

A New Parent's Guide to the Upper School

Upper School Faces

2025-2026 Administrative team

Person, title and contact information		Main responsibilities (Why should I contact?)
<p>Hannah Minton <i>US Office Administrative Assistant</i> hannah.minton@7hills.org 513-728-2460</p>		<p>General questions, attendance, absences, building scheduling, event planning, finding students, graduation, scheduling appointments, schedule questions, work permits</p>
<p>Dan Polifka <i>Dean of Students</i> dan.polifka@7hills.org 513-728-2466</p>		<p>Student life: activities, clubs, general academic support, getting involved, parent connections, school culture, student conduct & discipline issues, student leadership, student well-being, History department</p>
<p>Karen Glum <i>Director of Experiential Learning</i> karen.glum@7hills.org 513-728-2465</p>		<p>Experiential Education, Challenge Projects, Mayterm, Internships & Externships, Community Connections, Job Force, Science department</p>
<p>Dr. Caleb Paull <i>Registrar, Scheduler</i> caleb.paull@7hills.org 513-728-2464</p>		<p>Course requests, scheduling, class changes, AP testing, transcripts, English department</p>
<p>Rick Tate <i>Upper School Head</i> rick.tate@7hills.org 513-728-2462</p>		<p>Academic program, faculty questions, general questions, school administration, parent committee and parent involvement, World Languages (Spanish) department</p>

Student Support Team

Person and title		Main responsibilities (Why should I contact?)
<p>Vicky Hausberger <i>School Counselor</i> <i>(focused on 9-10)</i> vicky.hausberger@7hills.org 513-728-2469</p>		<p>Our school counselors oversee the social and emotional well-being of our students. This includes 1:1 or small group meetings with students struggling with academic, emotional, social, physical, or other concerns. They also assist with registering students for classes, coaching students on challenging situations, and supporting parental concerns. Both Vicky and Christine also teach our Health classes.</p>
<p>Christine Stier <i>School Counselor</i> <i>(focused on 11-12)</i> christine.stier@7hills.org 513-728-2365</p>		
<p>Meredith Brown <i>Director of Learning Support</i> meredith.brown@7hills.org 513-728-2454</p>		<p>Meredith oversees our team of dedicated support specialists that work with students individually and in small group that benefit from individualized learning support. While some students are specifically assigned because of diagnosed needs, all Seven Hills students may connect as needed with the learning support team.</p>
<p>Joy Copher <i>School Nurse</i> joy.copher@7hills.org 513-728-2364</p> <p>Ann Sebastian <i>School Nurse</i> ann.sebastian@7hills.org 513-728-2456</p>	 	<p>Nurse Joy together with Nurse Anne handle all student health issues including forms, medications, on-site injuries, illnesses, and parent concerns.</p>
<p>Anna Works-McKinney <i>US DEI coordinator</i> anna.works-mckinney@7hills.org</p>		<p>Anna coordinates Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging efforts at the Upper School, ensuring that each student's voice is heard, acknowledged, and represented. This includes overseeing student resource groups, cultural celebrations, and the annual culture fair. Anna also teaches math classes.</p>
<p>Brandon Williams <i>Interim Athletic Director</i> <i>(2025-2026)</i> brandon.williams@7hills.org 513-728-2458</p>		<p>The athletic director oversees all components of the school's athletic program including scheduling games, communicating with parents, supporting student-athletes, supervising coaches, and planning special events to ensure a quality athletic experience.</p>

College Counseling

Beginning in the second semester of 9th grade, each student is assigned a dedicated college counselor who will work with the family throughout the college process. College counselors meet individually and in small groups with students and parents to walk them through the college application process. College counselors also assist with course selection, involvement and interest development, the PSAT administration (grades 10 & 11), and other standardized testing.

<p>Alex Catalan <i>Co-director of College Counseling</i> alex.catalan@7hills.org 513-728-2461</p>		<p>Julie DiRoma <i>Co-director of College Counseling</i> julie.dirosa@7hills.org 513-728-2479</p>		<p>Cheryl Dixon <i>Assistant director of college counseling</i> cheryl.dixon@7hills.org 513-728-2467</p>	
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Department Chairs (6-12)

Department Chairs serve as the academic leaders of the school. They design and implement curriculum, place students in the appropriate courses, assist in remediation or student challenges, work to improve teaching at the school, and facilitate conversations when needed between students, teachers, and parents.

