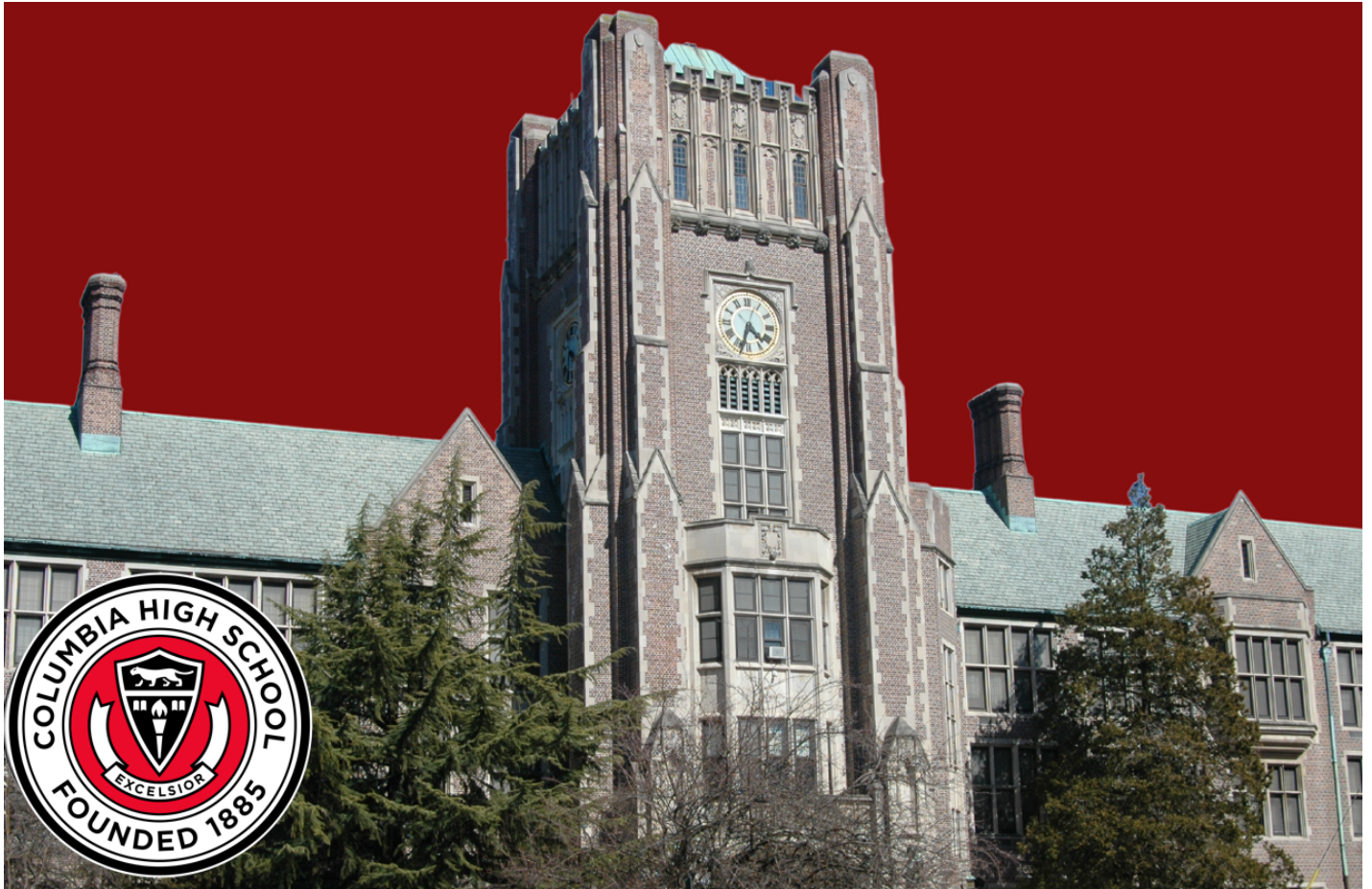


# Columbia High School



## Student/Family Handbook 2023 - 2024

*Learn, have fun, and be responsible!*

CHS Accountability -- Please take responsibility for the energy you bring to our learning environment. Your words matter. Your actions matter. Your teachers and peers matter, so be reflective of how your energy affects the rest of Cougar Nation.

*Excelsior*

1. **What do I do when my child must stay home from school because of illness or other reasons?**  
Parents should call the attendance hotline at (973) 762 - 5600 x1125. Also, parents can enter the absence directly into PowerSchool by following [these instructions](#).
2. **What should I do when my child reports to school late or must leave before the usual dismissal time?**  
You should call the attendance office at (973) 762 - 5600 x 1125. Your child should also email their teachers so they are aware they will be missing class. Students should also check [Canvas](#) for work.
3. **What are the differences among Excused, Verified, and Unverified absences?**  
When an adult calls a student absent because they are sick, then that becomes a VERIFIED ABSENCE. That means we know the student did not “cut” class. An UNVERIFIED ABSENCE means the student did NOT attend class and an adult did not notify the school. Students can face academic and disciplinary consequences for unverified absences so it is vital to contact the school when you know your child will be absent. Moreover, both verified and unverified absences count as absences according to our attendance policy (which is located on pages 10 - 13). EXCUSED ABSENCES are verified absences that are waived from attendance totals. (You can find more on Excused Absences on page 10.)
4. **How can I monitor my child’s academic progress and attendance to make sure there are no issues?**  
You can monitor your child’s progress by using the [ParentPortal website](#). You can also download the app. Parents/guardians who have issues with PowerSchool, should go to this website for help: <https://www.somds.k12.nj.us/district/information-technology/parentportalhelp/>
5. **What happens when students are late to class without an excuse or pass?**  
Repeated tardiness will result in central detention. *Central detention runs from 3:10 pm - 4:10 pm.*
6. **Where can I apply for free & reduced lunch for 2023 - 2024? ([PDF in English](#) or [PDF in Spanish](#))**  
Use this link - <https://www.somds.k12.nj.us/district/food-services/freereducedapplication/>
7. **When are student ID cards issued?**  
All students will receive new ID cards on the first day of school and ***they must wear them in school throughout the day***. They will need their cards for security purposes/building access. Any student can get a replacement card from the main office at a cost of \$5.
8. **Where can I find information about the School Counseling Department and the support they offer?**  
Use this site: <https://sites.google.com/somds.k12.nj.us/columbiahighschoolsoma/home>
9. **Where can I find information on clubs and sports at CHS?**  
Use this site: <https://www.somds.k12.nj.us/columbia/athletics/>
10. **Where can I locate information on working papers?**  
Starting in 2023, working papers for minors became digital through the State's website. The application process can be found at [MyWorkingPapers.nj.gov](https://myworkingpapers.nj.gov).
11. **My child has a serious medical issue. Who do I contact at CHS?**  
A-L last names contact Nurse Therese Crigler ([tcrigler@somds.k12.nj.us](mailto:tcrigler@somds.k12.nj.us)) at 973-762-5600 x1059  
M-Z last names contact Nurse Kim Sikora ([ksikora@somds.k12.nj.us](mailto:ksikora@somds.k12.nj.us)) at 973-762-5600 x1060.

### DAILY BELL SCHEDULE

(Our Cafeteria opens at 7:30 am -- Breakfast is over at 8:15 am)

TIME	CLASS PERIOD
7:55 am – 8:37 am	1
8:41 am – 9:29 am	2/Announcements
9:33 am – 10:15 am	3
10:19 am – 11:01 am	4
11:05 am – 11:50 am	5 (Lunch)
11:54 am – 12:39 pm	6 (Lunch)
12:43 pm – 1:28 pm	7 (Lunch)
1:32 pm – 2:14 pm	8
2:18 pm – 3:02 pm	9

### ½ DAY SCHEDULE (No Lunch)

TIME	CLASS PERIOD
7:55 - 8:32	1
8:36 - 9:15	2
9:19 - 9:56	3
10:00 - 10:37	4
10:41 - 11:18	8
11:22 - 12:00	9

### DELAYED OPENING SCHEDULE

In the event of a delayed opening the school day will start at 10:00 AM

TIME	CLASS PERIOD
10:00 - 10:10	Enter
10:11 - 10:56	4
11:00 - 11:45	5
11:49 - 12:34	6
12:38 - 1:23	7
1:27 - 2:12	8
2:16 - 3:02	9

**COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL**

**17 Parker Avenue  
Maplewood, NJ 07040  
Fax 973 378-7607**

**Telephone 973 762-5600**

	Ext.
<b><u>Principal.</u></b>	
Mr. Frank Sánchez ( <a href="mailto:fsanchez@somsd.k12.nj.us">fsanchez@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> )	1012
<b><u>Assistant Principals/Administrators</u></b>	
Mr. Russell King ( <a href="mailto:rking@somsd.k12.nj.us">rking@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> ) Attendance/Climate & Culture	1016
Mr. Phil McCormick ( <a href="mailto:pmccormi@somsd.k12.nj.us">pmccormi@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> ) 504s/Testing	1022
Ms. Tracie Morrison ( <a href="mailto:tmorriso@somsd.k12.nj.us">tmorriso@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> ) 9th Grade	1224
Ms. Luisa Iuliano-Cabrera ( <a href="mailto:liuliano@somsd.k12.nj.us">liuliano@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> ) Attendance/Climate at Culture	1129
Mr. Richard Porfido ( <a href="mailto:rporfido@somsd.k12.nj.us">rporfido@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> ) Athletics/Clubs	1024
<b><u>Department Supervisors</u></b>	
<b><u>Fine Arts (K-12)</u></b>	
Mr. James Manno ( <a href="mailto:jmanno@somsd.k12.nj.us">jmanno@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> )	1069
<b><u>Physical Education/Health (K-12)</u></b>	
Ms. Nicole Monfasani ( <a href="mailto:nmonfasa@somsd.k12.nj.us">nmonfasa@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> )	
<b><u>Counseling (6-12)</u></b>	
Mr. Anthony Vecchione ( <a href="mailto:avecchio@somsd.k12.nj.us">avecchio@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> )	1033
<b><u>Language Arts (K-12)</u></b>	
Dr. Jane Bean-Folkes ( <a href="mailto:jbean@somsd.k12.nj.us">jbean@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> )	1131
<b><u>STEM (9-12)</u></b>	
Ms. Corrina Parsio ( <a href="mailto:cparsio@somsd.k12.nj.us">cparsio@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> )	1204
<b><u>Social Studies (9-12)</u></b>	
Mr. Christopher Preston ( <a href="mailto:cpreston@somsd.k12.nj.us">cpreston@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> )	1130
<b><u>World Language (K-12)</u></b>	
Dr. Ramon Robles ( <a href="mailto:rrobles@somsd.k12.nj.us">rrobles@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> )	1218
<b><u>Special Education/Child Study Team (9-12)</u></b>	
Mr. Christin Mullen ( <a href="mailto:cmullen@somsd.k12.nj.us">cmullen@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> )	1145
<b><u>Nurses</u></b>	
Ms. Therese Crigler ( <a href="mailto:tcrigler@somsd.k12.nj.us">tcrigler@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> )	1059
Ms. Kim Sikora ( <a href="mailto:ksikora@somsd.k12.nj.us">ksikora@somsd.k12.nj.us</a> )	1060

## WELCOME TO COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL!

The policies and procedures contained in the CHS Handbook for Students and Parents are the result of a concerted effort on the part of the administration, faculty, and students. This information has been carefully prepared and presented, so that it will be of great value in helping you adjust to our school and become an integral part of it.

We hope that you will participate in our varied activities and thus be more engaged at Columbia High School. Remember that your success in this school will be directly proportional to your efforts. ***Be proud of your school, take good care of it, and feel free to make suggestions for improving it.***

Below you will find the **SOMSD Portrait of a Graduate**. Last year, District faculty, administrators, and community members met to discuss and then identify the 21st-century skills and mindsets we want to foster in our schools to ensure Columbia graduates are successful upon the completion of their studies with us. We are proud of the final product as it reflects the shared vision of our unique SOMA community. We will be using the *SOMSD Portrait of a Graduate* as our “north star” as we continue to improve our great school.



*Illustration by Isabel Morgan, Class of 2024*

## **MISSION STATEMENT**<sup>1</sup>

The mission of Columbia High School is to educate, inspire and encourage all students in our diverse community to discover and develop their individual talents and abilities in order to become productive contributors to our democratic society. To accomplish this mission, Columbia High School challenges all students to think critically and creatively, to collaborate respectfully, to solve problems effectively, to utilize technology wisely, and to respond ethically and generously to the responsibilities of global citizenship.

## **BELIEF STATEMENT**

We believe that:

- Each student is a valuable individual whose potential for intellectual, emotional, social and physical growth is enhanced by a stimulating and engaging educational experience.
- Diversity is a strength that enriches our society and will empower our students to thrive in our global community.
- High expectations shared by students, teachers, parents/guardians, and administrators, are essential to student achievement.
- An essential goal of education is the development of independent learners who will be curious and open to new experiences, opinions, and ideas throughout their lives.
- Physical safety and emotional security are essential to personal growth for all members of the educational community.
- Columbia High School embodies the values and aspirations of the community and must collaborate with all members of that community to achieve their goals.
- Supported by a responsive and competent faculty, students must take responsibility for exerting their best efforts and utilizing available resources to achieve success.
- Students will gain the confidence needed for success by learning and using self-advocacy skills.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

Columbia High School must be a place where administrators, staff, students and the community value and work together in a mutually supportive environment to encourage academic and personal excellence and respect for self, for others, and for the educational process.

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<sup>1</sup> The current mission & vision statements were drafted during our last Middle States Accreditation process. We will be beginning that process again in 2023 - 2024 so expect these statements to be updated this year.

## **Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education (CRSE) Definition**

At Columbia High School, we define Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education (CRSE) in this district as the continual acknowledgment, appreciation, and incorporation of student identities and lived experiences in forming identity, skills, intellectualism & criticality as it relates to an ability to understand and make critically informed decisions across lines of difference. Throughout our daily instruction, interpersonal interactions at school, lesson objectives, curricular content, classroom activities, and assessments, our commitment to this goal empowers students as agents of social change and contributes to their overall learning, growth, and achievement.

## **STATEMENT OF STUDENT RIGHTS**

The following are the rights to which all students are entitled:

- To receive a free public education between the ages of 5 and 19 years of age (N.J.S.A. 18A:36.1) (Special education students, ages 3 to 21) are entitled to a free appropriate education.
- To attend school in an environment that is free from discrimination or bias due to race, color, creed, religion, sex, and national origin, disability, or social/economic status.
- To receive due process throughout discipline matters regarding our student code of conduct including notice of the infraction and an opportunity to be heard. Students may be searched by school administrators or their designees as in accordance with state law, based upon reasonable suspicion of evidence that an offense has occurred. Lockers and other storage facilities provided for students are the property of the school and are subject to inspection at any time.

## **NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION**

The Board of Education directs that all students shall be afforded equal educational opportunities in accordance with the law. Applicants for admission and employment, students, parents, employees, sources of referral of applicants for admission and employment, and all unions or professional organizations holding collective bargaining or professional agreements with the School District are hereby notified that this District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, ancestry, marital status, sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status, national origin, religion, age or disability. In addition to the above, Title VI, 42 U.S.C. §2000d, specifically requires that all vocational opportunities be offered without regard to race, color, national origin, sex or disability.



## SEXUAL HARASSMENT, SEXUAL ASSAULT & DATING VIOLENCE

Pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. § 1681 *et seq.* and its enabling regulations, the District may not discriminate on the basis of gender or sexual orientation in the educational programs or activities which it operates. Title IX also prohibits sexual harassment. The District will not tolerate sexual harassment in any form. The Board shall assure that all students are free from sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is not only wrong, it's against the law and will not be tolerated at CHS. Sexual Harassment allegations may also trigger an H.I.B. investigation.

Sexual harassment is unwanted sexual advances, sexual suggestions, requests or demands for sexual favors, and/or other inappropriate verbal or physical conduct made by a staff member, student or outside vendor to a student when that conduct is based on gender and/or sexual orientation, has the purpose or effect of interfering with the person's performance or creates an intimidating, offensive or hostile environment. It includes: gestures, jokes, remarks, stories, graffiti, rumors, touching, grabbing, exposing, unwanted kissing or other sexual conduct.

Any student who has experienced sexual harassment should inform the offender that the behavior is unwanted and unwelcomed, and immediately inform an administrator, teacher, counselor or SAC. The staff member to whom the student reports the harassment should immediately inform the Principal, or designee, who will immediately notify **Dr. Kevin F. Gilbert**, the District's Title IX Coordinator, at [kgilbert@somsd.k12.nj.us](mailto:kgilbert@somsd.k12.nj.us) or at (973) 762 - 5600 ext. 1859.

The flowchart to the right identifies the steps of the Title IX investigative process. Please note that supportive measures can be implemented immediately for the complainant. While elementary and secondary school students retain less control over when disclosure of sexual harassment triggers the school's mandatory response obligations, these students (with involvement of their parents as appropriate) do retain control over whether to accept supportive measures, and whether to also file a formal complainant.

Columbia High School is committed to provide curricular opportunities and/or student programming to cover important topics such as sexual assault, sexual harassment, student relationships, and consent.





**Dating violence** is a serious concern for our young people and statistics show that 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced physical violence by a partner in their lifetime. Since 2011, the state ensured that all districts had a policy to prevent, respond and educate their students and staff on dating violence. For over a decade, SOMSD has incorporated a curriculum in health and PE to prevent dating violence.

Recently, in January of 2023, the Board of Education passed an updated policy on Dating Violence ([5519](#)) at school. As part of the policy each school has designated a school-based advocate to support anyone affected by dating violence. Here at Columbia High School, your advocate is one of our CHS Social Workers, **Ms. Jennifer Easton**. You can contact her via email ([jeaston@somsd.k12.nj.us](mailto:jeaston@somsd.k12.nj.us)) or in person by going to her office in the Counseling Center.

