



ALLIANCE CITY SCHOOLS

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Superintendent's Message

Aviators,

These last 22 or so months have been unlike any we have ever experienced. We've all had to find ways to overcome obstacles we could have never even imagined. It's been a couple years full of uncertainty and adversity, but we've adjusted and adapted and have had a successful first half of the school year.

Here in the midst of the holiday season, I am so thankful for and proud of the flexibility that our ACS staff, students and parents have all demonstrated, and the ways in which we've found new methods for doing and accomplishing great things related to academics, arts and athletics. Above all else, we've continued to model our core value of being Caring Citizens.

In our newsletter, you'll see many examples of these things — we love pointing out and celebrating the fact that Alliance Aviators are as good as or better than anyone else! Aviator pride is alive and well here in Alliance!

REP THAT A!

Rob Gress





ACS Safety Procedures

ACS has safety procedures in place to ensure students and staff are protected from several possible scenarios. Each safety procedure could be used for a number of reasons depending on the situation. Below is a brief explanation of each.

Evacuation

An evacuation could be enacted for reasons including a fire alarm going off or a gas leak. Students and staff will not be able to return to the building until it has been cleared by the proper authorities. If returning is not safe, students may be relocated to other district buildings.

Shelter-In-Place

A shelter-in-place could be enacted in response to a medical emergency, tornado, loss of power or possible threat of danger. For a shelter-in-place, staff and students remain in their classrooms and instruction activities continue as usual until the shelter-in-place has been lifted.

Staff or students may be given different instructions based on the reason for the shelter-in-place.

Lock Down

A lock down is enacted when there is an immediate threat of danger or an intruder. If a lock down occurs, students and staff remain in their rooms and out of sight until the lock down has been lifted.

Please note that each event is vastly different and the safety measures taken are done so on a case-by-case basis.

If any of these are to occur, we will continue to communicate the necessary information with building and/or district families.

Upcoming Events

January

Jan. 11

AMS: Geography Bee - 6 p.m.

Jan. 13

Early Dismissal
AHS: Rising Freshmen Parent Meeting - 6:30 p.m.

Jan. 14

End of Second Quarter
Teacher Work Day - No Students

Jan. 14-15

Top Gun Wrestling Tournament

Jan. 17

MLK Jr. Day - No School

Jan. 18

ACS: Board Meeting - 6 p.m.

Jan. 21

Second Quarter Report Cards Distributed

Jan. 22

AHS: Royal Aviation Show Choir Competition

February

Feb. 8

AMS: Parent/Teacher Conferences - 3 p.m.

Feb. 12

AHS: Winter Homecoming

Feb. 15

ACS: Board Meeting - 6 p.m.

AMS: City-Wide Spelling Bee - 6 p.m.

Feb. 18

Third Quarter Interims Distributed

AHS: Science Alliance

Feb. 21

Presidents Day - No School

March

Mar. 2

AHS: Senior Blood Drive
AHS: Band Mid-Winter Concert - 7 p.m.

Mar. 3

AES: Family Game Night

Mar. 4

AHS ONLY: Early Dismissal

Mar. 9

AELS: Family Game Night - 4 p.m.

Mar. 15

ACS: Board Meeting - 6 p.m.

Mar. 17

AES: Parent/Teacher Conferences - 3:30 p.m.

AIS: Parent/Teacher Conferences - 3:30 p.m.

Mar. 18

Early Dismissal
End of Third Quarter

Mar. 21

AHS: National Honor Society Induction - 7 p.m.

Mar. 24

AHS: Cosmetology Hair-A-Thon - 12 p.m.

AHS: Parent/Teacher Conferences - 3:30 p.m.

AELS: Parent/Teacher Conferences - 3:45 p.m.

Mar. 25

Third Quarter Report Cards Distributed

Mar. 29

PLDC: Parent/Teacher Conferences - 4 p.m.

March 31-April 2

AHS: Spring Musical - 7:30 p.m.



COVID-19 Q&A

with Randy Flint, Director of the Alliance Health Department

What should Alliance families know about the current state of the pandemic? Due to the recent surge in COVID-19 cases, Alliance is leading Stark County in cases per 100,00 population. Just looking at case numbers is comparing apples to oranges. However, comparing rates evens the playing field and provides a truer picture of the burden of disease in a community. Our hospitals are struggling due to the surge of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. Northeast Ohio is the highest in the state for hospitalizations. Stark County's rates for cases and hospitalizations are higher than the State of Ohio. 80 to 85% of hospitalizations in Stark County are unvaccinated individuals.

