

October 2026 Board FYI's

Van Alstyne High School

At VAHS we have so much to celebrate as we finish out the first quarter of this school year. Our students and staff have brought enthusiasm, dedication, and Panther pride to the classroom and beyond.

Our College, Career, and Military Readiness Coordinator, Mrs. Annie Smith, along with our senior seminar teachers and VAHS counselors, is holding individual meetings with seniors and their parents every Monday. During these sessions, families receive personalized guidance on post-high school plans, whether students are pursuing college, trade school, or military service. These conversations help students identify their next steps and prepare for life beyond graduation.

The October campus testing calendar includes the SAT on October 1, ACT on October 15, and PSAT on October 27. We appreciate the work of our teachers, counselors, and Mrs. Smith in helping students prepare for these opportunities and pursue their future goals.

The Region 25 UIL Marching Band Competition will take place on Wednesday, October 14, at Celina High School. We look forward to cheering on our talented band students and celebrating their hard work. They are deep in preparation to advance to the Area Contest on Saturday, October 31, in Longview.

Please join us for the Annual Ag Booster Auction on Saturday, October 24, from 11 a.m. - 2 p.m. at the high school. This event offers an opportunity to support our FFA program and see the creativity and craftsmanship of our students through auction items, many of which they create themselves.

We are very excited about the launch of our new Principal-Student Advisory Committee "Panther Voice". This committee will provide opportunities for students to share ideas and perspectives about our campus. Teachers, coaches, and advisors are being asked to nominate a broad cross section of students representing different interests, experiences, and activities.

Thank you for your continued support of our students and staff as we live out our campus theme: Panther Pride – Family – Together We Thrive!

Van Alstyne Junior High School

VAJH students and staff have had a busy and exciting start to the fall! September offered students opportunities to grow academically, compete, lead, serve, and strengthen their connection to the VAJH community.

Student Success & Campus Culture: We celebrated our September Students of the Month and continue recognizing students through Panther Tickets for demonstrating what it means to Work Hard and Be Kind. We recognize students during lunches. For our Students of the Month, we call home and, with permission, post their pictures on social media and their names on the marquee. Our first pep rally was a huge success, with students bringing tremendous energy and

school spirit. Students are also finding ways to connect through Campus Ambassadors, Dungeons & Dragons, Garden Club, Debate, Art, Theater, FCA, Student Senate, and Academic UIL.

Academics & Instruction: VAJH continues to focus on making learning visible throughout the entire school day. Through our Street Smarts initiative, students encounter quick academic questions and challenges during passing periods, reinforcing classroom learning in a fun and engaging way. We are using these opportunities to review concepts, encourage students to share what they know, and remind students that learning can happen anywhere on our campus. We have also completed beginning-of-year MAP Growth assessments in RLA, math, and science, and staff are using assessment and classroom data to identify student needs, establish goals, and plan interventions. Quarter 1 assessments begin in October, giving us another opportunity to measure student progress and adjust instruction.

Student Opportunities & Achievement: Our students continue to represent VAJH exceptionally well outside the classroom. Volleyball, football, and cross-country have been busy competing, and the hard work of our student-athletes is showing. Unstoppable Athletics had a fantastic showing at Special Olympics, with students earning first-, second-, and third-place finishes. Academic UIL has also generated strong student interest, with practices beginning soon. Our Campus Ambassador Team, which created a new Instagram account, is providing another avenue for students to develop leadership, communication, creativity, and teamwork while helping showcase the positive things happening at VAJH.

Family & Community Engagement: September included Homecoming activities, student events, athletics, and continued communication with families through our weekly Panther Press. Parent and student surveys are also helping us gather feedback regarding communication, engagement, and student belonging. VAJH is excited to participate in the district Fall Festival with our “Soak a Teacher” booth, with funds raised going directly back to student activities and opportunities.

Looking Ahead: October brings Quarter 1 assessments, continued UIL preparation, fall athletics, student celebrations, and our Fentanyl Awareness presentation on October 29. Through academics, extracurricular activities, Street Smarts, student leadership, and intentional relationship-building, we remain focused on creating a campus where students are known, supported, challenged, and celebrated.

At VAJH, everything comes back to our commitment: Every Kid. Every Day. Work Hard. Be Kind.

Van Alstyne Middle School

We are incredibly proud of the progress happening at Van Alstyne Middle School! Our recent classroom walkthroughs are highlighting amazing teaching and learning across campus, and it is exciting to see students engaged, challenged, and growing as learners. Our new to the district teachers are absolute gems, who are all setting high, yet achievable standards for our kiddos. Our preliminary student assessment data is looking solid and we can't wait to see them continue to grow!

