

September 2026

Principal's Corner - Mr. Schara



Dear Holton Families,

Community Before-School Program

“We want to make families/caregivers aware of a few before- and after-school opportunities available to IJ Holton and Ellis students in our community.”
Youth for Christ (YFC), an independent community organization, operates a before-school program at Bethlehem Church near Ellis Middle School. The program operates from 6:55 to 7:45 a.m. Students who participate walk from Bethlehem Church to Ellis Middle School or I.J. Holton Intermediate School before the school day begins. Youth for Christ operates this program independently and is not sponsored, supervised, or endorsed by Austin Public Schools. Families/caregivers interested in information about the program should contact Youth for Christ directly.

Safety Reminder
Students participating in the program may walk from Bethlehem Church to school. We ask families/caregivers to drive carefully and watch for students near the school parking lot entrance during morning drop-off.

YMCA Teen Center and After-School Transportation
We are also excited to continue to bus our students to the YMCA so they can access the Teen Center, which provides students with a free, supervised environment after school. The Teen Center

offers homework help, games, activities, snacks, special events, and opportunities for students to connect with friends in a safe and positive setting.
To make accessing the Teen Center even easier, the YMCA provides free after-school transportation from IJ Holton/Ellis Middle School.
Important transportation information:

- The YMCA bus picks up students in Lane 1 in front of Ellis.
- The bus can transport up to 18 students at a time and will make additional trips if needed.
- A school staff member will supervise students during transportation.
- During unsafe weather or other conditions that make waiting outside unsuitable, students will be brought indoors and supervised near Door 26 until transportation arrives.

To ensure a safe and positive experience for all students, riders are expected to follow school and bus expectations and cooperate with staff directions. Students who are unable to meet these expectations may lose transportation privileges.

We would like to thank these community organizations for providing additional opportunities for students and families/caregivers.

Best Regards,
Mr. Schara

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

Mr. Malo's Shout Out

Mr. Malo's Shout Out



Dear Families,
We are so glad to have your child with us; welcome to the new school year! I hope you and your family are settling into routines and enjoying the fresh start. We are grateful for your partnership as we work together to create a safe, supportive, and joyful learning environment.
Important Announcements

- STAR Reading: Sept. 2 and 3
- No School: Sept. 7 — school is closed for the holiday. Enjoy the long weekend!
- STAR Math: Sept. 9 and 10
- CAPTI Screening: Week of Sept. 14
- 5th Grade Nature Center Trip: Sept. 22–24

This Week's Celebrations

- Great start to the school year! Students are learning and practicing our expectations and routines.

- Teachers are already seeing students showing kindness, curiosity, and responsibility in classrooms and hallways.
- We are grateful for families who have helped children prepare; your support is making a real difference.

Arrival & Dismissal Reminders (Safety First)

- Please pull up to the curb for quick drop-off and pick-up; do not stop in the driving lane.
- If you are parked across the street, please walk across to escort your child — do not have them cross alone.
- Your careful attention during arrival and dismissal helps prevent accidents and keeps everyone safe. Thank you for helping with this.

Thank you for your ongoing support in helping our students learn and grow. We appreciate your trust and partnership. Together we will make this a wonderful year. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact the school office or your child's teacher.
We look forward to working with you and celebrating many more successes this year.

Kane Malo

Mr. Brown's Corner



Hello, Holton Families-

What a weird feeling. Here we are writing our second newsletter of the year and having it only be the beginning of September. I guess a new calendar brings us new experiences. Speaking of new experiences, I hope your child or children have come home excited about the things happening at Holton this year. If your child is a 5th grader, everything is new to them. If your child is a returning 6th grader, their schedule and teachers are new. New brings on excitement, but it also brings on worry and stress. If your child has beginning of the year anxiety, it is perfectly normal. Sometimes adapting takes a little longer for some than others. Trust us when we tell you that your child WILL learn how to open his or her locker. They WILL figure out their schedule and where that classroom is.