## SECTION 504 ACCOMMODATIONS

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) applies to the District, its programs, services and activities. Federal law requires that the District evaluate, identify, and provide a free and appropriate education to all students who are individuals with disabilities under federal law and reside within the district. Parents/guardians of these individuals are entitled to procedural safeguards, including individual notice and an impartial hearing. Under federal law, “an individual with a disability” is defined as a person who:

1. has a mental or physical impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities (for example seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, or working); or
2. has a record of such impairment; or
3. is regarded as having such impairment.

For further information, **please contact Mr. Phil McCormick, our 504 Coordinator.**

The District will furnish auxiliary aids and services to students, employees, parents/guardians, and members of the public who have disabilities to the extent necessary for communications with other persons, unless it will result in an undue burden on, or a fundamental alteration in the program.

### **Affirmative Action**

Affirmative action shall be taken to ensure that students are protected from the effects of discrimination. In accordance with Title VI, Title IX, the ADA and Section 504, students who experience harassment, less than equal educational opportunities or discrimination, shall use the District’s procedures to grieve such discrimination.

## **Free/ Reduced Price Lunch Program/ Senior Yearbooks/ Graduation Fees**

The South Orange/Maplewood School District participates in the federal program that provides free or reduced price lunches to students who meet federal eligibility requirements. You can access the forms in [English](#) or [Spanish](#). Please return the applications for review to the District Office. Application link: <https://www.somdsd.k12.nj.us/district/food-services/freereducedapplication/>

In addition, according to Board Policy #5466 and N.J.S.A.-18A, **SENIOR students who are eligible for the free or reduced price lunch program are also eligible for a waiver of required fees for graduation and a yearbook. Ms. Cheryl Hernandez will be sending out a GoogleForm regarding this. We also want to thank our partners in the H&SA's Cougar Cares for their support of this initiative.** Eligibility for the fee waiver will be determined using the same standards established by federal eligibility for free and reduced price meals.

## **STUDENT ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Statement of Belief --** It is our belief that on-time arrival and consistent attendance is essential to achieve the maximum benefit of the educational experience. Much of what is presented in class is sequential and vital to student learning. Learning requires continuity of attendance and effort. Repeated tardiness and absences from school or class impede the student's participation in classroom activities. Thus attendance should be and will be a significant factor in the determination of a student's grade, according to school policy.

**Purpose of the Student Attendance Policy --** The purpose of the Columbia High School Attendance Policy is to have each student attend all classes, arriving on time each day and participating fully. Students and parents should familiarize themselves with the provisions and procedures of the policy. It is expected that parents will support the intent of the policy and encourage their children to maintain good attendance. Official school attendance is taken during the attendance period daily. Classroom attendance is taken every period.

### **CHS Attendance Rules**

The State of New Jersey defines a chronically absent student as one who is not present for ten percent (10%) of the school year for any reason, including absences due to medical circumstances.

There are two types of absences recognized by the State of New Jersey, **State-Excused Absences** and **Unexcused Absences**. The State of NJ recognizes only the following types of State-Excused Absences:

- Religious Observances/Holidays (<https://www.nj.gov/education/holidays.shtml>)
- Three (3) separate College Visits (only in 11th and 12th grade)
- Bring Your Child To Work Day
- Participation in observance of Veteran's Day or Board of Elections membership activities
- Closure of busing district leaving students without transportation to receiving district
- Any other rule issued by the Department of Education Commissioner.

School-sanctioned field trips, suspensions, and other absences due to extracurricular activities are excused as well as per the approval of the Principal.

The State of New Jersey considers every other absence, which is not due to one of the reasons above, to be an **unexcused absence**. Columbia High School (as per SOMSD BOE Policy) divides Unexcused Absences into two categories for the purposes of students receiving credit from specific classes.

- **Verified-Unexcused Absences:** Absences for reasons such as funeral attendance, COVID quarantining, doctor's appointment, court dates, etc. require proper documentation within 10 days in order to be considered a Verified-Unexcused Absence. These Verified absences *may* not count toward a student's possible retention at the end of the school year, but are still required to be reported as absences on the end of the year State report.
- **Unverified-Unexcused Absences:** All other absences that lack supporting documentation within 10 days are considered unverified. These absences are counted toward a student's possible loss of credit and are required to be reported as absences on the end of year State report.

An **Attendance Action Plan** is required by the State of New Jersey for any student who accumulates 5-9 unexcused absences for any reason, including medical circumstances. These are designed to assist students and should not be viewed as disciplinary. Students will be contacted by their grade-level Assistant Principal if an Attendance Action Plan is needed.

#### **A. Maximum number of absences**

Students are expected to attend every class including Study Hall. Board Policy 5200 requires each student to be present for at least 90% of class meetings in order to be eligible to receive credit. The number of **verified/unverified-unexcused** absences in each class **may not exceed:**

<b>Full Year Course</b>	<b><u>18 Cumulative Absences</u></b>
<b>Semester Course</b>	<b><u>9 Cumulative Absences</u></b>
<b>Quarter Course</b>	<b><u>5 Cumulative Absences (PE/Health)</u></b>

“Excused absences” will be waived as per NJDOE regulations and do not count against the maximum number of absences. *Parents and students should check PowerSchool Parent Portal each week to monitor student attendance.* ANY PROBLEMS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED PROMPTLY THROUGH DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH THE ATTENDANCE ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL/Attendance Office

#### **B. Verifying Student Absence**

If a student is absent for either all or part of a school day, on the day of an absence a parent/guardian ***must report*** the absence by 8:30 am by calling 973-762-5600, ext. 1125 and/or through the Parent Portal of PowerSchool. To use PowerSchool, login to your account. Click on Forms. Click on Student Absence Notification. Confirm/edit the date and time. Fill in Reason for absence information in box. Click the submit box.

- Doctor notes are to be given to the nurse office when returning to school after an illness or doctor's appointment.
- All 11th and 12th graders are to bring documents to the attendance office when they attend a college visit for their files.
- Late-arrival or early dismissal notes should be turned in to the attendance office.
- **ABSENCE OR TARDY NOTES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED AFTER THE LAST DAY OF EACH MARKING PERIOD.**

### C. Leaving Early/Arriving Late

When a student is late or leaves school early, the parent must notify the Attendance Office as follows:

- **Late Arrival** -- Parents **MUST** call the Attendance Office before 9:00 a.m. or email before 8:30 a.m. and the student **MUST present a note** (which includes the student's full name and grade) to our attendance office (giving a specific reason for the tardiness) immediately upon arriving.
- **Early Dismissal** – When a student is leaving early, the following procedures must be followed:
  - **Grades 9-11** – Parents must send the student in with a note in the morning to present to the attendance office (If the attendance secretary is not available please bring the note to the main office.) When it is time for the student to dismiss, a parent/guardian **must come in to the security desk and sign their child out.**
  - **Seniors** – Parents must call the Attendance Office (ext. 1125) to advise of the student's early dismissal. (Early dismissals and late arrivals may also be reported via PowerSchool.) All seniors **MUST** report to the Attendance Office before leaving school in order to pick up a pass.
  - Should students become ill once they have reported to school, the student **must** report to the health office. The nurse will make the assessment as to whether the student must leave school early. Parents will be contacted for permission to let the student leave (**SENIORS ONLY**) or be asked to come to the school to sign the student out (Grades 9-11).

Parents/Guardians are responsible for ensuring that their child follows the procedures for absences, early dismissals, and tardy arrivals. Failure to follow the prescribed procedures will result in the student being charged with an **unverified-unexcused absence**.

Planned absences are discouraged because they entail the loss of learning opportunity. Students are responsible for obtaining assignments from their teachers in advance of planned absences. Planned absences will count toward the 18 (or 9 or 5) day limit and *may* result in loss of credit. Please note that excessive student absences without acceptable reasons shall be referred to the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P).

After the 10th absence (5 absences for a semester course and 3 for a quarter year course) an attendance conference must be held including the Assistant Principal, the student's school counselor, teacher(s), and the student to discuss the student's absences. The attendance conference may be held over the phone if both the school and parents agree to do so. *During this meeting a student may be put on an attendance contract.* Students who exceed these thresholds and withdraw from the class will need to repeat it in the subsequent year. A student who remains in the class and fails, may take a course in summer school. Alternatively, for students who pass the course, credit may be withheld until they are able to fulfill the required "seat time".

Furthermore, after the 18th absence (9 absences for a semester course and 5 for a quarter year course) a mandatory request for Truancy Court will be made by the Assistant Superintendent of Access and Equity.

