

AISD Sustainability & ESAC Updates

March 26, 2025

Greetings, AISD Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee (ESAC) members and friends of AISD Sustainability,

Please see below for the latest highlights of sustainability news and info from our AISD staff and ESAC working group leaders.

ESAC members, thank you for joining the upcoming 3/26 ESAC meeting. We look forward to a productive and engaging conversation!

ESAC Meeting Reminders



March 26th: AISD Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee (ESAC) Meeting

- March 26th - Join the [virtual meeting](#), 5:30-7:30PM
- See the [ESAC webpage](#) for the meeting agenda, upcoming meeting dates, and previous meeting materials.
- We are accepting nominations for outgoing Co-Chair Jeff Wacker's position, to serve from August 2025 - May 2027. Please consider nominating yourself or someone else by Friday, May 8, 2025 by filling out the nomination form [here](#).

AISD Staff Updates

The below updates are from AISD staff and departments that are contributing to AISD's sustainability efforts.

austinisd.org/sustainability



Sustainability (Update from Darien Clary & Carsen Daniel)

- **Earth Week (and a half) at Austin ISD** will be April 21-30. We extended the dates this year to accommodate standardized testing. We are updating the website, and please feel free to peruse last year's [website](#).
- The [AISD Sustainable Schools Course](#) is now available on BLEND. This course, co-created with EcoRise, helps teachers and staff perform simple actions to create a healthier learning and work environment and foster student learning about sustainability. AISD staff and teachers can enroll [here](#).
- The 9th annual **EcoRise Student Innovation Showcase** will be Thursday, May 15th from 5:30-7:00pm at Austin City Hall.
- **AISD Director of Sustainability, Darien Clary, was awarded the [National Best of Green Schools School District Champion Award](#)** which recognizes school staff working at the district level who have demonstrated a strong commitment to promoting greener and healthier K-12 schools and who are leaders in their communities.

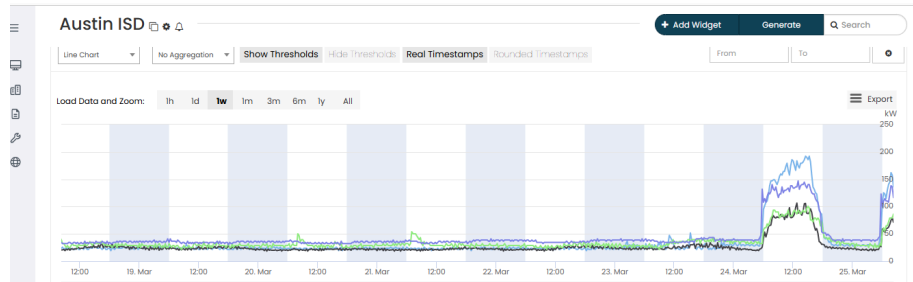
Darien received her award at the US Green Building Council Center for Green Schools Conference on March 5th. [Instagram](#) | [Linkedin](#)

- **USGBC Green Apple Day of Service.** On Saturday, March 1st, our team partnered with Shivani Langer at Perkins & Will for the [USGBC Green Apple Day of Service](#). We raised over \$5500 and hosted over 60 volunteers to assemble and paint 35 tables at Reilly Elementary. Special shoutout to ESAC members, Gabriella Bermea and Catherine Martinez, for coming out to volunteer, as well as the amazing donors and sponsors of the event: Perkins & Will, Perkins Eastman, Balfour Beatty, Coleman & Associates, Lowes, Texas Disposal Systems, and Landscape Forms. [Instagram](#) | [Linkedin](#)



Energy & Water (Update from Rey Torres & Louis Zachary)

- The AISD Building Automation Controls Team establishes “unoccupied” HVAC schedules to ensure energy conservation during spring break. This image shows that the measure worked, as you can see the low energy use before returning back to school on Monday, March 24th. The return is visible by the higher energy use levels to the right of the graph. Not all schools have building automation, but the 2022 Bond is making this technology available at more schools through control system upgrades.




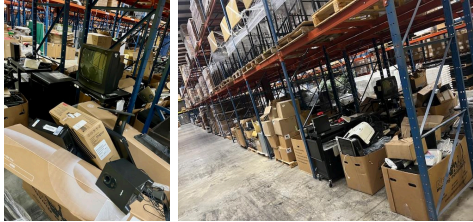

Transportation (Update from Rica Sunga-Kwan, Kris Hafezizadeh, Miguel Rios)

- Transportation continues to pilot 3 electric buses and they are all on different routes.



Sustainable Food (Update from Diane Grodek & Lindsey Bradley)

- Spring menus start the week after we return from Spring break
 - Philly Cheesesteaks
 - Pimento Grilled Cheese Sandwiches
 - Penne Alfredo
 - Honeydew Melon
- Look for local food all Earth Week (and year round!) including beef from Augustus Ranch, Tortilla products from Fiesta, bread and rolls from New World Bakery!
- On April 4 we will sample a pasta salad at all levels featuring local Marzano Tomatoes and parsley

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If you would like to offer produce from your school garden in the cafeteria, reach out to diane.grodek@austinisd.org to be certified for our Garden to Cafe program!
	<p>Warehouse (Update from Mark Curtis)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Since the start of this school year, we have recycled > 17 tons of scrap metal <div data-bbox="797 378 1266 598">  </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Every month, the warehouse collects and sends approximately 2000 cubic feet of obsolete, broken, and surplus electronics to our approved ITAD (IT Asset Disposition) vendors where these items are scrubbed of data, sold by consignment, recycled, or disposed of under EPA guidance. While some items cost to dispose of, the bulk of the usable items offset these costs and generate funds that go back to the district.
	<p>Nature & Outdoor Learning (Update from Colleen Garland & Mandi Golman)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We have a new team member in Outdoor Learning who will be working on field trips and at the OWL Center at Metz. Welcome Joanna Orozco! ● Congrats to Overton Elementary for becoming recognized as a Green School Park! Any school campus within Austin ISD has the opportunity to apply to be a Green School Park and receive the official designation. AISD currently has 16 Green School Park campuses (more info). ● The Dept. of Education Outdoor Learning grant has purchased PEAS guidebooks for every AISD elementary school to support outdoor learning curriculum. PEAS is hosting training sessions for educators on TEKS aligned curriculum that can be taught outdoors. ● We collected nature play materials such as cookies, stumps and boulders from PARD to use at a few different schools and to keep on site for the OWL Center at Metz. Construction for the OWL Center play features begins in April!



