses
- First week after exams involves comment correction
- Term III begins
- Spring sports and afternoon programs begin
- Plan curriculum so units or projects end at start of Spring Break; make this a week of real work—don't give up!
- Some admitted students may choose to visit—be prepared

LATE MARCH and APRIL/early Spring

- “No Homework” night on first night of Passover
- Accepted student visiting days—be alert for student and parent/guardian visitors in your classroom and possible special schedules and programs
- Seniors will be gone when you least expect it, visiting colleges to which they have been accepted
- “Prom” will absorb the energies of many students; volunteer chaperones needed, too!
- Spring performances and intensive rehearsals begin—stressed students; attend what you can

MAY/late Spring

- The end is in sight—but hold on tight; insanity seems to reign!
- Begin wrapping up curriculum as end of Term III and year looms
- Reunion—not a command performance for faculty, but graduates enjoy seeing teachers
- Keep Seniors’ feet to the fire with regard to meeting obligations
- Senior grades due
- Advanced Placement examinations—proctors always needed
- The division plays bring delights as well as preoccupied students; sometimes lots of stress, incomplete work—be firm but humane

JUNE/end of school

- Set time aside to correct examinations and complete grades and comments
- Commencement—attendance required
- Grades and comments due
- Pack up classroom materials to make space for summer programs
- Final faculty meetings, required
- End-of-year party

3. ESPECIALLY FOR NEW FACULTY

SERVICES YOU WILL NEED, AND A FEW WORDS TO THE WISE

Here are answers to some questions you might have about [school name] culture and your basic teacherly needs:

- **Information.** Where do you...
- **Official policies.** [School name]'s official policies, procedures, and expectations are published in the Employee Handbook, available online via the "Faculty and Staff Information" site.
- **Calendar.** The all-school calendar is an especially great resource—check it for the specifics of special schedules and other "unusual" days.
- **Parking.** [How, where, special info]
- **"Your" classroom.** This may or may not be YOUR classroom; many teachers share. You should "decorate" in some tasteful and functional way; some supplies for this are available through your department or as a reimbursable purchase. If you share a room, your influence on décor should be more or less proportional to your use level. Be tidy, and expect to use the faculty room or a department office as your work area if you are among the many teachers who "hot desk" classrooms.
- **Coffee and snacks.** Coffee and hot water for tea or cocoa are available [when and where]
- **Lunch.** Lunch is available [when and where]
- **Exercise.** Faculty members have been known to go for a run during a free period or at the end of the day. Sign out if you go during the day. The fitness equipment in the Athletic Center is accessible to teachers during afternoon program time. If you would like to try to make a special arrangement, see the Director of Athletics.
Some reductions in health-club membership [maybe??]
- **Health care.** If you need aspirin, acetaminophen, or the like during the school day, check [when and where]
[if] A certified athletic trainer is on the staff who may be able to offer some advice after 1:00 P.M. through the end of the afternoon program, when not engaged with students.
In the event of a medical emergency, in the absence of the nurse notify an administrator IMMEDIATELY and arrange to have emergency services (911) notified if this is warranted. Teachers should not move or transport an injured student. **See the protocol for contacting 911 in the [wherever this exists].**
Coaches will receive special instructions regarding medical situations that may arise during practices and games.
The use of the school's Epi-pens (for serious allergic reactions) and automatic defibrillator will be explained by the nurse.

- **Snow days and delayed starts. [Is there an??]** another active method of informing faculty, staff, and students of school closings or delays related to weather. News of such occurrences is immediately posted on the school website and on the email and phone systems, but you can also check the local television news stations and their websites.
- **Mail, phone calls, and faxes.** All teachers have mailboxes in the [place] ... If you have outgoing mail, there are boxes in the mail room behind to the reception desk. We can't expect the school to meter our letters, but you can make arrangements to send UPS or FedEx packages from school; if sending a personal FedEx, make sure it is clear that you are sending it as personal and the business office will track you down when the invoice comes in. Incidentally, neither FedEx nor UPS nor the Postal Service delivers when school is closed, so plan accordingly if you are expecting something urgent.

You have a voicemail address, and you should set your message and then plan to check voicemail at least daily on school days; the Tech Department can configure your voicemail to forward to your school e-mail. **Remember, 24 school-day hours is the promised response time to families.**

The school fax number is [xxx-xxx-xxxx]. You can send outgoing faxes [**when and where**]; be sure to use the log. Incoming faxes will find their way into your mailbox in the regular sorting of snail mail, so if you are expecting an urgent fax let [**who?**] know and s/he will try to make sure you learn of its arrival sooner rather than later. *Because faxes have to travel through the building in the normal course of their arriving in your hands, do not assume that contents will be confidential.*

- **Events.** You will be invited to certain events during the school year, and other events will beckon. Few school events outside the school day are “command performances.” You can always ask around to find out the protocol for attendance.

There are events you will want to attend: plays or performances that involve your advisees or many of your students; some athletic events—it is nice to see your advisees and students play at least once during each season; art show openings involving advisees or students; the end-of-the-year party, which includes the “official” farewells to departing faculty and staff.

Other events—parties, parent-run evening events—are optional, although if you are a “key” person you might be expected to appear at certain ones. Spouses and significant others are almost always welcome at non-school day events, but there is no expectation of attendance.

- **Forms.** There is a supply of various forms [**when and where**]. If you need a form that is not there or wonder whether there might be a form for some particular purpose, check with [**who**].
- **Teaching supplies. [WHEN, HOW, WHERE; procedures]**
- **Technology. [WHEN, HOW, WHERE; procedures]**

Remember that Macs may require a special adaptor (“dongle”) to work with the school’s LCD projectors, ...

See your department head if what you need is not readily available [**WHEN, HOW, WHERE; procedures**] be able to help you locate more arcane equipment (e.g., overhead projectors).

The school will provide you with a laptop computer.

- **Help Desk.** Technology help is available in person **[WHEN, HOW, WHERE; procedures]**
- **Maintenance services.** Maintenance requests—regarding breakage, light-bulb replacement, and set-up requests for events, typically—should be made **[WHEN, HOW, WHERE; procedures]** In a maintenance emergency
- **Library.** Think of the library as a real ACADEMIC resource. The very knowledgeable staff are eager to help teachers with almost anything with regard to curriculum and research; don't be shy about asking them for help. They will also happily provide orientation to your students as well as great and very specific instruction in the research process.
- **Building nomenclature.** We should try to be consistent among ourselves as to what we call the spaces on our campus.
[local details]
- **Field trips and transportation of students.** Plan field trips far ahead. **[WHEN, HOW, WHERE; procedures]**
In general, plan field trips to coincide with your class and surrounding free or community time; students should not be forced to miss classes for field trips. Your department head can help you plan effective trips.
- **School vehicles.** Teachers wishing to use a school van should make arrangements to receive the prerequisite training, and they must have a valid state driver's license. Arrangements for driver training can be made **[WHEN, HOW, WHERE; procedures]**
[IS THIS TRUE AT YOUR SCHOOL] Students may be driven in a teacher's car, although teachers should be aware that their own insurance obtains in such situations. Caution is recommended when transporting students, and all laws regarding seat-belt use, etc., must be observed scrupulously. If you are not comfortable doing it, don't.
On any off-campus excursion, remind students that they represent the school and that school rules apply—all the things your teachers told you. If you want to set some ground rules—and you should—inform students before the trip begins. Have students stay together on any trip, and count them often. If you don't have a mobile phone, borrow one (see the business office) and make sure you have the school phone numbers at hand.
- **Odds and ends you should know:**
 - **[IF TRUE]** The school benefits program includes partner benefits.
 - You can send a student to the nurse's office **[WHEN, HOW, WHERE; procedures]** but no student should be allowed to leave school for health reasons without being processed through ...
 - The building opens early in the morning—you can be at work by **[WHEN]**—and stays open into the evening. There are frequent evening events that last until after nine. On weekends just before the end of a term the building is sometimes opened so teachers can work.
 - Wherever possible and always with "official" mailings or publications, no document should leave the building for family or public consumption without its having been carefully proofread. There are preferred and official formats as well as official fonts for certain kinds of documents. Check with t**[WHEN, HOW, WHERE; procedures]**

- ***As a corollary, e-mails to families or that otherwise represent the school should conform to standard usage with regard to capitalization and punctuation; professionalism matters.***
- If something is going on with a student that makes you worried or uncomfortable with regard to behavior or comments about family or social life, take your concerns to a member of the counseling department ***as soon as possible; if the issue represents possible danger to the student or others, do this IMMEDIATELY.***
 - If you a student seems to be asking you to be his or her therapist, do NOT take on that role, and check in with a counselor as soon as possible.

4. HOW TO DO THE WORK WELL

ON BOUNDARIES—GENERAL THOUGHTS ON SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Teachers' primary role is to support our students' development and success through our teaching, our advising, and our conversations and relationships with their teachers, coaches, advisors, and—above all—their families.

As simple as this seems, this work can sometimes become very complex, and at times we are invited into conversations as part of our professional relationships that take us outside our comfort zones. A few principles should stand to help us all through our work:

- We are teachers, not counselors, and it is not our role to pass judgment on student or family decisions related to a student's medical or psychological situation. Our job is to help the student and family through the challenges they face and to support the decisions that they have made. If you as a teacher strongly question such a decision, take your concern to the **[School Counselor]** or to a member of the administration.
- When information is shared with you that makes you uncomfortable personally or that may indicate that a student or someone else is at physical or psychological risk, **IMMEDIATELY** take that concern to the **[School Counselor]** or a member of the administration.
- Do not make promises of confidentiality, non-action, or action to a student or a parent or guardian if you feel that you may need to share information with the **[School Counselor]** or a member of the administration so as to act in the best interest of the child. There may even be situations in which you have to break such a promise in order to fulfill your legally (and ethically) mandated role as a designated caretaker of children. **IF TRUE: State law defines the concept of "at risk" broadly, and so check with the School Counselor or a member of the administration if you have any doubts or concerns about a particular student or situation.**
- We are not our students' (or their parents' or guardians') friends, however close, positive, and cordial our relations with some of these may be. In the end it is our duty to act in the interest of the student, and so to invite or promise to hold confidences about the personal lives of students is to cross a boundary between professional good judgment and unprofessional or even actionable behavior. If you have concerns about any issue in your relationship with students or their families, take these concerns to the **[School Counselor]** or a member of the administration; at the very least, discuss such concerns with a trusted and experienced colleague who can offer you proper guidance.

Above all, as a teacher you should never let a specific concern or situation make you feel alone. Even if you feel you may have erred, it is important to proactively and forthrightly address any situation that arises. Maintaining professional boundaries is one of the most crucial parts of being a professional and a member of the school community. We are all in this together, and we can help and support each other through even the most challenging of circumstances.

CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT, [SCHOOL NAME] STYLE—THE BASICS

[HERE IS THE PLACE TO TALK ABOUT THE SCHOOL’S PHILOSOPHIES OF CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY, AND ASSESSMENT]

- Effective assessment asks students to demonstrate their understanding of important material by asking students to perform meaningful, worthy tasks that display that understanding; such tasks are known as “authentic” assessment—the tasks have real meaning to students.
- “Assess what is valued, and value what is assessed.” The point of assessment, obviously, is to provide students with meaningful feedback on their performance and on their level of understanding. Evaluating (grading) student work should first and foremost be about giving students information that will help them improve subsequent performance.
Rubrics. Grading rubrics are highly recommended as a way for teachers to give students specific information about aspects of performance, both the level of achievement and the nature of the learning being evaluated.
- Effective assessment involves a balance of strategies, with tests and quizzes focusing on content and basic skill material; deeper understanding and application should be assessed by more complex and open-ended assessment techniques such as essays, projects, multi-genre work, debates, and Socratic Seminars. Multimode or multi-genre (e.g., presentation + paper + visual aid + discussion) assessments are especially powerful as learning tools, although they require considerable planning and monitoring by the teacher.
- Assessment should be viewed as a trajectory in which types of assessment are keyed to the level of understanding being measured. Useful tools for developing this kind of “trajectory” are those based on Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomy of Educational Objectives in the Cognitive Domain.
- In the interest of exposing students to a variety of assessment types, most teachers should assign a major assessment during each term.
- Collaborative projects, though complex to organize and manage, are extremely powerful learning tools. (Teachers wishing to design such projects may consult with their department chair or any of several veteran faculty members; the school can supply teachers with an excellent model for designing work-equitable collaborative projects.)
- The necessary sequel to assessment is evaluation, or grading. Grading at **[SCHOOL NAME, then how it actually works—system, etc.]**. Grades should be meaningful to students as a source of feedback on performance, but a grade should never be considered as a single point of reference; a student’s grades should reflect the context of what is being assessed and how a range of assessments are incorporated into the overall framework of the course. (See “General Thoughts on Grading,” p. xxxx.)
Grade books. There are many ways for teachers to keep grade books. The critical thing to remember when setting up a grade book is to enable the accurate and timely

recording of pertinent information about the substance as well as the quality of student learning.

