

AISD Sustainability, Energy, and Environment & ESAC Updates

November 17, 2026

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

Please see the November 2026 Newsletter 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 11/17 virtual ESAC meeting. We look forward to a productive and engaging conversation!

ESAC Meeting Reminders	
	**November 17th AISD Environmental Stewardship Advisory Committee (ESAC) Meeting** ● **Meeting Details**: ○ Join us virtually on 11/17, 5:30-7:30pm! ○ See the ESAC webpage for the meeting agenda, upcoming meeting dates, and previous meeting materials.
District Update	
	● **AISD Board of Trustees Election Results & Legislative Priorities.** Congratulations to our newly elected and returning board members: Candance Hunter (District 1, *incumbent*), Jessica Neufeld (District 4), Sarah Dille (District 6), Laurie Solis (District 7), and Pamela Mathai (District 9). See results here & the Board's priorities for the 90th Legislative Session.
AISD Staff Updates The below updates are from AISD staff and departments that are contributing to AISD's sustainability efforts. austinisd.org/sustainability	



Job Alert! We are hiring for three positions to join the Sustainability, Energy, & Environment Department:

- **Analyst Building and Environmental Scientist -** Apply Here **|** Job Description **|** Pay Range (AUX 12): $28.590 - $36.093/hr **|** AISD Compensation Manual - *two (2) positions open*
- **Landscape Irrigator** *(TCEQ irrigator license required)* - Apply Here **|** Job Description **|** Pay Range (AUX 10): $25.330-$31.575/hr
- **Please share!** If you know someone who is interested, please refer them to Mandi.Golman@austinisd.org for the irrigation role and Chris.Papick@austinisd.org for the environmental role.



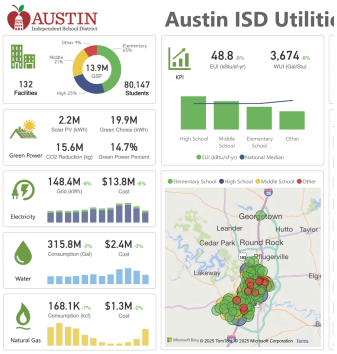






Sustainability, Energy, & Environment (Update from Darien Clary & Carsen Daniel)

- **Enroll now in the Sustainable Schools Course!** Staff and Teachers can **now enroll** in the Sustainable Schools Course for the 2026-27 school year on Google Classroom, created in collaboration with AISD Sustainability, STEM, and EcoRise. By completing this course and receiving 100% on all topic quizzes before May 5th, teachers will receive **4 PLED hours** in a Personal Learning Plan.
- **Recycling & Composting Awards.** Congratulations to St. Elmo Elementary, Gus Garcia YMLA, and Garza Independence High School for winning the October Recycling & Composting Competition. On Nov 5th, H-E-B visited all three campuses with HEBuddy to present $5,000 checks, and Golden Trashcan Awards from TDS. 📸See photos here!
- **Host an Intern!** Support social impact and green career pathways by hosting an intern this summer through the Austin ISD Summer Internship Program. The interest form for hosts and students opens in December.
- **Green Team Leaders Complete Fall Workshop.** In Sept., we kicked off our fall Green Team Leaders Accelerator workshop at Odom Elementary with 40 educators from 25 campuses! These leaders will guide school green teams, drive sustainability projects, earn NWF certifications, and receive stipends for their work. **Special thanks to Texas Disposal Systems (TDS), the Austin Ed Fund, and the City of Austin for making this program possible!**
- **ASES National Solar Award.** Congratulations to Darien Clary, Director of Sustainability, Energy, & Environment, who received the Clean Energy Innovation and Education Award from the American Solar Energy Society. During the SOLAR 2026 Conference Darien and Carsen Daniel (Sustainability Coordinator) also presented on engaging students in solar energy.

	• **Austin Sustainable Building Materials Forum.** On Nov 13th, Darien Clary spoke on a panel at the Austin Sustainable Building Materials Forum to share AISD's efforts in building partnerships and creating value from salvaged and reclaimed building materials. • **Follow us on social media!** Linkedin | Instagram
	**Energy & Water** (Update from Reynaldo Torres, Darien Clary, & Carsen Daniel) • **Cost Savings at Wooten Elementary.** Thanks to HVAC optimizations, Wooten Elementary reduced its peak demand for September saving over $1,500 in a single month. This adjustment will reduce $15-$20K in utility costs at the school over the year! • **Automated Bill Entry Is Here!** Rey Torres has officially launched automated utility bill entry for AISD. This will save our team countless hours and make tracking campus utility usage more accurate. Check on the **AISD utilities dashboard** to see your campus usage!
	**Transportation** (Update from Kris Hafezizadeh & Miguel Rios) • **Perez Elementary 20th Year Celebration.** On Oct. 30th, AISD Transportation joined Perez Elementary's 20th Anniversary and Fall Festival with a special decorated school bus to help mark this milestone! • **AISD Anti-Idling Reminder.** Idling more than 5 minutes is prohibited by City of Austin Ordinance and by AISD's Policy for District Vehicles (Driver Safety Rules, Rule 17), including buses. We ask families to protect young lungs by **turning off your engines, especially during school dropoff and pickup.** The Air Quality Toolkit has resources for your school's anti-idling campaigns.







