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# CONTENTS

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## COLUMNS

- 6 Lifelines.**  
8 Tips for Better Posture for Kids
- 8 Family Matters.**  
Easing Into Changing Schools  
Check [www.austinfamily.com](http://www.austinfamily.com) for the Spanish version.
- 14 Learning Curve.**  
Meet the Mean Girls, Now What?
- 18 Mom Minute.**  
An Interview with Li Yu.
- 24 Kid Zone.**  
Add Excitement to Your  
Back-to-School Lunch Menu



## IN EVERY ISSUE

- 4 Austin In Action.**  
News and Notes
- 20 Calendar.**  
Check [www.austinfamily.com](http://www.austinfamily.com) for daily updates.

## EXTRAS

- 12 Education Guide.**
- 16 Young Writers Club Contest.**

## TUNE IN



Catch Austin Family magazine live on "Good Day Austin" every Thursday morning.

**2** August 2024

**10**

## Role Playing Games: Fire Up Your Child's Imagination



*Aven is a cover kid winner who turns eight in August. He loves checking out parks in Austin and ice skating. Photo taken by Jordan Ashley Photography.*



View the magazine online at [austinfamily.com](http://austinfamily.com)

PUBLISHER  
Kaye Kemper Lowak

EDITOR  
Jess Archer: editor2003@austinfamily.com

COPY EDITOR  
Barb Matijevich

ADVISING EDITORS  
Dr. Betty Richardson, Barb Matijevich

SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER  
Jess Archer

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS  
Alison Bogle, Dee Cardenas, Rebecca Hastings,  
Dr. Betty Richardson

MEDIA RELATIONS  
Alison Bogle

GRAPHIC DESIGN  
Layout and Ads: Susie Forbes

STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER  
Jordan Ashley Photography

ADVERTISING SALES  
Kaye Kemper Lowak: kaye2003@austinfamily.com

BUSINESS MANAGER  
Greg Lowak

We are dedicated to serving the Greater Austin area by providing up-to-date information and ideas that promote smart parenting and healthy homes. We promote our clients' businesses by increasing their customer bases and enhancing their public images.

Austin Family is published monthly by KKKemper, Inc.  
Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 7559, Round Rock, Texas 78683-7559  
Phone Number: 512-733-0038  
On the web at: [www.austinfamily.com](http://www.austinfamily.com)

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Subscriptions are available for \$30 per year.

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## Editor's Note



JESS ARCHER

*Archer is a writer, a mom of two kids and a wife. She is the author of the memoir, "Finding Home with the Beatles, Bob Dylan and Billy Graham."*

August is certainly the month when we're making back-to-school plans, but there's still plenty of summer fun to be enjoyed. Our feature article this month by Dee Cardenas is all about role playing games (RPGs) and how beneficial this kind of play can be for every stage of childhood.

Our calendar this month highlights so many fun events. Get outside and enjoy Austin before school starts again.

In our education column, Alison Bogle tackles a topic that parents encounter when their kids enter upper elementary and middle school—mean girl cliques. Be sure to read Alison's piece for tips on

helping your kids navigate this specific kind of peer pressure and bullying.

For some kids, August means starting at a new school, which can bring on a lot of anxiety. Read Dr. Betty Richardson's advice for parents about how to help kids through new school transitions.

Follow Austin Family on social media as we promote great events around town each month. Enjoy your summer days and the start of a new school year.

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# Austin IN ACTION

GO TO AUSTINFAMILY.COM FOR WEEKLY UPDATES OF AUSTIN IN ACTION NEWS

## By The Numbers

**25 years old**

SpongeBob Square Pants.

Source: [www.nickelodeon.com](http://www.nickelodeon.com)

**45,000 words**

Lifespan of a pencil, equivalent to writing a 200-page novel.

Source: [www.facts.com](http://www.facts.com)

**1903**

Year Crayola Crayons were introduced with 8 colors

Source: [www.KidsPlayandCreate.com](http://www.KidsPlayandCreate.com)



Kids receive back-to-school supplies through Manos de Cristo.

Families look forward to the Program each year, as many would be unable to obtain the tools needed to start the school year. Children can feel anxious and less confident without the same items as their peers. One mother of four children said, "This program makes my kids happy. They get excited over the new clothes and especially the backpack. Without the help from Manos, they would have to wear old clothes from last year. I can't afford new things every year."

### Back to School Care for Families in Need

Year after year, the price of preparing a child for school increases. In 2023, parents expected to spend an average of \$597 per child, according to a 2023 Deloitte Back-to-School survey. This cost is beyond the reach of thousands of low-income, working-poor families in the Austin area; however, Manos de Cristo can purchase items for children thru its Back-to-School Program at wholesale prices.

The program is sponsored in part by private donors and Austin area Presbyterian churches. Anyone wishing to support the Back-to-School program, by underwriting the cost of school supplies for kids in need, can visit [www.manosdecristo.org/bts](http://www.manosdecristo.org/bts).



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### Calling All Poets

Applications for the 2024 Austin Youth Poet Laureate are now open.

Any teens ages 13 to 18 with an equal passion for artistic excellence and social activism and who live in the greater Austin area, are eligible to be the next Austin Youth Poet Laureate. Applications are now open and the deadline is September 1.

To help kids apply, the Library Foundation is sponsoring a series of free, online and in-person workshops to help young poets.

The Austin Youth Poet Laureate and finalists will have numerous opportunities and platforms to share their voices, leadership and love of Austin.

The Austin Youth Poet Laureate Program is a partnership between the Library Foundation, the Austin Public Library and the National Youth Poet Laureate Program led by Urban Word.

For more information and to begin the application process, teens should visit: [www.austinlibrary.org](http://www.austinlibrary.org)





### Vehicle Inspection Changes

The Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) reminds Texans of upcoming changes to the state's Vehicle Safety Inspection Program that will eliminate most vehicle safety inspections. House Bill 3297, which was passed by the 88th Legislature and signed into law by Governor Greg Abbott in 2023, removes the Vehicle Safety Inspection Program for non-commercial vehicles.

Beginning January 1, 2025, non-commercial vehicles will no longer need a vehicle safety inspection before registration. However, all non-commercial vehicles in the state will be subject to a \$7.50 inspection program replacement fee. This fee will be added to your total when you register your vehicle with the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles.

New vehicles (those of the current or preceding model year on the date of purchase) purchased in Texas that have not been previously registered in Texas or another state are required to pay an initial inspection program replacement fee of \$16.75 to cover two years. For more information go to: [www.dps.org](http://www.dps.org)

*Austin area teens learned how to build hands-on projects at TRF camp. Image credit: The Rosendin Foundation.*



Under expert supervision, 31 rising 7th through 10th-grade students learned specialized construction skills, including using power tools safely, wiring and building lamps and switch labs, soldering copper stands and welding treasure boxes. They also got to build virtually using VR and Building Information Modeling (BIM) technology used in the building industry.

"We are thankful to all our volunteers and partners who took the time to help teach our campers new skills and the joy that comes from building something with your hands," said Jolsna Thomas, President of The Rosendin Foundation.