Having been in education for way more years than I care to admit, I have learned a few things. Some of those things may help your child adjust to some of the nervousness or anxiousness they may be feeling, especially if your child is entering 5th grade. In my opinion, the biggest obstacle many fifth graders experience is going from the safety and comfort of their elementary where they have the same group of friends from year to year, to the big school where you have students from all four elementary schools. It is completely normal for your child to feel confused and sad when the friends they have had for years suddenly find new friends that have come from the other schools and your child is left out. Encourage and support your child. Let them know that this kind of change is normal, sometimes painful, but frequently very exciting if they are willing expand their horizons. Great rewards are to be found in the unknown!

Who doesn't love rewards and celebrations? The PBIS Program (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support) at Holton continues to be a highlight of our school. Perhaps your child has mentioned the frequent teaching of expectations while in certain areas of the school. Maybe they have mentioned the four rules of Holton: *Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe, and Do Your Best.* Recently, your child may have found out how we say thank you to the students of Holton for meeting or exceeding our expectations. Our Friday drawings began on August 28thth. This is a chance for your child to win incredibly cool prizes: water bottles, books, posters, and packs of sports cards, just to name a few. (Special thank you to Mike Cunningham at Rail Yard Sports Cards in Austin, for hooking us up with endless amounts of football, baseball, soccer, basketball, hockey, UFC and Marvel Comic cards.) Our first school wide celebration will take place in October. More details to come!

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. Enjoy the beautiful weather!

David Brown
IJ Holton Dean of Students

Message from the office

Dear Parents and Guardians,

As we continue adjusting to the 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. Students will not be able to call during the school day to go home with friends.

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.

To help ensure your child's safety, please take a moment to review and update your emergency contact information. We have already come across some issues not being able to contact family members because the contact information is wrong. 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

Counselor's Corner

Welcome to a new school year! The IJ Holton counseling department is excited to welcome our students and families back and looks forward to supporting everyone throughout the year. Our goal is to help students feel connected, supported, and prepared to succeed both in and out of the classroom.
Whether students need academic guidance, help navigating challenges, support with future planning, or simply someone to talk to, we are here for them. We encourage students to reach out whenever they need assistance, we are always happy to help.

Please see the attached link to the Mower County Resource Guide, a helpful and concise way to find anything in the community that might be helpful for your current needs.
2026 Mower County Resource Guide

We're looking forward to a wonderful year together. Welcome back, and let's make it a great one!

Zack Langreck
5th grade counselor
507 460 1513

Kayla Dickman
6th grade counselor
507 460 1533

November 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.

REFERENDUM INFORMATION CLICK HERE.

Strategic Priorities

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

- We have scripted "first 20 days" for every core teacher to implement building wide
- We are implementing the use of "Talking Points" to assist with parent communication.
- We are also meeting consistently and using our Crisis Response Team for any major issues or to review drills etc.

Priority Two: Packer Profile for all learners:

- Emily Hoveland will introduce Packer Profile to teachers.
- We are working on portfolio options
- Our new class "Magic of Electrons" will be implemented

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

- Monthly Attendance Team Meetings
- Monthly Family and Caregiver Communication
- Monthly Data Reviews in PLC's

Priority Four: Excellence in resource management:

- We have a few small building projects we are working on
- We have refined our student supply lists and delivered those to teachers
- We are using Strengths as guidance for team building

Monthly BARR Update

BARR

IJ Holton Families,

I am excited to continue as the BARR Coordinator at both IJ Holton & Ellis as IJ Holton enters Year 2! The staff completed a full day training from the BARR Center on August 17, 2026. This interactive training experience was titled "Effective Team Meetings in BARR."

The focus was on identifying the elements of an effective team, demonstrating an understanding of the role of Community Connect & Block meetings as a solution-focused process, effectively using collaborative problem-solving within the team structure, and integrating other skills & knowledge of nonacademic obstacles to enhance school effectiveness in promoting success for every student. The BARR strategies are listed below as well as a little information about our I-Time sessions coming up in September. Please always feel free to reach out to me with any questions you have.

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 **U-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**.

U-Time Sessions
9/3/26
Grade 5 & 6 House Rules
All students will learn about BARR and I-Time lessons during Connect time. Then, they will come up with House Rules that will be used for every I-Time lesson.

9/10/26
Grade 5 & 6 Student Questionnaire
Students will complete a student questionnaire. This will allow staff to learn more about their hobbies, interests, favorite school subjects, and dreams for the future.

