



## ABOUT VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL

Founded in 1997, Vermont Commons School is an independent, college-preparatory day school, located in South Burlington, Vermont for students in grades 6-12. With a curriculum that balances academic rigor with innovation, Vermont Commons educates students who are academically motivated and intellectually curious. From its inception, Vermont Commons School has cultivated an ethic of environmental awareness and responsibility, as well as a focus on community, both locally and globally.

## ACCREDITATION

Vermont Commons is accredited by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), and the Vermont State Board of Education.

## VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL AT A GLANCE

- **Average class size:** 12 students
- **Geographic Distribution:** Vermont Commons School students generally live in the greater Chittenden County area, although some students travel from as far away as Middlebury, Waitsfield, towns along the Canadian border, and Plattsburgh, NY.
- **Financial Aid:** Approximately 25% of the student body receives need-based financial aid.
- **2015-2016 Enrollment:** There are 106 students enrolled in grades six through twelve. There are 14 students in the class of 2016, two of whom have been recognized by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. There were 8 graduates in the Class of 2015; three were recognized by the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, and one was a finalist and scholarship recipient.
- **Faculty holding advanced degrees:** 15 of 17

## ACADEMIC PHILOSOPHY

Vermont Commons School presents a challenging college preparatory curriculum for students in grades 6-12. The academic program offers courses and presents material in ever increasing depth and complexity throughout a student's career. Classes at Vermont Commons are writing-intensive, hands-on, and focus on critical thinking skills across the curriculum. Students move from acquiring skills and understanding systems to analyzing and communicating solutions. The curriculum includes honors and advanced coursework, affording students the opportunity to experience the expectations of college-level courses while still having a strong mentoring relationship with their faculty as they transition to higher education.

### VCS MISSION STATEMENT

Vermont Commons School students experience a unique blend of academics and global immersion, master fundamental academic disciplines, grasp the profound interdependence of the natural and human systems they inhabit, and graduate with the values, knowledge, skills and commitment necessary to become ethical and engaged ecological citizens.



## NOTES ON COURSES AND PROGRAMS:

### CONTRACT HONORS

Vermont Commons School offers Contract Honors, an exciting alternative to Advanced Placement courses. Students still have the opportunity to sit for AP Exams each spring. The Contract Honors program provides students with greater challenge, complexity, and coursework in grades 10-12. Students “contract” for additional studies and earn an Honors designation for that course on their transcript. Participating teachers make the option to participate in Contract Honors available to students who meet each department’s prerequisites, but may not be offered in all courses. In order to take more than two Contract Honors courses, students must gain approval from the Department Chairs Committee. Honors grades are not accelerated or weighted when computing a student’s GPA. All honors work is graded and included in calculated course grades.

### SCIENCE SEQUENCE

Vermont Commons School Biology, Chemistry, and Physics courses are divided into two semesters that occur over multiple years. This curriculum allows students to see how each of the science disciplines intersects with the others.

### RESEARCH & SERVICE

The mission of the Research & Service Program is to go beyond the traditional classroom walls and to connect learning to community engagement and environmental awareness. The Research & Service Program is a concrete manifestation of Vermont Commons School’s deep commitment to place-based education, service learning, and ecological stewardship and provides a multi-aged setting that encourages leadership and fosters group skills. Students are evaluated on their active participation, preparedness, attitude, mastery of project-specific content, and leadership. In order to do the research and follow it up with a meaningful service project, Research & Service courses run the duration of a semester and are offered during the fall (8th & 10th grades) and spring (7th, 9th & 11th grades); the 6th grade has its own separate Research and Service class, which serves as an introduction and grounding to the program. Research & Service grades are included in the GPA.

### ENCOUNTER WEEK PROGRAMS

Each student participates in three Encounter Weeks per year, one in late September, one in late January, and one in late May. Encounter Weeks allow students to learn new skills in a variety of settings, from the summit of Mount Mansfield to the streets of Rome to Mayan villages in Belize. During these weeks, students explore the wilderness, the arts, and community-based projects. Encounter Weeks give students and faculty alike a new platform for connection and understanding. After the 6th grade year, the school strives to ensure that each student participates in at least one wilderness-based, overnight Encounter Week each year. We believe that spending time in the woods provides valuable mental and physical challenges, and creates strong bonds among the members of our community.