TRF Camp Build's co-ed camp took place June 17-21 at the Austin Electrical Training Alliance. Campers also got experiential learning during field trips to the UA Local 286 Plumbers and Pipefitters Union and the Rosendin, the nation's largest employee-owned electrical contractor.

In addition to skills training, professionals discussed potential career paths in construction.

### Builders Camp for Austin Teens

The Rosendin Foundation hosted a free, week-long construction camp for middle school students in its hometown of Austin. For the second year, TRF Camp Build partnered with local construction professionals and volunteers to help students discover the joy of building with hands-on projects.

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# 8 Tips for Better Posture for Kids

## Lifelines

REBECCA HASTINGS

*Hastings is a freelance writer and mom. Find her at [www.rebeccahastings.net](http://www.rebeccahastings.net)*



I looked at my son playing a game on his phone and I was shocked at what I saw. This wasn't about what he was playing or an inappropriate pop-up on his phone. It wasn't even about how much screen time he had. When I saw my son, I couldn't believe how he was sitting. His neck and shoulders were hunched forward, his face close to the phone as his fingers moved across the screen. Before I could even think of what it reminded me of, I caught my reflection in the window and saw I was hunched forward, and I wasn't even working at my computer. With increased screen time both at home and school, we need help with our posture now more than ever. Even young kids and toddlers can suffer from poor posture. As your kids prepare to go back to school, it is the perfect time to implement some small changes that can make a big difference in their posture. Better yet, do it as a family and everyone will be standing straighter in no time.

### Rule out a medical issue.

Routine exams from the

pediatrician and scoliosis screenings from the school nurse are an important part of your child's postural health. These trained medical professionals will look for any indication of spinal abnormality as well as other posture issues in hips, gait and more. Have a conversation with the doctor at your child's next well-check appointment about any potential concerns.

### Let kids move.

This starts with even the youngest kids. Opportunities to move and be mobile help your child develop the muscles he needs for proper growth and posture. Movement habits are being developed even in the diaper-wearing years. Give your child the opportunity to move around and be active. This is essential for his development.

### Keep moving.

As kids get older, there is a tendency to become more sedentary. This is especially true with increased time in school. Make sure your kids take movement breaks whenever they can, even if it's just to stretch. The opportunity to stand up, stretch and

get back to work provides a reset for the body that can remedy the slouching that comes with time.

### Sit well.

Different seating options can help with posture issues. Using a backless chair allows a child to strengthen the back and torso muscles, which is better for his posture. Alternatively, dynamic sitting using a balance chair or exercise ball as a seat is another way to engage the muscles that help with posture.

### Line it up.

Alignment is key when working on electronics or watching screens. Make sure that the screen is at the right height, so your child won't be slumped over. If you suspect it is an issue in school, ask the teacher about it and suggest stacking some books under his computer to ensure the screen is at eye level.

### Move around.

Incorporate longer movement times in the day. Typically, after 30 minutes of sitting, people should get up and move around for some time to foster healthy movement.



This can be a longer stretch break, a different activity, a walk around the block or some dance time set to music.

**Get the right backpack.**

Carrying a backpack that doesn't fit well or is overloaded can strain a child's back. More than just uncomfortable, it can result in posture issues throughout the day and beyond. Ensure your child's backpack fits well, resting evenly on his shoulders with the straps adjusted so the pack sits at or above his hips. If your child has more to carry, try using a second bag to hold rather than adding more to the backpack. If your child's school provides lockers, remind your son or daughter to utilize them to minimize the stress of a heavy bag.

**“With increased screen time both at home and school, kids need help with their posture now more than ever. Even young kids and toddlers can suffer from poor posture.”**

**Teach them about their body.**

Help your child understand his body and how it functions well. Yoga stretches for kids are a great way to raise awareness and provide opportunities for stretching and deep breathing. Help your child picture his body as being well-grounded on his sitz bones. Use a YouTube yoga tutorial to teach your

child how to breathe up through the top of the head. This will teach him to lengthen his spine without being forced into a rigid position.

**Involve the family.**

Make good posture about good body movement for the whole family. You

can even arrange a secret family signal to remind one another to get up and stretch or pull that head up and shoulders back. The more you do together, the more likely good posture habits will stick.

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# Easing Into Changing Schools

## Family Matters



DR. BETTY RICHARDSON

*Richardson, PhD, RN, CS, LPC, LMFT, is an Austin-based psychotherapist.*



**Q** Our son Dennis, who is 11 years old loves his elementary school. He doesn't want to switch to middle school this fall. I think he's worried about losing his friends and having to make new ones in an unfamiliar setting. He is having trouble sleeping and his appetite is less, probably due to his anxiety about changing schools.

**A** Thank you for asking that question, as it is relevant to many of our readers. A lot of children will be transitioning to a new school this fall. Transitions come for many reasons such as moving or children aging out of a school. I do have several suggestions for you to make this transition less traumatic.

1. Encourage your son to talk about his fears. Spend time listening to him. Role-play how he can

respond to situations like bullying, having trouble fitting in and how to make new friends.

2. Make play dates with grade school friends to lessen the fear of losing old friends. In addition, find a child going to the new school and arrange for your son to have a playdate with that child.

3. Remind your child that just as he is having anxiety about the transition, there will be others at the new school who are experiencing the same emotions. Talk to him about befriending others.

4. Make contact as early as possible, with the new school, to find out what your child needs for school. Is there a school uniform or supplies to purchase? Get started on that early to minimize your child's stress about starting at a new school.

5. Are there volunteer opportunities for you and your husband at the

school? Seeing you involved in the school will help your child feel more comfortable there. You will also meet other parents and children to socialize with and learn from.

6. Set daily goals with your child. For example: introduce yourself to two other children today or identify some extracurricular activities to join and then rank them.

7. At the end of the school day, encourage your child to talk about his day. Transitions can be difficult even for adults changing jobs, colleges or careers. With planning and effort, transitions will be less traumatic and more successful.

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# Role Playing Games: Fire Up Your Child's Imagination

DEE CARDENAS

*Dee Cárdenas is a 20+ veteran teacher living and gaming in Austin, TX. Ms. Dee has been gaming with kids since 2015 and uses RPG as often as she can in the classroom.*

The setting is your family room. The props are simple: a towel, a sofa cushion and an empty water bottle. The actors? A pair of four-year-old best friends. The one wearing her father's bedroom slippers commands, "I'll be the daddy, and you be the baby." For the fifth time this afternoon, they play these roles, and they may keep going, reenacting the scene repeatedly. But what are these children getting out of this game? To adult eyes, both the story and the dialogue seem nearly identical. So what's going on?

## What are Role Playing Games?

These children are learning about relationships, the world and their place in it. This is imaginative play, an early childhood form of a role-playing game (RPG), which is an interactive form of storytelling. This type of play allows children to explore many things: big feelings, seeing the world from another's viewpoint, making choices and cooperating in play. This collaboration requires children to



listen to one another, take turns, compromise, follow directions and make decisions. These are skills that the Pre-K set will need to master as their world expands.