9/17/26
Grade 5 My Name in Lights
Students explored their hopes and dreams for the future and demonstrated the importance of having a growth mindset. They used color, drawing, and writing to illustrate this concept.
Grade 6 Do You Know Your Neighbor?
This activity helped classes build a community in the classroom by learning their classmates' names and similar information about each other. There was movement involved with a rotation of leaders.

9/24/26
Grade 5 I Am
Students identified positive relationships, self-worth, and self-acceptance. The book, *I Am Enough* by Grace Byers, was read. Students also drew a picture illustrating the quality of themselves that they wanted to celebrate.

Grade 6 Letter of Understanding

In this lesson, students had the chance to share information with their teacher in the form of a letter. This will help their teacher understand them better. Students were encouraged to share things such as pets, places they had traveled to, activities and hobbies they enjoyed, and hopes they have for the future.

Attendance Works Your Presence 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

Important Dates to Remember

- **9/2-3:** STAR Reading Testing
- **9/7:** No School
- 9/9-10: STAR Math Testing
- 9/14-17: Capti Testing
- 9/18: Homecoming
- 9/23: Picture Retake Day
- 9/28: No School for Students (Staff report to work)
- 9/29-30: Dental Health Services



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

Making Waves, Chasing Goals, Going the Distance - Calling 6th Graders

Fall Sports Registration Information

This year, 6th graders have several opportunities to be part of Ellis Athletics. We are still accepting registrations through September 2nd for 6th graders to join the following fall sports teams:

6th grade Girls Swim and Dive
6th grade Boys soccer
6th grade Girls and Boys Cross Country

If you are interested in any of these opportunities, or will be interested in future opportunities, please have your child get a sports physical. Physicals can be dropped off at the Ellis Office or emailed to me.

Once the physical is entered, you will be able to see registration options in the IJ School Store. If you have any questions, please reach out to me.
Email: nichelle.gabrielson@austin.k12.mn.us

Thank you!
Dr. Nichelle Gabrielson
Dean of Students and Ellis Athletic Director
Ellis Middle School
(507)460-1508

🏈 Game on. Who's in?

Austin Public Schools is not sponsoring, endorsing, or recommending the activities announced in this flyer



Register at Austin Park and Rec or Online With QR Code

Tackle Football League Open to all 5th & 6th grade boys.
Cost: Registration fee is $50 per player.
Helmets, game jerseys and padded pants provided.
Parents/Players are responsible for player shoulder pads, cleats and mouthguards.

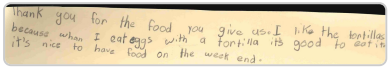
Players will be assigned to one of three Austin teams.
Team practices begin Tuesday, August 18
Practice locations and times TBD by team coaches.
6 game season starting Saturday, September 12 - October 17
Games weekly Saturday mornings at Wescott Sports Complex
September 12 – October 17

Questions: Contact Robert Hartman (715) 409-9474
robertwhartmanii@gmail.com

November Referendum

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

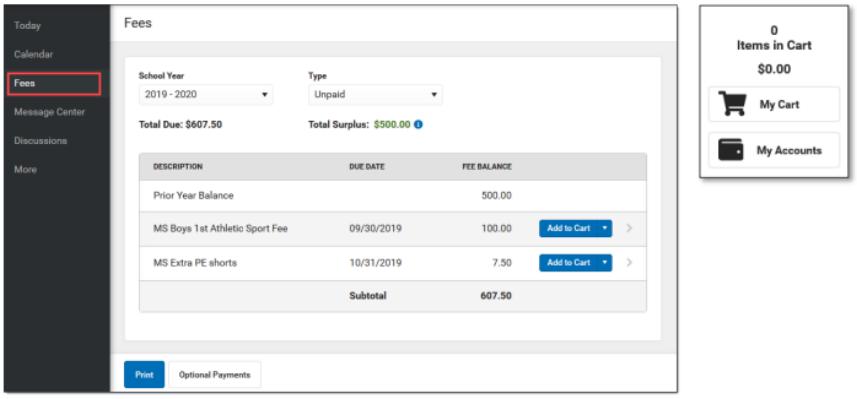
Please see below if you want to pay your fees online. You may always pay at the school with check/cash/or credit card also.

