

PARENT FIELD GUIDE TO CASCO BAY HIGH SCHOOL



Welcome to Casco Bay High School, Portland's Expeditionary Learning high school. Below are brief descriptions of some key concepts and programs at CBHS, which are described in more detail in the CBHS Family Handbook. You can download the Family Handbook (which also includes the school philosophy, course descriptions, staff biographies and school rules/procedures) from the CBHS homepage (cbhs.portlandschools.org).

THE EL APPROACH CBHS is a lead school within the EL Education (eleducation.org) national network. EL schools emphasize learning that is active, challenging, and meaningful, and are based on key principles such as self-discovery, collaboration, service and compassion. EL schools measure student achievement in three dimensions: mastery of skills and knowledge, high quality work and character.

In addition, CBHS maintains core values in the 3 R's:

- **Rigor** – where students are challenged to do their best work and take responsibility for their learning.
- **Relevance** – where students are encouraged to consider how the curriculum in different courses is connected and how their learning relates to local, national, and global issues.
- **Relationships** – where the small size of CBHS and the Crew system help to form a cohesive, inclusive community and allow students to develop long-term connections with both teachers and fellow students.

The CBHS curriculum is organized around Learning Expeditions – long-term, in-depth studies, often centered on social justice issues. Expeditions involve fieldwork, research, critical thinking, and problem solving, on both individual and group levels. The study culminates in a performance or product presented to teachers, fellow students, and community experts.

CREW SYSTEM Each grade at CBHS is divided into 7 Crews – groups of students that generally stay together

through all four years, often with the same faculty advisor for grades 9-10 and another for grades 11-12. Crew allows students to be part of a smaller peer community, and ensures that each student is known well by at least one faculty member. The Crew Leader meets with parents and students at semi-annual conferences (November and January), and is the primary person for a parent/guardian to contact with questions about your child's progress in school. Crew meets once a day, typically for thirty minutes, and addresses the following questions over the four years:

- Who am I?
- How am I doing?
- What are my plans for the future?

MAKING THE GRADE CBHS uses a standards-based grading system to communicate student progress. Each class is built around course standards made up of concepts or skills a student must demonstrate that they have learned. Below is the standards-based grading scale used at CBHS:

1 = Does Not Meet the Standards

2 = Approaches the Standards

3 = Meets the Standards

4 = Exceeds the Standards

A student must meet or exceed standards to receive credit for a trimester. Progress reports are distributed halfway through each trimester. This gives students and parents the opportunity to identify areas that need extra attention in order to meet standards and receive credit for that trimester. Students and parents can also view assignments and grades online on Infinite Campus any time during the year.

EARNING UNITS OF PROFICIENCY Forty-one Units of Proficiency (UPs) are required for graduation. Units of Proficiency are the standard-based assessment version of credits. For most courses, two UPs are awarded for a year-long class, or two-thirds UPs (.66) per trimester. Students receive UPs each trimester only for classes in which they earn a 3 ("meets standards") or higher. Grades of 3.75 and 4 ("exceeds standards") earn an honors designation ("H") on a report card and transcript.

The requirements for graduation are meeting standards in four years of English courses; three years each of social studies, mathematics, and science; one year each of fine arts and physical education; and one semester of health. The remaining UPs are earned through electives. Seniors must also complete a capstone project (the Senior Expedition) as well as a post-secondary plan. Beginning with the Class of 2021, students must also demonstrate mastery of PPS graduation standards; these are embedded in CBHS's courses.

Because of the school's small size, CBHS does not have the number of electives available at Portland's larger high schools. However, twice a year (in January and April), CBHS offers **Intensives** - week-long mini-expeditions that explore a variety of subject matters. Students can choose from about fifteen Intensives, from Songwriting to Rocketry, although students are not guaranteed their top choices. Offerings may be in the creative arts, performing arts, humanities, fitness, math, science, and adventure. Intensives are graded and typically worth .5 UPs.

