

AUSTIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
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ELLIS EAGLE GAZETTE

November Parent Newsletter

Message from the Principal, Dewey Schara



Dear Ellis Families,
As you know, in lieu of traditional in-person conferences, we hold **Family Communication Events**. Our first event was held on September 23, and our most recent event took place on October 28. We are always looking for ways to strengthen our partnership with families, and we hope these events have been helpful and meet your needs.

Please remember that you can contact your child's teacher directly through the Parent Portal at any time. If you would like to meet with a teacher individually, you can arrange a conference by calling the main office. We also value your feedback and welcome your ideas and suggestions. Please don't hesitate to call or email me.

I'm sure you've noticed our increased focus on student attendance. In addition to dedicating an Administrative Assistant to attendance support, we review attendance data monthly to identify ways we can better support students and families. If your child is experiencing challenges that are affecting regular attendance, please keep us informed. We want to work with you to make school a positive and successful daily experience for your child.

I do have one important request: please make every effort to ensure your child arrives at school on time and is ready to learn by **8:00 a.m.** Our first class begins promptly at 8:00 a.m., and frequent tardiness can impact a student's academic success. Developing positive attendance habits now will help prepare students for success in high school and future employment opportunities. Please also take a moment to verify that we have your current contact information, including emergency contacts. Keeping this information up to date helps us communicate with you effectively when needed.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support and partnership.
Sincerely,
Mr. Schara



Message from the Assistant Principal, Joni Irvin

Ellis Families,
At Ellis Middle School, we are committed to ensuring that every student receives the support they need to be successful both academically and socially. One of the ways we accomplish this is through our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), which allows us to identify student needs early and provide targeted interventions.

For students who require additional academic support, Ellis offers Tier 2 instruction in both reading and mathematics. Students are identified for these supports through a comprehensive review of historical academic data alongside current assessment results from the MCA and STAR 360 assessments. Students whose scores fall within the intervention or urgent intervention ranges in reading are considered for additional support services. As part of this process, eligible students complete an additional screening assessment, the CAPTI ReadBasix, which helps staff better understand specific skill needs and determine the most appropriate intervention pathway.

Academic success is only one piece of the puzzle. We recognize that students' social and emotional well-being plays a critical role in their ability to learn and thrive. In addition to our veteran Counseling Department and our fully implemented BARR Program, Ellis is fortunate to partner with Austin Aspires, whose mentor provides valuable social-emotional support to students who may benefit from an additional trusted adult connection during the school day. Through mentoring relationships, students receive encouragement, guidance, and support that help foster confidence, resilience, and engagement in school.

By combining targeted academic interventions with meaningful social-emotional supports, Ellis continues to build a system that meets students where they are and helps them grow toward their full potential. We are proud of the collaborative efforts of our staff, families, and community partners who work together to ensure every student has the opportunity to succeed.

Strategic Priorities Update

Strategic priorities:
Priority One: Support and resources to ensure a safe and welcoming learning environment:

- Our second communication event was October 28th. Teachers reach out to their Connect students' families and share updates. The use phone calls, Talking Points, emails and TEAMS meetings to make sure information is transferred.

- We are discussing with our leadership team ways to improve communication. There is always value in face-to-face meetings when possible. So we are looking at some form of hybrid event.
- 96% of our parent communications were completed.
- We meet weekly with our BARR coaches to regularly evaluate and improve our BARR work.

Priority Two: Packer Profile for all learners:

- We completed and submitted our grant proposal to the Hormel Foundation for Eagle Bluff trips.
- The new digital music class is going very well and our digital arts teacher, Mr. Johnson, has developed new quarter classes for digital arts. He will be presenting to CACR in December.
- We continue to work on offering Cultural Dance (not the official name just my temporary name) to be offered in the near future.
- Building for the Future, is a new PLTW class that will be offered next year. This class focusses on things like plumbing and H-Vac.
- We are working closely with Emily Hovland to make our Packer Profile Priority more robust and support the efforts at AHS.

Priority Three: District-wide multi-tiered systems of support for all learners:

- Our math intervention class, now offered through our ALC is seeing very good preliminary data. Over half of the students enrolled are experiencing high growth. All students report having more confidence in math.
- We have completed our STAR assessments and CAPTI testing which helps us identify students for both math and reading interventions.
- Our reading intervention classes are going well. We continue to look at data to calibrate our services.
- Our PD in November will be on High Impact Teaching Strategies with Higher Order Thinking Questions as the focus.
- We are still working on criteria for exiting student from interventions. We have 5 students we are exiting for math, for example.

Priority Four: Excellence in resource management:

- We had a 17% reduction in our department budgets with 7% going to district budget cuts and 10% for digital music supplies.
- We continue to work on completing furniture purchases for classrooms.
- Our athletic budgets are being re-aligned to work on improving our outdoor facilities and weight room.

