

2010-2011

**STUDENT  
HANDBOOK**

**Commerce Middle School**

**Patrick Just, Principal**

606 Culver Street, Commerce, Texas 75428

Phone: 903-886-3795

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Kathy Campbell, Librarian  
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Nancy Nation, PEIMS

## Faculty

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Christine Beard	Language Arts
Jeremy Bridges	Reading
Pam Cole	Texas History
Jamie Conley	Language Arts
Debbie Dunham	Reading
Joyce Harris	Spanish/ESL
Taylor Huffman	Athletics/PE/Health/Speech
Janet John	Social Studies
Sarah Jones	Technology
Mardi Leist	Resource Math
Debora Lytle	Art
Clayton Minor	Social Studies
Tiffany Moreland	Athletics/PE
Stephen Netsch	Band
Jenna O'Neal	Athletics/PE
Harley Pier	PE/Athletics
Cindy Pierce	Science
Lois Pritchard	Science
John Pullen	Team Math/Athletics
Sherry Rector	Language Arts
Celia Reid	Math
Valerie Roberson	Language Arts
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## **PREFACE**

To Students and Parents:

Welcome to school year 2010–2011! Education is a team effort, and we know that students, parents, teachers, and other staff members all working together can make this a wonderfully successful year for our students.

The Commerce Middle School Student Handbook is designed to provide a resource for some of the basic information that you and your child will need during the school year. In an effort to make it easier to use, the handbook is divided into two sections:

**Section I—PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**—with information to assist you in responding to school-related issues. We encourage you to take some time to closely review this section of the handbook.

**Section II—OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS**—organized alphabetically by topic for quick access when searching for information on a specific issue.

Please be aware that the term “the student’s parent” is used to refer to the parent, legal guardian, or any other person who has agreed to assume school-related responsibility for a student.

Both students and parents should become familiar with the Commerce ISD Student Code of Conduct, which is a document adopted by the board and intended to promote school safety and an atmosphere for learning. That document may be found as a separate document sent home to parents and posted at [www.commerceisd.org](http://www.commerceisd.org). It is also available in the principal’s office.

The Student Handbook is designed to be in harmony with board policy and the Student Code of Conduct. Please be aware that the handbook is updated yearly, while policy adoption and revision may occur throughout the year. Changes in policy or other rules that affect Student Handbook provisions will be made available to students and parents through newsletters or other communications.

In case of conflict between board policy (including the Student Code of Conduct) and any provisions of the Student Handbook, the current provisions of board policy and the Student Code of Conduct are to be followed.

After reading through the entire handbook with your child, keep it as a reference during this school year. If you or your child has questions about any of the material in this handbook, please contact the principal.

1. Also, please complete and return to your child’s campus the Parental Acknowledgment Form.

[See **Obtaining Information and Protecting Student Rights** and **Directory Information** for more information.]

Please note that references to policy codes are included so that parents can refer to current board policy. A copy of the district’s policy manual is available for review in the school office or online at [www.commerceisd.org](http://www.commerceisd.org)

## SECTION I: PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section of the Commerce Middle School Student Handbook includes information on topics of particular interest to you as a parent.

### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

#### Working Together

Both experience and research tell us that a child's education succeeds best when there is good communication and a strong partnership between home and school. Your involvement in this partnership may include:

- Encouraging your child to put a high priority on education and working with your child on a daily basis to make the most of the educational opportunities the school provides.
- Ensuring that your child completes all homework assignments and special projects and comes to school each day prepared, rested, and ready to learn.
- Becoming familiar with all of your child's school activities and with the academic programs, including special programs, offered in the district.
- Discussing with the counselor or principal any questions you may have about the options and opportunities available to your child.
- Reviewing the requirements of the graduation programs with your child, if your child is entering ninth grade.
- Monitoring your child's academic progress and contacting teachers as needed. [See **Academic Counseling** on page 21 and **Academic Programs** on page 13.]
- Attending scheduled conferences and requesting additional conferences as needed. To schedule a telephone or in-person conference with a teacher, counselor, or principal, please call the school office at 903.886.3795 for an appointment. The teacher will usually return your call or meet with you during his or her conference period or before or after school. [See **Report Cards/Progress Reports and Conferences** on page 40.]
- Becoming a school volunteer. [For further information, see policies at GKG and contact the school counselor at 903.886.3795.]
- Participating in campus parent organizations. Parent organizations include: Commerce Middle School PTO.
- Serving as a parent representative on the district-level or campus-level planning committees, assisting in the development of educational goals and plans to improve student achievement. For further information, see policies at BQA and BQB, and contact the principal at 903.886.3795
- Serving on the School Health Advisory Council, assisting the district in ensuring local community values are reflected in health education instruction. [See policies at BDF, EHAA, FFA, and information in this handbook at **School Health Advisory Council** on page 34.]
- Attending board meetings to learn more about district operations. [See policies at BE and BED for more information.]

## **Parent Involvement Coordinator**

The Parent Involvement Coordinator, who works with parents of students participating in Title I programs is Julia Robinson and may be contacted at 903.886.3755.

## **PARENTAL RIGHTS**

### **Obtaining Information and Protecting Student Rights**

Your child will not be required to participate without parental consent in any survey, analysis, or evaluation—funded in whole or in part by the U.S. Department of Education—that concerns:

- Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student’s parent.
- Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student’s family.
- Sexual behavior or attitudes.
- Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior.
- Critical appraisals of individuals with whom the student has a close family relationship.
- Relationships privileged under law, such as relationships with lawyers, physicians, and ministers.
- Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or parents.
- Income, except when the information is required by law and will be used to determine the student’s eligibility to participate in a special program or to receive financial assistance under such a program.

You will be able to inspect the survey or other instrument and any instructional materials used in connection with such a survey, analysis, or evaluation. [For further information, see policy EF(LEGAL).]

### **“Opting Out” of Surveys and Activities**

As a parent, you have a right to receive notice of and deny permission for your child’s participation in:

- Any survey concerning the private information listed above, regardless of funding.
- School activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information gathered from your child for the purpose of marketing or selling that information.
- Any nonemergency, invasive physical examination or screening required as a condition of attendance, administered and scheduled by the school in advance and not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student. Exceptions are hearing, vision, or scoliosis screenings, or any physical exam or screening permitted or required under state law. [See policies EF and FFAA.]

### **Inspecting Surveys**

As a parent, you may inspect a survey created by a third party before the survey is administered or distributed to your child.

### **Requesting Professional Qualifications of Teachers and Staff**

You may request information regarding the professional qualifications of your child’s teachers, including whether a teacher has met state qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction; whether the teacher has an

emergency permit or other provisional status for which state requirements have been waived; and undergraduate and graduate degree majors, graduate certifications, and the field of study of the certification or degree. You also have the right to request information about the qualifications of any paraprofessional who may provide services to your child.

### **Reviewing Instructional Materials**

As a parent, you have a right to review teaching materials, textbooks, and other teaching aids and instructional materials used in the curriculum, and to examine tests that have been administered to your child.

[Also see **Removing a Student from Human Sexuality Instruction** on page 6 for additional information.]

### **Displaying a Student's Artwork and Projects**

Teachers may display students' work in classrooms or elsewhere on campus as recognition of student achievement. The district will seek parental consent before displaying students' artwork, special projects, photographs taken by students, and the like on the district's Web site, in printed material, by video, or by any other method of mass communication.

### **Accessing Student Records**

You may review your child's student records. These records include:

- Attendance records,
- Test scores,
- Grades,
- Disciplinary records,
- Counseling records,
- Psychological records,
- Applications for admission,
- Health and immunization information,
- Other medical records,
- Teacher and counselor evaluations,
- Reports of behavioral patterns, and
- State assessment instruments that have been administered to your child.

[See **Student Records** on page 7.]

### **Granting Permission to Video or Audio Record a Student**

As a parent, you may grant or deny any written request from the district to make a video or voice recording of your child. State law, however, permits the school to make a video or voice recording without parental permission for the following circumstances:

- When it is to be used for school safety;
- When it relates to classroom instruction or a cocurricular or extracurricular activity; or
- When it relates to media coverage of the school.

## **Granting Permission to Receive Parenting and Paternity Awareness Instruction**

As a parent, if your child is under the age of 14, you must grant permission for your child to receive instruction in the district's parenting and paternity awareness program or your child will not be allowed to participate in the instruction. This program, developed by the Office of the Texas Attorney General and the State Board of Education (SBOE), is incorporated into the district's health education classes.

## **Removing a Student Temporarily from the Classroom**

You may remove your child temporarily from the classroom if an instructional activity in which your child is scheduled to participate conflicts with your religious or moral beliefs. The removal cannot be for the purpose of avoiding a test and may not extend for an entire semester. Further, your child must satisfy grade-level and graduation requirements as determined by the school and by the Texas Education Agency.

## **Removing a Student from Human Sexuality Instruction**

As a part of the district's curriculum, students receive instruction related to human sexuality. The School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) is involved with the selection of course materials for such instruction.

State law requires that any instruction related to human sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, or human immunodeficiency virus or acquired immune deficiency syndrome must:

- Present abstinence from sexual activity as the preferred choice of behavior in relationship to all sexual activity for unmarried persons of school age;
- Devote more attention to abstinence from sexual activity than to any other behavior;
- Emphasize that abstinence is the only method that is 100 percent effective in preventing pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and the emotional trauma associated with adolescent sexual activity;
- Direct adolescents to a standard of behavior in which abstinence from sexual activity before marriage is the most effective way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases; and
- If included in the content of the curriculum, teach contraception and condom use in terms of human use reality rates instead of theoretical laboratory rates.

As a parent, you are entitled to review the curriculum materials. In addition, you may remove your child from any part of this instruction with no academic, disciplinary, or other penalties. You may also choose to become more involved with the development of curriculum used for this purpose by becoming a member of the district's SHAC. Please see the campus principal for additional information.

## **Excusing a Student from Reciting the Pledges to the U.S. and Texas Flags**

As a parent, you may request that your child be excused from participation in the daily recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. The request must be in writing. State law does not allow your child to be excused from participation in the required minute of silence or silent activity that follows. [See **Pledges of Allegiance and a Minute of Silence** on page 39 and policy EC(LEGAL).]

## **Excusing a Student from Reciting a Portion of the Declaration of Independence**

You may request that your child be excused from recitation of a portion of the Declaration of Independence. State law requires students in social studies classes in grades 3–12 to recite a portion of the text of the Declaration of Independence during Celebrate Freedom Week unless (1) you provide a written statement requesting that your child be excused, (2) the district determines that your child has a conscientious objection to the recitation, or (3) you are a representative of a foreign government to whom the United States government extends diplomatic immunity. [See policy EHBK(LEGAL).]

## **Requesting Notices of Certain Student Misconduct**

A noncustodial parent may request in writing that he or she be provided, for the remainder of the school year, a copy of any written notice usually provided to a parent related to his or her child's misconduct that may involve placement in a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) or expulsion. [See policy FO(LEGAL) and the Student Code of Conduct.]

## **School Safety Transfers**

As a parent, you have a right:

- To request the transfer of your child to another classroom or campus if your child has been determined by the school principal to have been a victim of bullying as the term is defined by Education Code 25.0341. Transportation is not provided for a transfer to another campus. See the principal for information. [See policy FDB.]  
[See **Bullying** on page 14, and policy FFI(LOCAL).]
- To request the transfer of your child to attend a safe public school in the district if your child attends school at a campus identified by TEA as persistently dangerous or if your child has been a victim of a violent criminal offense while at school or on school grounds. [See policy FDE(LOCAL).]
- To request the transfer of your child to another campus or a neighboring district if your child has been the victim of a sexual assault by another student assigned to the same campus, whether that assault occurred on or off campus, and that student has been convicted of or placed on deferred adjudication for that assault. [See policy FDE.]

## **Requesting Classroom Assignment for Multiple Birth Siblings**

As a parent, if your children are multiple birth siblings (e.g., twins, triplets, etc.) assigned to the same grade and campus, you may request that they be placed either in the same classroom or in separate classrooms. Your written request must be submitted no later than the 14th day after the enrollment of your children. [See policy FDB(LEGAL).]

## **Parents of Students with Disabilities**

Parents of students with learning difficulties or who may need special education services may request an evaluation for special education at any time. For more information, see **Special Programs** on page 45 or contact Patrick Just at 903.886.3795.

### ***Options and Requirements for Providing Assistance to Students Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need or May Need Special Education***

If a child is experiencing learning difficulties, the parent may contact the person listed below to learn about the district's overall general education referral or screening system for support services. This system links students to a variety of support options, including referral for a special education evaluation. Students having difficulty in the regular classroom should be

considered for tutorial, compensatory, and other academic or behavior support services that are available to all students including a process based on Response to Intervention. The implementation of Response to Intervention has the potential to have a positive impact on the ability of school districts to meet the needs of all struggling students.

At any time, a parent is entitled to request an evaluation for special education services. Within a reasonable amount of time, the district must decide if the evaluation is needed. If the evaluation is needed, the parent will be notified and asked to provide informed written consent for the evaluation. The district must complete the evaluation and the report within 60 calendar days of the date the district receives the written consent. The district must give a copy of the report to the parent.

If the district determines that the evaluation is not needed, the district will provide the parent with a written notice that explains why the child will not be evaluated. This written notice will include a statement that informs the parent of his or her rights if the parent disagrees with the district. Additionally, the notice must inform the parent how to obtain a copy of the *Notice of Procedural Safeguards—Rights of Parents of Students with Disabilities*.

The designated person to contact regarding options for a child experiencing learning difficulties or a referral for evaluation for special education is Patrick Just at 903.886.3795.