<p>Jen Torline <i>Science / Computer Science; Chair of Academic Departments</i></p> 	<p>Teresa Bardon <i>World Languages</i></p> 	<p>Mark Beyreis <i>English</i></p> 	<p>Hannah Hanley <i>Physical Education</i></p> 
<p>Jacob Hauser <i>Fine and Performing Arts</i></p> 	<p>Andrew Neyer <i>Math</i></p> 	<p>Dr. Eric O'Connor <i>History</i></p> 	

Your student's advisor - TBD

Students are organized into advisories of 8-10 students. 9th grade advisories have specific activities to support the transition to 9th grade; advisors are supported by the Beekeepers, a group of 11th and 12th grade students who work with students throughout the year to help them understand the culture, expectations, and excitement of the upper school. In addition, each advisory is part of a swarm (Bumblebees, Wasps, Yellow Jackets, Hornets) with activities throughout the year.

Advisors are the first point of contact with the school. They meet with students daily (morning check-in and afternoon check-out) as well as during community time. Advisors help students

manage conversations with peers and teachers and serve as a liaison between school and home.

Transition Talking Points

(What I wish I knew before 9th grade)

We've worked with parents to compile a helpful list of things to know. This is a lot of information, all of which will all be available online for easy reference later on.

From our counselors

- **Habits are important.**
 - The habits your student finishes 8th grade with will be the ones with which they start 9th grade.
 - End the year strong—celebrate, but don't coast.
- **Ninth grade is a big leap.**
 - Students grow intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally.
 - They're seeking independence, but they still need structure and support—think “heading into Kindergarten” all over again.
- **Your kids still need parents.**
 - Independence is a continuum. They're not quite ready to be completely on their own.
 - Be part of the process, not just a spectator.
 - Model healthy academic habits:
 - Time management
 - Seeking help and asking questions
 - Using Canvas to stay organized
 - **Trust, but verify.** Check in, even if they say they've “got it.”
- **High school moves fast.**
 - It's an intense four years with more of everything:
 - More homework
 - Longer practices and rehearsals
 - More weeknight games and events
 - Weeknights are fuller—expect that schoolwork will spill into the weekends.
 - Even students in standard-level courses will need weekend time for things like:
 - Papers
 - Lab reports
 - Projects

The big stuff

The family handbook: This is a living document found on the parent page on the website and in the Parent Portal in Veracross. It has detailed information to answer most questions, including further details on all of the following topics.

School day: Classes currently begin (2025-26) at 8:05. Prior to that time, students check in with their advisors and drop off their personal electronics.

Free Bells: 9th graders start in study hall during all but two free blocks during the 10-day cycle and gradually get more free bells as the year goes on. If students need more focused time due to academics or behavior, they will be placed back in study hall.

Lunch: Students may eat in the cafeteria or anywhere on the Upper School campus. Many students participate in student-led clubs during lunch (see below).

Student Drivers/Parking: Once students have their driver's license, they may apply for a parking spot through campus security. All students are assigned a designated parking spot.

Drop-off and Pick-up: The drop-off and pick-up location for the upper school is directly in front of the Marrs Building. If you have another student on campus, then you will coordinate your pick-up and drop-off locations based on the school's recommendations at the start of school. Please be advised that pick up begins at 3:15pm, unless you are going to after school sports. If possible, it's wise to wait 5 minutes to avoid the rush of Lower School parents.

Student IDs/Lanyards: Each student has a photo ID attached to a lanyard that they are required to wear at all times. Student IDs/lanyards are used to enter buildings, purchase lunch and items at the spirit shop. If a student forgets their Student ID/lanyard, they may request a 1-time pass at the front office.

Personal electronics: Students are not allowed to have cell phones, smart watches or other personal electronic devices during the school day. These items are checked in at the beginning of the day with advisors. All students are issued a school-owned Ipad for academic use. Personal computers are not allowed until 11th grade.

Absences / tardies: If you know your student will be absent, please enter the absence and required details via the Parent Portal in Veracross. A doctor's note is required for any absence more than three days. Students who are late more than 5 times during a quarter will make up tardies during lunch detention.

Medical needs: Nurse Joy and Nurse Anne do a fantastic job of attending to our students' medical needs. Should a student become sick during the day, they should report to the main office and a nurse will be notified. Please see additional medical forms in the summer packet for information regarding at-school medicine, allergies, and known medical conditions.

