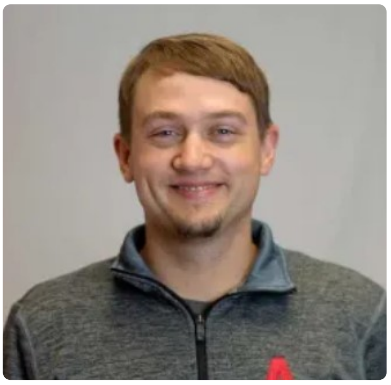


Minnesota School of Excellence

September 2026

Message from Mr. Gus!



We have had an amazing start to the school year at Southgate Elementary. Our halls are back to life with students and we are learning and practicing our important school routines. As a building, we are already getting excited for the fall events such as the Walk-a-Thon and Homecoming. These events build community in our school and serve as a way to celebrate that we are all Austin Packers!

If you ever have any questions or concerns please feel free to call or email me. As a former Southgate parent myself, I am committed to making sure your students feel safe and welcome at our school.

Please feel free to use our anonymous feedback form to leave any comments or to give a teacher a special shout out from Mr. Gus.
Parent Feedback Form - September 2026 – Fill out form

Strategic Priorities Update

1. Support and resources to ensure a safe and welcoming learning environment.

As part of our back to school activities, Southgate Gators are learning and practicing our PBIS mission of providing a safe and welcoming environment for students. Our students have been able to visit all areas of our school and are being taught our expectations for being "Respectful, responsible, Safe and Caring."

Homecoming week is Sept 14th through the 18th. A parade takes place on Friday, September 18th. Southgate Elementary will walk in the annual **Homecoming parade**. If families wish to walk in the parade with their child, they should meet at the our designated area at Austin High School starting 3:45 p.m. so we can gather and enjoy a walk with our Southgate Gator. More details to come!

Our **Walk A Thon** at APS will be held at Southgate on Wednesday, October 7th. All families are welcome to come and walk for our Family Walk at 8:15am. All students KG-4th grade will walk with their classroom teachers and our families are invited to join us too!

2. Packer Profile for all learners

The Packer Profile reflects what our students, staff, and families desire each day for our students and supports their preparation to become college, career, and life-ready. Our students, while learning foundations skills will use SeeSaw to start to create an portfolio of students work. Students will also have multiple opportunities for exposure to possible future career and educational choices.

Our Nature Center field trips, Day at the Farm outing and visit to the Hormel Home will serve as jump off points for students to think about different career paths for themselves. We appreciate these opportunities to explore our community and how we can contribute to it.

3. District-wide multi-tiered systems of support.

Teachers and specialists meet in teams once a week in professional learning communities to plan lessons tailored to the individual needs of all students. Our School Leadership Team met over the summer and is excited to lead staff through exploring best practices for our reading instruction.

We are also beginning to assess students groups to ensure that we can provide instruction that helps our learners grow and accelerate in according with the district's Strategic Plan. These assessments will be conducted throughout September so that we can better gauge our student's learning.

4. Excellence in resource management.

Over the summer and into the start of the school year our building site witnessed some improvements in our walking and playground areas. We saw extensive repairs to our blacktop area and will continue to see work in our bus lanes and parking lots. These improvements will ensure that staff and students remain safe while navigating our site.