If a student is receiving special education services at a campus outside his or her attendance zone, the parent or guardian may request that any other student residing in the household be transferred to the same campus, if the appropriate grade level for the transferring student is offered on that campus. [See policy FDB(LOCAL).]

### **Accommodations for Children of Military Families**

Children of military families will be provided flexibility regarding certain district requirements, including:

- Immunization requirements.
- Grade level, course, or educational program placement.
- Eligibility requirements for participation in extracurricular activities.
- Graduation requirements.

In addition, absences related to a student visiting with his or her parent related to leave or deployment activities may be excused by the district. The district will permit no more than 5 excused absences per year for this purpose.

Additional information may be found at <http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/mil/>.

### **Student Records**

Both federal and state laws safeguard student records from unauthorized inspection or use and provide parents and eligible students certain rights of privacy. Before disclosing any personally identifiable information from a student's records, the district must verify the identity of the person, including a parent or the student, requesting the information. For purposes of student records, an "eligible" student is one who is 18 or older OR who is attending an institution of postsecondary education.

Virtually all information pertaining to student performance, including grades, test results, and disciplinary records, is considered confidential educational records. Release is restricted to:

- The parents—whether married, separated, or divorced—unless the school is given a copy of a court order terminating parental rights or the right to access a student’s education records.

Federal law requires that, as soon as a student becomes 18, is emancipated by a court, or enrolls in a postsecondary institution, control of the records goes to the student. The parents may continue to have access to the records, however, if the student is a dependent for tax purposes and under limited circumstances when there is a threat to the health and safety of the student or other individuals.

- District school officials who have what federal law refers to as a “legitimate educational interest” in a student’s records. School officials would include trustees and employees, such as the superintendent, administrators, and principals; teachers, counselors, diagnosticians, and support staff; a person or company with whom the district has contracted or allowed to provide a particular service or function (such as an attorney, consultant, auditor, medical consultant, therapist, or volunteer); a parent or student serving on a school committee; or a parent or student assisting a school official in the performance of his or her duties. “Legitimate educational interest” in a student’s records includes working with the student; considering disciplinary or academic actions, the student’s case, or an individualized education program for a student with disabilities; compiling statistical data; reviewing an educational record to fulfill the official’s professional responsibility; or investigating or evaluating programs.
- Various governmental agencies.
- Individuals granted access in response to a subpoena or court order.
- A school or institution of postsecondary education to which a student seeks or intends to enroll or in which he or she is already enrolled.

Release to any other person or agency—such as a prospective employer or for a scholarship application—will occur only with parental or student permission as appropriate.

The principal is the custodian of all records for currently enrolled students at the assigned school. The superintendent is the custodian of all records for students who have withdrawn or graduated.

Records may be inspected by a parent or eligible student during regular school hours. The records custodian or designee will respond to reasonable requests for explanation and interpretation of the records.

A parent or eligible student who provides a written request and pays copying costs of ten cents per page may obtain copies. If circumstances prevent inspection during regular school hours and the student qualifies for free or reduced-price meals, the district will either provide a copy of the records requested or make other arrangements for the parent or student to review these records. The address of the superintendent’s office is 3315 Washington St, Commerce, Tx 75428

The address of the principals’ offices are: 606 Culver, Commerce, Tx 75428

A parent (or eligible student) may inspect the student’s records and request a correction if the records are considered inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student’s privacy rights. A request to correct a student’s record should be submitted to the principal. The request must clearly identify the part of the record that should be corrected and include an explanation of how the information in the record is inaccurate. If the district denies the request to amend the records, the parent or eligible student has the right to request a hearing. If the records are not amended as a result of the hearing, the parent or eligible student has 30 school days to exercise the right to place a statement commenting on the information in the student’s record. Although

improperly recorded grades may be challenged, contesting a student's grade in a course is handled through the general complaint process found in policy FNG(LOCAL). A grade issued by a classroom teacher can be changed only if, as determined by the board of trustees, the grade is arbitrary, erroneous, or inconsistent with the district's grading policy. [See FINALITY OF GRADES at FNG(LEGAL), **Report Cards/Progress Reports and Conferences** on page 40, and **Student or Parent Complaints and Concerns** on page 16 for an overview of the process.]

The district's policy regarding student records found at FL(LEGAL) and (LOCAL) is available from the principal's or superintendent's office or on the district's Web site at [www.commerceisd.org](http://www.commerceisd.org)

The parent's or eligible student's right of access to and copies of student records do not extend to all records. Materials that are not considered educational records—such as a teacher's personal notes about a student that are shared only with a substitute teacher—do not have to be made available to the parents or student.

**Please note:**

Parents or eligible students have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education if they believe the district is not in compliance with federal law regarding student records. The complaint may be mailed to:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-5901

***Directory Information***

The law permits the district to designate certain personal information about students as “directory information.” This “directory information” will be released to anyone who follows procedures for requesting it.

However, release of a student's directory information may be prevented by the parent or an eligible student. This objection must be made in writing to the principal within ten school days of your child's first day of instruction for this school year. [See the “Notice Regarding Directory Information and Parent's Response Regarding Release of Student Information” included in this handbook OR included in the forms packet.

***Directory Information for School-Sponsored Purposes***

The district often needs to use student information for the following school-sponsored purposes: All district publications and announcements.

For these specific school-sponsored purposes, the district would like to use your child's name, address, photo, date of birth, grade level, honors, awards received, dates of attendance, enrollment status, participation in officially recognized activities and sports and weight and height of members of athletic teams

(Fl)(Local). This information will not be used for other purposes without the consent of the parent or eligible student, except as described above at

**Directory Information.**

Unless you object to the use of your child's information for these limited purposes, the school will not need to ask your permission each time the district wishes to use this information for the school-sponsored purposes listed above.

***Release of Student Information to Military Recruiters and Institutions of Higher Education***

The district is required by federal law to comply with a request by a military recruiter or an institution of higher education for students' names, addresses, and telephone listings, unless parents have advised the district not to release their child's information without prior written consent. A form has been attached for you to complete if you do not want the district to provide this information to military recruiters or institutions of higher education.

## **SECTION II: OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS AND PARENTS**

Topics in this section of the handbook contain important information on academics, school activities, and school operations and requirements. Take a moment with your child to become familiar with the various issues addressed in this section. It is organized in alphabetical order to serve as a quick-reference when you or your child has a question about a specific school-related issue. Should you be unable to find the information on a particular topic, please contact Patrick Just at 903.886.3795.

### **ABSENCES/ATTENDANCE**

Regular school attendance is essential for a student to make the most of his or her education—to benefit from teacher-led and school activities, to build each day’s learning on the previous day’s, and to grow as an individual. Absences from class may result in serious disruption of a student’s mastery of the instructional materials; therefore, the student and parent should make every effort to avoid unnecessary absences. Two state laws—one dealing with compulsory attendance, the other with attendance for course credit—are of special interest to students and parents. They are discussed below.

#### **Compulsory Attendance**

State law requires that a student between the ages of six and 18 attend school, as well as any applicable accelerated instruction program, extended year program, or tutorial session, unless the student is otherwise excused from attendance or legally exempt.

A student who voluntarily attends or enrolls after his or her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday is required to attend each school day until the end of the school year and is subject to compulsory attendance laws, if the student is under 21 years old. In addition, if a student 18 or older has more than five unexcused absences in a semester the district may revoke the student’s enrollment. The student’s presence on school property thereafter would be unauthorized and may be considered trespassing. [See FEA.]

Students enrolled in prekindergarten or kindergarten are required to attend school.

State law requires attendance in an accelerated reading instruction program when kindergarten, first grade, or second grade students are assigned to such a program. Parents will be notified in writing if their child is assigned to an accelerated reading instruction program as a result of a diagnostic reading instrument.

A student in grades 3–8 will be required to attend any assigned accelerated instruction program, which may occur before or after school or during the summer, if the student does not meet the passing standards on the state assessment for his or her grade level and applicable subject area.

#### **Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance**

State law allows exemptions to the compulsory attendance requirements for several types of absences if the student makes up all work. These include the following activities and events:

- Religious holy days;
- Required court appearances;
- Activities related to obtaining United States citizenship;
- Service as an election clerk; and

- Documented health-care appointments, including absences for recognized services for students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders.

In addition, a junior or senior student's absence of up to two days related to visiting a college or university will be considered an exemption, provided the student receives approval from the campus principal, follows the campus procedures to verify such a visit, and makes up any work missed.

### **Failure to Comply with Compulsory Attendance**

School employees must investigate and report violations of the state compulsory attendance law. A student absent without permission from school; from any class; from required special programs, such as additional special instruction, termed "accelerated instruction" by the state; or from required tutorials will be considered in violation of the compulsory attendance law and subject to disciplinary action.

A court of law may also impose penalties against both the student and his or her parents if a school-aged student is deliberately not attending school. A complaint against the parent may be filed in court if the student:

- Is absent from school on ten or more days or parts of days within a six-month period in the same school year, or
- Is absent on three or more days or parts of days within a four-week period.

If the student is over age 18, the student's parents will not be subject to penalties as a result of their child's violation of state compulsory attendance law. [See FEA(LEGAL).]

### **Attendance for Credit**

To receive credit in a class, a student must attend at least 90 percent of the days the class is offered. A student who attends at least 75 percent but fewer than 90 percent of the days the class is offered may receive credit for the class if he or she completes a plan, approved by the principal, that allows the student to fulfill the instructional requirements for the class. If a student is involved in a criminal or juvenile court proceeding, the approval of the judge presiding over the case will also be required before the student receives credit for the class.

If a student attends less than 75 percent of the days a class is offered or has not completed a plan approved by the principal, then the student will be referred to the attendance review committee to determine whether there are extenuating circumstances for the absences and how the student can regain credit, if appropriate. [See policies at FEC.]

In determining whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences, the attendance committee will use the following guidelines:

- All absences will be considered in determining whether a student has attended the required percentage of days. If makeup work is completed, absences for the reasons listed above at **Exemptions to Compulsory Attendance** will be considered days of attendance for this purpose.
- A transfer or migrant student begins to accumulate absences only after he or she has enrolled in the district. For a student transferring into the district after school begins, including a migrant student, only those absences after enrollment will be considered.
- In reaching a decision about a student's absences, the committee will attempt to ensure that it is in the best interest of the student.

- The committee will consider the acceptability and authenticity of documented reasons for the student’s absences.
- The committee will consider whether the absences were for reasons over which the student or the student’s parent could exercise any control.
- The committee will consider the extent to which the student has completed all assignments, mastered the essential knowledge and skills, and maintained passing grades in the course or subject.
- The student or parent will be given an opportunity to present any information to the committee about the absences and to talk about ways to earn or regain credit.

The student or parent may appeal the committee’s decision to the board of trustees by filing a written request with the superintendent in accordance with policy FNG(LOCAL).

The actual number of days a student must be in attendance in order to receive credit will depend on whether the class is for a full semester or for a full year.

### **Parent’s Note after an Absence**

When a student must be absent from school, the student—upon returning to school—must bring a note signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence. A note signed by the student, even with the parent’s permission, will not be accepted unless the student is 18 or older.

### **Doctor’s Note after an Absence for Illness**

Upon return to school, a student absent for more than five consecutive days because of a personal illness must bring a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student’s extended absence from school.

Should the student develop a questionable pattern of absences, the principal or attendance committee may require a statement from a doctor or health clinic verifying the illness or condition that caused the student’s absence from school.

[See policy FEC(LOCAL).]

### **Driver License Attendance Verification**

For a student between the ages of 16 and 18 to obtain a driver license, the Texas Department of Public Safety must be provided written parental consent to access the student’s records for purposes of verifying 90 percent attendance for credit for the semester.

## **ACADEMIC PROGRAMS**

The school counselor provides students and parents information regarding academic programs to prepare for higher education and career choices. [For more information, see **Academic Counseling** on page 21 of this handbook and policies at EIF.]

## **ADMISSION**

New students who want to enroll in Commerce Middle School should contact the counselor’s office at (903) 886-3795. Parents need to bring as many records as possible from the previous school. Students transferring from another Texas School district should bring a copy of the withdrawal form. It is district policy to enforce a 24-hour waiting period for processing enrollment records. The office will request grades and other records from the previous school. If, after two requests or after the 30-day grace period for enrollment, records are not sent, it will become the responsibility of the student and parent/guardian to request and deliver the records to

the principal's office. Students who were enrolled in the Commerce public schools the previous year are pre-registered for the next year.

## **AWARDS AND HONORS**

“A” Honor Roll includes students with all grades from 90-100 and an “A” in citizenship for all classes.

“A-B” Honor Roll includes students with no grades lower than 80 and an “A” in citizenship for all classes.

“C” Awards (Certificate of Award) will be presented to students who have an academic average of 95 or above the course and an “A” in citizenship each six weeks.

Students may earn awards for perfect attendance, participation in University Interscholastic League academic events, and other awards honoring academic achievement. [See Academic Counseling]. An awards assembly is held near the end of each year to recognize students that excel in the above-mentioned categories.

## **BULLYING**

Bullying occurs when a student or group of students directs written or verbal expressions or physical conduct against another student and the behavior results in harm to the student or the student's property, places a student in fear of physical harm or of damage to the student's property, or is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment.

The board has established policies and procedures to prohibit bullying and to respond to reports of bullying. [See **School Safety Transfers** on page 6 and policy FFI(LOCAL).]

## **CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION (CTE) PROGRAMS**

CMS offers career and technology programs in Business Computer Information Systems.

Commerce ISD will take steps to ensure that lack of English language skills will not be a barrier to admission and participation in all educational and vocational programs.