Visitor Parking: Visitors should park in Lot A (short term parking or any empty spot). If there aren't spots available in Lot A, they can go across the street to find a spot or park at the Fieldhouse.

Academics

Homework and Teacher help

- Students will generally have 30-45 minutes of homework per academic class session. Homework will be posted on Canvas by 4:30 on the day it is assigned, giving students at least 2 nights to complete it.
- We have dedicated extra-help sessions 1-2 times per week on Tuesdays and Fridays after lunch. Teachers may also be available during common free blocks or before/after school. Students are highly encouraged to meet early and frequently with their teachers.

Grading

- Students can check their current grades on Canvas.
- Grades are reported at the middle and end of each semester. The only grades reported to colleges on transcripts are end-of-semester and course grades.
- Parents and Students will be able to access unofficial transcripts via their college counselor or Veracross.
- 9th-grade students currently receive academic comments in September, October, and February. Students earning a C or lower receive additional comments at other points throughout the year.
- 7 Hills grades on a 4.0 scale, using a weighted system that gives more GPA points to more challenging classes. More information on weighting is available in the Family Handbook.
 - Introductory College Prep - 0 weight (4.0)

- Upper level College prep - .25 weight (4.25)
- Honors - .5 weight (4.5)
- Advanced Placement (AP) and Advanced Topics (AT) - 1.0 weight (5.0)
- The GPA is calculated twice a year at the end of each semester and is reported on the transcript (but not report card). Only courses taken at 7 Hills are calculated in the GPA.
- 7 Hills (like other Independent schools in Ohio) does not participate in the CCP program. However, students who complete coursework at accredited universities are encouraged to submit transcripts to colleges from these courses along with their application.
- If a student receives a combination of 2 D grades or one NP grade, they will be placed on Academic Notice for the next quarter. This is the school's attempt to funnel more resources to support the student.
- At the end of 11th grade, some students are inducted into the Seven Hills Scholar Society, recognizing excellence in academic achievement, community involvement, and model citizenship.

Registering for classes

- Course registration takes place in early spring, with classes announced prior to the end of the school year. Teachers and students meet to discuss logical sequential options within the department, and students may petition if they feel the placement isn't challenging enough. The full course catalog is available by late February, and registrations are due shortly after spring break.
- Successful students take a balance of courses that intersect with their passions, skills, and areas for growth. Colleges look for breadth, depth, and engagement.
- Students are required to take at least 6 classes (out of 8) per semester, and many take 7. We do encourage students (especially those with after-school commitments) to have some free bells during the week.
- The Program of Studies, 7 Hills Profile, and family handbook are helpful resources you will find at www.7hills.org.

Summer Reading

- Students in each year of Seven Hills Upper School will be assigned two summer reading books. There will be essay writing, discussion, and assessments done at the start of the year based on the reading. It is suggested to annotate your book so you can easily remember important reference points for when you return to the classroom.

Communication

School Communications: There are several methods of communication the school uses. Here is a breakdown of what is used for what:

- **Parent Portal in Veracross:** The information hub which houses all administrative documents, links to protected information (Magnus Health & MyKidsSpending), schedules, official comments, final report cards, enrollment/billing documents, attendance, school directories, links to school information resources, key event details, cafeteria menus, and more.
- **Canvas:** This will be new to the 2025-2026 school year. Canvas is a Learning Management System used at Universities and High Schools throughout the country to organize classes and academic information and facilitate communication between students, teachers, and parents. Teachers post assignments and resources by 4:30 or earlier on the day the work is assigned, and many assignments will be turned in via Canvas. Assignment, quiz and test grades are also available on Canvas for students and parents to view.
- **The Blasts:** In an attempt to consolidate informational emails from the school, 7 Hills sends out "The Weekly Blast" each Friday morning, with links to news and information from each division. Remember, Athletics is its own division, so don't forget to check their section out for important information.
- **Email:** When needed, you will receive specific emails from your student's teacher, counselor, or an administrator at the school. Teachers also generally prefer that you reach out to them via email as they don't answer the phone while teaching.