#### **D. Unexcused Absences**

- 1. Truancy** -- A student who is absent from school without documented parental permission is considered to be truant. Repeated instances of truancy by students under age 16 may be referred to municipal court. “An unexcused absence that counts toward truancy” is a student’s absence from school for a full or a portion of a day for any reason that is not an “excused absence” as defined by district Policy 5200.
- 2. Tardiness to class** -- Tardy arrival to class disrupts the learning in progress and deprives the tardy student of valuable instruction. Students are required to be on time to their classes. We expect students to be in their seats ready to learn ***at*** the bell.

**If a student has Four (4) tardies (fewer than 20 minutes) to class they shall be assigned one after-school detention for every 4 tardies. If a student is more than 20 minutes late, they will be considered absent unless they have a pass.** Continued violations of attendance expectations may result in more severe disciplinary consequences and interventions.

#### **E. Make-up policy**

When a student’s class absence is excused or verified, the student is allowed two school days to complete missing work/tests for each day absent to receive full credit. For example, if a student has an excused absence of three days, the student will have six school days to complete his/her work. Students are not entitled to make up work or tests missed during an unverified absence. Students who accumulate unauthorized class absences relinquish their right to make up any graded work from that class session. Grades of zero will be entered for work missed during unauthorized absences. If a parent/guardian knows in advance that the student will be absent from school, students should obtain assignments prior to the absence and complete them before returning to school. Suspended students are also expected to obtain their assignments and make an effort to complete their work while out of class.

#### **F. Attendance Appeals**

A student who has exceeded the maximum number of cumulative absences (18 or 9 or 5) may appeal for a waiver of the loss of credit. Appeal forms may be obtained from the grade-level assistant principal. Appeals will be considered when based upon: 1) serious illness which is documented by a physician note; 2) legal obligations beyond the student’s control; or 3) patterns of attendance that demonstrate substantial improvement following earlier instances of absenteeism. Appeals must be filed at the end of each course in an academic year to the school principal.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

As outlined in the [CHS Program of Studies](#), one hundred and twenty (120) credits are required for graduation from Columbia High School. A course meeting for a full year earns 5 credits and one that meets one-half year earns 2.5 credits, Physical Education courses earns 1.25 credits per quarter

Transfer students must meet all state and local requirements in order to receive a high school diploma. No diploma will be issued until the requirements are met. Students must have completed all graduation requirements in order to participate in the graduation ceremony.

### Full Time Status

All students are required to register for 35 credits during each school year.

### Promotion Policy

Students are promoted to the next academic grade upon successful completion of required course credits: Grade 10 (30 credits), Grade 11 (60 credits), Grade 12 (90 credits) & graduation at 120 credits and [successful completion of the NJDOE's state assessment](#).

### Marking System and Report Cards

1. Report cards will be available four times a year and will indicate a letter grade, the number of absences and comments for each course. Parents and students should monitor student academic progress weekly online through PowerSchool
2. Progress reports are available to all parents through PowerSchool midway through each quarter.
3. Grading Scale:

Alphabetic Scale	Numeric Scale	Point Value When Averaging MPs	Final Grade Cutoffs
A+	97 – 100	4.33	4.15
A	93 – 96	4.00	3.85
A-	90 – 92	3.67	3.50
B+	87 – 89	3.33	3.15
B	83 – 86	3.00	2.85
B-	80 – 82	2.67	2.50
C+	77 – 79	2.33	2.15
C	73 – 76	2.00	1.85
C-	70 -72	1.67	1.50
D+	67 -69	1.33	1.15
D	63 -66	1.00	0.85
D-	60 -62	0.67	0.50
F	Below 60	0.00	0.00
NC*		Loss of credit because of excessive absences	

**\*Loss of credit indicated by grades of NC are treated the same as an F and are calculated in the GPA as a 0.00.** If a student retakes and passes a previously failed course during the school year, both classes are reported on the transcript and both grades are computed in the GPA. If a course is retaken during summer school, it is reported on the transcript but not included in the GPA.

**All final grades will be weighted as below**

SEMESTER COURSE			FULL-YEAR COURSE					
MP 1	MP 2	Final	MP1	MP2	Midterm	MP 3	MP 4	Final
45%	45%	10%	20%	20%	10%	20%	20%	10%

*\* Seniors with an A average (A-, A or A+) are exempt from finals. Students should speak with their teachers about this privilege.*

### Honor Roll

Honor Roll status is a special achievement that recognizes students' effort, discipline and accomplishments.

- **Honors:** All grades B or better in every course each quarter.
- **High Honors:** All grades A- or better in every course each quarter.
- **Principal's List:** High honors for the entire year.

### SUMMER SCHOOL

Columbia High School offers summer school for students who have not successfully met New Jersey's minimum core curriculum standards. Students attend classes for 25 days in the summer. Information about summer school courses and fees are available in the spring.

**Courses offered** - Summer school courses are intended to provide students with another opportunity to master key course content before advancing to the next course in a content-area sequence or the next grade. Students are only permitted to take two classes unless one of the classes is Health, Physical Education or Drivers Education. Health, Physical Education, and Drivers Education are quarter courses. Consequently, these courses are only six days in duration during summer school. Students with approval may take more than two of these courses. **Class times are 8:15-10:45 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. -1:30 p.m.** The following courses *may be* offered: [Class times/courses vary]

- |                            |                      |
|----------------------------|----------------------|
| • English I, II, III, & IV | • Algebra I & II     |
| • Physics                  | • Geometry           |
| • Biology                  | • Physical Education |
| • World History            | • Health 9, 11 & 12  |
| • US History I & II        | • Drivers Education  |

**Attendance** – Summer school classes are required by law to meet a minimum of 60 hours. Due to the rapid pace of instruction and the short duration of summer school, prompt and regular attendance is imperative. **If a student misses more than 10 percent of the class (six hours), the student may be dismissed from the program.**



## **Student Expectations**

In order to maintain a positive learning environment at CHS, all students are expected to attend school and classes with punctuality; follow faculty and staff directions; wear and properly use their student ID; exhibit respect for themselves, others, and their property; and take responsibility for their own behavior and learning. At the end of the handbook, we have published the SOMSD 2023-2024 Code of Conduct & Restorative Justice policies and consequences. Below you will find an overview of expectations of student behavior. As always, make sure to exhibit COUGAR PRIDE!

**Campus Conduct** -- It is the goal of Columbia High School to provide a classroom environment that is conducive to learning, supports bell-to-bell instruction, and offers opportunities for students to realize their academic potential. We offer students the opportunity to learn in a positive environment, free from distractions or disturbances. To that end, teachers are expected to convey their expectations for positive learning to their students. General rules for classroom conduct include entering the classroom fully prepared, being on time and ready to focus on learning; being attentive to the teacher and complying with the teacher's classroom rules and procedures; and remaining on task at all times until the teacher dismisses the class at the sound of the bell at the end of each period. All students are expected to adhere to these rules, as well as with other classroom policies and/or procedures that are created and communicated by staff and administrators.

**Conference Period** - Most CHS students take advantage of the academic conferencing at the beginning of the day during period 1. Students seeking help from teachers should report to those classrooms or the library quickly so as not to disrupt our academic environment. Conference sessions are held on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays every week during period 1.

The following rules and procedures regarding school opening are to be followed:

- Students can use the CHS Library during period 1 Conference if there are enough spaces. Make sure to check the [CHS Library website](http://www.chslibrary.org) for information on how to reserve a spot. The CHS Library is also open until 5:15 pm every day. Here's the CHS Library link: [www.chslibrary.org](http://www.chslibrary.org)
- Beginning in 2023 - 2024, select students who do not have a scheduled period 1 will be invited for a mandatory sports study hall held in the cafeteria.
- Clubs should only meet after school to allow for maximum participation. If a club plans to hold a period 1 meeting, it **must** hold an identical session after school that same day.
- Students who have a period 1 class cannot expect to miss class to meet with teachers or make up assignments for other classes.
- Students are expected to comply with all local traffic safety regulations while walking, cycling, or driving to school; failure to do so may result in a summons from the Maplewood or South Orange Police Department. *Students are reminded that they represent Columbia High School while off campus.*

**All students are expected to:**

1. Practice common courtesy and safety in their conduct at school and while traveling to and from school.
  - a. Greet adults and each other respectfully.
  - b. Address school personnel as Dr., Mr., Ms., etc. and respect peers' pronouns
2. Be punctual. (Period 1 begins at 7:55 am, so be sure to enter the school at 7:45.)
3. Enter the school in the morning at the designated time through specific doors (Front Door, Academy Street, or the Main Gym Lobby) and **SCAN in** for attendance purposes
4. Respect all personal and school property, including textbooks, instructional and non-instructional materials, desks, lockers, interior of school, exterior of school, and the neighborhood.
5. Keep CHS safe & secure by **never** opening outside doors for peers
6. A hall pass from a teacher is necessary when a student is out of class during instruction.
7. Follow faculty/staff/security directions at all times.
8. Refrain from swearing and using vulgar language.
9. Act as a positive CHS ambassador when eating lunch off campus (see rules on page 20)
10. Help keep the Columbia campus beautiful by depositing trash in the receptacle.
11. Refrain from vaping and/or smoking (**NO LIGHTERS** allowed on campus)
12. Be responsible for maintaining the security of personal belongings.
13. Balloons are not allowed in school.
14. Follow school rules that prohibit the selling of candy or other non-sanctioned items at school.
15. Follow the CHS Dress Code (**see pages 18 - 19**)
16. Always be honest and forthcoming, especially when it comes to your studies (see below)

**Academic Honesty**

Our students are expected to be honest in all of their academic work (Board of Education Policy 5701). To ensure the integrity of Columbia High School's educational program, a strict adherence to our district policy of academic dishonesty will be enforced. Students are expected to be honest in order to learn and grow. Any breach of this standard endangers the learning process and impugns the integrity of the entire school community. The purpose of education is to prepare students to become lifelong learners, and dishonesty undermines and inhibits that process. No forms of personal and/or academic misrepresentation are permitted. A student who cheats or who helps another person to cheat, is subject to disciplinary consequences.

