



August 7, 2026

Greetings, New and Returning Altoona Elementary Families!

It is hard to believe that we are a few short weeks away from the start of the 2026-2027 school year! There is a great deal of excitement at Altoona Elementary as we prepare to welcome our students and families back.

The building is receiving its final touches before our teachers return on August 13. Our custodial team has worked incredibly hard all summer preparing the building; teachers have already begun setting up classrooms and participating in professional learning; our PTA has been busy planning another great year of events. In just a few short weeks, we'll welcome more than 400 PreK-5th grade students back through our doors!

For those who are new to Altoona, welcome! My name is Morgan Miller, and I am proud to serve as the Principal of Altoona Elementary. This is my sixth year at Altoona, eighteenth overall as a principal, and I truly believe we have the best school around. Before becoming a principal, I taught for seven years as a fourth- and fifth-grade teacher.

This year, our theme is **Lead With Purpose. Grow Together**, and we are excited to incorporate it into everything we do. We will continue our Leader in Me journey by setting and celebrating Wildly Important Goals (WIGs), practicing the 7 Habits, providing opportunities for student leadership, strengthening our partnerships with families, and ensuring every student receives high-quality instruction in a safe, supportive, and engaging environment. Together, we will continue building a culture where every student is encouraged to **Learn. Lead. and Live.**

I will be attaching a staff listing at the end of this document, but I wanted to highlight some new faces to our school community.

Thepmala Pearson – EL Teacher

Ryan Veencamp – 3rd Grade Teacher

Ashley Green – Preschool Teacher

Patricia Combs – Administrative Assistant

Below you will find general information regarding back to school:

Teacher Assignments:

- **You will be able to see teacher assignments in Infinite Campus on August 7th after 4:00 pm.** A great deal of consideration goes into creating our class lists. Academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs are all factors in the process, as well as the balance of numbers between sections at each grade level. We continue to receive newly enrolled students each week, so rosters could potentially change through August.

Back-to-School Night: August 20th, 4:00-6:00 pm

- This is a come-and-go event for all PreK-5th grade families.
- Students can see their classroom, bring supplies, and meet their teacher for the 2026-2027 school year.
- There will also be information tables as you enter the building. Please take time to check them out—especially our PTA. We are always looking for more families to join! Stay tuned, as our PTA will have an exciting announcement to share about Back-to-School Night!
- This is also a good time to take pictures in the classroom or with your teachers, as only Kindergarten and new-to-Altoona families can come into the building on the first day of school.

The first day of school for Kindergarten through fifth grade is Monday, August 24th.

- The building will open at 8:25 am for breakfast students only. This will allow additional time for students to eat breakfast before school starts. We will not be allowing students to enter the building at 8:25 if they are not eating breakfast. We ask that if you plan to have your child(ren) eat breakfast at school, you have them here by 8:25 so that they are ready and prepared for school to start at 8:45.
- Students not eating breakfast can enter the building at 8:30 am and they will head to their classroom. We will not let students enter the building before 8:30 if they are not eating breakfast.
- Kindergarten families and families new to Altoona will be able to walk their children into the building on the first day. We ask that you drop off your student and exit after saying goodbye.
- We will have staff outside and inside welcoming students and guiding them to their classrooms.
- Note: There will not be supervision for students outside of the building until 8:20 am.

Communication:

- Our [district webpage](#) holds a wealth of information with links to commonly searched items.

- SeeSaw: We continue to have building access to Seesaw. This is an excellent way for you to see what is happening at school and streamline communication with families. Our goal is to have all families connected to Seesaw within the first couple of weeks of school. Classroom teachers will help families get connected at Back-to-School Night.
- We will utilize the *Infinite Campus school messenger system* as an efficient form of communication.
- Our Altoona Elementary [web page](#) provides information regarding events and updates for families.
- Visit our Facebook page for updates and events for Altoona Elementary families and students!
 - Facebook Page: SEP Altoona Elementary @SEPaltoonaElementary
- Follow Altoona Elementary PTA on Facebook. Posts will include reminders about PTA events and volunteer opportunities.

