

School Profile 2023–2024
CEEB/ACT School Code: 220222

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Commonwealth School, an independent day school for 154 students in grades 9–12, is recognized for its adventurous intellectual exploration, nourished by outstanding faculty, and inspired by our generous community hailing from diverse backgrounds. In the Class of 2023, 100% were admitted to four-year colleges and universities.

Ranking Commonwealth School does not rank its students.

Transcripts All ninth-grade courses are graded Pass (P)/Fail (E). Straight A's are rare.

Grading Scale: A+ (100-97); A (96-93); A- (92-90); B+ (89-87); B (86-83); B- (82-80); C+ (79-77); C (76-73); C- (72-70); D+ (69-67); D (66-63); D- (62-60); E (below 60).

Unweighted GPA Scale: A+ (4.33); A (4.0); A- (3.67); B+ (3.33); B (3.0); B- (2.67); C+ (2.33); C (2.0); C- (1.67); D+ (1.33); D (1.0); E (0).

Weighted GPA: add (1) for AP and APE courses and (.5) for Honors courses.

Course Offerings Most Honors (H) and all Advanced Placement (AP) courses are taught at the college level. AP equivalent (APE) courses have the rigor that is equivalent to or surpasses AP requirements. Humanities, language, and computer science courses follow in numerical sequence. Commonwealth offers a range of advanced science and math courses which progress in difficulty. Courses marked with an asterisk (*) are taught at AP or APE level.

Biology Biology 1 Biology 2 (AP)*	Chemistry Chemistry 1 Chemistry 1 Advanced Chemistry 2 Advanced (AP)*	Physics Physics 1 (AP)* Physics 1 Accelerated* Physics 1 Advanced* Physics 2 Advanced*
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Electives: Computer Science*, Environmental Science*, Advanced Topics in Neuroscience

Algebra & Geometry Intermediate Algebra Geometry Geometry Advanced Algebra 2/Precalculus Algebra 2/Precalculus Advanced	Statistics Statistics Statistics (AP) (.5 credit)*	Calculus Calculus 1 Calculus 1 Advanced (AP)* Calculus 2 (AP)* Multivariable Calculus* Theoretical Calculus*
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Electives: Differential Geometry, Economics*, Abstract Algebra*, Linear Algebra*, Medieval Islamic Mathematics, The Science & Art of Materials

Class of 2024 Academic Profile

- There are 34 students in the Class of 2024.
- 10 students are recognized as National Merit Semifinalists and 9 have been recognized as National Merit Commended Scholars.
- By the end of July 2023, 79% of AP scores were 4 or 5; 96% of scores were 3 or above. When AP exams are available for APE classes, most students earn a score of 4 or 5.

ACT and SAT The average combined SAT score for the Class of 2023 is 1520. There were too few ACT test takers to provide an average score.

College and University Matriculation 2019–2023

Amherst College, 1	Lesley University, 1	Univ. of California, Berkeley, 4
Barnard College, 2	Macalester College, 3	Univ. of California, Los Angeles, 2
Boston College, 4	Mass. Institute of Technology, 3	Univ. of Chicago, 7
Boston University, 1	McGill University, 1	Univ. of Colorado Boulder, 1
Bowdoin College, 1	Middlebury College, 1	Univ. of Michigan (Ann Arbor), 2
Brandeis University, 3	Mount Holyoke College, 1	Univ. of Oxford, 1
Brown University, 5	New York University, 7	Univ. of Pennsylvania, 3
Carleton College, 2	Northeastern University, 14	Univ. of Rochester, 2
Case Western Reserve Univ., 1	Northwestern University, 5	Univ. of Southern California, 1
Colby College, 1	Pomona College, 2	Univ. of Toronto, 1
Columbia University, 5	Princeton University, 1	Univ. of Wisconsin—Madison, 1
Cornell University, 3	Reed College, 3	Vanderbilt University, 2
Duke University, 2	Rhode Island School of Design, 4	Vassar College, 1
Emory University, 4	Rose-Hulman Institute of Tech, 1	Waseda University, 1
Georgetown University, 1	Royal College of Music, 1	Washington Univ. in St. Louis, 6
Grinnell College, 1	School of the Art Inst. of Chicago, 1	Wellesley College, 5
Harvard University, 8	Smith College, 6	Wesleyan University, 1
Haverford College, 6	Swarthmore College, 1	Whitman College, 1
Johns Hopkins University, 5	Syracuse University, 1	Williams College, 2
Kenyon College, 1	Tufts University, 7	Yale University, 1
King's College London, 2	UMass Amherst, 6	

