

August 2026

Principal's Corner - Mr. Schara



Holton Families,

Last year, we made some significant changes to the schedule at I.J. Holton. We transitioned from a traditional seven-period middle school schedule to a more elementary-style model with self-contained classrooms. In this model, our core teachers have students for math, reading, and either science or social studies. Each teacher partners with another teacher who teaches the remaining core subject to the two homerooms.

Our teachers did a fantastic job making this major adjustment, and we are excited to continue building on its success. From a family's perspective, one of the biggest benefits is having one primary teacher who serves as your main point of contact. We believe this strengthens communication and helps build stronger relationships between home and school.

For our incoming fifth-grade students, this transition should feel very familiar, as they are already accustomed to the elementary classroom model. One notable difference, however, is our grading system. At Holton, we use a traditional letter grading scale (A, B, C, D, and F), which differs from the grading many students have experienced in elementary school.

We hope to see you at your child's scheduled conference on **August 11**. Additional information will be shared soon, but this will be your opportunity to meet your child's teacher, explore our building,

and become more familiar with Holton. Last spring, our administrative team visited each fourth-grade classroom to introduce students to Holton, explain our routines and expectations, and answer their questions. Students also had the opportunity to visit our building, so we hope much of the environment already feels familiar.

Holton also offers opportunities that students may not have experienced in elementary school, including Project Lead the Way courses and performance music classes. Even so, we understand that moving to a new school can feel overwhelming. Having been a Holton parent myself, I understand those feelings. We are committed to helping both students and families feel comfortable and confident as they begin the school year.

Throughout the year, we will communicate with families through this monthly newsletter. We will also use Parent Portal for important announcements and time-sensitive information, so please make sure your account is set up and connected. If you need assistance, we would be happy to help during conferences.

One area that often presents challenges is transportation. If you plan to drop off or pick up your child at school, I want to be upfront that traffic around the building can be very congested. I wish there were an easy solution, but the layout of our campus makes this a difficult issue to solve. Whenever possible, I encourage families to drop students off or pick them up one or two blocks from the building. Parents who choose this option generally experience much less delay. If you prefer to use the front of the building, please be patient, allow extra time, and use extreme caution. Hundreds of students are arriving and leaving during these times, and student safety is our highest priority. Please follow the directions of our staff as you navigate the parking lot. Their goal is simply to keep everyone safe and traffic moving as smoothly as possible.

Finally, I want you to know that your voice matters. Please never hesitate to reach out with a phone call or email if you have questions, concerns, or ideas. You are always welcome to contact me directly, and I am committed to responding to your communication within 24 hours whenever possible.

We are looking forward to a wonderful school year and appreciate the opportunity to partner with you. Together, we can make this a successful and rewarding year for every Holton student.

Sincerely,
Mr. Schara

PDF **Standard Response Protocol Parent Handout** Download 286.8 KB

Mr. Malo's Shout Out

Mr. Malo's Shout Out

Dear IJ Holton Students and Families,



Welcome to the 2026–2027 school year! We hope you have had a wonderful summer filled with fun, relaxation, and time with family and friends. We are excited to welcome everyone back and begin another great year of learning together.

A special **welcome back to our returning 6th-grade students!** We look forward to seeing the leadership, confidence, and growth you bring to our school this year. To our **new 5th-grade students and families, welcome to IJ Holton!** We are thrilled that you are joining our school community and can't wait to help make your transition to intermediate school a positive and exciting experience.

As we prepare for the first day of school, here are a few important dates to remember:

- **Back-to-School Conferences: Monday, August 11**
  - Please be sure to sign up for a conference with your child's teacher. Conferences are a wonderful opportunity to meet your teacher, ask questions, learn about classroom expectations, and help your child start the school year with confidence.
- **First Day of School: Wednesday, August 19**
  - We are excited to welcome students back into the building and begin an amazing year of learning, growth, and new opportunities.
- **School Pictures: Wednesday, August 19**
  - Picture Day will take place on the first day of school. More information about ordering photos will be shared with families during conferences.

Our staff has been working hard throughout the summer to prepare for another successful year at IJ Holton. We are looking forward to partnering with our families to ensure every student feels welcomed, supported, challenged, and inspired to learn.

Thank you for being an important part of the IJ Holton community. We can't wait to see you at Back-to-School Conferences on **August 11** and again on the **first day of school, Wednesday, August 19!**
Here's to a fantastic 2026–2027 school year!

