Independent School District No. 2134
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,

With the Thanksgiving holiday falling later in the month again this year, December ends up being a short month here at USC. Even though there are only 17 school days between Thanksgiving and winter breaks, there is certainly a lot going on at United South Central and December looks to be an exciting month for our students and school.

2026-2027 Academic Calendar Survey - As we start planning for the 2026–2027 school year, it's important to get an early start on shaping the calendar so we can set the year up for success. Our Calendar Committee, made up of staff, students, parents, and administrators, works together to create a calendar that balances instructional time, breaks, and professional development to give our students the best possible learning experience. This year, one of the key decisions we're looking at is whether to start before or after Labor Day, especially with the holiday falling later in September. Your input matters and please share your thoughts and ideas as we work together to design a school year that sets all our students up for success.

Link to Calendar Survey

Winter Weather & Virtual Learning – I was hoping we could make it through November without a snow day, but Mother Nature had other plans. As we move into December, we're asking for your help in preparing your student(s) for the possibility of Virtual Learning Days. While we may still have another "regular snow day" early in the season, we will transition to Virtual Learning Days as needed for weather-related closures. We will provide as much notice as possible when a Virtual Learning Day is called so students can be ready. Please take a few moments to consider what your student(s) may need in order to be successful while learning from home.

Facilities Process and Taskforce - As we continue discussions about our district facilities and look ahead to a potential project in the fall of 2026, we've been aiming to listen to the thoughts of our staff, students, parents, and community members to better understand the long-term needs of our schools. Our goal is to gather a complete picture of enrollment trends, student demographics, instructional needs, and building maintenance requirements so we can create a plan that works best for USC in the long term. While these conversations may feel slow at times, our focus is on being thorough, asking the right questions, considering every possibility, and most importantly, listening to our community. Our initial Taskforce, made up of representatives from each of our district communities, helped launch this broader discussion. Moving forward, the Taskforce will begin meeting again (starting this month) and will expand to include individuals who expressed interest at our October community meeting. This group will review feedback from staff and students and help shape potential plans and layouts for consideration. We're also preparing a community survey, which will launch as we move into the 2026–2027 school year. Your input will continue to be an important part of this process as we plan for the future of our district.

District Budget – As property tax notices arrive in mailboxes, it signals the time of year when we review our annual tax levy for the year ahead. Minnesota school district property tax levies are determined by fourteen different funding categories, only one of which is voter-approved.

This is a lengthy process with relatively little flexibility provided to individual districts by the State. Our School Board is pleased to share that our proposed property tax levy will decrease slightly this year. We remain committed to providing the best education possible to our students while also being responsible stewards of taxpayer funds. Overall, our district budget remains stable. We are beginning to pare back in a few areas as we prepare for a projected shortfall in the State's budget during the 2027–2028 legislative funding biennium. Because the State of Minnesota is our largest source of revenue, and current projections for the coming years are somewhat bleak, we are proactively planning to ensure we avoid unexpected challenges down the road.

Upcoming Events and Activities -

- December 2, 5-12th Grade Band Concert - 7:00 PM
- December 4, Middle and High School Conferences 3:30-7:30 PM
- December 8 - K-6 Music Program - 7:00 PM
- December 16, Truth in Taxation Presentation - 6:00 PM
- Dec. 24 to Jan. 2 - Winter Break

Go Rebels!

Taylor Topinka
USC Superintendent