AITKIN HIGH SCHOOL

Senior Newsletter

Fall 2026

Class of 2027: Welcome to Senior Year!

As you begin your final year at Aitkin High School, it is probably with mixed feelings of excitement about your senior year, and maybe some uncertainty about what the future holds for you. I look forward to meeting with you regarding your plans after High School. Feel free to make an appointment with me at any time.

The Senior Newsletter is designed to give students and their families information about the steps students should be taking in order to prepare for life after high school. Topics covered will be graduation, the college application process, and scholarships. I will do my best to prepare you for graduation and your plan beyond.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, I am happy to help in any way I can and answer (or find the answer to) your questions. I encourage students and families to visit the following sites on the ISD1 website: **Counseling Office, Daily Announcements, and Graduation Information**. Important information and resources are also available to students on the **Seniors Canvas page**. These sites contain good information and helpful links.

Meredith Sander
10-12 Counselor, Aitkin High School
msander@isd1.org 218-927-7108

DATES OF IMPORTANCE, MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

November 5: High School Conferences. Parents are encouraged to see me with questions regarding senior year and the college application process. I will have resources pertaining to college/career planning available.
October/November: Financial Aid Presentation for seniors and families. Updates will be sent when a date is set.
November 3, 12:10pm AHS Auditorium: Jostens meeting regarding cap and gown ordering for graduation
December 1: Senior Picture and Baby Picture for the Yearbook due to Mrs. Tetrick
May 5: Senior Reception and Award night at AHS
June 4: Graduation Ceremony

Graduation Information Website

https://home.isd1.org/graduation-information.html

For pertinent information regarding graduation, senior class trip, Josten's ordering, Grad Blast, etc. please visit this website which is available via the Aitkin High School homepage. Information will be updated as it becomes available.

Honors Diploma Requirements

Students meeting the criteria below will be issued an honors diploma and identified upon graduation. Cumulative GPA includes grades 9-12. Students must also meet the credit req. listed on the next page. See full description of Honors Requirements in the Parent/Student Handbook.

Highest Honors (Gold Cord): Cumulative GPA of 3.75 and above

Honors (Silver Cord): Cumulative GPA of 3.5 – 3.74

Graduation Course and Credit Requirements

The following requirements must be met for graduation.
Credits must be taken in grades 9-12 to count towards graduation.
There are College in the Schools (CIS) classes that can substitute for some of the 11th and 12th grade requirements.

Requirements for Graduation	Semester Credits
English English 9, English 10, English 11, English 12	8 cr.
Social Social 9, American History, Geography, World History, Civics, Economics	8 cr.
Science Science 9, Biology, Chemistry *or* Physics	6 cr.
Mathematics Geometry, Intro to Statistics, Algebra II, Math elective (or Intermediate Algebra as determined by teacher)	7 cr.
Physical Education Phy. Ed 9/10	2 cr.
Health Health 9	1 cr.
Fine Arts 2 semester credits	2 cr.
Additional Credits – Semester Credits	11 cr.
Totals	**45 credits**

1 Semester Class = 1 credit

Year-long Class = 2 credits

GO GOBBLERS!

The ACT and SAT Testing

Every college/university is different; some require an ACT score for admission, while some give students the option to include it in their application decision or not. It is up to students to fully research the admissions requirements at the school(s) to which they intend to apply. I highly encourage students to directly contact college admissions counselors to receive the best advice and guidance when it comes to the decision to apply "test optional" or to submit an ACT score. I can also be of help in exploring these options.

Want to test but not sure what test to register for or how to register? **Stop in the counseling office for assistance.**

National test dates are available at various locations in MN. Find these dates/locations and register at www.actstudent.org

*When you are registering for the test, make sure to code for Aitkin High School (**240020**) and also code for the colleges to which you would like your scores sent; there are additional fees to send your scores after taking the test.

*Refer to the ACT website (www.actstudent.org) to determine if the colleges that you are applying to require the written portion of the test. Most do not.