Spreadsheets. *It is also important that teachers recognize the limitations of “grading” and of grade books. Even the most obsessively precise record-keeping systems are in fact largely subjective. Spreadsheets and other similar methods of grade calculation present the user with information that is only as “objective” and “accurate” as the evaluation of each piece of work; do not be deceived or deceive students into believing that a spreadsheet grade is “objective.”*

- The thoughtful development of curriculum is a hallmark of teaching. Teachers looking for guidance or additional professional development in this area should consult with **[WHO, WHEN, HOW, procedures]**.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT HOMEWORK

Students should be trained to view time spent on homework as a regular, scheduled obligation built into the structure of each academic course they take—just as is time in the classroom. Nightly assignments and long-range projects should be presented as necessary preparation for effective class work, and as essential for the achievement of course goals. Teachers can help students learn how to allocate time for assignments by detailing homework expectations well in advance and by helping students plan long-range assignments. Advisors can play an important role in helping students to schedule their week’s work in all subjects, and, as necessary, productively communicate deficiencies to parents.

[WHAT FOLLOWS IS VERY SCHOOL SPECIFIC AND SHOULD BE MODIFIED AS APPROPRIATE]

Each department or grade level has, and should have, some discretion in setting the amount of work expected in a particular class or subject, or by a particular student. In the Upper School the following guidelines should be adhered to generally: in a typical course each nightly assignment should be formulated so as not to exceed 60 minutes for the average student in that class to complete. Our goal is to keep students challenged and engaged in their classes by providing varied types of assignments requiring students’ time, thought, and care. Homework assignments for Advanced courses will be longer by necessity, and that additional responsibility must be clearly specified in the course prospectus.

In the Middle School, 6th graders should expect 20–30 minutes per class, 7th graders should expect 30 minutes per class, and 8th graders 30–40 minutes per class.

The school’s policy is not to give homework over religious holidays or to give especially burdensome assignments over long school vacations. Students should certainly feel free to use vacation time for individual enrichment, for remedial work, or for correcting deficiencies noted in warning reports.

The prospectus for each course should include an explicit and detailed statement of the

teacher's policies and expectations concerning homework.

HOW TO DEVELOP STUDENT ASSIGNMENTS

School policy is that students should always have at least a week's homework assignments in hand at any given time. The basic requirement is that teachers produce for students a written assignment sheet that specifies work to be done and due dates. Teachers should post information on their class site, either as a message or a downloadable document.

Good assignment sheets (and effective assignments) do not have to be complicated. They should specify the work to be done, the materials to be used, and the date on which work is due. Specific guidelines as to expectations for length, quality, or required elements should be included as appropriate.

For students working on long-term projects it is extremely helpful and important that teachers be as specific as possible in spelling out interim steps or stages. The publication of specific nightly goals or expectations help students manage their time as well as helping to forestall the disastrous situation in which a student has waited too long to complete a project even though there were nights "when I didn't have any homework"—in other words, nights when the student should have been working away at the project but did not. (Specification of interim steps is also useful for families, who may otherwise wonder why their child seems to have little or no homework at times.) Clearly, older students should require less guidance of this sort than younger students.

The development of assignments for a particular unit of study should incorporate the principles of effective curriculum and assessment design laid out in the section on Curriculum & Assessment, above.

ASSESSING STUDENT LEARNING

[WHAT FOLLOWS IS VERY SCHOOL SPECIFIC AND SHOULD BE MODIFIED AS APPROPRIATE]

One of the key characteristics of a [school name] teacher is a passion for being reflective and thoughtful in our approach to teaching. To this end, assessment (and, subsequently, grading) is extremely important and our philosophy about this complex term must be unified. What follows is a summary for people new to our school of our approach to assessment and grading. This is just the beginning; you must be willing to follow up with discussion and debate with your colleagues. It is important that our faculty use the best pedagogical practices related to

assessment, communicates with a common language, and works with an ever-increasing clarity of purpose.

The overarching purpose of our classes is to help our students develop their capacity for critical understanding. As you would in planning any course, begin thinking of assessment by asking some essential questions:

“What is the purpose of assessment?” Assessment has two purposes. Some assessments are designed to measure understanding, while others are intended to develop understanding. In both cases, assessment allows students to demonstrate what they have understood thus far and for teachers to decide whether and how to alter their class plans to improve future learning.

“What is the purpose of grades?” Grades are a method of briefly communicating a student’s understanding. They are extremely limited in that they cannot on their own communicate the full story of a student’s achievements. One thing is for certain: *a grade should not be a punishment or a reward.*

It is important to reconsider these essential questions periodically to ensure that our decisions regarding assessment and grading are pedagogically sound. Take a moment right now—think of a time in your own learning experience when you were given an assignment that you felt truly allowed you to demonstrate how much you knew. Think of a time when a teacher gave you an assignment that was especially poor at gauging what you understood. Now think about a time when you received a grade that you knew did not accurately reflect your understanding of the course material. Just as we do not need to teach the way that others have taught before us, we do not need to grade and assess in the same ways, either—especially if those ways ultimately do not support our pedagogical goals.

VARYING ASSESSMENT

Varying assessment takes two distinct forms.

- First, make sure that students have many different opportunities to demonstrate understanding. Traditional tests and quizzes are obvious, but consider all the other ways that allow you to assess a student and all the possibilities for what a “test” or “exam” might look like: class work, group work, discussions, skits, problem sets, projects, oral work, visual work, written work, etc.
- Second, use both *formative* and *summative* assessments in your course. *Formative assessments* help students to develop their understanding. They are quick and give immediate feedback to the student and the teacher. The student finds out where he may be falling short in time to do something about it, and the teacher finds out where he needs to adjust his approach to the material. Strictly speaking, formative assessments should not affect the final Performance grade, and they should be helpful in measuring Progress. *Summative assessments* are meant to judge a student’s understanding at a given moment in time. Most obviously, these are unit

exams and final exams. There will be times when an assessment feels like it is both summative and formative, when it seems to be measuring a variety of things. There are, understandably, gray areas, and that's okay.

DATA- AND EVIDENCE-GATHERING

Reflective grades are based on robust data (quantitative & qualitative). Find or create easy ways to gather and record that data. (Some folks around the school have neat approaches that might work for you; ask around.) You can use words, symbols, numbers, etc. You can use spiral notebooks, Word, Excel, Post-Its, etc. But whatever you do, create a system that allows you to gather AND interpret a lot of data. The point is not to create more work for you, but to gather enough information to make informed and defensible judgments about your students.

GRADING

These recommendations concerning how we grade assessments are based on the belief that a grade is a tool for communication rather than punishment or reward.

- First, do not assume that whatever your grade book program spits out as a final grade is what ought to be a student's grade. It is nice to have these tools to alleviate some calculation, but they should never replace your own thoughtfulness and understanding of a student and his or her story in your course.
- Second, do not assume that averaging a student's scores is the best way to arrive at his or her grade. This goes along with the first point. Don't let the "math" replace your own common sense and professional judgment. Experiment with multiple methods of calculation. Maybe taking the median would be a better reflection of that student's understanding in your course. Or maybe taking another approach to her grade would best communicate her performance. Have a *pedagogical reason* for why you do what you do with your grades—not just because it is what has always been done.
- Third, avoid giving zeros at all costs. In fact, if you can, eliminate them all together. This, historically, has been a controversial recommendation. Generally, a grade of zero is primarily used as a severe form of punishment rather than a helpful evaluation tool. On a test, a zero communicates that *nothing* was understood (a very unlikely situation), when in fact the student may have neglected to make up a test or other work missed due to absence. Additionally, in a traditional grading scheme, a zero will skew an averaged grade disproportionately downward. Any situation in which you initially feel justified in giving a zero is likely to be a situation in which the student needs to be called to responsibility—but this must be done outside the realm of the grade as much as possible. The grade is meant to reflect a student's understanding, which cannot be fairly judged on the basis of no work. The comment is the place for pointing out a student's poor habits.
- Fourth, consider dropping extreme grades. This is not unusual; teachers often offer to drop the lowest test score. But maybe the highest score should be dropped, too. The reasoning behind this recommendation is based in the assumption that anything outside the student's normal results might be an anomaly. (This invites the question:

How do we justify this recommendation in conjunction with the others above? It always comes down to understanding our students well. You are not required to drop all extreme grades or never to average a student's scores, but you are required to be thoughtful about what you do choose to do, always keeping in mind that a grade is a reflection of understanding.) As always, consult your department chair about departmental policies.

CURRENTLY...

The discussion of assessment and grading at **[SCHOOL NAME]** is ongoing. If any of the above requirements or recommendations seems odd, talk about it with your department head and others. Talk about it even if it doesn't seem odd! Assessment and grading are difficult and are bound to raise questions and concerns. As well they should be when you think of what it's all about—a teacher's professional judgment.

Many conversations at **[SCHOOL NAME]** are focusing on how to weight the roles that Performance and Process should play in a final grade. Should more weight (and how much?) be given to Performance and Process in the younger grades while Product reigns supreme in the older grades? Both divisions, but particularly the Upper School, have been working to redesign the grade report and comment form to better accommodate the language of assessment.

RESOURCES

There are some excellent professional resources on assessment and grading, and your department chair can guide you to many of these. Along with almost anything written by Grant Wiggins or published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development on the subjects, *Fair Isn't Always Equal* by Rick Wormeli (Stenhouse, 2006) and *How to Grade for Learning* by Ken O'Connor (Corwin, 2002) have informed many of our discussions on assessment and evaluation.

SOME GENERAL THOUGHTS ON GRADING

[WHAT FOLLOWS IS VERY SCHOOL SPECIFIC AND SHOULD BE MODIFIED AS APPROPRIATE]

IN THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

The middle school grading system offers a special opportunity to educate students about the **[SCHOOL NAME]** grading system by which they will be evaluated for the next seven years. It is the goal of this philosophy to minimize student anxiety surrounding grades and allow students to truly focus on their learning and on the actual work, not on the grade. In the sixth grade it is the goal of the teachers to use a narrative rubric so that students and parents are introduced to how assessments are made. Rather than using traditional grades, the sixth-grade rubric is based on narrative comments. Merit, proficient work, approaching proficient work, and beginning to

approach proficient work will be used to represent various categories of standards by which work is assessed. In seventh and eighth grades teachers use a traditional grading system (A, B, C, D, NP), teaching the students to look carefully at the narrative comments and incorporate them into goals for each term. Term grades in the middle school are not cumulative. Full-year grades are not computed.

IN THE UPPER SCHOOL

1. Grades in the Upper School range from A, A-, ... to D, D-, NP (not passing).
2. Where given, term examination results should be recorded as letter, not numerical, grades. The relative weight of a term examination is determined within departments. The relative weight of the examination should be noted in the prospectus of each course distributed to students some time in the first two weeks of the term.
3. Year averages are not computed for term courses within a single department. For example, a year grade would not be determined in English for a senior taking an elective each term. However, in cases when a student switches a section or a teacher within the same course at the term, an average of the two term marks, determined in conjunction with the Department Head, will represent the year grade. In such cases the exams at the end of the term will be computed into the term, not the year averages, unless specifically determined otherwise by the Department Head.
4. An evaluation of effort of the preceding marking period is noted on a four-element scale on the comment form. (See "How to Determine Effort Grades," p. xxxx.)
5. The automated comment system provides appropriate headings for students, courses, sections, and grades. Problems or inconsistencies should be reported to the

HOW TO CREATE INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGING COURSE WORK

The characteristics of intellectually challenging work do not vary greatly from grade to grade or discipline to discipline. The intellectual challenge for *teachers* is to ensure that all course work inspires students to use the maximum amount of intellectual power and to develop habits of mind like precision, empathy, intellectual curiosity, consideration of multiple points of view, and optimism.