Free and Reduced Application:

- Did you know that families can apply for Free/Reduced price meal benefits at ANYTIME throughout the school year? We encourage all families to fill out the application to see if they qualify for free or reduced meal prices. This also helps with our Title support in the building. Note: a new application is required each year.
 - How to Submit Your Application
 - There are 2 EASY ways to submit!
 - Online from a computer at www.schoolcafe.com
 - Download the SchoolCafe by PrimeroEdge app for your smart device.
 - Returning users: Log in with last year's username and password. Use the "Forgot username?" or "Forgot Password?" links if needed.
 - What You'll Need Before You Begin
 - If you are new to online submission, gather the following details to ensure a quick process:
 - Student Details: Your child(ren)'s name and date of birth, their school ID number, and the school they will be attending this fall. You can find this on your Campus Portal. Most students in grades 6-12 know this ID number, as it is their lunch PIN.
 - SchoolCafé Account: Registration is required before applying. You must register for SchoolCafé. If you don't have an account, follow the [Step-by-Step Account Registration Instructions](#) to get started.
 - Application Instructions & Helpful Resources - How to Complete Your Application:

- Read the [Step-by-Step English Application Instructions](#) or [Step-by-Step Spanish Application Instructions](#).
- [Watch the 1½-Minute Application Video Tutorial](#).
- Official Program & Reference Documents:
 - [2026-2027 Free & Reduced Price Meal Application Information Letter](#)
 - [Step-by-Step Paper Application Instructions \(PDF\)](#)

Important Transportation Deadlines & Dates:

- August 10 - Registration Deadline: Registration for returning students must be fully completed to guarantee bus service on the first day of school.
- August 17 at 4:00 pm - Route Details Release: Families who registered by August 10 will receive their bus route numbers, pick-up/drop-off times, and stop locations in Infinite Campus or our transportation app, My Ride K-12. For details on how to set up and use the My Ride K-12 app, please [visit our website](#).

Important Notes:

- Route times may be adjusted as new students are added before the start of school. We strongly encourage families to re-check their times in the My Ride K-12 app up until the first day.
- If you notice a significant error with your route once details are released, please contact Transportation at transportation@southeastpolk.org or (515) 967-3793.

After August 10 - Late Registration Processing: Registration remains open, but transportation service is no longer guaranteed for the start of the school year. Bus service for late registrants will begin no later than September 8. *Families should plan to arrange their own transportation for the first two weeks of school.*

(Note: This deadline applies to returning families only. Families newly enrolled during July and August will be routed through our standard enrollment process.)

Other Information:

- The first day of school for K-5 students is Monday, August 24th. Regular hours are 8:45-3:35, and we have early outs on Wednesdays at 1:35.
- Students can enter the building each morning at 8:30. School staff will not be outside to supervise until 8:20, so please do not have your child arrive before then. We ask that all students arrive on time to ensure they're prepared and ready to learn.
- Food Service: Here is the link for the district [food/nutrition webpage](#).

- Families may elect to send lunch from home for their children. Please think of food safety and realize lunches may be at room temperature for more than four hours. Please remember appropriate nutrition is essential for students who bring cold lunches, as children need a good source of protein, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Milk can be purchased at school for \$0.50. Carbonated beverages /soft drinks are not allowed at any time. Parents may not bring fast food lunches to school. For any questions or concerns about the school nutrition program, please contact the Food & Nutrition Services Department at 515-957-3432 or email at school.nutrition@southeastpolk.org
- PTA Meetings: Our very supportive PTA meets monthly. They will be communicating their meeting schedule soon! We are always looking for more families to join this great group of individuals that work together to support our students/staff here at Altoona Elementary!
- School Pictures: As of now, we have pictures scheduled for September 24th.
- Conferences: Tuesday, 10/13 4:00-8:00 pm, Thursday, 10/15 12:30-7:30 pm
 - Conferences and all other events can be found on our [district academic calendar](#).
- [Elementary Handbook](#)

Altoona Elementary provides an exciting and unique learning environment for the children and the families we serve. We are committed to ensuring academic excellence, mutual respect, and an appreciation for diversity. We look forward to the start of another school year at Altoona Elementary! The best place to learn, grow, and achieve together! If you have any questions, please feel free to email using the contact information below or call our office.

Respectfully,

Mr. Miller, Principal

Altoona Elementary

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Altoona Elementary Phone: (515)967-3771