



# Student-Parent Handbook

Fall 2024

Dear Billings students and families,

Welcome to Billings Middle School! We are delighted to have you in the Billings family!

Billings is a dynamic learning community, and as such we rely on partnerships between teachers, parents, students, and administration for a successful school year. Within these pages, you'll find both the Student and Family Codes of Conduct, our disciplinary philosophy, as well as information that helps guide a positive and inclusive school culture.

The Billings Middle School Student-Family Handbook was created as a reference tool, designed to keep parents and students informed about the procedures and policies of our school. It is our expectation that parents and students will review the Handbook together and will ask questions of our faculty and staff when they arise. Advisors will review key pieces of the Handbook with students in the first weeks of school.

Every year the Student-Family Handbook is reviewed and revised to reflect changes. So even if you're a returning Billings student or parent, please read this handbook again. The care that goes into creating and editing the handbook reflects the thoughtfulness and creative thinking that goes into designing the entire Billings program.

Thank you for choosing Billings Middle School. I look forward to a productive and engaging school year!

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Montgomery". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mike Montgomery  
Head of School

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# Introduction

## Our Mission

Billings Middle School is a dynamic academic community intentionally designed to stretch, support and inspire early adolescents through experiential education to foster social, emotional, and academic growth.

## Vision Statement

Billings champions the needs of families seeking a focused, enriching experience for their adolescent children by investing in programs, best practices, and teacher training and facilities for the unique complexities of the middle school years.

Billings is the leader in Expeditionary Education, the touchstone for academics, social-emotional learning, and school culture. Billings blends best practices in **experiential learning**, integrated curriculum, project-based pedagogies, and a responsive advisory program to create a comprehensive child-centered program.

Billings leads through equitable and ethical practices and engages students in self-expression, self-understanding, and critical thinking about the possibilities for our world by focusing on the needs of students, families, and our community through a **Social Justice lens**. *This is where the work to impact systemic, historical inequities can begin.*

Billings develops, strengthens, and retains highly trained **educators** with the right experience, professional development, and passion for teaching and mentoring diverse, early adolescent learners.

## Core Values

The Billings Middle School experience is designed to stretch, support, and inspire adolescent learners, which begins with each child being seen and known. It is shaped and defined by these core values:

Individuality  
Inclusivity  
Exploration  
Intellectual Challenge  
Social Justice  
Integrity  
Creativity  
Collaboration  
Fun!

## Diversity and Equity Statement

### Global Sustainability and Social Justice

Billings has a unique opportunity to model a lifelong commitment to promoting global sustainability because our students are beginning to consciously reconcile their emerging self-image with a broader sense of the world and their purpose within it.

- We see that the foundations for this work are built from within ourselves and recognize that we live and operate in a society created and characterized by historical inequities of power.
- We believe that the work of seeing, engaging, and disentangling institutionalized privilege is an act of social justice, a critical human endeavor, and a society-building skill necessary to thrive in the 21st century.
- We, therefore, strive at Billings to be an educational community characterized by its emphasis on fostering self-understanding, critical thinking, and global awareness so as to promote equitable and ethical habits of living in the world.
- We commit ourselves to the pursuit of social justice in the establishment and evaluation of school governance, curriculum, disciplinary practices, educational programs, admissions, faculty performance, and hiring.

### Student Code of Conduct

Every community you join exists with different goals and expectations. In order to achieve its goals, members of the Billings community make a mutual agreement about behaviors.

The Billings school culture will foster the core values of: Individuality, Inclusivity, Exploration, Intellectual Challenge, Social Justice, Integrity, Creativity, Collaboration, and Fun!

*As a member of the community, you have the right:*

- to feel safe
- to an environment that is conducive to learning
- to explore your own interests with responsibility

*As a member of the community, a Billings student will:*

- Act with integrity in all situations.
- Use kind and respectful language and conduct in any group situation.
- Follow safety standards put in place by the school in the classroom, and off campus.
- Care properly for property of the school and others; abide by "Leave No Trace".
- Approach challenges and discomfort with a growth mindset.
- Advocate for yourself and others, not just in individual learning but in community growth.
- Take responsibility if you cause harm, even when it was not your intent.
- Use technology appropriately as tools to serve the academic objectives of the school.
- Be responsive to feedback from adults and peers, and positively engage in group efforts.
- Respect all school rules as outlined in the Billings Handbook.

# *School Day*

## **Drop off and Pick Up**

**Drop off:** School starts at 8:30 am, and an administrator or staff member will be present to welcome students each day. Please drop students off at the loading zone between the entrance on 8th Avenue and the exit to 125th St. The courtyard will be open at 8:00 am for early drop off; there is no supervision prior to 8:00 am. Students are allowed to enter the building at 8:20am.

**Pick up:** School ends at 3:30 pm. An administrator or staff member will be present to supervise dismissals each day. Please pick students up at the loading zone between the entrance on 8th Avenue and the exit to 125th St. Within 15 minutes of the school day ending students must either sign into an after-school activity or leave campus. All after school activities, including athletics, clubs, and academic clinics start 15 minutes after the school day ends. Students not attending an after-school activity must be picked up, on the way home, or at a safe meeting spot designated by the parents by 3:45pm.