In addition to the total UPs needed to graduate, there are UP requirements at the end of each grade that must be achieved in order to advance to the next grade level. This helps to ensure that a student stays on track to meet graduation requirements in four years. (Although if a student needs more than four years to get a diploma, that is

fine!)

HOW TO GET IT DONE CBHS recognizes that there is a strong correlation between academic achievement and quality “Habits of Work and Learning” (HOWL), and students receive a separate HOWL grade for each course, using the same 1-4 scale as for academic grades. HOW requirements encourage students to be accountable and pursue their personal best.

To earn a 3 in HOWL, a student must do the “Big 3” below consistently - around 80% of the time. Students can earn a 4 in HOWL by meeting these requirements almost all of the time.

1. Complete homework.
2. Meet deadlines.
3. Participate effectively in class activities (includes regular, on-time attendance).

It is within the power of every student to earn a HOWL of 3. For many students, it is the key to success. With a HOWL of 3 or higher, a student will have additional opportunities to revise work to meet standards.

For instance, at the end of a trimester, if a student has a HOWL of 3 or 4 in a class, but has not met standards, they will receive a grade of Incomplete (INC) and will be given two weeks and additional support to meet the remaining standards. However, if a student is not meeting standards, but has a HOWL below 3, they will receive a 1 or 2 on their report card and may not have the opportunity to make up the standards.

MUD SEASON SCHOOL, FROST SCHOOL and SUN SCHOOL Students who are close to meeting course standards at the end of the trimester, usually with a grade of 2+, have the opportunity to meet standards and receive credit during one of the six-hour standards make-up opportunities that follow shortly after each trimester: Frost School (after the fall trimester) Mud Season School (after the winter trimester) or Sun School (after the spring trimester).

To attend, students must be invited by their teacher and are limited to working on standards for two courses. There is no fee for students who receive a HOWL grade of 3 or 4 for that trimester. For students with a HOWL of less than 3, each course will cost \$25 (\$5 for reduced lunch/free lunch students).

In addition, Portland Public Schools offers a 30-hour, three-week Summer School program at Deering or Portland High School that enables students to earn full credit for a class. Offerings generally include English, social studies, math, and science. The fees for PPS Summer School are \$100 for one course or \$150 for two courses for Portland residents. Reduced rates are upon approval by the program director. In addition, CBHS often offers summer intensives for students who want enrichment or who seek additional credit. This past summer we offered both Math Workshop and a joint USM/CBHS Intensive, Geology 199.

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES Each student has an annual opportunity to participate in an interdisciplinary, overnight experience designed to have a deep, lasting positive impact on your child.

Casco Bay Quest for Freshmen (9/24-9/27/19)– Each fall, the 9th graders spend four days and three nights on Cow Island learning about themselves, CBHS and their new fellow crew members. Students engage in team-building activities from kayaking to cooking contests, zip-lining to journaling.

Sophomore Solo (TBD May 2020) - Prior to the Sophomore Passage, sophomore will undertake the Sophomore Solo, an overnight at Wolfe’s Neck Farm meant to prepare students to answer the big questions of the Sophomore Passage: Who am I? How am I doing? What are my plans for the future? In addition to camping with their crew, students will have the opportunity for an extended “solo” to reflect on the questions above.

Junior Journey (4/13-4/17/20) – The Junior Journey is a week-long cross-cultural learning experience where students assist on service projects, such as building a Habitat for Humanity home, or helping in an area hit by a natural disaster. Juniors have traveled to West Virginia, Biloxi, Mississippi, the Rockaways (NY) and Detroit (MI). This April, the junior class will once again be returning to Maine’s Katahdin region for adventure, service and environmental fieldwork.

Casco Bay Quest for Seniors (9/17-9/20/19)– Seniors also complete their own four-day, three-night Casco Bay Quest each September, with a crew-based backpacking or sea kayaking expedition. During their adventure, seniors unify and take stock of who they are and where they want to go.