One of the highlights this year has been our new 8-minute PAWS homeroom (Personal Accountability with Sincerity). Students recently completed a deep dive into what it means to take responsibility for their learning, their choices, and their growth in our community, at home, and in the world. Each Wednesday during PAWS, students log into Skyward to review their own grades and progress. They then work alongside their homeroom teacher to create a plan for tutoring, completing missing assignments, or getting the support they need. We are intentionally empowering students to become lifelong problem-solvers and advocates for themselves.

We also know that middle school can be an awkward and challenging time, and students need opportunities to discover who they are and explore new interests. This year, we are thrilled to offer eight new club opportunities, including Art Club, Future Christian Athletes, Writing Club, Chess Club, Crochet Club, Spiderman Comic Club, and Dungeons & Dragons Club. We are also offering UIL practice and competition for 5th and 6th graders, and have begun planning and communicating with families on that. We could not be more excited about the incredible choices available to our students and the opportunities these clubs provide to build relationships, discover passions, and develop confidence.

We are also investing in student voice and leadership through the launch of our own VAMS Student Council. Our students will have an important role in helping shape the vision for the school they want to be a part of. We are excited to give them a voice, listen to their ideas, and empower them to help make Van Alstyne Middle School the very best it can be with student leadership at the forefront.

We are proud of the momentum on our campus and, most importantly, proud of the students who are embracing opportunities to learn, lead, take responsibility, and advocate for themselves. We look forward to celebrating our students at our Q1 Premier Panther Awards on October 20 at 10:20 a.m., where we will recognize the outstanding accomplishments and character of our Panthers. Let's go Team VAMS!

Sanford Elementary School

Partin Elementary School

We kicked off our 100-book challenge with an exciting Read-A-Thon event. Our students demonstrated their passion for reading by clocking in a remarkable total of 73,423 minutes of reading over two weeks. The top reader among them even surpassed the 1,000-minute mark! Needless to say, we are off to a great start establishing reading routines.

We have been meeting with teachers for their goal conferences at the beginning of the year. I have thoroughly enjoyed meeting with teachers over the past few weeks to discuss their goals for the year. This has been a valuable opportunity for me to gain insights into their goals and the areas they would like to improve upon. With the hectic pace of the daily routine, it can be challenging to find uninterrupted time to focus on their individual needs. These one-on-one sessions have allowed me to continue strengthening my relationships with the teachers and ensure that they feel valued and supported in their professional endeavors.

We recently completed training for teachers on accessing and analyzing MAP reports. They are excited about looking at the data due to the comprehensive and focused insights it provides. This information has been instrumental in guiding our WIN time (intervention and extension sessions). Teachers can identify specific standards that require attention for growth, enabling us to target areas for intervention or enrichment effectively.

Williams Elementary School

With support from our instructional coaches, teachers completed beginning-of-year assessments and used the results to launch WIN Time and Power Hour. This data is especially valuable as we learn the needs of students joining our new campus from multiple schools and districts.

WIN Time: Our daily 30-minute “What I Need” block provides targeted instruction based on student needs. Flexible groups allow students to work with teachers across their grade level and change as students progress.

Power Hour: While a Specials teacher works with their class, grade-level teachers receive additional time to collaborate, analyze data, participate in RtI meetings, and plan WIN instruction. Together, these structures help us support and challenge every learner.

We also celebrated the first quarter with our first Panther PRIDE assembly, honoring our Williams Way student recipients. Congratulations to Melody Bolton, our Williams Way Teacher Award recipient, and Jennifer Angle, our Williams Way Support Award recipient!

Pre-K earned September’s highest attendance rate at over 98%, with second grade just one-tenth of a percentage point behind. Our Pre-K Panthers will celebrate with a popsicle party hosted by our counselor, Nikki Kelley.

We look forward to Red Ribbon Week, Donuts with Dads, and more fall fun ahead as we continue building connections and celebrating our Williams students and community!

OCTOBER

13 - WES Fall Picture Day

16 - Panther Readers

19 - No School/Parent Teacher Conferences

26 - 30 - PTO Book Fair

26-30 - Red Ribbon Week

30 - PTO Donuts w/Dads

30 - Panther Readers

Curriculum Director

The Curriculum and Instruction team has stayed focused on strong instruction, useful data, and support for teachers and students on every campus.

- Campuses completed fall MAP testing, and campus leadership and the curriculum team were trained in best practices on how to analyze the data, including reading fluency and sub-population performance so instruction responds to what students need most. Campuses turned this training around to their classroom teachers and the instructional coaches were there for support as teachers begin to dig into their individual student needs.