## **Attendance**

Consistent, daily attendance is a priority expectation for students at Billings. There is a significant impact on learning and engagement with frequent absences from scheduled classes, field trips, outdoor trips, and other required activities. We expect, however, that illness and other circumstances beyond the students' control that necessitate occasional absences throughout the year. If these circumstances arise, please make every effort to inform the school as soon as possible.

**Illness:** If a student is ill and unable to attend school, please phone the Front Desk manager at (206-547-4614) or send an email to [frontdesk@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:frontdesk@billingsmiddleschool.org) and include your student's advisor by 8:15 AM. Students may not make this phone call or send this email.

**Planned Absences:** If the student needs to attend medical or dental appointments or miss school for other reasons, please notify the school in person, by phone, or in email about any such appointment at least 48 hours prior to the event. Students are expected to follow up with each of their teachers in person or with an email regarding missed class and homework.

Students who have been absent from school five or more days without prior notice in one term will receive an attendance notice. After the sixth absence, the Dean of Faculty will request a meeting with the student and family to discuss the student's attendance status and create a plan to support consistent, daily attendance.

**Loss of Academic Credit:** A student who has been absent from a class ten or more times in one term, regardless of notification status, may receive an incomplete or risk losing credit for the class.

**Morning Attendance:** Teachers take attendance in advisory every morning, record it in ALMA, and send names of missing students to the front desk manager. Students who arrive after the start of class must check in with the front office to sign in and get a late pass to give to their advisor. Parents of students who arrive late to school more than 5 times in a term will be contacted by the Dean of Faculty or Dean of Students to discuss plans for on-time arrival.

**Periods 1-6:** Students are expected to arrive at each class on time. If a student is going to be more than 1 minute late for class, they must stop by the front office to sign-in and get a late pass to give to their teacher. After 3 late passes, parents will be notified, and the student will serve a 15-minute break

or lunch session with a teacher or administrator to make up for lost class time and to plan for on-time arrival. Students who are consistently late for class will be referred to the Dean of Students.

**Illness During the Day:** If a student becomes ill during the school day and is unable to participate in classes, a faculty member or the front office staff will call the family to make arrangements for the student to be picked up. If a student misses a significant amount of class-time due to illness during the school day, they are expected to make up any work missed. Time spent in the front office is generally limited to 15 minutes.

**Leaving the Building:** Billings operates as a “closed campus”. Once students are signed in for the day, they are not allowed to leave the Billings campus without written permission by a parent/guardian or accompaniment by a teacher. Students who leave early need to be signed out by a designated adult.

## **School Closures**

In the case of inclement weather, emergency messages will be emailed and/or texted to all families by 7:00 am. We will also put the closure message on the main phone line of the school. Our emergency notification system sends an email, calls family contact phone numbers, and if your phone accepts text messages, sends a text message.

# ***Disciplinary Philosophy and Procedures***

Billings’ approach to discipline is responsive to individual student needs and challenges. Billings’ disciplinary goals are: 1) to ensure the safety of the school community; 2) to nurture an inclusive and caring community; and 3) to create opportunities for social, emotional, and academic growth.

This approach is the foundation for the Billings behavior plan and will be implemented by all faculty and staff. These steps are situation dependent and may not necessarily occur in the order below.

## **Step 1: Creating, Modeling, and Practicing the Rules**

Billings staff and students collaborate to develop our classroom and school rules based upon our school’s core values. The rules help us to take care of ourselves, each other, and the school environment. Throughout the day, we model, practice and reinforce our rules.

## **Step 2: Reminding and Redirecting**

Reminders and verbal redirections are the primary means of guiding students at Billings. We recognize that sometimes children forget or will not follow the rules. When a rule is forgotten or broken, staff will speak directly and respectfully to the student about the behavior. Some students may need more than one reminder, but it is generally more effective to limit the number of reminders.

## **Step 3: Logical Consequences**

Logical consequences are ways to help fix problems that result from children’s words and actions when they break or forget rules. They are used when it takes more than a simple cue to stop a behavior or fix a problem. Logical consequences help children regain self-control, reflect on their mistakes, and make amends for them. Logical consequences should be respectful of the child, relevant to the situation and reasonable. Logical consequences may include:

- **“You break it, you fix it”.** Children are expected to fix it when they break something or make a mess, whether intentionally or not.
- **“Take a Break”** in the classroom is a brief time away from the class activity to allow a student to gain self-control.
- **“Apology of Action”** is used to solve problems between students when a child hurts another

through words or actions.

- **"Loss of Privilege"** is the temporary removal of a privilege to help a child understand the connection between privileges and responsibilities. This may include loss of time at lunch or participating in a trip or experience.

#### **Step 4: Further Intervention**

If student behavior warrants it, the Dean of Students or another administrator will be involved. An adult will come to the classroom for assistance, with the goal of getting the student back on track in the classroom as soon as possible or removing the student from class. The purpose of the removal is to help the student regain self-control, problem solving, and plan how to deal with similar situations in the future.