Urban Forestry (Update from Sydnie Levell)

- We have had two very successful volunteer plantings at:
 - TA Brown Elementary (partnership with TreeFolks) - the campus received 30 trees and over 70 community members came out to help! [Instagram](#)
 - Ann Richards School for Young Women Leaders (Sponsored by HEB) - The campus received 30 trees planted by campus students and HEB volunteers! [Instagram](#)
- The final tree planting of the season will be at Manchaca Elementary on Saturday, March 29th, in partnership with TreeFolks.



Planning & Asset Management (update from Dr. Raechel French)

- Dr. Wendy Mills will be presenting with Kirksey Architecture on the process for Norman-Sims ES at “Gulf Coast Green” later this month! Dr. Mills was the principal of Norman-Sims ES during design and now serves our district as an Executive Director.

ESAC Updates

This section includes news and updates from AISD Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee Working Groups.

austinisd.org/advisory-bodies/esac



Greenies Connect! (Resource List)

- Group Leader: Jen Cregar
 - Our goal: To support campus sustainability initiatives by matching ESAC members who have sustainability interests and skills with teachers and staff looking for sustainability support.
 - Status: Seeking teacher feedback on the best way to accomplish the above goal.
 - THANK YOU to the 32 ESAC members (out of 36) who took our survey. More to come pending teacher feedback!



Outdoor Amenity Rehoming & Mapping

- Group Leaders: Melody Alcazar + Yasmine Anderson + Mandi Golman
 - Hoping to restart mapping this summer, looking for volunteers
 - Trying new mapping software in the hopes to speed up the process
 - Data + cost analysis complete, will use to draft summary of findings and recommendations for Board



Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Green Career Pathways

- Group Leader: Mo Beacham + Mike Eggen
- Focused on creating resources for AI and Sustainability
- Tour de Buzz: An accessible immersive experience for Earth Day. Inviting students who want to learn about app development and sustainability, April 20th. [Register here.](#)



Legislative Affairs

- Group Leader: Catherine Martinez
 - Focusing on getting additional student and campus staff involvement
 - Trustee Boswell hosted ESAC members on a field trip to the State Capitol on Saturday, February 22nd where we learned how to provide testimony and navigate the building. [Instagram](#)
 - Next Capitol Tour on April 5th at 9:30am. Register to receive a calendar invite: <https://forms.gle/kdnUpbUiHhN9XgV8A>
 - Building toolkits and open to tips and feedback



Zero Waste (ZW)

- Group Leader: Lavanya Selvam Alli
- Our goal is to roll out a comprehensive ZW strategy across AISD for the 2025-2026 school year (signages, bins/liners, education, volunteers)
 - Updated Audit questions (AISD Food Services & TDS insights)
 - ZW Audits at school cafeterias are ongoing
 - Meetings with AISD Communications/Voly and ACPTA on this initiative



Energy Engagement

- Group Leader(s): Rey Torres & Tamera Tate
- Met with AISD STEM administrators, and connected them with the [Austin Energy All Stars Program](#) Administrator. She provided information for their newsletter about electrical safety presentations that meet science and math requirements.
- Invited the Austin Energy Solar team to meet with Akins High School students.
- EcoRise and Solar Austin held a solar energy training with students at the Foundation Communities on Slaughter Lane.
- EcoRise has partnered with Austin Energy to create a renewable energy section in the [Sustainable Intelligence Curriculum](#). This includes lesson plans that focus on solar energy in schools.



Walk 'n' Roll to School

- Group Leader(s): Sahiti Karempudi (Sub: Bobby Sandoval)
 - Sahiti's role has changed within Safe Routes to School: Please relay all future comments and concerns regarding Safe Routes to School to saferoutestoschool@austintexas.gov or amir.emamian@austintexas.gov. If you would like to reach me, my email address will remain the same.
- Kidical Mass is happening 4/26! Meet at General Marshall Middle School from 9-noon.
 - [Volunteers can sign up here!](#)
 - [Sign up to borrow a bike from Ghisallo here!](#)
- We continue to work on a Back to School Bash for the 2025-26 school year at AISD. We would like to offer Safety Checks and give information about Active / Sustainable transportation and alternatives to families.
- We continue to work on AISD Transportation webpage updates that outline all transportation options.

Resources: [AISD Sustainability Website](#) | [Sustainability Resource for Schools Flyer](#)
[ESAC Google Drive](#) | [ESAC Website](#) | [ESAC Working Group Notes Folders](#) | ESAC listserv:
aisd_esac@googlegroups.com

(If you need access to the ESAC Google Drive or listserv, please contact
carsen.daniel@austinisd.org)

Kind regards,
Darien Clary

Darien G. Clary, MPH
Sustainability Director
Austin Independent School District
e: darien.clary@austinisd.org
p: 512.414.3042
AISD staff can call direct via Microsoft Teams
austinisd.org/sustainability