Message from the Dean of Students, Dr. Gabrielson



Families-
As we begin the second quarter, we are excited to continue building on the growth, learning, and achievements our students have made so far this school year. Quarter 2 is a great opportunity for students to reflect on their progress, set new goals, and strengthen the habits and routines that support academic success. We encourage families to regularly check the Parent Portal to monitor grades, attendance, and missing assignments, as staying informed is one

of the best ways to support students throughout the school year. If you ever have questions or concerns about your child's progress, please do not hesitate to reach out to their teachers. We value the partnership between home and school and are committed to working together to help every student succeed.

As we move further into the fall season, we also want to remind families that cold weather will be here soon. Please help ensure that students come to school dressed appropriately for the changing temperatures, including coats, hats, gloves, and other warm-weather clothing when needed. If your student is in need of warm clothing items or other basic necessities, we are here to help. The Ellis Packer Pantry is available to support students and families with items such as coats, hats, gloves, and other essential resources. We encourage families to reach out if there is a need, as our goal is to ensure every student has what they need to be successful, comfortable, and ready to learn each day.

Thank you for your continued support as we work together to make Quarter 2 a positive and successful experience for all students. We appreciate your partnership and look forward to all that our students will accomplish in the months ahead.

Dr. Gabrielson

Note from the Office

Families,

Student Pick-Up Reminder

When picking up your child, please provide as much advance notice as possible. This helps us ensure your child is waiting in the office upon your arrival. Last-minute pick-ups can result in delays, as students may be in the gym, at lunch, or participating in activities outside the classroom.

School Zone Safety Reminder

Please remember to slow down when driving down the school driveway to pick up your child. We have noticed several vehicles speeding while turning around or parking to wait for students. This is a school zone, and with nice weather, our classes will be spending more time outdoors. While safe driving is always expected, it is especially important now with more students outside .

Thank you!

Emergency Contacts

📞 **Keep Emergency Contacts Up to Date!**

To help us ensure your child's safety, please take a moment to review and update your emergency contact information. If your phone number, address, or emergency contacts have changed recently, let us know as soon as possible. Accurate contact details help us reach you quickly in case of illness, injury, or other urgent situations.

You can update your information by logging into the parent portal.

Thank you for helping us keep our records current!

BARR Updates

Ellis Families,
Another part of BARR is a focus on interventions & strategies for the purpose of helping students in academics. One way that we do this is through the use of “Catch Days”. Each quarter, core classes have the option of requesting assistance to provide a “Catch Day” for their students. On this day, the students who have all their work completed at a satisfactory level can go to the Media Center to participate in a variety of activities like board games, ping pong, foosball, an Art project, video games, and more. The rest of the students have the opportunity to get caught up on their work by getting extra help from their teacher during this time. Please reach out to me if you have any questions about BARR at Ellis.

Sincerely,
Karen Dunbar, IJ Holton & Ellis BARR Coordinator, karen.dunbar@austin.k12.mn.us

BARR Strategies
Focus on the **whole student**.
Provide **professional development** for teachers, counselors, and administration.
Use BARR’s **I-Time Curriculum** to foster a climate for learning.
Create a **cohort** of students.
Hold **regular meetings** of the cohort teacher teams.
Conduct **community connect meetings**.
Engage **families** in student learning.
Engage **administrators**.

I-Time Sessions Grade 7
11/4/26 Who Is Your Champion
Students will identify at least one adult they can approach for help or support. The students listen to a video clip by Rita Pierson titled, "Every Kid Needs a Champion." Then, they will write about someone who has been a champion for them. Last, they will work together to create a "How To" list for staff to follow to become champions for the students at Ellis.
11/11/26 Reflection
Students will explore their identity considering what makes them different and how they can use those differences to build a positive identity. They will watch a video about a person who overcame adversity to realize her hopes and dreams for her future. They will then reflect on their own goals through independent work and group discussion.
11/18/26 Personality Portrait
The students will explore their personal values, interests, strengths, goals, and dreams. They will brainstorm words to describe themselves and then create a Word Cloud using their chosen words. Finally, they will have a chance to share their creation with a small and large group.

I-Time Sessions Grade 8

11/4/26 Mindful Listening

The students recognize the difference between active and passive listening. They begin by writing and brainstorming with classmates about what this means. Then, they practice these skills with a partner by experiencing each role - listener and speaker.

11/11/26 This Is Now

The purpose of this lesson is to help students identify SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented, time-bound) goals. They write both "End of School Year" and "Lifetime" goals. Then, they choose one goal in each category to share with the class by adding them to the class list.

11/18/26 Compassionate Honesty

The students will practice honest communication in compassionate ways. They learn about this through reading and discussing an article summary on the topic. Then, they practice the skill with a partner by choosing 2-3 scenarios to work through discussing them compassionately with their partner. At the end, the class debriefs as a whole group about the process.



