

AUSTIN PUBLIC SCHOOLS
INSPIRE • EMPOWER • ACCELERATE

ELLIS EAGLE GAZETTE

August Parent Newsletter

Message from the Principal, Dewey Schara



Ellis Families,
Welcome back! We have an exciting year ahead at Ellis Middle School, with a strong focus on supporting student growth in reading, math, and our Packer Profile initiatives.

As we continue to strengthen reading instruction across the district, our Language Arts teachers will participate in state-required literacy training to enhance classroom instruction. In addition, students who are identified as needing extra reading support will have access to a dedicated reading intervention class. We are also expanding math intervention opportunities through our ALC programming. These efforts align with the work taking place in our elementary schools and reflect our district-wide commitment to helping every student build strong literacy and math skills.
Our Packer Profile work is also taking a significant step forward this year. We are partnering with Emily Hovland, Packer Profile Coordinator at Austin High School, to organize two major learning experiences for our students.

First, students will participate in a career exploration unit that culminates in mock job interviews. Some families may remember the "Career Project" that Ellis introduced nearly twenty years ago. We are bringing back many of its core elements to help students explore career pathways while developing valuable research, writing, speaking, and interviewing skills through a cross-curricular experience.

Second, we are working with Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center to bring back the 8th grade overnight Eagle Bluff trip to Lanesboro, including the high ropes course. We are excited about the opportunity to offer this memorable experience once again with the support of Eagle Bluff and our

dedicated teacher leaders. The trip is planned for the second semester, and we will share additional details as they become available.

As you can see, we have an action-packed year planned for our students! Communication and partnership with families are essential to a successful school year, and we encourage you to attend our Open House on **August 12** from **8:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.** or **4:00–7:00 p.m.** This is a great opportunity to meet your child's teachers, explore the building, and start the school year with excitement and confidence.

Your partnership is incredibly important to us. If you ever have a question or concern, please don't hesitate to reach out. We encourage you to contact us early so we can work together to ensure your child's experience at Ellis Middle School is positive, successful, and rewarding.
Thank you for your continued support. We look forward to a fantastic school year!

Sincerely,
Mr. Schara



Message from the Assistant Principal, Joni Irvin

Ellis Families,

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome our 7th grade students and welcome back our returning 8th graders! We have had a busy summer preparing for the 26-27 school year, and we are looking forward to having our Ellis Eagles back in the building on a daily basis. I am committed to supporting both students and families in finding success at Ellis Middle School and encourage frequent forms of communication should you want to touch based about your student's progress or another specific need.

Austin Public Schools uses TalkingPoints to help families and staff communicate easily and effectively. Messages are automatically translated into your preferred language, allowing all families to stay informed about school events, student progress, important announcements, and more through a simple text sent directly to your phone. You will be provided additional information on how to access TalkingPoints at our Back-To-School open house on August 12th.

In addition to our Back-To-School open house, families will receive updates from staff throughout the year during our Communication Events scheduled for: 9/23/26, 10/28/26, 12/9/26, 3/31/27 and 5/5/27. We encourage you to take note of those dates as your students Connect Teacher will be contacting you via your preferred method. While these are not traditional in person opportunities, you are always welcome to schedule an in-person meeting should you prefer.

I am looking forward to a fantastic 26-27 school year ahead!

Lifetouch.

Picture Day is Coming!

¡Ya llega el Día de la Foto!

Wednesday, September 09, 2026

Ellis Middle School

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



How it Works:

Pre-order today on mylifetouch.com. Create an account or login with your Picture Day ID:
EVTHR3MXS

Students are photographed on Picture Day.

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

Cómo funciona: Encarga de manera anticipada en mylifetouch.com. Crea una cuenta o inicia sesión con tu identificación del Día de la Foto. Los estudiantes son fotografiados el Día de la Foto. Los pedidos serán enviados a tu casa con tu estudiante después del Día de la Foto.

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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Strategic Priorities Update

Safe and welcoming learning environment:

1. We will continue to have our communication events throughout the school year to make sure families are in the loop with their child's learning.
2. We will effectively use "Talking Points", a communication software.
3. We will be working more diligently on documenting parent communications.

Packer Profile for all learners:

1. We will be implementing a "Career Project" for all students.
2. We will be working with Eagle Bluff to bring back our ropes course field trips.
3. We are adding a new class: Digital Music. This will be a quarter-class for 7th and 8th grade students.