## **CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

As a parent, it is important for you to be aware of warning signs that could indicate a child may have been or is being sexually abused. Sexual abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as a failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child. Anyone who suspects that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility, under state law, for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect to law enforcement or to Child Protective Services (CPS).

Possible physical warning signs of sexual abuse could be difficulty sitting or walking, pain in the genital areas, and claims of stomachaches and headaches. Behavioral indicators may include verbal references or pretend games of sexual activity between adults and children, fear of being alone with adults of a particular gender, or sexually suggestive behavior. Emotional warning signs to be aware of include withdrawal, depression, sleeping and eating disorders, and problems in school.

A child who has experienced sexual abuse should be encouraged to seek out a trusted adult. Be aware as a parent or other trusted adult that disclosures of sexual abuse may be more indirect

than disclosures of physical abuse, and it is important to be calm and comforting if your child, or another child, confides in you. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling you.

As a parent, if your child is a victim of sexual abuse, the campus counselor or principal will provide information regarding counseling options for you and your child available in your area. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS) also manages early intervention counseling programs. To find out what services may be available in your county, see [http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention\\_and\\_Early\\_Intervention/Programs\\_Available\\_In\\_Your\\_County/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/Programs_Available_In_Your_County/default.asp).

The following Web sites might help you become more aware of child sexual abuse:

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index.aspx?id=2820>

<http://sapn.nonprofitoffice.com/>

<http://www.taasa.org/member/materials2.php>

[http://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG\\_Publications/txts/childabuse1.shtml](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG_Publications/txts/childabuse1.shtml)

[http://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG\\_Publications/txts/childabuse2.shtml](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/AG_Publications/txts/childabuse2.shtml)

Reports may be made to:

The Child Protective Services (CPS) division of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (1-800-252-5400 or on the Web at <http://www.txabusehotline.org>).

## **CLASS SCHEDULES**

In the spring of each year students submit pre-registration forms selecting classes for the next school year. The counselor makes every attempt to schedule classes according to student preferences. To change a schedule after the first six weeks of school, parents will schedule a meeting with the counselor to determine if the change is feasible and necessary.

Schedule changes may be made under the following conditions:

1. Failure of a required course that may make a schedule change necessary.
2. Change due to balancing of class loads.
3. Scheduling error-course not required.
4. Change because of credit earned in summer school.
5. Change as a result of a student being elected to or being assigned by the administration to an activity within the school.
6. Change which allows a student to graduate in a particular year.
7. Change due to inappropriate placement or the failure to meet eligibility criteria.
8. Any change, which in the judgment of the principal, is the best interest of a student or teacher.

**Adding Courses:**

A student may add a course during the first ten days of a semester if conditions of a schedule change are met.

**Dropping Courses:**

Before a student is permitted to drop a course, he/she must submit a written request signed by the parent, guardian, or adult student to the counselor. If the change is approved, the student may be dropped from the course in accordance with the following procedures:

1. No grade will be recorded on the cumulative record of a student who drops a course before the end of the second week of a semester.
2. The assignment of the student who drops a course is left to the discretion of the administrator.

**COMPLAINTS AND CONCERNS**

Usually student or parent complaints or concerns can be addressed by a phone call or a conference with the teacher or principal. For those complaints and concerns that cannot be handled so easily, the district has adopted a standard complaint policy at FNG(LOCAL) in the district's policy manual. A copy of this policy may be obtained in the principal's or superintendent's office or at [www.commerceisd.org](http://www.commerceisd.org)

In general, the student or parent should submit a written complaint and request a conference with the campus principal. If the concern is not resolved, a request for a conference should be sent to the superintendent. If still unresolved, the district provides for the complaint to be presented to the board of trustees.

**COMPUTER RESOURCES**

To prepare students for an increasingly technological society, the district has made an investment in computer technology for instructional purposes. Use of these computer resources is restricted to students working under a teacher's supervision and for approved purposes only. Students and parents will be asked to sign a user agreement (separate from this handbook) regarding use of these resources; violations of this agreement may result in withdrawal of privileges and other disciplinary action.

Students and their parents should be aware that e-mail and other electronic communications using district computers are not private and will be monitored by district staff. [For additional information, see policies at CQ.]

CISD network access is coordinated through a complex association of government agencies and regional and state networks. The smooth operation of the network relies upon the proper conduct of the end users that must adhere to strict guidelines. The terms and conditions listed below are provided so that users are aware of the privileges and the responsibilities related to network use. Efficient, ethical, and legal utilization of the network resources is expected.

**SYSTEM ACCESS**

- District employees will be granted access to the District's system upon completion of Staff Member AUP Agreement.

- Students will be granted access to the District's systems by their teachers, as appropriate, after completion of Student AUP agreement and instruction in the proper use of the network by a CISD staff member.
- If a user violates any of the provisions of network use, the user may be subject to disciplinary action as included in our student code of conduct.
- Any system user identified as a security risk or as having violated District and/or campus computer use guidelines may be denied access to the District's system.
- User access will cease upon withdrawal from school or termination of employment.

## **INDIVIDUAL USER RESPONSIBILITIES**

The purpose of the CISD network, Internet access, and access to other online services is to support research and education in CISD and among other academic institutions by providing access to unique resources and the opportunity for collaborative work. The use of the network must be in support of education and research and be consistent with the educational objectives of CISD. All network access using district equipment must comply with CISD terms and conditions. The terms and conditions are not limited to, but include, the following user guidelines:

- Transmission of any material in violation of any U.S. or state law is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, copyrighted material, threatening or obscene material or material protected by trade secret.
- Use for commercial activities, for product advertisement, or political lobbying is prohibited.
- Illegal activities are strictly prohibited.
- All files and programs on the computer belong to someone. Users shall not erase, rename, or make unusable anyone else's files or programs.
- Users shall not copy, change, or transfer any software provided by CISD, teachers, or another student without permission from a CISD supervisor.
- Users shall not copy or place on any district system any copyrighted software from any source without a license. It is generally illegal to copy any software that has a copyright. The use of illegally copied software is considered a criminal offense and is subject to criminal prosecution.
- Users shall not intentionally write, produce, generate, copy, propagate, or attempt to introduce any computer code designed to self-replicate, damage, or otherwise hinder the performance of any computer memory, file system, or software.
- Users shall not access, create, send or post material that is abusive, obscene, sexually oriented, threatening, harassing, damaging to another's reputation, or illegal.
- Users who gain access to such material are expected to discontinue the access as quickly as possible and report it to the supervisor.
- Files and electronic mail are subject to monitoring. System administrators have access to all files, including mail. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities may be reported to the appropriate authorities.
- Users shall not waste District resources related to the electronic communications system.
- Users shall not gain unauthorized access to resources or information.
- Users will be assigned a login and agree to only access the network with this login.
- Users shall not remove CISD property (hardware or software) without written permission of the supervisor.
- Users shall not attempt to sabotage network systems or programs.

- Users shall not bring prohibited materials into the schools' electronic environment.
- Users shall not upload or download programs or other files without the expressed permission of their teacher or supervisor. Users are responsible for determining whether a program is copyrighted.
- Users shall not attempt to secure a higher level of privilege on network systems.
- Individual users will be responsible at all times for the proper use of a hardware and software.
- Development of web pages for instructional support is encouraged. Administrative approval shall be acquired before posting an educational web page for public access. Web page content shall be consistent with the guidelines set forth in CISD policy.
- Users shall abide by all CISD policies.
- Users shall not reveal personal information about students or colleagues.
- Users shall not use the network in such a way that would disrupt the use of the network by other users (e.g. uploading and/or downloading huge files; sending mass e-mail messages; forwarding chain letters; indiscriminately subscribing to services or newsgroups; annoying other users electronically.)

### **CONSEQUENCES OF IMPROPER USE**

The use of the CISD network is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use will result in the cancellation of that privilege. Based upon the Acceptable Use Policy outlined above, the system administrators will deem what is inappropriate use and their decision is final. Use of the networks may be denied, revoked, or suspended as a consequence of inappropriate use. Violation of this document by student or employee may result in any disciplinary consequence deemed appropriate by the administration.

### **CONSENT REQUIREMENTS**

CISD will make every effort to enforce the following:

- No student under the age of 18 will be allowed access to the District communications network without written permission of a parent or guardian. A parent/guardian signature regarding receipt of the student handbook grants this permission.
- No personally identifiable information about a student will be posted on a web page under CISD control unless the district has received written consent from the student's parent.
- No original work created by any District student or employee will be posted on a web page under the District's control unless the District has received written consent from the student (and the student's parent) or employee who created the work.

### **DISCLAIMER**

CISD offers no warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for the services provided. CISD will not be responsible for damages suffered, such as loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, mis-deliveries, or service interruptions caused by the district's or user's errors or omissions. Use of any information obtained via the CISD network is at user's own risk. CISD has no claim for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through network services. CISD has established user guidelines for all members of the district, students, teachers, staff, and administrators. However, unacceptable material or communication may be available on a global network. It is impossible to control all materials, and an industrious user may discover inappropriate resources. CISD believes that the valuable information and interaction available on

this worldwide network far outweighs the possibility that users may discover material that is not consistent with the educational goals of the district. Ultimately, parents and guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media and information sources. Commerce Independent School District supports and respects each family's right to decide whether or not to allow access to CISD resources.

Opinions, advice, services, and all other information expressed by system users, information providers, service providers, or other third-party individuals in the system are those of the providers and not CISD.

CISD will cooperate fully with local, state, or federal officials in any investigation concerning or relating to misuse of the District's electronic system.

## **CONDUCT**

As required by law, the board has adopted a *Student Code of Conduct* that prohibits certain behaviors and defines standards of acceptable behavior—both on and off campus—and consequences for violation of these standards. The district has disciplinary authority over a student in accordance with the *Student Code of Conduct*. Students and parents should be familiar with the standards set out in the *Student Code of Conduct*, as well as campus and classroom rules.

To achieve the best possible learning environment for all students, the Student Code of Conduct and other campus rules will apply whenever the interest of the district is involved, on or off school grounds, in conjunction with classes and school-sponsored activities. The district has disciplinary authority over a student in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

Each family will receive a copy of the district Student Code of Conduct. Parents and students are encouraged to read and make themselves aware of its contents. Parent/guardians and students will be asked to sign and return the acknowledgement of the Student Handbook and Student Code of Conduct. Failure to sign and return the acknowledgement does not take away the responsibility of the student to abide by the Student Handbook and the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Academic Dishonesty/Cheating/Plagiarism**

Academic dishonesty – cheating or plagiarism – is not acceptable. Cheating includes the copying of another student's work – homework, class work, test answers, etc. – as one's own. Plagiarism is the use of another person's original ideas or writing without giving credit to the true author. A student found to have engaged in academic dishonesty will be subject to grade penalties for the work in question, as well as disciplinary penalties, according to the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Applicability of School Rules**

As required by law, the board has adopted a Student Code of Conduct that prohibits certain behaviors and defines standards of acceptable behavior—both on and off campus—and consequences for violation of these standards. The district has disciplinary authority over a student in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Students and parents should be familiar with the standards set out in the Student Code of Conduct, as well as campus and classroom rules.

## **Corporal Punishment**

Corporal punishment—spanking or paddling the student—may not be used as a discipline management technique in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct and policy FO(LOCAL) in the district’s policy manual.

## **Disruptions**

As identified by law, disruptions include the following:

- Interference with the movement of people at an exit, entrance, or hallway of a district building without authorization from an administrator.
- Interference with an authorized activity by seizing control of all or part of a building.
- Use of force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent participation in an authorized assembly.
- Use of force, violence, or threats to cause disruption during an assembly.
- Interference with the movement of people at an exit or an entrance to district property.
- Use of force, violence, or threats in an attempt to prevent people from entering or leaving district property without authorization from an administrator.
- Disruption of classes or other school activities while on district property or on public property that is within 500 feet of district property. Class disruption includes making loud noises; trying to entice a student away from, or to prevent a student from attending, a required class or activity; and entering a classroom without authorization and disrupting the activity with loud or profane language or any misconduct.
- Interference with the transportation of students in vehicles owned or operated by the district.

## **Telecommunications Devices, Including Mobile Telephones**

For safety purposes, the district permits students to possess telecommunications devices, including mobile telephones; however, these devices must remain turned off during the instructional day, including during all testing. The use of mobile telephones in locker rooms or restroom areas at any time while at school or at a school-related or school-sponsored event is strictly prohibited.

A student who uses a telecommunications device during the school day will have the device confiscated. The parent may pick up the confiscated telecommunications device from the principal’s office for a fee of \$15.

Confiscated telecommunications devices that are not retrieved by the student or student’s parents will be disposed of after the notice required by law. [See policy FNCE.]

Any disciplinary action will be in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. The district will not be responsible for damaged, lost, or stolen telecommunications devices.

## **Other Electronic Devices**

Students are not permitted to possess such items as radios, CD players, MP3 players, video or audio recorders, DVD players, cameras, games, or other electronic devices at school, unless prior permission has been obtained from the principal. Without such permission, teachers will collect the items and turn them in to the principal’s office. The principal will determine whether to return items to students at the end of the day or to contact parents to pick up the items.

Any disciplinary action will be in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. The district will not be responsible for any damaged, lost, or stolen electronic device.

### **Inappropriate Use of Technology**

Students are prohibited from sending or posting electronic messages that are abusive, obscene, sexually oriented, threatening, harassing, damaging to another's reputation, or illegal. This prohibition applies to conduct off school property if it results in a substantial disruption to the educational environment. Any person taking, disseminating, transferring, or sharing obscene, sexually oriented, lewd, or otherwise illegal images or other content will be disciplined according to the Student Code of Conduct and may, in certain circumstances, be reported to law enforcement.