Students are expected to:

1. Do their own academic work;
2. Refrain from sharing assignments unless authorized to do so;
3. Refrain from engaging in plagiarism when doing research; and
4. Adhere to classroom academic standards when testing.

The District subscribes to Turnitin.com, an electronic resource for helping to detect and prevent plagiarism. If required to do so by their teachers, students must submit their work to the website before presenting the work to their teacher.

**Definition:**

**Cheating** is defined as any misrepresentation of one's academic work.

**Personal Misrepresentation** includes attendance records; presenting falsified notes, passes or names and any other deliberate misrepresentation to school authorities, other than academic work.

**Academic Misrepresentation** includes but is not limited to: stealing, copying or providing answers on any homework, quiz, test, exam, report, essay or other school assignments, and using sources without proper documentation (plagiarism) as well as changing grades.

All teachers will discuss the proper use of *A.I. technology* in their classes. Please keep that in mind when doing homework and completing assignments.

**Procedures --** A teacher who believes that a pupil has been academically dishonest in his/her class will resolve the matter in the following manner:

1. Any student found to have violated the standards for academic honesty will receive a grade of an F for the work. No make-up work will be permitted
2. The teacher shall file a discipline referral with the grade level administrator. The referral must describe in detail the dishonesty that is alleged to have taken place and must request that the matter be reviewed by the administrator.
3. The administrator, in coordination with the teacher and content area supervisor, will prescribe additional penalties depending upon the previous record of the student.
4. Any student leader (captain, officer, editor, class representative, etc.) who violates the standards of honesty may be removed from that position and may not be allowed to hold any position of leadership or trust for the remainder of the school year from the date of the infraction.
5. The teacher informs the Principal, subject supervisor, and Supervisor of Student Activities regarding any determination of academic dishonesty.
6. Serious violations may result in notification to summer programs or colleges dependent on those institution's procedures. Additional consequences may be imposed at the discretion of the Principal.
7. If the student is not in agreement with the disciplinary action of the assistant principal, they may appeal the action to the Principal in accordance with Policy No. 5710, Pupil Grievance

## CHS Dress Code

Students are expected to wear clothing that is safe and conducive to creating and supporting an optimal learning environment. Because no dress code is all inclusive, the administration makes the final determination in deciding the appropriateness of student attire. At CHS, we expect all students to dress appropriately for our educational and professional community while ensuring that all students are treated equitably regardless of gender/gender identification, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, body type/size, religion, and personal style.

Our updated dress code is modeled after the Oregon's National Organization for Women's 2016 project. It is based on the following values:

- All students should be able to dress comfortably for school without fear of or unnecessary discipline or body shaming.
- All students and staff should understand that they are responsible for managing their own personal "distractions" without regulating individual students' clothing/self expression.
- Teachers can focus on teaching without the additional and often uncomfortable burden of dress code enforcement.
- Students should not face unnecessary barriers to school attendance.
- Reasons for conflict and inconsistent discipline should be minimized whenever possible.

Therefore, Students **Must** Wear

- Shirt
- Bottom (pants/sweatpants/shorts/skirt/dress/leggings)
- Shoes (activity-specific shoes requirements are permitted)

Students **May** Wear:

- Hats, including religious headwear
- Hoodie sweatshirts
- Fitted pants, including leggings, yoga pants and "skinny jeans"
- Ripped jeans, as long as underwear is not exposed.

Students **Cannot** Wear:

- Violent language or images, hate speech, profanity, or pornography.
- Images or language depicting drugs or alcohol (or any illegal item or activity)
- Images or language that creates a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class.
- Bathing suits or visible underwear. (Visible waistbands or straps on undergarments worn under other clothing are not a violation.)
- Gaiters that obscure the face (except as a religious observance)
- Lighters or other dangerous/inappropriate accessories that hang from belts or bookbags

Students who violate this dress code will be asked to change their clothing and then return to learning. Parents will be notified when this occurs for assistance.

### **Student Lunch & Cafeteria Conduct**

The cafeteria is available to students during their assigned lunch periods ONLY. **All Freshmen students are required to stay on campus during their lunch period.** Students grades 10 - 12 have the privilege of leaving the building for lunch. Students should either leave the building or report to the cafeteria promptly. Students may choose to eat lunch in the cafeteria or go outside during their lunch period. The open campus privilege may be revoked for violations of the guiding principles for responsible and courteous behavior or for behavior deemed inappropriate by the school administrators. Students who leave will be able to re enter through the cafeteria anytime during lunch OR through the main door or the gym lobby entrance at the bell only.

To reduce episodes of critter infestation, CHS asks students not to eat in hallways, classrooms, the library, or other areas. Violations of this rule will be handled by the appropriate assistant principal. Students are expected to be seated while eating in the cafeteria. They walk into a clean eating area every day and are asked to leave a clean cafeteria for the students in subsequent lunch periods.

The following rules are to be observed by all students:

- Open Campus during lunch is a privilege for students grades 10 - 12 only. This privilege can be taken away with a Code of Conduct violation, habitual tardiness to your next class, or failing to appear at a Central Detention.
- When leaving the building, students are to cross the street safely at the corresponding cross walks. ***Jaywalking is illegal, unsafe, and disruptive to our community.***
- Students are free to enjoy the outside tables on Ritzer but they must respect the PE classes outside and not be disruptive
- Upon returning to the building from lunch, Upperclassmen must re-enter the building using the main entrance, the cafeteria, or the main gym and scan back using their ID cards.
- Keep tables, chairs, and surroundings clean. Each student is responsible for cleaning their table before leaving the cafeteria/outdoor table. If directed by CHS staff to clean up the table, students are expected to cooperate.
- Students will not be permitted to leave the cafeteria without a written pass from the teacher or counselor they will be meeting with.
- To maintain the security of the building, food deliveries by businesses or apps are not allowed
- Students may use the lavatories in the D-wing ground floor during lunch.
- Vending machines can only be used during lunch periods and after school.
- Act as a positive CHS ambassador when eating lunch off campus -- complaints from local businesses can lead to disciplinary consequences

## **CHS: A Healthy & Safe Learning Environment**

**Good Health --** The following section has information on our Health Office and our COVID-19 protocols.

**CHS Nurses.** The Columbia High School Health Office is found in A112 next to the Adult School and across from the East Gym. The Health Office staff provides state-mandated screenings and physicals, as well as basic first aid and emergency medical care for accidents and sudden illness that occur during the school day. CHS has two certified nurses for the 2023-2024 school year including [Nurse Therese Crigler](#) (973) 762-5600 x1059 and [Nurse Kim Sikora](#) (973) 762-5600 x1060.

**Health Office Policies.** Scheduled visits for physicals and other health screenings are excused absences from class. However, students who miss class while they are in the medical office because of illness will be charged with a cumulative absence.

- Students reporting to the health office **MUST** have a hall pass signed by the classroom teacher or an appointment pass issued by the medical office, except with emergencies.
- Students must be evaluated through the health office to be released from the school to home when sick.
- Parents or guardians may give the student permission to go home, but students will only be released to persons 18 years of age or older who are specifically designated on the emergency card by the parent or guardian.
- Students who leave school or do not return to school without properly going through the nurse or an administrator will be considered truant.
- Students who need to use the school elevator due to a medical condition must provide a written request from a physician stating the reason for the accommodation and the length of time necessary. An elevator card may be obtained in the health office. A \$10.00 deposit is required for the electronically-keyed elevator card.

**Student Accident Insurance.** It is advisable to maintain a student accident insurance policy to cover students during periods of school enrollment. If you are interested in insurance coverage for your child, please contact the [SOMSD Business Office](#) for more information. obtain coverage.

**Physical Education Excuse.** An excuse from class for 1 to 5 days requires an explanatory note from the parent. The note is to be brought to the health office at 7:45 AM if you have a period 1 class or 8:15 AM if your day begins with a period 2 class. Students will then report to their physical education class as usual for attendance purposes and present the note from the health office to their teacher. In the event of a long-term excuse from physical education, the treating physician should write a note explaining the reason for the excuse and the length of time involved. Such excuses must be returned each quarter, if applicable. CHS staff will provide alternate programming in accordance with state law. Students who have a medical excuse for physical education may not participate in athletics.

