

## UPPER SCHOOL ACADEMIC CHALLENGE POLICY

The CPS Upper School Program is designed to provide all students with equal access to a superior academic and social experience in grades 6-8. The program's goals are to: raise student achievement; close achievement and access gaps; develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills; create a grades 6-12 district pathway; and prepare all students for success in high school and post-secondary education.

Consistent with Massachusetts General Laws and federal laws, including without limitation, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and guided by the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks which include the Common Core State Standards, the CPS Upper School Program will adhere to the following academic challenge requirements:

1. All students will have access to challenge opportunities within heterogeneous upper school classrooms. Flexible grouping will be employed as an instructional strategy based on student need. Students will not be assigned to separate upper school challenge programs, nor will separate challenge programs be offered in the Upper Schools. Students, classes, and academic units of study will not be designated as "honors" or "non-honors."
2. School communities and teaching staffs will hold high expectations for all students and will provide appropriate instruction, challenges and supports to eliminate gaps in achievement.
3. Curriculum will be designed to provide a range of opportunities for challenging, intellectually stimulating experiences that support deep learning and allow for flexibility and reach.
4. Upper Schools will promote healthy and positive learning environments. Student assignments will be made with the goal of creating demographically and academically balanced classrooms.
5. The habits of challenging one's self, perseverance, and self-efficacy will be at the center of every classroom.

6. The core subjects of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Sciences will be taught in heterogeneous classrooms where children of all ability levels will experience instruction that meets their academic level. Planning, instruction, and assessment will be rooted in the following criteria:
  - a. Appropriate pacing
  - b. Inquiry based approach
  - c. Making connections within and across content areas
  - d. Complex and creative problem solving

In addition, students protected under IDEA may have their Individualized Education Program team address whether goals and objectives should be developed to assist them in meeting these criteria, and students protected under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 may have their 504 teams address whether any accommodations or modifications are needed to assist them in meeting these criteria.

7. Mathematics instruction in the Grade 6-12 Pathway will meet the needs of all students so that they are college and career ready by the end of grade 12. The Upper School Mathematics Program will provide students with a strong foundation to engage successfully in a rigorous, high school course sequence. All students will be expected to complete Algebra I, as outlined by the Common Core State Standards, no later than the end of grade 9 with opportunities for students to complete Algebra I in grade 8 or earlier.
8. Information & communication technologies will be strategically used to provide challenge opportunities to students.
9. A Subject Acceleration Protocol for students significantly above grade level will be developed. Students will be assessed using both quantitative and qualitative evidence. Individual plans that articulate the most developmentally appropriate way in which to provide additional challenge will be developed for students assessed as significantly above grade level.

Approved by Cambridge School Committee March 6, 2012