Counselor Updates

Dear Students and Families

As we move through the school year, November is a great time to check in on academic progress, build positive habits, and make sure students have the support they need to succeed. The IJ Holton and Ellis Counseling Department is here to support students both academically and personally. Check out this month's tips, reminders, and celebrations!

Check Your Parent and Student Portal

Students and families should regularly check the parent and student portals to monitor grades, attendance, and overall academic progress.

Checking the portal together can help families:

- Identify classes where a student may need additional support.
- Monitor grades and progress throughout the quarter.
- Address attendance concerns early.
- Celebrate improvements and academic accomplishments!

A quick check once or twice a week can make a big difference.

If you have any problems logging in, please contact portal@austin.k12.mn.us

Communication Is Key!

Students do not have to navigate challenges alone. If a student is struggling with an assignment, a class, a friendship, or something outside of school, reaching out to a trusted adult is an important first step.

Students and families are encouraged to email teachers or the school counselor when concerns arise. Asking questions early can help us work together to find solutions and provide support before a concern grows.
Remember: asking for help is a sign of strength!

November Is National Youth Homelessness Awareness Month
November is a time to raise awareness about youth homelessness and the challenges some students and families experience when they do not have stable housing.
Housing insecurity can affect a student's attendance, concentration, academic performance, and overall well-being. Sometimes, these challenges are not immediately visible to others.
At IJ Holton and Ellis, we want every student to feel safe, supported, and connected to school. If your family is experiencing housing instability or you are concerned about a student who may need support, please reach out to the school counselor.
School staff can help connect students and families with appropriate school and community resources. **You do not have to face these challenges alone, and asking for support is nothing to be ashamed of.**

A Final Note
As we head into November, remember that academic success is a team effort. Students, families, teachers, and counselors all play an important role in helping students thrive. Keep communicating, stay organized, celebrate progress, and reach out whenever support is needed.

Wishing all our Ellis students and families a wonderful November!

Your Ellis Counselors,
Lea Oelfke, 8th grade counselor lea.oelfke@austin.k12.mn.us 507-460-1517
Kirstin Norby, 7th grade counselor kirstin.norby@austin.k12.mn.us 507-460-1536

Athletics

Sports Information from EMS Athletic Director



Parents and Athletes
Winter sports season is here! Be sure to check out the available winter athletic opportunities for Ellis students in the information provided.
Before registering, please make sure your student has a current physical on file. If a physical has expired, registration options will not appear during the online registration process. Physical forms can be found here: **https://www.austin.k12.mn.us/district-offices/activities-office/forms**.
Families can also find Ellis Middle School athletic schedules, game information, and updates at **https://www.gobound.com/mn/schools/ellismiddle**
As a reminder, athletes are strongly encouraged to lock up all personal belongings in the locker rooms during practices and competitions. Valuable items such as cell phones, earbuds, wallets, jewelry, and school-issued devices should never be left unattended. Taking a few moments to secure belongings helps ensure a safe and positive experience for everyone.

If you have any questions regarding athletics, registration, eligibility, or schedules, please do not hesitate to reach out. We are excited for another great season and look forward to seeing our students represent Ellis with pride, sportsmanship, and teamwork

Dr. Gabrielson



Know

VETERAN'S DAY BREAKFAST

- **WHERE?** *ELLIS MIDDLE SCHOOL, [1700 4TH AVENUE SE, AUSTIN, MN 55912]*
- **WHEN?** *NOVEMBER 11TH 8:00 TO 8:45*
- **WHY?** *TO CELEBRATE AND RECOGNIZE YOUR SERVICE FOR OUR COUNTRY*

PLEASE JOIN US FOR COFFEE, DONUTS, AND PERFORMANCES PLAYED BY THE ELLIS BAND& ORCHESTRA!

Call 507-460-1508 to reserve your spot at the Veterans Day breakfast!





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EXPIRES JULY 31, 2027

SCHOLASTIC BOOK FAIR

Ellis will be holding book fair November 16 - November 20th. Students will have the opportunity to view and purchase books before school, after school, or during school hours with teacher permission.