### Why the Endless Do-Overs?

- *Testing Outcomes.* Children are born researchers who understand that sometimes changing one small thing can vastly affect an outcome. Will the other players respond differently? How does this affect the story?
- *Exploring Choices.* Occasionally, a choice in play has natural consequences that result in unwanted outcomes, and the players rescript their game to get a different result. They are failing in a safe space and learning perseverance. They are also beginning to recognize boundaries and how to react when rules get broken.
- *Learning Visualization.* RPGs call on players to form a picture in their minds about what is happening and to think metaphorically, allowing one thing to represent another. These skills are used in both reading and math readiness.

### Do Older Kids Play RPGs?

Like their preschool counterparts, older children often participate in imaginative play, with a few key differences. Younger elementary-aged children frequently still engage in open-ended RPGs: playing house or school, pretending to run a store. As they reach the tween years, some kids begin to play tabletop RPG games (TTRPGs) such as *Dungeons & Dragons*, *Magic: The Gathering*, *Kids on Bikes* and others.

- *Following Rules.* Games, including RPGs, have more rules in middle childhood, imposing organizational and behavioral demands on participants.

- *Playing Cooperatively.* To extend the game with others, players must become less rigid and self-regulate more. Sharing both time and props with other players has the built-in reward of a group who returns to play together again and again.
- *Planning Ahead.* Quite often, the play will show up as a lot of setups and little actual playacting. It's about process, not product. When school-aged children say they are "playing," frequently they are preparing for the game they have in mind. They are practicing organizational skills. By projecting what they will need to play their game successfully, they are planning.

### How About Teens?

Teens play many of the same TTRPGs as their younger counterparts but with several key differences.

- *Pushing Boundaries.* Rather than simply learning and applying the rules, teens look for ways to use game rules to their group's advantage.
- *Connecting Kids.* RPGs, as with much of adolescence, are about peer relationships. Teen players are more interested in role-playing (parlay) than fighting (melee).
- *Building Skills.* RPG-playing teens play more tactically, planning ahead for potential situations and challenges. They are also practicing self-regulation, time/resource management and flexibility.
- *Staying Safe.* RPGs can be safe spaces to explore a wide variety of behaviors as the Game Master (GM) narrates events, settings and non-player characters (NPCs). Skillful arbitration of game rules and interpersonal

dynamics can be tricky, and an experienced GM is a must. Keeping lines of communication open with RPG-playing teens and their GM, is recommended.

### What About Kids Who Are Neurodiverse?

Neurodiversity acknowledges that both thinking and behavior are diverse within human populations. Neurodivergence describes the spectrum of ways people's brains take in, process and respond to information and stimuli. Neurodiversity includes ADHD, autism spectrum, dyslexia, dyscalculia, OCD and other diagnoses.

- *Practicing Skills.* RPGs can be effective learning tools used to help everyone practice specific social and organizational skills in low-risk environments. Empathy, collaboration and listening are required of all players to create a successful long-term RPG campaign and failing safely reinforces learning.
- *Comforting Rules.* RPGs, despite the large number of choices they offer their players, provide the comfort of a set of rules. Having a set of expressly stated rules helps individuals who are practicing successful social interactions.

Ultimately, the goal for RPGs is not about who wins or loses but extending the play for as long as possible. Children of every age, and adults too, can benefit from playing RPGs, which are not only fun but let players acquire and practice social and organizational skills needed to succeed in life.



# 2024 EDUCATION GUIDE

## PRIVATE SCHOOL

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<b>CATHEDRAL SCHOOL OF ST. MARY'S</b>	PreK3-8	DT Austin	512-476-1480	<a href="http://www.smcschoolaustin.org">www.smcschoolaustin.org</a>
<b>CHALLENGER SCHOOL</b>	PreK-8	Avery Ranch	512-341-8000	<a href="http://www.challengerschool.com">www.challengerschool.com</a>
<b>CHALLENGER SCHOOL</b>	PreSch-K	Pond Springs	512-258-1299	<a href="http://www.challengerschool.com">www.challengerschool.com</a>
<b>CHALLENGER SCHOOL</b>	PreSch-K	Round Rock	512-255-8844	<a href="http://www.challengerschool.com">www.challengerschool.com</a>
<b>HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC SCHOOL</b>	PreK-8	North Austin	512-246-4455	<a href="http://www.holyfamilycs.org">www.holyfamilycs.org</a>
<b>KIRBY HALL SCHOOL</b>	PreK4-8	Central Austin	512-474-1770	<a href="http://www.kirbyhallschool.org">www.kirbyhallschool.org</a>
<b>NATUREVERSITY</b>	5-12 yrs	North and South	512-461-9395	<a href="http://www.natureversity.org">www.natureversity.org</a>
<b>PARAGON PREP</b>	3-8 yrs	North Austin	512-459-5040	<a href="http://www.paragonprep.com">www.paragonprep.com</a>
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<b>BRIGHT STAR</b>	Inf-PreK	Cedar Park	512-842-6640	<a href="http://www.brightstaracademyschools.com">www.brightstaracademyschools.com</a>
<b>CARPE DIEM</b>	6 wks-12 yrs	Pflugerville	512-572-0400	<a href="http://www.endeavormontessori.com">www.endeavormontessori.com</a>
<b>ENDEAVOR MONTESSORI</b>	Inf-PreK	Leander	512-957-9159	<a href="http://www.carpediemschool.com">www.carpediemschool.com</a>
<b>EXTEND-A-CARE YMCA FOR KIDS</b>	3-8 yrs	77 area campuses	512-472-9402	<a href="http://www.austinyymca.org/locations/extend-a-care">www.austinyymca.org/locations/extend-a-care</a>
<b>SNAPDRAGON PRESCHOOL</b> (Must be potty-trained)	3-5 yrs	North Austin	512-593-6226	<a href="http://www.snapdragonpreschool.com">www.snapdragonpreschool.com</a>
<b>SPICEWOOD COUNTRY SCHOOL</b>	2-5	North Austin	512-346-2992	<a href="http://www.spicewoodcountry.com">www.spicewoodcountry.com</a>
<b>STEPPING STONE SCHOOLS</b>	Infant-12 yrs	17 locations throughout Austin area	512-459-0258	<a href="http://www.steppingstoneschool.com">www.steppingstoneschool.com</a>
<b>YMCA CENTRAL TEXAS</b>	Infant-12 yrs	6 locations	512-615-5511	<a href="http://www.ymcactx.org">www.ymcactx.org</a>