- **Text Messaging:** The school uses a service called Ruvna to alert parents of weather closures or delays via text and phone. It gets contact information from Veracross and is only used when needed.
- **Website:** The public-facing parent page at <https://www.7hills.org/parents/> contains key information such as the master calendar, key dates, summer information, links to blasts and other important information. People-specific information (directories, schedules) are only available at Veracross.
- **GoStingers:** The Athletics department has their own app, GoStingers, with up-to-date schedules and game information.
- **Phone:** During the school day, you can always call Mrs. Minton at 513-728-2460. She will direct you to the person best suited to help you.
- **Back to School Night:** This event, held in the first couple of weeks of school, allows parents the opportunity to walk through their student's schedule, meet their teachers, and learn about classes in a brief overview..
- **Parent Teacher Conferences:** Parent teacher conferences are held in the Fall. You will have the ability to sign up for 15 minute increments of time with any or all of your student's teachers. *Pro Tip, be careful signing up for back to back conferences, because if the person before you runs late (sigh) or you have a long walk between classrooms you may get less than 15 minutes.*

Experiential Learning:

Each student will complete the following experiences as part of their graduation requirements.

- **May Term Intensives** - 5 school days at the end of the school year during which each student in grades 9-11 is enrolled in an immersive learning experience. Passing 3 May Terms is a graduation requirement. Students request [May Term courses](#) in late fall. Contact [Karen Glum](#) with questions.
- **Community Service:** [Details are available here.](#) Student orientation/onboarding occurs in the 9th-grade year and includes two dedicated Service-Learning Days for the whole grade. Students complete a total of 30-hours during grades 9-12. Contact [Karen Glum](#) with questions.
- **Challenge Experience:** [Details are available here.](#) Student orientation/onboarding occurs midway through the 10th-grade year. Most students complete and present their Challenge Experience between spring of junior year and fall of senior year. Contact [Kathryn Rosenberg](#) or [Karen Glum](#) with questions or to brainstorm ideas and options.

In addition, there are also many ways for students to get involved in experiential learning including career exploration, student internships, a community-based Experiential Learning Fair, and courses focused on learning by doing. Students should contact Karen Glum with any questions or interests.

Parental Involvement

Parent Organizations (Volunteering):

In the upper school the students take the lead in organizing most of their activities and events. The primary role of the Upper Parent Community is to help ensure the parents are connected to what is happening at the school, as well as supporting the students with time and resources to execute a few select activities each year. There are many opportunities to share your time and talents if you are interested.

Opportunities for Parents to Connect:

Class Socials: A long tradition at 7 Hills in which parents of each class volunteer to organize an event in the fall where all parents in the class are invited to attend and get to know each other.

Parent Community Board: The community board is made of volunteers to support students and teachers at the school. Sign-ups are sent in spring for the next year. The divisional PC Board includes the following roles. Chair, Vice Chair, Communications, Treasurer. Sub committees include: Senior Committee, Arts Alive, Teacher Appreciation, and Parent

Connections. Volunteer opportunities for subcommittees are sent out in the fall at the start of the school year.

Athletic Spirit Committee: The Athletic Spirit Committee helps create fun, welcoming experiences around Seven Hills sports. Whether it's organizing sport-specific showcases, celebrating seniors, or encouraging attendance at games and banquets, the group supports teams and builds school spirit. They work with families, coaches, and students to make sure everyone feels included and connected. There are lots of ways to help out! To learn more or get involved, reach out to Pretty Patel at patelpretty@hotmail.com.

Parent's Walking Club: Meets monthly in the morning after drop off on the lower soccer field. It is an unstructured opportunity to talk and share information and experiences. The group communicates via What's App and Text message. Please contact our volunteer organizers Katy Fraser (513) 335-7812 or Karen Hwang (513) 836-2335. *Note: this group included parents across the divisions (Upper/Middle & Lower schools)*

Spirit Shop: The spirit shop, run by parent volunteers, is located near the Kalnow Gym. It is open during lunch on most days and special events. If you are interested in volunteering this is a fun place to spend time on campus. If you are interested in some cool Seven Hills gear, you can come on campus and check out the spirit shop or you can browse the merchandise online through the website or other portals.

Volunteer Opportunities: Throughout the year, the Parent Committee or School Faculty may ask for parent volunteers for specific activities including Teacher Appreciation week, the 9th grade service days, etc.

Student life

Athletics:

Our athletics program follows a no-cut policy, ensuring that every student has the opportunity to participate, compete, and grow alongside their peers. With 37 sports teams across the fall, winter, and spring seasons, there's something for everyone, whether you're trying a new sport for the first time or continuing to develop your skills in a familiar one.

