

DATE: December 8, 2025

TITLE: Technology Services

TYPE: Information

PRESENTER: Amy Thuesen, Director of Technology

BACKGROUND:

Technology Services designs, implements, and supports the technology infrastructure and resources in this district. This includes network and communications, hardware and software, and technology training and integration.

Technology Advisory Team

- The Technology Advisory team met on Monday, December 1st. The main part of this month's discussion was the update of the District's Acceptable Use Policy 524 (AUP). In October we reviewed the current AUP and made note of areas that need to be updated or changed. This month we summarized the comments from October and reviewed a comparison of our district's AUP to other Minnesota K12 district AUPs. This comparison was developed with the assistance of Microsoft Copilot. The next step is to review the MSBA sample policy and compose a draft of an updated AUP for Austin Public Schools. At our next meeting in February, we will come back together and review the draft. By the end of our last meeting in April, we plan to have a final updated draft of the AUP ready to present to the School Board. To round out this month's meeting, we reviewed the district's network filtering practices.

Support and resources to ensure a safe and welcoming learning environment

- Through our district's partnership with Southwest West Central Service Cooperative, we are able to take advantage of a variety of cybersecurity supports. Most recently:
 - We shared with all district staff a tool that they can use to safely check their used passwords, both personal and professional, to see if any of them have been discovered in a password breach. Although there are several widely available tools people can find on the internet that accomplish this task, we can ensure that all of the passwords submitted for a breach-check on this site are encrypted and never shared with the site developer. This link was shared in last week's issue of Dr. Page's Happenings and will also be linked on the Technology Department's website.
 - We are able to view all known exploited vulnerabilities (KEVs) in a central location and ensure that we don't miss important fixes and patches. What is a KEV? It is a security flaw in software, hardware, or systems that is known to be exploited by cyber-attackers.

District-wide MTSS & Packer Profile

- Our district Education Technology Specialist, Nick Berthiaume, had the opportunity to visit the 9th grade Seminar courses several times in November to support their learning in digital and AI literacies. Topics Nick discussed with students included:
 - Being proactive in guiding your online safety and privacy.
 - Using Artificial Intelligences tools safely and appropriately – especially in learning.
 - Guarding your digital footprint and understanding the reach of shared content.

Excellence in Resource Management

- November is the time of year for technology disposal and recycling. Each year the Tech Department gathers all technology equipment that has reached its end of life or is damaged and works with partners who want to buy or recycle the used equipment. These vendors pay the district for any parts or devices that still have value, and charge the district for devices and parts that need to be recycled. We recycle Windows devices, printers, peripherals, etc. every fall, but we only recycle Apple products every 3-5 years.
 - Apple products are known for their good resale value and iPads devices we sent to our vendor were in very good physical condition, even though they were beyond appropriate use in our system. After costs of recycling were accounted for, the district received approximately \$240,000 for the still usable iPads and iPad parts.
 - Our other technology recycling, including used Windows devices, was picked up in November and we are still waiting for final information on costs vs. gains. In the case of non iPad recycling, we typically have much more unusable waste that we need to pay to have recycled – displays, cables, printers, damaged devices, etc.
- We are excited to report that Austin Public Schools was awarded \$80,000 as a part of a Minnesota State Cybersecurity grant that was available to schools. This grant is awarded to fund the reimbursement of Cybersecurity costs that the district has already incurred.
- The business and technology departments are working together to plan for a new copy machine lease since our current lease expires soon. We have completed our walkthrough assessments and are now working on pricing review.
- The government shutdown this past fall has significantly slowed down our ability to move forward with our 2025 eRate projects – replacing our wireless controllers and two building network cores. While we are already gearing up to submit our 2026 eRate proposal, we are hoping that we can soon complete our 2025 projects.
- We are excited to welcome our new Systems Administrator, Ryan Wiersma, to Austin Public Schools. Ryan comes to APS with 20+ years of experience in IT, most recently as a Systems Administrator for Innovance Inc. in Albert Lea. Prior to working at Innovance, Ryan worked at Jaguar Communications and SMIG (Southern Minnesota Internet Group).