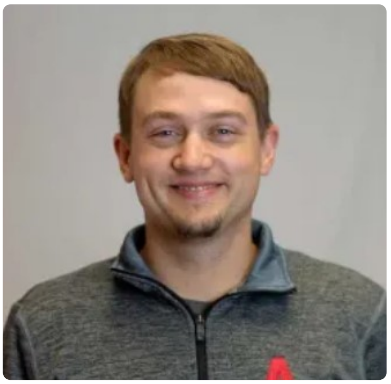


Minnesota School of Excellence

November 2026

Strategic Priorities Update

Message from Mr. Gus!



It's hard to believe we are in November already; with the leaves falling and the temperatures dropping, it's hard not to think of the winter ahead and all the excitement that the changes of the seasons can bring. I hope that this letter finds your family healthy and happy!

If you ever have any questions or concerns please feel free to call or email me. As a former Southgate parent myself, I am committed to making sure your students feel safe and welcome at our school.

Please use this link to fill out an anonymous survey the help give us feedback from the parent perspective:

Parent Feedback Form - Nov. 2026 – Fill out form

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

Our Gators are working on their second building wide incentive this month. When students fill up our Gator Swamp, Mr. Gus will be dying his hair.

Our kindness theme for this month is "Gratitude." We kicked off this theme with a building wide assembly where I challenged the students to show 5 acts of gratitude in the month of November each week. This theme fits into our Great Gator goals of being Respectful, Responsible, Safe and Caring.

2. Packer Profile for all learners

The Packer Profile reflects what our students, staff, and families desire each day for our students and supports their preparation to become college, career, and life-ready. Our students, while learning foundations skills will use SeeSaw to start to create an portfolio of students work. Students will also have multiple opportunities for exposure to possible future career and educational choices.

During conferences, we highlighted "Strengths Spotting" with our students. Also, we are starting to connect these strengths with future career oppourtunities!

Some of the work examples teachers have been planning on showcasing include student work on numerical recognition, reading passages and recording their progress, and writing samples from class assignments. All of these will serve as artifacts in the "Profile" for learners to reflect upon as the continue their educational journey.

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

The School Leadership Team plays a vital role in guiding the direction and success of our school. This team works collaboratively to set building-wide goals that align with our district's vision and focus on continuous improvement for students and staff. By analyzing academic, attendance, and behavior data, the team identifies strengths and areas for growth, ensuring that decisions are grounded in evidence and centered on student outcomes.

The team meets regularly to review data trends, monitor progress toward established goals, and adjust strategies as needed. Academic data helps identify where instructional support or professional development may be needed, while attendance and behavior data provide insight into school climate and student engagement. Together, these data points inform action plans that promote achievement, equity, and a positive learning environment for all students.

4. Excellence in resource management.

Our school continues to prioritize growth and collaboration through a variety of professional development opportunities for staff. Teachers and support staff engage in ongoing training focused on instructional best practices, student engagement, and the integration of new resources that support academic and social-emotional learning. These opportunities strengthen our collective capacity to meet the diverse needs of students and promote a culture of continuous improvement.

In addition, the district offered guided tours for community members interested in learning more about upcoming referendum projects at Southgate.

By combining staff development with community engagement, we ensure that both our educators and stakeholders are informed, connected, and working together toward a shared vision of excellence for our schools.

Know

Parent Pick Up

We would like to remind families of the importance of notifying the school office whenever possible before **1:30 p.m.** if your child's after-school pick-up plans change. Advance notice helps us communicate information accurately to students and staff and ensures a safe and smooth dismissal process. Last-minute changes can be challenging to relay, especially during the busy end-of-day routine. Calling the office before 1:00 p.m. gives us the best opportunity to make sure your child receives the correct message. Thank you for your partnership in helping us keep all students safe and accounted for at dismissal.

4th Grade Orcehstra Trip

We are excited to share that our 4th grade students had a wonderful experience attending the community orchestra performance this week. Students represented our school with outstanding behavior, demonstrating respect, responsibility, and excellent listening skills throughout the event. They were engaged in the performance and enjoyed the opportunity to experience live music in our community. The orchestra members and staff were impressed with our students' positive attitude and conduct. Thank you for your continued support in helping our students learn how to be respectful and responsible members of our community.

Lockdown Drill Dates

As part of our commitment to student safety, our school will be conducting lockdown drills on the following dates:

Nov. 18, Jan. 14, Feb. 23, May 4

This is a safety exercise that helps students and staff learn how to respond calmly and quickly in the unlikely event of a potential danger inside or near the school. In accordance with state guidelines, we are notifying all families in advance. Parents and guardians have the right to opt their child out of participating in these drills. If you prefer your child not participate, please contact the school office at 507-460-1300 at least 24 hours before the scheduled drill.