### SENIOR PROJECTS

At the end of the spring semester, each Vermont Commons School senior is provided the opportunity to design and implement his/her own Senior Project. These internship-style projects are five weeks long and replace regular classes. The students are able to pursue a career or skill interest and gain a sense of the professional setting outside of the classroom. This program allows seniors to creatively tie together their personal interests and academic experiences as they make the transition from high school to higher education. Students who choose to complete the senior project work with a community mentor for 30-35 hours/week, research an issue in their field of study, and present their experience to the school community.



# VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL

## REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

Each year, students are expected to successfully complete a full complement of courses. The available disciplines include Science, Mathematics, Language Arts, World Language, Social Studies, Visual Arts, Physical Education and Research & Service. Students must meet both the Vermont State requirements and the additional requirements as prescribed by the school. Vermont Commons offers both Spanish and Mandarin Chinese.

Vermont Department of Education requirements for graduation including:

- 4 years of English Language Arts
- 3 years of Science
- 3 years of Mathematics
- 3 years of History and the Social Sciences
- 1 year of the Arts
- 1½ years of Physical Education

Vermont Commons School requirements for graduation, including:

- 4 years of English Language Arts
- 4 years of Science
- 4 years of Mathematics
- 4 years of History and the Social Sciences
- 4 years or Level 4 of World Language
- 4 semesters of the Arts
- 4 years of Physical Education
- 4 years of Research & Service coursework
- Participate in 11 Encounter Weeks
- Participate in Health and Wellness classes
- Successfully complete the requirements of the Senior Project Program, if student chooses to participate

## GRADING

Vermont Commons School grades on a 100-point numeric scale, and courses are offered on either a semester or yearlong basis.

GRADE	PERCENTAGE		
A+	97%-100%	C	73%-76%
A	93%-96%	C-	70%-72%
A-	90%-92%	D+	67%-69%
B+	87%-89%	D	63%-66%
B	83%-86%	D-	60%-62%
B-	80%-82%	F	59% and below
C+	77%-79%		

Students receive a final grade at the end of a semester-long class. This grade is recorded as a final grade on the transcript. Each quarter is worth 40% of the semester grade and the final exam is worth 20%. In yearlong classes, the final grade is determined by the average of the two semester grades. Students receive a pass/fail grade for physical education.



## VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL

### STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES – (SOURCE: WWW.COLLEGEBOARD.COM)

	VCS Class of 2016	VCS Class of 2015	Vermont Class of 2013
CRITICAL READING	636	680	516
MATHEMATICS	625	705	519
WRITING	616	653	505
TOTAL	1877	2038	1540

### VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY MATRICULATION RECORD (2009-2015)

University of Alabama, AL  
 American University, DC  
 University of Arizona, AZ  
 Bates College, ME  
 Beloit College, WI  
 Bishop's University, PQ  
 Boston University, MA  
 Bowdoin College, ME  
 Brandeis University, MA  
 Carleton College, MN  
 Carnegie Mellon University, PA  
 Castleton University, VT  
 Champlain College, VT  
 University of Chicago, IL  
 Clark University, MA  
 Colby College, ME  
 University of Colorado/Boulder, CO  
 University of Colorado/Denver, CO  
 Colorado College, CO  
 Cornell College, IA  
 Cornell University, NY  
 Drexel University, PA  
 Earlham College, IN  
 Eckerd College, FL  
 Elon University, NC

Grinnell College, IA  
 Hampshire College, MA  
 Johns Hopkins University, MD  
 Kenyon College, OH  
 Maryland Institute College of Art, MD  
 Massachusetts College of Art and Design, MA  
 University of Miami, FL  
 Mount Holyoke College, MA  
 New York University, NY  
 Pepperdine University, CA  
 Reed College, OR  
 Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, NY  
 Rochester Institute of Technology, NY  
 St. Lawrence University, NY  
 St. Michael's College, VT  
 Skidmore College, NY  
 University of St. Andrew's, Scotland  
 Susquehanna University, PA  
 Swarthmore College, PA  
 Tulane University, LA  
 College of Wooster, OH  
 Worcester Polytechnic Institute, MA  
 University of Vermont, VT  
 Yeshiva University, NY

#### VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Dexter Mahaffey, Ph.D.  
 Head of School  
 dmahaffey@vermontcommons.org

Ari Shapiro-Miller, MA.  
 Director of Counseling  
 email: asmiller@vermontcommons.org

#### VERMONT COMMONS SCHOOL



75 Green Mountain Drive  
 South Burlington, VT 05403

Ph. 802.865.8084 • F. 802.865.2429