## CHARTER SCHOOL

<b>BASIS AUSTIN</b>	K-8 expanding to 12	North Austin	737-263-5890	<a href="http://www.basisedtx.com/austin">www.basisedtx.com/austin</a>
<b>BASIS PFLUGERVILLE</b>	K-8 expanding to 12	Pflugerville	737-263-5890	<a href="http://www.basisedtx.com/pflugerville">www.basisedtx.com/pflugerville</a>
<b>BASIS CEDAR PARK</b>	K-8 expanding to 12	Cedar Park	737-263-5890	<a href="http://www.enrollbasistx.com/cedarpark">www.enrollbasistx.com/cedarpark</a>
<b>HARMONY SCIENCE ACADEMY</b>	PK-8	North Austin	512-835-7900	<a href="http://www.hsaaustin.harmonytx.org">www.hsaaustin.harmonytx.org</a>
<b>HARMONY SCHOOL OF INNOVATION</b>	PK-5	Southeast Austin	512-300-0895	<a href="http://www.hsiaustin.harmonytx.org">www.hsiaustin.harmonytx.org</a>
<b>HARMONY SCHOOL OF EXCELLENCE</b>	6-12	Southeast Austin	512-693-0000	<a href="http://www.hseaustin.harmonytx.org">www.hseaustin.harmonytx.org</a>
<b>HARMONY SCIENCE ACADEMY</b>	PK-5	Cedar Park	512-494-5151	<a href="http://www.hsacp.harmonytx.org">www.hsacp.harmonytx.org</a>
<b>HARMONY SCHOOL OF ENDEAVOR</b>	PK-12	North Austin	512-284-9880	<a href="http://www.hspaustin.harmonytx.org">www.hspaustin.harmonytx.org</a>
<b>HARMONY SCHOOL OF SCIENCE</b>	PK-5	North Austin	512-821-1700	<a href="http://www.hssaustin.harmonytx.org">www.hssaustin.harmonytx.org</a>
<b>HARMONY SCIENCE ACADEMY</b>	6-12	Pflugerville	512-251-5000	<a href="http://www.hsapflugerville.harmonytx.org">www.hsapflugerville.harmonytx.org</a>

## HOMESCHOOL

<b>STUDIO PREP</b>	3-12	East Austin	512-919-4177	<a href="http://www.studioprep.org">www.studioprep.org</a>
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## AFTERSCHOOL/ENRICHMENT

	LOCATION(S)	PHONE	WEBSITE
<b>AUSTIN LEARNING CENTER</b>	Westlake & Online	512-330-9007	<a href="http://www.austinlearningcenter.com">www.austinlearningcenter.com</a>
<b>ARMSTRONG COMMUNITY MUSIC SCHOOL</b>	Westlake	512-474-2331	<a href="http://www.acmsaustin.org">www.acmsaustin.org</a>
<b>AVERY RANCH DANCE AND MUSIC</b>	North Austin	512-658-2996	<a href="http://www.dancediscovery.com">www.dancediscovery.com</a>
<b>CAMERON PARK ZOO</b>	Waco	254-750-8400	<a href="http://www.cameronparkzoo.com">www.cameronparkzoo.com</a>
<b>CORDOVAN ART STUDIO</b>	NW and SW Austin, Round Rock, Leander, Cedar Park	512-275-4040	<a href="http://www.cordovanartschool.com">www.cordovanartschool.com</a>
<b>DANCE DISCOVERY</b>	Central Austin	512-419-7611	<a href="http://www.austin-dance.org">www.austin-dance.org</a>
<b>IDEA LAB</b>	North Austin	512-494-6744	<a href="http://www.austin.idealabkids.com">www.austin.idealabkids.com</a>
<b>INDIGO PLAY</b>	Northwest Austin	512-269-0097	<a href="http://www.indigoplay.com/">www.indigoplay.com/</a>
<b>JUMP GYMNASTICS</b>	North & South Austin	512-593-6226	<a href="http://www.jump-austin.com">www.jump-austin.com</a>
<b>KIDSACTING</b>	18 Area Locations	512-836-5437	<a href="http://www.kidsactingstudio.com">www.kidsactingstudio.com</a>
<b>MAD SCIENCE</b>	Locations throughout Austin and San Antonio	512-892-1143	<a href="http://www.austin.madscience.org">www.austin.madscience.org</a>
<b>MASTER GOHRING TAI CHI AND KUNG FU</b>	Central Austin	512-879-7553	<a href="http://www.mastergohring.com">www.mastergohring.com</a>
<b>NATIONAL CHILDREN'S CHORUS</b>	Austin	Book audition online	<a href="http://www.nationalchildrenschorus.com/auditions">www.nationalchildrenschorus.com/auditions</a>
<b>NITRO SWIM</b>	Cedar Park Bee Cave	512-259-7999 512-861-7946	<a href="http://www.nitroswim.com">www.nitroswim.com</a>
<b>PARTNERS IN PARENTING</b>	North, South, Zoom	<a href="mailto:info@pipaustin.org">info@pipaustin.org</a>	<a href="http://www.pipaustin.org">www.pipaustin.org</a>
<b>ROCK ABOUT CLIMBING</b>	Various Adventures	512-415-0804	<a href="http://www.rock-about.com">www.rock-about.com</a>
<b>ROUND ROCK SERVING CENTER</b>	Round Rock	512-244-2431	<a href="http://www.rrasc.org">www.rrasc.org</a>
<b>STICKY FINGERS COOKING SCHOOL</b>	In Area Schools		<a href="http://www.stickyfingerscooking.com/">www.stickyfingerscooking.com/</a>
<b>SWITCH WILLO STABLES</b>	North Austin	512-920-2276	<a href="http://www.switchwillo.com">www.switchwillo.com</a>
<b>SYNERGY DANCE</b>	Westlake	512-327-4130	<a href="http://www.synergystudio.com">www.synergystudio.com</a>
<b>WAYA</b>	West Austin	512-473-2528	<a href="http://www.waya.org">www.waya.org</a>
<b>YMCA AUSTIN</b>	5 Austin locations, Bastrop, Buda, Dripping Springs, Kyle	512-730-9622	<a href="http://www.austinyymca.org">www.austinyymca.org</a>
<b>YMCA CENTRAL TEXAS</b>	Burnet, Georgetown, Hutto, Leander, Liberty Hill, Round Rock, Waco, Gateway	512-246-9622	<a href="http://www.ymcactx.org">www.ymcactx.org</a>

## RESOURCES

<b>AUSTIN LEARNING CENTER</b>	Westlake & Online	512-330-9007	<a href="http://www.austinlearningcenter.com">www.austinlearningcenter.com</a>
<b>FOR KIDS SAKE</b>	Central	512-476-9490	<a href="http://www.for-kids-sake.com">www.for-kids-sake.com</a>
<b>HAND TO HOLD</b>	Zoom, Podcast	855-424-6428	<a href="http://www.handtohold.org">www.handtohold.org</a>
<b>PARTNERS IN PARENTING</b>	North, South, Zoom	<a href="mailto:info@pipaustin.org">info@pipaustin.org</a>	<a href="http://www.pipaustin.org">www.pipaustin.org</a>

# Meet the Mean Girls, Now What?

## The Learning Curve



ALISON BOGLE

*Bogle is a writer living in Austin with her husband and three children. A former fourth grade teacher, she now enjoys writing about children and education. You can also catch her talking about articles from Austin Family magazine each Thursday morning on FOX 7 Austin.*



In the movie “Mean Girls,” the ruling girl clique, known as “The Plastics,” reinforces its social standing by deliberately excluding and deriding other students. The movie is based on the nonfiction book “Queen Bees and Wannabes” by Rosalind Wiseman and illustrates the impact that intentionally cruel alpha girls can have on other girls. Wiseman defines mean girl behaviors such as backstabbing, manipulation and exclusion as forms of relational aggression. This type of bullying is non-physical, often carried out subtly and can be extremely confusing and painful for its victims.