Know

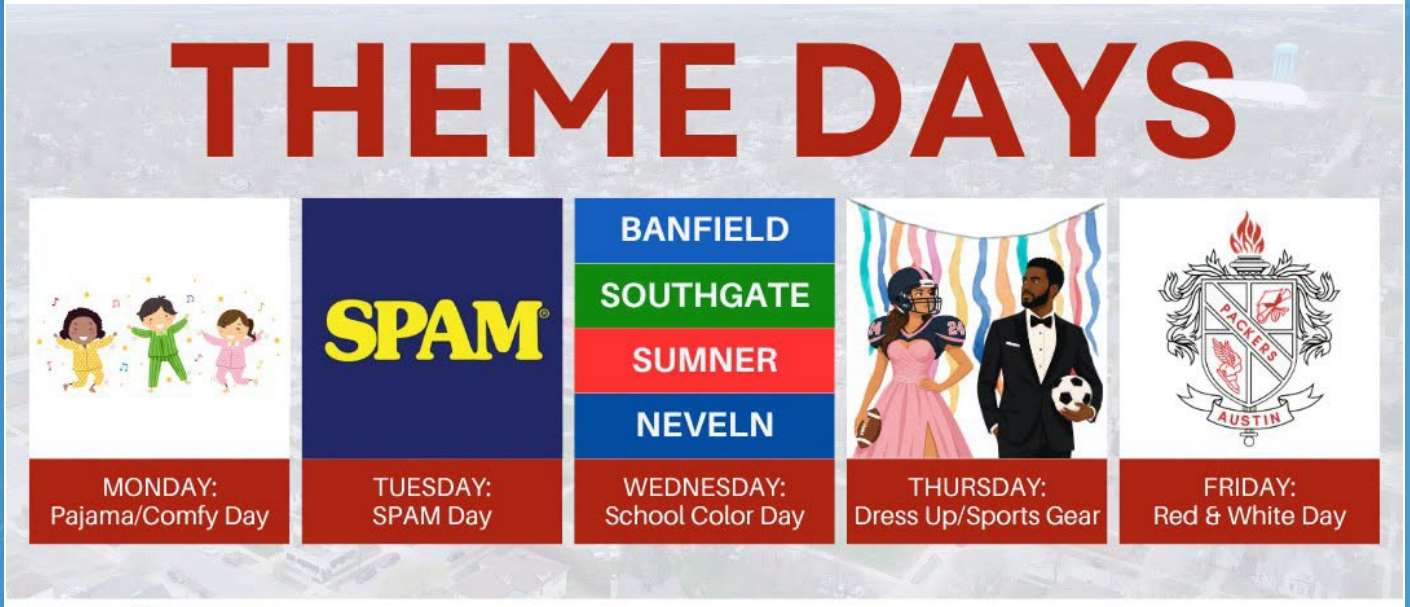
School Picture Day

Picture Day is coming on Tuesday, September 8!

You can place your order on mylifetouch.com using your Picture Day ID: **EVT6J6RS3**. Order before midnight on Picture Day to get FREE shipping!

Homecoming Dress Up Days

As part of our Homecoming Week Festivities, the entire district including Southgate will be participating in spirit themed dress up days. Please see the image below for our dress up days.



Save the Date - Elementary School Walk-a-Thon

Get Ready to WALK, MOVE & MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

We are excited to kick off our **Annual Austin Elementary Schools Walk-A-Thon on Wednesday, October 7!** This fun, school-wide event brings together students and families from **Banfield, Neveln, Southgate, and Sumner Elementary Schools** as we work toward a **district-wide fundraising goal of $40,000!**

The best part? **Every dollar raised goes directly back to our elementary students** and helps provide special extras throughout the school year, including **family engagement events, PBIS supplies and celebrations, outdoor learning opportunities, spirit wear, and more.**

How Can Your Family Help?
Getting involved is easy! We are using **Get Movin' FundHub**, an online, mobile-friendly fundraising platform.
Just follow these three simple steps:

1. **Register or log in** to your parent dashboard and complete your child's student webpage at www.getmovinfundhub.com. Our school identifier is **5d52d23dd9fc5**.
2. **Make an online donation** using the red "Donate" button.
3. **Share your child's page** with friends and family! Consider sending 10–15 emails or text messages and sharing the fundraiser on social media.

Be sure to check the FundHub website for information about **prizes and incentives**!

Walk-A-Thon Day — Wednesday, October 7
Each elementary school will have an **All-School Walk**, followed by additional walking time with individual classes throughout the school day. Families are welcome and encouraged to join us for the all-school portion of the walk!
All-School Walk Times:

- **Southgate:** 8:15–8:55 a.m.
- **Banfield:** 9:10–9:50 a.m.

- **Sumner:** 10:00–10:30 a.m.
- **Neveln:** 1:40–2:10 p.m.
-

A Few Important Reminders

- **Online donations are preferred** and can be made through your child's fundraising webpage.
- Cash and check donations should be placed in an envelope and turned in to your child's teacher by **Tuesday, October 6**. Please make checks payable to **Austin Public Schools PTC** and include your child's name and teacher on the envelope.
- Check with your employer to see whether they offer a **matching gift program**!
- Interested in volunteering on Walk-A-Thon day? Volunteer sign-up information will be available under the **"Event Updates"** section of your school's fundraising website.

We can't wait to see our students **walking, moving, and working together** to make a difference across Austin Public Schools! Thank you for helping us make this year's Walk-A-Thon a fun and successful event for all of our elementary students.