Here are some of the characteristics of intellectually challenging course work:

INTELLECTUAL QUALITY AND DEMANDS OF REQUIRED WORK

- Questions of high intellectual quality are posed to students
- Deep and detailed analysis is a regular feature of work
- Different ways of learning and knowing are recognized and utilized
- Texts are carefully selected to expand student capacity
- Proficiency in different modes of expression is required and evaluated

- Students have opportunities in the curriculum for creative problem-solving and expression
- Students have opportunities in the curriculum to learn and to apply learning in authentic contexts

PURPOSES OF ASSIGNED WORK

- Homework is used as tool to strengthen understanding
- Scale and frequency of reading and writing assignments are based on clear teaching/learning objectives
- Tests and quizzes are about measuring and solidifying learning and understanding
- Major projects are connected to clear teaching and learning objectives

STANDARDS—GRADING AND FEEDBACK

- Detailed, precise, and prescriptive feedback is given to students as work is evaluated
- Frequency of evaluation of work and of overall performance is timely and appropriate
- Students are asked to respond to feedback by demonstrating improvement to ensure mastery
- A clear and informative grading system is used
- The teacher responds in a meaningful way to student underperformance

RECOGNITION OF DISTINCTIVE CAPACITY/INTEREST

- Students have opportunities to pursue topics based on interest and affinity
- Students have opportunities to learn and to demonstrate knowledge beyond school walls

STRENGTHENING/REMEDIATION OF RECOGNIZED DEFICIENCY OR WEAKNESS

- The teacher recognizes and responds to multiple learning styles and strengths
- The teacher distinguishes deficiencies in background from issues of ability or learning style

Developmental appropriateness, of course, applies to each of these, as do basic stipulations as to the overall objectives for a course—that algebra students, for example, should master the skills of the level of the course in which they are enrolled. That should go without saying, but we will say it anyhow.

**[IF THE SCHOOL REQUIRES OR SUGGESTS THESE]
HOW TO WRITE A COURSE PROSPECTUS**

What is a course prospectus?

A course prospectus is a brief descriptive document outlining the overall goals and content of a course and the teacher's expectations for students. The prospectus is made available online to students and families at the beginning of the year.

The idea is to provide clear, unambiguous information on such things as readings and grading policies for students and families.

Basic organization (confining your prospectus single sheet is good):

<p>COURSE NAME Teacher name</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>COURSE PROSPECTUS, 2012–13</u></p> <p><u>OVERVIEW</u> This course will ...</p> <p>Significant course goals include ...</p> <p><u>TEXTS and MATERIALS</u> Readings for the course will include ... Other texts will be ...</p> <p><u>ASSESSMENTS</u> Students will read and write regularly and often. There will be tests and quizzes Non-traditional assessments may include Graded assignments are weighted The final examination ... Up to <i>n</i>% of a student's grade will be based on class participation, which will include</p> <p>[If appropriate]<u>HONORS</u> Students who elect to take the course at the Honors level can expect</p> <p><u>STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES</u> Each student should come to class each day</p> <p>Most importantly, Extra help</p>

If your department has set policies on late or missing work or on other questions that should be clear to students, these should be attached to the prospectus.

See the sample, next page. The sections on assessment and Student Responsibilities are essentially boilerplate; please feel free to cut and paste. Your department or mentor may have better ideas.

ENGLISH 10

T. Teacher

COURSE PROSPECTUS, 2012–13

OVERVIEW

This course will introduce students to the formal study of American literature, including novels, shorter fiction, poetry, non-fiction, images, film, and key documents. The course will address the following essential questions:

- ◆ *How does literature embody national character and national ideals?*
- ◆ *How does literature serve to question and challenge a society?*
- ◆ *What makes a certain body of literature “American”?*

Significant course goals include having students develop their fluency and skill in reading comprehension, interpretation, and analysis and develop their skills in expository and analytical writing. Course content will also include formal study of grammar, usage, and vocabulary.

TEXTS

Readings for the course will include novels by Cather (as summer reading), Kerouac, Hawthorne, Chopin, Morrison, Owen, and Fitzgerald, longer non-fiction by Thoreau and Douglass, and significant amounts of poetry and short fiction. Other texts will be the AMSCO *Vocabulary for the College-Bound Student* (1993) and the current edition of the *MLA Handbook*.

ASSESSMENTS

Students will read and write regularly. There will be tests and quizzes as appropriate to the material being studied. Non-traditional assessments may include oral presentations, hands-on projects, visual and audio presentations, and work portfolios. Graded assignments are weighted in approximate relation to their length and degree of difficulty. The final examination (which will count for 20% of the course grade) will be the major assessment in the second term. Up to 15% of a student’s grade will be based on class participation, including punctuality, active listening, and collaboration.

HONORS

Students who elect to take the course at the Honors level can expect to have major assignments differentiated in terms of degree of conceptual or analytical difficulty. Honors students are expected to engage more deeply with course material and to play a significant role in class discussion and collaborative exercises.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Each student should come to class each day with her or his notebook, the text from which the day’s assignment has been drawn, and a pen or pencil. Problems with completing assignments should be discussed *before* the work is to be handed in. It is an expectation of the course that students CHECK THEIR SCHOOL E-MAIL DAILY as well as looking at the course site.

Most importantly, each student should strive to take an active interest and play an active role in this course and its material. Students are encouraged to raise questions about the material being studied and to ask for assistance or clarification whenever difficulties of understanding arise. Extra help is always available by appointment.

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR GOOGLE CALENDARS AND CLASS WEBSITES

REQUIRE

HOW TO FIND STUDENT INFORMATION

STUDENT SCHEDULES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Student schedules and contact information can be found **[WHERE, HOW]**

TEACHER SCHEDULES AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Teacher class lists and schedules can be found **[WHERE, HOW]**

PERMANENT FILES

Students' permanent files can be found **[WHERE, HOW]**

Student file contents are confidential in the extreme; under no circumstances should the contents be shared. Files should not leave the **[WHERE]** office, although academic administrators or members of the counseling department may sign files out.

It is expected that you will review the files of your new advisees each year and especially to make yourself familiar with a student's learning profile or any educational or psychological evaluations before meeting with the student and/or the student's parent(s) or guardian(s).

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH FAMILIES: E-MAIL AND VOICEMAIL

There are times when teachers are asked to respond via e-mail to questions about students. Whether this request comes from a family, an advisor, an administrator, or a teacher, one needs to be thoughtful and careful when preparing any comment on a student's behavior or performance via e-mail.

First of all, the school's policy is that **teachers will respond to any family communication in any medium within 24 hours on school days**. This goes for voicemail and even written notes as well as e-mail.

Teachers sending written check-in information to an advisor, an administrator, or a teacher should assume that their words will somehow end up directly in front of the family's eyes. The

medium, after all, is e-mail, and things happen. Therefore, write as if you were composing directly for the family: be clear, be honest, be direct, include evidence, but avoid little judgments or flippancies that might not be perceived as entirely helpful by the family. Be very circumspect in your references to your own emotional or mental state; better still, avoid the subject. It would be especially helpful if you could add prescriptive advice for improvement in the student's performance.

If you are responding to a question from a family or if you are an advisor gathering check-in reports to send to a student's home, edit where you need to, or summarize and categorize where you see opportunities to do so in a way that you think would be helpful. Assist your colleagues, and make your own job easier, by tempering, rephrasing, or otherwise exerting a calming and positive editorial hand on language or content that you think might not be helpful.

The point of communicating about students is to be helpful, of course, and all of our communication, and especially communication in writing, should be scrupulously correct and professional.

One last thing: Punctuation, capitalization, and spelling matter. Errors will occur, but try hard to avoid them.

HOW TO HOLD EFFECTIVE PARENT/GUARDIAN CONFERENCES

WHAT FAMILIES WANT TO KNOW:

- **Do you really know my child?**
- **Is my child doing the work?**
- **Is my child behaving properly?**
- **What is my child doing well?**
- **What can my child do to improve?**

DO

- lay out copies of your progress reports in the order the families will come
- **keep to the time schedule**
- review and have nearby the students' learning profiles to avoid putting your foot in your mouth
- **have a notebook and a pen near at hand so you can write things down either during or just after the meeting**
- have your gradebook at hand (but not necessarily open in your lap; it's about the student, not just the grades)
- **ASK QUESTIONS about the student: interests, passions, outside reading choices. This is YOUR chance to find out about the student, which is one of the most important things you do**
- show student work if you have it at hand and if it illustrates what you have to say

- **be positive and upbeat; show the parents that you know and like their child. The conference may be the occasion on which you learn the crucial thing about the student that really helps you to appreciate her or him**
- be ready to respond to the “What else can we do at home to help?” question—you will probably hear this often, because they WANT to help

DON'T

- shoot yourself in the foot by talking about class issues—behavior, size, your own control
- **discuss other students, ESPECIALLY by name**
- deliver bad surprises if the news should have gone home earlier
- **deliver diagnoses as if you were the child’s psychologist—but don’t be afraid to DESCRIBE behavior, either**
- be afraid to politely put someone off who comes at an unscheduled time
- **forget to ask if there is anything else the family thinks you could do to help**
- assume that the people you are meeting with are either birth parents or married; some students have guardians or are adopted, and some parents are divorced but come to conferences together
- **be afraid to discontinue a difficult meeting and suggest a reschedule with an administrator present**
- forget to enjoy yourself

HOW TO INVIGILATE (that’s British English for “supervise a test”)

Basic instructions for giving examinations or tests:

- Make your room an examination center: arrange desks and chairs for comfort and security, give yourself a path to move around the room; erase or remove materials that might aid students.
- Set an examination tone: use your “proctoring voice” to announce the ground rules relating to time (see below); talking (none, on pain of being removed and the examination result nullified); bathroom trips (raise your hand and wait to be excused); out-of-seat experiences (none, other than bathroom). Make it clear that you will come to the seat of a student with a question, not the other way around. You should be the pencil sharpener, not the student.
- **(FOR EXAMINATIONS) Be aware of the time. Start and end promptly, on a clear verbal signal.**
- See to it that desks are clear of distractions/security risks. Some students may have pens, crystals, magic animals, or whatever, and you must decide what’s okay. Water bottles seem to be de rigueur these days, but soda is not okay. FOR EXAMINATIONS: Small candy that can be consumed without noisy unwrapping is probably okay; Snickers bars are questionable.
- After the examination starts, move around the room to assure yourself that students are working on the right test and that there are no suspicious piles of paper or other

possible security risks on or near desks. Keep yourself up and visible throughout the test; even if you have work to do, place yourself so that a quick raising of your head will enable you to scan the entire room. Be alert for raised hands. Stop your work and make a circuit of the room every few minutes; the more often you do this, the less of a distraction it is, and you can be sure that you are being suitably diligent in your supervision.

- One person at a time in the bathroom should be the rule.
- If you need to make a general announcement, make some kind of preliminary statement to get students' attention before you get to the point you need to make: "I'm sorry, but I need to interrupt you for a moment. Please pause what you're doing. Now, in Question 7 ..."
- Be sure to time the test so that it can be finished in the allotted time; for security reasons, it is not a good idea to allow students to return later to finish a test, although sometimes it may be unavoidable. For students with extended time, you will need to consider this carefully and make whatever arrangements are most likely to both support the students' accommodation and maintain test security
- When students are finished, have them put all papers and bluebooks together in a packet. You should note the time of each student leaves the examination on the test itself; this is useful later when writing comments for extended-time students and to note when students might have rushed through their work.
- Keep the room quiet and in "examination mode" until the last student has left.

These rules are not about trust, but rather about setting a serious tone for a serious undertaking. Students appreciate the quiet space created by setting a formal tone.

Every teacher should make a point of proctoring a major standardized test from time to time; it is a valuable learning experience and one that helps you learn the essence of proctoring technique.