Sustainable Food (Update from Diane Grodek & Lindsey Bradley)

- This holiday season, we are promoting our **Season of Giving** campaign to help pay off negative meal account balances for students across the district, which has a rolling average of nearly $40,000 each day. You can learn more and donate here.
- All **Kerbey Lane All Day Cafe** locations are donating a portion of all their sales of Queso to offset student negative fund balances for school meals. Support your local Kerbey Lane today!
- Our **winter menu** cycle begins the week of Nov. 30th, bringing new variety and dishes to AISD cafeterias. We are excited to introduce **Afia Falafel** at all schools this winter, a tasty plant-based option prepared from scratch using whole ingredients in Taylor, TX.
- AISD Recognized for Good Food Leadership. On Oct. 20th, we brought together representatives from the Center for Good Food Purchasing, City of Austin, Texas Department of Agriculture, and a few of our local producers to celebrate Austin ISD being recognized with Good Food Leader: Silver status, following our most recent Good Food Purchasing Program Assessment.
- Throughout October, we celebrated the **Texas Department of Agriculture's Farm Fresh Challenge** by highlighting locally sourced produce, dairy, grains, and proteins across our schools!



Warehouse (Update from Mark Curtis)

The AISD Warehouse recovers end-of-life electronics from district facilities and partners with certified IT Asset Disposition (ITAD) vendors for responsible e-waste recycling.

- **Revenue Generation:** While most older electronics carry a recycling cost, remarketable items generated **$46,893.50** back to the district in FY26.
- **Data Security:** All data-storing devices undergo strict sanitization and destruction to protect student and staff privacy.
- **Full Compliance:** Our partners provide certified reporting to ensure adherence to all environmental and regulatory standards.
- **Battery Recycling:** Need to dispose of used batteries? The warehouse provides and collects battery recycling buckets. Submit an **AISD Help** ticket to request one!





Outdoor Wonder & Learning (OWL) (Update from Colleen Garland, Joanna Orozco)

- **Volunteer Workday.** See "Upcoming Events" below! On Dec 3rd, the OWL Center is having a volunteer planting workday organized by the National Wildlife Federation and BDO Bank. Thanks to BDO for donating habitat plants! Reach out to Colleen Garland, AISD Outdoor Learning Specialist, if you'd like to join!
- **New Accessible Water Feature.** In September, together with Austin Watershed and a YFC volunteer, we installed a triple-stage water trough along the ADA pathway at the OWL Center.
- **Field Trips Underway.** We have finally begun OWL Center field trips this school year! With limited spots, we are prioritizing Band 1 and 2 schools for scheduling.
- **Girls+Outside Mentorship Training.** In October, the OWL Center hosted five days of hands-on mentorship training for our Girls+Outside middle and high school students participating in our Girls+Outside program.
- **Get kids outside!** New data from the Children and Nature Network shows a sharp decline in children and youth time spent outdoors today than 15 years ago, with 6 out of 10 children getting less than 4 hours outside in nature a week; that's an average of less than 30 minutes a day. Get kids outside!



Grounds, Schoolyards, and Urban Forestry (Update from Mandi Golman, Sydnie Levell, & Darien Clary)

- **AISD continues to work alongside the Texas Conservation Corps (TxCC)** to care for our district's urban tree canopy. As we look toward future projects, our team is actively pursuing grant opportunities to keep this vital partnership growing.
- **Safety Milestones for Grounds.** Our mowing crews have been working hard to maintain campus grounds across the district. Thanks to enhanced safety training meetings launched earlier this year, the team has reduced workplace injuries.

ESAC Updates

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

austinisd.org/advisory-bodies/esac



Upcoming ESAC Meetings:

- November 17, 2026 (virtual)
- January 28, 2026 (virtual)
- April 1, 2026 (virtual)
- May 19, 2026 (in-person, TBD)

You can always check the ESAC website for future meeting dates, agendas, and materials.



Active & Sustainable Transportation

Group Leader: Bobby Quindlen Sandoval

- **Community Night Bike Ride Through the Muller Lights.** Join us on December 12 for a festive rise through the Mueller lights! Meet at Blanton Elementary at 6:30pm or Marshall Middle School at 7pm to enjoy hot chocolate and cider before the ride begins at 7:30pm (returning by 9pm).
- The **Texas Trails and Active Transportation (TTAT) Conference** has just come to a close. Ms. Gutierrez of GetThereATX was a presenter of Safe Routes efforts. Ms. Sandoval was able to participate and learned a lot about advocating for sustainable transportation and bringing about change. The next conference in 2028!