High school isn't the only place where the stereotypical “mean girl” can be found. In many schools, this type of behavior is now showing up as early as third grade. To complicate things further, beginning around fourth grade, kids naturally begin to pull away from their parents and start to place a higher importance on the opinions of friends. This biological drive prepares our

children for adulthood, but it also makes them even more vulnerable to mean behavior.

What if your child finds herself on the receiving end of mean-girl social rejection? Should you step in to help or should you encourage her to work it out herself? Like many things in parenting, there is no one right answer. How you help your daughter navigate a mean girl will depend on many factors such as your daughter's personality, how she is being affected by the aggression, her age and the strength of her other social connections.

### **How to support your daughter if she is a target of relational aggression:**

#### **EDUCATE HER**

It can be very helpful for girls to learn that the aggression they are experiencing has a name and is something that commonly occurs among girls. Understanding that this is a widespread issue can help

to depersonalize the experience. In addition, teaching your daughter that mean-girl behavior often stems from anxiety, fear and insecurity can give her a different lens through which to view what is happening.

#### **MAKE SURE SHE KNOWS IT'S NOT HER FAULT**

Many victims of bullying internalize the experience. They believe that somehow they deserve the treatment and they feel intense shame. Many children do not want their parents to think less of them or to be disappointed in them, so they try to manage the pain themselves. It is important to stress to your daughter that she is valuable and loved and that your support of her will not waiver.

#### **TEACH HER STRATEGIES**

While your daughter may not always be able to make the mean girl's behavior stop, giving her strategies to help will give her a sense of control. When physically possible, she should ignore the behavior and walk away. Mean girls



are looking for a reaction when they fail to get one, they lose their sense of power. When it is not possible to physically leave the situation, teach your daughter to project confidence by keeping her voice strong and her head up to convey that what the bully is saying or doing is not having the intended effect.

### **CONNECT HER WITH SCHOOL AND OUTSIDE SUPPORT**

If your daughter is younger, speaking with her classroom teacher and making him or her aware of what is going on can go a long way toward helping your daughter feel supported. While mean girl behavior is often subtle and insidious, if the teacher is aware, he or she can keep a sharper eye out and can also structure activities to ensure that your daughter's interactions with the mean girl are minimized.

Your child's school counselor can also be an excellent resource. He or she will be very familiar with helping students navigate relational aggression and can meet with your child discreetly during school hours.

Finally, some children benefit from seeing an outside counselor. If you notice your daughter demonstrating signs of anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, self-harm or low self-esteem, it is important to take your observations seriously and to connect her with professional support.

### **HELP HER STRENGTHEN AND CREATE FRIENDSHIPS**

Good friendships are one of the best mitigators against the painful effects of relational aggression. Encouraging your daughter to stay connected to her friends is an important way to support her as she weathers the storm. Having friends outside of school will allow her to shed her victim identity and get a break from her stress.

### **KEEP AN EYE ON ONLINE ACTIVITY**

These days, relational aggression often takes place online. Keep an eye on what your daughter is seeing and reading online and ensure that she is getting regular breaks from device time. It may

be wise to take a complete break from social media if it is contributing to her distress.

### **BUILD HER SELF-ESTEEM**

Support your daughter in exploring her natural talents and strengths. This will help her to feel good about herself, minimizing the negative impacts of the relational aggression that she is experiencing.

Ultimately, the most important thing you can do as a parent is to keep the lines of communication open. Check-in with your child regularly and pay attention to what she says as well as to her non-verbal cues. If your child believes that she has your support and feels safe coming to you to share her concerns, that is half the battle won.



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# MOM Minute

## An Interview with Li Yu



*Li and Chen Yu and their two daughters, Rebecca (10) and Bella (12).*

Austin is bursting with people doing exciting work, and that includes moms who work hard to raise their kids. Every other month Austin Family features a short interview with an Austin mom doing the extraordinary work of parenting.

### **Austin, meet Li Yu.**

#### **AF: Tell our Austin Family readers a little bit about yourself.**

I'm a Chinese lecturer at Texas State University. I'm from far northwest China, close to the border of Tajikistan. It's a very rural place and mostly ethnic Muslim, though I am not Muslim. My husband, Chen and I moved to Austin in 2012 for his job. Our oldest daughter, Bella was born in China and our younger daughter, Rebecca was born right here at St. David's Hospital in Austin.

#### **AF: What is some of the best parenting advice you've received?**

In traditional Chinese culture, parents don't show much affection—hugs, kisses, saying I love you. I did not grow up with that kind of parenting. Chinese parents go to work to provide and push their kids to be good at something. I was raised more by my grandparents who lived with us. They showed me more affection. Raising my daughters in America, I've learned to adapt to American culture by being a provider plus an outwardly loving, affectionate mom.

#### **AF: Who has been a role model for you as a mom?**

My American mom friends are good for me to watch. I see how they give their kids a little more independence

and freedom. I'm learning how to parent like that. I'm also learning how to praise my kids the way American parents do.

#### **AF: The best thing about your kids at this stage?**

My kids are starting to develop a healthy understanding of their Chinese roots and that's nice to see. (Although my younger daughter does not like my traditional Chinese cooking. She'd always rather eat American fast food.)

#### **AF: What are a few good things about raising kids in Austin?**

Austin is the only city in America where I've lived. I like the many outdoor activities that families can enjoy in Austin.

#### **AF: If you had known then what you know now, what would you have worried about less as you entered parenting?**

I would have worried more! If I had known when I arrived in America that I would be teaching Chinese full-time at a university, I would have worried about that. Better to not always know what's around the corner for you in life.

#### **AF: What do you love these days about being a mom?**

It feels rewarding to be developing healthy relationships with my daughters. I'm so glad I can give them open lines of communication with me—something I did not have with my parents.


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# August 2024 calendar

Go to [austinfamily.com](http://austinfamily.com) for expanded listings.

Check our calendar online which is updated daily. Any family-friendly events can be posted at [austinfamily.com](http://austinfamily.com) and will be made live once approved. Certain restrictions apply.

## Thu 1

**Summer Movie Clubhouse.** 9:30 a.m. Four area theaters. Check the Cinemark schedule near you. Austin, Cedar Park, Round Rock and Pflugerville. Check show for locations. \$1.75. [www.cinemark.com](http://www.cinemark.com).

**77th Annual Bastrop Homecoming and Rodeo.** 10 a.m. Kicks off with team roping, barrel racing and other rodeo events. Parade is on Saturday. Bastrop Rodeo Arena, \$25. [www.bastrophomecomingrodeo.org](http://www.bastrophomecomingrodeo.org).

**ASO Tuneful Tales.** 1 p.m. ASO presents Berry Song featuring a string quartet of ASO musicians. Austin Public Libraries, FREE. [www.austinsymphony.org](http://www.austinsymphony.org).