How can Alliance families stay safe and help mitigate the spread of COVID-19? COVID-19 vaccines are the most effective way of preventing severe illness and death. We know these vaccines are safe and effective. No vaccine is 100% effective against disease, but the important point is that if you contract the disease, the vaccine will prevent you from having to go to the hospital and you can recover at home. This is particularly important now because of the surge of patients our hospitals are dealing with. Masking in crowded public places, social distancing and good handwashing continue to be important as well. If you are sick, please stay home.

What are some things the Alliance community is doing well? Early in the pandemic, local businesses and the community stepped up and adapted to the ever-changing guidelines prior to vaccines being available. We have seen many acts of kindness throughout the community and volunteers have come forward to assist community members and agencies. Our at-risk population and high-risk occupations rolled up their sleeves and got vaccinated when vaccines became available. We are seeing numbers of people at our clinics now for booster doses, which is important because of COVID-19 variants.

How are the protocols (masking, quarantine procedures) in place at Alliance City Schools helping to mitigate the spread of COVID-19? Alliance City Schools and all of our schools in Stark County have done a wonderful job mitigating cases of COVID-19. It has been a major task for the staff and students to adapt to these new protocols. Data indicate that with these protocols, the school setting is a safe place for students. The number one goal is to have students in the classroom, which is the best environment for optimal learning.

What is some advice you would offer to students, families or the community with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic? Everyone is tired of the COVID-19 pandemic. Vaccines have allowed us to resume most of our normal activities. Unfortunately, this is not a sprint, it's a marathon. Most of us now know someone who has been affected by COVID-19, either with long-lasting health implications or sadly, someone who has passed away due to complications from this disease. If you are not vaccinated, please talk to your health care provider about this. We must stay the course and be diligent.

District Stats

Operations

1,280 acres of lawn mowed each year

131 bus routes traveled

Approximately 51,193 route miles traveled

Approximately 7,685 trip miles traveled so far this school year

Approximately 107,500 masks given out this school year

Food Service

2,500 school lunches served a day

Technology

109 student computers repaired this year

5,869 IT help desk tickets submitted

- On average, 57% are answered in the first hour after submission, 80% answered in the first eight hours, 94% answered within 24 hours

1,251 total hours of tech PD hours submitted

29 teacher with 10+ hours submitted

Four teachers with 20+ hours submitted

The AES Math Club has completed more than 1.2 million math problems since the start of the year.

Communications

3346 ParentSquare posts

45922 direct messages via ParentSquare

224 Facebook posts

283 tweets seen approximately 267,693 times

44 Instagram posts

ACS Renewal Levy Passes; District Plans to Return to the Ballot in May

Voters in the Alliance City School District have approved the district's renewal levy every five years since 1992. The renewal levy will go into effect in 2022 but WILL NOT increase resident taxes.

We are extremely grateful to our community for their unrelenting support of our students, faculty, and schools; by passing this renewal levy, we can

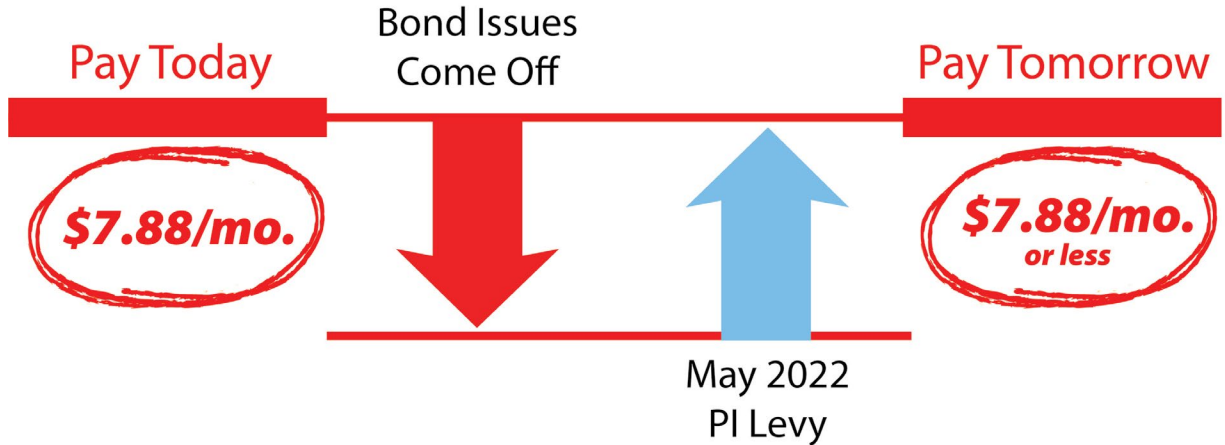
continue to provide the high-quality education and programming that our students have become accustomed to.