Thank you!

Fall Festival

Our Fall Festival is coming up on November 13th! The Student Leadership Team has been busy preparing a fun-filled day for the Gators. After the event you can check out the Southgate Elementary Facebook page for pictures and a recap of the day!

Special thank to Alex Weis and the Student Leadership team for putting on this event!

Southgate School Store

The school store is open for students every Thursday. The items are all $1 or less and consist of fun/silly erasers, pencils, grips, pop its, bookmarks, and more. This is put on by the Student Leadership Team to help fund school events like Fall Festival, Winter Blues Week, birthdays and more.

PTC Meeting - November

We have our next meeting on Monday, November 9th at 4:15pm in the Pi Academy Classroom. Please join us as we discuss fundraising and the Scholastic Book Fair. This will be our last meeting until February 9th, 2027.

A Few Important Things:



Food Allergies

Peanuts, peanut products prohibited in classrooms

Creating safe and supportive learning environments is a top priority in Austin Public Schools; foods with peanuts and tree nuts cannot be brought into classrooms. There are many students with life-threatening food allergies, and exposure to a peanut or tree nut product puts many students at risk of anaphylaxis. We need your help to keep everyone safe. Cafeterias have peanut-free tables in every school cafeteria to provide a safe dining experience.

- Do not send snacks that contain peanuts, almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, pistachios, or walnuts.
- Please read labels carefully to make sure that products are peanut- and nut-free. Products with labels that read “May contain traces of peanuts/nuts” or “Manufactured in a plant that processes peanuts/nut products” are not allowed in classrooms.

Foods that cannot be in classrooms

- Peanuts
- Tree nuts: almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, pecans, pistachios, walnuts, etc. For a list visit: Food Allergy Research
- Peanut butter or any nut butters
- Nut milk – almond milk,
- Nutella
- Pesto or nut-based spreads

** SunButter, a product made with sunflower seeds, is a safe substitute for peanut butter!*

Peanut- and tree-nut-free snack & lunch ideas!

- Fruits & vegetables: canned or fresh
- Fresh fruit: apples, bananas, peaches, pears, grapes, etc.
- Chopped fruit: watermelon, cantaloupe, pineapple, etc.
- Fruit cups: applesauce, pears, peaches, oranges, etc.
- Dried fruit: raisins, dried apricots, etc.
- Fresh vegetables: sliced cucumbers, carrots, sugar snap peas, sliced red pepper, grape tomatoes, etc.
- Cheese: string cheese, cheese slices, etc.
- Yogurt cup
- 100% fruit juice boxes

If you have further questions, please contact your school’s health office. You can view the Austin Student Student Wellness Policy 533 here.

Allergies & Medical Conditions

If your student needs special diet accommodations, please contact:

- Tanner Lange, Food & Nutrition Director, at 507-460-1921 or by email or
- Shaylie Meyer, RN/Licensed School Nurse, Supervisor of Health Services, at 507-460-1915 or by email.

More resources:

Special Diet Request Form

Birthday Treats

Individual classrooms will observe birthdays with special activities planned by teachers, such as allowing children to wear a "Birthday Hat" or by singing to them. If students choose to share a treat with the class on their birthday, food must be an individually wrapped and purchased treat that, in the interest of instructional time, can quickly be consumed. Examples of such treats are fruit snacks, individual packages of cookies or crackers, etc.... **Parents should contact the teacher to make them aware that they are sending a treat for the class.** Please do not distribute personal party invitations at school.

If you do not want your child to participate in holiday or birthday celebrations for personal or religious reasons your desires will be honored. Please contact the classroom teacher to discuss the activities in which your child should not participate, and to decide what he or she will do during these events.



Example of a Snack that Meets Our Policy

Individually wrapped snacks that do not come from a shared package



Example that Does Not Meet Our Policy

Package of Cupcakes from a Shared Container



Call us with Questions!

If you aren't sure whether or snack will meet the policy or not, please feel free to call our office at 507-460-1100.

Important Dates to Remember

November 25, 26 and 27th - No School - Thanksgiving Holiday



School Leadership Update

Student Leadership opened up the school store last month which consists of items such as festive erasers, pencils, pop-its, seasonal themed items, and more. All items are $1 or less. Every **Thursday,** K-1 will be before school at 7:45 till 8:10 in the Gator Gym. 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grade will be during their lunch time. We are not responsible for any lost money or purchased items being lost. Please join us in supporting Student Leadership and providing opportunities for financial responsibility for our young gators!

