

October 6, 2026



Dear Austin High School families,

On Friday afternoon, our seniors gathered in Knowlton Auditorium to open letters from Minnesota colleges and universities telling them they already meet admission criteria, based on their academic record and expected graduation date. This is our fourth year in the Direct Admissions Minnesota program, and it's one of my favorite days of the year. It gives students a chance to see themselves as "college ready" and "college material," and a clear next step: submit an application.

That same momentum is all over the building. Our 10th graders attended one of the largest career fairs in the state, right here in Austin. Guest speakers are visiting classrooms, and students are heading out on field trips for hands-on experiences they can't get from a textbook.

Every one of those opportunities depends on students being here. The academic record that earns a student a letter like that is built one ordinary day at a time.

October is when attendance habits for the school year take shape. Research on chronic absenteeism (missing about 10 percent of school days, or roughly two days a month) shows that even excused absences add up. Students who miss that much fall behind in reading and math and have a harder time feeling connected to school. The good news is that it's one of the most fixable problems we have, and families and schools can fix it together.

Here's what we're asking:

- **Aim for every day.** Appointments, trips, and family time matter, so when you can, schedule them outside the school day.
- **Call us early.** If your student is struggling to get to school, whether it's transportation, anxiety, friendships, or something you can't quite name, contact the office. We would much rather help early than react late.
- **Check in on grades.** The first quarter is wrapping up. Take a few minutes to look at your student's grades and reach out to a teacher with questions.

- **Seniors and families:** Talk about the next step. Learn more about Direct Admissions at ahs.austin.k12.mn.us.

Thank you for trusting us with your students every day.

Sincerely,
Matt Schmit
Principal, Austin High School

Strategic Priorities Update

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

- Austin High School celebrated Homecoming this month. Lots of fun was had by all as we celebrated this week. We are excited to continue to see our students joining in on the fun.
- Grade 10 students from Austin High School travelled to Riverland Community College for CareerQuest. CareerQuest is a career exploration event bringing students together with a broad selection of employers from across the region.

2. Packer Profile for all learners

- Wednesday, September 30th was our first profile day. Nineth graders had a chance to learn more about Pathways while our 10-12th graders spend time reviewing and preparing their portfolio for the year.
- Direct Admissions Assembly was Friday, October 2nd. Seniors now have the opportunity to select any of the colleges that were on their list to apply to. If they have any questions please have them reach out to their counselor.
    - Katherine shared a great quote today, “Take advantage of what you have through this course because I didn’t have this and it would have benefited me a lot in looking at what I want to do in the future. It is a great opportunity, so take advantage of it!”
- ALC Seminar Students had the opportunity to learn more about Workforce Development this month. We found out about work experience opportunities, scholarships and ways to plan more for what we want to do after high school.

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

- **What it is:** Our Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is how we make sure every student gets the right help at the right time, whether that's academic, attendance, or social-emotional. Support is matched to what each student needs.
- **How families can start it:** If you have a concern about your student, contact your counselor through School Counseling - Austin High School. You don't need to wait for a report card or a call from us.

4. Excellence in resource management.

Student Laptops and Chargers

Students and families are responsible for the care of the school-issued laptop and charger. Keep the device in its case, charge it at home, and report damage or a lost device to the office the same day it happens.

We have seen more damaged laptops this fall than we should at this point in the year. Each repair costs your student instructional time and costs the district or families money that belongs in classrooms. Please talk with your student about handling the device carefully and bringing problems to us right away.

Talking Points Is Now Building-wide
Talking Points is available to every family in the building. The tool translates messages between school and home so families can read and reply in the language they use at home.
The district expanded the tool because it removes language barriers and supports credit attainment and academic performance through stronger family engagement.

Semester 1 Progress Grades
Semester 1 progress grades are posted in the portal. Staff communicated with families about student progress on September 23.
If you have concerns about your student's academic performance, please contact the staff member directly.

Austin Online Enrollment
Austin Online enrollment is increasing statewide. The growth shows how online programming expands access to a quality education while making efficient use of district resources.

To learn more about the Packer Profile and the district's long-term strategic plan, please visit AccelerateAustin.org.

Know

October 7, 2026: "My Ascension" Suicide Awareness Program
October 8, 2026: AHS Student Picture Retake Day
October 14, 2026: No School - Professional Development
October 15-16, 2026: No School - MEA
October 23, 2026: End of Quarter 1
October 28th, 2026: Josten Senior Presentation
November 3, 2026: No School - Professional Development
November 25-27, 2026: No School Holiday Break



Attendance Matters

As a reminder, attendance is crucial to the success of our students. Please help support your student by having them attend school daily. Chronic absenteeism significantly impacts student success. Missed school days can create learning gaps and impact student engagement which may ultimately impact graduation rates.

If your student must miss school due to illness or appointments, please make sure you are contacting the school to let us know about your child's absence.

What is Future Teachers Club?