#### **Step 5: Behavior Contract**

These pathways to self-control may not be enough for some children to be successful. In such cases, a behavior contract will be implemented. The behavior contract will identify specific strategies and interventions to help the child develop self-control. These plans will be reviewed on an individual basis. This contract will be in place for a finite period, as determined by the Dean of Students. The purpose of this contract is to increase fundamental positive behaviors and ensure that harmful actions do not occur in our community. This contract will contain clear and positive actions that students need to take, and it will outline behaviors that are unacceptable in our community. If a student receives a formal behavioral contract, an in-person meeting with the student, parent(s), and Dean of Students is required.

If a student fails to uphold their behavior contract or behaves in such a way that egregiously violates our student code of conduct and a behavioral contract would be insufficient, they will be placed on **Behavioral Probation**. The duration of the probationary period is at the discretion of the Head of School. If any action follows that resembles the previous incident(s), then the student's enrollment could be called into question. If the probational stage is reached, parents, the Dean of Students, and the Head of School will have a meeting followed by a subsequent meeting with the student.

The school has sole responsibility for deciding consequences and reserves the right to assign consequences. It is not appropriate for any family to insist upon particular consequences or to demand actions from another family or student. The school also has the right to require professional assessment, counseling, or a probationary contract for a student to continue in the school. Acceptable behavior must be noted for continuation. In some cases, it may be determined that Billings is not the right setting for a particular child. This decision will be made by careful consideration among all the adults responsible for the care and education of this child, with the final decision made by the Head of School.

Parents and students should be aware that some actions may be violations of the law and could be subject to legal actions by city authorities and/or parents of students affected by those actions. Billings Middle School will keep records of all formal actions taken with students and will notify the parents of actions taken when necessary.

## ***Anti-Harassment***

The community at Billings relies on the active and positive participation of all its members. We expect that people will use language and act in ways which promote an environment characterized by respect, care, and empathy.

It is our goal to foster an environment of respect and support for all members of our school community. Physical safety and emotional security are high priorities. We expect that every member of the community will display appropriate and respectful behavior towards children and adults. Inappropriate behavior includes threatening actions or language, sexually explicit materials or behavior, or any derogatory comment relating to race, color, age, appearance, gender, sexual orientation, culture, or socioeconomic status. Billings has no tolerance for such behavior among any members of its community.

### **Peer Conflict and Bullying**

Peer conflicts are a normal part of human development and interaction. They are characterized as disagreements that can be negotiated and resolved. Peer conflicts may extend over time when/if student personalities clash.

Students involved in peer conflicts:

- Do not insist on getting their own way or controlling another person
- Can give reasons why they disagree
- Can apologize or offer win-win suggestions
- Can change the topic or walk away if they choose

**Bullying is repeated harassment over a period of time** according to the following characteristics:

- Motivation is a desire to hurt or harm. It is intentional and usually premeditated.
- A power imbalance may exist between the perpetrator and the victim; the action(s) reflect unjust use of power.
- The victim has little to no recourse to stop the harassment and requires adult intervention.

Bullying can present itself in various forms: physical, verbal and non-verbal. Bullying can also result from indirect actions wherein the bully solicits support from others to do harm or intentionally excludes a person from a group or activity.

Cyberbullying is the use of digital-communication tools (such as the Internet and cell phones) to hurt another **intentionally and repeatedly**. Examples of cyberbullying include sending hurtful texts or instant messages, posting embarrassing photos or videos on social media, and spreading mean rumors online or with cell phones repeatedly over time.

Teachers will investigate incidents believed to constitute bullying and report such incidents to the administration. Faculty members make every effort to differentiate between peer conflict and bullying and to respond appropriately. If parents have a concern about their child's social relationships, we ask that they bring the matter to the attention of the teacher or the Dean of Students.

### **Hate Language, Symbols, and Incidents of Bias**

Billings Middle School does not tolerate the use of disrespectful language of all types, including racial epithets, ethnic slurs, and pejorative terms relating to religion, sexual orientation, social class, ability, or appearance. The school will respond immediately to any incidents of hate or biased speech, regardless of intent. We will educate students about the meaning of the words or symbols they have used and the reasons those words and symbols hurt a group of people. The continued use of hate speech or hate symbols will not be tolerated at Billings and may result in suspension or expulsion.

Signs, posters, and clothing cannot include items that are vulgar, obscene, libelous, or denigrate



others because of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or disability (i.e. confederate flag, swastika, etc.).

## Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation

Billings Middle School is an active supporter of the LGBTQIA+ community. We support students as they explore their gender identity and sexual orientation. Middle school is a time of self-discovery, and it is common for students to begin to explore these vital pieces of their core identities. To this end, students are encouraged to use the bathroom in which they feel most comfortable. Billings has 3 gender neutral bathrooms located in the main office, Frida, and a multi-stalled bathroom on the 3rd floor. On our expeditions, students and families are given the option to select a gender nonbinary tenting arrangement with other nonbinary students or students that identify as allies. Families are contacted if their student is requesting this option or is identified as an ally.

# *Sexual Harassment Policy*

## Introduction

Billings is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. Sexual misconduct, harassment, and digital harassment are serious violations of our community standards. This policy is designed to define and address these behaviors, outline the reporting and investigation process, and provide a framework for resolution and repair.

## Definitions

**Sexual Consent:** An informed, voluntary, and mutual agreement to engage in specific sexual activity. Consent cannot be obtained through coercion, force, intimidation, or incapacitation.

