

ELLIS EAGLE GAZETTE

October Parent Newsletter

Message from the Principal, Dewey Schara



Dear Ellis Families,

As we complete our first month of the school year, I want to share a few important reminders and provide an update on the work we are doing to support a safe, welcoming, and successful school environment for all students.

Toys and Toy Weapons

Recently, we have had several concerns involving students bringing toys to school, particularly toy weapons. While these items may seem harmless, anything that resembles a weapon must be taken very seriously in a school setting.

For this reason, **toys, including toy weapons and look-alike weapons, should not be brought to school.** School Board Policy 501 addresses weapons and look-alike weapons and provides for significant disciplinary consequences, up to and including possible dismissal from the school district.

Families can help us maintain a safe and calm learning environment by:

- Talking with your child about keeping toys at home.
- Checking your child's backpack regularly.
- Contacting the school if you have concerns or information that may affect student or school safety.

We appreciate your partnership in reinforcing these expectations at home.

Attendance Matters

I also want to emphasize the importance of regular school attendance. You may have noticed that the district frequently highlights attendance through social media and other communications. There is a good reason for this: being at school each day gives students the best opportunity to learn, build relationships, and experience success.

We also understand that families sometimes face challenges that make regular attendance difficult. If there are barriers affecting your child's attendance, please reach out to us. Our goal is to partner with families, identify solutions, and provide support that helps students attend school consistently and successfully.
As part of our MTSS process, Ellis has an attendance team that regularly reviews student attendance and identifies supports and interventions for students and families when needed. We also have an administrative assistant who supports attendance efforts at both Ellis and Holton. She works directly with families to clarify attendance concerns and provides updated attendance data to our team every two weeks, **helping us identify concerns early and respond with appropriate support.**

School Safety and Crisis Response
I also want families to know about some of the ongoing work happening behind the scenes to support school safety.
Ellis has a Crisis Response Team that meets monthly to review issues related to building safety and security. The team includes administrators, our school liaison officer, counselors, teachers, and other staff members.
During these meetings, we review our safety drills and identify ways to make them more effective. We also discuss significant safety or discipline concerns from the previous month and determine whether adjustments to our procedures or practices are needed. This ongoing process helps us continually strengthen our safety practices while maintaining a supportive school environment for students and staff.

Thank you for your continued support of Ellis students and staff. Strong partnerships between families and schools make a tremendous difference in helping students feel safe, supported, and ready to learn. We appreciate your trust and look forward to continuing to work together in the best interests of your child.

Sincerely,
Mr. Schara
Principal



Message from the Assistant Principal, Joni Irvin

Ellis Families,

Last week, Ellis Middle School completed their first round of Family Communication events. Families have received at least one communication regarding their students' current level of overall progress using the first 5 weeks of data as our resource. Did you know there is a direct correlation between home and school connections? Research by John Hattie shows that when parents are actively involved in their child's learning and maintain positive communication with teachers, student achievement improves. The effect size is about 0.51, which is above the level considered to have a meaningful impact on learning. In simple terms, students are more successful when parents and teachers work together as a team. There will be four more Communication events over the course of the

academic school year and as families you should expect to hear from a staff during the following weeks: October 28, 2026, December 9, 2026, March 31, 2027 and May 5, 2027. We encourage you to reach out to your students' teachers, counselors and administration as we work together to provide your student a quality education and collaborate through strong partnership.

Strategic Priorities Update

Strategic priorities:

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

- We have adjusted our communication events to offer more time for teachers to make contacts.
- Our building level crisis response team meeting are bi-weekly.
- We are also working to do a better job of documenting communication with families.
- We have monthly climate surveys with staff to help address concerns before they become larger issues.

Priority Two: Packer Profile for all learners:

- We are beginning the process of designing a “Career Project” with the help of Emily Hovland.
- We are researching another PLTW class for Ellis.
- We are working to add a Dance class to P.E. for next year, if possible.
- We are working to better align co-curricular activities with AHS.