**Home Instruction for Medical Reasons.** If your child is expected to be out of school for more than ten days for medical reasons, after five days, the student can apply to receive home instruction for up to 5 hours per week (10 hours for special education). Contact the school nurse at extension 1059 or 1060 as soon as possible to obtain information on how to secure home instruction.

**COVID Protocols.** Our [District procedures](#) will be updated throughout the year as local and state-level guidelines change. Based on the latest information and guidelines from the CDC and the NJ Department of Health, only COVID-positive students will need to be isolated from school. Please follow the following procedures if your child tests positive for COVID:

1. Email the nurse, principal and attendance office if COVID is the reason for absence
2. Keep your child home for the current 5-full-day isolation guidance.
3. Have your child contact teachers to let them know so they can follow along on Canvas
4. Return on Day 6, as long as they are fever free without the use of fever-reducing medicines and have felt well for 24 hours. (We do not require a negative test upon return, but if you CHOOSE to test upon return and your rapid test is still positive, you must stay out for the entire 10 days and return on day 11.)
5. Wear a mask indoors and outdoors at school on days 6 to 10 after home isolation.

Our building will continue to be **mask-optional** for students, visitors, and staff. Students may wear masks (other than gaiters) if it makes them comfortable during regular school days. CHS students and faculty members are required to wear masks when returning to school from days 6-10 after home isolation.

We encourage parents and students to continue following the CDC/NJDOH promoted safeguards, such as:

- Getting vaccinated and boosted as eligible
- Staying home when you are sick
- Considering wearing a mask in public settings
- Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or using hand sanitizer
- Covering coughs and sneezes and properly disposing of tissues
- Limiting close contact with people who are sick and not sharing food, drinks and utensils
- Practicing social distancing to the greatest extent practicable; and
- Continuing to monitor your health for symptoms. Get a laboratory PCR or Rapid test if you have symptoms

**School Security** -- The following section pertains to student & faculty safety, our top priority. Our strict's Safe & Security Supervisor is Mr. Stanley Valles, [svalles@somsd.k12.nj.us](mailto:svalles@somsd.k12.nj.us)

**Visitors.** All visitors to the campus must sign in with Columbia High School security personnel in the lobby of the main entrance and receive a visitors' badge. In order to receive a badge to enter CHS, visitors must present a valid photo ID and provide a license number (if applicable).

Former students, visiting friends and/or relatives are NOT allowed on campus for liability reasons. If an unverified person enters CHS, they may be charged with trespassing and the student who allowed them entrance will be suspended. In exceptional circumstances, the Principal may permit a visitor on campus; requests for exceptions must be made in writing at least two (2) school days in advance.

Parents who want to visit a teacher or administrator as part of a conference need to call or email first to make an appointment or to inquire if a GoogleMeet can be scheduled.



**CHS Doors.** Students can only enter the aforementioned entrances in which swipe card machines are located. Students may not enter any other door unless as part of a classroom activity (such as Ritzer doors during PE). Once school starts (outside of lunch periods), students may only enter the building through the main entrance. If a student is seen opening the door for another student or propping open an entrance, they will both receive detentions. *Again, keeping the building secure is our top safety priority.*

**CHS Construction Referendum:** From 2023 to 2026, Columbia High School will be undergoing extensive construction. We are excited about the construction because we will be updating our facilities. Please make sure to stay away from all construction equipment including portable toilets (porta-johns) outside on Ritzer. Students must adhere to all safety requirements/measures that are presented by the Board of Education and or building administration during construction including updates to our fire drill & evacuation procedures.

**Student Identification Cards.** All Columbia High School students will be issued a student identification card each year. Students must present their identification card to any school staff member when requested to do so. ID cards are also required for admission to some school events and to borrow materials from the library. In accordance with the school discipline policy, any student who refuses to provide identification, or is unable to provide identification or provides false identification will be subject (B1) to discipline. For students who have lost their Identification Cards, replacement cards are available for a \$5.00 fee. Identification cards can be ordered in the Main Office each school day during lunch and picked up at the library. In the meantime, the student will wear a temporary ID.

**Emergency Evacuations, Drills, and Lockdowns.** The NJ Department of Education requires each school to conduct 20 drills a year: 10 fire drills and 10 security drills. Security drills include Codes Red/Lockdowns and Code Yellow/Shelter in Place as well as table-top discussions with local police and school evacuation drills.

All students will be reminded of our security protocols at the beginning of the year and we will practice our drills at least twice a month as per state mandate. We understand that conducting security drills may cause students anxiety, and so we will always conduct them seriously and with respect to our students' feelings. We will also communicate with our parents on the day of a security drill so they are aware of our practices.

All actions that should be taken during an emergency situation cannot possibly be covered in this handbook; however, there are some actions that are inherent to every emergency situation.

Those are covered below:

- Follow the instructions of your teacher or the adult present in your classroom.
- If in the hallways when an emergency occurs, follow the directives of school personnel.
- Remain quiet so that you do not miss important instructions
- Do not use your cell phone, music player, or ear buds/headphones at any time.
- Stay with your class until you are properly released by a school official.

Treat each practice drill as if it were an actual emergency. Teachers will take attendance at the drills, so be aware that students who fail to return to class after practice drills or who fail to remain with their class during an actual emergency will be subject to disciplinary consequences.

***Video Surveillance.*** All students, parents, and staff are advised that since CHS is a public school facility, students, staff, parents, and visitors do not have a right to expect privacy in connection with their actions and activities while in, on or about the school facilities. Many areas of the high school campus, both internal and external, shall be subject to observation and monitoring by video cameras. The tapes of such observations shall be available for use by the school district, its staff, or law enforcement agencies. The video surveillance is not used in an attempt to recover lost/stolen items that are prohibited in school.

***Pedestrian Safety and Courtesy.*** Students are reminded they should comply with all traffic safety regulations when crossing intersections while traveling to and from school. Students should obey "WALK" and "DON'T WALK" signals. Crosswalks should always be used and students should check traffic prior to crossing the street. Students should walk on sidewalks at all times, where they are available, coming to or leaving Columbia High School. Failure to do so could result in a summons issued by the Maplewood or South Orange Police Departments and/ or revocation of lunch privileges. Be polite to other pedestrians, give them room, and use appropriate manners. Please be a safe pedestrian, and be mindful that you represent Columbia High School during off-campus periods.

***Disciplinary Remediation and Consequences.*** Columbia High School students are expected to follow the school rules listed in the [Code of Student Conduct](#) (Board Policy 5500 & Board Policy 5600 ) and to exercise good judgment regarding their behavior at all times. If a student chooses to break the rules or interfere with the learning of other students, she/he must accept the consequences and take responsibility for her/his actions.

The following corrective measures may be utilized by teachers:

- Positive discipline interventions – redirection and classroom consequences.
- Change seating location.
- One on one conference with students.
- Phone contact and/or conference with parents.
- Assign detention.
- Refer students to Counselor or the Assistant Principal.

Our **Code of Conduct** outlines the consequences for inappropriate student actions referred to the Assistant Principal, and/or Principal. This Code of Conduct is intended to provide general notice to students of prohibited behaviors and possible disciplinary actions. Nothing herein prevents the Board or District Administration from exercising their discretion in accordance with this Plan, Board Policies, State law or regulations, or federal law or regulations. The Plan constitutes a guideline, not a comprehensive and exhaustive code.

Student discipline is handled on a priority basis. Detentions, suspensions and positive behavior intervention plans will be assigned as soon as possible. Every effort will be made to deal with infractions in an expedient manner and parents/guardians will be notified.

Please refer to the **[Code of Conduct](#)** addendum to this handbook to best understand the District's restorative philosophy and consequences one may receive for violating the Code of Conduct.

## **STUDENT SERVICES**

### **SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAM / GUIDANCE** (Website: <https://bit.ly/3RZY361>)

***Philosophy of Counseling.*** The [Columbia High School Counseling Center](#) is committed to the total development of the child. We encourage the fulfillment of intellectual aspirations by developing competence in our students through placement in academically challenging programs. We endeavor to help each student achieve his/her potential as a distinct entity, according to individual interests and abilities. We believe the counseling process must include deliberate nurturing of such essential virtues as integrity, honor, self-discipline and a respect for authority.

Columbia High School is noted for its outstanding record of college placement and academic counseling offered through its guidance and counseling department. The department provides students, parents and faculty with a variety of services that enable the student to participate fully in the educational program. Beginning in 10th grade, each student is assigned to a guidance counselor. Conferences between the student and counselor are held periodically. Parents are welcome to meet with their child's guidance counselor by appointment.

Specific counseling services are offered to assist each student to make more effective adjustments to the high school environment. The counseling staff provides assistance to parents and students in many areas such as: academic planning, orientation to the school, assistance with academic challenges, career counseling and planning, personal and social counseling, college, technical, and vocation school planning and placement, and financial aid and scholarship information.