[IF THE SCHOOL USES THESE] HOW TO DETERMINE EFFORT GRADES

Here is some language around levels of observable effort:

SUPERIOR—Student's observable effort significantly succeeds teacher expectations in most or all of the following areas: work process as assigned, completion of assigned work, care in following directions, use of opportunities for extra help or support, initiative in the use of supplemental materials, and use of class time (as distinguishable from "class participation").

EFFECTIVE—Student's observable effort is in line with teacher expectations in the following areas: work process as assigned, completion of assigned work, care in following directions, use of opportunities for extra help or support, and use of class time (as distinguishable from "class participation").

INCONSISTENT— Student’s observable effort meets teacher expectations inconsistently in one or more of the following areas: work process as assigned, completion of assigned work, care in following directions, use of opportunities for extra help or support, and use of class time (as distinguishable from “class participation”).

POOR—Student’s observable effort is significantly deficient in several or more of the following areas: work process as assigned, completion of assigned work, care in following directions, use of opportunities for extra help or support, and use of class time (as distinguishable from “class participation”).

In determining a student’s effort the key word is “observable”—as correct as you might be, it is not always easy to evaluate the amount of effort that has gone into a completed piece of work. If you are convinced that a student is not working up to his or her potential, find as many ways as possible to gather accurate data on your supposition.

The use of rubrics can also help a teacher break down aspects of complex projects to help evaluate specific aspects of the work—the sloppy collage with conceptually good content may be an example of poor effort, but it is hard to know for certain. Establish a rubric category for “neatness” or “craftsmanship,” and evaluate poorly in that category; no judgment on actual “effort” is necessary

HOW TO WRITE EFFECTIVE COMMENTS

WHAT PARENTS/GUARDIANS WANT TO KNOW:

- **Do you really know my child?**
- **Is my child doing the work?**
- **Is my child behaving properly?**
- **What is my child doing well?**
- **What can my child do to improve?**

THINK PERFORMANCE (how the student has done), PROCESS (how well the student has mastered the skills of doing), and PROGRESS (how the student’s mastery has changed over time relative to expectations)!!

GOOD COMMENT WORDS AND PHRASES:

consistent but give it a context: *consistently late, consistent effort, consistent level of achievement; never just a consistent student*

reticent but not *reticent to speak*; reticent implies that

demonstrate as in *“her term paper demonstrated her mastery of...”*

competence and confidence (a wonderful pair, but go easy with them)

fine although this word means “very good” (as a stamp or coin) to me, it can mean “just adequate” to someone else; use cautiously

diligent

passionate

hard-working

mastery

thoughtful

eager

engaged

challenging

active participant in discussion

intellectually curious

active listener

creative

as shown by

anxious to please, eager to please

haphazard

(more) attentive (to directions)

shoddy

difficulties with

reluctant

conceptual material, abstract material,

tentative

concrete material

Stay away from words that imply something about a child’s emotional state or innate ability: average, brilliant, neurotic. But don’t be afraid to say that you have seen evidence of anxiety, tiredness, or distractedness (**but make sure you’ve read anything that may be in the student’s file, which may refer to these**).

If you are reporting catastrophe, it had better not come as a surprise in your comment:

“Pollyanna seems to have skipped a number of classes” or “Pollyanna has done almost none of the assigned work this term” or “I am concerned that Pollyanna seems to have lost a great deal of weight since the year began.” Messages like these should have been conveyed *viva voce* a long time ago. Then you can say it again, but start with, “As we discussed on the telephone recently...” Then say something specific about how you are addressing the dire situation.

Sometimes one finds oneself with a theme for a set of comments: how the kids listen to one another, performance on a particular kind of work that seems especially revealing, whether students have begun to find their individual voices, or how they have demonstrated some aspect of intellectual curiosity, growth, or maturity.

Some of the best comments reveal very clearly the classroom culture of the teacher. Mentions of active listening and specific kinds of contributions to class discussion reveal a room rich in discussion. References to students’ performance as partners demonstrate that collaborative/cooperative learning is going on. Comments can reflect what matters to you about the learning that goes on in your classroom, and how is each kid doing with regard to this special value. It’s okay to have values.

Don't sell yourself out: "Pollyanna is often a leader when the class becomes disruptive." Don't advertise class problems to parents, as this reflects badly on you.

Don't compare students: "Pollyanna is one of the few truly able students in this class." But praise is good: "Pollyanna brings a sparkling intellect to our discussions each day."

Do express surprise (positive or negative) or delight, but don't make it sound as though you had held low expectations: "Pollyanna surprised me with an examination that revealed effective review," but not "Pollyanna did much better than I might have expected" UNLESS you continue on "considering the haphazard way she had prepared for several earlier quizzes."

The rule of thumb should be that what you write about the student should never be shorter than what you write about the course.

Don't predict, unless you qualify: "Based on the progress she has made thus far, I would expect that Pollyanna will finish this course on a very positive note." NOT, "I know that Pollyanna will finish in the A range this year."

Acknowledge learning issues, but not as a negative factor: "Certain types of questions on the examination were a challenge for Pollyanna, but she grappled successfully with categories of problems that had nearly defeated her when she first encountered them." Or even, "Problems requiring reasoning from the general to the specific can be a challenge for Pollyanna, but [what you do to enable her to deal with them, or how she is learning in your class to deal with them]." Above all be positive and, where possible, prescriptive. In serious situations I have written lists: "If Pollyanna is to find success consonant with her capacities, she will need to

- 1) arrive in class on time each day with all materials
 - 2) make an effort to check in with me before each test or major assignment
 - 3) make a point of contributing at least once to each day's discussion, and
 - 4) be more respectful in her interactions with classmates
- etc."

It is generally best to avoid an enumeration of test and quiz grades. If you must do this, try to make some generalizations about the kinds of material being tested and what the scores reveal; don't just write a laundry list.

[IF THE SCHOOL USES ONE OF THESE] HOW TO USE THE ON-LINE COMMENT SYSTEM

IN GENERAL

Our Official Recommendation is that you write in MS Word, Google Docs, or another word processor, spell-check, then cut and paste each comment into the on-line template.

You have a limited amount of text that can be entered for each comment before it spills over and will not appear in the printed comment. Be sure to preview each comment for length and formatting and to do what may be necessary to manage paragraph breaks. In block style, there should be a single empty line between paragraphs and no indents. Sometimes it will require some experimentation to make the paragraph breaks behave.

HOW TO WRITE EFFECTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Here are some suggestions from the College Counseling office about how to structure letters of recommendation and what to include in them:

- Limit the letter to one page. Given the volume of paperwork, admission officers tend to skim long letters.
- Write a draft of your letters over the summer. Keep a copy of your comments handy to help you recall anecdotes about your students.
- Begin your letter by explaining the context in which you know the student. Give the reader a brief overview of your class, emphasizing the depth and rigor. Feel free to add anything unique about **[SCHOOL NAME]** too.
- Remember that you are providing an academic reference. Your primary focus should be the student's performance in your course(s). Try to give specific examples to illustrate your points. Refer to essays and research papers, lab reports and research, class discussion, interaction with classmates etc. Help the admission officer see the academic strengths and potential of the student.
- Do not highlight the student's weaknesses. That will be evident by what is not said. If you cannot be generally positive, please suggest that the student find another reference.
- The counselor letter and the student transcript will include information on the student's extracurricular activities so it is not necessary for you to repeat this information. However, you may have your own anecdotes to include.
- These letters are confidential. Do not show them to students.

It is important to the student and to the school that writers of recommendations adhere religiously to deadlines. **The College Counseling office requests that all teacher recommendations for seniors be submitted on or before [when] in order to facilitate early or rolling applications.** Recommendations for secondary school admission are usually due by February 1 at the latest, although some may be due earlier.

HOW TO BUILD YOUR MULTICULTURAL CAPACITY

to help make our school a safe space for everyone

Things to know about the [SCHOOL NAME]community:

- Students come from many ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds and from many kinds of families
- Some students have guardians, not parents—try using “family” instead of “parents”
- Students’ families speak over **[how many]** different languages at home; some students cannot ask family members for help with certain kinds of work
- Some students work, and others are responsible for major child-care and other kinds of help at home
- Some of your students are gay and know it; many are questioning their own sexual orientation or gender identity; many of your students have GLBTQ family members, including parents/guardians, and friends

Things you can do:

- Be aware of YOUR cultural capital (race, gender, age, class, religion, sexual orientation) and how it differs from that of your students and colleagues
- Don’t make assumptions about your students or their experiences; get to know them so you can keep the conversation real
- Don’t generalize about the experiences, characteristics, or attitudes of peoples; speak from your own experience in “I” statements
- ***Don’t let students generalize about the experiences, characteristics, or attitudes of peoples or about nations, regions, communities, or neighborhoods;*** STOP the conversation, back up, explore—this is your chance to turn ignorance into understanding and knowledge
- STOP any talk that involves language or commentary that is offensive; ***address the issue on the spot, if you can***—and follow up
- Don’t make statements based on the assumption that everyone shares the same ideas or values about something—especially with regard to sexuality and religion; STOP conversations in which such statements are made, and address the issue
- Look for opportunities to bring the points of view of other cultures, etc., into your classroom
- Look for opportunities to be an ALLY—to stand with others in support of diversity and difference; build individual relationships
- Beware of inappropriate “cultural appropriation”: when students use cultural language, symbols, or other signifiers as decoration or entertainment rather than as tools for serious exploration and learning

SMALL BUT IMPORTANT MATTERS: ATTENDANCE, PROCTORING, AND MAINTAINING A PRODUCTIVE ENVIRONMENT

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

School begins officially for the school community at **[WHEN]**. Teachers are expected enter attendance information **[where, how]**.

Maintaining accurate records of attendance is absolutely essential. We are morally and legally responsible for knowing the whereabouts of our students. Teachers who neglect these procedures can subject the school to charges of negligence.

MORNING MEETINGS

All faculty are required to attend morning meetings and all assemblies and are expected to be on time. **[IF THIS...]**Faculty not assigned to a specific ...

CLASS MEETINGS

The ...

EXTRACURRICULAR/CO-CURRICULAR SUPERVISION

[HOW, WHAT, procedure] In addition to their academic responsibilities, full time faculty assist with extracurricular

When an activity such as an athletic practice, contest, or an arts rehearsal or performance ends after normal school hours, the adult in charge is responsible for staying until all students are picked up.

UNASSIGNED STUDENT TIME

In those periods when student time is unassigned, students should be vigorously encouraged to make the fullest and wisest use of our facilities. Generally available: **[WHAT]**

All adults have the responsibility to see that students do not lounge or behave in an indecorous or offensive manner in the classroom corridors, administrative areas, or ...

USE OF THE LIBRARY

Please do not send classes to the Library unless you have arranged to do so with the staff. Such classes should, with rare exceptions, be faculty proctored. All adults should check with the staff on assignments that will require any special use of the Library.

FACULTY MEETINGS

Faculty and Administrators will be involved in faculty meetings **[WHEN, WHERE]** ... We believe faculty meetings are critically important if we are to execute our mission. Faculty and administrators are expected to treat the starting time of these meetings as they would the start of a class.

ACADEMIC AMBIANCE

Each teacher is responsible for the appearance and general maintenance of an interesting, attractive, educationally stimulating, and orderly classroom. Teachers should work with Department Heads to enhance the classroom and corridor environment.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

When a discipline problem is so serious that a class cannot be continued (or a student “calming

down” for a few minutes outside the door would not suffice), [PROCEDURE]

YOUR OWN SPECIAL EVENTS: THE CALENDAR AND FIELD TRIPS

GETTING ON THE CALENDAR

To add an event to the all school calendar...

.

FIELD TRIP PROCEDURE

Field trips should be scheduled [**WHEN, HOW, procedure**]

PLEASE NOTE these restrictions on the scheduling of field trips:

- With rare exceptions, no field trip should be taken during the two weeks preceding term end examinations.
- No field trips should be taken during the two weeks immediately following Spring break (Admission visit days) or on days with scheduled Admission events during the school day.