**Silly Sparkles Balloon Twisting Workshop @ Laura's.** 1 to 3 p.m. Learn the fascinating art of balloon twisting from Silly Sparkles in this exciting, hands-on workshop. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**The Drop-In.** 7 p.m. Our free outdoor concert series returns. Long Center, 701 W Riverside Dr. FREE. [www.thelongcenter.org](http://www.thelongcenter.org).

**Round Rock Express Sugar Land.** 7:15 p.m. Dell Diamond, 3400 E Palm Valley Blvd. [www.milb.com](http://www.milb.com).

**Footloose: The Musical at Hill Country Galleria.** 8 to 10 p.m. In collaboration with the city of Bee Cave and Hill Country Galleria, Magnolia Musical Theatre is proud to present this musical. Hill Country Galleria, 12700 Hill Country Blvd. FREE. [www.hillcountrygalleria.com](http://www.hillcountrygalleria.com).

**Legally Blonde - Zilker Summer Musical.** 10 to 8:15 p.m. Zilker presents the 65th year of Hillside Theater. Zilker Hillside Theater, 2206 William Barton Dr. [www.zilker.org](http://www.zilker.org).

## Fri 2

**Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire (2024) - Community Cinema + TOOF.** 8 to 10:30 p.m. Welcome The Austin Ghostbusters to our screening Friday night in partnership with The Other Ones Foundation (TOOF). Ghostbusters: Frozen Empire (2024) - Community

Cinema + TOOF, 9301 Hog Eye Rd. FREE. [www.eventvesta.com](http://www.eventvesta.com).

**Candlelight: The Best of The Beatles.** 8:45 to 10 p.m. Candlelight concerts bring the magic of a live, multi-sensory musical experience to awe-inspiring locations like never seen before in Austin. St David's Episcopal Church, St. David's 301 E 8th St. \$46.55. [www.eventvesta.com](http://www.eventvesta.com).

CONTINUED: **77th Annual Bastrop Homecoming and Rodeo**, see Thu 1; **Round Rock Express Sugar Land**, see Thu 1; **Footloose: The Musical at Hill Country Galleria**, see Thu 1; **Legally Blonde - Zilker Summer Musical**, see Thu 1.

## Sat 3

**Baby Bloomers.** 8 to 10 a.m. Baby Bloomers is a special program during which the museum is open exclusively for visitors ages 0-3 years and their families. Thinkery, 1830 Simond Avenue. [www.thinkeryaustin.org](http://www.thinkeryaustin.org).

**Troy Farmers Market/ Arts & Crafts Events.** 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Troy Farmers Market/ Arts & Crafts community market. Kirk John Q. Thompson Pavilion, 201 E Main St. FREE. [www.cityoftroy.us](http://www.cityoftroy.us).

**Austin Reptile Shows @ Laura's.** 10:30 a.m. Are you in Slytherin? Are you able to speak Parseltongue? Or do you just like snakes? Well, you're in luck! Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Wizards Week @ Westbank & Laura's.** 10:30 a.m. Wizards Week at the Westbank Libraries. Calling all Hogwarts hopefuls! Fly into Westbank and Laura's this week for some spellbinding activities. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Read to a Therapy Dog.** 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Read to Princess Buttercup Dump Truck or Bentley, reading therapy dogs from Divine Canines. Wells Branch Community Library, 15001 Wells Port Dr. [www.wblibrary.org](http://www.wblibrary.org).

**Back to School Free Community Day.** 12 to 3 p.m. Free backpacks and school supplies, free haircuts and braided hairstyles. First come, first served. Greater Calvary Bible Church, 6510 Berkman Dr. FREE. [www.booksbyamber.com](http://www.booksbyamber.com).

**Building Exploration @ Westbank.** 1 to 3 p.m. There will be building materials for you to stack, create and construct. What will you build? Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

CONTINUED: **77th Annual Bastrop Homecoming and Rodeo**, see Thu 1; **ASO Tuneful Tales**, see Thu 1; **Round Rock Express Sugar Land**, see Thu 1; **Footloose: The Musical at Hill Country Galleria**, see Thu 1; **Legally Blonde - Zilker Summer Musical**, see Thu 1.



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**Sun 4**

**H-E-B Free First Sunday: Back to School.** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Get ready to go back to school with free admission and fun family activities. Enjoy FREE exhibition admission all day. Bullock Texas State History Museum, 1800 Congress Ave. FREE. [www.thestoryoftexas.com](http://www.thestoryoftexas.com).

**Summer Stock Austin Disney's The Little Mermaid.** 1 to 6 p.m. Immerse yourself in the magical underwater world of Disney's "The Little Mermaid" where dreams and adventures take center stage. \$15. [www.texasperformingarts.org](http://www.texasperformingarts.org).

**DIY Sunday.** 2 to 4 p.m. Register at [www.wblibrary.eventbrite.com](http://www.wblibrary.eventbrite.com) Wells Branch Community Library, 15001 Wells Port Dr. [www.wblibrary.eventbrite.com](http://www.wblibrary.eventbrite.com).

CONTINUED: **Round Rock Express Sugar Land**, see Thu 1; **Legally Blonde - Zilker Summer Musical**, see Thu 1.

**Mon 5**

**Friendship Bracelets @ Westbank.** 1 to 3 p.m. We'll have beads, elastic cord and embroidery thread available so you can make your own design. Keep for yourself or give to a friend. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Free Play @ Laura's.** 4 to 6:30 p.m. Meet up with your friends at the world's best play date. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Board With Books - Tabletop RPG Edition.** 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Want to get into tabletop roleplaying games but don't know where to start? Or do you have the knowledge, but you need a group to play with? Central Library, 710 W. César Chávez St. Gallery. FREE. [www.library.austintexas.gov](http://www.library.austintexas.gov).

CONTINUED: **Summer Movie Clubhouse**, see Thu 1.

**Tue 6**

**Flix Jr Summer Series.** 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Offering a way to beat the heat with family-friendly throwbacks for \$5. Flix Brewhouse, 2200 S I-35 Frontage Rd Bl. \$5. [www.flixbrewhouse.com](http://www.flixbrewhouse.com).

**Board Games @ Westbank.** 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Kids and adults alike are welcome to come play games upstairs at Westbank. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Disney's FANTASIA Film Screening at KMFA.** 12 to 2 p.m. KMFA announces a new series of free summertime midday

concerts for kids & family presented by Ally Medical Emergency Rooms. Draylen Mason Music Studio at KMFA, 41 Navasota St. [www.kmfa.org](http://www.kmfa.org).

**Community Hours.** 3 to 7 p.m. Community Hours are part of Thinkery's Open Door Initiative, created to give every child a chance to explore STEAM concepts. Thinkery, 1830 Simond Ave. [www.thinkeryaustin.org](http://www.thinkeryaustin.org).

**Get Crafty.** 6:15 to 7:45 p.m. Grab your family and bring your friends for Get Crafty, where local artist Rita Wang will teach us a new, cute craft every month. Howson Branch, 2500 Exposition Blvd. FREE. [www.library.austintexas.gov](http://www.library.austintexas.gov).

