

**Local Newspaper Article  
Dr. Topinka - May 2026**

With just a few days remaining, it's hard to believe we're already approaching the end of the 2025–2026 school year at United South Central. This year has been filled with growth, accomplishments, challenges, and many memorable moments for our students and staff. I want to sincerely thank our families, community members, and students for the continued support you provide to our schools in so many ways. Your involvement, encouragement, and partnership help make USC a special place for students to learn, grow, and succeed each day.

At USC, we continue to believe it is the people who make a school great, and we are fortunate to have an outstanding team serving our students. This has been a year of several retirements and a few position changes, which has opened up multiple teaching positions this spring, and with continued enrollment growth we are also adding a new elementary teaching position to help keep class sizes as small as possible. We have been fortunate to identify strong additions to our staff in Elementary, Physical Education, English, Title I, and School Counseling. While it is always difficult to see long-tenured and highly valued staff members leave USC, we are excited for the experience, energy, and perspective our new staff members will bring to our school and community. We are going into summer with only a part-time preschool teaching position remaining open and are looking forward to a great year ahead.

The United South Central School Board and Facilities Task Force met two weeks ago to review the results from our recent community survey and continue refining our facilities planning work. We received 549 responses, about 20% of our district, which gives us a statistically reliable snapshot of community sentiment, and the results showed strong support for a smaller-scale project than the larger \$25.5 million option we had previously discussed. In response, we made some thoughtful adjustments to reduce the overall cost by about \$1.5 million, including scaling back the gym/multipurpose space, removing the commons expansion, and eliminating a mezzanine mechanical area, while still keeping the core needs of the project intact. The Board also chose to wait until our June meeting to submit plans to the Minnesota Department of Education so we can continue to gather input and ensure voices are heard before moving forward with a potential referendum later this summer. While support for the larger option was more limited than hoped, we were encouraged by the level of support reflected in the survey overall, and we fully hear our community's perspective on the importance of keeping the overall cost of the project as measured and responsible as possible.

We were fortunate to hold our April School Board meeting in Bricelyn last month, and we are scheduled to meet in Kiester on June 16th. As a reminder, prior to meetings held outside of Wells we also host a brief Q&A session with the school board before the regular meeting. Our next opportunity will be Tuesday, June 16th from 6:30-7:00 PM in Kiester, and we encourage community members to attend with any questions about the facilities process or to reach out directly if they are unable to make it.

As we head into the final days of the school year and look ahead to summer, we remain grateful for the continued partnership of our staff, families, and broader USC community. There is a lot of important work still ahead as we refine plans for our facilities and prepare for the upcoming year, but we do so with optimism and appreciation for the input and support we continue to receive. We wish everyone a safe, restful, and enjoyable summer, and we look forward to welcoming students back in the fall.