Student Leadership is a team of 4th graders who serve the school through various services and put on various events for students to enjoy such as Fall Festival and Winter Blues Week. The school store helps with funding these opportunities.

Do

Attendance

Our school instructional day at Southgate is from 8:00 until 2:30. Our doors open at 7:30 for students. It is so important that students arrive in time to start the instructional day at 8:00 am.

Please take a few minutes to view the video linked below, *Bringing Attendance Home*, a video from Attendance Works.

Bringing Attendance Home

Winter Weather

As we approach the winter season, please be mindful of helping students dress appropriate for the weather. We go outside for recess anytime it is above 0 degress or -10 windchill.



Volunteer Background Check Information

We have been so happy to have more parents and families back in the building for volunteer opportunities. In order for a parent to be a volunteer, they need to have a current background check on file.
If anyone is unsure of whether or not they are current, they can call the office at 507-460-1300.

For people who need to complete a new check, it's done online, very quick and easy from the district website under the "Parents" dropdown menu:

https://www.rhris.com/ApplyNowV3/ApplyNowV3.cfm?SiteID=5039S&PNbr=4&OriginalURL=

Share

Southgate Artsonia

You can keep up to date on what your student is doing in art class by viewing their digital art portfolio on Artsonia. The online school gallery link is: Southgate Art Gallery
If you are not already connected to your student's art portfolio you can use this link to get connected: https://www.artsonia.com/connect/8PSSCT6D

You can then share artwork with friends and family and receive important updates on your child's art class activity. If you have questions or if your child already has an Artsonia account from a previous school, please email Mrs. Lennie at krystal.lennie@austin.k12.mn.us

Facebook Page

Please feel free to follow us on our Facebook Page! We often post daily events, upcoming activities and general information on this page.

https://www.facebook.com/Southgate492

Gator Gym News

Hello Gator Families!
October has been a busy month with the Gators. In Mr. Weis' class, the students have been working on their kicking skills primarily through soccer and fall fitness challenges throughout the month. Mr. Tharp's students have been working on overhand throwing and floor scooter lessons. With cold weather trickling in and winter boots starting to come out of storage, please make sure your child has tennis shoes for physical education class. Winter boots are not safe to wear in class as it poses a high risk of tripping and falling in addition to bringing in dirt/rocks into the gym which can increase the wear and tear of the gym floor. We have limited shoes available for students to borrow. If you have any gently used youth tennis shoes, we will be happy to take some.

Physical Activity Fact of the Month
As we head into cold/flu season, one way to help reduce the risk of getting it is through physical activity. Studies have shown that moderate physical activity can reduce your chances of getting upper respiratory tract infections such as a cold by 29% (Physical exercise Facts for Kids)! As the hours of daylight gets shorter, it is still important to prioritize physical activity for your child outside of school just for a little bit. Some examples of moderate physical activities can look like going for a walk, playing at the playground, playing catch and much more.

Family Physical Activities of the Month
As the temps get colder, people start venture inside more and a great inside activity to do as a family is to do video exercises like Just Dance, Yoga, Danny Go, and more!

Another form of physical activity inside is cleaning! Everyone's favorite word :), but having a family cleaning session not only provide low level physical activity, but also provide a mental health boost and sense of accomplishment. According to the American Cleaning Institute, 9 out 10 Americans reported feeling their best self after cleaning and having a clean home which reduces stress and anxiety and boost productivity and relationships.

Physical Education Reminders

Tennis Shoes Required

· For safety, all students must wear tennis shoes (sneakers) during PE class. Crocs, sandals, and boots are not recommended as it poses higher risk of tripping and falling.

· It is recommended that they have a pair in their locker or backpack every day to help ensure wearing a tennis shoe in class.

· If your child does not know how to tie their shoes, please help teach them at home or choose an alternative shoe that does not require tying. Here is a link for kids to watch to learn how to tie their shoes - HOW TO TIE YOUR SHOES - Easy for Kids!

Doctor Notes

· If your child is unable to participate in PE due to illness or injury, please send a doctor's note to the school office or PE teacher.

· The note should include the reason and the dates your child should be excused.

· For short-term absences due to injury/sickness (1-2 days), a parent email is sufficient. For longer absences, please provide a doctor's note.

Parent Emails

· If you have questions or need to communicate about your child's participation, feel free to email your child's physical education teacher.

Thank you for helping us keep Gator Gym a safe and fun place for everyone! If you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out.

Mr. Weis - alex.weis@austin.k12.mn.us

Mr. Tharp - brandon.tharp@austin.k12.mn.us

Southgate Elementary School
https://southgate.austin.k12.mn.us

1601 19th Avenue SW
Austin, MN 55912
507-460-1300

School Hours:
8:00AM - 2:30PM