***Counselor Visits.*** To see a counselor, a student needs only to fill out a request from the [Counseling website](#). If there are no available slots, stop by the Counseling Office in the B Wing and make an appointment. Parents may also call or email the counselor to arrange an appointment.

***The Counseling Annex.*** Located in the CHS Library, the [Counseling Annex](#) houses all of the academic and social emotional resources your school counselor may refer you to. Make sure to check out the SLAM Lab, Achieve Tutoring, meet with a counseling intern, or join a group! Also come up and check our programming calendar filled with awesome workshops and seminars. If you have any questions, you can contact Ms. Jennifer Easton or Ms. Marcia Hicks.

***SACs.*** Specific assistance in the area of substance abuse and crisis intervention is readily available through the services of two [Student Assistance Counselors \(SAC\)](#). Students who voluntarily seek assistance are entitled to strict confidentiality and will not be subject to discipline for past conduct regarding use. Ms Dorota Martinez works with 9th Graders & 12th graders while Mr. Michael Loupis works with 10th and 11th grade students.

***Schedule Changes.*** The Columbia High School master schedule will be built based on students' course requests submitted by April 1, 2023. Students are expected to honor their commitments to attend and satisfactorily complete the courses requested by this date.

Students received their schedule in July. After then, changes will only be considered according to the guidelines listed below and are subject to availability.

- Correction of a scheduling error
- Addition of a required course
- Addition of course/credits required for June 2024 graduation
- Changing a course to/from an academic, honors, or AP
- Adjustment for summer school completion

***It is important to note that any request for a teacher change will not be honored.***

Students will only be able to add/drop classes during the time frame below. All of this information can be found in the [Program of Studies](#) on the Counseling Website.

### Requires Guardian & Department Supervisor Approval

Estimated schedule change windows (exact dates TBD)	Add Semester 1 (S1) or full-year (FY) courses	Drop Semester 1 (S1) or full-year (FY) elective* courses Rolling through 10/15	Drop any AP class	Change levels (other than AP)	Withdraw Semester (S1) or full-year elective* (FY) (WP or WF on transcript; not included in GPA)	Drop Semester 2 (S2) elective*	Add Semester 2 (S2) elective*
1: 9/9-9/24	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
2: 10/11-10/15		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
3: 11/22 - 12/01			✓ (with supervisor approval)	✓	✓ (S1, FY elective)	✓	✓
4: 2/7-2/11						✓	✓
5: 3/7-3/11						✓	

**SAT.** Most colleges require the SAT test for college admissions. Most students consider taking the SAT in March, May, or June of their Junior Year, and seniors often take the SAT again in October of their Senior Year.

Only SAT score reports from completed and scored tests will be sent to colleges, universities and scholarship programs. Students can only send scores that appear next to test dates on their SAT Status page. If a student decides to use Score Choice, only those scores from the test dates you choose will be sent. If you decide not to use Score Choice, all available scores will be sent, including those from previous test administrations.

All necessary materials for registering to take the SAT are available in the Counseling Center.

- COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL TEST CENTER CODE 31472
- MILLBURN HIGH SCHOOL TEST CENTER CODE 31511
- COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL CEEB CODE 310750

***The American College Test (ACT)*** Another series of college admissions tests is the American College Test (ACT). Be sure to check with your counselor if you are uncertain which test is best for you. The ACT is somewhat different from the SAT I, including four tests that “measure academic abilities in the areas of English, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Natural Sciences.” Although these four subject areas are being tested, the “tests contain a large portion of analytical, problem-solving exercises and few measures of narrow skills.” Students receive scores for each of the four tests and a composite score. Students who feel that their strengths might be better measured by a test of this nature, with less emphasis upon mathematical ability, should consider the ACT as an option. Additional information regarding the ACT is available in the Counseling Center.

***PSAT/NMSQT.*** Taking the PSAT/NMSQT is an excellent way to prepare for college. Columbia High School provides free PSAT testing for all Sophomores and Juniors every October. The 11th-grade test (PSAT/NMSQT) allows students to practice for the SAT and to also compete for national scholarships. Accommodations for the PSAT can only be awarded by CollegeBoard. If you need assistance with that process contact your Child Study Team member or Mr. Matthew Endlich at [mendlich@somsd.k12.nj.us](mailto:mendlich@somsd.k12.nj.us).

## **ATHLETICS & EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES & CLUBS ([Website](#))**

***Athletic & Activities Office.*** The Athletic & Activities Office is located in A102. The key staff members in this department are

- [Mr. Richard Porfido](#), Supervisor of Athletics and Activities (x1024)
- [Ms. Stephanie Goncalves](#), Administrative Assistant & Facilities Coordinator (x1025)
- [Ms. Vannessa Carney](#), Athletic Trainer (x1090)

***CHS Extracurricular Equity Policy.*** Please remember that there are ***NO*** mandatory membership dues, participation fees, or financial obligation of any kind to participate in any CHS team, club, or activity. Extracurricular opportunities are part of the educational experience at CHS and are open to all students, in accordance with the District’s Access and Equity policy

***Clubs & Activities.*** There are scores and scores of extracurricular opportunities at Columbia High School. Our clubs change every year so it is important to attend the annual Activity Fair at the beginning of the year. Students and parents can access the current [list of clubs](#) by clicking on “Activities” on the Columbia High School website, <https://www.somsd.k12.nj.us/columbia/>.

**Sports.** Participation in interscholastic athletics and extracurricular activities serves a wide range of purposes and meets the following goals:

- To provide a variety of experiences which foster a sense of teamwork and opportunities for student leadership;
- To allow youngsters to gain a sense of self as well as an appreciation for the value of each individual as a contributing member of a group working toward a common goal;
- To ensure that the interests and talents of the vast majority of students can be cultivated and nurtured;
- To involve students in worthwhile, productive, and positive after school activities

At Columbia High School we offer more than 25 sports opportunities across three seasons. Students and parents can find the list of coaches and athletic opportunities on our school website at <https://www.somds.k12.nj.us/columbia/athletics/>.

**Option 2.** Athletes can use their time in competitive sports as a substitute for portions of the CHS Physical Education curriculum (but not health). Students need to complete the [Option 2 request form](#) to receive this privilege. More information can be found online at <https://www.somds.k12.nj.us/columbia/athletics/option-2/>

**Posters.** All posters must be approved by the Director of Student Activities prior to posting. Posters must be removed by the sponsoring group following the event. Posters must relate to events sponsored by a CHS organization. They should not be attached to painted surfaces but must be appropriately affixed to tiled areas only.

**Sports Schedules.** Cougar High School participates in the Super Essex Conference and we play teams in our greater Essex County area. Schedules for games can be found [online](#), but you can also download the AS mobile app (for Activity Scheduler) and then choose CHS as a “favorite.”

**Friday Night Lights.** This year, Friday Night Lights are back! We know that CougarNation will make us proud by behaving appropriately. Let’s prove we can handle that responsibility!

Columbia High School Principal @CHSPPrincipalNJ · Jan 19  
So proud of the @SOMSDK12 Athletic program (coaches, players, and fans) who were recognized as the NJSIAA best Sportsmanp Award winner for the 2nd time in 3 years! This shows that CHS is a first-class organization with great students and coaches. #CougarNation #CougarPride



## **CHS LIBRARY ([www.chslibrary.org](http://www.chslibrary.org))**

The CHS Library is the intellectual hub of Columbia High School. It also houses the Achieve Tutoring Services, the CHS Archives, the Counseling Annex including the SLAM Lab, and MAC (the Minority Achievement Committee).

***Librarians & Counselors.*** The following personnel manage programming held at the CHS Library.

- Mr Jeffrey Cosgrave, Librarian/Media Specialist [jcosgrav@somds.k12.nj.us](mailto:jcosgrav@somds.k12.nj.us)
- Ms. Suzanne Ng, Librarian/Media Specialist [sng@somds.k12.nj.us](mailto:sng@somds.k12.nj.us)
- Ms. Shannon Kirk, Achieve Tutoring Coordinator, [skirk@somds.k12.nj.us](mailto:skirk@somds.k12.nj.us)
- Ms. Marcia Hicks, Counseling Annex & MAC Coordinator, [mhicks@somds.k12.nj.us](mailto:mhicks@somds.k12.nj.us)

***Library Policies.*** The library opens at 7:48 AM; school starts at 7:55 AM. The library stays open after school until 5:15 PM. Make sure to observe the following procedures to properly use library services:

- Student IDs are required for all library services.
- Students can reach out to [chslib@somds.k12.nj.us](mailto:chslib@somds.k12.nj.us) to have PowerSchool / canvas / school email accounts reset
- Students can visit the library for chromebook tech issues and even receive a loaner if available. Parents can visit the [SOMSD 1:1 webpage](#) to learn more about the Chromebooks and even use the [Columbia High School Student Chromebook Repair Form](#) found there.
- Students can reserve a spot in the library during one's lunch, study hall, or free period and after school by using the QR Code found in the library's website <http://www.chslibrary.org/>
- Students interested in receiving academic assistance should complete the form on the [Counseling website](#).
- Students must eat in the cafeteria only. Although food is not permitted in the library, students may drink bottled water if they have it.
- Students may borrow books and other materials for two weeks at a time; these can be renewed. Students may receive a fine for lost and damaged items so materials can be replaced.
- Students can always access databases and electronic copies of materials from home by using the [CHS library homepage](#).