**Sexual Harassment:** Unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, including but not limited to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's education.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for educational decisions affecting the individual.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's educational performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment.

**Digital Sexual Harassment or Sexting:** The sending, receiving, or forwarding of sexually explicit messages, images, or videos via electronic devices, including but not limited to text messages, emails, and social media platforms. Digital sexual harassment is prohibited at Billings, and sending, possessing, or exchanging sexually explicit images of Billings students or other minors is illegal in the state of Washington. If an adult at Billings discovers that a student has been engaging in this behavior, it may lead to a report with Child Protective Services, the police, or parents.

## **Reporting**

Any student who believes they have been a victim of sexual misconduct or harassment should report the incident to the Dean of Students or the Head of School. If the student is not comfortable reporting the incident to either of these individuals, they should report the incident to a trusted administrator. If a teacher receives a report, they will notify the Dean of Students and/or Head of School. Reports can be made anonymously, but providing identifying information may aid in the investigation process.

## **Investigation**

Upon receiving a report, the Dean of Students and/or the Head of School and/or another individual will initiate a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation. At minimum, all parties involved, including witnesses, will be interviewed, and relevant evidence will be collected. The investigation will be conducted with the utmost confidentiality to the extent possible. During the investigation, there may be instances in which a temporary leave from school is necessary for the accused individual, in order to ensure that there is no risk of further action. If the investigation finds a violation of the policy, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken, ranging from counseling and education to suspension or expulsion, depending on the severity of the misconduct.

The school strictly prohibits any form of retaliation against individuals who, in good faith, report incidents of sexual misconduct or harassment. Any act of retaliation will be treated as a separate violation and subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

## **Supportive Measures**

The school will provide support to the victim, which may include counseling, academic accommodations, or other measures deemed appropriate.

Billings provides education and resources to promote awareness, prevention, and understanding of sexual misconduct. Billings values a whole-child approach to sexual misconduct education. Billings reviews this curriculum on a yearly basis.

## **Repair and/or Resolution**

If an investigation has determined that a student has violated the above policies, the school will take corrective measures that are commensurate with the nature of the violation. These measures will always include a process of education, and may include disciplinary measures such as a behavior contract, behavior probation, suspension, or termination of the student's contract.

This policy aims to create a school environment where every student feels safe, respected, and able to learn without fear of harassment or misconduct. It is the responsibility of every member of our community to uphold these standards and actively contribute to the well-being of our school.

## **Additional Resources**

[Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline](#)

[The Trevor Project](#)

[RAINN's National Sexual Assault Hotline](#)

# ***Academics***

## **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is a significant part of the foundation upon which a school community is built. Cheating and plagiarism are considered serious offenses. The following examples are considered academically dishonest; however, this is not intended to be a comprehensive or limiting list. Students who have questions about whether actions may be a violation of academic integrity should speak with a teacher or administrator for clarification.

- submitting work as your own that has been done in whole or part by another person (including a parent) or artificial intelligence
- using another person's words, ideas, or organization of thoughts and/or facts in a paper or assignment without giving appropriate attribution
- cutting and pasting information from the internet without citation or passing it off as your own
- using fake citations
- copying homework or allowing others to copy yours
- looking at another student's quiz or test paper while taking a test
- sharing information or communicating with another student during a quiz or test
- accessing notes or information during a test or quiz (paper, written on the body, cell phone, computer or other electronic devices, etc.)
- giving or receiving information about an exam from another student
- removing testing materials or questions from the testing environment
- forging a signature

Consequences for violations of academic integrity may include loss of credit, full disclosure and discussion with the student's parents, and other possible consequences, including suspension for repeated occurrences. As in other academic and behavioral areas, the school will work with students in an age-appropriate manner.

## **Homework**

Homework is given on a regular basis at Billings. The goal of homework is to support work done in class, to provide meaningful skill practice or to introduce ideas or subject matter that will be germane to an upcoming class. Homework is also an important assessment tool for teachers. If a student is struggling to complete an assignment on time or to the quality expected, they should communicate proactively with their teacher.

## **Learning Support**

Greg Smith, our Learning Specialist, supports students, parents, and staff to manage learning challenges as they arise throughout the school year. Parents are encouraged to reach out to Greg to discuss any student learning differences or challenges. Through classroom observation and hands-on in-class support, Greg helps students and teachers develop strategies for ownership of their learning style.

## **Semester Reports**

Families will receive semester reports three times a year at the end of the fall term, winterim, and spring term. Reports are generally available 2 weeks after the last day of the term. Semester reports include an academic performance assessment in narrative form with evidenced based comments addressing student work, academic mindset, growth, and suggestion for improvement.

Students who have not submitted enough work for assessment will receive an "Incomplete" for the course and given a deadline for completion of unfinished work. Parents can expect to be notified of this arrangement prior to the release of evaluations.

## **Chromebooks and Textbooks**

Chromebooks and texts are provided to students. Texts are loaned to students on a yearly basis and are expected to be returned in good condition at the end of the school year. Families will be charged for any lost or damaged texts.

# ***General Policies***

## **Mobile Device Policy**

Cell phones should be put away (and turned off) in backpacks or lockers from 8:00am until students leave and pass through the school gates at 3:30pm. Chromebooks should be stored in backpacks or cases unless being utilized in class. Additionally, the same protocol should be applied to smartwatches or comparable devices.

