

AISD Sustainability, Energy, and Environment & ESAC Updates

September 24, 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 9/24 ESAC meeting. We look forward to a productive and engaging conversation in-person!

ESAC Meeting Reminders



September 24th: AISD Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee (ESAC) Meeting

- **Meeting Details:** We'll be gathering *in person* from **5:30–7:30 PM** at the [AISD Outdoor Wonder and Learning Center \(OWL\)](#), formerly Metz Elementary, 84 Robert T Martinez Jr. St.
 - Snacks will be provided. Don't forget your reusable water bottle!
 - We will end the meeting with a tour of the OWL Center.

AISD Staff Updates

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

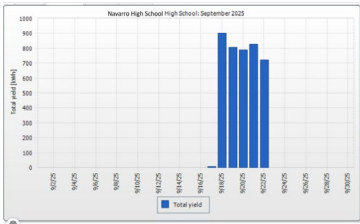
austinisd.org/sustainability



Sustainability (Update from Darien Clary & Carsen Daniel)

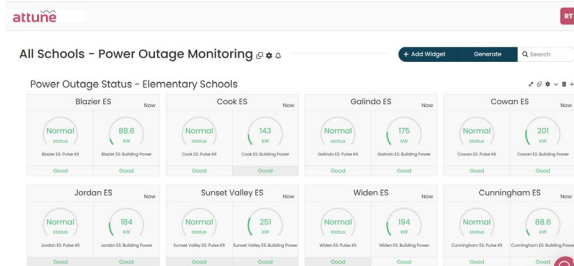
- AISD Sustainability has partnered with the City of Austin's Office of Climate Action and Resilience and Keep Austin Beautiful for this year's CoA [Food Waste Innovation Grant](#) "Zero Waste Heroes" to reduce food waste in three of our schools: Overton Elementary, General Marshall Middle School, and Eastside Early College High School.
- This summer, AISD Sustainability & AISD Warehouse connected with Harvest Lumber to [salvage wood materials](#) from the Anita Ferrales Coy Facility in East Austin, which is undergoing a full demolition to make way for affordable housing.
- Austin ISD Sustainability and Outdoor Learning are partnering with [National Wildlife Federation EcoSchools US](#) for the first AISD Green Team Leaders Collaborative, offering grant-funded stipends to 20 educators across 14 campuses to launch green teams at their school, get eco-certified, and attend professional development workshops throughout the year.

- US Green Building Council's Texas chapter hosted a [Green Building tour](#) at Eastside Early College High School on Tuesday 9/23 to celebrate Eastside's recently awarded [AIA National Education Facility Design award](#) for its design that intentionally connects a marginalized community, acknowledging its past, supporting its present, and offering opportunities for its future.
- **Follow us on social media!** Austin ISD Sustainability is now on [Linkedin](#) & [Bluesky](#), in addition to our [Instagram](#) and [Twitter/X](#) accounts.



Energy & Water (Update from Rey Torres, Louis Zachary, Darien Clary, & Carsen Daniel)

- Rey has engaged with Holt Renewables, which installed several AISD solar projects in 2017. They have repaired the photovoltaic system at Navarro HS and will also repair the system at Paredes MS.
- Learn more about [renewable energy at AISD](#).
- Rey is working on getting the AISD Utility Dashboard updated for public view.
- We are installing power meters at schools which enable AISD to remotely monitor power status in real-time, which is important during bad weather and disaster response. They also enable us to verify load reduction during load curtailment requests from Austin Energy. AISD aims to have power meters in all schools. Currently, **40** schools have power meters. All 2017 and 2022 bond schools include power meters.



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

- The Electric Bus Master Plan has been completed and will be shared with the board this winter.



Sustainable Food (Update from Diane Grodek & Lindsey Bradley)

- We kicked off the school year introducing some new plant-based dishes, Korean Rebellyous Kickin' Tenders with Ramen at secondaries, and Falafel with Pita Bread at elementary schools. We received positive feedback on the falafel, with some campuses sharing how students were excited to have a taste of home served at school.
- We will celebrate National School Lunch Week, October 14-17! The theme this year is Taste the World: Your School Lunch Passport. Our menus will feature global inspired recipes from Peru (Peruvian Chicken Drumstick and Quinoa Chaufa), Italy (Penne and Sauce), India (Chana Masala), and El Salvador (Pupusas, Curtido and Plantains).
- October is also Farm to School Month and we will join districts across the state in participating in Texas Department of Agriculture's Farm Fresh Challenge! We will be highlighting local vendors throughout the month, as well as featuring Apples from Idalou, TX, Sweet Potatoes from Fredericksburg, TX, and Watermelon from Edinburg, TX.
- During the week of October 27th, we will roll out our new Fall Harvest Salad! It has local apples and roasted sweet potatoes, alongside lettuce, dried cherries, chicken or chickpeas and a scratch-made honey mustard dressing!
- The Food Service Department has a goal of reducing single-use, disposable items by \$250,000 for this school year!
 - Our teams have been working on small tweaks in the kitchens to achieve this goal including setting up fewer trash and compost cans per kitchen (to save on bags) and offering more self-serve options than we ever have before!