- Curriculum subject area teams held Data Dig Days to study the results of last year's state assessments; these days led to data-proven areas of concern for instructional across the district systems as a whole. The teams developed plans to work to fill those holes by supporting our teachers in the classrooms in these specific areas.
- Our instructional coaches met weekly to align their work across campuses, completed math calibration training, and joined classroom observations supporting strong math, RLA, science, and social studies instruction.
- The district held Day 2 of the New Teacher Academy, continuing our investment in onboarding and mentoring new staff.
- The GT Advisory Committee met in September, and EB and GT Parent Awareness Sessions are scheduled for October 8.
- The first sessions of the Teacher Leadership Academy (TLA), the Principal Leadership Academy(PLA), and the Assistant Principal Leadership Academy(APLA) were all held this month. We have six participants this year in the TLA and it's a great group! Our first session involved answering their questions about the role of AP before we move into more structured trainings in the coming months. Both the PLA and the APLA focused on math this month and observed a math classroom in action, individually rated the instruction observed using our TTESS rubrics, and then discussed each domain/dimension comparing what evidence they recorded and why they landed on the rating they did. Both sessions were filled with great conversations about alignment across the district in what superior instruction looks like for our kids.
- Looking ahead: First-quarter assessments run October 8–14, October 19 is a staff professional development day, and a Title III update will be presented at the October board meeting.

Athletic Director:

Our cross country teams are preparing for their upcoming district meets. Most of our athletes have improved their times at each meet this season, and we are excited to see our junior high and high school runners compete at district. The junior high district meet has been moved to October 7 in Sanger, and the high school district meet will take place October 8, also in Sanger.

Our volleyball team is finishing the first round of district play. Aubrey has been the dominant team in our district so far, and we narrowly fell to Sanger on the road in a hard-fought, five-set match. The second round will give us another opportunity to compete against both teams.

All four of our high school football teams have been playing well as we head into our open week before beginning the district schedule. Finding opponents for each team has been challenging, but we have been able to secure games for every team each week so far. At the junior high level, we have also maintained a full schedule for each team despite few schools having enough players to field four complete teams. Our junior high coaching staff has done a great job of finding opponents and making creative scheduling arrangements to ensure all our players gain valuable game experience.

Meanwhile, our basketball teams are gearing up for their seasons, which will begin in the next few weeks.

The UIL requires an academic eligibility check at the end of the first six weeks of school, regardless of the district's grading schedule. Since our district uses nine-week grading periods, this checkpoint can present challenges for students, parents, and teachers. Our administrators and teachers do a great job of communicating expectations and helping families stay informed. Following this initial check, eligibility checks align with our district's grading periods, with additional opportunities for ineligible students to regain eligibility.

We will host our first Unstoppable Athletes (Special Olympics) event later this month, beginning with bocce ball. With approximately 400 athletes currently signed up, this will be our largest bocce ball event yet. Around 100 VAHS student volunteers will help at the courts, and our Booster Club will provide free lunches for everyone involved. These events continue to grow and are such a blessing to our district, our students, and everyone who participates. We are grateful to the volunteers and supporters who make them possible.

We have also received strong interest in our soccer and wrestling programs. Soccer will begin soon, and our coaches had the opportunity to work with athletes during our summer program, giving them a foundation to build on as the season approaches. Wrestling begins later this semester, and we are gathering student interest to help get the program off to a strong start. We are excited about the new opportunities these programs will provide for our students.

Chief Financial Officer

90th Legislative Session Priorities -

Allotment for Basic Costs:

The prior legislative session provided school districts with a \$106 per student allotment to help offset the costs of transportation, retired-teacher hiring, health insurance, payroll taxes, TRS contributions, utilities and property casualty insurance premiums. Currently, we have 3015 students enrolled in our district which means that our district's allocation for all of these program costs will be approximately \$319,590. As you will see below, this amount is pennies compared to what we actually pay for these programs.

Transportation - \$1,206,562
Retired-Teacher Hiring -
Health Insurance - \$228,600
Payroll Taxes - \$
TRS Contributions - \$
Utilities - \$1,219,000
Property/Casualty Insurance - \$723,173

Small & Mid-Sized District Allotment

The current mid-sized multiplier is .00003 and the recommended multiplier is .000035. The current amount we receive with the current multiplier is \$1,162,034. The recommended multiplier would bring us \$1,474,173, an increase of \$312,139.

School Safety Funding

The school safety allotment has grown the last three sessions and is currently \$20 per student and \$33,540 per campus. For our district, this amount is $\$20 \times 3015 \text{ students} = \$60,300$ and $6 \text{ campuses} \times \$33,540 = \$201,240$. Our current budget is \$788,627.

TRS Retire/Rehire Flexibility

Currently, retirees from TRS are not allowed to return to work full-time, without a twelve month break in service. If a school district hires a retiree that has not laid out a full twelve months after retirement from TRS, district are then required by law to pay a 16.5% surcharge pension contribution per month, plus a surcharge in the amount of \$535 per month as long as the retiree is employed by the district. School districts would benefit greatly from being able to hire retired employees without the penalties for hard-to-fill positions such as math, science and spanish).