If students would like to access their phone or Chromebook as an **“academic tool”** during class, they must ask their teacher. If students would like to utilize their phone as an **“academic tool”** during non-class time, they must get the permission of a school administrator. A student who wants to contact a parent/guardian should come to the Main Office and ask any of the faculty there for permission to do so.

Students who use cell phones without permission during the school day will be given a warning at the first incident. Second incidents will result in confiscation of the device by the Dean of Students who will keep it until the end of the school day. If cell phone confiscation becomes a pattern the Dean of Students will contact parents/guardians to discuss the action steps.

Cell phones may be used in afterschool programs only with permission of the supervising teacher or coach. They are not to be used in the school building or within the gates before school or after dismissal.

The office/student phone at the front desk is available for students who need to contact home during the school day. Students may use the office phone only with permission from the front desk staff or another member of the faculty.

## **Electronics**

The use of personal music, game or video players is not permitted during the school day on the school grounds. Headphones and earbuds are also not permitted to be worn in ears or around the neck outside of the classroom and should only be used when directed by a member of the faculty or staff. If a student is in violation of this policy, the electronic item will be confiscated for the day. If a pattern continues, parents will be notified. Trips are an extension of school, and the same policies apply.

## **Dress**

Students should be dressed appropriately for the activities of the school day, including PE/Get Outside! athletic activity and being outdoors for lunch and for various classes. Additionally, students are expected to dress respectfully by not wearing clothing with writing that promotes illegal practices, violence, advertises alcohol, tobacco or drugs or insults any person, gender, race, religion or culture.

## **Medications**

Under state law, we require a doctor’s note on file for prescription and over the counter drugs that need

to be administered during the school day and/or during after school activities including sports and overnight trips. If students must take any short-term medication (prescription or over the counter) during school hours or on overnight field trips, the school must have the parent or guardian's written permission on file for dispensation.

All medications must be given to the front desk and must be in the original container clearly labeled with the student's name and dosage. Students are not allowed to carry their own medication without special arrangements. In some cases, special arrangements can be made for carrying inhalers, Epi-pens and other medication for chronic conditions. Students may never give any medication to another student.

## **Disabilities – Reasonable Accommodation**

Billings Middle School recognizes that students with physical or mental disabilities may need reasonable accommodations to allow them to fully participate as a student. Any family that believes their student needs reasonable accommodations should notify an administrator. Although the need for accommodations is determined on a case-by-case basis, generally Billings Middle School and the family engage in an interactive process to support reasonable accommodations. Billings may ask for authorization to communicate with the student's healthcare providers concerning the student's condition and reasonable accommodations. For accommodations specific to learning, this process is facilitated by the Learning Support Specialist and an administrator.

## **Environment and Stewardship**

Appreciation and respect for the environment are important pieces of the Billings philosophy. Students demonstrate care for our natural resources through the school's recycling and service programs. This also includes trees, plants, and other wildlife while at lunch or on expeditionary trips. In this regard, it is the expectation that students show respect for all natural wildlife (i.e. - not pulling off leaves, not climbing trees, not chasing ducks). Showing mindfulness in the care of our school buildings reflects positive respect for our North Seattle neighbors. Property damage or graffiti do not. Damaging school property is a big statement to the school and community and will be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

It is essential that students maintain a respectful attitude towards our entire neighborhood including buildings and adjacent streets and sidewalks. Environmental stewardship includes mindfulness about our actions within our school buildings as well as the outer neighborhood.

## **Lockers and Storage of Personal Items**

Each student is assigned a locker for storage of personal items. Use of these is a privilege. Students should keep them in good condition for current and future students. For safety reasons, we ask students not to leave their personal belongings anywhere in common areas other than in their lockers. We encourage students to leave valuables at home. The school is not liable for lost or stolen personal property.

## **Pet/dog policy**

Student pets may not enter the school building or be on school grounds; this includes the blacktop. Under the ADA, a student with a disability who uses a service animal will be allowed to have that animal at school during the school day. Only animals that meet the ADA definition of service animals will be allowed on campus. Please contact the Head of School if you have any questions about service animals. Exceptions can be made in special circumstances.

## **Lunch & Recess**

Lunch and recess is a time to have fun with friends in a safe environment. Recess takes place every day during lunch on our campus. In order to ensure that this community time is safe and enjoyable for everyone, Billings students agree to follow these guidelines:

- Students will eat lunch in the spaces provided
- Students need to bring their own lunch and snacks. Billings does not provide heating or refrigeration for student food.
- Students will treat people, play equipment and school property with care and respect.
- Students will not climb trees or hang from tree branches or other high objects.
- Students will never engage in physically malicious or aggressive acts.

**Food:** Prepared food intended to be shared, such as baked goods, muffins, sandwiches, etc., must be store-bought and delivered in their original sealed container with listed ingredients. Exceptions may be made for certain cultural celebrations but must be approved by the Dean of Students, families notified in advance, and all ingredients clearly listed. Students with food allergies may keep a supply of special foods and/or non-food treats at school and choose from for times that food is provided that he/she cannot eat.