5. SOME RULES FOR TEACHERS TO KNOW

RULES PERTAINING TO EVERYONE

Basic school rules are spelled out in the online *Student–Parent Handbook*. Teachers should be aware, however, that most rules of general behavior and deportment should be considered as applying to everyone in the community. Some of these are:

- The entire campus is a **No Smoking** area. This should also be construed to include neighboring properties and streets.
- No hats or other headwear should be worn in the buildings of the campus at any time; religious headwear is of course excepted from this.
- No food or beverages should be consumed in the hallways or meeting areas. Water may be carried but not consumed in the halls.
- Student mobile phones should not be used during classes except as a legitimate part of a classroom activity. Teachers may ask students to place mobile devices in a central location during class to avoid distraction.

[THIS MIGHT BE A PLACE TO INCLUDE FIRE-DRILL, LOCK-DOWN, OR OTHER EMERGENCY PROCEDURES. GENERALLY THESE WOULD BE DRAWN FROM OTHER, MORE “OFFICIAL” OR “STATUTORY” DOCUMENTS, LIKE AN EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK]

ESSENTIAL RULES PERTAINING TO STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Consistent teacher vigilance in responding to a few aspects of student behavior will make everyone’s life at least a little easier. The big ones are:

- **Absence and lateness.** Practice with regard to the reporting of student absence or lateness—whether this involves class, community meetings, advisory meetings, afternoon activities, or practices—is evolving. *The more assiduously teachers follow the prescribed procedures for reporting, the more likely that vigilance and accountability can combine to have a deterrent effect.* Take questions and concerns to **[WHERE, WHO]**
- **Disruptive, rude, or defiant behavior; persistent violation of minor rules.** **[PROCEDURES]**
- **Off-Campus.** **[SAMPLE CONTENT HERE:]** Seniors (unless their privileges have been suspended or revoked) may leave campus on foot or in cars during their free periods—ONLY after signing out at the Reception desk. They need to drive safely on campus and to park vehicles tidily, and they may take no one with them who is not another senior whose privileges are in force. Teachers encountering students who are not seniors off

campus or leaving (or returning to) campus should report the sighting immediately to the Dean of Students; if possible, they should also have a conversation with the students involved.

Teachers should be vigilant and consistent in the enforcement of this rule. Above all, the school needs to be able to account for every student during the school day and may be held responsible if a student is unaccounted for and some extraordinary situation arises.

- **Drugs and alcohol.** [SAMPLE CONTENT HERE:]While the nature of the conversations we are having with students around these issues is evolving, the flat bottom line is that the use or possession of drugs (including alcohol and tobacco and prescription drugs outside the parameters of the prescription) is a very serious violation of school rules. Teachers with suspicions or concerns should take these to the Dean of Students or a member of the counseling staff immediately.
- **Firearms and explosives.** [SAMPLE CONTENT HERE:]Presence of these represents a very serious violation of school rules as well as the law. Teachers with suspicions or concerns should take these to the Dean of Students or any administrator *immediately*. Obviously, this pertains to all members of the school community, including faculty and staff.

SOME POLICIES ESPECIALLY FOR TEACHERS

The *Employee Handbook*, published on line each autumn, is the final arbiter and the contractual and legal last word on issues related to employment policies and expectations for teachers, but here are a few highlights to remember:

- **Hours.** Teachers are expected to arrive on campus by [WHEN] each day; if there is a scheduled obligation (parent meeting, trip departure, first day of school), this may be earlier on occasion. Teachers should remain on campus at least until the conclusion of their final obligation of the day; *in no case should a teacher leave earlier than [WHEN]*
- **Dress.** [SAMPLE CONTENT HERE:]Teacher dress should be neat and professional.
- **Attendance at Meetings.** [SAMPLE CONTENT HERE:]Teachers are expected to attend **all** class meetings of the grade with which they are affiliated, **all** school and division meetings, **all** faculty and department meetings, and 7:30 A.M. morning meetings at which their presence is requested.

If you think that you might have to miss any one of these obligations, you should check with your immediate supervisor (usually your department chair) or with whoever is in charge of the event, arranging for substitute coverage if appropriate.

- **Tutoring.** No [school name]teacher will tutor or provide educational services of any sort for any [school name] student for pay, remuneration, or compensation in cash, goods, or services of any kind at any time during which the teacher is employed at [school name] and while the student is enrolled at [school name]. This would represent a clear conflict of interest.
- **Leaving campus during the day.** Teachers needing to leave campus during the day must inform a supervisor.

- **Absence.** A teacher should inform her or his supervisor (usually a department chair) as soon as it becomes known that s/he will be absent. The teacher should make every effort to prepare materials for a substitute; departmental practices may vary with regard to how this is done.

Teachers should absolutely avoid commitments away from school that would occur on Admission event and visiting days, Parent Conference days, or Parents Night.

- **Gifts.** [SAMPLE CONTENT HERE:] [school name] does not have a faculty gift policy, but teachers should be circumspect in accepting gifts of more than incidental value from students, parents, or guardians.
- **Use of facilities.** [SAMPLE CONTENT HERE:] While teachers may consider themselves as having the privilege of using the campus, there are also scheduled events in which parts of the campus are used by non-[school name] groups, and faculty members should defer to these groups.

A teacher wishing to use campus facilities for personal activities should clear any such use with [WHOM, procedure].

- **Technology.** [SAMPLE CONTENT HERE:] In general, teachers should not expect any kind of technical support for personally owned technology. Teachers may sign out school-owned technology—digital video cameras; digital still cameras; LCD projectors; a small number of laptop computers—for classroom use.

[SAMPLE CONTENT HERE:] [School name] does make possible the purchase of technology through a payroll deduction plan. See the [WHOM, procedure].

Other policies pertaining specifically to teaching are spelled out elsewhere in this book.

HOW TO TOOT YOUR OWN HORN

[SAMPLE CONTENT HERE:] If you've spent any time on the school website (and surely you have if you're a new hire!), you know that it's a great resource for prospective teachers and prospective families to find out what makes [school name] different from other schools. Now that you'll be contributing to the [School name] difference yourself through your work with students inside and outside the classroom, you should get to know the **marketing-communication team [or whoever]**. You may be reluctant to toot your own horn, but this team is more than happy to toot it on your behalf—*in fact, they want you to!*

[WHO] writes all the stories that go on the website, including those in the section highlighting interesting class projects with multimedia examples of student work. If you have a special guest coming to visit, let [WHO] know. If you are taking students on a field trip, borrow a digital camera to document your trip and share the experience (photos, video, a few descriptive words) via email with [WHO]. If students are posting cool artwork, reflections, or videos on your class website or blog, tell [WHO] where to find them. If you are wondering whether what you're doing is "newsworthy," just send [WHO] an e-mail and ask if they are interested – it's their purpose to make you and the school look good, so don't be shy!

6. TROUBLESHOOTING STUDENT ACADEMIC BEHAVIOR

[ALL OF THIS IS SAMPLE CONTENT—YOUR SCHOOL’S POLICIES MAY DIFFER] HOW TO UNDERSTAND STUDENT LEARNING DIFFERENCES

For the past decade students with identified learning difficulties have been eligible for certain accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Students with identified learning disabilities at **[school name]** are still expected to complete all aspects of the curriculum and to participate in all academic and other activities. These students may have very high ability levels.

Teachers should be aware that some students receive specific accommodations. They should be aware

- that some students may need extended time (E.T.) when working on tests or quizzes. This sometimes requires some creative planning as to when E.T. students will have an opportunity to complete work. There are also security issues that need to be taken into account; the simplest solutions include collecting the work between work sessions and having the student continue work in a different color ink or lead.
- that some students are uncomfortable reading aloud, either from their own work or from a text. It is all right to honor the request of a student who wishes to “pass” during an oral reading exercise, although you may wish to arrange for the student to read to you privately in order to assess the degree of the student’s problem. You might make a note of the student’s name and check with **[WHO]** on how best to support the student.
- that some students may need to leave a classroom for water or a bathroom break. This is common practice at **[school name]**, although a few students use this as a way of helping themselves refocus on classroom activities. *This does not mean that you have to allow students to wander the classroom or the halls.* That is NOT a **[school name]** -sanctioned accommodation.

The *Student–Parent Handbook* provides the information below to parents on supporting students; it is important that teachers also be aware.

Support for Students with Diagnosed Learning Disabilities

One way we commonly try to help students with known learning disabilities is to give them extra time on tests and examinations.

In order to take advantage of our test accommodations, students must have a learning disability diagnosed by an accredited professional, and this document must be on file with us. To ensure validity and relevance, we recommend that this evaluation be updated every three years.

For those who meet the criteria, we offer the following test accommodations:

Extended time on all term-end examinations (one extra hour beyond the regular two-hour allotment for each exam). An opportunity will be given to all learning-disabled students to opt for extended time on as many subject examinations as they choose. The list of students who qualify for and choose to act on this option will be given to the faculty prior to examinations.

Extended time on all in-class tests (up to but not to exceed one-half of an extra class period). This is offered only to those students with a documented disability and demonstrated need. **It is only granted when requested and only then with the approval of the Director of Academic Support Services. Students will complete the test on the same day it was given.**

Extended time on standardized tests, e.g. the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, the PSAT in the 11th grade, the ACT. Extended time for these tests is granted only by the test providers (the College Board and the ACT) and only to students with diagnosed learning disabilities, up-to-date evaluations (within three years of the test date), and a history of use of the Extended Time option on examinations. Evaluations must be completed four months prior to the test registration deadline. When registering for the SAT, SAT Subject Tests, and the ACT, students and their parents/guardians must complete special registration material by the required deadline. Students will take these tests at national testing sites, not at **[school name]**. For more specific information regarding registration procedures, families should contact the **[WHO]** or the Director of College Counseling.

The Use of Laptop Computers on Tests. This accommodation is extended to those students with a diagnosed learning disability that impacts written production. A list of those students will be provided to teachers.

If a student has a diagnosed learning disability and is interested in pursuing one of all of these options, please do the following:

1. Make sure that the student's testing is on file with us. Testing should be up to date (preferably within three years to ensure validity and relevance to the student's present situation).
2. Contact **[WHO]** to discuss one or more of these options, if you have not already done so.

3. If a student has not been evaluated for a learning disability but you have reason for doing so, please contact **[WHO]** to discuss the issues and possible options for testing.

Contact [WHO] if you have questions regarding accommodations for your student.

HOW TO GUIDE STUDENTS IN SEEKING HOMEWORK HELP

A Brief Guide to What's OK and What's Not for Students, Families, and Tutors

Homework is assigned at **[school name]** to help students master the skills and information they need for academic success. Sometimes the work is hard, and long, and sometimes it feels easy.

When homework is hard, students are encouraged to ask for help. Family members, tutors, and even friends can be great resources, and sometimes these helpers can assist students in reaching new levels of understanding—just the point of a good homework assignment! But there are limits to how much help, and what kind, students should be receiving from others.

The *Student–Parent Handbook* suggests the following as appropriate kinds of help that a student can receive on a homework assignment:

- **Referring students to resources where they might find answers;**
- **Identifying errors to focus students' efforts;**
- **Asking questions about the assignment which may help students clarify their ideas about approaches;**
- **Explaining underlying rules or principles which would help students formulate their own answers.**

The ultimate goal and effect of any assistance should be to enable students to master the material. Students should indicate when they have received assistance on an assignment. Because teachers need to see students' mistakes as well as their successes, resist the impulse to merely give answers or make corrections.

Good and appropriate homework assistance can also include listening to a student read a paper or rehearse a presentation and offering modest amounts of constructive criticism. Individual teachers and departments will vary in their specific policies, but in general helpers who are inclined to copy-edit a student's paper (proofreading and offering many suggestions) should refrain from doing so. **At the least, any commentary by a helper on a student's work should be in writing and should be included with the work when it is turned in.**

Perhaps most important, it is critical that students become comfortable in the habit of citing sources. This includes "live" assistance, or even assistance from an on-line homework help service. **A student who receives help on a piece of homework should, as a matter of course, include with the assignment a "bibliography" listing the names of those who have provided substantial assistance.** This is both good manners and a matter of academic integrity; there's

no shame in acknowledging that a tutor or a family member helped with writing a paper or solving a set of questions. However, trouble can arise when work is clearly not the students' own and yet there is no acknowledgment of help.