CONTINUED: **Summer Movie Clubhouse**, see Thu 1; **Summer Stock Austin Disney's The Little Mermaid**, see Sun 4.

**Wed 7**

**Preschool Play @ Laura's.** 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. We have self-directed playtime activities set up that are geared toward preschool-age kids. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Mad Science @ Westbank.** 3 p.m. Come enjoy an interactive science show that will spark your children's

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imagination, make them laugh and get them excited about learning. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

CONTINUED: **Summer Movie Clubhouse**, see Thu 1; **Summer Stock Austin Disney's The Little Mermaid**, see Sun 4; **Footloose: The Musical at Hill Country Galleria**, see Thu 1.

## Thu 8

**Arcade @ Laura's.** 4 to 6:30 p.m. Arcade meet up with friends at the library to play Mario Kart and Super Smash Bros. Feel free to bring your own gaming device as well. Laura Bush Community Library, 9411 Bee Cave Rd. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Sunset Movies in the Park-Gypsy Ice.** 8:30 p.m. Bring a blanket or chairs, some snacks and enjoy the family movies we have scheduled this summer. Come out early for free popcorn and activities. San Gabriel Park, Legacy Pavilion. FREE. [www.visit.georgetown.org](http://www.visit.georgetown.org).

CONTINUED: **Summer Movie Clubhouse**, see Thu 1; **ASO Tuneful Tales**, see Thu 1; **Footloose: The Musical at Hill Country Galleria**, see Thu 1; **Legally Blonde - Zilker Summer Musical**, see Thu 1; **The Drop-In**, see Thu 1.

## Fri 9

**Cedar Park Rodeo 2024.** 7:30 p.m. Get ready for two evenings of professional rodeo events including bare back riding, saddle bronc riding, bull riding and the fan favorite mutton busting. HEB Center, 2100 Avenue of the Stars. \$25 - \$40 Children 2 years and under free. [www.hebcenter.com](http://www.hebcenter.com).

**The Fall Guy (2024).** 8 to 10:30 p.m. Grab chairs and a blanket, bring family and friends, and enjoy this special screening. Come explore Community First! Community Cinema, 9301 Hog Eye Rd. FREE. [www.mlf.org/community-cinema](http://www.mlf.org/community-cinema).

CONTINUED: **Footloose: The Musical at Hill Country Galleria**, see Thu 1; **Legally Blonde - Zilker Summer Musical**, see Thu.

## Sat 10

**Sharpie Tie-Dye.** 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Wells Branch Community Library, 15001 Wells Port Dr. [www.wblibrary.org](http://www.wblibrary.org).

**Second Saturdays are for Families: Whirl & Twirl.** 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Join family and friends to build a giant communal pool noodle sculpture. The Contemporary Austin-Laguna Gloria, 3809 West 35th St. [www.thecontemporaryaustin.org/event](http://www.thecontemporaryaustin.org/event).

**Lost Draw's Splash Day | Lost Draw.** 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Get ready to make a splash at Lost Draw's Splash Day. Dive into a day filled with live music, water slides and water balloon battles. Lost Draw, 1686 US-290. \$25. [shorturl.at](http://shorturl.at).

**Creative Exploration @ Westbank.** 1 to 3 p.m. Create art with a variety of mediums (markers, crayons, colored pencils, daubers, watercolors). Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Honey, I Shrunk the Kids.** 3:30 p.m. Part of the film series. The Paramount Theatre, 713 Congress Ave. [www.tickets.austintheatre.org](http://www.tickets.austintheatre.org).

CONTINUED: **Baby Bloomers**, see Sat 3; **Footloose: The Musical at Hill Country Galleria**, see Thu 1; **Summer Stock Austin Disney's The Little Mermaid**, see Sun 4; **Legally Blonde - Zilker Summer Musical**, see Thu 1; **Cedar Park Rodeo**, see Fri 9.

## Sun 11

**End of Summer Celebration @ Westbank.** 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. Let's celebrate the end of summer with Sunday sundaes from Amy's Ice Creams. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Sunday Funday: Folding Fans.** 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday Funday Folding Fans. Beat the heat with a custom folding fan. Neill-Cochran House Museum, 2310 San Gabriel St. [www.nchmuseum.org](http://www.nchmuseum.org).

CONTINUED: **DIY Sunday**, see Sun 4; **Summer Stock Austin Disney's The Little Mermaid**, see Sun 4; **Legally Blonde - Zilker Summer Musical**, see Thu 1.

## Mon 12

CONTINUED: **Summer Movie Clubhouse**, see Thu 1; **Free Play @ Laura's**, see Mon 5.

## Tue 13

**First Day of School Round Rock ISD, Hays CISD**

**Free Days - Blanton Museum of Art.** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Blanton Museum of Art is free for all visitors on the 2nd Tuesday of every month. Blanton Museum of Art, 200 E Martin Luther King Jr Blvd. FREE. [www.blantonmuseum.org](http://www.blantonmuseum.org).

**Round Rock Express vs. Albuquerque Isotopes.** 7:05 p.m. Dell Diamond, 3400 E Palm Valley Blvd. [www.milb.com](http://www.milb.com).

CONTINUED: **Summer Movie Clubhouse**, see Thu 1; **Community Hours**, see Tue 6.

## Wed 14

**First Day of School Manor ISD, Eanes ISD, Taylor ISD, Leander ISD**

CONTINUED: **Preschool Play @ Laura's**, see Wed 7; **Summer Movie Clubhouse**, see Thu 1.

## Thu 15

**Board with Books.** 5 to 8 p.m. Explore the Central Library's board game collection at this monthly board game meetup. Central Library, 710 W. César Chávez St. Gallery. FREE. [www.library.austintexas.gov](http://www.library.austintexas.gov).

CONTINUED: **Summer Movie Clubhouse**, see Thu 1; **Round Rock Express vs. Albuquerque Isotopes**, see Tue 13; **Legally Blonde - Zilker Summer Musical**, see Thu 1; **The Drop-In**, see Thu 1.

## Fri 16

**Back-to-School Luau for All Abilities.** 5:30 to 8 p.m. There will be music, food, raffle prizes and a photo booth. Put on your best Hawaiian attire and get ready for this unforgettable evening. Gemstone Palace, 1101 Bunton Creek. FREE. [www.cityofkyle.com](http://www.cityofkyle.com).

**Round Rock Express vs. Albuquerque Isotopes**, see Tue 13; **Legally Blonde - Zilker Summer Musical**, see Thu 1.

## Sat 17

**First Day of School Georgetown ISD**

**NBFB Back-to-School Event.** 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. New Braunfels Food Bank will be giving away backpacks and school supplies to children who are in need. New Braunfels Food Bank, 1620 S Seguin Ave. FREE. [www.nbfoodbank.org](http://www.nbfoodbank.org).

**Back-to-School Backpack Giveaway.** 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. African American Youth Harvest Foundation, 6633 Hwy 290 East. [www.austintexas.gov](http://www.austintexas.gov).