### **CONTAGIOUS DISEASES / CONDITIONS**

To protect other students from contagious illnesses, students infected with certain diseases are not allowed to come to school while contagious. If a parent suspects that his or her child has a contagious disease, the parent should contact the school nurse or principal so that other students who might have been exposed to the disease can be alerted.

The school nurse or the principal's office can provide information from the Department of State Health Services regarding these diseases.

### **COUNSELING**

#### **Academic Counseling**

Students and their parents are encouraged to talk with a school counselor, teacher, or principal to learn more about course offerings, graduation requirements, and early graduation procedures. Each spring, students in grades 5-8 will be provided information on anticipated course offerings for the next school year and other information that will help them make the most of academic and CTE opportunities.

To plan for the future, each student should work closely with the counselor in order to enroll in the high school courses that best prepare him or her for attendance at a college, university, or training school, or for pursuit of some other type of advanced education. The counselor can also provide information about entrance exams and application deadlines, as well as information about automatic admission to state colleges and universities, financial aid, housing, and scholarships.

#### **Personal Counseling**

The school counselor is available to assist students with a wide range of personal concerns, including such areas as social, family, or emotional issues, or substance abuse. The counselor may also make available information about community resources to address these concerns. A student who wishes to meet with the counselor should stop by the office in between classes.

#### **Psychological Exams, Tests, or Treatment**

The school will not conduct a psychological examination, test, or treatment without first obtaining the parent's written consent. Parental consent is not necessary when a psychological examination, test, or treatment is required by state or federal law for special education purposes or by the Texas Education Agency for child abuse investigations and reports.

[For more information, refer to policies EHBA(LEGAL), FFE(LEGAL), and FFG(EXHIBIT).]

## **CREDIT BY EXAM—If a Student Has Taken the Course**

A student who has previously taken a course or subject—but did not receive credit for it—may, in circumstances determined by the teacher, counselor, principal, or attendance committee, be permitted to earn credit by passing an exam on the essential knowledge and skills defined for that course or subject. Prior instruction may include, for example, incomplete coursework due to a failed course or excessive absences, homeschooling, correspondence courses, or independent study supervised by a teacher.

The counselor or principal would determine if the student could take an exam for this purpose. If approval is granted, the student must score at least 70 on the exam to receive credit for the course or subject.

The attendance review committee may also offer a student with excessive absences an opportunity to earn credit for a course by passing an exam.

A student may not use this exam, however, to regain eligibility to participate in extracurricular activities.

[For further information, see the counselor and policy EEJA(LOCAL).]

## **CREDIT BY EXAM—If a Student Has Not Taken the Course**

A student will be permitted to take an exam to earn credit for an academic course for which the student has had no prior instruction. The dates on which exams are scheduled during the 2010–2011 school year include:

Dates Scheduled:

September 22-24, 2010

January 26-28, 2011

A student will earn credit with a passing score of at least 90 on the exam.

If a student plans to take an exam, the student (or parent) must register with the principal no later than 30 days prior to the scheduled testing date. The district will not honor a request by a parent to administer a test on a date other than the published dates. If the district agrees to administer a test other than the one chosen by the district, the parent must purchase a test from a university approved by the State Board of Education. [For further information, see EEJB(LOCAL).]

## **DATING VIOLENCE, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION**

The district believes that all students learn best in an environment free from dating violence, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation and that their welfare is best served when they are free from this prohibited conduct while attending school. Students are expected to treat other students and district employees with courtesy and respect, to avoid behaviors known to be offensive, and to stop those behaviors when asked or told to stop. District employees are expected to treat students with courtesy and respect.

The board has established policies and procedures to prohibit and promptly respond to inappropriate and offensive behaviors that are based on a person's race, color, religion, gender, national origin, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law. [See policy FFH.]

### **Dating Violence**

Dating violence occurs when a person in a current or past dating relationship uses physical, sexual, verbal, or emotional abuse to harm, threaten, intimidate, or control the other person in the

relationship. This type of conduct is considered harassment if the conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity; creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment; or substantially interferes with the student's academic performance.

Examples of dating violence against a student may include, but are not limited to, physical or sexual assaults, name-calling, put-downs, threats to hurt the student or the student's family members or members of the student's household, destroying property belonging to the student, threats to commit suicide or homicide if the student ends the relationship, attempts to isolate the student from friends and family, stalking, or encouraging others to engage in these behaviors.

### **Discrimination**

Discrimination is defined as any conduct directed at a student on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law, that negatively affects the student.

### **Fighting**

Fighting of any kind is not acceptable at Commerce Middle School. Students involved in fights or harassment of other students shall be subject to disciplinary action. Law enforcement officers will be notified and students may be transported to the police station. Students violating Section 42.01 may be issued a citation and may be subject to a fine.

### **Harassment**

Harassment, in general terms, is conduct so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from an educational program or activity; creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive educational environment; or substantially interferes with the student's academic performance. A copy of the district's policy is available in the principal's office and in the superintendent's office or at [www.commerceisd.org](http://www.commerceisd.org)

Examples of harassment may include, but are not limited to, offensive or derogatory language directed at a person's religious beliefs or practices, accent, skin color, or need for accommodation; threatening or intimidating conduct; offensive jokes, name-calling, slurs, or rumors; physical aggression or assault; graffiti or printed material promoting racial, ethnic, or other negative stereotypes; or other kinds of aggressive conduct such as theft or damage to property.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment of a student by an employee, volunteer, or another student is prohibited.

Sexual harassment of a student by an employee or volunteer does not include necessary or permissible physical contact not reasonably construed as sexual in nature. However, romantic and other inappropriate social relationships, as well as all sexual relationships, between students and district employees are prohibited, even if consensual.

Examples of prohibited sexual harassment may include, but not be limited to, touching private body parts or coercing physical contact that is sexual in nature; sexual advances; jokes or conversations of a sexual nature; and other sexually motivated conduct, communications, or contact.

### **Retaliation**

Retaliation against a person who makes a good faith report of discrimination or harassment, including dating violence, is prohibited. Retaliation against a person who is participating in an

investigation of alleged discrimination or harassment is also prohibited. A person who makes a false claim or offers false statements or refuses to cooperate with a district investigation, however, may be subject to appropriate discipline.

Retaliation against a student might occur when a student receives threats from another student or an employee or when an employee imposes an unjustified punishment or unwarranted grade reduction. Retaliation does not include petty slights and annoyances from other students or negative comments from a teacher that are justified by a student's poor academic performance in the classroom.

### **Reporting Procedures**

Any student who believes that he or she has experienced dating violence, discrimination, harassment, or retaliation should immediately report the problem to a teacher, counselor, principal, or other district employee. The report may be made by the student's parent. See policy FFH(LOCAL) for the appropriate district officials to whom to make a report.

### **Investigation of Report**

To the extent possible, the district will respect the privacy of the student; however, limited disclosures may be necessary to conduct a thorough investigation and to comply with law. Allegations of prohibited conduct, which includes dating violence, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, will be promptly investigated. The district will notify the parents of any student alleged to have experienced prohibited conduct involving an adult associated with the district.

In the event prohibited conduct involves another student, the district will notify the parents of the student alleged to have experienced the prohibited conduct when the allegations, if proven, would constitute a violation as defined by policy.

If the district's investigation indicates that prohibited conduct occurred, appropriate disciplinary or corrective action will be taken to address the conduct. The district may take disciplinary action even if the conduct that is the subject of the complaint was not unlawful.

A student or parent who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal in accordance with policy FNG(LOCAL).

## **DELIVERIES TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS**

The following guidelines have been established as CMS policy concerning deliveries to students or faculty members.

1. No commercial deliveries of food will be made or accepted at the Middle School. Parents or guardians may bring lunch to the front office for their child only.
2. No deliveries of any nature will be made directly to classrooms by non-CMS personnel.
3. *Teachers will be notified, no deliveries will be made to the classroom.*
4. Parent deliveries of any nature, i.e. lunch money, gym clothes, etc., will be left at the office to be delivered by office personnel/office aides or a message will be relayed to the student.
5. Approved commercial deliveries to students will be accepted in the office. These deliveries will not be given to students until the end of the academic school day.

## **DISTANCE LEARNING**

Distance learning includes courses that encompass the state-required essential knowledge and skills but are taught through multiple technologies and alternative methodologies such as satellite, Internet, video-conferencing, and instructional television.

The Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN) has been established as one method of distance learning. A student has the option, with certain limitations, to enroll in a course offered through the TxVSN to earn course credit for graduation. Depending on the course in which a student enrolls, the course may be subject to the “no pass, no play” rules. [Also see **Extracurricular Activities, Clubs, and Organizations** on page 29.]

## **DISTRIBUTION OF PUBLISHED MATERIALS OR DOCUMENTS**

### **School Materials**

Publications prepared by and for the school may be posted or distributed, with the prior approval of the principal, sponsor, or teacher. Such items may include school posters, brochures, flyers, etc.

All school publications are under the supervision of a teacher, sponsor, and the principal.

[See **Directory Information for School-Sponsored Purposes** on page 9.]

### **Nonschool Materials...from students**

Students must obtain prior approval from the principal before posting, circulating, or distributing more than ten copies of written materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, petitions, films, tapes, posters, or other visual or auditory materials that were not developed under the oversight of the school. To be considered, any nonschool material must include the name of the sponsoring person or organization. The decision regarding approval will be made within two school days.

The principal has designated the front foyer as the location for approved nonschool materials to be placed for voluntary viewing by students. [See policies at FNAA.]

A student may appeal a principal’s decision in accordance with policy FNG(LOCAL). Any student who posts nonschool material without prior approval will be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct. Materials displayed without the principal’s approval will be removed.

### **Nonschool Materials...from others**

Written or printed materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, films, tapes, or other visual or auditory materials not sponsored by the district or by a district-affiliated school-support organization will not be sold, circulated, distributed, or posted on any district premises by any district employee or by persons or groups not associated with the district, except as permitted by policy GKDA. To be considered for distribution, any nonschool material must meet the limitations on content established in the policy, include the name of the sponsoring person or organization, and be submitted to the superintendent for prior review. The superintendent will approve or reject the materials within two school days of the time the materials are received. The requestor may appeal a rejection in accordance with the appropriate district complaint policy. [See policies at DGBA, FNG, or GF.]

Prior review will not be required for:

- Distribution of materials by an attendee to other attendees of a school-sponsored meeting intended for adults and held after school hours.
- Distribution of materials by an attendee to other attendees of a community group meeting held after school hours in accordance with policy GKD(LOCAL) or a noncurriculum-related student group meeting held in accordance with FNAB(LOCAL).

- Distribution for electioneering purposes during the time a school facility is being used as a polling place, in accordance with state law.

All nonschool materials distributed under these circumstances must be removed from district property immediately following the event at which the materials are distributed.

## **DRESS AND GROOMING**

The district's dress code is established to teach grooming and hygiene, prevent disruption, and minimize safety hazards. Students and parents may determine a student's personal dress and grooming standards, provided that they comply with the following:

Commerce Independent School District believes that students should learn to dress for success in order to be successful and lead productive lives. Students should dress in a way that is appropriate for a teaching and learning environment. Maintaining a school atmosphere suitable for academic study will help students focus on learning. The Standardized Dress Policy is an important step toward furthering excellence and better preparing students for future educational opportunities, careers, and successful living as adults.

**Parent and Student Responsibility:** The parent and student shall be responsible for ensuring that the student is in compliance with all aspects of this policy when the student enters the school premises and during the time the student is on school premises during the regular school day.

**Principal is the Final Authority:** The Board delegates to the building principal the authority to make final determinations as to whether clothing or grooming is/is not within this Code.

### **Pants, Skirts, Shorts, Skorts, Capri Pants & Jumpers**

- Colors: khaki, navy blue, black, olive, brown and gray
- Slacks, pants, shorts and capri pants can be pleated or flat-front Docker-style, always worn at the waist. Elasticized waists are acceptable. Pants must be belted if belt loops are provided
- Shorts, skirts or skorts must be knee length or longer; skirt slits may not extend above knee
- Jumpers may be knee length or longer and must be worn over a standardized dress-approved shirt
- Pants must be worn outside of shoes or boots
- Corduroy is an acceptable fabric
- Brand logos or labels on clothing items may be no larger than 1½ by 1½ inch

### **Not Allowed:**

- Bottoms cannot be same color as shirts
- Sagging or oversized clothing
- Sweatpants, pajama pants, wind pants, warm-ups, overalls, or coveralls
- Drawstrings at waist in place of belt
- Denim of any type or color; cargo pants or shorts; carpenter style pants or shorts
- Brads, studs or decorations (i.e. chains or straps) of any kind
- No hip-hugger styles

**Belts**

- If pants have belt loops, belts are required and must be worn within the loops and buckled at all times.
- Belts must be solid color, leather-like, dress-type or canvas with a buckle.
- Colors are brown, black, navy blue, khaki or white.

**Not Allowed:**

- Scarves or ribbons used as belts
- Tie or fringe belts
- Oversized buckles (no larger than credit card size)
- Chain or metal belts

**Polo, Oxford & Turtleneck Shirts**

- Colors: any solid color shirt or undershirt.
- School spirit shirts in acceptable styles will be allowed as approved by campus principals.
- Buttoned polo-style, knit shirts with collars, turtleneck shirts, and oxford-style or dress shirts (short or long sleeve).
- All shirts must remain tucked in under all circumstances.
- Brand logos or labels on clothing items may be no larger than 1½ by 1½ inch.