SAT (Register at www.collegeboard.com)

While it is more common for students in this area of the country to take the ACT, the SAT is also an option for students. Most students in Aitkin will not take the SAT. Stop in the counseling office if you would like more information about the SAT. Dates the SAT is administered can be found on the SAT website or from the school counseling office.

NORTHEAST MINNESOTA OFFICE OF JOB TRAINING

Discover Career and Scholarship Possibilities

https://www.nemojt.org/

The NEMOJT website contains valuable resources for young adults as they enter the workforce. I encourage all seniors to fully investigate opportunities available to them in their search for what is the best fit after high school. This website contains valuable information for those not pursuing a college education as well as for those that are.

ATTENTION: STUDENT ATHLETES – FALL IS THE TIME TO REGISTER WITH NCAA or NAIA

If you are a senior who is planning to participate in a sport as a college freshman, now is the time to register and be certified by the NCAA or the NAIA. You must do this in order to qualify for college athletics. First, find out which association your college of choice is affiliated with (if any). Check out student eligibility information at www.ncaa.org or www.naia.org. Always work with your college of choice to determine if you need to register with the NCAA or NAIA. Some colleges do not require you to register. The athletic department and/or coaches from your college of choice are your best options to turn to for assistance. If you have any questions, please stop in the counseling office.

College Applications and Transcript Requests

Now is the time to apply!! All college applications are available online via individual college websites. Some may require students to enter their school counselor information; please make sure the information entered is accurate: **Meredith Sander** msander@isd1.org **218-927-7108**

Transcript Requests: Submit a Transcript Request form to Mrs. Sander. Forms are available online or in the counseling office. You can submit your form in person or email msander@isd1.org

Online College Application Process

- Carefully read and follow **all** directions
- If you have taken/are taking a CIS course at Aitkin High School and are applying to a Minnesota State College/University, login using your **STAR ID** and password that was assigned to you for your CIS course. **DO NOT CREATE A NEW STAR ID!!** Not sure what this is? Stop in the counseling office and ask.
- Complete the online application and submit it.
- If a HS Transcript is needed, fill out a Transcript Request form, available in the counseling office. Give this form to Mrs. Sander in the counseling office and your transcript will be sent.
- If you are submitting an ACT or SAT score upon applying, check with the college to determine whether **Official** or **Unofficial** ACT or SAT scores are required. Official scores must be requested directly from the testing agency and can be done online. Unofficial scores are the scores that can be included with your high school transcript or scores that you self-report.
- **Be aware of deadlines…they are your responsibility.**

College Visits

Registering for a college visit is done via college websites. Contact or stop by the counseling office if you need help setting up a visit. Many colleges are offering virtual options for visits as well. **To excuse the absence from school**, you must obtain a form from Mrs. Sander in the school counseling office prior to the visit. College reps are constantly visiting AHS; students are able to meet with them during the school day.

OCTOBER: FREE COLLEGE APPLICATION MONTH!!

Select colleges in Minnesota waive the application fee for the entire month of October. Please refer to the enclosed document outlining which institutions are participating. Remember - schools participating in Direct Admissions will waive fees for AHS students all year, regardless of what month it is.

12th Annual AHS College App-athon

The counseling department at AHS is hosting the 12th Annual College App-athon. One day in October, counseling staff will be in Mr. Miller's classroom during his senior class times, giving students time to start, work on, and/or submit college applications. This is a fun event, geared at promoting post-secondary education to students.

Financial Aid/FAFSA Assistance

The Financial Aid department at Central Lakes College in Brainerd offers Financial Aid and FAFSA assistance to any family, even if your student isn't applying for admission to Central Lakes College. They are available on weekdays from 8:00AM – 3:00PM. Contact Nathan Wright at finaid@clcmn.edu or call 218-855-8039.

Because of the **FAFSA Simplification Act**, there has been a significant overhaul of the processes and systems used to award federal student aid. The FAFSA application for the 2027-28 award year is scheduled to be available to students starting **October 1, 2026**. Please visit their website to stay current on updates and application availability. https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid/fafsa

If you have questions about the FAFSA and/or the FAFSA Simplification Act, contact us in the AHS School Counseling office, or contact the Financial Aid Office of a higher education institution.