Notable Facts about Commonwealth School

- **Academic Honors** Commonwealth does not confer academic honors. There is no *Cum Laude* Society, book awards, or prizes for each subject in any year.
- **Arts** Students are required to take one art course per year; approximately one-third of students take two or more. Each class meets 2 periods per week all year.
- **Research and Writing** Using primary sources, students write three long research papers, one each in Ancient History, Medieval World History, and U.S. History.
- **Leadership** Commonwealth emphasizes collegiality over hierarchy. Student government is voluntary. Club leadership is shared or fluid. Twice a year, the entire school travels to a rural New England campground on a student-run, adult-chaperoned trip. Some students serve as Day Heads, overseeing work and activities for the day. Other students are Head Cooks, who plan meals for 200 people and direct crews of some dozen sous-chefs and waiters; they also supervise and serve on clean-up crews.
- **Community Service** Students participate in many service projects over their four years to meet the community service graduation requirement.
- **Projects** Every year, students in grades 9–11 design and complete a one-week project or participate in a two-week overseas exchange. During senior year, students design and complete a three-week project.
- **Jobs** Nearly all students serve two weeks out of three on a crew that cleans up the school kitchen and lunchroom. Each year, twenty students are chosen as head waiters and supervise the clean-up crews.
- **Sports/Fitness** Students are required to participate in a varsity sport or fitness program for 2–3 seasons, three afternoons per week, every year.

Disciplinary Reporting Policy

Commonwealth School views discipline as part of the educational process and normally an internal matter. When colleges ask for information about a student's high school disciplinary record, we will disclose at our discretion and ask the student to disclose accordingly. Should you have any questions about our policy, please contact Gena Rodriguez, Director of College Counseling.

Description of Courses

English

Our English courses require close critical reading of literature and frequent writing of analytical essays. We emphasize rigorous questioning of a literary text, imaginative response to its language and design, and construction of clear interpretive arguments based on textual detail. We aim to develop our students' understanding of the implications of metaphor and nuances of language, and appreciation of the ambiguities and contradictions in great works of literature. In the junior year, students take an AP course that prepares them for the Literature and Composition AP exam.

Languages

Commonwealth offers courses in Spanish, French, Latin, and Mandarin. Modern language classes are conducted in that language from the start of the first year, and the first two years emphasize mastery of grammar and literacy as well as fluency in speaking. Third-year classes are AP for French and Spanish; students prepare for AP Language exams by reading major literary texts, discussing them, and writing essays in the language. Latin classes study grammar and syntax in the first two years and move to the study of such authors as Sallust, Cicero, Catullus, and Ovid in the third year. Fourth-year Latin is an AP class focused on Virgil and Caesar, while fourth and fifth year French and Spanish courses divide into "composition" and "literature" sections (all considered "APE") that require fluency in speaking and writing. Mandarin in the first 3 years emphasizes both speaking and character writing skills as students build their vocabulary and master the tones. The 4th or 5th level of Mandarin prepares for the Mandarin AP exam.

History

Ninth graders all take an Ancient History course that moves from Mesopotamia to Egypt, Greece, and Rome, while sophomores take a Medieval World History course that examines connections between Europe, China, Africa, and the Islamic world; both courses emphasize the interpretation of primary source documents, and in the second semester both teach techniques of research from primary and secondary sources. U.S. and Modern European History are offered to juniors and seniors as AP courses. All history courses include frequent interpretive essays and major research papers in the spring. Other elective history courses include The World Since 1945 and Empires & Nationalism in the 20th Century offered on a rotating basis, as well as an AP course in Microeconomics and Macroeconomics.

Humanities Electives

In junior and senior years, many students take advanced elective courses in such areas as Russian Literature, Creative Writing, Film Analysis, South of the Border: The History and Culture of the Other Americas, and The Craft of Poetry. Labeled "APE" these classes are taught as college seminars, with challenging reading lists and frequent essays involving close reading of texts.

Math

In math, students are provided varying options but all students complete at least one calculus or statistics course. Most students take Geometry in ninth grade. Ninth grade students without a previous full algebra course will take Intermediate Algebra to prepare them for a challenging course of study. The typical student will follow a sequence from Geometry to Algebra 2/Precalculus to Calculus 1, covering most of the AP AB syllabus. They normally finish with Calculus 2 in the senior year, a course that prepares them for the AP BC exam. The most challenging progression typically moves from a Geometry course with considerable emphasis on abstract logic to a sophomore course in Algebra 2/Precalculus. Juniors then take Calculus 1 Advanced, covering 90% of the AP BC syllabus, and as seniors, these students usually take either our top-level Theoretical Calculus, which includes an introduction to college-level real analysis, or Multivariable Calculus.

Science

Students usually take biology and chemistry (Chemistry 1 Advanced or Chemistry 1) courses in freshman and sophomore years; both include lab work, and chemistry uses a college-level text. Juniors must take Physics 1 Advanced (APE), a calculus-based course in mechanics that prepares students for the AP C Mechanics exam, Physics 1 Accelerated (AP) an algebra-based course covering the AP Physics 1 curriculum, or Physics 1, a course that covers the basic principles of physics. Most seniors take a fourth year of science: Physics 2 (APE), a course on electro-dynamics that prepares students for the AP Physics C E/M exam; Biology 2 (APE); or Chemistry 2 (AP). Students can elect to take a computer science elective for all four years; students are prepared to take the AP exam after their second year. Elective courses are often offered in such subjects as Theory of Relativity, Introduction to Wave Physics, Gene Expression and Regulation, Organic Chemistry, Advanced Topics in Neuroscience, Environmental Science, or The Science & Art of Materials.