Hello esteemed AHS Parent,
My name is Colleen Owens and I am the Future Teacher Coordinator at Austin Public Schools and I would like to share with you some exciting opportunities available to your student here at AHS.
If your child has expressed an interest in a career in Education or if they have exhibited the following characteristics:

- Natural Curiosity and Love for Learning
- Strong Communication Skills
- Empathy and Patience
- Creative Problem-Solving
- Leadership and Teamwork

Then your student could have what it takes to be an excellent teacher and a great member of our Future Teachers Club! Please click below for more information in the language that works best for you.

English | Spanish | French

Direct Admissions Minnesota

Every student is "college material". This core belief is the driving idea behind the Office of Higher Educations new program called Direct Admissions. This pilot program will notify graduation high school seniors from selected Minnesota high schools that there are multiple partner colleges and universities that are eager to admit them based on their academic records and their projected graduation date. This program will allow students to apply with confidence, knowing that the "will I get in?" question has already been answered with a "Yes!"
Austin is entering its second year of this program! Seniors will receive a letter in October that lists all the colleges and universities they are admitted to next year. All they have to do is apply! Check out the Direct Admissions webpage for more information:
https://ahs.austin.k12.mn.us/counseling-office/direct-admissions



Scarlet Cord

The Scarlet Cord Program is a distinguished volunteer service award available to Austin High School students who perform community service/volunteering during every year of high school. Students who complete 160 hours will be recognized at the Spring Awards ceremony senior year and will also be recognized at graduation. They will wear a scarlet cord with their cap and gown and be identified in the commencement program. Service hours must be completed, logged in Get Connected, and approved by April 30th of their graduation year to be eligible.

MY ASCENSION

“MY ASCENSION” programming is coming soon. Last month's SMORE included information about a suicide awareness program coming to Austin High School. The program will be offered on Wednesday, October 7th from 8:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. “MY ASCENSION “is an inspiring look at Emma Benoit’s story, and includes firsthand experiences of families, friends, school officials, and suicide prevention experts. The film does not shy away from the difficult realities of the ongoing youth suicide crisis but shares valuable resources to **help keep teens safe.** The program includes students viewing a 90-minute documentary and then participating in a Q&A Session with Emma Benoit, Jenn Hegge (Aidan’s Light Foundation) and Mark Hanson (APS School Psychologist). Austin High School will run an adjusted academic schedule after the program. Student Support Professionals will be available to support students as needed throughout the event and afternoon. There will be a community event of “My Ascension” sponsored by “Beyond the Shadows” on Monday, October 5th from 6-8:30 p.m. at Knowlton Auditorium at the Austin High School.

If parents have questions or concerns, please reach out to Julie Hale, AHS School Social Worker, 507-460-1810.

My Ascension



If you have questions about the Austin Assurance Scholarship, you can ask Mrs. Bumgarner in the Career Center or visit with Haley Bauer from Riverland Community College. Haley will be in the Career Center in the morning on October 6, 13, 27 and in the afternoon on October 29th. Please schedule a time to save your spot; walk-ins welcome if she is available. We are talking about the scholarship with Freshmen Seminar classes on October 1st, materials are available on our website.

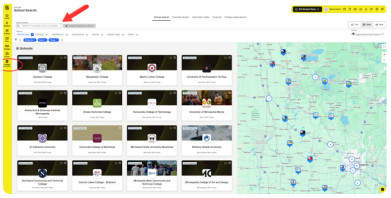
College Fair

October 9th is our **College Fair**! Stop by from 1:00 - 3:00 to talk with admissions reps from a variety of colleges! There will also be a bingo card students can complete for their Packer Portfolio! Keep an eye on the SchooLinks Events Calendar for additional college rep visits, industry tours, and special pathway events.



October is College Knowledge Month

this is the time to start exploring your options in SchooLinks! You can search by location, school type, program, sports available, and more. Start building your list of favorite schools!





September 29: Explore College Options
October 6: Apply to College
October 13: Understanding Financial Aid
October 20: FAFSA 101 - for 12th grade students who are US citizens or eligible noncitizens
October 27: MN Alternative State Financial Aid Application 101 - for 12th grade undocumented students

November 10: Scholarships 101

October's Pathway Learning Events:

October 6 (2:30) - NIACC Rep (Career Center)
October 12 (AM) - First Green Event Field Trip
October 19 (12:00) - Mayo Clinic Career Festival
October 21 (2:00) - Southwest State University Rep (Career Center)
October 28th - ASVAB Testing (Career Center)
October 28th - Construct Tomorrow & Industry Tour Trip (noon - 3:00)

*keep checking SchooLinks and the monthly Career Pathways Newsletter for opportunities and information.

TESTING

October 21 - PSAT Testing (8:30 - 11:00 AM)

October 27 - AP Exam Orders due (return to Cashier's Office)

CLASS OF 2027
SENIOR PHOTO GUIDELINES

Austin High School history is recorded in the Austinian, and we want to make sure our senior section is spectacular! Professional photos are not required, but your photos must meet the guidelines for publication. Because we have a spring delivery book, we have firm deadlines. **Senior yearbook photos are due January 27, 2027. Easy to remember, Class of 2027!**

This senior picture will be used for the yearbook, the Austin Daily Herald Graduation Feature, and the Graduation Slide Show. NO extra photos required!