Questions? Please contact your school principal or Noelle Day at **nrday11@gmail.com**.

PBIS Update - Respectful, Responsible, Safe and Caring

Our students are doing a great job learning and practicing our gator expectations. The students are demonstrating being Respectful, responsible, safe, and caring throughout the school. Your child might come home and talk about getting a gator ticket. This is a way staff can recognize students for demonstrating our core values. They might earn a card for working through a difficult problem, being a caring friend, showing responsibility in the lunchroom or being respectful in the hallway. When students earn a gator ticket, they have will have a chance to be drawn each month to win a prize. They are also helping their classroom and school reach their goals. The more gator tickets a class earns the more gators they will put in their class swamp. Once a class has ten gators, they earn a golden gator for the school! Once the school reaches 50 Golden gators, we will earn a whole school reward! I encourage you to ask your student about gator tickets, classroom swamps and Golden Gators!

Home Conversations

Transitioning from summer to school can be difficult for students. Any conversation at home you can have with students about personal boundaries, kind words and having safe hands in school and on the playground helps reinforce our messaging to students. We want each and everyday to be safe and positive!

AUSTIN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Walkathon

BANFIELD | NEVELN | SUMNER | SOUTHGATE

Referendum November 3

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. **#AustinPackers**

Learn more or submit a question:

https://www.austin.k12.mn.us/district-resources/referendum-2026

Dress Code - Hats and Hoods

Hats and hoods are allowed during the school day but must follow School Board Policy 504:

- Hats and other headwear, except as a religious observance, must allow the face to be visible and must not interfere with the line of sight of any student or staff, including while the student wearing the hat is seated.

Food Allergies



Peanuts, peanut products prohibited in classrooms
Creating safe and supportive learning environments is a top priority in Austin Public Schools; foods with peanuts and tree nuts cannot be brought into classrooms. There are many students with life-threatening food allergies, and exposure to a peanut or tree nut product puts many students at risk of anaphylaxis. We need your help to keep everyone safe. Cafeterias have peanut-free tables in every school cafeteria to provide a safe dining experience.

- Do not send snacks that contain peanuts, almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, pistachios, or walnuts.
- Please read labels carefully to make sure that products are peanut- and nut-free. Products with labels that read “May contain traces of peanuts/nuts” or “Manufactured in a plant that processes peanuts/nut products” are not allowed in classrooms.

Foods that cannot be in classrooms

- Peanuts
- Tree nuts: almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, pecans, pistachios, walnuts, etc. For a list visit: Food Allergy Research
- Peanut butter or any nut butters
- Nut milk – almond milk,
- Nutella
- Pesto or nut-based spreads

** SunButter, a product made with sunflower seeds, is a safe substitute for peanut butter!*

Peanut- and tree-nut-free snack & lunch ideas!

- Fruits & vegetables: canned or fresh
- Fresh fruit: apples, bananas, peaches, pears, grapes, etc.
- Chopped fruit: watermelon, cantaloupe, pineapple, etc.
- Fruit cups: applesauce, pears, peaches, oranges, etc.
- Dried fruit: raisins, dried apricots, etc.
- Fresh vegetables: sliced cucumbers, carrots, sugar snap peas, sliced red pepper, grape tomatoes, etc.
- Cheese: string cheese, cheese slices, etc.
- Yogurt cup
- 100% fruit juice boxes

If you have further questions, please contact your school’s health office. You can view the Austin Student Student Wellness Policy 533 here.

Allergies & Medical Conditions

If your student needs special diet accommodations, please contact:

- Tanner Lange, Food & Nutrition Director, at 507-460-1921 or by email or
- Shaylie Meyer, RN/Licensed School Nurse, Supervisor of Health Services, at 507-460-1915 or by email.

More resources:

Special Diet Request Form

Birthday Treats

Birthday Treats

Individual classrooms will observe birthdays with special activities planned by teachers, such as allowing children to wear a "Birthday Hat" or by singing to them. If students choose to share a treat with the class on their birthday, food must be an individually wrapped and purchased treat that, in the interest of instructional time, can quickly be consumed. Examples of such treats are fruit snacks, individual packages of cookies or crackers, etc.… **Parents should contact the teacher to make them aware that they are sending a treat for the class.** Please do not distribute personal party invitations at school.

If you do not want your child to participate in holiday or birthday celebrations for personal or religious reasons your desires will be honored. Please contact the classroom teacher to discuss the activities in which your child should not participate, and to decide what he or she will do during these events.



