



Mark T. Sheehan High School

Parent FAQ

How do I know which assistant principal is assigned to work with my child?

Mr. Marciano works with students whose last name begins with letters A-K, while Mr. Dirkson works with students whose last name begins with letters L-Z. However, both assistant principals are able and willing to assist any student, and Ms. Duthie, the school principal, is also available to help.

How can I get my child involved in school activities?

Sheehan proudly offers a variety of clubs, student governance, artistic, and athletic activities to engage students in the life of the school community. A Club Recruitment Day is held each September to introduce the students to extracurricular activities and Mr. Dailey, the athletic director, is available to provide information concerning the school's sports program. Students may also try out for various artistic activities, including SSA chorus, the Jazz Band, the Fall Drama Production, and the Spring Musical. Students may run for office to represent their class or to participate in Student Council. Students with a particular interest can also see Mr. Marciano to discuss the possibility of starting a new club if there is sufficient interest and a gap in the available options.

What do I do if my child is absent from school?

If your child will be absent from school, please call in to notify the main office as early as possible on the day of absence. Thereafter, please send in a parental note explaining the absence and supply any available documentation, such as doctor's notes, court documents, DMV appointments, etc. Please note that recent changes in state law involving student attendance make it imperative that the school receives all documentation as soon as possible. **Note also that state law expressly states that we may not treat an email as a written notice regarding attendance. Finally, please keep in mind that students do run the risk of losing credit if they miss too many classes in a given course. It is essential that they miss as few days as possible.

What do I do if my child is experiencing difficulties with social adjustment or relationships or is being targeted for mean behavior by his or her peers?

If your child is experiencing difficulty adjusting to the social culture at the school, please contact his or her school counselor. If you are concerned about unfriendly behavior by peers, you may address the concern with the counselor or with your child's assistant principal. **Note that school personnel will not tolerate peer behavior that victimizes students under any circumstances, and such concerns should be reported immediately so that we may assist you in addressing any possible problems and work together to create a plan. Additionally, our school counseling office offers support groups that address self-image, grief/loss, and decision-making. They meet every other week for 40 minutes. We rotate the period so the students are not taken out of the same class each time.

When can my child talk with his/her school counselor?

All four of our school counselors are here full time and are available for student appointments. Students can stop by the School Counseling Office before, during, or after school to make an appointment with Ms. Smith to see their counselor. Students can also email their counselor to set up an appointment. The school counselors make a conscious effort to ensure that students miss a minimal amount of classroom instruction, so appointments are usually scheduled during a student's study hall period. If students want to leave a class to see their counselor, they must first ask the teacher for permission. A student may also seek out their school counselor in an emergency situation and the counselor will work with the student's teachers to make sure they know that he/she is in the School Counseling Office. On occasion, students may also receive passes for appointments scheduled by their counselor or see their school counselor during a group developmental guidance lesson in one of their classes.

I work and cannot provide transportation for my child in the afternoon. How can he or she participate in after school activities?

A late bus is available on Tuesdays and Thursdays to students who reside in Wallingford. Pick up is at 3:45 p.m. at the front of the school near the flagpole. This allows students to seek extra help from teachers, participate in clubs and school activities, or otherwise engage in school life. When this is insufficient, students often arrange transportation among their peers. Late bus service begins September 12, 2017.

Whom do I contact if I have a question or concern that I need to address?

Addressing any questions or concerns at the lowest possible level typically enhances communication and saves time for parents, although there are always options for follow-up if needed. The following chart provides some guidance to help parents.

Concern Type	First Contact	Second Contact	Third Contact	Fourth Contact
Classroom Issues (curriculum instruction, assessment, behavior, assignments, grades)	Classroom Teacher	Department Chairperson/School Counselor	Assistant Principal	Principal
Athletics	Coach	Mr. Dailey, AD	Assistant Principal	Principal
Report Cards or Transcripts	Classroom Teacher	Mr. Dirkson, AP		
Attendance	Classroom Teacher	Assistant Principal	Mr. Marciano (manages attendance building-wide)	
Miscellaneous Policy Questions	Assistant Principal			
Personal, Family, Emotional Concerns, Post-Graduation Planning	School Counselor			
Health Concerns	School Nurse			

I hear Sheehan allows students to dress up for Halloween and Spirit Week. Is this true? What is acceptable during such events?

Sheehan is proud to support traditions that enable students and teachers to have fun together while they work. With this in mind, both students and staff frequently wear costumes for Halloween or dress up during Spirit Week just prior to Thanksgiving to show support for the school's teams. Often, Halloween costumes are whimsical and amusing or just plain fun, but students do need to remember that they are still in school, and their costumes must be school-appropriate. Costumes that are overly revealing or suggestive, involve students carrying inappropriate props (weapons, etc), or which convey inappropriate messages (i.e., promoting drug/alcohol use, etc.) are not acceptable. Spirit Week garb is determined by the theme of the day, which is published widely in the school.