**Not Allowed:**

- Tops cannot be same color as bottoms
- Lettering of any kind - unless approved by school principal
- Cap sleeves, sleeveless shirts, spaghetti straps, halter tops or backless shirts
- Visible stripes, check or other designs
- Zippered shirts
- Tight, extremely form-fitting shirts
- Low-cut shirts or cleavage showing

**Sweatshirts, Sweaters & Sweater Vests**

- Any solid color to be worn over the standardized dress-approved shirt.
- Approximately sized in shoulders, sleeves and length; minimum waist length; may not extend more than 4 inches below the belt.
- Sweatshirts, sweaters, and sweater vests may be zipper, snap, pullover or cardigan style.
- Brand logos or labels on clothing items may be no larger than 1½ by 1½ inch.

**Not Allowed:**

- Sleeveless or cap sleeved sweatshirts
- Oversized clothing

**Shoes, Shoestrings, Socks & Hosiery**

- Footwear must be closed toe and closed heel and matching pair.
- Footwear must be leather-like or canvas lace up, loafer type, boots, or athletic shoes.
- Colors for shoes other than athletic shoes are black, brown, navy, gray, gold or silver; matching pair.
- Athletic shoes must be primarily black, white, gray or brown.
- Shoelaces must be white or match the primary color of the shoe and tied at all times.
- Matching pair of socks must be solid color.
- Tights or hosiery must be solid brown, black, navy blue, white, or neutral.

**Not Allowed:**

- Flip-flops or sandals
- Heels over three inches
- Slings (straps around the heel)

**Outer and Winter Wear**

- Coats, jackets or hoodies and scarves may be worn to and from school in accordance with appropriate weather conditions.
- Coats, jackets or hoodies and scarves shall be removed when entering the building and placed in a designated area.
- Solid-color lightweight jackets are allowed in the classroom to accommodate for classroom temperature variances. Clothing underneath must meet standardized dress guidelines.

**Not allowed:**

- Dusters or trench coats
- Oversized coats or jackets
- Sleeveless or cap sleeved outerwear

**Dress for Special Occasions:** The principal at any campus has the authority to allow all or part of the student body of the campus to vary from the standard mode of dress; establish a particular mode of attire for special occasion days; or for particular school-sponsored or school-related activities.

**Spirit Wear & School Organization**

- Any school organization may offer a shirt / sweatshirt to students as an optional purchase. Organizations must receive prior approval from the principal.
- Shirt must be polo-style, oxford-style or a sweater or sweatshirt and meet all criteria listed in the shirt or outer/winter wear section.
- Spirit wear must have a principal-approved school related logo.
- Shirts will be worn with approved pants/shorts/skirts/skorts as listed above.
- Other school organizations may wear uniform dress as approved by the principal.

**Other Guidelines**

- No clothing that reveals skin at midriff or undergarments.
- Startling, unusual or immodest attire of any sort shall not be permitted. Fads in hairstyles, clothing or anything designed to attract attention to the individual or to disrupt the orderly conduct of the classroom is not permitted.
- Hair should be neat and well groomed at all times and shall not obstruct vision. No extreme style or color (i.e. unnatural reds, greens, blues, etc) shall be allowed. No symbols, letters, or extreme designs cut in the hair that are suggestive or excessive shall be permitted. No streaks shaved in eyebrows.
- Make-up and nail polish may not be worn by males.
- Hats, caps, hoods, wave caps, headbands, bandanas, rollers or any other head coverings / accessories are not acceptable attire and may not be worn in the building. Distracting articles may not be worn in the hair.

- Dark glasses are not acceptable unless they are prescribed to be worn inside the building.
- Uniforms of outside organizations are not permitted.
- All clothing must be properly hemmed and cuffed; torn, ripped, frayed or cut clothing will not be allowed.
- Clothing and other articles that are considered “gang related” are not allowed.
- Leather, suede, vinyl and denim materials are not allowed except for outer/winter wear.
- Spandex, nylon or stretch-type materials are not allowed.
- Tongue rings and visible body piercing, other than earrings, are not allowed.
- Tattoos and body art are not to be visible.
- "Grillz" or temporary decorations on teeth are not to be worn. Orthodontic approved mouth wear is acceptable.

**Exemptions:** Exemptions are granted for specific items or circumstances rather than for the entire standard dress guidelines. Examples of exemptions that might be granted are as follows:

- Elastic pants for students who cannot button or zip
- No belt
- No collar shirts for children with disability who can’t tolerate something near the face
- No tuck-in requirement

Exemptions will be based on a specific student’s need rather than a desire to not follow the standard dress guidelines. Exemptions should be reviewed each year to determine if the need still exists.

## **EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES, CLUBS, AND ORGANIZATIONS**

Participation in school-sponsored activities is an excellent way for a student to develop talents, receive individual recognition, and build strong friendships with other students; participation, however, is a privilege, not a right.

Eligibility for initial and continuing participation in many of these activities is governed by state law and the rules of the University Interscholastic League (UIL)—a statewide association overseeing inter-district competition. If a student is involved in an academic, athletic, or music activity governed by UIL, the student and parent are expected to know and follow all rules of the UIL organization. [See <http://www.uil.utexas.edu> for additional information.]

The following requirements apply to all extracurricular activities:

- A student who receives at the end of a grading period a grade below 70 in any academic class—other than an Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate course; or an honors or dual credit course in English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, economics, or language other than English—may not participate in extracurricular activities for at least three school weeks.
- A student with disabilities who fails to meet the standards in the individualized education program (IEP) may not participate for at least three school weeks.
- An ineligible student may practice or rehearse.
- A student is allowed in a school year up to 10 absences not related to post-district competition, a maximum of five absences for post-district competition prior to state, and a maximum of two absences for state competition. All extracurricular activities and public performances, whether UIL activities or other activities approved by the board, are subject to these restrictions.

- An absence for participation in an activity that has not been approved will receive an unexcused absence.

### **Standards of Behavior**

Sponsors of student clubs and performing groups such as the band, choir, and drill and athletic teams may establish standards of behavior—including consequences for misbehavior—that are stricter than those for students in general. If a violation is also a violation of school rules, the consequences specified by the Student Code of Conduct or by local policy will apply in addition to any consequences specified by the organization’s standards of behavior.

[For further information, see policies at FM and FO. For student-organized, student-led groups, see **Meetings of Non-curriculum-Related Groups** on page 44.]

### **Offices and Elections**

Certain clubs, organizations, and performing groups will hold elections for student officers.

### **FEES**

Materials that are part of the basic educational program are provided with state and local funds at no charge to a student. A student, however, is expected to provide his or her own pencils, paper, erasers, and notebooks and may be required to pay certain other fees or deposits, including:

- Costs for materials for a class project that the student will keep.
- Membership dues in voluntary clubs or student organizations and admission fees to extracurricular activities.
- Security deposits.
- Personal physical education and athletic equipment and apparel.
- Voluntarily purchased pictures, publications, class rings, yearbooks, graduation announcements, etc.
- Voluntarily purchased student accident insurance.
- Musical instrument rental and uniform maintenance, when uniforms are provided by the district.
- Personal apparel used in extracurricular activities that becomes the property of the student.
- Parking fees and student identification cards.
- Fees for lost, damaged, or overdue library books.
- Fees for driver training courses, if offered.
- Fees for optional courses offered for credit that require use of facilities not available on district premises.
- Summer school for courses that are offered tuition-free during the regular school year.
- A reasonable fee for providing transportation to a student who lives within two miles of the school. [See **Buses and Other School Vehicles** on page 47.]
- A fee not to exceed \$50 for costs of providing an educational program outside of regular school hours for a student who has lost credit because of absences and whose parent chooses

the program in order for the student to meet the 90 percent attendance requirement. The fee will be charged only if the parent or guardian signs a district-provided request form.

Any required fee or deposit may be waived if the student and parent are unable to pay. Application for such a waiver may be made to the principal. [For further information, see policies at FP.]

## **FUND-RAISING**

Student groups or classes and/or parent groups may be permitted to conduct fund-raising drives for approved school purposes. An application for permission must be made to the Director of Finance at least 30 days before the event. [For further information, see policies at FJ and GE.]

## **GANG-FREE ZONES**

Certain criminal offenses, including those involving organized criminal activity such as gang-related crimes, will be enhanced to the next highest category of offense if they are committed in a gang-free zone. For purposes of the district, a gang-free zone includes a school bus and a location in, on, or within 1,000 feet of any district-owned or leased property or campus playground.

## **GRADING GUIDELINES**

Grading guidelines for each grade level or course will be communicated and distributed to students and their parents by the classroom teacher. These guidelines have been reviewed by each applicable curriculum department and have been approved by the campus principal. These guidelines establish the minimum number of assignments, projects, and examinations required for each grading period. In addition, these guidelines establish how the student's mastery of concepts and achievement will be communicated (i.e., letter grades, numerical averages, checklist of required skills, etc.). Grading guidelines also outline in what circumstances a student will be allowed to redo an assignment or retake an examination for which the student originally made a failing grade.

Academic grades are recorded numerically and citizenship grades are recorded as a letter grade on the report card. Teachers follow grading guidelines approved by the Principal that have been designed to reflect each student's academic achievement for the grading period, semester, or course.

The grading policy of the Commerce Independent School District is designed to provide consistency throughout the system and to meet requirements specified by the Texas Education Agency. There are six requirements specified by the Texas Education Agency. There are six reporting periods, three each semester. Supplementary reporting is done by conferences and/or interim reports of the student's progress.

In grades 6 - 12 number grades are used to represent the teacher's assessment of the student's achievement. Number grades can be converted to letter grades using the following scale:

### Academic Grading

90 – 100 = A

80 – 89 = B

70 – 79 = C

69 – Below = F (Failure)

### Citizenship Grading

A = Outstanding

B = Needs Improvement

C = Major Concerns

F = Unsatisfactory

To keep the students and parents informed of academic status, the following procedures will be used in distribution of grade reports:

- The semester will be divided into three six-week periods of approximately 30 days each.
- Report cards will be issued to students and mailed to parents the week following the six-week period.
- The six-week report card will indicate the grade average and citizenship grade for that six-week period, and the cumulative number of tardies and absences for each class.
- At the end of each semester, exams will be given and the semester averages determined and placed in the student's permanent record.
- The six week average will consist of daily grades, test grades and a comprehensive six week test. For core courses daily work will count 50%, test grades 35% and the six week test will be 15% of the overall six week grading period.
- A comprehensive semester exam will be given at the end of each semester. This will count as 15% of the overall semester grade.

Students are expected to complete all assignments in each of their classes. If assignments are not completed, a grade of incomplete will be issued. Incompletes must be removed within two weeks after the beginning of the next six week grading period. If incompletes are not removed, a grade of zero will be given except for major assignments. Major assignments must be completed in order to have an incomplete grade removed. Assignments turned in late will not receive full grade value. Academic detention hall may be assigned if students fail to do assignments.

## **GRADING POLICY**

Teacher guidelines shall ensure that grades reflect student achievement and that a sufficient number of grades are taken to support the average grade assigned. Grades shall not be reduced for disciplinary reasons except in case of late assignments, academic dishonesty, or as otherwise permitted by this policy. Guidelines for grading shall be clearly communicated to students and parents.

Also see **Report Cards/Progress Reports and Conferences** on page 40 for additional information.

## **HARASSMENT**

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 22.]

## **HEALTH-RELATED MATTERS**

### **Bacterial Meningitis**

State law specifically requires the district to provide the following information:

- What is meningitis?

Meningitis is an inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord. It can be caused by viruses, parasites, fungi, and bacteria. Viral meningitis is most common and the least serious. Bacterial meningitis is the most common form of serious bacterial infection with the potential for serious, long-term complications. It is an uncommon disease, but requires urgent treatment with antibiotics to prevent permanent damage or death.

- What are the symptoms?

Someone with meningitis will become very ill. The illness may develop over one or two days, but it can also rapidly progress in a matter of hours. Not everyone with meningitis will have the same symptoms.

Children (over 1 year old) and adults with meningitis may have a severe headache, high temperature, vomiting, sensitivity to bright lights, neck stiffness or joint pains, and drowsiness or confusion. In both children and adults, there may be a rash of tiny, red-purple spots. These can occur anywhere on the body.

The diagnosis of bacterial meningitis is based on a combination of symptoms and laboratory results.

- How serious is bacterial meningitis?

If it is diagnosed early and treated promptly, the majority of people make a complete recovery. In some cases it can be fatal or a person may be left with a permanent disability.

- How is bacterial meningitis spread?

Fortunately, none of the bacteria that cause meningitis are as contagious as diseases like the common cold or the flu, and they are not spread by casual contact or by simply breathing the air where a person with meningitis has been. The germs live naturally in the back of our noses and throats, but they do not live for long outside the body. They are spread when people exchange saliva (such as by kissing, sharing drinking containers, utensils, or cigarettes).

The germ does not cause meningitis in most people. Instead, most people become carriers of the germ for days, weeks, or even months. The bacteria rarely overcome the body's immune system and cause meningitis or another serious illness.

- How can bacterial meningitis be prevented?

Do not share food, drinks, utensils, toothbrushes, or cigarettes. Limit the number of persons you kiss.

While there are vaccines for some other strains of bacterial meningitis, they are used only in special circumstances. These include when there is a disease outbreak in a community or for people traveling to a country where there is a high risk of getting the disease. Also, a vaccine is recommended by some groups for college students, particularly freshmen living in dorms or residence halls. The vaccine is safe and effective (85–90 percent). It can cause mild side effects, such as redness and pain at the injection site lasting up to two days. Immunity develops within seven to ten days after the vaccine is given and lasts for up to five years.