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

- Our language arts teachers are completing their OLA training for reading.
- Our math and reading intervention classes are going well.
- In special education our teachers are learning to use GoalBook to write IEP’s.
- Our PD around HITS and vocabulary instruction

Priority Four: Excellence in resource management:

- We continue to work to replace furniture in our classrooms.
- We have worked with the district to allocate resources for our intervention classes in math and reading.

Message from the Dean of Students, Dr. Gabrielson



Families-

We love seeing our students every day and want to ensure they get the most out of their learning experience. When students arrive on time, they start their day with confidence, stay connected to classroom routines, and don’t miss important learning moments. If your child is sick or unable to attend, please call the front office to report their absence (507-460-1500) or enter their absence in the Parent Portal. Your support helps us create a consistent and successful school experience for all students. If you have any questions on our attendance policies, please feel free to reach out and I'd be happy to help you.

Dr. Nichelle 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!

EVERY SCHOOL HAS A STORY

From the first days of kindergarten to graduation day, Austin Public Schools have helped shape generations of students and families. This video reflects on those stories and looks ahead to our schools' future. As the community considers the upcoming referendum, we encourage everyone to learn more, ask questions, and stay informed.

Learn more here: **www.austin.k12.mn.us/referendum**

PDF **Building updates on our schools needs for voting Nov. 3 refer endum.pdf** Download 2.2 MB

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,
Our Small Block, Big Block, and Community Connect meetings help us stay focused on the whole student. Over the course of the school year, our goal is to discuss every Ellis student at least once in our weekly Small Block meetings. We start by talking about strengths, connections to school, hobbies, and interests. Then, we move into other areas such as academics, attendance, and any areas of concern. Each Small Block is made up of 5-6 teachers that meet weekly. It includes core teachers as well as elective teachers. 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 710/7/26 North Star
The students identify and plan to achieve short- and long-term goals. They explore their motivation or reasoning behind the goals they choose. They do this by listening to a story, writing about their "North Star", sharing with others and listening as others speak about their goals.
10/21/26 Unity Day – Upstander Lesson
Students will learn more about what it means to be an upstander which includes promoting courage and support in challenging situations. Upstanders can choose to actively intervene, provide support & empathy and/or promote positive change by fostering an environment that encourages respect & kindness.
10/28/26 What is Cyberbullying?
Students learned more about cyberbullying through a handout provided by the teacher, group discussion about the information on the handout, and an activity that involves a quiz on the information in small groups. The session also involved giving students a chance to talk about cyberbullying at our school or in the media.

I-Time Sessions Grade 8
10/7/26 Solution Creation
The students will create/list various strategies to overcome academic and nonacademic barriers

or problems. Part of the lesson involves students working in groups to offer creative solutions to a number of real-world scenarios.

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10/28/26 Your Cyber Footprint

The students will develop a deeper understanding of the lasting impact of posting online. They will watch a video that uses the terms, footprints, lighthouse, copy machine, stadium big screen, and permanent marker. They will utilize these terms when reflecting on their own use of social media through writing, discussing, and sharing in a small group.



Counselor Updates

Dear Students and Families

October is National Bullying Prevention Month

As we step into October, we join schools and communities across the nation in recognizing **National Bullying Prevention Month**—a time dedicated to promoting kindness, inclusion, and respect, while raising awareness about the serious effects of bullying.

Bullying can take many forms—physical, verbal, social, and online—and it impacts not just the students involved but the entire school community. By working together, we can create an environment where everyone feels safe, supported, and valued.

Parents and guardians play a crucial role in preventing and addressing bullying. Here are a few ways you can support efforts at home:

- Talk openly with your child about their day-to-day experiences
- Encourage empathy and respectful communication
- Remind them to speak up if they see or experience bullying
- Report any concerns to school staff promptly

Bullying prevention is not just a one-month effort, it's a year-round commitment. Let's continue to work together to build a culture of kindness where every student can thrive.