Multi-tiered systems of supports for all students:

1. We are implementing reading intervention classes as well as math intervention support.
2. Our Language Arts teachers are taking state mandated reading training.

Excellence in resource management:

1. We are working on long-term funding or our Eagle Bluff field trip
2. We continue to replace desks and chairs
3. Resources of time and scheduling have been allocated for our reading and math interventions.

Message from the Dean of Students, Dr. Gabrielson



Welcome Back!

As we begin a new school year, there is a great sense of excitement and anticipation for the opportunities ahead. As Dean of Students, I am thrilled to welcome both our returning families and those who are joining our school community for the first time.

The start of a new school year brings a fresh opportunity for growth, learning, and connection. Our staff has been working hard to prepare a safe, welcoming, and engaging environment where every student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. At our school, we believe that every student deserves to feel valued, respected, and included. We are committed to fostering a positive school culture where differences are celebrated, kindness is expected, and all students have a sense of belonging. By working together, we can create a community where everyone feels supported and empowered to succeed.

Safety remains one of our highest priorities. We are dedicated to maintaining a secure learning environment where students can focus on learning, building relationships, and exploring new opportunities. We encourage students to be responsible, respectful, and ready to learn each day as we continue to create a school climate built on trust, care, and accountability.

This year, we look forward to partnering with families to support student success. Strong relationships between home and school are essential, and we encourage open communication throughout the year. Together, we can help every student reach their full potential.

Thank you for being an important part of our school community. We are excited to begin this journey with you and look forward to an outstanding year filled with learning, growth, and achievement.

Dr. Nichelle Gabrielson

SCHOOL BOARD REFERENDUM NOVEMBER 3

The school board took action Monday night to place a $24.9 million referendum on the November 3 ballot. The funding will allow the District to improve safety, increase accessibility, mitigate water infiltration, update building systems and finishes, and complete needed repairs to keep the pool at Ellis Middle School operational. Information about the referendum can be found on the District's website at www.austin.k12.mn.us.

Emergency Drills Scheduled for this year

To ensure the safety of all students and staff, our school regularly conducts emergency drills. This helps us prepare for real emergencies and keep everyone safe.

As you will see, the dates listed below are for our upcoming drills:

Lockdowns:
August 25
October 23
November 23
January 14
February 19

Fire Drills:
August 21
September 25
November 6
April 2
May 11

Tornado Drill:
April 15

These drills are only practice and not a cause for concern. Please reassure your child that these drills are for safety purposes.

If you have any questions or would like to opt out your child's participation in these drills, please contact the school office at 507-460-1500.

Thank you for supporting our commitment to safety.

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 and could take us a bit to get them up to the office.

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 the arrival of warmer weather, our classes will be spending more time outdoors. While safe driving is always expected, it is especially important now with more students outside.

We truly appreciate your cooperation and continued support in helping us keep our students safe and dismissal running smoothly.

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!

Attendance Matters

Consistent Attendance Matters!

At Austin Public Schools, we know that showing up matters. Consistent attendance is one of the clearest predictors of a student's success, not only in the classroom, but in life after graduation. Students who attend school regularly are more likely to achieve academically, graduate on time, and find success in college, careers, or both.

Strong attendance also tells us something important: it reflects how connected students and families/caregivers feel to their school community. When attendance drops, whether for specific groups or across the district, it often signals challenges we can help address, including school climate and engagement, as well as social, emotional, or family barriers.

That's why we're focused on building schools where students want to be. Through strong instruction, supportive relationships, and programs that care for the whole child, Austin Public Schools is working to ensure every student feels welcome, supported, and ready to learn each day. When students feel that connection, they show up, and when they show up, they succeed.
Please watch our new video about the importance of attendance.

Please watch our new video about the importance of attendance.
English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6QScFl1yD0
Spanish: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UN2NBvMfdZw

Counselor Updates

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 507-460-1513

Athletics

Parents and Students:

Registration is now open for our Ellis Middle School fall sports offerings. Please note that a sports physical must be submitted before you can complete registration; the registration options will not appear in the Parent Portal until the physical has been entered. Physicals may be dropped off at the High School Activities Office or emailed to kelly.joseph@austin.k12.mn.us.

