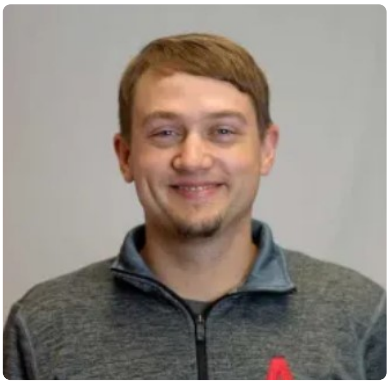


Minnesota School of Excellence

October 2026

Strategic Priorities Update

Message from Mr. Gus!



At Southgate Elementary, we believe learning extends far beyond the classroom walls. This fall, our students have been engaging in meaningful field trips and hands-on classroom learning experiences that connect lessons to the world around them. We have a fantastic October Family Fun Night which was a special opportunity for families, students, and staff to come together, celebrate our school community, and enjoy an evening of connection and fun. The Walk-a-Thon will surely be another great event tomorrow.

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 - October 2026 – Fill out form

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

I'm proud to announce that our Gators have earned their first building wide incentive for the year: All of our Gators will be getting additional recess time for their hard work. Our behavior interventionist, Josh McRae has been doing an amazing job with the Weekly Gator News bringing updates to our students, families and staff about what it means to be a GREAT Gator.

Our **Walk A Thon** at Southgate will be held at Southgate on Wednesday, October 7th. All families are welcome to come and walk for our Family Walk at 8:15am.

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.

Over the last 8 weeks our students have been able to visit the Apple Orchard, the Nature Center and work with Austin's fire department both on school skills, but also career paths and local community opportunities. We appreciate the partnerships we have with our local agencies in Austin!

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

Teachers and specialists meet in teams once a week in professional learning communities to plan lessons tailored to the individual needs of all students. Our School Leadership Team met over the summer and is excited to lead staff through exploring best practices for our reading instruction.

We are also beginning to assess students groups to ensure that we can provide instruction that helps our learners grow and accelerate in according with the district's Strategic Plan. These assessments will be conducted throughout September so that we can better gauge our student's learning.

4. Excellence in resource management.

This week our paraeducator group is fully staff gain as of last week. We are lucky to have an amazing group of people that help support our staff and our learners everyday.

We spent time at our last professional development reviewing new math standards, how reading standards can impact our grading practices, and reviewing student data to plan how to best use our instructional time and resources to meet the needs of our learners. It was incredible to see the level of engagement and care that our staff has for the students in the school.

Know

Walk-a-Thon

We're excited to kick off this year's district-wide PTC fundraiser, the Austin Elementary Schools Walkathon! Students from all four public elementary schools will be walking to raise funds that directly support positive behavior (PBIS) celebrations, family engagement nights, outdoor learning, spirit wear, and much more. Donations can be collected easily and securely online through FundHub, making it simple for family and friends near and far to participate. This fun and active event is a great way for our community to come together in support of every child in our schools! For details on how to register your child and start fundraising, please see the parent letter and video attached.

The Austin Elementary School Walk-a-Thon is happening on October 7th. This important fundraiser supports our students, staff, and school programs.

Referendum November 4

Southgate Elementary School

How the Proposed Referendum Would Impact Southgate Elementary

On November 3, Austin voters will decide on a proposed school facilities referendum. If approved, the referendum would fund improvements across the district, including several projects at Southgate Elementary.

At Southgate, planned improvements include exterior repairs, replacement of aging doors, electrical upgrades, ceiling replacements, restroom renovations, and updates to the storage building. These investments would help preserve and modernize spaces students use every day while ensuring the building remains safe, accessible, and functional for future generations of Southgate students.