We'll be celebrating **Unity Day** (Wednesday, October 21) by wearing **orange**—a color that represents hope and support for those who have experienced bullying. It's a day to come together to promote **kindness, acceptance, and inclusion**—and to send a clear message that **bullying is not okay**. To commemorate Bullying Prevention and Unity Day, there will be a variety of school announcements, engaging activities, and prizes for students throughout the week to address being an upstander and demonstrating acts of kindness and inclusion.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if your child needs support, please don't hesitate to reach out to our school counselors or administrators. We're here to help.

The IJ Holton and Ellis Middle School Counselors wish to thank you for being a valued part of our school community.
Zack Langreck [5th grade]
Kayla Dickman [6th grade]
Kirstin Norby [7th grade]
Lea Oelfke [8th grade]

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 Students:

Please see the athletic options for our winter sports seasons. Several opportunities are open at Ellis as well as AHS for our student athletes. Registrations will open on various dates and will only be open for two weeks. We will be opening up a winter weightlifting option as well - more information to come!

Just a reminder - prior to registration, sports physicals must be turned in to the Ellis office. They can be dropped off or emailed to nicole.murphy@austin.k12.mn.us
Registration options will NOT show up in the Portal until the physical is entered.
If you have any questions please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Nichelle Gabrielson, Middle School Athletic Director


WINTER SPORTS REGISTRATION
AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL OFFERINGS:
REGISTRATION OPENS OCTOBER 5, 2026
Dance (APDT): Grades 8-12, start 10/26
Girls Hockey: Grades 7-12, start 11/2
Boys Hockey: Grades 9-12, start 11/16
Girls Basketball: Grades 9-12, start 11/16
Boys Basketball: Grades 9-12, start 11/23
Gymnastics: Grades 7-12, start 11/16
Wrestling: Grades 7-12 (boys & girls), start 11/23
Boys Swim & Dive: Grades 7-12, start 11/30
ELLIS MIDDLE SCHOOL OFFERINGS:
SEE ABOVE FOR OTHER OFFERINGS WITH AHS
Girls Basketball: Grades 6-8, start 10/26; registration opens Oct 5
Dance: Grades 6-8, start 11/16; registration opens Nov 1
Boys Basketball: grades 6-8, start 1/4; registration opens Nov 30
REGISTER IN THE PARENT PORTAL; NEED SPORTS PHYSICAL; FILL OUT ED BENEFITS APPLICATION

Know

Lifetouch.

Picture Retake Day is Coming!

¡Ya llega el Día de las nuevas tomas fotográficas!

Wednesday, October 07, 2026

Ellis Middle School Retake Day!

Scan to order now!
¡Echa un vistazo para encargar ahora!



How it Works:

Students are photographed on Picture Retake Day. Bring original package if available!

You can still order on mylifetouch.com. Create an account or login with your Picture Day ID: EVTGF4FGC

Orders will be sent home with your student after Picture Retake Day.

Cómo funciona: Los estudiantes son fotografiados el Día de las Nuevas Tomas Fotográficas. Trae paquete original ¡si está disponible! Aún puedes encargar en mylifetouch.com. Crea una cuenta o inicia sesión con tu identificación del Día de la Foto. Los pedidos serán enviados a tu casa con tu estudiante después del Día de las Nuevas Tomas Fotográficas.

Parents can contact our Customer Success team with questions pertaining to Packages/Payments: 1-800-736-4753

Questions? Contact our Help Center at lifetouch.com/support-us. Select K-12 School Photography for assistance.
¿Preguntas? Comunícate con nuestro Centro de Ayuda en lifetouch.com/support-us. Selecciona Fotografía Escolar K-12 para recibir asistencia.