## **Student Sales and Solicitations**

The selling of merchandise, tickets, etc. is prohibited on school grounds and among students unless pre-approved by the Dean of Students. Selling of personal merchandise is always prohibited. Students participating with non-profit organizations may request to sell on campus within a specific time frame. These requests must be made to the Dean of Students.

All announcements, posters, and advertisements of activities in school or out of school must be approved by the Dean of Students. All school fundraising activities in which students participate must be approved in advance by the Dean of Students.

## **Expeditions**

Outdoor and curricular related field trips are a core element of the Billings Program. All school rules apply on off-campus trips. The trip permission form that families sign at the beginning of the year serves as a general permission slip for all of our field trips. On occasion, certain destinations (i.e. rock climbing or white-water rafting) require a specific waiver, which is sent home when appropriate.

Trips at Billings range in scope and distance. In addition to the curricular elements of these trips, we strive to facilitate cooperative learning, individual accountability and an increased sense of confidence and independence in a way that is fun, safe, and memorable. Trip leaders have a continuing presence and emphasize safe travel and are trained in emergency response (CPR, First Aid, Wilderness First Aid).

Very occasionally, we have the opportunity to schedule an educational trip that may require additional fees or costs. We make every effort to provide financial aid and scholarship support to make these trips accessible to all Billings students.

## **Directory Policy**

The contents of the directory are for Billings Middle School use only. Please respect families' privacy. The information contained in the directory may not be used for mass mailings ("spam") or business/political solicitation purposes.

## **Online and Social Media Photo and Video Policy**

No student photos, video images, or full names may be published by students or families without permission on the internet including websites, online video spaces, social media and social networking sites.

Community members need permission from everyone to take each photo before they are posted online.

Students and parents are not allowed to "tag" photos with names, but the people in the photos may opt to "tag" themselves (i.e.: to identify their own image with their own name). Any complaints around social media usage can be filed with the Dean of Students if there is a reasonable assumption that online content has negatively impacted school dynamics. Disciplinary or legal measures may be taken if student or family online action violates our community norms and causes harm to an individual or group in our community.

### **Photos and Student Names Policy**

Billings includes the first name only (or first name and initial of last name when necessary), when referring to a photo of a student in print or online publications. When naming a student in publications without a photo, the first name and, when appropriate, grade level or class year are included.

## ***Emergency Procedures***

### **Lockdowns**

Should some person or event pose an imminent threat to the school, Billings will go into "lockdown." This means that doors will be locked, and no one will be able to leave or enter the school campus until the lockdown is over. Student safety is the focus of the faculty and staff at these times. Billings will make every effort to contact families about the status of the situation and will update its phone message or website regularly. Our emergency notification system sends an email, calls family contact phone numbers, and if your phone accepts text messages, sends a text message.

Entering the neighborhood during a lockdown endangers both you and the school. Therefore, we ask that parents do not come to the school during a lockdown situation, unless specifically instructed to do so by a member of the faculty or staff.

### **Natural Disasters**

Students at Billings Middle School practice fire and earthquake drills. The procedures for response to any sort of attack or bombing are nearly identical to those practiced in preparation for an earthquake. In the event that students need to spend a night or extended time at school, we have disaster preparedness supplies in the Main Building that include food and water for the entire student body. Further, each student should have at school a completed earthquake contact form. In such an event, students will remain at school until a parent/guardian, or a person designated on the release form can arrive. If phone contact with the school is not possible, we will call your designated alternative contact person as soon as possible.

## ***Supporting the School***

### **Philanthropy and Advancement**

Advancement is all about the future -- advancing our school's mission and building sustainable support through marketing communications and fundraising (development) efforts. At Billings, we promote a culture of philanthropy that provides appropriate recognition and stewardship of those who donate financially, as well as volunteers who give their time and energy so generously.

As with most independent schools, Billings cannot function without our annual fundraisers. The funds raised are not extra funds, they are needed so that Billings can continue to grow in order to offer a competitive curriculum, an excellent, dedicated and educated team of teachers, and the programs your students count on.

### **Annual Fund Participation Campaign**

It's our tradition that every family and 100% of our Board of Trustees at Billings make a gift to the

annual fund. Every gift, of any amount, makes a difference for all of our kids by supporting faculty professional development, education program curriculum and materials, and need-based financial aid to provide tuition assistance. Thank you, in advance, for helping us to continue this great tradition of 100% community participation. The fundraiser will launch at the end of September and be done by Thanksgiving. All (or mostly) online via email.

### **Community Celebration and Fundraising Dinner**

The Billings Community Celebration and Fundraising Dinner is a spring tradition enjoyed by parents of students and alumni, friends from the wider community, teachers and administrators. They enjoy a scrumptious buffet, an engaging program, and fabulous auction items. Volunteer opportunities include auction item procurement, sponsorships, community outreach, entertainment, and party planning. Specific donations to Fund-a-dream for Financial Aid are designated to need-based tuition assistance to keep the Billings student body economically diverse. General proceeds provide critical operating funds for the school, supporting all students and teachers with educational program materials, curriculum development and professional development for faculty. This fundraiser takes place in the spring.

## ***Communication with the School***

Even in a school community the size of ours, active communication requires work and patience. Complementing formal evaluations and mid-term reports, the following people are in place, in addition to classroom teachers, as a resource for information about the school and may contact you at various times throughout the school year. For **General Academic Concerns**, please contact your student's teacher directly.