Warehouse (Update from Mark Curtis)

- The warehouse team has recycled **46,000** pounds of mixed metal since the start of the school year.
- [Battery recycling buckets](#) have been distributed to all AISD campus and facility locations.

Battery Recycling

- AISD batteries only - no household batteries.
- Place tape on ends of battery.
- Use the bucket provided by AISD Central Warehouse for battery collection.
- All damaged batteries should be bagged individually.
- We do not accept lead-acid, wet cell, or leaking batteries.
- We will pickup and replace your bucket with an AISD Help request.

How to Recycle Batteries:

TAPE & SEPARATE!

Cover all lithium battery terminals with tape and separate them from other batteries.

For pickup, submit AISD Help request to the warehouse:

Questions?
Call 512-414-6060



Nature & Outdoor Learning (Update from Colleen Garland, Mandi Golman, & Joanna Orozco)

- Outdoor Learning has made their website live. Check it out [here!](#)
- Through grant funding, we have finished assembling 167 Outdoor Learning wagons and have distributed 2 carts to all 82 elementary schools and to 3 middle schools in the district!



- We also are providing the [Easy PEASy Guidebook](#) to every elementary school as well as their [TEKS aligned lessons online](#) (Teachers: for login info, contact OWL@austinisd.org or ask your campus librarian).
- You are invited! The [Outdoor Wonder and Learning Center](#) ribbon cutting will be [September 26th at 10:00 am](#) and will host its first field trip for Sanchez Elementary. Join us! Read the recent feature in the Austin Chronicle [here](#).
- We hosted a clean up of the Metz courtyard with the help of AISD volunteer staff. Zilker Botanical Gardens donated fairy materials from their [Woodland Faerie Trail](#) and we were able to reuse them in the courtyard. Austin Watershed hosted their first Earth Camp 9/17 and enjoyed the renovated space.
- OWL and Office of Sustainability will be launching new efforts to proliferate Green Teams and help all AISD campuses register to be an [EcoSchool](#) through the [National Wildlife Federation](#).



Urban Forestry (Update from Sydnie Levell)

- Summer work with TxCC is completed! They will return in fall for a few weeks and next summer to continue to provide care to campus trees. Crews cared for over 700 trees at four AISD facilities and sixteen campuses last season.
- Multiple crew members are now interested in Urban Forestry career pathways with one member already approved to sit for the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Certified Arborist exam.
- Sydnie will be attending the ISA Texas Chapter Conference the last week of September.

ESAC Updates

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

austinisd.org/advisory-bodies/esac



Welcome Back, ESAC!

- We are excited to begin the 2025-26 school year!
- You should have received invitations for all the ESAC meetings this year. All are 5:30-7:30pm. Dates:
 - September 24, 2025 (in person, AISD OWL Center)
 - November 19, 2025 (virtual)
 - January 21, 2026 (virtual)
 - March 25, 2026 (virtual)
 - May 20, 2026 (in-person, location TBD)
- You can always check the [ESAC website](#) for meeting dates, agendas, and materials.

ESAC 2025-26 Working Groups

- This is the list of [possible working group topics](#) that emerged in the 8/8 ESAC Strategic Planning Meeting.
- ESAC Members: please sign up for the working group you would like to serve. We will also have time during the 9/24 meeting to hear about each working group if you are undecided.
- Have an idea for a new working group you would like to lead? That's great! We'll have time for members to share additional working group ideas at the 9/24 meeting.



Greenies Connect! (Resource List)

- Group Leader: Jen Cregar
 - This working group was created during the 2024-25 school year to make it easier for schools to connect with each other, ESAC members, and community partners and volunteers to advance campus sustainability initiatives. We discovered AISD's new volunteer collaboration tool, [Voly](#), that could be used to match interested ESAC members with sustainability volunteer opportunities at AISD campuses. We'll meet early this year to decide what additional work this group may wish to pursue or whether we feel we've met our purpose.



Student Civic Engagement

- Group Leader: Catherine Martinez
 - After a successful year of trial and error in the 2024-25 school year the Legislative Affairs Working Group is transforming into the Student Civic Engagement Working Group! The hope is that this pivot will allow for more engagement and learning opportunities for students and the community.



Energy & Water Engagement

- Group Leader(s): Rey Torres & Tamera Tate & [Aubrey Lethbridge](#)
 - We have discussed some ways to incorporate water into this subcommittee. Aubrey and Rey are going to meet to discuss this before the October ESAC meeting.
 - Tamera has 8 electrical training sessions scheduled



Zero Waste

- Group Leader(s): Lavanya Selvam Alli
 - We are planning to involve ACPTA (Austin Council of PTA's) to recruit parent/caregiver volunteers to help with zero waste management at school cafeterias and continue meaningful conversations with the custodial team to ensure unanimity in zero waste process across all schools.

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Resources: [AISD Sustainability Website](#) | [Sustainability Resources 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,
AISD Sustainability Department, Darien Clary & Carsen Daniel

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