October 18, 2012

Dear Students and Parents:

The details of this letter are more complicated than some will find helpful. Here’s a summary and you can decide if you need to read on: A possible option for a final year of Commonwealth Diplomas is being offered. Although the recognition of this award no longer includes possible financial benefit, some students can request a waiver for consideration of altered program requirements. If this applies to you, please adhere to the required deadline as stated below.

Many of you will recall that, until recently, the State administered a program called the Commonwealth Diploma. This program had specific requirements that necessitated careful scheduling through all 4 high school years. Previously, honorees were reimbursed for three successful AP exams, honored through special recognition in our graduation commencement ceremony, and given a nice Commonwealth Diploma document.

In the summer of 2011, we were notified through press releases of the discontinuation of this program. The final class that would be recognized for this program would be the graduating class of 2012. In October of 2011, the State announced, perhaps due to public pressure (my speculation), their decision to extend the program for one year in a modified and limited way. This extension applies only to the graduating class of 2013. The problem the program extension creates for families and schools is that students made scheduling decisions based on the idea that the program would no longer be recognized, and the October 2011 announcement came well after the start of school. The scheduling issue most commonly occurred with foreign language because the program required an AP foreign language class.

The State, recognizing this newest problem of program qualification, has agreed to allow us to apply for a waiver for individual students who want to be considered for the Commonwealth Diploma’s final year. The Commonwealth Diploma requires students to complete all of the minimum requirements for the Pre-College Prep curriculum in addition to a minimum of one AP English class, one AP math or science class, one AP elective in any area, and one AP foreign language. For consideration of the waiver, the student can substitute another elective AP course in place of the AP language. Students also need to earn a C or higher in these courses, and take the AP exam in a minimum of 3 of the 4 qualifying AP classes. Students who apply for the waiver must have had the first two levels of foreign language completed prior to entering their junior year.

While the benefits, and now the prestige, of this award have been greatly diminished, some students may still want to be considered for this program. If so, we have a short form in the counseling office that the student must pick up and return completed by Friday, October 26, 2012. Due to the fact that this information must be submitted to the State, we will not be able to extend this deadline.

Thank you,

Frank W. Howatt
Principal