- What should you do if you think you or a friend might have bacterial meningitis?

You should seek prompt medical attention.

- Where can you get more information?

Your school nurse, family doctor, and the staff at your local or regional health department office are excellent sources for information on all communicable diseases. You may also call your local health department or Regional Department of State Health Services office to ask about a meningococcal vaccine. Additional information may also be found at the Web sites for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov>, and the Department of State Health Services, <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/>.

## **Physical Activity for Students in Elementary and Middle School**

In accordance with policies at EHAB, EHAC, EHBG, [and FFA], the district will ensure that students in middle school will engage in 30 minutes of moderate or vigorous physical activity per day for at least four semesters.

For additional information on the district's requirements and programs regarding elementary, middle, and junior high school student physical activity requirements, please see the principal.

### **School Health Advisory Council (SHAC)**

During the preceding school year, the district's School Health Advisory Council held two meetings. Additional information regarding the district's School Health Advisory Council is available from the school nurse. [See also policies at BDF and EHAA.]

[See **Removing a Student from Human Sexuality Instruction** on page 5 for additional information.]

### **Other Health-Related Matters**

#### ***Physical Fitness Assessment***

Annually, the district will conduct a physical fitness assessment of students in grades 3–12. At the end of the school year, a parent may submit a written request to the principal to obtain the results of his or her child's physical fitness assessment conducted during the school year.

#### ***Vending Machines***

The district has adopted policies and implemented procedures to comply with state and federal food service guidelines for restricting student access to vending machines. For more information regarding these policies and guidelines see the school principal. [See policies at CO and FFA.]

#### ***Tobacco Prohibited***

The district and its staff strictly enforce prohibitions against the use of tobacco products by students and others on school property and at school-sponsored and school-related activities. [See the Student Code of Conduct and policies at FNCD and GKA.]

#### ***Asbestos Management Plan***

The district's Asbestos Management Plan, designed to be in compliance with state and federal regulations, is available in the maintenance office. If you have any questions, please contact the Director of Maintenance at 903.886.3778.

#### ***Pest Management Plan***

The district applies only pest control products that comply with state and federal guidelines. Except in an emergency, signs will be posted 48 hours before application. Parents who want to be notified prior to pesticide application inside their child's school assignment area may contact Director of Maintenance at 903.886.3778.

## **HOMELESS STUDENTS**

For more information on services for homeless students, contact the district's Liaison for Homeless Children and Youths, Julia Robinson, at 903.886.3755.

## **HOMEWORK**

### **Purposes of Homework**

- To extend classroom-learning opportunities for students who need additional time.

- To create additional opportunities for students to accomplish learning outcomes that require independent student work, such as research, and to apply classroom learning in new and different situations.
- To prepare for upcoming classroom instructional activities.
- To foster the development of study habits, individual initiative, responsibility, and self-discipline.
- To provide an opportunity for parents to participate in the student's learning.

## **IMMUNIZATION**

A student must be fully immunized against certain diseases or must present a certificate or statement that, for medical reasons or reasons of conscience, including a religious belief, the student will not be immunized. For exemptions based on reasons of conscience, only official forms issued by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Immunization Branch, can be honored by the district. This form may be obtained by writing the DSHS Immunization Branch (MC 1946), P.O. Box 149347, Austin, Texas 78714-9347; or online at <https://webds.dshs.state.tx.us/immco/affidavit.shtm>. The form must be notarized and submitted to the principal or school nurse within 90 days of notarization. If the parent is seeking an exemption for more than one student in the family, a separate form must be provided for each student.

The immunizations required are: diphtheria, rubeola (measles), rubella (German measles), mumps, tetanus, pertussis, poliomyelitis (polio), hepatitis A, hepatitis B, varicella (chicken pox), and meningococcal. The school nurse can provide information on age-appropriate doses or on an acceptable physician-validated history of illness required by the Department of State Health Services. Proof of immunization may be established by personal records from a licensed physician or public health clinic with a signature or rubber-stamp validation.

If a student should not be immunized for medical reasons, the student or parent must present a certificate signed by a U.S. licensed physician stating that, in the doctor's opinion, the immunization required poses a significant risk to the health and well-being of the student or a member of the student's family or household. This certificate must be renewed yearly unless the physician specifies a life-long condition. [For further information, see policy FFAB(LEGAL) and the Department of State Health Services Web site: <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize/school/default.shtm>.]

## **LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES**

### **Questioning of Students**

When law enforcement officers or other lawful authorities wish to question or interview a student at school, the principal will cooperate fully regarding the conditions of the interview, if the questioning or interview is part of a child abuse investigation. In other circumstances:

- The principal will verify and record the identity of the officer or other authority and ask for an explanation of the need to question or interview the student at school.
- The principal ordinarily will make reasonable efforts to notify the parents unless the interviewer raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection.
- The principal ordinarily will be present unless the interviewer raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection.

## **Students Taken Into Custody**

State law requires the district to permit a student to be taken into legal custody:

- To comply with an order of the juvenile court.
- To comply with the laws of arrest.
- By a law enforcement officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has engaged in delinquent conduct or conduct in need of supervision.
- By a probation officer if there is probable cause to believe the student has violated a condition of probation imposed by the juvenile court.
- By an authorized representative of Child Protective Services, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, a law enforcement officer, or a juvenile probation officer, without a court order, under the conditions set out in the Family Code relating to the student's physical health or safety.
- To comply with a properly issued directive to take a student into custody.

Before a student is released to a law enforcement officer or other legally authorized person, the principal will verify the officer's identity and, to the best of his or her ability, will verify the official's authority to take custody of the student.

The principal will immediately notify the superintendent and will ordinarily attempt to notify the parent unless the officer or other authorized person raises what the principal considers to be a valid objection to notifying the parents. Because the principal does not have the authority to prevent or delay a student's release to a law enforcement officer, any notification will most likely be after the fact.

## **Notification of Law Violations**

The district is required by state law to notify:

- All instructional and support personnel who have responsibility for supervising a student who has been arrested or referred to the juvenile court for any felony offense or for certain misdemeanors.
- All instructional and support personnel who have regular contact with a student who is required to register as a sex offender or who has been convicted, received deferred prosecution, received deferred adjudication, or was adjudicated for delinquent conduct for any felony offense or certain misdemeanors.

[For further information, see policies FL(LEGAL) and GRA(LEGAL).]

## **MAKEUP WORK**

### **Makeup Work Because of Absence**

For any class missed, the teacher may assign the student makeup work based on the instructional objectives for the subject or course and the needs of the individual student in mastering the essential knowledge and skills or in meeting subject or course requirements.

A student will be responsible for obtaining and completing the makeup work in a satisfactory manner and within the time specified by the teacher. [For further information, see policy EIAB(LOCAL).]

A student who does not make up assigned work within the time allotted by the teacher will receive a grade of zero for the assignment.

A student will be permitted to make up tests and to turn in projects due in any class missed because of absence. Teachers may assign a late penalty to any long-term project in accordance with time lines approved by the principal and previously communicated to students.

### **DAEP Makeup Work**

A student removed to a disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) during the school year will have an opportunity to complete, before the beginning of the next school year, a foundation curriculum course in which the student was enrolled at the time of removal. The district may provide the opportunity to complete the course through an alternative method, including a correspondence course, distance learning, or summer school. The district will not charge the student for any method of completion provided by the district. [See policy FOCA(LEGAL).]

### **In-school Suspension (ISS) Makeup Work**

A student removed from the regular classroom to in-school suspension or another setting, other than a DAEP, will have an opportunity to complete before the beginning of the next school year each course the student was enrolled in at the time of removal from the regular classroom. The district may provide the opportunity by any method available, including a correspondence course, distance learning, or summer school. The district will not charge the student for any method of completion provided by the district. [See policy FO(LEGAL).]

## **MEDICINE AT SCHOOL**

District employees will not give a student prescription medication, nonprescription medication, herbal substances, anabolic steroids, or dietary supplements, with the following exceptions:

Only authorized employees, in accordance with policies at FFAC, may administer:

- Prescription medication, in the original, properly labeled container, provided by the parent, along with a written request.
- Prescription medication from a properly labeled unit dosage container filled by a registered nurse or another qualified district employee from the original, properly labeled container.
- Nonprescription medication, in the original, properly labeled container, provided by the parent along with a written request.
- Herbal or dietary supplements provided by the parent only if required by the student's individualized education program (IEP) or Section 504 plan for a student with disabilities.

In certain emergency situations, the district will maintain and administer to a student nonprescription medication, but only:

- In accordance with the guidelines developed with the district's medical advisor; and
- When the parent has previously provided written consent to emergency treatment on the district's form.

A student with asthma or severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) may be permitted to possess and use prescribed asthma or anaphylaxis medication at school or school-related events only if he or she has written authorization from his or her parent and a physician or other licensed health-care

provider. The student must also demonstrate to his or her physician or health-care provider and to the school nurse the ability to use the prescribed medication, including any device required to administer the medication.

If the student has been prescribed asthma or anaphylaxis medication for use during the school day, the student and parents should discuss this with the [school nurse or] principal.

In accordance with a student's individual health plan for management of diabetes, a student with diabetes will be permitted to possess and use monitoring and treatment supplies and equipment while at school or at a school-related activity. See the school nurse or principal for information. [See policy FFAF(LEGAL).]

### **Psychotropic Drugs**

A psychotropic drug is a substance used in the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a disease or as a component of a medication. It is intended to have an altering effect on perception, emotion, or behavior and is commonly described as a mood- or behavior-altering substance.

Teachers and other district employees may discuss a student's academic progress or behavior with the student's parents or another employee as appropriate; however, they are not permitted to recommend use of psychotropic drugs. A district employee who is a registered nurse, an advanced nurse practitioner, a physician, or a certified or credentialed mental health professional can recommend that a student be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner, if appropriate. [For further information, see policies at FFAC.]

### **NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

In its efforts to promote nondiscrimination, Commerce ISD does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, or disability in providing education services, activities, and programs, including CTE programs, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), as amended, which incorporates and expands upon the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

The following district representatives have been designated to coordinate compliance with these legal requirements:

- Title IX Coordinator, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of gender: Ludonna Smithers at 903.886.3755.
- ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of disability: Julia Robinson at 903.886.3755.
- All other concerns regarding discrimination: See the superintendent, Blake Cooper, 903.886.3755.

### **PHYSICAL EXAMINATIONS / HEALTH SCREENINGS**

A student desiring to participate in the UIL athletic program shall submit annually a statement from a health care provider authorized under UIL rules indicating that the student has been examined and is physically able to participate in the athletic program.

The District may provide additional screening as District and community resources permit.

Parents of students identified through any screening programs as needing treatment or further examination shall be advised of the need and referred to appropriate health agencies. [See FFAA]

## **PLEDGES OF ALLEGIANCE AND A MINUTE OF SILENCE**

Each school day, students will recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Texas flag. Parents may submit a written request to the principal to excuse their child from reciting a pledge. [See **Excusing a Student from Reciting the Pledges to the U.S. and Texas Flags** on page 5.]

One minute of silence will follow recitation of the pledges. Each student may choose to reflect, pray, meditate, or engage in any other silent activity during that minute so long as the silent activity does not interfere with or distract others. [See policy EC(LEGAL) for more information.]

## **PRAYER**

Each student has a right to individually, voluntarily, and silently pray or meditate in school in a manner that does not disrupt instructional or other activities of the school. The school will not encourage, require, or coerce a student to engage in or to refrain from such prayer or meditation during any school activity.

## **PROMOTION AND RETENTION**

A student will be promoted only on the basis of academic achievement or demonstrated proficiency in the subject matter of the course or grade level, the recommendation of the student's teacher, the score received on any criterion-referenced or state-mandated assessment, and any other necessary academic information as determined by the district. To earn credit in a course, a student must receive a grade of at least 70 based on course-level or grade-level standards.

In grades 1-8, promotion is based on an overall average of 70 on a scale of 100. Passing standards are based on course/grade level (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills) for all subject areas and a grade of 70 or above in three of the following areas: language arts, mathematics, science and social studies.

In addition, at certain grade levels a student—with limited exceptions—will be required to pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), if the student is enrolled in a public Texas school on any day between January 1 and the date of the first administration of the TAKS.

- In order to be promoted to grade 6, students enrolled in grade 5 must perform satisfactorily on the mathematics and reading sections of the grade 5 assessment in English or Spanish.
- In order to be promoted to grade 9, students enrolled in grade 8 must perform satisfactorily on the mathematics and reading sections of the grade 8 assessment in English.

Parents of a student in grades 3–8 who does not perform satisfactorily on his or her exams will be notified that their child will participate in special instructional programs designed to improve performance. The student may be required to participate in this instruction before or after normal school hours or outside of the normal school year.

A student in grade 5 or 8 will have two additional opportunities to take a failed assessment. If a student fails a second time, a grade placement committee, consisting of the principal or designee, the teacher, and the student's parent, will determine the additional special instruction the student will receive. After a third failed attempt, the student will be retained; however, the parent can appeal this decision to the committee. In order for the student to be promoted, based on standards previously established by the district, the decision of the committee must be unanimous and the student must complete additional special instruction before beginning the

next grade level. Whether the student is retained or promoted, an educational plan for the student will be designed to enable the student to perform at grade level by the end of the next school year. [See policies at EIE.]

Certain students—some with disabilities and some with limited English proficiency—may be eligible for exemptions, accommodations, or deferred testing. For more information, see the principal, counselor, or special education director.