Kane Malo

Mr. Brown's Corner

Dear Holton Families-

I can’t believe that as I write this message, it is still July. Yet here we are talking about the start of school in less than a month. Either I am unbelievably excited for the school year to start, or the boss has told me I need to get my message out early this year. Let’s go with the former. 😬

To our returning 6th grade students and families, welcome back! To our incoming 5th grade students, WELCOME! We are so happy to have you here.



Allow me to (re-)introduce myself. My name is David Brown, and I have the absolute pleasure of being the Dean of Students here at IJ Holton Intermediate School. What exactly is a Dean of Students you ask? In a nutshell, I'm the behavior guy. I like to tell people that my job has two components: to be proactive and to be reactive. Proactively, it is my job to set up all the rules and expectations throughout the building. I set up the systems in our school that allow all 762 of our students to travel and exist in our building safely and efficiently. For example, having 125 students enter and exit the cafeteria every 15 minutes doesn't just happen. It requires extensive planning and establishing guidelines that need to be followed for everything to work smoothly. With that said, it does require some time to make it happen. The first few days in the cafeteria, especially for our new 5th graders, will feel chaotic. Trust me, it does get better quickly.

The second part of my job is the reactive part. I am usually the person who deals with the students who fail to meet our expectations. In other words, I am the discipline guy. Fortunately for me, that is usually a very small percentage of our students. Consistently, 90-95% of our students do exactly what is expected of them. Of course, the 5-10% who struggle with expectations do require a considerable amount of my time.

It's not only the negative I deal with. I am also the person who responds to the students that are following expectations. PBIS Celebrations, (You'll learn more about those soon.) Friday student drawings and prizes, and numerous other recognitions for our incredible students are the best part of my job. IJ Holton is an incredible place!

At IJ Holton, we encourage our students to be Respectful, Responsible, Safe, and to Do Their Best!

If at any time you have any questions or concerns, please email me david.brown@austin.k12.mn.us or call me at 460-1525.

David Brown
IJ Holton Dean of Students

Message from the office

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we prepare for the upcoming school year, we kindly ask for your help in ensuring smooth and efficient student dismissals during the school day.

If your child will need to leave school for an appointment, please enter the absence in the Parent Portal or notify the office in advance. When picking up your child, please arrive with enough time for office staff to contact the classroom and have your child ready for dismissal. Advance notice helps minimize disruptions to learning and ensures your child is ready when you arrive.

If transportation arrangements need to be made with your child, please discuss them before the start of the school day whenever possible.

Our office staff manages a high volume of calls each day. Unless there is an emergency, please avoid calling the office throughout the day with reminders or transportation changes. If daily reminder calls become a concern, we may ask families to make arrangements with their child before the school day begins.

Additionally, on **August 19**, the first day of school, parents and guardians will not be permitted to enter beyond the office area. If your child is unable to attend Back-to-School Conferences, please know that we will have extra staff available to help students navigate the building and find their classrooms.
The first day of school is also **Picture Day**. If you plan to purchase school pictures, online ordering is preferred. Payment by cash will also be accepted if you provide the exact amount. Checks should be made payable to **Lifetouch**.

To help 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, please let us know as soon as possible. Accurate contact information helps us reach you quickly in the event of illness, injury, or another urgent situation.
You can update your information through the Parent Portal or by contacting support at portal@austin.k12.mn.us.

Finally, please be aware that APS school phone numbers may appear as "Spam" on some phones. We encourage you to save **I.J. Holton's** number, **507-460-1525**, in your contacts to ensure you receive important calls from the school.

Thank you for your cooperation and continued support. We look forward to a great school year!

Sincerely,
I.J. Holton Office

Strategic Priorities

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

1. We are fulling integrating "Talking Points" into our work. This is a communication software for teachers to use with our families.
2. We will be emphasizing routines by implementing "the first 20 days". All classrooms will learn the same routines.
3. Social Emotional Support: We will use our Read Aloud time to share stories directly related to students' concerns and issues. Our BARR time lessons will also focus more on SEL.
4. Our Crisis Response team now has a rigid schedule and topic agenda so we can be prepared and also review our actions during crisis.