In addition to serving as Dean of Students, I am excited to step into the role of Middle School Athletic Director. I look forward to expanding opportunities for our students, strengthening communication with families, and fostering a positive, inclusive athletic experience that encourages students to challenge themselves, build confidence, and stay connected to our school community.

For fall athletics, Ellis offers:

- Girls Volleyball for 7th and 8th grade
- Boys Football for 7th and 8th grade
- Boys Developmental Soccer for 6th and 7th grade

Additional sports opportunities are available through our Austin High School Athletic program.

Girls Volleyball Note:
7th and 8th grade girls who plan to try out for the High School volleyball teams should only submit a sports physical at this time. They will complete registration after tryouts conclude. Students who do not intend to try out for the High School team should register normally for the Ellis program.

If you have any questions, please reach out at nichelle.gabrielson@austin.k12.mn.us.

I look forward to a great season and to supporting our students as they grow, compete, and represent Ellis with pride. If you'd like help refining the closing sentence further, you can choose to polish the ending or add a more inspirational tone.

Go Packers!

Dr. Nichelle Gabrielson

Important Dates to Remember

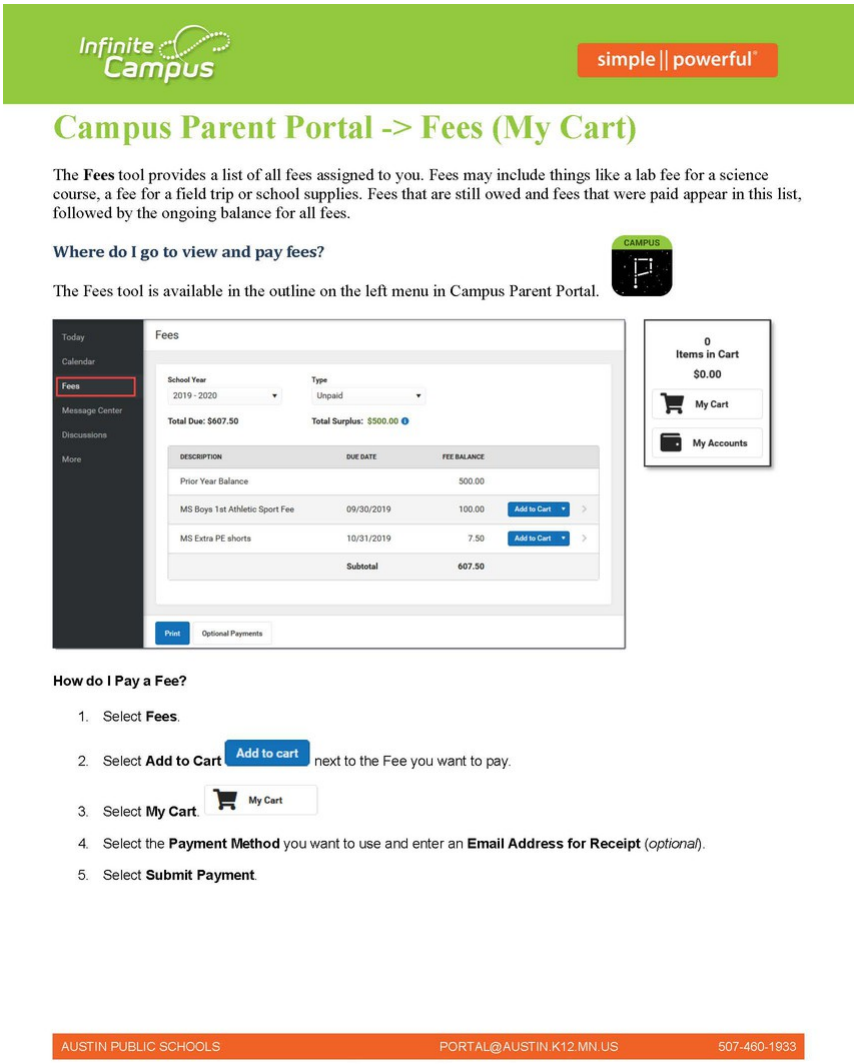
August 12- BTS Open House 8am-1pm & 4pm-7pm
August 19 - First day of school
August 21 - Fire Drill #1
August 25 - Lockdown Drill #1
September 7 - No School
September 9 - Picture Day



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.

How do I Pay a Fee?

1. Select **Fees**.
2. Select **Add to Cart** next to the Fee you want to pay.
3. Select **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



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