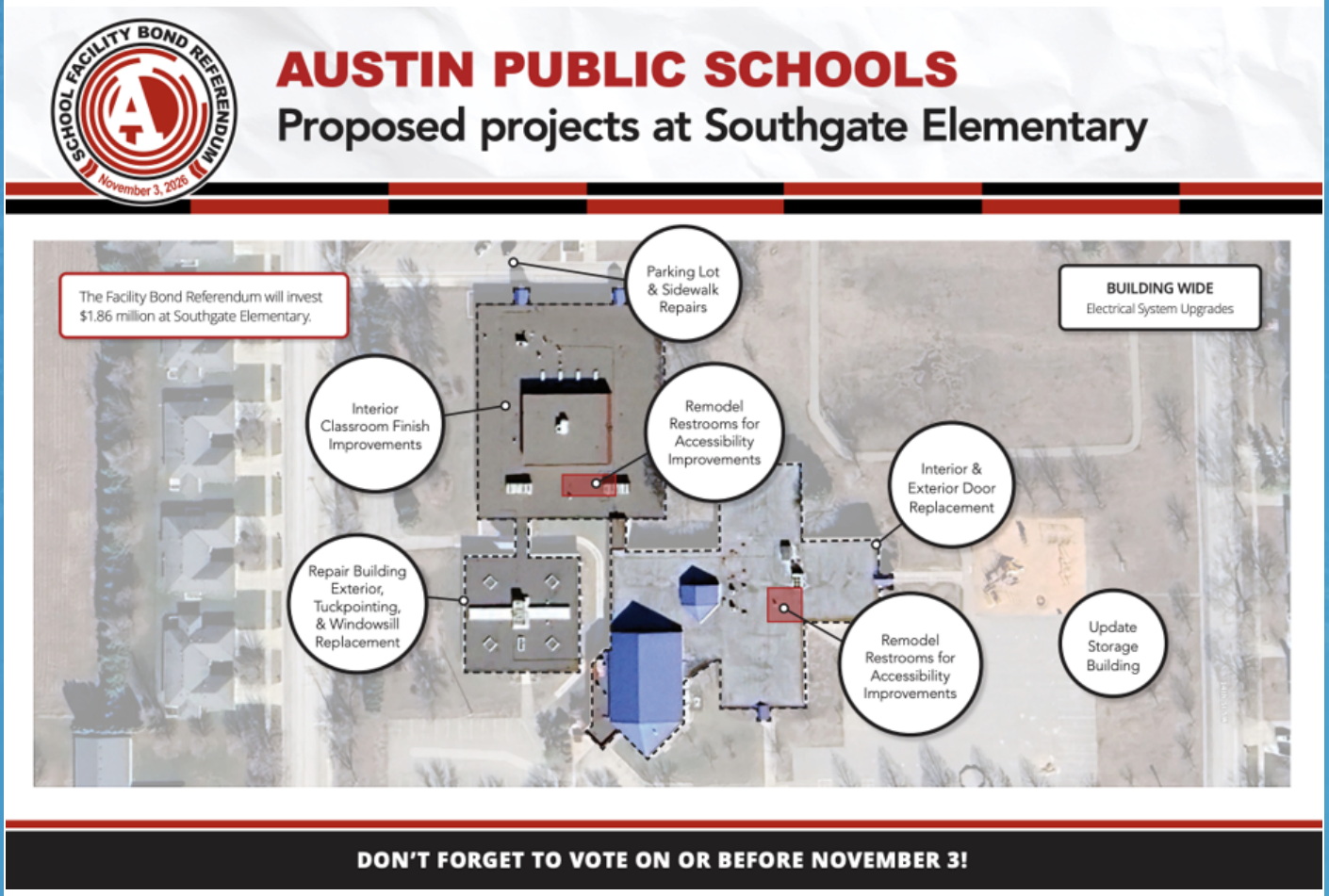
Referendum Resources to Learn More:

· **Watch Superintendent Dr. Joey Page's Presentation**

· **View the Districtwide Project Budget Breakdown**

· **Visit the Referendum Informational Webpage**

Make a plan to vote on or before November 3, 2026.



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**

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

October 14, 15 and 16th - No School - Break for Students
October 20th and 28th - Conferences from 4-8pm



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

Conference Sign Up

Conferences October 20 and 29th
Please use the link below to sign up for October Conferences at Southgate. If you have questions about how to sign up, please feel free to contact our main office!

Conference Sign Ups

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

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

Gator Gym News

Hello Gator Families!

September has been a great month with the Gators working on their throwing and catching abilities. To extend their learning outside of school, we highly encourage you to play catch or have them share what they know about throwing and catching. In addition to this, Mr. Weis' classes also did short frisbee unit, and the 3rd and 4th graders learned a little bit about disc golf. Here in Austin, we have three disc golf courses that are free to use which are at Todd Park, Driesner Park and Marcusen Park. Click this link "Disc Golf Courses in Austin MN" to learn more about each course. You can buy the disc locally at Dunham Sport, they have a beginner pack. Austin Park and Rec also offer youth opportunities to do disc golf. This is a great family physical activity to do that is inclusive of most ages.

Physical Activity Fact of the Month

Excessive screentime use is correlated to the lack of physical activity, which leads to a higher probability of overall health issues. It is recommended to set boundaries and limits around recreational screentime usage, see link for more information. Screen Time Vs Physical Activity: Finding the Right Balance

Family Physical Activities of the Month

Fall is here and that means the leaves are falling. Physical activity does not have to be sports or fitness related. In fact, it can look like doing yard work. Raking leaves into large piles while running and jumping into the pile is a great opportunity for physical activity for the family.
Fall is also the perfect season for family hikes and bike rides, with cool air, vibrant leaves, and the perfect chance to connect and create lasting memories together. Check out Discover Austin to find trails in Austin and other nearby areas.

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



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

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