I have been hearing about something called "Advisory" and "Office 45." What are these?

Advisory is an opportunity for students to connect with an adult member of the school other than their school counselor and build relationships that support the school culture and assist in social integration. Advisory meets bimonthly for thirty minutes each session, with students assigned to the same teacher throughout their high school career similar to the old homeroom model. During advisory, students are encouraged to engage in meaningful and relevant conversations on such topics as goal setting, academic success, conflict resolution, responsibility, and anti-bullying. Office 45 is also held twice each month however students and teachers are unscheduled for 45 minutes. This time period is used to facilitate different kinds of academic teacher-student interactions as well as student-student interactions outside of a typical classroom experience. Students can use this time for extra-help sessions, one-on-one writing conferences with their teachers, college and career planning with their counselors and/or college & career specialist, group work with classmates, peer tutoring, and self-directed work. It also provides time for students who have been absent to check in with their teachers to secure make-up work.

What are the rules about cell phones and other electronic devices in school?

Students may use cell phones and other electronic devices before and after the school day and during their assigned lunch wave. In addition, cell phones and laptop/tablet computers will be allowed during class time when approved by the teacher for educational purposes.

What is PowerSchool, and what good can it do for me?

PowerSchool is the district's online student management database. Parents can access it through the web-based parent portal, which gives access to students' grades and attendance information. It is very useful and can provide up to the minute information on a student's progress. PowerSchool is available on the Internet, and a link is posted on the district website. Please contact the main office if you have questions on how to access it.

When are report cards generated? How are they distributed?

Report cards are emailed home four times annually, in November, January/February, April, and after school closes in June. In addition, parents have 24/7 access to their student's grades through PowerSchool.

How can I contact my child's teacher?

Please feel free to contact the main office to leave a message if you would like a call from a teacher. Alternatively, all teachers have a district email account which can be accessed through the district's website. You should expect a reply within 24-48 hours. Classroom questions or concerns should typically go to your student's teachers first. If you do not get a response back within 48 hours, please contact that teacher again. If, after that attempt to contact the teacher, you still do not get a response, please reach out to the department chairperson of that teacher, your child's school counselor, or assistant principal. One of those contacts will investigate why the teacher has not responded and will ensure that you get a timely response. Please also note that you can contact your child's teacher as often as you need to, within reason. Since this is high school and we want to foster independence, you may want to think about a limit of times you contact your child's teacher.

Rather, you may want to push your student to self-advocate and build that working relationship between teacher and student, especially as your child progresses from grade to grade.

How much homework can I expect my child to have each day? If students work on homework together, is that cheating? What if my child doesn't understand the work?

Homework loads vary widely depending on how challenging a student's course schedule is. Generally speaking, academic level classes will assign more homework than general level classes; honors level classes will assign more homework than academic level classes, and so on. In most academic level classes, students will have work to complete each day. Students taking AP classes face a significant workload each and every evening. When in doubt, contact the teacher. In regards to student collaboration, the expectations will vary with each teacher and each assignment. When in doubt, email the teacher. Even if the teacher does not immediately respond, at least your child will have demonstrated a good faith effort to complete the work.

How do conferences work at the high school and do I really need to be there?

There are three dates for parent conferences. They are staggered throughout the year to help parents stay informed of how their student is doing in classes. An important note is that conferences are not only a time to discuss your child's academic successes or struggles, but also a time to meet the individuals who are working with your child every day. The teachers will be able to offer not only academic insight about your student, but many of them can provide you with valuable social and emotional insight about your student. For example, your student may do well in a class but consistently misses random homework assignments. To the parent, it may look like the student is simply forgetful or isn't paying attention, whereas the teacher may see something else that could be leading to that forgetfulness or missed opportunities. It's okay to discuss the "whole child" with teachers. Parents can provide valuable insights for teachers, and that can help the teachers make important decisions about your student. Conferences can help develop a strong teacher/parent relationship built upon the trust that all adults involved are looking out for the student's best interest.

Does Sheehan require community service in order to graduate? If so, what does this mean and when should it be completed?

In Wallingford, students at both high schools are required to complete a minimum of thirty hours of community service prior to graduation. For transfer students, the time is prorated depending on how long the students are with us. Students may begin to complete their service as soon as they finish their middle school careers. They should report to the school counseling office to get the correct form and get the planned service approved before actually doing it. The counselor can make sure the service is appropriate and explain the process for completing the service and paperwork at that time.

How can I best support my child as he or she makes the transition to independence and adulthood?