COSTS Some activities at Casco Bay do cost money and, when they do, CBHS works hard to make sure every student can participate, regardless of family resources. The school does a lot of fundraising and grant writing to make these transformative experiences possible for everyone. Any fee is often on a sliding scale. Below are some fees that can be anticipated, ranging from the cost for those who qualify for free lunch to the full price:

- \$10-\$50 Casco Bay Quest (for 9th and 12th graders)
- \$50-\$350 Junior Journey
- \$5-\$25 Each course at CBHS Frost, Mud Season or Sun School (*Important Note: These remediation options are FREE if your child has a HOWL grade in the relevant course of 3 or 4.*)

PARENT ADVISORY GROUP CBHS’s Parent Advisory Group (PAG) is the parent association of CBHS and is open to all parents. PAG meets once a month with the principal to discuss topical issues and events related to the school and to teenagers and their families. PAG meetings are held typically on the second Tuesday or Thursday of the month from 5:30-7:00pm. This fall’s meetings will be held on 9/17, 10/10 and 11/12 in the CBHS Great Space.

PAG is also responsible for CBHS fundraising through its tax-exempt status and conducts fundraisers throughout the year to support CBHS scholarships, faculty grants and staff appreciation events as well as our trademark programs: Intensives, Casco Bay Quests and Junior Journey. PAG’s primary fundraisers are:

- **Arts and Music Fest** (11/16/2019) – A celebration of CBHS’s many talented artists, performers and entrepreneurs with lots of fun stuff to buy and yummy lunch offerings (including the world’s largest Cookie Walk).
- **The CBHS Film Festival** (2/6&7/2020) - This new event will showcase CBHS students’ greatest video creations over 15 years - as well as new student work and short videos by alumni.

- **The Math Cup** (March 2020) – Student math teams compete against math teams from local businesses.
- **Annual Appeal** – A direct appeal to CBHS families (in the fall) and to the extended family and friends of the CBHS community (in the spring) for donations to help defray the costs of our exceptional and distinct student offerings.

All parents are encouraged to volunteer for some of the activities throughout the year. Your support will help make each event a success.

STAY INFORMED There are a variety of ways in which families can stay informed about events at CBHS:

- **Email** – By providing your email address to Deb Kierstead (kiersd@portlandschools.org), you will receive the weekly Parent Newsflash from Derek Pierce, Principal at Casco Bay High School. The Newsflash contains information about upcoming events, student achievements, and important deadlines. The emails will also include attachments with relevant forms and special announcements. Families on the email list will also receive a monthly CBHS Newsletter.
- **CBHS Website** – The Casco Bay High School website - <http://cbhs.portlandschools.org> - provides information about the school, the faculty (including their email addresses), and upcoming events.
- **Google Classroom** - Many courses and all crews maintain a “Google Classroom;” you can request a weekly digest relating upcoming assignments for your child that have been posted on their Google Classrooms.
- **Infinite Campus** - This district data system is where you can view details about your child’s attendance, grades and UPs. To protect confidentiality, it requires a sign in; you can use your child’s username and password or request your own.
- **Social Media** – Follow CBHS on Twitter and Instagram [@cascobayhs](https://www.instagram.com/cascobayhs). Like Casco Bay High School on Facebook.

KEYS TO SUCCESS Below are several ways that you can help your child be successful at CBHS:

- Keep in touch with your child’s Crew Leader.
- Check grades on Infinite Campus regularly.
- Many teachers maintain “Google Classrooms;” ask your child to show you these for current assignments and deadlines.
- If your child is stuck on a major assignment and seeks your help, ask to see the rubric (which will describe what the teacher is looking for).
- Encourage your child to practice good Habits of Work and Learning (HOWLs) and aim for a HOWL of 3 (or better).
- Attend culminations where students present what they learned after completing a Learning Expedition.
- Check on your child’s ALEKS pie – an online math tool used in 9th and 10th grade math classes.
- Support a designated time and place in your home for your child to complete homework.
- Encourage your child to keep a planner – paper or digital – to track projects and assignments.

These topics are covered in more detail in the Family Handbook. If you have further questions, please follow up with your student’s Crew Leader. We look forward to working with you and your student during your years here at Casco Bay High School!