## **CHS MAIN OFFICE**

The Main Office at Columbia High School is staffed by the administrative team's secretaries. You can always go there to check to see if a building administrator is available.

***Student Lockers.*** Remember that student lockers, whether hall lockers or physical education lockers, are the property of the school district and subject to inspection at any time. Here are the procedures for lockers:

- Current students will use the same lockers as last year. The locker combination can be found in PowerSchool. Students cannot use their own locks and must use school issued locks. Unauthorized locks will be cut off.
- New students grades 10 -12 will receive a locker and combination when they start school. Freshmen students will receive their lockers (with a lock) during orientation. It will also appear on PowerSchool.
- Students should never share lockers nor give their combinations to other students.
- CHS is not responsible for lost or stolen property.



**Working Papers.** High schools in New Jersey no longer are responsible for assisting teens with working papers. Starting in June 2023, working papers for minors have gone digital through the State's website. The application process can be found at [MyWorkingPapers.nj.gov](https://myworkingpapers.nj.gov).

**Lost and Found.** Students should not bring valuable articles to school such as large sums of money or expensive electronic devices including cell phones or video game players. Students are encouraged to insure valuable items since the school is not responsible if such items are lost or stolen. Students are expected to monitor their own belongings and to secure valuables in their lockers during the school day. In order to prevent loss, please mark all belongings with indelible ink or by sewing on name tags.

Students who find or lose articles are urged to report to the security desk. Owners claiming lost articles must give satisfactory identification. Large amounts of clothing and other articles are accumulated in the lost and found department. After 30 days, unclaimed articles are donated to charitable organizations.

**Bicycles & Motorized Transportation ([Updated February 2023 BOE Policy 5514](#)).** Students bringing their own transportation must always follow local ordinances and state laws. As of February 2023, motorized bikes and scooters are **no longer allowed** on campus.

There are many bicycle racks provided for students in the front of the building on Parker Avenue. Students who park their bikes at the rack should use their own sturdy-locking mechanism, and, if it is a bicycle, park it front wheel in. This will help us to maximize the number of bicycles we can accommodate. Mopeds MUST be parked in the PE Parking Lot and locked around one of the signs there. That is because we do not want a moped to be driven on a sidewalk.

The South Orange and Maplewood School District cannot be held responsible for lost or stolen bicycles/motorized transportation. That being said, we have added new, more sophisticated cameras near the bike racks so if a bicycle is stolen or vandalized, make sure to contact Mr. Sanchez.

**Change of Address, Phone numbers, or Email address.** For all changes to your home address, it is imperative that you promptly notify the Registrar's Office at 525 Academy Street in Maplewood. The number is (973) 762-5600 x 1830. CHS personnel do not have the authority to alter the address under which you registered as a resident. Parents/guardians can update all other information through PowerSchool including home, work, and cell phone numbers, email addresses, and emergency contact persons. If you have issues with PowerSchool, use this website:  
<https://www.somds.k12.nj.us/district/information-technology/parentportalhelp/>

**Electronic Devices & Unauthorized Items.** Unauthorized items brought to school such as, but not limited to, speakers, laser pointers, aerosol cans, toys, smelling salts, and related items, may be confiscated by school staff. Confiscated items will be returned to parents by appointment. Items not recovered within a reasonable period of time will be discarded. Subsequent violations will result in disciplinary consequences. The primary objective of prohibiting students from bringing restricted materials to school is to ensure students' focus on educational tasks, students' safety, and to prevent loss or damage to private property. Any student who brings an illegal item that would be considered like a weapon or drug, like pepper spray, will face consequences through the Code of Conduct and the Maplewood Police will be contacted.

***Cell Phones & Smart Electronics ([BOE Policy 5516](#))***. Although it is important for students to have their phone at school, it is still a privilege and it ***can be taken away if they fail to honor the following procedures***:

- High school students may use their cellphones during lunch break and in between classes as long as it does not create a distraction, disruption or otherwise interfere with the educational environment, during after school activities (e.g. extra curricular activities) and/or at school-related functions. A teacher may confiscate a student's phone if a student is found using their phone during class. Students will then be able to have the phone returned to them after class unless it is the second time. Then the phone can be collected after school in the main office or may require a parent/guardian to pick up the item..
- Use of personal communication devices (cellphone, watches, etc) at any other time is prohibited and they must be powered completely OFF and stored out of sight to ensure academic honesty during any classroom assessment.
- Students can text outside of the classroom, library, common spaces, and in the cafeteria, but we ask students to not make phone calls or use Face-Time in the halls.
- Students must adhere to the acceptable use policy
- Playing audible music is disrespectful to others who do not want to listen to your music. Therefore students who want to listen to music should wear earbuds/headphones during free periods/lunch.
- Photo or video recording is allowed only when permitted by a teacher for educational purposes. Review the Code of Conduct for a violation of this policy.

***Field Trips and Assemblies.*** These activities are designed to enhance the curriculum and expose students to a wide variety of topics and issues and are often related to the curriculum. Attendance at and participation in these activities is a privilege, not a right. Inappropriate behavior may result in the revocation of student privilege to attend such events.

***Senior Information & Privileges.*** It is important for us to celebrate our Seniors during their final year at CHS. Because we have many events planned for them, it is important for parents and Seniors to follow their activities by connecting with Mr. Woolard, the 12th-Grade Assistant Principal and their counselor and/or CST case manager. Parents and students should also follow the [Class of 2024 website](#) which is replete with helpful links and information. Since these 12th-grade are privileges and not entitlements, there are certain standards that must be met before students enjoy these privileges. They are outlined below:

- **The Commencement Ceremony** represents the culmination of four years of hard work, and is a showcase for both Seniors and parents. Seniors must meet the minimum academic curriculum standards and must have earned the required number of credits to participate in graduation. Participation in commencement exercises is a privilege; the principal reserves the right to prohibit any student from attending commencement ceremonies.
- **The Prom** is open to all Seniors provided they are in good standing with the school. This means that the senior must not have outstanding detentions. A suspension does not necessarily preclude a senior from attending Prom; however, serious disciplinary issues may be a hindrance. Disciplinary issues will be dealt with on a case-by- case basis. All seniors attending prom must have a Prom Permission Slip completed and signed by a parent/guardian as well as a school identification card. Administration must approve all non-CHS guests.

- **The Homecoming Dance**, open to all Seniors and Juniors, is scheduled to be held on October 21st this coming year. All outstanding detentions, if any, must be served. Seniors who break the alcohol or drug contract during Homecoming CANNOT attend prom; Juniors who break the contract will not be allowed to attend the Homecoming Dance their Senior year. This event is restricted to CHS students only, and students attending homecoming must present a school identification card upon entry.
- **Parking** is extremely limited at CHS, so carpooling is strongly encouraged. Seniors who wish to drive their own vehicles to school may submit an application for on-campus parking. Completed applications must be submitted at the beginning of each marking period by the date indicated on the application. Submission of an application does not guarantee a parking space since there are about 70 senior parking spaces. These spaces are assigned by lottery to seniors for each marking period. In the event that all spaces are not assigned during a marking period, we will open the lottery to former winners. Once parking spaces are assigned, Seniors are only permitted to park in the space assigned to them. A Senior's parking privilege will be revoked for suspension, parking in any unauthorized space (i.e. Flagpole, AV, Gym, Valley, and Gleason Parking lots), outstanding detentions, and/or repeated disciplinary referrals. Seniors who choose to park in unauthorized spaces are also subject to parking fines. ***STUDENTS PARK AT THEIR OWN RISK.***

### ***Study Hall Rules***

All students MUST report to their Study Hall class. If not they will receive a "cut" or unverified absence and receive an after-school detention. If a student does not attend the detention then they may lose extracurricular privileges like open lunch or attending sporting activities.

If students want to go to the library during study hall, they must FIRST report to study hall and show the teacher that they reserved a space in the library and then go to the library. Upon entering the library, the student must sign in.

Seniors who have a study hall adjacent to their lunch can leave the building for both periods but they must first apply for the privilege with Ms. Hernandez in the main office. As per BOE Policy 5320, Seniors who are assigned to a last period study hall may be excused for that period provided the student's parent/legal guardian has given prior written request to attendance office and provided the excused student leaves the school grounds.

### ***Columbia High School Alma Mater***

Oh! Columbia, thou has taught us  
 The path that we should tread  
 By thy rules of pride and honor  
 In our work and play we're led  
 In the year of life's hard struggle  
 We care not what's in store,  
 For thy motto is our motto  
 And our cry "Excelsior!"\*

\*Excelsior: More lofty; still higher; ever upward. (From the latin excellere.)