
Conversation with the AISD Board of Trustees

ESAC Co-Chair, Jen Cregar, reached out to Trustees to invite them to the upcoming ESAC meeting and to ask questions about their role in environmental sustainability at the district. [Click here to read the full responses](#) from Trustee Lynn Boswell, District 5, and Trustee Noelita Lugo, At-Large Position 8.

"[The Board of Trustees] role includes two areas with a major impact on sustainability - our budgeting and spending, and our role in setting district policy. Used well, those are powerful tools to ensure that our actions match our ambitions. The ESAC can play a key part in both by making recommendations and helping us find more areas to move forward." - Trustee Boswell, District 5 (Read the rest here!).

Open Co-Chair Position

Larry Franklin, one of our ESAC Co-Chairs, is stepping down from his position but staying on as an ESAC member. We are grateful for his service on the ESAC, and that he will be staying on as a member. **We will be accepting nominations for a new Co-Chair to fill the vacant position.** The new Co-Chair will finish out a 2-year term which ends in May of 2024 (just over one year remaining). This is a volunteer position that requires about 2-3 hours per month in addition to regular ESAC meetings. If you are interested in nominating yourself or another member, please let us know by February 1st.

Nature Updates



AISD Staff at the Nature Play Training Workshop



Green School Park Sign

- A **Nature Play Training Workshop** was held November 15 and 16 2022 led by [Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds](#) and attended by representatives from AISD STEM Construction Management and Sustainability as well as City of Austin staff and local landscape architects. The training will inform future projects associated with the 2022 Bond.



AISD Staff at the Nature Play Training Workshop

- The **Green School Parks Designation** has officially rolled out! The goal of the [Green School Park Program](#) is to create a network of school parks that provide schools and the surrounding community the opportunity to learn from steward and play in nature. Green School Parks are school parks that are inclusive of traditional playground features but more notably have present abundant natural elements woven throughout the greenspace. There are currently 6 GSPs in our District with 10 more schools under (New and improved streamlined) review. We are committed to encouraging even more so we ordered lots of new designation signs to be posted at each new Green School Park!
 - **Spring It's My Park Day** will be **March 4, 2023**. At least 8 AISD campuses will be IMPD sites. You can [sign up here](#) starting Feb 6 to volunteer!
 - **PEAS Registration for the '23-'24 school year is open now.** You can learn more about programming and pricing [here](#). [Click here](#) to register!
 - The **Green School Administrator Cohort & Big Green Jumpstart Grant application is open.** The Cohort is a year-long professional-development opportunity to develop strategies for integrating outdoor learning and green campus infrastructure. Principals and partners this is a wonderful opportunity to collaborate! Cohort participants can use the Jumpstart Grant with partners on green school improvement and school outdoor learning initiatives. Here is the [link](#) to learn more. Cohort & Grant info session linked [HERE](#) will be held February 16th.
 - On **January 26th, Austin City Council approved the updated Joint Use agreement between AISD and the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department.** This marks the culmination of a multi-year effort to better support access to nature for students and school communities and improved outdoor learning features at schools.
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Transportation & Air Quality Updates



- **We are scheduled to receive 3 electric school buses in October 2023** and are currently installing charge stations at our Southeast Terminal.
- Unfortunately AISD was not awarded any grant funds from the Electric School Buses Grant from EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) for the first round of grant opportunities over the next 5 years. We will continue to apply for grants with EPA & TCEQ.
- We are open to any ideas on how to generate funds to continue to purchase Electric School Buses as the cost for one electric school bus is nearly 4 times the cost of one Diesel Engine School Bus
- AISD Transportation was [in the news](#) regarding proposed legislation ([Sentae Bill 238](#)) to help fund electric school buses.



AISD is scheduled to receive 3 electric school buses in October 2023

- ESAC member and Associate Director of Transportation Mike Rios will be representing AISD at the Inaugural Clean Energy Schools Symposium in Washington DC in March.

Energy & Water Updates



- AISD submitted its concept paper for the [Department of Energy's Renew America's School Grant](#) to fund **rooftop solar and energy efficiency projects**. Select applications will be invited to submit a full proposal in April. Fingers crossed!
- The Energy and Water Department in a coordinated effort with Austin Energy through the Energy Engagement program facilitated and distributed over 3 800 [Energy All-Star Kits](#) to 6th grader students and teachers to promote educate and help students and communities to save energy and water across the district and at their home.
- We are working on certifying [Energy Star Buildings](#) at our qualified campuses. Stay tuned!

Food Updates



Services Staff at The New World Bakery

- **We are creating weekly sustainability goals** for our kitchens starting this week all the way through Earth Week. These include things like updating the Share Tables and continuing to offer self serve condiments (reducing single serve containers).
- Our featured Winter menu items include **Whole Grain Cheesy Calzones Scratch-made Chili and Cornbread Cuban Chicken Bowls and Hot Honey Drumsticks with Biscuits**. In addition we will continue to offer our weekly themed salads and vegetarian offerings at every meal.
- Chef Diane Grodek will present with 2 members of the Center for Environmental Health at the [Green Schools Conference](#) in late February sharing successes and challenges from the Cafeteria when it comes to sustainable practices.
- With grant funding from Austin Ed Fund we completed 2 field trips with about 30 staff members that focused on sustainability global flavors and wellness. Our first sustainability field trip stop was to **Texas Disposal Systems** to see where our trash compost and recycling goes once it leaves our kitchen. Our second sustainability field trip was to **The New World Bakery** our local vendor who makes us whole grain preservative-free fresh bread items right down the road in Kyle Texas.



Food Services Staff at Texas Disposal Systems (TDS)

- **We celebrated the holidays with a lean towards sustainability by creating a cafeteria decorating competition** and encouraged our teams to use only items they already had on hand. You wouldn't believe the creativity that came out of cardboard warehouse boxes empty cans tin foil and packaging materials!



Sustainable holiday decorations in school cafeterias using all reused materials

Zero Waste & Procurement Updates



- **We have updated sorting signs!** They are available to all teachers staff and students in the zero waste toolkit (see right side of [this web page](#)).
- **Assessment visits** have been performed at high schools by the Zero Waste Lead Ana Echeverria to encourage promote and enforce Waste Sorting practices at the district while engaging personnel to commit to AISD Zero Waste strategies.
- **"Reusing" has become part of the strategies promoted by Austin ISD during the 2022-2023 year.** With the help of Housekeeping Operations personnel the Energy & Water Department and our painting shop AISD Zero Waste have distributed 7-gallon bins adapted for recycling at elementary schools. These bins originally intended for landfill were donated to the school district through National Instruments and have been repurposed saving money to the school district and diverting resources from the landfill.

Equity & Community Engagement Updates



- The ESAC subcommittee continues to meet bi-weekly. Members are currently reaching out to teachers and students for one-on-one discussions to help shape recruitment gaps. This is one step in the [Equity by Design framework](#) that we are using to guide our process.
- The subcommittee is also reviewing edits to the ESAC website which will be updated soon.
- The subcommittee will share a recruitment toolkit this spring in advance of the application period that will kick off in April. All current members will be asked to reapply.