Cafeteria Zero Waste

Group Leaders: Lavanya Selvam Alli & Jengo Wiley Russell

- **Campus Waste Sorting & PTA Outreach.** Our group is rolling out targeted support to improve waste sorting across AISD campuses:
  - **Elementary Outreach.** Using Golden Trashcan metrics to identify campuses needing the most support, we've made a list of AISD Elementary School PTAs to reach out to to collaborate.
  - **Middle & High School Engagement.** At secondary campuses, Green Team leaders will work directly with students to lead sorting efforts.



Energy & Water Conservation

Group Leaders: Rey Torres, Tamera Tate, Aubrey Lethbridge , Carsen Daniel

- **Solar Summit interest forms** have been sent out to elementary schools and we've already received responses! We are excited to continue our collaboration with Austin Energy to advance solar student engagement.
- **Austin Energy Training.** Tamara Tate and her team have completed 18 training sessions related to Renewable Energy, Electrical Safety, Electrical Distribution since the school year started!

	• **Water Conservation Lessons.** EcoRise offers a water conservation module across grades K-12 under Green Building Lessons. We are excited to share this opportunity with our educators! • **Friends of Dowser Dan (K–2 Water Conservation Assemblies).** A free, TEKS-aligned interactive school assembly series is now available for elementary campuses! Launched by the Colorado River Alliance in partnership with Austin Water and Austin ISD, bookings are open for Spring (Jan–May) and Fall (Sept–Dec) sessions. • **Free Field Trips & School Visits!** Looking to bring Texas water science to life for your students? The Colorado River Alliance offers additional free, TEKS-aligned programs for AISD and Central Texas campuses. Learn more here under "Programs"!
	**Get Schools Growing/Garden to Café** Group Leaders: Carsen Daniel & Mandi Golman • **Garden Manual Coming Soon!** Our working group is working on a school garden manual to be completed by the end of this school year. This manual will help campuses to set their school produce gardens and livestock areas up for success. • **Vegetable to Classroom Garden.** Working with Lamar Middle School to discuss the potential of getting a school vegetable garden to be used by the culinary class. • If your school is interested in starting a school food production garden, we would love to chat! Reach out to Carsen Daniel and/or Mandi Golman.

📅 Upcoming Events

Pecan Spring Elementary Grand Opening! Join AISD in celebrating the grand opening of Pecan Springs Elementary made possible by the 2022 Bond Program. Nov 19 **|** 2:30 - 3:30pm **|** 3210 Rogge, Ln, Austin, TX 78723 **|** Link

Holiday Reuse Art Market. Join Austin Creative Reuse to discover 50+ local reuse vendors, eco-friendly crafts, games, adoptable dogs, food trucks, and more! Nov 28-29 & Dec 5-6 **|** 11am - 4pm **|** Learn more here!

17th Annual Green Schools Conference (GSC). Join us for sessions and local tours featuring Austin ISD projects and presenters! Feb 8-10, 2027 **|** Downtown Hyatt Regency

- **Registration** is now open with discounts and scholarships for educators, students, school district staff, non-profit leaders, and green building professionals. Early bird pricing ends after ***November 30, 2026.***
- Become a sponsor to support scholarships and the conference.

Owl Center Volunteer Workday. Want to get your hands dirty? Join the OWL Center for a hands-on volunteer workday organized by the National Wildlife Federation and BDO Bank. Reach out to Colleen Garland, AISD Outdoor Learning Specialist, to sign up! Dec 3rd **|** 2-5pm **|** The Outdoor Learning and Wonder Center (METZ)
Community Night Bike Ride. Bundle up to join Marshall Middle School & Active Middle School Communities for a night bike ride through the Muller holiday lights! Dec 12 | Blanton El (6:30pm), Marshall MS (7pm; hot chocolate & cider served)
2027 Students Speak Out for Climate Contest. Invite your students to share their perspectives on climate change and environmental justice! Students submit a two-minute video speech responding to provided prompts for a chance to win a cash prize bundle and more. Due Dec 15, 2026 **|** Learn more here.
Arbor Day Poster Contest. Want to see what "Growing Shady, Cooling Cities" means to you? Invite Austin students (K-5) to submit their artwork! One winner will be chosen in each grade and one grand-prize winner will receive an Arbor Day party at their campus next spring! Due Dec 19 | Learn more here.

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 nia.nickens@austinisd.org)

Kind regards,
AISD Department of Sustainability, Energy, & Environment

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