### **Front Office**

Becca DePrisco, Administrative Assistant (she/they)

The front desk is the communication hub for parents, students and faculty regarding absences, late arrivals, or schedule changes. Becca answers the phone and any general questions you might have. The front desk can also direct your specific questions to the most appropriate Billings contact. If a student needs any minor first aid or over-the-counter medication, the front office staff provides assistance. All medications for students should be given to the front office for administration during the school day. Becca is also responsible for student records.

### **Advisors**

An advisor works with a small group of students to foster their citizenship, self-awareness and advocacy as well as academic growth. Each student has an advisor who acts as a steward of his/her/their progress through the year. Advisors communicate with other teachers to keep abreast of academic progress and are often the ones to contact families if academic issues arise that go beyond a single class. In the same vein, **the advisor is the person to contact with general questions or concerns.** Questions particular to a specific class should first be directed to the teacher of that class. Advisors facilitate both October and March student/parent/advisor conferences and are often present at any other significant conference held concerning their advisee at other times in the year.

### **Head of School**

Mike Montgomery

The Head of School is responsible for the overall health and vision of the school community. While you are encouraged to seek out and collaborate with the people in the school who work most closely with your child, the Head of School's door is always open for questions or conversation. Appointments to meet with the Head can be made through Becca DePrisco in the Front Office. The Head of School's office is located in the main office.



## **Dean of Students**

Rob Heavner

The Dean of Students is responsible for fostering an atmosphere conducive to learning and advancing the social and emotional development of each student. Questions about the life of students including discipline, behavior, and restorative practices should be directed to Rob.

## **Dean of Faculty**

April Little

The Dean of Faculty is the primary coordinator for all items related to teaching and instruction. They serve as the leading advocate for excellence, experiential pedagogy, and coherence in the learning experience for all students at Billings. Questions about teaching practices, curriculum, coaching, and academic support for students should be directed to April.

## **Experiential Learning Coordinator**

Melissa Bernstein

The Experiential Learning Coordinator is responsible for the creation and implementation of a cohesive outdoor program that exposes students to the natural world while teaching the practical skills needed to be safe and comfortable in that environment. Melissa also oversees our co-curricular program of athletics and summer program.

## **Business Manager**

Brian Kutzero

The Business Manager provides support to the school with managing the finances and business operations including facilities, front desk, and IT.

## **Community Engagement Manager**

Koby McInnis-Fuller

The Community Engagement Manager partners with the Office of Admissions for recruitment and welcoming of new students and families, organizes and mobilizes family volunteerism and the Parent Guardian Association, and leads our fundraising events for the fall Annual Fund and spring Community Celebration and Fundraising Dinner.

## **Learning Support**

Greg Smith

The school employs a Director of Learning Support who consults with faculty to create the most effective learning strategies for individual students. Academic specialists are available to families for contracted tutoring services after receiving a recommendation from the school.

## **Director of Admissions**

Stephanie Horne-Hagedorn

The Admissions Office operates to ensure that all new and returning families are supported throughout the enrollment, re-enrollment, and withdrawal process. In addition, Stephanie works alongside our Dean of Students to have open communication channels with other Admissions Directors for High School placements. Should your family have questions about applying for siblings to Billings or you would like to be a Billings Admissions Ambassador please reach out to Stephanie.

# ***Faculty and Staff***

All faculty, including teachers and administrative staff, can be reached during school hours at (206) 547-4614. Outside of school hours, the best way to contact faculty or staff is through email. Email addresses are comprised of: [first name] [last initial] @billingsmiddleschool.org

Amy Bowton-Meade

6th-8th Grade Social Studies, 8th Grade Lead Advisor

[amyb@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:amyb@billingsmiddleschool.org)

April Little

Dean of Faculty, 8th Grade English Language Arts

[aprill@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:aprill@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Amira Rahali-Smith

Long Term Substitute 7th Grade Science, 7th Design Lab, 7th Grade Advisor

[amirar@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:amirar@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Becca DePrisco

Administrative Assistant, Registrar

[beccad@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:beccad@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Birch Pereira

6th-8th Instrumental Music

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Brian Kutzera

Business Manager

[briank@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:briank@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Cherrise Smith

Counselor

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Christine Eaton

6th-8th Visual Art, 7th Grade Advisor

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Daniel Shin

IT Support Specialist, Staff Accountant

[daniels@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:daniels@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Emily Mamunes

6th and 8th Science, 6th Design Lab, 8th Grade Advisor

[emilym@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:emilym@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Emma Masterman

6th and 7th English Language Arts, 6th Design Lab, 6th Grade Advisor

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Gillian Jorgensen

6th-8th Drama

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Greg Smith

Learning Center Director

(C) 206-282-4637

[gregs@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:gregs@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Ian McCullough

6th Grade Math, 6th -8th PE/GO, 6th Grade Lead Advisor

[ianm@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:ianm@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Koby McInnis-Fuller

Community Engagement Manager, Billings Family Association & Alumni Outreach

[kobym@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:kobym@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Kruthi Isola

6th-8th Spanish, 6th Grade Advisor

[kruthii@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:kruthii@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Maya Jacobs