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EXPIRES JULY 31, 2027



Important Dates to Remember



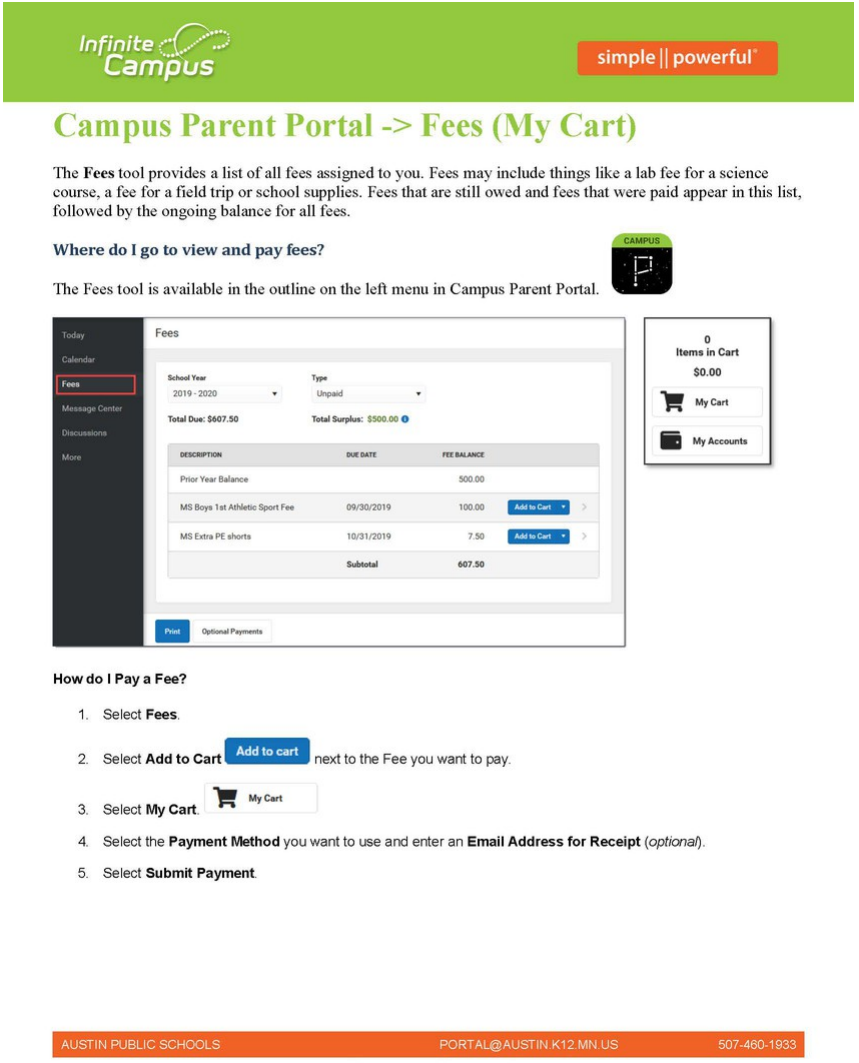
October
October 1 - Hearing and Vision screening (7th grade only)
October 6 - Aiden's Light Assembly
October 7 - Picture Re-take day
October 21 - Dental Clinic
October 23 - Lockdown drill #2 at 8:45am
October 23 - End of 1st Quarter
October 28 -Progress Communication Event, Teachers reaching out from 3:40pm-5:15pm to parents

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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.



Infinite Campus

simple || powerful

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

Share

School Bond Referendum

The Austin Public Schools have placed a $24.9 million bond referendum on the November 3 ballot.

The proposed funding would address identified facility needs across the District, including:

- Improving safety and security
- Increasing accessibility
- Addressing water infiltration
- Updating aging building systems and finishes
- Completing needed repairs to keep the Ellis Middle School pool operational

Community members are encouraged to learn more about the proposal, review project information, and submit questions through the District's referendum website.

Learn more or submit a question: https://www.austin.k12.mn.us/district-resources/referendum-2026

Ellis Middle School
https://ellis.austin.k12.mn.us

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

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

