



Dear Billings Community,

Today we dropped off Cale and Dillon for the first time at a bus stop on a 520 on-ramp in Redmond. They looked small and uncertain with their new haircuts and new backpacks, as they joined the crowd of jaded morning commuters to wait for the 542. This is the bus they will ride to Billings every morning for the next three years. Our hearts broke a little to watch them wait.

But dropping them off was not nearly as terrifying as it was two years ago when we first put their big brother Griffin on the bus to Billings – because this time we know where they are going. With Griffin we knew that the walk from the Ravenna Park-and-Ride to Billings would take him through a friendly Seattle

neighborhood to a precious school nestled on the edge of Green Lake, but this time around we also know that the thriving academic community our children are entering will help them pass safely on their journey to adulthood.



Clockwise from top left: Alex, Jamie, Griffin, Cale (with Penny the Dog), Brier, Dillon

We have watched as Billings has helped Griffin take ownership of his learning process by teaching him to manage homework and studying on his own, and by providing him with personalized work that challenges him. We have also watched the school help him develop deeper insight into himself, his motivations, and his relationships with others through intentional support for his social and emotional growth. We see Griffin's academic progress when reviewing his portfolio with him, and his personal growth when he catches a late bus home so he can take a friend who is feeling down out for hot chocolate and a trip to the library.

Middle school is a huge transition time as a person emerges from childhood and enters adolescence. Billings supports this transition by creating a safe place for our children to experiment and try new things. The school expects its students to take increasing responsibility for themselves and those around them as they grow while honoring their input and allowing them to have an active role in their community.

By encouraging a variety of experiences and helping students reflect on their successes and failures, Billings develops engaged learners who operate confidently in new situations and places.

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Billings is able to provide this personalized support and intentional social and emotional development because it is small and targeted at middle school. This costs money, actually, more money than tuition covers. Please join me in supporting the Billings Annual Fund.

We look forward to watching our children broaden their experiences, stretch their world view, meet new people, and understand new perspectives. As we watched Cale and Dillon settle in at the bus stop this morning, we proudly noted that they are starting to find their own way in the world. It is exciting to see their budding independence, and we are grateful to Billings for helping them on their way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Hehmeyer". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Alex Hehmeyer