Example of a Snack that Meets Our Policy

Individually wrapped snacks that do not come from a shared package



Example that Does Not Meet Our Policy

Package of Cupcakes from a Shared Container

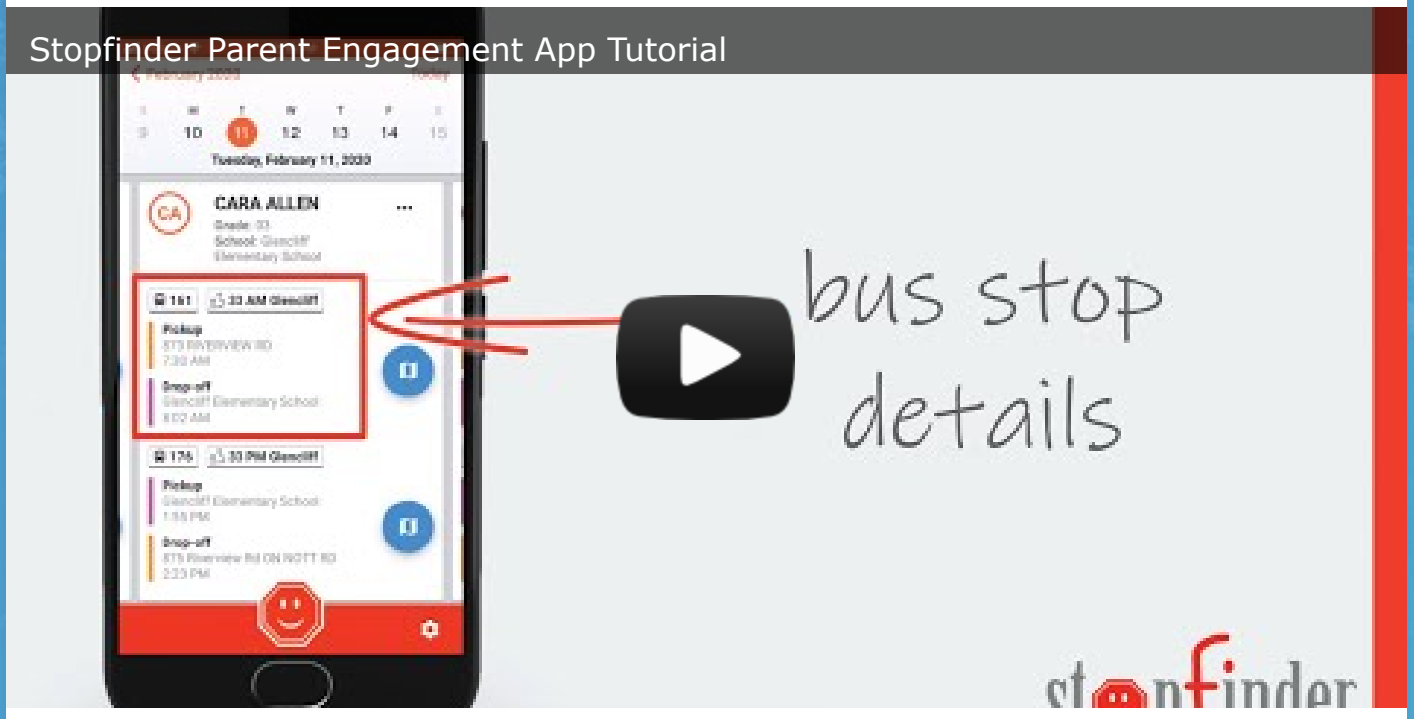
Call us with Questions!

If you aren't sure whether or snack will meet the policy or not, please feel free to call our office at 507-460-1100.

StopFinder

Stopfinder App
Austin Public Schools and Palmer Bus Service have launched a new parent/guardian app called Stopfinder that will allow parents and guardians to track their children's school bus in real-time accurately. The easy-to-use app is secured so only authorized users can access school bus information.