A Personal Graduation Plan (PGP) will be prepared for any student in a middle school or beyond who did not perform satisfactorily on a state-mandated assessment or is determined by the district as not likely to earn a high school diploma before the fifth school year following enrollment in grade 9. The PGP will be designed and implemented by a guidance counselor, teacher, or other staff member designated by the principal. The plan will, among other items, identify the student's educational goals, address the parent's educational expectations for the student, and outline an intensive instruction program for the student. [For additional information, see the counselor and policy EIF(LEGAL).]

## **RELEASE OF STUDENTS FROM SCHOOL**

Because class time is important, doctor's appointments should be scheduled, if possible, at times when the student will not miss instructional time.

A student who will need to leave school during the day must bring a note from his or her parent that morning and follow the campus sign-out procedures before leaving the campus. Otherwise, a student will not be released from school at times other than at the end of the school day.

Unless the principal has granted approval because of extenuating circumstances, a student will not regularly be released before the end of the instructional day.

If a student becomes ill during the school day, the student should receive permission from the teacher before reporting to the school nurse. The nurse will decide whether or not the student should be sent home and will notify the student's parent.

## **REPORT CARDS / PROGRESS REPORTS AND CONFERENCES**

Report cards with each student's grades or performance and absences in each class or subject are issued to parents at least once every six weeks.

At the end of the first three weeks of a grading period, parents will be given a written progress report if their child's performance is near or below 70, or is below the expected level of performance. If the student receives a grade lower than 70 in any class or subject at the end of a grading period, the parent will be requested to schedule a conference with the teacher of that class or subject. [See **Working Together** on page 2 for information on how to schedule a conference.]

Teachers follow grading guidelines that have been approved by the superintendent pursuant to the board-adopted policy and are designed to reflect each student's relative mastery of each assignment for the grading period, semester, or course. State law provides that a test or course grade issued by a teacher cannot be changed unless the board determines that the grade was arbitrary or contains an error, or that the teacher did not follow the district's grading policy. [See policy EIA(LOCAL) and **Grading Guidelines** on page 31.]

Questions about grade calculation should first be discussed with the teacher; if the question is not resolved, the student or parent may request a conference with the principal in accordance with FNG(LOCAL).

The report card or unsatisfactory progress report will state whether tutorials are required for a student who receives a grade lower than 70 in a class or subject.

## **RETALIATION**

[See **Dating Violence, Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation** on page 22.]

## **SAFETY**

Student safety on campus and at school-related events is a high priority of the district. Although the district has implemented safety procedures, the cooperation of students is essential to ensuring school safety. A student should:

- Avoid conduct that is likely to put the student or others at risk.
- Follow the behavioral standards in this handbook and the Student Code of Conduct, as well as any additional rules for behavior and safety set by the principal, teachers, or bus drivers.
- Remain alert to and promptly report to a teacher or the principal any safety hazards, such as intruders on campus or threats made by any person toward a student or staff member.
- Know emergency evacuation routes and signals.
- Follow immediately the instructions of teachers, bus drivers, and other district employees who are overseeing the welfare of students.

### **Accident Insurance**

Soon after the school year begins, parents will have the opportunity to purchase low-cost accident insurance that would help meet medical expenses in the event of injury to their child.

### **Drills: Fire, Tornado, and Other Emergencies**

From time to time, students, teachers, and other district employees will participate in drills of emergency procedures. When the alarm is sounded, students should follow the direction of teachers or others in charge quickly, quietly, and in an orderly manner.

#### ***Fire Drill Bells***

3 bells	leave the building
1 bell	halt; stand at attention
2 bells	return to the classroom

#### ***Tornado Drill Bells***

1 continuous bell	move quietly but quickly to the designated locations
2 bells	return to the classroom

### **Emergency Medical Treatment and Information**

If a student has a medical emergency at school or a school-related activity when the parent cannot be reached, the school may have to rely on written parental consent to obtain emergency medical treatment, and information about allergies to medications, foods, insect bites, etc. Therefore, parents are asked each year to complete an emergency care consent form. Parents should keep emergency care information up-to-date (name of doctor, emergency phone numbers, allergies, etc.). Please contact the school nurse to update any information that the nurse or the teacher needs to know.

## **Emergency School-Closing Information**

Each year, parents are asked to complete an emergency release form to provide contact information in the event that school is dismissed early because of severe weather or another emergency.

During inclement weather or other emergencies, parents should listen to local radio station KETR (88.9FM) or KGVV (1400AM) as well as to Dallas Metroplex TV stations regarding possible school closings. Parents can sign up to receive instant alerts via text, email and phone messaging by ensuring that information reported on the emergency contact sheet is correct and kept up to date. Commerce ISD utilizes SchoolMessenger to send out these alerts.

## **SCHOOL FACILITIES**

### **Use by Students Before and After School**

Certain areas of the school will be accessible to students before and after school for specific purposes. Students are required to remain in the area where their activity is scheduled to take place.

The following areas are open to students before school, beginning at 7:30 a.m.

- Cafeteria (all grade levels)
- Library (all grade levels)
- Gym (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students only)

Unless the teacher or sponsor overseeing the activity gives permission, a student will not be permitted to go to another area of the building or campus.

After dismissal of school in the afternoon, and unless involved in an activity under the supervision of a teacher, students must leave campus immediately.

### **Conduct Before and After School**

Teachers and administrators have full authority over student conduct at before- or after-school activities on district premises and at school-sponsored events off district premises, such as play rehearsals, club meetings, athletic practices, and special study groups or tutorials. Students are subject to the same rules of conduct that apply during the instructional day and will be subject to consequences established by the Student Code of Conduct or any stricter standards of behavior established by the sponsor for extracurricular participants.

### **Use of Hallways During Class Time**

Loitering or standing in the halls during class is not permitted. During class time, a student must have a hall pass to be outside the classroom for any purpose. Failure to obtain a pass will result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

### **Cafeteria Services**

The district participates in the National School Lunch Program and offers students nutritionally balanced meals daily. Free and reduced-price meals are available based on financial need. Information about a student's participation is confidential. Applications are available on or before the first day of school.

Foodservice has been contracted by Chartwells, a food service management company. Meal prices will remain the same:

	Breakfast	Lunch	Milk/Juice
Regular	1.25	2.00	.35
Reduced	.30	.40	.35

The district follows the federal and state guidelines regarding foods of minimal nutritional value being served or sold on school premises during the school day. [For more information, see policy CO(LEGAL).]

### **Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value (FMNV)**

Effective August 1, 2004 the Texas Department of Agriculture issued the Texas Public School Nutrition Policy creating new guidelines for public schools participating in federally funded Child Nutrition Programs.

Schools may not provide FMNV's to students at any time during the school day. These include any carbonated beverages, water ices, chewing gum, and certain candies. The only food that may be made available to elementary school students on campus during the school day, at times other than meal periods, is a nutritious classroom snack allowed by the policy. Foods otherwise restricted are allowed on three days during the school year.

Parents may send cupcakes for a child's birthday but serving the cupcakes will be scheduled after the end of the lunch period for the class.

Pizza parties or other alternative meals may not be provided to students in competition with meals made available by the school food service department under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. Such items may be provided if they are supplemented with additional food provided by the Food Service Department so as to become a reimbursable meal.

School-approved field trips are exempt from the nutritional policy. No food fundraising will be allowed on an elementary school campus during the school day. For more information go to [www.squaremeals.org](http://www.squaremeals.org) or 1-888-TEX-KIDS.

### **Library**

The library is a learning laboratory with books, computers, magazines, and other materials available for classroom assignments, projects, and reading or listening pleasure. The library is open for independent student use during the following times with a teacher permit:

- Monday-Friday, 7:30-8 a.m., 3:30 – 4 p.m.
- Other times to be determined by administration.

### **SCHOOL HOURS**

Students will be allowed to enter the classrooms at the 7:55 a.m. bell. Students are considered tardy at 8 a.m.. For safety reasons, your child should not arrive prior to 7:30 a.m. Students not picked up by 3:40 p.m. are brought into the building for supervision. If your child's usual dismissal routine is to be changed, the office should be notified before 2:15 p.m. After that time, it is often difficult to ensure that the message gets to the teacher and the student.

## **Meetings of Non-curriculum-Related Groups**

Student-organized, student-led non-curriculum-related groups are permitted to meet during the hours designated by the principal before and after school. These groups must comply with the requirements of policy FNAB(LOCAL).

A list of these groups is available in the principal's office.

## **School Sponsored Trips**

Students who participate in school-sponsored trips shall be required to ride in transportation provided by the school to and from the event. Exception may be made if the student's parent or guardian personally requests that the student be allowed to ride with the parent or presents a written request to the principal the day before the scheduled trip that the student be allowed to ride with an adult designated by the parent. The district shall not be liable for any injuries that occur to students riding in vehicles that are not provided by the school.

## **Social Activities**

All school-related social activities shall be approved by and planned with the teacher and students in consultation with the Principal. Invitations to private social events will not be distributed at school.

All social functions are for the students of the Commerce Middle School only. Times and dress will be announced in advance of the events. If school dress is not specified, the dress code in the Handbook should be followed. If the occasion is to be formal, guidelines will be issued. Students not currently enrolled at Commerce Middle School will not be allowed to attend social functions. If a student leaves the function for any reason without permission of the person in charge, he/she will not be allowed to return to the function.

As the time for any school event will be given in advance, it is of the utmost importance that students are picked up at the designated time and place after the event.

## **SEARCHES**

In the interest of promoting student safety and attempting to ensure that schools are safe and drug free, district officials may from time to time conduct searches. Such searches are conducted without a warrant and as permitted by law.

### **Students' Desks and Lockers**

Students' desks and lockers are school property and remain under the control and jurisdiction of the school even when assigned to an individual student.

Students are fully responsible for the security and contents of their assigned desks and lockers. Students must be certain that their lockers are locked, and that the combinations are not available to others.

Searches of desks or lockers may be conducted at any time there is reasonable cause to believe that they contain articles or materials prohibited by policy, whether or not a student is present.

The parent will be notified if any prohibited items are found in the student's desk or locker.

### **Trained Dogs**

The district will use trained dogs to alert school officials to the presence of prohibited or illegal items, including drugs and alcohol. At any time, trained dogs may be used around lockers and the areas around vehicles parked on school property. Searches of classrooms, common areas, or

student belongings may also be conducted by trained dogs when students are not present. An item in a classroom, a locker, or a vehicle to which a trained dog alerts may be searched by school officials.

## **SPECIAL PROGRAMS**

The district provides special programs for gifted and talented students, homeless students, bilingual students, migrant students, students with limited English proficiency, dyslexic students, and students with disabilities. The coordinator of each program can answer questions about eligibility requirements, as well as programs and services offered in the district or by other organizations. A student or parent with questions about these programs should contact the counselor at 903.886.3795.

## **STEROIDS**

State law prohibits students from possessing, dispensing, delivering, or administering an anabolic steroid. Anabolic steroids are for medical use only, and only a physician can prescribe use.

Body building, muscle enhancement, or the increase of muscle bulk or strength through the use of an anabolic steroid or human growth hormone by a healthy student is not a valid medical use and is a criminal offense.

Students participating in UIL athletic competition may be subject to random steroid testing. More information on the UIL testing program may be found on the UIL Web site at [http://www.uil.utexas.edu/athletics/health/steroid\\_information.html](http://www.uil.utexas.edu/athletics/health/steroid_information.html).

## **STUDENT SPEAKERS**

The district provides students the opportunity to introduce the following school events

- Varsity football games;
- Opening announcements and greetings for the school day;
- Cocurricular and extracurricular student assemblies and banquets and
- Honor assemblies at the secondary level.

Students are eligible to introduce these events if they are in the highest two grade levels of the school at which the student is publicly speaking and hold one of the following positions of honor based on neutral criteria: student council officers, class officers of the highest grade level in the school, captains of an athletic team and other students holding positions of honor.

For cocurricular, extracurricular and honor assemblies and banquets only, students must be members of the organization for which the event is being held to be eligible.

Students who are in disciplinary placement or suspension from an extracurricular activity at the time of the speaking event will not be selected.

A student who is eligible and wishes to introduce one of the school events listed above should submit his or her name to the principal during the first week of the fall semester and/or spring semester. The names of all students who volunteered will be randomly drawn and matched to the event for which the student will give the introduction. If the selected student speaker declines or becomes ineligible, then no student introduction will be made at that event. The selection of students to introduce school events will occur at the beginning of each semester.

As determined by the principal, students who have been selected for special honors, such as captain of an athletic team, student council officers, leaders of school-sponsored organizations, homecoming king or queen, or prom king or queen may also address school audiences at designated events. [See FNA(LOCAL)]

## **SUMMER SCHOOL**

Summer school is offered for four weeks following the end of the school year. Students are recommended for summer school based on a combination of teacher recommendation, review of yearly progress by administration and counselor, educational testing results including failure to master the TAKS, and attendance or retention committee review of student progress. Summer school is offered free of charge to those recommended students and transportation is provided. Students who attend an extended-year program must attend 90% of the program days and meet academic proficiency of the course or grade level in order to be promoted. (See section on **Promotion, Retention, and Placement.**)

## **TAKS (TEXAS ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS)**

In addition to routine tests and other measures of achievement, students at certain grade levels will take state-mandated assessments (such as TAKS: the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) in the following subjects:

- Mathematics, annually in grades 3–11
- Reading, annually in grades 3–9
- Writing, including spelling and grammar, in grades 4 and 7
- English language arts in grades 10 and 11
- Social studies in grades 8, 10, and 11
- Science in grades 5, 8, 10, and 11
- Any other subject and grade required by federal law

[See policy EKB(LEGAL).]