Homework should be a learning experience, and in the end the teacher must be able to see clearly what the student has truly learned; only then can the teacher continue to work to meet the individual learning needs of the student.

The student who comes to rely on a helper for success is being cheated out of his or her own learning, and that, we can all agree, is not what we are trying to accomplish here.

ALL ABOUT TUTORING AT [school name]

Students are encouraged to seek extra help from teachers during unassigned time during the school day. Students should make appointments and are generally expected to keep such appointments without reminders; occasionally a student will need to be hunted down and brought in for extra help, and teachers should not be shy about using this method when a student is in real danger of failure and is resistant to gentle invitation.

Effective tutoring support involves effective communication among the tutor, the student, the teacher, and the family. It also involves the tutor's having a clear understanding of what is required and the degree to which support is needed and appropriate. Teachers should address concerns about a particular tutoring situation should to a member of the Academic Services department.

Teachers should also remember that it is not permitted for a [school name] teacher to tutor any [school name] student for any kind of consideration or remuneration.

HOW TO USE [ANY LEARNING SUPPORT SERVICES THE SCHOOL OFFERS]

[SAMPLE CONTENT HERE:]The **[WHERE/WHAT]** is part of the **[what]** department and consists of a staffed workroom where students can receive help on almost any kind of academic issue that does not require in-depth subject-matter expertise. The goal of the Center is to help students implement efficient organizational, time management, editing, and questioning skills to facilitate students taking responsibility for their own learning. The Center is staffed by an adult member of the **[what]** department and at times, a small cadre of academically accomplished volunteer students.

Listed below are three different categories of students who use the **[WHERE/WHAT]** and how the student can be supported there:

Required Students: Students referred by the Academic team to attend a regularly scheduled weekly appointment that is mandatory due to their academic performance. Missed appointments will be treated as a class cut.

- The **[WHERE/WHAT]** instructor can work on strengthening areas of weakness. At times, this may mean a closely supervised study hall or work independently but students will have access to the instructor, and sometimes this will mean more direct instruction or feedback from the instructor. This may include working on study skills, time management skills, or organizational skills.

Referred Students: Students referred by teachers and specific concerns have been indicated to the **[WHERE/WHAT]** staff so that needs can be addressed. Teachers will follow a referral process either through email communication with the **[WHERE/WHAT]** staff. Students should have a clear understanding of why a teacher has referred them and the nature of the work they should be doing there.

- The **[WHERE/WHAT]** can support these referred students by working on study skills, organizational, and time management of content. If content-related questions arise, staff at the Center will work towards having students formulate questions and encourage students to follow up with their teacher or tutor.

Drop-In Students: Students who typically need support on a particular assignment.

- The **[WHERE/WHAT]** can support students on written assignments by a pencil edit before handing in their paper, indicate focus of editing (i.e., grammar, sentence structure, content) as well as the specific requirements of an assignment.

For *all* students seen at the **[WHERE/WHAT]**, the staff will communicate with advisors and teachers the type of support students received.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT LATE AND MISSING WORK

Teachers should refer to specific departmental policies relating to late and missing work, but in general the following conventions should be observed:

- The key to compliance in having students turn work in on time is your own consistency. Whatever policy you establish, stand by it.
- Be accurate and up-to-date in your inventory and record-keeping involving collected student work; this is a corollary to the consistency issue.

“Missing” work that is said to have been handed in can be a BIG headache for the teacher, especially if s/he has not done an inventory—and responded to the “missing”-ness—almost at the moment of collection, or if any doubt lives in the teacher’s mind.

Collecting work via e-mail or by hand is best; work left on an untended desk or in-box is vulnerable. Ask colleagues to initial any work they put in your mailbox at a

student's behest. "I asked a teacher to put it [*missing work*] in your mailbox" is often another prelude to a difficult situation.

- **Late work is work that has been handed in late. It is only late after you have it in your possession; before that time it is missing.**
- Missing work is work that is not in your possession; this can also include tests and quizzes that need to be made up.
- A missing work policy should also include what to do about missed tests or quizzes, and it should also address the issue of the reason for which such tests or quizzes might have been missed. A policy that caps the highest achievable grade on a made-up test or quiz (one day late—90%; two days—80%; three days—70%; four days—60%; more—automatic NP) is one way to address this.
- A grade of zero (0) has a powerful and usually unbalancing and even unjust effect on a student's course grade. Use this "weapon" sparingly and thoughtfully, and never because you are just irritated with the kid. Zero is the teacher's nuclear option for missing work, although at times its use may be justified; check with your department or division head if you are unsure about using the grade of zero.
- In general the kinds of reasons for uncompleted work that become valid excuses are those presented in advance of the due date; *ex post facto* declarations about uncompleted work should be heard with some skepticism. (Obviously real emergencies or tragedies are something else altogether.)
- Penalties for late or missing work that count down by days (1/3 of a grade for each day late, for example) should probably have a drop-dead date after which missing work receives a stronger penalty than late work—not passing for terminally late, perhaps zero (0) for missing.
- Do not permit a situation to reach the point where a student is at risk of not passing a course because of late or missing work UNLESS you have done all that you can to forestall disaster, including
 - communicating the precise parameters of the situation and the potential for problems to the student, the advisor, and the family regularly and **in a timely way**
 - using available opportunities as a place to park the student to complete the missing work
 - communicating the precise parameters of the situation and the potential for problems to the student, the advisor, and the family **in a timely way (Did we say that twice?)**
- Understand that there are circumstances (illness, serious family crisis) under which a particular student may be unable to complete work for long periods of time. It is the school's practice to consider such situations on a case-by-case basis. The point is to help the child learn and not to focus on the uncompleted work. While we do not modify curriculum for students, there may be circumstances under which the nature or number of assessments needs to be adjusted to allow a student to heal or to make it through a difficult time. Patience and love are in order here, even more in order than a late work policy.

[SAMPLE TEXT IF YOUR SCHOOL HAS SOMETHING LIKE THIS]

HOW TO USE LATE WORK STUDY

Late Work Study is a proctored afternoon study hall for Upper School students who have defaulted in the completion of daily homework, who have long-term work outstanding, or who have submitted work that must be re-done.

Late Work Study takes place **[WHERE, WHEN]**. Students can be assigned to the study on the day of the default; **[PROCEDURE]**

Students must attend Late Work Study (LWS) unless they have a game, a dress rehearsal or performance, or a specific parentally-approved obligation that requires them to leave early. LWS takes precedence over athletic practice or drama rehearsal, and coaches and directors may in fact be unhappy about a student's absence—this unhappiness should be a disincentive for students to be behind-hand in their work.

Students assigned to LWS are expected to remain for the full time. If they complete the “late” work before the end of Late Work Study, they need to find something else to do.

If we are all consistent in assigning students to LWS we can provide real support for those students who need accountability around meeting obligations.

Late Work Study is not intended as a punishment. It is, however, intended as a firm reminder to all students that they need to complete their work on time, and to the best of their ability. An angry coach or a dismayed, impatient cast (or just the loss of an hour's free time) may feel like a punishment, but the object is to help students see the importance of doing what must be done.

Please use this tool for helping students learn to help themselves.

HOW TO KEEP YOUR STUDENTS HONEST

and yourself sane and happy

Much has been written about the amount of student academic dishonesty that schools are seeing. While plagiarism, cheating, and abuse of the collaborative process seem to be less prevalent at **[SCHOOL NAME]** than the media lead us to believe, we all need to be on our guard. Here are some ideas for reducing students' opportunities to succumb to temptation and for coping on the rare occasions when they do.

I. BE CLEAR ABOUT WHAT YOU MEAN BY ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

The more you inform your students about the meaning and consequences of plagiarism, cheating, and academic dishonesty, the less chance that you will find yourself having to explain this after the fact.

It is especially important that you explain to students *why* these behaviors are wrong—that failure to attribute properly robs a creator of credit and sometimes money, that work completed with the improper aid of others will not lead to understanding, and that abuse of the collaborative process is simply unfair to others. Students know this, and they have heard it all before, but it is important that they hear it again directly from *you*.

Here are some broad definitions of various kinds of academic dishonesty:

- **Plagiarism** is the unauthorized or unacknowledged use of ideas or words that are not one's own in order to seek an academic benefit.
- **Cheating** is the unauthorized use of notes or the use of information gathered, applied, or accessed in a dishonest fashion in order to seek an academic benefit.
- **Abuse of the collaborative work process** involves the reliance of an individual upon the efforts of others to seek an academic benefit to which her or his own efforts do not entitle her or him. The collaborative work process involves the principle of the sharing of an equal burden of thought and effort among students assigned or authorized to work together.

It is worth your time as a teacher to review these in detail. If you plan on assigning group projects or recommending that students work collaboratively on homework assignments or when studying for tests, it is imperative that you spell out your expectations for what is proper in such circumstances.

It is also a very good idea to review with your students the degree to which you will allow them to receive outside help on their work—from parents, tutors, and friends. You might want to share with students the “How to Guide Students in Seeking Homework Help” section of this handbook (page xxx), also included in a slightly different form in the online *Student–Parent Handbook*.

II. DESIGN WORK THAT MAKES IT HARD FOR STUDENTS TO RECEIVE IMPROPER ASSISTANCE

Putting together assignments and projects that stymie attempts to cheat or plagiarize is not so terribly difficult, and, best of all, it involves curriculum design that is very much in alignment with the best and most advanced principles of good teaching. There are many ways to think about this; not all will fit your style or your needs at a given moment, but in the aggregate they will benefit you and your students.

- First and foremost, wherever possible, **DEVELOP YOUR OWN ASSIGNMENTS**. And when you base these assignments on learning goals and/or original or unusual (“non-canonical,” for example) materials that are unique to your goals and your content, it will be much harder for the wayward or desperate student to go on line for help. Try to find ways to put a unique “take” on a particular topic on which you are asking students to work.
- Ask students to do **COMPARATIVE WORK**. The [school name] curriculum and approach to many subjects is unique, and when one asks students to draw comparisons between content elements or to analyze different topics in parallel or

tandem, the chances that the student can find similar work decreases (literally) by an order of magnitude.

- **PROCESS, PROCESS!!—CHECK IN, CHECK IN!!** If the first and only time that you ever see a piece of work, particularly something major, is when the student hands in a final draft, you have lost valuable opportunities to check in on the student’s progress and offer feedback—that is the point of the drafting and check-in process. Just as importantly, though, you have made it much easier for the student to wait until the last minute and then perform some untoward act of desperation.

Design major assignments with absolute way-stations at which students will show you progress on the work they have done, and make these intermediate stages part of the project evaluation. If you do not see work along the way, make the student pay a known and moderately severe academic penalty (as well as the penalty of not having the opportunity to receive feedback).

For smaller projects, at least ask students to hand in all drafts with the completed work; that way you can glance to see whether the final edition came together as part of a process or in a way that is suspiciously *sui generis*.

- Have students complete **WORK IN CLASS**, if there is a way to do so without sacrificing time you would like to spend on other things. The level playing field of handwritten work on lined paper (or work done on laptop screens as you wander the room and look over shoulders) may also give you some important information as to how each student works and learns. And of course, be vigilant as students are at work.
- **ORGANIZE AND KEEP TRACK** of all work handed in. This is essential. The more certain you can be of who has handed in work and when, the less likely it will be that a desperate student will resort to dishonesty either to put one over on a less than perfectly organized teacher or to be able to sustain a claim of “I put that on your desk.” Check on collected work immediately and chase down laggards right away.

Collect work via the school e-mail system or some other online drop-box; it is critical that you specify what “on time” means (e.g., “by 11:59 P.M. on Thursday night”) when accepting work electronically. All students have access to a computer at home, and all students have school e-mail accounts. **[IF RELEVANT]** You may require students should submit work via the Google system.

Do not accept work e-mailed from personal accounts! This may expose you to some personal liabilities that you do not even want to contemplate!

- **LOOK AT COLLECTED WORK IMMEDIATELY**, and correct and return it as soon as possible. The benefits here are obvious.