You may also view the Ellis School Book Fair by clicking link below: Homepage: https://bookfairs.scholastic.com/bf/ellismiddleschool

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Important Dates to Remember



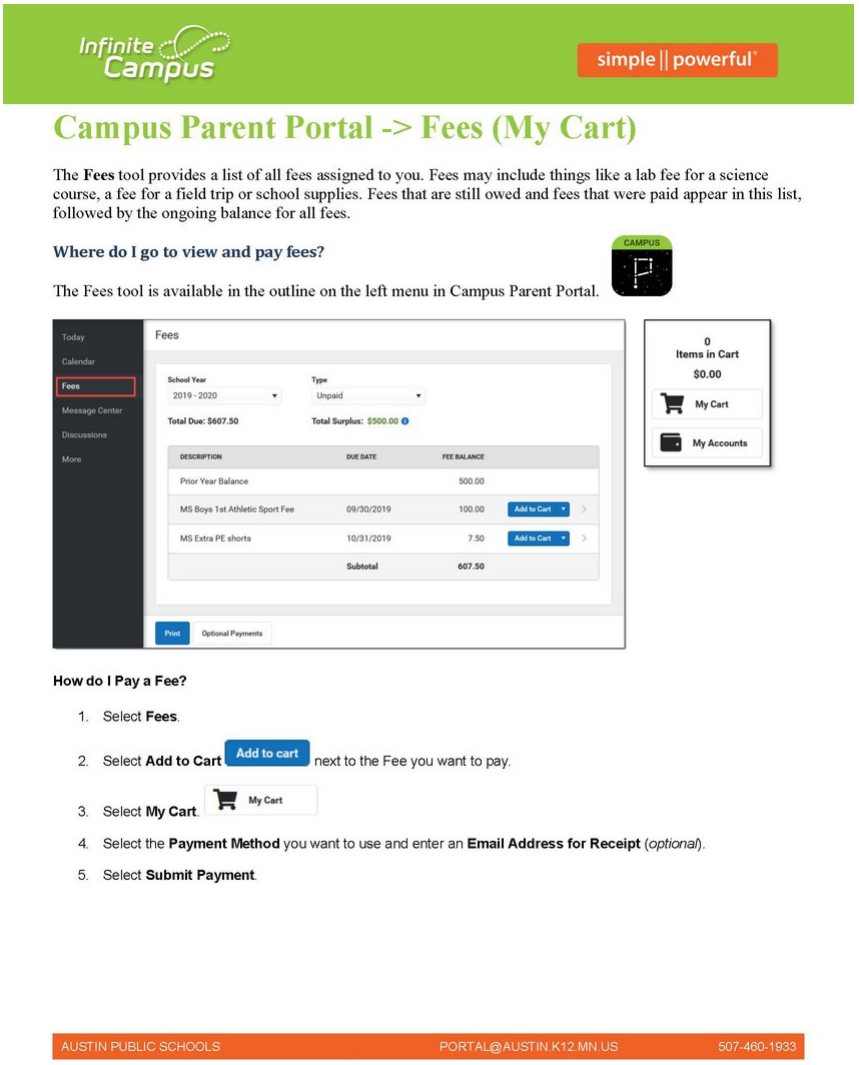
November
November 3 - No School for students-Staff Professional Development Day
November 6 - Fire Drill
November 10 - Grade 8-12 Fall Band, Knowlton Auditorium
November 11 - Veterans Day Breakfast
November 16 - 20 - Ellis Book Fair
November 23 - Lockdown Drill
November 25-27 - No School, Holiday Break
December 1 - STAR Reading Testing
December 3 - STAR Math Testing

December 7 - Grade 5-8 Choir Concert, Knowlton Auditorium
December 9 - Parent Communications (3:40pm-5:15pm)

Do

Fees

Please see below if you want to pay your fees online. You may always pay at the school with check/cash/or credit card also.



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Campus Parent Portal -> Fees (My Cart)

The **Fees** tool provides a list of all fees assigned to you. Fees may include things like a lab fee for a science course, a fee for a field trip or school supplies. Fees that are still owed and fees that were paid appear in this list, followed by the ongoing balance for all fees.

Where do I go to view and pay fees?

The Fees tool is available in the outline on the left menu in Campus Parent Portal.

Today
Calendar
Fees
Message Center
Discussions
More

Fees

School Year: 2019 - 2020 | Type: Unpaid
Total Due: $607.50 | Total Surplus: $500.00

DESCRIPTION	DUE DATE	FEE BALANCE	
Prior Year Balance		500.00	
MS Boys 1st Athletic Sport Fee	09/30/2019	100.00	Add to Cart
MS Extra PE shorts	10/31/2019	7.50	Add to Cart
	Subtotal	607.50	

Print | Optional Payments

0 Items in Cart
$0.00
My Cart
My Accounts

How do I Pay a Fee?

1. Select **Fees**.
2. Select **Add to Cart** Add to cart next to the Fee you want to pay.
3. Select **My Cart**. My Cart
4. Select the **Payment Method** you want to use and enter an **Email Address for Receipt** (*optional*).
5. Select **Submit Payment**.

AUSTIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS | PORTAL@AUSTIN.K12.MN.US | 507-460-1933

PDF **CP_Fees.pdf** Download 289.4 KB

1700 4th Avenue SE
Austin, MN 55912
507-460-1500

School Hours:
8:00AM - 3:00PM