Packer Profile for All Learners:

1. We will be choosing artifacts for the Packer Portfolio
2. We have a new class, " the Magic of Electrons". This will be a new Project Lead the Way offering.

District-wide Multi-Tiered Systems of Support:

1. We will do some specific learning around making our PLC's more effective and integrating data meetings.
2. We have added a monthly attendance meeting. Our attendance secretary will keep and share attendance data with us as our team chooses interventions to help students who struggle with attendance.
3. We will have monthly family/caregiver communications
4. We will also start our data meetings earlier in the year and we have allocated more time for better PLC and data meetings.

Excellence in resource management:

1. Our process for school supplies purchased by the district was very successful last year; we will use the same process.
2. We will have monthly meetings with district leadership to review our budgets and make sure we are on track financially.

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

Austin Public Schools Conference Schedule

Back To School Conference Schedule



Austin Public Schools Picture Days

Picture Day



Important Dates to Remember

- August 11 - Schedule 1:1 Back to School Conferences 8:00am -1:00pm & 3:00pm -6:00pm.
- August 11 -**Teachers will not be available from 1:00pm-3:00pm**
- August 19 - First Day of School - Building is open from 7:45 - 4:00
- August 19 - School Pictures - Order online or bring exact amount of cash for pictures. Checks are also accepted.



Parent Awareness: IJ Holton Lockdown Drill Dates



IJ Holton Lockdown Drill Dates

app.smore.com

Support IJ Holton and Order Your Fan Gear!



Click Here to Order Your Fan Gear

Instrument Rental Information!

IJ Holton Families!

Have a 5th grader joining band or orchestra this year?

Music Mart will have instrument rental displays and information at open house (August 11th). They will be in the **Turtle Creek Science Lab from 3-6pm.**

You can also check out their website at www.themusicmart.biz

IJ Holton also has a limited supply of school instruments for students to use. Please stop by the music rooms at open house and our music teachers will be happy to assist.

¡Familias de IJ Holton!

¿Tienen un estudiante de quinto grado que se vaya a unir a la banda o a la orquesta este año escolar?

Music Mart contará con información y muestras de instrumentos para alquilar durante la jornada de puertas abiertas (11 de agosto). **Estarán ubicados en el laboratorio de ciencias Turtle Creek de 3:00 p. m. a 6:00 p. m.**

También pueden visitar su sitio web en: www.themusicmart.biz

IJ Holton dispone además de una cantidad limitada de instrumentos escolares para uso de los alumnos. Por favor, pasen por las aulas de música durante la jornada de puertas abiertas; nuestros profesores de música estarán encantados de atenderles.

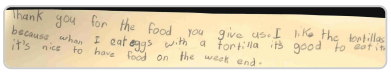
School Bond Referendum November 3

The school board took action Monday, July 23rd 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.



If you are in need of extra food, we can help!





Backpack Program

Enrollment for the Backpack Program during the 2026-27 is now open, please click the button above to register for the program.

uwmower.org

DO

Pay Fees

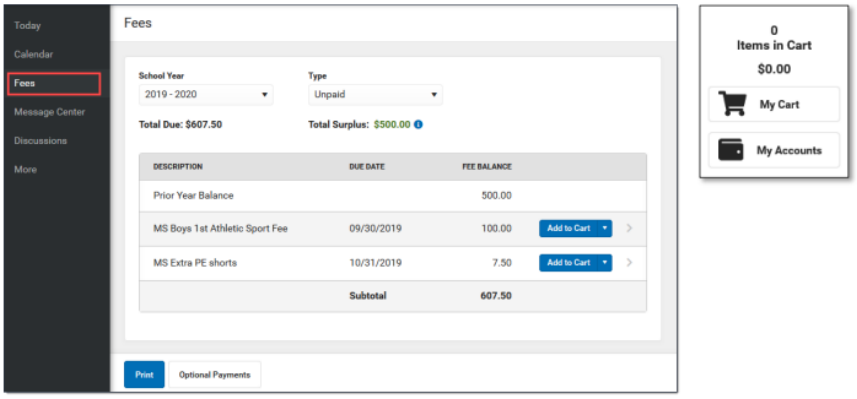
Please see below if you want to pay your fees online. You may always pay at the school with check/cash/or credit card also.

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.

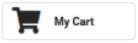
Where do I go to view and pay fees?