7th Grade Science/Health, 7th Design Lab, 7th Grade Lead Advisor, Climbing Wall Manager

[mayaj@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:mayaj@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Mike Montgomery

Head of School, 8th Grade Design Lab

[mikem@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:mikem@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Melissa Bernstein

Experiential Learning Coordinator

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Nathan Hunnicutt

7th-8th Grade Math, 7th Grade Advisor

[nathanh@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:nathanh@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Rob Heavner

Dean of Students, 8th Grade Advisor

[robh@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:robh@billingsmiddleschool.org)

Sabrina Brazier

6th-8th Vocal Music

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Stephanie Horne-Hagedorn

Director of Admissions

[stephanieh@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:stephanieh@billingsmiddleschool.org)

## ***Parent Code of Conduct at Billings Middle School***

We are very fortunate to have a supportive and friendly parent body. Our parents recognize that educating children is a process that involves partnership between parents, teachers and the school community. As a partnership, our parents will understand the importance of a good working relationship. For these reasons, we continue to welcome and encourage parents to participate fully in the life of the school. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines regarding expected conduct so our community can continue to thrive in an atmosphere of mutual understanding. We expect parents to:

- Treat others with dignity and respect.
- Adhere to the school rules, calendar, schedule, and other deadlines to maximize student learning and experience.
- Participate and communicate with Billings staff to support teaching and learning.
- Speak respectfully to teachers, staff and other parents, especially when there is a disagreement.
- Reach out with any questions that may arise in a proactive manner.

Failure to abide by the community code of conduct may jeopardize your child's enrollment.

## ***Billings Family Association (BFA)***

The Billings Family Association (BFA) supports the mission of Billings Middle School by building community among parents/caregivers and by deepening connections between the school and families. A strong family community creates the foundation for a vibrant and healthy school.

The BFA is a group of parent/caregiver volunteers who work together to benefit Billings families and faculty through:

- Community building
- Parenting support
- School volunteering

All Billings families are invited to get involved in the BFA as their interests, skills, and time permit.

### **Community building**

The BFA helps families connect by:

- Welcoming new families
- Arranging Google groups by graduation year

- Hosting all-school events like UW Bowling Night and our One Seattle Day of Service project

### Parenting support

In collaboration with the Dean of Students, the BFA makes available parenting resources like:

- Affinity and support groups for parents and caregivers
- Educational opportunities on parenting adolescents

### School volunteering

The BFA also supports Billings through volunteer work, including:

- Assisting with admissions, development, and school celebrations
- Helping out with the school's sports and outdoor learning programs
- Organizing faculty appreciation events

All parents and caregivers are invited to participate in monthly BFA Meetings, in person or online. These meetings focus on information-sharing about upcoming school and BFA events, as well as planning BFA events. The date/time and agenda for each All Families Meeting are posted in the school's iNews newsletter, as well as the BFA webpage.

BFA leadership includes a parent/caregiver who serves as chair (or co-chairs), a representative from each grade level, and leads for key BFA and school events. Members of Billings Administration serve as faculty liaisons to the BFA.

### **Billings Family Association Faculty Liaison:**

Koby McInnis-Fuller, Community Engagement Manager

Email: [kobym@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:kobym@billingsmiddleschool.org)

### **Billings Family Association Chair, 2024-2025:**

Laurie Alexander, 7th-Grade Parent

Email: [familyassoc@billingsmiddleschool.org](mailto:familyassoc@billingsmiddleschool.org)

## **Family Google Groups**

### **Purpose & Important Disclaimer**

The Billings Family Association (BFA) sets up Google Groups by graduation year so that parents/caregivers have a space to arrange social events, ask for recommendations, and connect with each other during their years at Billings and beyond. The groups function as a message board. The purpose is to build community among families through communication.

Group membership is done via an "opt in" model; all eligible members are added to the groups upon request, and they may easily leave at any time they wish.

*Please Note:* Activities organized through the Google Groups are not sanctioned or approved by Billings, and the school does not moderate and is not responsible for what is posted to the Group. Billings is not liable or otherwise responsible for any events or activities organized or information shared via these Google Groups.

### **Group Guidelines**

Parents and caregivers are welcome to post items such as:

- Inviting families to a social event
- Asking fellow parents/guardians about a parenting issue
- Offering up used athletic gear, extra art supplies, etc.
- Letting families know about an upcoming event of interest like a lecture or a concert

Posts may not include discriminatory language or hate speech; harassment, intimidation, or bullying as prohibited by Billings policy; political solicitations; or personal or business solicitations. If you see a post that you believe violates this rule, please [email the BFA chair](#).

As “owners” of the groups, the BFA Chair and Community Engagement Manager can view messages and make changes to group membership and other settings as needed, but the school does not regularly review content of messages. The groups should not be used to communicate with School administrators or staff. The groups were set up with the BFA Chair and Community Engagement Manager as “owners” to ensure continuity of the groups over time.

### **Group Enrollment Procedures**

All parents/caregivers are invited to join the group or groups that reflect their child(ren)’s graduation year(s). The BFA Chair sends all families instructions for how to opt in, which involves filling out a [short form](#). Every Family Google Group contains easy instructions for leaving the group at any time. All questions about the Family Google Groups may be directed to the [BFA Chair](#).