III. BE VIGILANT WHEN GIVING TESTS OR OTHER IN-CLASS ASSESSMENTS

On test days do not plan on just burying yourself in correcting while the students beaver away. Pay attention; set the room up as if you were serious about the matter at hand. See also “How to Invigilate,” page xxx of this handbook.

There have been numerous articles on ingenious cheating techniques developed by students, some of which involve technology—mobile phones, programmable calculators,

Google Docs—and others of which involve sheer cleverness—water bottle labels and the like. Try not to become the victim of subterfuge, old or new.

Here again, count and check work as students hand it in. The “lost” test is the bane of teachers’ existence, and the less opportunity students have to misrepresent circumstances, the more secure you can be that they are doing their own work to the best of their own abilities.

IV. WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT THAT SOMETHING IS AWRY

The steps here are simple at **[school name]**—cut and dried, per the *Student–Parent Handbook* and school practice:

1. Check the facts, and check again. Be as certain as you can be that something is truly wrong with the work you are looking at, or with the work that is missing, or with the excuse you are hearing.
2. Check the work, if you can, against other student work or against other obvious sources. Written work that is too good to be true—that is substantially better than other work you have seen from a student—may be the result of many things, not all of which are intentional plagiarism. Consider:
 - Might the student have received too much help from a friend, parent, or tutor? Before calling the student a plagiarist or a cheater (in point of fact, using such labels is highly unprofessional; label behavior—and sparingly—not the child), figure out if you can solve this problem with a very firm conversation with the student and possibly the helper.
 - Might the student actually have achieved a kind of intellectual breakthrough? Such things happen, folks, and we ought to be ready to celebrate, not punish. Check this by quizzing the student on the content you find suspicious.
 - Too much unattributed Wikipedia or Microsoft Word Thesaurus? A problem, and depending on the student’s age perhaps even a very big one. Possibly a teachable moment, but if you do not think so, then proceed to Step 3.
 - Too good to be true? It might be. For written work you can type suspect passages into Google; a match is a bad thing. If you feel overcome by the crime-fighting urge, there are even higher-tech systems, but, like computer anti-virus software, cheat-check technology is often a step behind malefactors who stand to make money off the crime. This might be a good moment to share your suspicions with your department head, as in Step 3.
 - Problems in the collaborative process are usually much more difficult to identify and to pin down. The more clearly you have articulated your expectations and had students spell out their specific roles and responsibilities in collaborative work, the easier it will be for you to spot problems and call the right students to account.
3. (*And sooner is much better than later for this.*) If you are satisfied that something untoward and probably intentional has taken place, then take your concern directly to your department head. Save evidence by photocopying, printing, or whatever else you need to do. At some point early on you will need to confront the student. The next step is to involve the division director. The system must run its course at this point.

A thought on the disciplinary process here: Academic dishonesty represents at least one and probably more than one bad decision on the part of the student, who must be held accountable for this. However, the teacher needs to be pretty clear that s/he has done everything possible by way of *prevention* to make the process into one that is truly righteous for all concerned.

This is not to say that a teacher's error offsets a clear-cut case, but a teacher's error makes it much harder to make a disciplinary process into the powerful educational experience it should be.

HOW TO USE THE "INCOMPLETE" GRADE

Students are expected to complete all assigned work by the due date specified by the teacher; late work will typically be marked down according to departmental policy. If a student has not completed all assigned work at the close of a term (or the end of the year in the case of a final examination), **work not completed may be assigned a grade of 0 (zero) for the purpose of grade calculation (a sanction to be avoided if at all possible).**

Under certain circumstances a teacher may grant a student a specific extension. Such an extension should be for no more than one week after the day on which grades are due to the department head unless a different timetable is deemed necessary owing to extraordinary circumstances.

An extension may be granted only in unusual circumstances, such as if

- the student has missed opportunities for classroom learning, research, collaborative work, or consultation with the teacher due to excused absence from school.
- a personal situation that has made it difficult for the student to work effectively outside of school; an extension granted under these circumstances would typically require the endorsement of the student's advisor or a member of the Counseling Department in consultation with the appropriate Division Director.
- the student has missed a test, quiz, or examination due to excused absence from school.

Extensions should not be granted

- to enable students to re-take tests or to re-write or re-do work that has already been graded in order to earn a higher grade; such work should have been completed prior to the end of the term.
- to allow students to make up work missed due to participation in extracurricular activities, except in exceptional circumstances with the endorsement of the appropriate Department Head.
- to allow students to make up work—including research, collaborative work, tests, quizzes, or examinations—missed due to unexcused or unauthorized absences.

During the time that a student is making up work under a granted extension, the student's work for the term will be assigned a grade of *Incomplete*; in the final term of a year-long course, the calculation of a final course grade will also be delayed and noted as *Incomplete*. The teacher will enter this grade on the student's comment.

When a grade of *Incomplete* has been assigned, the specified deadline for completing work should be made known to the student, the student's family, and the student's advisor by the date on which grades are due to be turned in. The work to be completed should also be specified at this time.

If the specified work is turned in by the stated deadline, the teacher will determine the student's grade and enter the final grade on a revised comment for inclusion on the student's report card.

If the specified work is not completed by the stated deadline, it will be assigned a grade commensurate with the work done (if any) and the final term grade (and/or course grade) will be calculated on that basis. The teacher will then enter the final grade on a revised comment for inclusion on the student's report card.

7. THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

[ALL IS SAMPLE CONTENT]

OVERVIEW

All professional development at [school name] is designed to support and reinforce the mission of the school and the goals of the strategic plan. Scheduled professional development activities are also designed to complement and support all aspects of the teacher evaluation system.

For New Hires

- ◆ An introductory program

For All Teachers

- ◆ *Full-Faculty Professional Workshops*—on topics of professional interest to all faculty members in support of the Mission and goals of the school
- ◆ *Departmental Retreats*—All departments may take at least one one-day retreat during the year for the purpose of meeting to work toward departmental and school strategic goals; departments may schedule up to one retreat day per term.
- ◆ *Other opportunities*—Faculty wishing to attend off-campus workshops may consult with the Assistant Head of School. In addition, the academic administration may invite members of the faculty to participate in appropriate professional development experiences.

Teaching for Understanding/Understanding by Design

In the mid 1990s [school name] faculty delved deeply into the “backwards design” models developed at Harvard’s Project Zero and through the work of Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. Essentials of this model can be found in the “Curriculum and Assessment, [school name] style” section of this handbook on page 30 and especially in the *Teaching for Understanding* text and workbook by Wiggins and McTighe. Teachers are urged to acquire and peruse these extremely useful books; a template for designing a course or unit based on Understanding-based principles (and adapted from Wiggins and McTighe) can be found on the “Teaching Resources” section of the “Faculty and Staff Information” site. Much of [school name]’s work and conversation around assessment has been deeply informed by ideas generated at Project Zero and by Wiggins and McTighe.

Helpful reading on understanding-based curriculum design:

Making Learning Whole: How Seven Principles of Teaching Can Transform Education (Perkins, 2010)

The Teaching for Understanding Guide (Blythe, 1997)

Understanding by Design, 2nd ed. (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005)

Understanding by Design: Professional Development Workbook (McTighe & Wiggins, 2004)

Problem-Based Learning (“PBL”)

[SAMPLES SUGGESTED]

Helpful reading on PBL:

How to Use Problem-Based Learning in the Classroom (DeLisle, 1997)

Collaborative Project Design and Design Thinking

One of the great challenges to teaching is to design collaborative student projects in which work tasks, expectations, and assessment reflect the degree of accuracy and equity that students expect from their teachers.

At the very least, teachers assigning collaborative projects ought to be aware of basic project planning principles and tools. **[SAMPLES SUGGESTED]**

Design Thinking is a specific elaboration of project-based learning that is focused on creative, collaborative problem-solving, often with a strong “real world” component. This approach is based on a rigorous development of a problem statement (often with real-world constraints), research and ideation to develop a deep understanding of the problem, brainstorming of possible solutions, prototyping and improving multiple iterations of candidate solutions, and a continuous feedback loop driving improvement throughout the process.

Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO has written that design thinking “starts with people—what we call human-centered design—and applies the creative tools of design, like storytelling, prototyping, and experimentation to deliver new breakthrough innovations.”

Helpful reading on projectsm collaborative project design, and design thinking:

The Design Thinking Toolkit for Educators (downloadable at the Design Thinking for Educators website)

Edutopia, the magazine of the George Lucas Educational Foundation

Assessment—an ongoing initiative

Work begun in 2006 toward building a more focused and consistent approach to the assessment of student learning and the evaluation of student work continues to this day.

Helpful reading on assessment and evaluation (“grading”):

Assessing Student Performance: Exploring the Purpose and Limits of Testing (Wiggins, 1999)

Fair Isn't Always Equal: Assessing and Grading in the Differentiated Classroom (Wormeli, 2006)

How to Grade for Learning: Linking Grades to Standards (O'Connor, 2002)

Transforming Classroom Grading (Marzano, 2003)

Differentiated instruction

Following on the All Kinds of Minds work and informed by a conversations and expanding capacity related to assessment, [school name] has recently been engaged in learning more about the differentiated classroom, more commonly known as “differentiated instruction.” The goal is to develop a culture of instructional practice and diverse assessment strategies that enables all students to demonstrate learning effectively.

Good reads on the differentiated classroom:

Differentiated Instruction: Theory into Practice (Forsten & Hollas, 2004)

Leading and Managing a Differentiated Classroom (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010)

Inclusive Classroom/Equity Pedagogy/Civic Engagement

It is understood that an important part of every teacher’s work is to create culturally inclusive learning experiences as well as building connections between all aspects of [SCHOOL NAME]’s curriculum with “real world” issues. See also “How to Build Multicultural Capacity” on page 51.

Helpful reading on the inclusive classroom and equity pedagogy:

Everyday Antiracism: Getting Real about Race in School (Pollock, 2008)

Other People’s Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom (Delpit, 1995)

The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children (Ladson-Billings, 1994)

Whistling Vivaldi: How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We Can Do (Steele, 2010)

“Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?": A Psychologist Explains the Development of

Racial Identity, revised ed. (Tatum, 2003)

Big Ideas

[SCHOOL NAME] has been especially driven in recent years by Big Ideas—some found in books, others in periodicals, and many on line. Below is a sampling of Big Idea resources that have influenced [SCHOOL NAME]’s culture and practice in recent years.

Books:

The Adventures of Johnny Bunko: The Last Career Guide You’ll Ever Need (Pink, 2008)

Change for Design: How Design Thinking Transforms Organizations and Inspires Innovation
(Brown, 2009)

Creating Innovators: The Making of Young People Who Will Change the World (Wagner, 2012)

*Disrupting Class, Expanded Edition: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World
Learns* (Christensen, Johnson, & Horn; 2010)

Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us (Pink, 2009)

An Ethic of Excellence: Building a Culture of Craftsmanship with Students (Berger, 2003)

Good to Great and Good to Great and the Social Sectors (Collins, 2001 & 2005)

The Students Are Watching: Schools and the Moral Contract (Sizer & Sizer, 1999)

Switch: How to Change Things When Change Is Hard (Heath & Heath, 2010)

A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future (Pink, 2006)

Periodicals:

Educational Leadership

Edutopia

Fast Company

MIT Technology Review

Wired

Web-based resources:

Ars Technica—a tech blog great for keeping up with the latest trends in technology and
technology-
infused culture

IDEO, OpenIDEO, and IDEO.org—an ever-changing collection of design thinking resources

Khan Academy—the original “flipped classroom” resource; mini-lessons on thousands of topics

TechCrunch—a tech and investment blog offering a glimpse of future innovations that will
affect
culture and education

TED (and TEDx)—a vast and growing body of short presentations by social, scientific, and
cultural
innovators and entrepreneurs

RESOURCES

There are a many resources available to **[SCHOOL NAME]** teachers interested in expanding their professional knowledge and awareness:

Listserv(e)s

Listservs are email discussion groups focused on specific topic areas. Subscribers may post queries of their own or replies and comments on existing discussion topics or threads. They can be valuable as ways for teachers to keep abreast of developments or issues in education in general, in their subject areas, or in other areas in which they have an interest.

Faculty members are urged to join appropriate listservs relating to subject matter or to other areas of professional interest. Subject-specific listservs are listed below.