APS Stopfinder Support
507-433-5358
trinar@palmerbusservice.com



Important Dates to Remember

Important Dates to Remember

September 8th - School Pictures
September 18th - 3:45 pm - Homecoming Parade

Families meet at designated area to walk the parade route



Use of Crosswalks

Austin Public School families,
My name is Officer Brian Blake. I am the school resource officer at Ellis Middle School and IJ Holton, Nevlen and Southgate. I have been with the school system going on 8 years.
The first couple of days I've been directing and watching traffic at several schools as parents are dropping off their children and this has been going great. So, thank you!
Please, if you are dropping your children off have your children use the available crosswalks. If you are walking them, please use available crosswalks. Don't cut across the road. This is a safety issue, and I don't want a child to get hurt. So please remind your child before exiting the car to use the crosswalks and look both ways.
Sincerely
Officer Brian Blake
Austin Police Department
School Resource Officer

Do

Attendance

Our school instructional day at Southgate is from 8:00 until 2:30. Our doors open at 7:30 for students. It is so important that students arrive in time to start the instructional day at 8:00 am.

Please take a few minutes to view the video linked below, *Bringing Attendance Home*, a video from Attendance Works.

Bringing Attendance Home

Volunteer Background Check Information

We have been so happy to have more parents and families back in the building for volunteer opportunities. In order for a parent to be a volunteer, they need to have a current background check on file.
If anyone is unsure of whether or not they are current, they can call the office at 507-460-1300.

For people who need to complete a new check, it's done online, very quick and easy from the district website under the "Parents" dropdown menu:

https://www.rhris.com/ApplyNowV3/ApplyNowV3.cfm?SiteID=5039S&PNbr=4&OriginalURL=

Share

Notes from the School Nurse - Vaccinations

Vaccinations strengthen your child's immunity from illnesses such as whooping cough, measles, mumps, and chicken pox. Minnesota law (Statute 121A.15) requires written proof or legal exemption of certain vaccinations for children to remain enrolled in public school. You may access your child's current record on the Infinite Campus Parent Portal or through your healthcare provider. For more information or to obtain an exemption form, contact your school's office. A medical exemption must be signed by a healthcare provider, and a non-medical exemption must be signed by a parent and notarized. If vaccination or exemption information is not up to date, you will be asked to pick your child up and keep them at home until complete.

Please feel free to call and talk to Nurse Jenn with any questions at 507-460-1300.

Facebook Page

Please feel free to follow us on our Facebook Page! We often post daily events, upcoming activities and general information on this page.

https://www.facebook.com/Southgate492

Gator Gym News

Hello Gator Families!
The first two weeks of school has been off to a great start. We're excited to kick off another energetic year of physical education! Here's what you need to know to help your child have a safe and successful experience in physical education:

Physical Education Reminders

- Our classes are filled with fun activities that help students build strength, coordination, and teamwork skills.
- Please encourage your child to participate fully and try their best every day! We offer a wide variety of opportunities for your child to find something they may enjoy doing outside of school.

Gym Shoes Required

- For safety, all students must wear gym shoes (sneakers) during PE class. Crocs, sandals, and boots are not recommended as it poses higher risk of tripping and falling.
- It is recommended that they have a pair in their locker or backpack every day to help ensure wearing a tennis shoe in class.
- If your child does not know how to tie their shoes, please help teach them at home or choose an alternative shoe that does not require tying.

Doctor Notes

- If your child is unable to participate in PE due to illness or injury, please send a doctor's note to the school office or PE teacher. Parent note will work for one day to be medically excused.
- The note should include the reason and the dates your child should be excused.

Parent Emails

- If you have questions or need to communicate about your child's participation, feel free to email your child's physical education teacher.
- For short-term absences due to injury/sickness (1-2 days), a parent email is sufficient. For longer absences, please provide a doctor's note.

MN Mandated Pedestrian and Bike Safety

Last week they also went through a state mandated pedestrian training (K-4) and bike safety training for 4th grade. This is done in an effort to promote safety and reduce pedestrian/bike related accidents. Below are the video links that we had the students watch, discuss, and for K-1 practice crossing a pretend street in the gym. We highly encourage you to revisit these videos and have a conversation of your expectations for your child regarding pedestrian and bike safety. In addition to this, there has been some updated guidelines/laws regarding e-scooters and e-bikes, please see the attached PDF from the Austin Police Department.

K-2 Pedestrian Safety - Pedestrian Safer Journey

3-4 Pedestrian Safety - Pedestrian Safer Journey

4th grade Bike Safety - Bicycle Safer Journey

E-Scooters and E-Bikes Regulations

Thank you for helping us keep Gator Gym a safe and fun place for everyone! If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out.

Let's have a great year in PE!

Mr. Weis - alex.weis@austin.k12.mn.us

Mr. Tharp - brandon.tharp@austin.k12.mn.us