CONTACT

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YEARBOOK ADVISOR:
Anna Good

EMAIL:
anna.good@austin.k12.mn.us

YEARBOOK WEBSITE:
www.austinyearbook.com

PHOTO SAMPLE:



SENIOR & CHILDHOOD PHOTOS ARE DUE January 27, 2027 (childhood photos will be used for the graduation slide show ONE SET OF PHOTOS PLEASE)

We reserve the right to refuse publication or to modify photos that do not meet the criteria above without your consent. If you wish to have your senior photo excluded from the yearbook, please indicate that in writing before the photo deadline. If your Lifetouch photo is available, we will use that so that you are pictured. If you are unsure about which pose to pick, I'm happy to help you decide.

Picture Requirements:

- **Upper body full color photos. For the senior section, we use color photos only**. **Upper body** shots are preferred so that we can see your beautiful faces. Full body photos will be cropped/zoomed in when needed so that we can see you.
- **Please read these specific photo guidelines. All AHS Dress Code items will be expected in the photo you select for the yearbook. Photos need to include only you, nothing else (example: pets, cars, props, weapons). No hats allowed in our senior portrait section** unless you have a special circumstance. Please be sure there are **no hand gestures** in your photos. We reserve the right to refuse publication if photos don't meet the requirements.
- **Please submit photos via email to:** Anna.good@austin.k12.mn.us. Be sure to include the student's first and last name.
- **Don't have a photographer?** You have options!
    - We can use your **Lifetouch** picture even if you don't buy their package. We automatically get them. It is highly recommended you have a Lifetouch picture taken at school even if you don't intend to purchase the photos.
    - You can **take your own photos**. It doesn't need to be taken by a professional, it just needs to meet the criteria above. Most cell phone cameras will do a great job.
    - **We can take a picture of you at school**, stop in and see Mrs. Good.
- **Please be sure your photographer understands our photo guidelines. The main ones to think about are the school dress code and no hats.**
- If you are unsure about a photo, feel free to contact me.

SENIOR CHILDHOOD PICTURES – DUE JANUARY 27, 2027

*Please submit via email and be sure all photos are labeled with your child's first and last name, especially the childhood pictures. If you don't have access to a scanner, you can take a picture or the photo with your phone or use the scanner function in the Notes app (iphone).
*Photos must be emailed to Mrs. Good to be included in the yearbook by the deadline.

BOOKS can be purchased beginning October 1st online at www.austinyearbook.com or in person at the Cashier's Office.

WINTER SPORTS REGISTRATION

AUSTIN HIGH SCHOOL OFFERINGS:

REGISTRATION OPENS OCTOBER 5, 2026

- *Dance (APDT): Grades 8-12, start 10/26*
- *Girls Hockey: Grades 7-12, start 11/2*
- *Boys Hockey: Grades 9-12, start 11/16*
- *Girls Basketball: Grades 9-12, start 11/16*
- *Boys Basketball: Grades 9-12, start 11/23*
- *Gymnastics: Grades 7-12, start 11/16*
- *Wrestling: Grades 7-12 (boys & girls), start 11/23*
- *Boys Swim & Dive: Grades 7-12, start 11/30*

ELLIS MIDDLE SCHOOL OFFERINGS:

SEE ABOVE FOR OTHER OFFERINGS WITH AHS

- *Girls Basketball: Grades 6-8, start 10/26; registration opens Oct 5*
- *Dance: Grades 6-8, start 11/16; registration opens Nov 1*
- *Boys Basketball: grades 6-8, start 1/4; registration opens Nov 30*

REGISTER IN THE PARENT PORTAL; NEED SPORTS PHYSICAL; FILL OUT ED BENEFITS APPLICATION

COME JOIN

SPEECH

HEY WHAT IS SPEECH ALL ABOUT?

COME FIND OUT!

OCTOBER 8TH AT 3:45

HIGH SCHOOL, RM 222

QUESTIONS?

CONTACT COACH HANSON

OR COACH WARD



EVERY SCHOOL HAS A STORY.

From the first days of kindergarten to graduation day, Austin Public Schools have helped shape generations of students and families. This video reflects on those stories and looks ahead to our schools' future. As the community considers the upcoming referendum, we encourage everyone to learn more, ask questions, and stay informed.

Learn more here: **www.austin.k12.mn.us/referendum**

Check Your Mailbox for Referendum Information

Austin Public Schools households should have received a brochure in the mail with information about the November 3 bond referendum. The brochure outlines the proposed projects and explains how the funding would be used across our schools.
These proposed improvements focus on student learning, safety, accessibility, aging infrastructure, and learning spaces that will serve students and our community for years to come.

We encourage everyone to review the information, learn about the proposed projects, and vote informed on November 3.

DOCX **What the Referendum do for your School.docx** Download 19.4 MB

Do



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Austin High School

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