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.

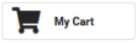
Where do I go to view and pay fees?

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

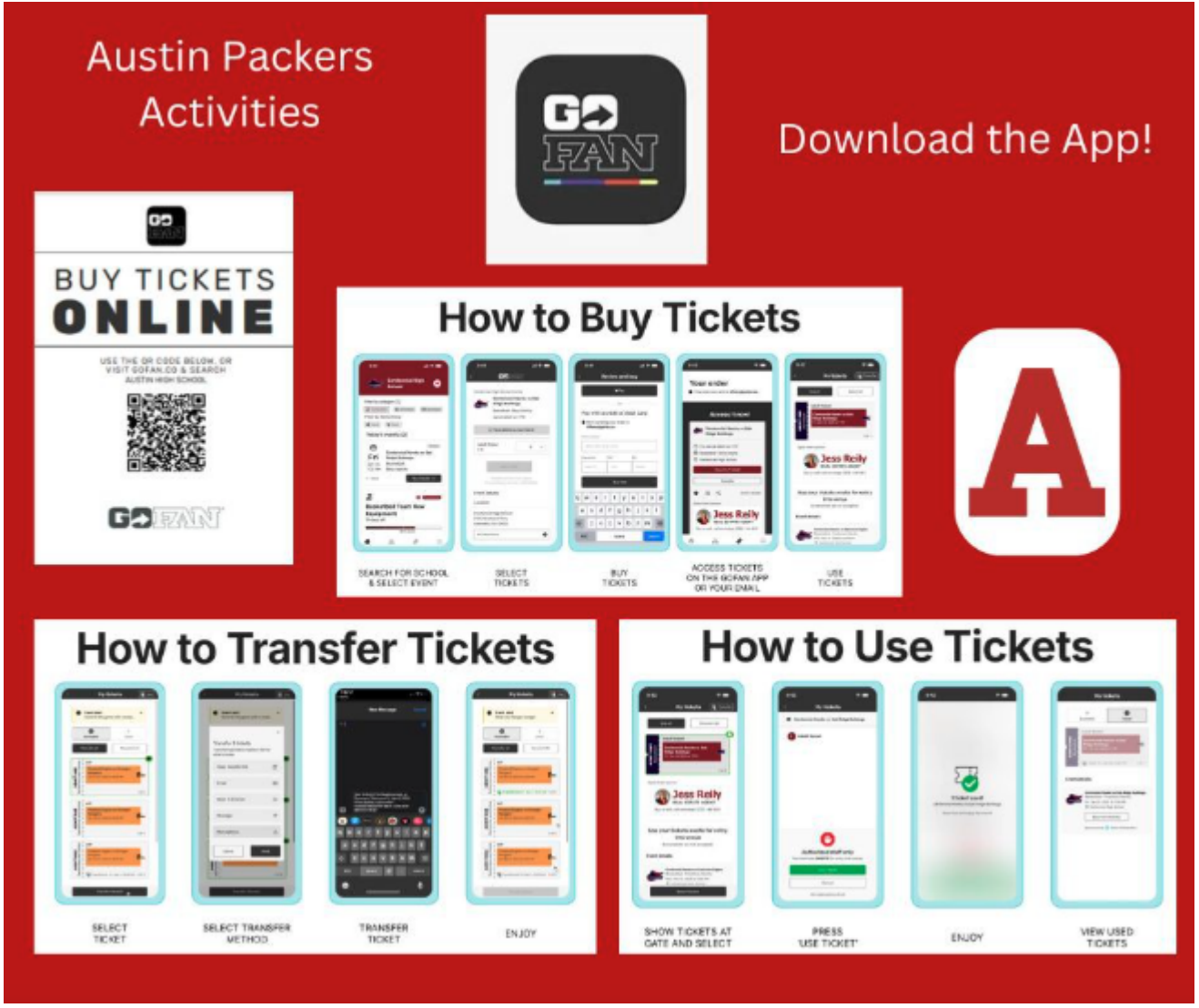


How do I Pay a Fee?

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**.









The start of the new school year is off an running!







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)