**中文游园-Chinese Learning Playground @ Westbank.** 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. 中文游园-Chinese Learning Playground is a Mandarin Chinese study group for school-age children. Westbank Community Library, 1309 Westbank Dr. [www.westbanklibrary.com](http://www.westbanklibrary.com).

**Reggie Rap's Community Care Celebration - mental health event series.** 3 to 7 p.m. Reggie Rap's Room, a dynamic initiative dedicated to fostering mental health and emotional well-being through the power of creative expression and art. Republic Square, 422 Guadalupe St. FREE. [www.reggieapscommunity.eventbrite.com](http://www.reggieapscommunity.eventbrite.com).

CONTINUED: **Baby Bloomers**, see Sat 3; **Read to a Therapy Dog**, see Sat 3; **Round Rock Express vs. Albuquerque Isotopes**, see Tue 13; **Legally Blonde - Zilker Summer Musical**, see Thu 1.

**Sun 18**

CONTINUED: **DIY Sunday**, see Sun 4; **Round Rock Express vs. Albuquerque Isotopes**, see Tue 13.

**Mon 19**

CONTINUED: **Baby Bloomers**, see Sat 3; **Free Play @ Laura's**, see Mon 5.

**Tue 20**

**First Day of School Austin ISD**

CONTINUED: **Community Hours**, see Tue 6.

**Wed 21**

**Zine Night.** 5:30 to 7 p.m. Learn how to make and craft a zine with the Austin Public Library. Central Library, 710 W. César Chávez St. Gallery. FREE. [www.library.austintexas.gov](http://www.library.austintexas.gov).

CONTINUED: **Preschool Play @ Laura's**, see Wed 7.

**Thu 22**

**Steel Magnolias.** 7:30 p.m. Part of our summer film series. The Paramount Theatre, 713 Congress Ave. [www.tickets.austintheatre.org](http://www.tickets.austintheatre.org).

**Sat 24**

**Austin Train Show.** 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Austin Train Show is celebrating 51 years. Railroad fans of all ages will converge on Austin. Palmer Events Center at 900 Barton Springs Rd. \$8 - \$10. [www.austrintrainshow.org](http://www.austrintrainshow.org).

CONTINUED: **中文游园-Chinese Learning Playground @ Westbank**, see Sat 17.

**Sun 25**

**Mini Maker Market.** 2 to 5 p.m. This Mini Maker Market is perfect for your tiny entrepreneurs and future businesspeople. The Hive, 10542 Menchaca Rd. [www.hiveaustin.com](http://www.hiveaustin.com).

CONTINUED: **Austin Train Show**, see Sat 24.

**Mon 26**

CONTINUED: **Free Play @ Laura's**, see Mon 5.

**Wed 28**

CONTINUED: **Preschool Play @ Laura's**, see Wed 7.

**Sat 31**

**Public Safety Back to School Fair.** 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Barton Creek Mall, 2901 S. Capital of Tx Hwy. [www.austintexas.gov](http://www.austintexas.gov).

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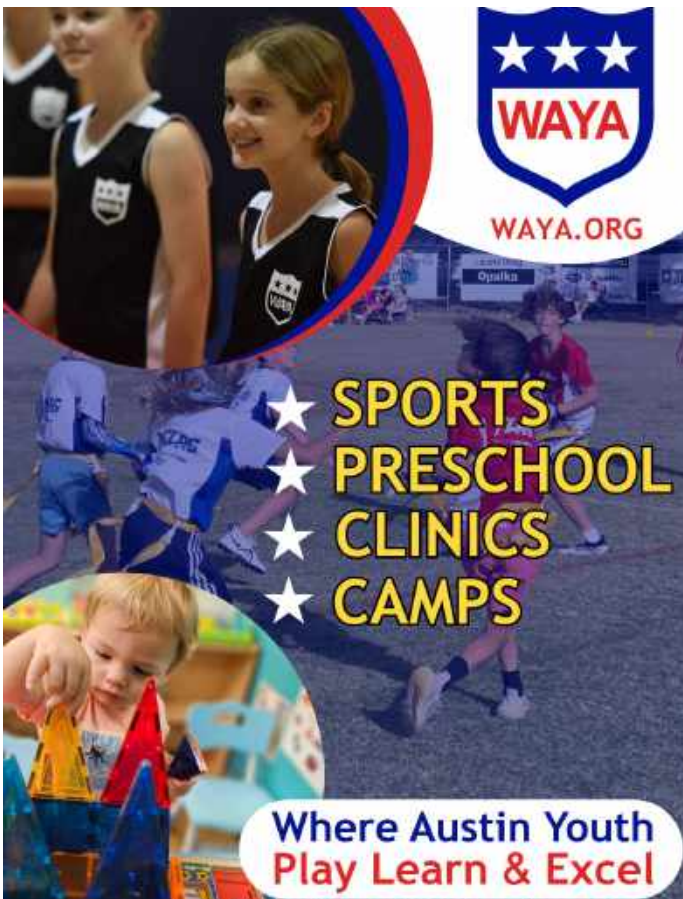


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## Add Excitement to Your Back-To-School Lunch Menu

Parents spend countless hours making peanut butter and jelly and cold-cut sandwiches for their kids' school lunches. Ultimately, many reach a point of asking, "Isn't there something better, healthier and different that we can come up with?"

Fortunately, through trial and error, several healthy options emerge that our kids actually enjoy, and in the process, they develop good eating habits. Here are a few suggestions to get the school year off to a fun, healthy start.

**Bean & Cheese Tacos** – Beans of all varieties are one of the unsung heroes in the food world. They're tasty, filling and high in fiber and protein. Pinto beans, black beans and refried beans all make good options. Choose from flour, whole wheat, mix (half corn/half flour) or corn

tortillas (for a gluten-free option). Sprinkle a little cheese and/or salsa to add some flavor, and you're all set.



**Hummus & Veggies** – Thank goodness for hummus! When it comes to getting kids to eat their vegetables, it's a parent's best friend. You'll find a wide range of hummus flavors to choose from, and you can pair it with sliced cucumbers, carrot sticks or celery.



**Sliced Apples & Nut Butter** – Something magical happens when you use an apple slicer, and that hard, round red object transforms into a dozen fun

little pieces. Pair them with a dollop of peanut or sesame butter and you have a sweet & salty snack that packs protein, healthy fats and other nutrients.

**Hidden Veggies** – Whether it's mac and cheese, chicken salad or another favorite dish, take the opportunity to boost the nutrient content by slipping in diced vegetables, nuts, sliced meats or even fruits. Loaded mac & cheese with sausage, chopped peppers and onions is a winner. Chicken salad with walnuts, chopped grapes and celery makes a great sandwich on whole-wheat bread.

Engage your kids in the process so they take ownership of their nutrition, and let your imagination run wild. Be sure to check rules at your school regarding nut allergies.

*The Extend-A-Care YMCA provides safe, enriching and educational programs for children at seven area preschools and more than 60 area elementary schools. For more information about Extend-A-Care YMCA programs visit [www.eacymca.org](http://www.eacymca.org).*

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