Senior Reception and Award Night

All seniors that apply for a scholarship through the Aitkin Dollars for Scholars program are **REQUIRED** to attend the Senior Award Night on **Wednesday, May 5**. Seniors not in attendance will NOT receive the scholarships they were awarded through Dollars for Scholars. Seniors will also be recognized for other accomplishments, including CTE Distinctions, graduating with honors, and Military enlistment. Please mark your calendar now as this is an important event to attend.

MINNESOTA GOES TO COLLEGE

Minnesota Goes To College is our state's effort to provide graduating high school seniors with the preparation, opportunity, and support needed to apply and enroll in college. Virtual events and resources are available to students and their families in regards to applying to college and paying for college. If you have questions about anything on this site, feel free to contact the Minnesota Office of Higher Education or speak with Mrs. Sander in the school counseling office.

https://mngoestocollege.mn.gov/mngoestocollege

The College Planning Series

If you or someone you know is looking for more information on the college and financial aid process, the MN Office of Higher Education is here to help! Join them during the months of October and November for a series of college and financial aid webinars created specifically for students and families to walk through components and steps of applying for college and financial aid. Register online at the site listed below.

https://mngoestocollege.mn.gov/mngoestocollege/students/attend-virtual-event

https://www.dli.mn.gov/workers/be-apprentice

For information on Apprenticeships in Minnesota, visit this website which is part of the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry. Apprenticeship Minnesota can provide information about the 100+ occupations that offer apprenticeships in Minnesota and refer you to employers in your geographical area that may have openings. Application procedures vary widely depending on the occupation and geographical location you select and can be competitive.

Scholarship Opportunities

There are many scholarships available for seniors; it is up to seniors to search for and find scholarship opportunities. Some search engines available to seniors across the nation are: www.fastweb.com and www.highfivescholarships.com.

Be careful to avoid scams! Never pay to apply for a scholarship or pay a person or entity to find scholarships for you. Be selective in the scholarships you do apply for.

The counseling office does receive information on numerous local scholarships, just stop in and ask what is available!

Scholarship opportunities are always posted on the AHS School Counseling website and on the Seniors Canvas page.

The following scholarships are just a few for your attention:

-Hagen Scholarship Foundation: https://haganscholarships.org/ The Hagan Scholarship is a nationwide need-based merit scholarship, providing recipients "regardless of nationality" with the opportunity to achieve their goals and graduate college debt-free. The scholarship provides up to $7,500 each semester for up to 8 consecutive semesters. Deadline: 12/1/2026. Submission details available on the website.

-Horatio Alger Association Scholarships: https://scholars.horatioalger.org/scholarships/ Horatio Alger offers a few different scholarship programs, including State Scholarships, Career and Technical Education Scholarships, and National Scholarships. Submission details available on the website.

-Coca-Cola Scholars Program Scholarship: https://www.coca-colascholarsfoundation.org/ Qualifications: Must be a US citizen, must be a high school senior planning to earn a degree from an accredited post-secondary institution. Deadline: 09/30/2026. Submission details available on the website.

-Elk's Most Valuable Student Scholarship: https://www.elks.org/scholars/scholarships/mvs.cfm Qualifications: Must be a high school senior, applicants do NOT need to be related to a member of the Elks. Deadline: 11/12/2026. Submission details available on the website.

-Alworth Memorial Fund Scholarship: https://www.alworthscholarship.org/index.html The Alworth Fund awards scholarships of $24,000 to students entering the math or science field. There are additional requirements, including an ACT score and family income level. Refer to the website for these very specific requirements. Deadline: 01/15/2027. Submission details available on the website.

-Aitkin Dollars for Scholars: https://aitkin.dollarsforscholars.org/ The mission of Aitkin Dollars for scholars is to award a scholarship for any post-secondary education to all AHS graduates who submit a completed application. Applications typically open in February, and are due in early April. An informational meeting for students will be held at AHS during the school day in February.