TAKS-Accommodated, TAKS-Modified, and TAKS-Alternate for students receiving special education services are administered to eligible students.

Linguistically accommodated testing (LAT), as well as the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System (TELPAS) for students identified as limited English proficient, are also administered to eligible students.

## **TARDINESS**

A student who is tardy to class by more than 10 minutes will be assigned to detention hall. Repeated instances of tardiness will result in more severe disciplinary action, in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

## **TEXTBOOKS, ELECTRONIC TEXTBOOKS, AND TECHNOLOGICAL EQUIPMENT**

State-approved textbooks are provided to students free of charge for each subject or class. Books must be covered by the student, as directed by the teacher, and treated with care. Electronic

textbooks and technological equipment may also be provided to students, depending on the course and course objectives. A student who is issued a damaged item should report the damage to the teacher. Any student failing to return an item in acceptable condition loses the right to free textbooks and technological equipment until the item is returned or paid for by the parent; however, the student will be provided textbooks and equipment for use at school during the school day.

## **TRANSFERS**

[See **School Safety Transfers**, on page 6, and **Options and Requirements for Providing Assistance to Students Who Have Learning Difficulties or Who Need or May Need Special Education**, on page 6, for other transfer options.]

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **School-Sponsored Trips**

Students who participate in school-sponsored trips are required to use transportation provided by the school to and from the event. The principal, however, may make an exception if the parent makes a written request that the student be released to the parent or to another adult designated by the parent.

### **Buses and Other School Vehicles**

The district makes school bus transportation available to all students living two or more miles from school. This service is provided at no cost to students. Bus routes and any subsequent changes are posted at the school.

A parent may also designate a child-care facility or grandparent's residence as the regular pickup and drop-off location for his or her child. The designated facility or residence must be on an approved stop on an approved route. For information on bus routes and stops or to designate an alternate pickup or drop-off location, you may contact the Director of Transportation at 903.886.3778.

See the Student Code of Conduct for provisions regarding transportation to the DAEP.

Students are expected to assist district staff in ensuring that buses remain in good condition and that transportation is provided safely. When riding in district vehicles, students are held to behavioral standards established in this handbook and the Student Code of Conduct. Students must:

- Follow the driver's directions at all times.
- Enter and leave the bus or van in an orderly manner at the designated stop.
- Keep feet, books, instrument cases, and other objects out of the aisle.
- Not deface the bus, van, or its equipment.
- Not put head, hands, arms, or legs out of the window, hold any object out of the window, or throw objects within or out of the bus or van.
- Not possess or use any form of tobacco on school buses.
- Observe all usual classroom rules.
- Be seated while the vehicle is moving.
- Fasten their seat belts, if available.

- Wait for the driver's signal upon leaving the bus or van and before crossing in front of the vehicle.

Misconduct will be punished in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct; bus-riding privileges may be suspended.

## **VANDALISM**

The taxpayers of the community have made a sustained financial commitment for the construction and upkeep of school facilities. To ensure that school facilities can serve those for whom they are intended—both this year and for years to come—littering, defacing, or damaging school property is not tolerated. Students will be required to pay for damages they cause and will be subject to criminal proceedings as well as disciplinary consequences in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

## **VIDEO CAMERAS**

For safety purposes, video/audio equipment may be used to monitor student behavior, including on buses and in common areas on campus. Students will not be told when the equipment is being used.

The principal will review the video/audio recordings routinely and document student misconduct. Discipline will be in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

## **VISITORS TO THE SCHOOL**

### **General Visitors**

Parents and others are welcome to visit district schools. For the safety of those within the school and to avoid disruption of instructional time, all visitors must first report to the principal's office and must comply with all applicable district policies and procedures.

Visits to individual classrooms during instructional time are permitted only with approval of the principal and teacher and only so long as their duration or frequency does not interfere with the delivery of instruction or disrupt the normal school environment.

All visitors are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of courtesy and conduct; disruptive behavior will not be permitted.

## **WITHDRAWING FROM SCHOOL**

A student under 18 may be withdrawn from school only by a parent. The school requests notice from the parent at least three days in advance so that records and documents may be prepared. The parent may obtain a withdrawal form from the principal's office.

On the student's last day, the withdrawal form must be presented to each teacher for current grade averages and book and equipment clearance; to the librarian to ensure a clear library record; to the clinic for health records; to the counselor for the last report card and course clearance; and finally, to the principal. A copy of the withdrawal form will be given to the student, and a copy will be placed in the student's permanent record.

A student who is 18 or older, who is married, or who has been declared by a court to be an emancipated minor may withdraw without parental signature.

## Glossary

**Accelerated instruction** is an intensive supplemental program designed to address the needs of an individual student in acquiring the knowledge and skills required at his or her grade level and/or as a result of a student not meeting the passing standard on a state-mandated assessment.

**ACT** refers to one of the two most frequently used college or university admissions exams: the American College Test. The test may be a requirement for admission to certain colleges or universities.

**ARD** is the admission, review, and dismissal committee convened for each student who is identified as needing a full and individual evaluation for special education services. The eligible student's parents are part of the committee.

**Attendance review committee** is sometimes responsible for reviewing a student's absences when the student's attendance drops below 90 percent of the days the class is offered. Under guidelines adopted by the board, the committee will determine whether there were extenuating circumstances for the absences and whether the student needs to complete certain conditions to master the course and regain credit lost because of absences.

**DAEP** stands for disciplinary alternative education program, a placement for students who have violated certain provisions of the Student Code of Conduct.

**FERPA** refers to the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act that grants specific privacy protections to student records. The law contains certain exceptions, such as for directory information, unless a student's parent or a student 18 or older directs the school not to release directory information.

**IEP** is the written record of the individualized education program prepared by the ARD committee for a student with disabilities who is eligible for special education services. The IEP contains several parts, such as a statement of the student's present educational performance; a statement of measurable annual goals, with short-term objectives; the special education and related services and supplemental aids and services to be provided, and program modifications or support by school personnel; a statement regarding how the student's progress will be measured and how the parents will be kept informed; accommodations for state or districtwide tests; etc.

**ISS** refers to in-school suspension, a disciplinary technique for misconduct found in the Student Code of Conduct. Although different from out-of-school suspension and placement in a DAEP, ISS removes the student from the regular classroom.

**LAT** stands for linguistically accommodated testing, which is an assessment process for recent immigrant English language learners who are required to be assessed in certain grades and subjects under the NCLB Act.

**NCLB Act** is the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

**PGP** stands for Personal Graduation Plan, which is recommended for all students entering grade 9 and is required by state law for any student in middle school or higher who fails a section on a state-mandated test or is identified by the district as not likely to earn a high school diploma before the fifth school year after he or she begins grade 9.

**SAT** refers to one of the two most frequently used college or university admissions exams: the Scholastic Aptitude Test. The test may be a requirement for admissions to certain colleges or universities.

**SHAC** stands for School Health Advisory Council, a group of at least five members, a majority of whom must be parents, appointed by the school board to assist the district in ensuring that

local community values and health issues are reflected in the district’s health education instruction.

**Section 504** is the federal law that prohibits discrimination against a student with a disability, requiring schools to provide opportunities for equal services, programs, and participation in activities. Unless the student is determined to be eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), general education with appropriate instructional accommodations will be provided.

**State-mandated assessments** are required of students at certain grade levels and in specified subjects. Successful performance sometimes is a condition of promotion, and passing the grade 11 exit-level test is a condition of graduation. Students have multiple opportunities to take the tests if necessary for promotion or graduation.

**Student Code of Conduct** is developed with the advice of the district-level committee and adopted by the board and identifies the circumstances, consistent with law, when a student may be removed from the classroom or campus. It also sets out the conditions that authorize or require the principal or another administrator to place the student in a DAEP. It outlines conditions for out-of-school suspension and for expulsion. The Student Code of Conduct also addresses notice to the parent regarding a student’s violation of one of its provisions.

**TAKS** is the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills, the state’s standardized achievement test currently given to students in certain subjects in grades 3–11.

**TAKS-Accommodated** is a state mandated assessment based on the same grade-level academic achievement standards of TAKS available to certain students who receive special education services and who need specific accommodations, as determined by the student and his or her ARD committee.

**TAKS-Alternate** is an alternate state mandated assessment designed for students with severe cognitive disabilities receiving special education services who meet the participation requirements, as determined by the student and his or her ARD committee.

**TAKS-Modified** is an alternate state mandated assessment based on modified achievement standards and is administered to eligible students receiving special education services, as determined by the student and his or her ARD committee.

**TELPAS** stands for the Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System, which assesses the progress that English language learners make in learning the English language, and is administered for those who meet the participation requirements in kindergarten–grade 12.

**TxVSN** is the Texas Virtual School Network, which provides online courses for Texas students to supplement the instructional programs of public school districts. Courses are taught by qualified instructors, and courses are equivalent in rigor and scope to a course taught in a traditional classroom setting.

**UIL** refers to the University Interscholastic League, the statewide voluntary nonprofit organization that oversees educational extracurricular academic, athletic, and music contests.

# APPENDIX I

## Commerce Middle School Student/Parent/School Compact Title I Schoolwide Project, 2010

**The Mission of Commerce ISD:** In partnership with families and community, Commerce ISD will provide all students an exemplary education, preparing them to be successful and productive citizens.

### **Commerce Middle School Responsibilities:**

Commerce Middle School pledges to help our students improve their academic performance by:

- Respecting all students' different learning styles.
- Providing staff development on the latest proven instructional strategies and methods.
- Providing instructional practices that will help all students be successful in school.
- Ensuring that all students have an opportunity to meet and exceed the State's standards.
- Keeping the lines of communication open with the community, parents and students.
- Maintaining an open door policy with students, parents and community.
- Respecting the views of all stakeholders.
- Ensuring that the environment of the school is conducive to learning.

### **Parent/Guardian Responsibilities:**

I pledge to help my student improve his/her academic performance by:

- Supervising my student's television viewing, computer and cell phone usage and use of video/gaming devices.
- Reviewing all progress reports and report cards.
- Encouraging my student to perform at a high academic level.
- Attending parent conferences and maintaining open communication with all teachers.
- Visiting CMS, classrooms and volunteering when possible.
- Monitoring the attendance of my student.
- Ensuring my student completes all homework and turns it in on time.
- Reading and signing the student handbook, code of conduct and rules of transportation.

### **Student Responsibilities:**

I will help improve my academic performance by:

- Assuming the responsibility of acquiring the learning necessary to meet the State's performance standards.
- Taking pride in my school, myself and my school work.
- Coming to school every day on time and with necessary materials.
- Taking responsibility for my learning and applying new knowledge to different situations.
- Limiting television viewing, cell phone usage and computer usage, as well as the use of other hand held devices.
- Read and sign the student handbook, code of conduct and rules of transportation.

## **Commerce Middle School Parent Involvement Plan**

### **Commerce ISD Mission Statement**

In partnership with families and community, Commerce ISD will provide all students an exemplary education, preparing them to be successful and productive citizens.

### **The Purpose of the CMS Parent Involvement Plan**

CMS has developed the "Parent Involvement Plan" in compliance with the legal requirements for Title I federal funding and in accordance with CISD's policy for the educational success of students in the district.

### **Goals of the CMS Parent Involvement Plan**

1. Communication – Provide continuous two-way communication with parents/guardians.
2. Parent Involvement and Engagement – Develop programs and services that will encourage active parent involvement and participation with children at home and at school.
3. Partnership – Develop successful partnerships with parents/guardians, families, businesses and the community that support student success as well as parent involvement and participation.
4. Accountability – Develop, implement and evaluate a Parent Involvement Plan that is in compliance with the legal requirements for the Title I Federal Funding and CISD Policy. The plan will promote active parent/guardian involvement and participation and enhance the success of CISD students and stakeholders. The plan will be evaluated annually.

### **Communication**

#### **CMS will:**

- Maintain an open line of communication at all times. Means of communication will include, but are not limited to, technology, media, teacher/parent conferences and or phone calls, phone calling systems, school webpage, newsletters and email.
- Inform parents of how to help their student in and out of the classroom.
- Communicate information in a manner that is understandable for all parents/guardians, even parents who have limited English proficiency.
- Provide timely information to parents/guardians regarding the school and district programs goals and objectives.
- Inform parents/guardians if the school fails to meet state and federal guidelines.
- Provide parents/guardians progress reports of their child's academic performance throughout the school year.

### **Partnership**

#### **CMS will:**

- Collaborate with all stakeholders to ensure all children will receive a high quality education.
- Ensure that all parent/guardians and families are supported as concerned and involved partners who want children to learn and achieve at the highest level, regardless of income, education or cultural background.
- Ensure that parents/guardians are an integral part of the decision making process for their student.
- Develop innovative relationships with local businesses, community organizations and agencies to support parental involvement.

### **Parental Involvement and Engagement**

#### **CMS will:**

- Involve parents/guardians in the development, implementation and ongoing evaluation of a district wide parental involvement plan.
- Encourage CISD parents/guardians to become full partners in their child's education.
- Promote active parent/guardian involvement and participation in the education of their students.
- Guide parents on what learning activities are best to use with students at home and at school.
- Provide parents/guardians support from CISD in becoming full partners in their child's education.
- Provide activities that encourage parents to come to school and return on a regular basis.

### **Accountability**

#### **CMS will:**

- Conduct an annual evaluation of the Parent Involvement Plan to ensure that the plan is being implemented throughout the district and is updated as needed.
- Publicize the CMS Parent Involvement Plan through campus and district websites.