Continuing with our forward momentum, ACS will once again return to the ballot this upcoming year. On the May 3, 2022 ballot, our community will have the opportunity to vote on a proposed permanent improvement levy that will benefit our district.



The 2.7 mill PI levy WILL NOT increase taxes for residents.

RESIDENTS PAY THE SAME



All amounts based on a \$100,000 home.

On your ballot, you will see the word "Additional" to describe the tax. Please remember, while the levy will be considered a new levy, it will **NOT** be an additional cost to taxpayers. Residents will **NOT** be taxed for this levy until the payment for our facilities comes off next year. This conversion would be the same cost or less that an Alliance property owner is currently paying.

In 2022, the district will pay off the bonds or "mortgage" for our buildings.

In an effort to maintain this funding and financial stability for the district, ACS will place a levy on the ballot that will generate **approximately** \$750,000 per year. This proposed levy will help protect the investment our community has already made in our facilities.

This levy is used for the maintenance and replacement of items that have a lifespan of at least five years, including items such as buses, windows, roofing, safety and equipment. This levy **CANNOT** be used for salaries or wages.

Our buildings, our students, **our future**



New VBO Chart

Alliance City Schools introduced a new VBO chart for all students and staff for the 2021-22 school year. The chart showcases the Values, Behaviors and Outcomes all students and staff should strive for each day.

VBO Chart



Value



Behavior



Outcome

High
Performance

- » Teach and learn at high levels
- » Collaborate and communicate
- » Focus on continuous learning

Leadership

- » Engage in the learning process
- » Model the Aviator Profile and make a difference
- » Serve others with integrity and excellence

Caring
Citizens

- » Treat all people with dignity and respect
- » Value our differences
- » Press pause and seek first to understand

All students will
graduate prepared
for life, college,
and careers



Owning Your R: A Lesson in the R-Factor

Alliance City Schools hosted an R-Factor Community Night on Tuesday, Nov. 30, to introduce families and community members

to the R-Factor. The night featured guest presenter Derek Avera from Focus 3, a Columbus-based company behind the R-Factor.

Learning School, students start learning about the R-Factor and how it can help them to make good decisions that will lead to a positive outcome. The skills learned from the R-Factor are life skills that will help our students long after they graduate.

So, what is the R-Factor?

The most recognizable aspect of the R-Factor is the equation $E + R = O$. This translates to an event and your response to the event, which leads to either a positive or negative

Over the years, Alliance City Schools has worked hard to integrate the R-Factor into the everyday culture of the district. All staff members have gone through intensive training to learn about the R-Factor and how to incorporate it in their buildings. Beginning at Alliance Early



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Owning Your R - A Lesson in the R-Factor - *cont.*

tive outcome. The R-Factor teaches that when we are faced with an event, we can't control it. However, what we can control is our response. If we learn how to respond in a disciplined and skillful way, it will lead to a positive outcome, but if we respond in a default or impulsive manner, it will often lead to a negative outcome.

"E + R = O is simply the way life works," Avera said. "It's our job to get good at it. What we mean by that is we live in a cause and effect world and that's how we express it."

The R-Factor centers around six disciplines meant to teach people how to think about the outcome they want before responding. Knowing the outcome they desire helps individuals to respond in a way that will lead to that outcome.

The six disciplines are:

1. *Press Pause*
2. *Get Your Mind Right*
3. *Step Up*
4. *Adjust and Adapt*
5. *Make a Difference*
6. *Build Skill*

From the time students start school at Alliance City Schools, they learn the six disciplines starting with Press

Pause, which offers the students a chance to take a second and get their mind right instead of reacting on autopilot.

"The R-Factor has helped our district staff be more consistent as we teach our students the skills they will need to be successful in their lives," said Rob Gress, superintendent of Alliance City Schools. "We are now aligned in the techniques that we teach our students to effectively deal with the many events they encounter on a daily basis. Students are making better choices and getting better outcomes because of our work with the R-Factor."

The R-Factor also teaches that our response, whether good or bad, can create an event for another person. Students learn that every person has 20-square-feet they control in every aspect of their life. They can't control what happens outside of their 20-square-feet, but they can control their own space and what impact they will have on others around them.

The R-Factor encourages all individuals to become the best version of themselves through a continuous growth mindset. The change is not expected to happen overnight, and even those fluent in the R-Factor still have the opportunity to continue to grow and get better.