Sheehan High School is a community that continually fosters student independence. The nature of what is appropriate or advisable varies with each student, and you certainly know your child better than we do, but we can offer advice at any time. Students attending high school should experience a gradual release of parental control and direct involvement beginning with the freshmen year. This does not mean that parents shouldn't inquire about or express an interest in a student's academic or social life. Indeed, such interest and involvement is vital. But the expression of that interest should evolve from the day to day direction of a student's work or social experience to a process of setting expectations, monitoring progress and allowing students to experience the natural consequences of their choices. Remember, too, that consequences can be either negative—I didn't study, so I failed the test—or positive—I worked hard and received an A. While we want students to live well and avoid deeply hurtful outcomes, the fact is we must get out of the way and allow students to experience life—its challenges, difficulties, and yes, even its failures, if we want them to develop normal adult coping skills. Perhaps the most important thing a parent can do is facilitate a conversation in which the student reflects on relative success (or failure) and articulates the link between choices and outcomes him/herself. In other words, don't lecture, but rather, ask questions.

What do I do if my child doesn't do his or her work?

If you have a child who does not have good time management skills, or who frequently fails to complete work or submit it on time, try to ask what the problem might be, and remember that the kinds of organizational skills or activities adults employ may not come naturally. You may be very comfortable using a calendar or software program to track and meet your obligations, but your child may need direct support in developing the appropriate habits. But don't allow yourself to become responsible for your child's completion of schoolwork. Instead, examine his or her daily schedule with them and help them identify time to potentially use to complete schoolwork or meet other obligations (chores at home, employment, sports, or personal commitments). Similarly, suggest your student deliberately cultivate specific habits supporting improved organization and avoid the laundry list of problems. Instead, focus on one or two specific changes at a time until they have become habitual. For example, just getting your student to consistently record homework assignments might be a significant improvement (initially), even if he or she doesn't immediately learn to check those notes or get the work done.

If your child is still unable to structure their time, structure it for them by requiring that they spend a specific amount of time each evening engaged in some kind of academic activity. The setting should be the same each time, and while students often work well with music (though current research challenges that assertion), they should avoid the distractions of television, texting, or Facebook—with one caveat: students often legitimately collaborate on work while using those media outlets. The setting should provide sufficient light and allow you to monitor your child without actually being involved in the work, unless the student needs academic help. The amount of time will depend on the nature of your child's course schedule. Do not ask them what they have for homework. Instead, ask them what academic work they will be completing that evening. If they say they have no homework, accept this but ask what course they will be studying or what they will be

reading. In other words, make it clear that investing time and energy in schoolwork is not optional; only what they choose to do with the time is.

Phone Directory		
<p>Main Office 203-294-5900</p> <p>Administration Principal, Rosemary Duthie 203-294-5905</p> <p>Assistant Principals Gregory J. Dirkson Justin Marciano 203-294-5904</p> <p>Athletic Director Christopher Dailey 203-294-5924</p> <p>Health Office Diane Gibson, R.N. 203-294-5920</p>	<p>School Counseling Office 203-294-5915</p> <p>Chairperson, Lana Pekoske 203-294-5918</p> <p>School Counselors Maura Distante: 203-294-5919 Wendy Eaton-Soto: 203-294-5914 Erica Forselius: 203-294-5917</p> <p>School Psychologists Terry Dietlmeier: 203-294-5916 Justin Phee: 203-294-5967</p> <p>College & Career Specialist Kim McLaughlin: 203-294-6579</p>	<p>Department Chairpersons</p> <p>Art and Music: 203-294-5956 Paige Sperry</p> <p>English: 203-294-5931 Peter Wiesen</p> <p>Mathematics: 203-294-5965 Jason Bouffard</p> <p>Science: 203-294-5973 Kelly Watrous</p> <p>Social Studies: 203-294-5943 Heather Brinton</p> <p>Special Education: 203-294-5960 Patricia Fishbein</p>

Quick Tips:

Follow us on Twitter:

- Sheehan School Info: @MTSheehanHS
- Sheehan Counseling (Guidance) Info: @MTS_Counselors
- Sheehan Athletics: @MTSAthletics
- Sheehan morning announcements: @Sheehanlive

If you do not have a Twitter account, the school and counseling feeds are published on the Sheehan home page, and the Athletic’s twitter feeds are published on the Athletic’s page.

Create a twitter account by going to www.twitter.com and clicking “Sign Up” in the top right corner.

Follow us at www.facebook.com/MTSheehanHS as we share the exciting things happening at Sheehan.

Establish login for PowerSchool and sign up for updates on grades: <http://powerschool.wallingford.k12.ct.us/public/home.html>. Become familiar with your student’s schedule. Log in periodically to check your student’s attendance/tardy records, in addition to grades (if you do not opt for automatic updates.)

- If you do not have a Powerschool account, contact your child’s school counselor.
- Access the Quicklinks drop down menu from the district website home page and select “Parent Portal” to access step by step information on how to set up your account.
- PowerSchool can also be accessed from your smart device. Search for “Pearson PowerSchool for Parents.” Our district code is ZNWR

Explore Naviance with your student login and discuss content: <https://succeed.naviance.com/family-connection/auth/login/?hsid=marktshs>. (Naviance is a student tool, which supports college/post high school education research, career searches, scholarship information, and managing the college application process in one place.)