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

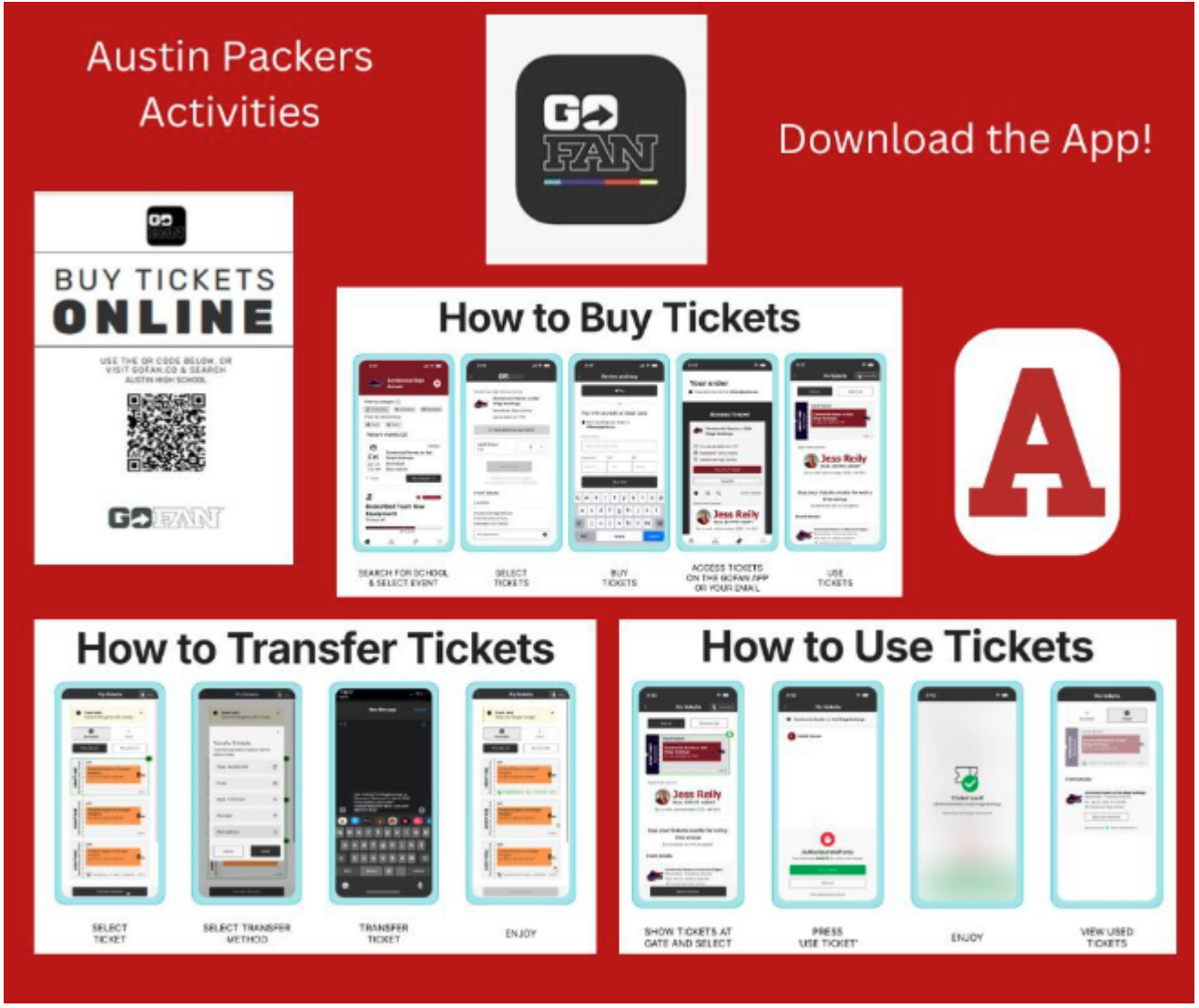


How do I Pay a Fee?

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**.



IJ Holton Intermediate School

https://holton.austin.k12.mn.us

Principal: Dewey Schara
Assistant Principal: Kane Malo
Dean of Students - Dave Brown
Principal's Administrative Assistant: Karla Dooley

1800 4th Ave SE
Austin, MN 55912
507-460-1525

School Hours:
7:45 AM - 4:00 PM (Mon-Thursday)
7:45 AM-3:00 PM (Fri)