



United South Central Schools

"Empowering students to reach their full potential through a supportive community and engaging school experiences, inspiring them to be lifelong learners and responsible citizens."

Taylor Topinka, Superintendent

Hello United South Central Families,

The 2026–2027 school year is just around the corner, and we are excited to welcome our students and families back to a new school year at USC! Our staff has been busy throughout the summer preparing for the year ahead, and we are looking forward to another great year of learning, growth, and opportunities for our students.

Our Buildings and Grounds team has also been busy throughout the summer getting our school and campus ready for students to return. Along with our regular summer deep-cleaning and maintenance, our team has worked to refresh and prepare classrooms, common areas, athletic spaces, and the grounds for the start of a new school year. We are fortunate to have a beautiful facility and campus, and we are committed to maintaining it and keeping it in the best condition possible for our students, staff, and community.

Updated JMC Information: As we begin the new school year, please take a moment to review the contact information we have on file for your family in JMC. Keeping phone numbers, email addresses, and other contact information current helps ensure that you receive important information about school events, activities, weather-related announcements, and other district communications. If you need assistance updating your information, please contact any of our school offices. We are happy to help.

Emergency Drill Procedures: Keeping our students and staff safe, both physically and emotionally, continues to be a top priority for United South Central. In 2023, the Minnesota Legislature updated requirements for school emergency drills. USC has conducted lockdown drills for many years, so families should not see significant changes in our overall approach to school safety this year. As required by state law, we will conduct five lockdown drills during the school year. These drills will include both "soft lockdown" and "hard lockdown" procedures. It is important to note that none of the drills conducted by United South Central are considered "active simulations." Our procedures are designed to help students and staff understand how to respond during an extreme situation while minimizing any unnecessary stress or negative impact on their school experience.

Recent changes to state law allow parents and guardians to opt their students out of hard lockdown drills. Students who are opted out will be supervised in an alternative designated location within the school while the drill takes place. USC is scheduled to conduct hard lockdown drills on November 6, 2026, and January 14, 2027. If you would like to opt your student out of hard lockdown drills, please contact:

Dr. Taylor Topinka, USC Superintendent
By Email: ttopinka@unitedsouthcentral.org
By Phone: (507) 553-3134

We continue to partner with the Wells Police Department to provide a School Resource Officer for our district. During the past year, our school staff and School Resource Officer participated in training on a non-student day to strengthen our preparedness and ensure we are ready to respond in the best interests of our students and staff. We also work closely with local law enforcement throughout the year at both the building and district levels. These ongoing partnerships and conversations are an important part of our efforts to maintain a safe, supportive, and welcoming learning environment for everyone at USC.



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Pick up and Drop Off Locations - As we begin the new school year, we want to remind families of the traffic and pick-up/drop-off patterns around our main parking lot, which are designed to support student safety. Morning bus drop-off continues to take place on the west side of the building, while afternoon student pick-up remains in front of the school. During drop-off and pick-up times, vehicles should not use the bus lane closest to the building. In addition, the first four parking spaces in each row directly in front of the elementary entrance remain reserved for student drop-off and pick-up. We appreciate everyone's attention to these traffic patterns and your flexibility as we continue to work through some structural challenges with our parking area. We recognize that our current setup is not a perfect long-term solution, and we are exploring more permanent improvements as part of future facility planning efforts. Your assistance greatly helps us keep student arrival and dismissal as safe and efficient as possible.

Enrollment and Upcoming Building Referendum – As we begin the new school year, our enrollment is again shaping up to be among the highest USC has seen in recent years. Current projections have our enrollment growing from the mid-700s to closer to 800 students over the next five years. This continued growth has led the district and school board to spend more than a year gathering information, exploring options, and listening to a variety of perspectives about our future space needs.

As a result of that work, a building referendum question will appear on the November 3 election ballot regarding a potential expansion of our school facilities to address our projected enrollment growth. As a school district, we cannot use district resources to persuade voters to support or oppose a ballot question. We can, however, make sure our community has access to accurate information and provide honest answers to questions about the proposal. We will have several opportunities to connect with community members over the next couple of months, and you are always welcome to contact me directly at USC with questions as well. Beginning September 15, I will be at the Pink Cup on Tuesday mornings from 8:00-8:45 AM for some informal time to answer questions and visit with anyone who would like to stop by. I would encourage you to come and visit, even if you simply have questions or want to learn more. We will share additional information and opportunities to learn more as we get closer to the November election.

We are looking ahead to the 2026–2027 school year with great enthusiasm, and we are excited about all that the new school year will bring to United South Central. If you have any questions or would like to visit about anything happening in our district, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at ttopinka@unitedsouthcentral.org or by phone at (507) 553-3134.

We are excited to welcome our middle and high school students back on Tuesday, September 8, followed by our elementary students on Wednesday, September 9. I hope you and your families enjoy the final days of summer and have a great start to the new school year!

Go Rebels!

Taylor Topinka
USC Superintendent