We encourage all students to get involved and take advantage of our wide range of offerings. Our Athletics Programs are members of both the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) and the Miami Valley Conference (MVC), our teams compete at a high level while keeping the focus on sportsmanship and growth. Our goal is to foster a love for athletics while building a strong, supportive community.

Our professional coaches work with the Athletic Director's office to communicate with families; the GoStingers app also has up-to-date information. Some Fall sports do have tryouts and practices in summer. Keep your eyes out for special evenings: Senior night, spirit nights, and an Awards night at the end of each season. There are also opportunities to volunteer in the concessions stand and with team snacks. Detailed information on Athletics policy will be provided prior to the season.

Clubs and Activities:

- Each year, students lead a wide variety of clubs, many of which meet during lunch throughout the campus (Environmental, Service, Wings of Hope, Math, French, Spanish, Sports Business, Sports Broadcasting, etc.) These change each year and are divided into social (students with common interests) and action clubs (specific objectives and faculty support).
- Each grade elects 2 student senators who help plan Stinger Days and other student-run activities throughout the year. There are also four senior leaders (President, Vice-president, Communications, and Secretary)

- Seven Up is our school spirit organization. Students are divided into swarms which compete in friendly competitions throughout the school year.
- 7 Hills also has several Student Resource Groups which meet monthly to support students from different backgrounds. Current SRGs include African American, LatinX, Jewish, Muslim, LGBTQ+, ADD/ADHD, Multiracial, South Asian, Asian, Grief, Anxiety, Young Men, and Women
- Academic competition teams. In addition to a wide selection of clubs that meet during lunch, Seven Hills sponsors the following Academic student teams, which compete in a variety of competitions throughout the year, many of which occur after school and on weekends.
 - Mock Trial
 - Science Olympiad
 - HOSA (Health Occupation Students of America)
 - Robotics
 - Academic Challenge
 - Certamen (Latin, Greek, and Ancient civilizations quiz bowl)

Special Events

Freshman Orientation and Retreat: Prior to the beginning of the school year, Upper Schoolers begin the ninth grade by attending a full-day retreat at a local camp for bonding, tone-setting, and orientation to the Upper School. This also includes a morning at the Upper School for on-campus orientation.

Arts Alive: Each spring, our Visual and Performing Arts department puts on a day-long festival with exhibits of student work and live performances throughout the day to celebrate the role of the Arts in the greater 7 Hills community.

Books for Lunch: For 38 years, Books for Lunch has been a cornerstone of literary engagement, bringing renowned authors to the Hillsdale Campus for insightful mornings with Upper School students and memorable luncheons with educators, parents, and the wider Cincinnati community. Books for Lunch takes place in early spring.

Culture Fair: In spring, students and families from different cultural backgrounds are invited to share their traditions and food with the student body during the school day.

Homecoming: Every Fall, Seven Hills hosts a large homecoming weekend with the major tradition being a large family picnic. At the picnic, the school provides food, and there are lots of sports events and showcases taking place all around the campus. Once it gets dark, get ready to be wowed because the school puts on an incredible fireworks display.

Student dances: The school sponsors three dances per year: Homecoming, Winter Formal, and Prom. Homecoming and Winter Formal are held on campus, and Prom is held at a different venue each year (2025 was at the Aquarium). Students of all grades are invited to attend these dances. Dances are chaperoned by the school; parents are not required.

Academic Travel: There are international travel trips that are offered in coordination with the language department. Currently, trips go to China, France, Italy, and Spain. Most trips run during Mayterm, and registration begins the year prior to travel. Some financial aid is available. There are also opportunities to host students from Chile, Denmark, France, and Spain through short (1-2) exchanges. The Science department also sponsors science trips (Marine Lab).

Performances: Seven Hills has three performing ensembles: Chamber Choir, Symphonic Ensemble (band and orchestra) and Contemporary Ensemble. All students are welcome to join any of these groups. Each group has a major concert each semester in the Schiff Center (required attendance) that is open to friends and family. These dates are communicated at the beginning of the year. All groups also participate in Arts Alive, a major community event held each spring. Some groups have additional performance opportunities throughout the year.

Theater: There are three theatrical performances each year: a fall musical, a winter play (part of Masterclass), and a spring play. All students, regardless of their enrollment in theater classes,

are encouraged to audition or participate as crew members (set design, lights, sounds, stage crew). Rehearsals are held after school with some extended rehearsals during tech week. Tech students work on set/lights/sound daily after school as well. Students are also encouraged to participate in the Thespians' society with activities throughout the year.