Of general interest to teachers is the ISED-L listserv, an email list through which independent school educators can share concerns and ideas or put forth inquiries relating to all aspects of policy and practice.

Details on subscribing the ISED-L list can be found at

<http://www.gds.org/podium/default.aspx?t=128874>

Past ISED discussion can be searched at the listserv archive at

http://ericir.syr.edu/Virtual/Listserv_Archives

This site also allows searches of a number of other educators' listservs.

There are dozens of high quality online communities and listservs relating to subject matter areas, pedagogy, and school policies. Most generate a readable number of messages each day, and all provide a way for individual teachers to gather information or suggestions from peers or just to track what is happening in your field.

Here are several places for teachers to begin looking for good listservs:

The Arts — <http://www.naea-reston.org/ataglace-links.html>

College Counseling — <http://www.nacac.com/elist.html>

English and English-language literature — <http://www.ncte.org>

History, cultural studies, and social sciences — <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu>

Mathematics — <http://forum.swarthmore.edu/join.forum.html>

Modern Languages — <http://www.cortland.edu/flteach>

http://www.nifl.gov/lincs/discussions/nifl-esl/subscribe_nifl-esl.html

The Sciences — http://pgw.org/images/education_lists.htm

Technology in the classroom — <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~edweb/>

And for more **lists of lists** — <http://privateschool.about.com/cs/maillinglists1/index.htm>

Membership in Professional Organizations

Funding is available for each member of the [SCHOOL NAME] faculty to hold a basic membership in one professional organization relating to teaching in her or his discipline.

Examples of such organizations are

- The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages
- The International Society for Technology in Education
- The National Art Education Association
- The National Council for History Education
- The National Council for the Social Studies
- The National Council of Teachers of English
- The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
- The National Science Teachers Association

Teachers should approach [WHO] in reference to membership.

FUNDING OF ACADEMIC COURSEWORK AND CONFERENCES

Academic Coursework: [SCHOOL NAME] will reimburse employees for a portion of credit-bearing academic coursework toward a first master's degree (or equivalent) at accredited institutions of higher learning.

At the discretion of the [WHO], [SCHOOL NAME] may reimburse faculty members for course or conference fees for academic or professional courses or conferences directly related to the individual's responsibilities at [SCHOOL NAME] but not directly related to the school's immediate strategic goals, including course or conference fees, travel and expenses.

For course work undertaken at the school's behest for contractual reasons relating to professional development needs, [SCHOOL NAME] will reimburse all course expenses—tuition, books, and course fees. Please refer to the *Employee Handbook* for additional details.

Professional Conferences: It is our policy to encourage faculty to present their expertise at the national level, and [SCHOOL NAME] will cover all expenses of faculty members presenting at national conferences or conventions relating to their discipline or field or to matters of pedagogy, curriculum, or school life/policies, provided that the invitation to make such a presentation has come at the result of a competitive or peer-reviewed application/selection process. Faculty members interested in making presentations at any convention or conference should contact [WHO] for advice and support.

Teachers interested in attending professional conferences should **[PROCEDURE]**. Professional development funds will generally be used to train teachers and administrators to meet the needs of the school in advancing its programs. For out-of-town conferences, registration fees, and membership fees (the latter should be charged to departmental funds where appropriate), the school will cover the following expenses:

1. Car travel: mileage at the rate specified per current IRS guidelines; tolls (receipt necessary);
 parking.
2. Other travel: lowest possible airfare or train fare.
3. Special session fees (but not materials).
4. Moderately priced lodging (receipt necessary).
5. Moderately priced meals (receipt necessary).

FACULTY SABBATICALS

SPECIAL SUMMER PROJECTS

8. PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND TEACHER EVALUATION PROGRAM

PROGRAM GOALS

The professional development and growth program at **[SCHOOL NAME]** is keyed to the central elements of the school's mission and strategic plan, and professional evaluation of members of the teaching faculty is based on the aspirations expressed in the document Effective Teaching at **[SCHOOL NAME]**. The comprehensive Professional Development program is designed to meet the goal of helping teachers increase and expand professional competence within our educational framework.

[INSERT YOUR SCHOOL'S PROCESS/PROGRAM HERE]

9. A DICTIONARY—THE LANGUAGE OF [SCHOOL NAME]

[THE ODD AND IDIOSYNCRATIC TERMS THAT ARE UNIQUE IN THE DISCOURSE OF YOUR SCHOOL. INCLUDE THINGS LIKE SPACE NAMES AND NICKNAMES, LANGUAGE RELATING TO CURRICULUM OR STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, HOLIDAY EVENT NICKNAMES, RECENT EPOCHAL EVENTS LIKE SCHOOL PLAYS, AND LEAGUE NAMES. A GREAT WAY TO GATHER CONTENT IS TO ASK A RANDOM GROUP OF TEACHERS TO SIT AND BRAINSTORM FOR A WHILE, AS SOMEONE COLLECTS THE DATA]

[SAMPLE] KEY:

- *M.S. = Middle School*
- *U.S. = Upper School*

ACT – a standardized test, equivalent to the SAT, taken by juniors and seniors as part of the college application process

ADMISSION TOURS – students seeking admission tour the school with families; tours are led by admission officers, student tour guides, or parents; tours may drop in for brief class visits—always at what feels like the most embarrassing possible moment; stay the course!

ADVISOR GROUP – one’s group of advisees

AFTERNOON PROGRAM – (1) the art, athletic, and service activities that take place after classes are over

AISNE (“EYZ-nee”) – the Association of Independent Schools of New England, which sponsors a number of workshops and gatherings throughout the year

ALL-SCHOOL MEETING – weekly gathering of the school community on Thursday morning from 10:10–10:35; all faculty are expected to attend

ASSESSMENT – the general process of collecting evidence of student work and behavior, based on predetermined ideas of what is expected to be learned in a given course or unit of study; in an ideal “progressive world,” work tasks would be designed assessment-first

ASSESSMENTS – the evaluated work tasks, projects, quizzes, tests, etc. assigned to students to assess learning

[SCHOOL NAME NEWSPAPER] – the student newspaper, available online regularly

CHALLENGE – (1) relating to the issue of extending and expanding the level of thinking and understanding in student work; (2) the sheer amount of time and energy required to complete work. *The first definition is the relevant one for teachers; our task is to maximize the level of intellectual challenge for students.*

CLASS MEETING –these generally occur once a week; teachers affiliated with a grade are expected to attend

COMMENTS – narrative reports completed for each student in each class at the end of each term

CONSTRUCTIVIST – an educational philosophy in which the purpose of teaching is to allow and give students the tools to “construct meaning” from intentionally designed experiences; related concepts are “experiential learning,” “student as learner, teacher as coach,” “student-centered learning”

COURSE PROSPECTUS – a document explaining the goals, basic content, and basic expectations for a course; a prospectus should be prepared by the teacher for each course taught

CUM LAUDE SOCIETY – a national academic honor society to which **[SCHOOL NAME]** belongs; student members are inducted in an annual ceremony; faculty who became members of the society in high school or who are members of Phi Beta Kappa are automatically members of the **[SCHOOL NAME]** chapter and participate in the selection of inductees

DESIGN THINKING – “Design thinking is a human-centered approach to innovation that draws from the designer’s toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for ... success.” —Tim Brown, president and CEO of IDEO (see IDEO)

DIVISION – the Upper School or Middle School

DRESS-UP DAY – a day when all males in the community are expected to wear tucked-in dress shirts and not jeans and all females are expected to wear the equivalent; Cum Laude and Final Assembly are dress-up days

EARLY DISMISSAL – occasions when athletic teams are excused from class early to get to games; happens most in the Fall after the change from Daylight Saving time; students are released from class until the time on the notice, no matter what they tell you.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS – somewhat rhetorical and/or open-ended questions that define the issues and/or set up the conceptual framework of a course or unit of study

EXTENDED TIME – some students with documented learning disabilities are allowed to have up to 50% extended time on tests and examinations; see the student’s LEARNING PROFILE and the Extended Time list provided (and regularly updated) by the Academic Services department

F

GLBTQ – abbreviation for “gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and/or questioning”
GOOGLE DOCS – online system for individual and collaborative student work
GOOGLE SITES – the Google service that teachers are required to use to house online information for students
GRADE DEAN – the faculty member designated as a leader in overseeing the life of a particular Upper School grade level
G.S.A. – Gay/Straight Alliance, student-led group devoted to issues relating to sexuality, sexual orientation, and community

HABITS OF MIND – desired cognitive and affective dispositions of students
HEALTH OFFICE – destination and resource for ill students, on the lower level, east side, of the main building section. Staffed from 10:00 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. each day; students should not be there or be sent there other than during those times.
[LITERARY MAGAZINE NAME] – the student literary and arts magazine, usually published twice a year

INCOMPLETE – grade given to a student who has legitimate reason for not having completed work during a term; see page 69 of this handbook for details on the use of this grade
INDEPENDENT STUDY – U.S. students in grades 10–12 may elect to do independent academic study for credit through the Independent Study program; students must find a faculty advisor for each study and complete an application for approval by the Director of Special Programs
“INSPIRE – IDEATE – IMPLEMENT” – the three phases of design thinking

LANGUAGE WAIVER – students with serious language-based learning disabilities are sometimes allowed to “waiver out” of the graduation requirement involving foreign-language study
LEARNING PROFILE – a document prepared by the Academic Services department detail the nature of a student’s diagnosed learning issue and how the student, the student’s family, and teachers can support the student in his or her work
LGBTQ – see GLBTQ
LONG BLOCK – the 120-minute periods in the U.S. schedule

M

NAIS (“en-ey-eye-ess”) – (1) the National Association of Independent Schools, the “trade organization” for independent schools in North America; (2) may refer to the Annual Conference of NAIS, held in late winter
[SAMPLE] NEASC (pronounced in various ways) – the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, the body that accredits **[SCHOOL NAME]**
NURSE’S OFFICE – see HEALTH OFFICE

ORIENTATION TRIPS – events for each grade to orient and welcome students and create a sense of common class purpose; held during the opening week of school

P.A. (“pee-EY”) – the Parents’ Association; sponsor of several events during the year to build community and to support the mission of the School through volunteer efforts

PARENT CONFERENCES – days when parents/guardians are invited to sign up for conferences with each of their children’s teachers; the scheduling is done administratively

PoCC (“pee-oh-see-SEE”) – the annual National Association of Independent Schools People of Color Conference in early December, usually attended by some **[SCHOOL NAME]** faculty and students

PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING – a case-study method of presenting material that promotes inquiry and student “ownership” of materials and skills being taught; involves gradual unfolding of case information and a structured discussion protocol

PROFESSIONAL DAY – a day when there are no classes but on which faculty are expected to be in attendance for professional development

PROJECT MANAGEMENT – a structured method of creating medium- and long-term group work to maximize accountability and effectiveness of the learning experience.

PROSPECTUS – see COURSE PROSPECTUS

PSAT – a standardized “pre-SAT” test administered to tenth- and eleventh-grade students in October; for eleventh-graders this test serves as the qualifying exercise for the National Merit Scholarship program

RUBRIC – a (usually) grid-like evaluation tool in which both the criteria for evaluation and levels of achievement/mastery are clearly stated; the rubric is specific to the piece of work, and is ideally a) generated with student input and b) distributed as the work is being assigned

[SAMPLE] SEVEN-THIRTY CONFERENCE – conference, generally with parents or guardians, regarding a student about whom there is a particular concern, held at 7:30 A.M.; the advisor is usually the emcee, and some or all of the student’s teachers may be invited; the student may be present, as well; teachers are notified by email if they are invited; if invited, attend, punctually

SKILLS – abilities, know-how, and basic knowledge that students can apply to a problem in order to achieve critical understanding and make meaning

SNOW DAY – rare and coveted phenomenon when school is closed for weather-related reasons; “too many” is a bad thing, sometimes; no direct faculty notification—depend on radio, television, or internet

SPECIAL SCHEDULE – dreaded occurrence when the schedule is altered for a day to accommodate a special event of some sort; announced via email

TERM – one of the major divisions of the year

TIAA-CREF (“tie-KREF”) – the pension program in which **[SCHOOL NAME]** participates

