

# **Needham Public Schools PowerSchool Parent/Student Access Frequently Asked Questions**

## **What is PowerSchool?**

PowerSchool is Needham Public School's student information system. The district uses PowerSchool for scheduling, taking attendance, storing grades, and more. PowerSchool provides:

- ❑ parents and students with immediate access to grades, assignments, and attendance records
- ❑ access to more accurate information for administrators and teachers to use in making decisions
- ❑ an electronic gradebook for teachers

## **How do I access PowerSchool?**

You may access PowerSchool from any computer with an internet connection by launching your web browser and going to the Needham Public Schools web site ([www.needham.k12.ma.us](http://www.needham.k12.ma.us)). The PowerSchool link is on each school's main web page. The minimum browser requirements are as follows:

OS X: Safari

OS 9: Mozilla 1.2.1, Netscape 4.8

Windows: Internet Explorer 6

## **Who may access PowerSchool?**

All parents/guardians of Needham Public Schools students as well as students at Needham High School and Pollard Middle school have a username and password to access PowerSchool.

## **How do I obtain a username and password?**

A username and password is generated for all parents when students are registered. Parents initially receive this information via US Mail. Under no circumstances are usernames/passwords given out via phone or email.

### **How do I use PowerSchool?**

A link is provided on the district and school web sites to a document with directions for using PowerSchool.

### **What may I reasonably expect from the PowerSchool system as a parent?**

Attendance is taken in all schools using the PowerSchool system. Every high school teacher takes attendance in each class. At Pollard and the elementary schools, attendance is taken in the homeroom period only. You are able to monitor your child's attendance on a daily basis. Please keep in mind that attendance data typically is not complete at the high school until the end of the school day. Checking attendance for the previous day may be more accurate than checking for the current day.

You are able to view your child's assignments and grades as soon as the teacher enters the data into his/her electronic gradebook at the high school and Pollard. Although teachers attempt to record grades in a timely manner, the time needed to accomplish this task varies from teacher to teacher. Please keep in mind that teachers have various methods of grading and the number of assignments given varies based on the course content and individual teaching style. For example, a math teacher may assign regular homework assignments and give a test or quiz once a week. An art teacher might base the final grade on several large projects and give little written homework. As a result, there may be a large amount of data available in PowerSchool for one of your child's classes but not for another. All teachers are required to distribute their course syllabus /grading policy either electronically or on paper. Please consider this information carefully when viewing your child's grades in PowerSchool.

Use PowerSchool to monitor your child's progress. Look for any unusual changes in grades or attendance, but realize that the final grade for a

course is based on a number of factors, often including class participation, extra credit, dropping lowest grade, etc. Your child's grade may appear unusually high or low at the beginning of the year when there have been few assignments. Your child's grade may appear lower during the quarter, but the final grade may actually be higher once all factors have been included. The opposite may also be true. The information made available to you through PowerSchool should not be considered a substitute for a dialog with your child's teacher.

Teacher email addresses are posted in PowerSchool. You may communicate with the teacher through email or by phone. If you choose to use email, realize that due to the nature of the job, most teachers have little time to respond to email during the school day. Do not expect an immediate response to email messages. However, if you do not receive a response from the teacher within a day or two, please contact the teacher again. Any correspondence with the teacher through email is considered public record. Teachers may only share strictly factual information through email. For more detailed information, you should schedule a conference with your child's teacher.

When sending email to a teacher, it is advisable to use an email address with a valid-sounding name. A teacher who receives a message from [jellybean@hotmail.com](mailto:jellybean@hotmail.com) might very well ignore the message thinking that it is probably junk mail. It is also important to include a valid subject line. This is part of a strategy to reduce the amount of junk mail (spam) that staff members receive every day.

### **What if I have a question or forget my password?**

Please protect your username and password. If you forget your password, please visit the main office of your child's school. If you are having other problems accessing PowerSchool, please send an email to [powerschool@needham.k12.ma.us](mailto:powerschool@needham.k12.ma.us) stating the issue.