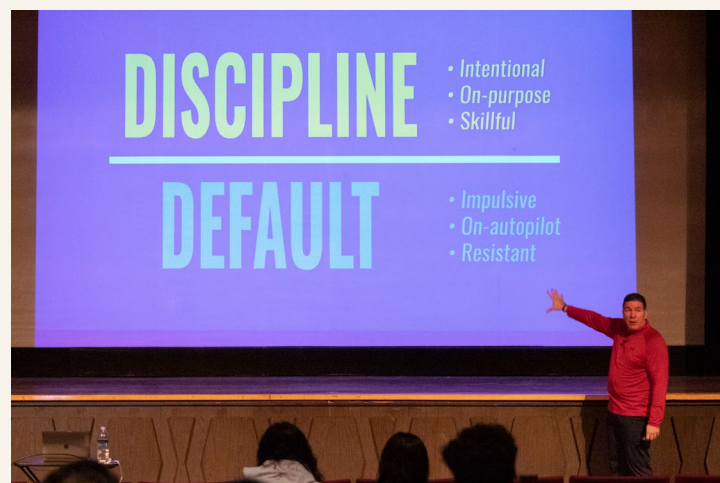


Teaching kids about the R-Factor at a young age encourages them to grow into the best versions of themselves throughout their time at Alliance City Schools.

"When you compare yourself only with the best version of yourself, it delivers from what we like to call the tyranny of comparison. There are so many people that spend so much time, effort, energy, emotion and resources comparing themselves with other people. If you're trapped in that comparison, I want to encourage you not to do that because it is a game that nobody ever wins," Avera said. "But there's a very healthy comparison game, and it's comparing yourself with the best version of yourself - with what's possible."

The vision for Alliance City Schools is to have all students graduate prepared for life, college and careers. The R-Factor gives the district the opportunity to teach life skills the students will carry with them far beyond graduation.

The staff at AHS was thrilled to once again be able to provide this high school staple to all students.





AHS Celebrates Homecoming

Alliance High School celebrated homecoming on Saturday, Oct. 9, after a one-year hiatus with over 500 students taking part in the celebration. The students danced the night away at the event, which was themed “A Night on the Red Carpet.”

For many students, this was their first high school dance in almost two years, and for some, it was their first high school dance ever. The high schoolers were excited and it showed in the number of students who elected to attend

the dance.

Reigning over the dance was King **Hunter Berlin** and Queen **Reese Griesez**, along with the following court members:

Senior attendants - **Corbyn Staggers** and **Olivia George**

Junior Attendants - **Holden Robinson** and **Mianna Ford**

Sophomore Attendants - **Alonzi McKenney** and **Jayla Callock**

Freshmen Attendants - **Kamden Jones** and **Alayjah Smith**, and **Cerriana Williamson**, Homecoming Princess

Along with the dance festivities on Saturday, AHS hosted West Branch for the Varsity homecoming game, which featured the crowning of the 2021 Homecoming King and Queen and court members.

The staff at AHS was thrilled to once again be able to provide this high school staple to all students.





Teacher of the Year: Carol Jesse



Congratulations to Carol Jesse, the 2021 Teacher of the Year!

Carol Jesse has been with Alliance City Schools for nine years as the instructional coach at Alliance Early Learning School.

"Mrs. Carol Jesse is a dedicated, passionate instructional coach who works tirelessly to support teaching and learning at Alliance Early Learning School," said Michelle Balder-

son, director of elementary education. "She possesses a true element of care for all those she knows. Beyond interacting with students on an instructional level, she works to make sure their physical and emotional needs are met, as well. The impact Mrs. Jesse has made on the students and staff is immeasurable!"

To be nominated for Teacher of the Year, the staff member must have an outstanding reputation for caring for all students and staff around them and exhibit a passion for upholding the values of an Aviator. Mrs. Jesse has gone above and beyond, and we thank her for dedication to the students and staff at AELS.



Rookie of the Year: Brenda Weisel

Congratulations to Brenda Weisel, the 2021 Rookie Teacher of the Year!

Brenda Weisel is in her third year as an English teacher at Alliance City Schools. In her short time in the district, she has made an immense impact on her students.

"Brenda is a great example of a teacher who epitomizes our core values," said Shawn Jackson, director of secondary edu-

cation. "She cares deeply about her students and believes they all can learn and grow at high levels. Simply put, she's a great teacher."

In order to be named Rookie of the Year, a teacher must be in the district for less than three years and have made a positive impact in the classroom.

Mrs. Weisel exemplifies the ideals of a Rookie teacher and the district thanks her for the impact she has every day, in and out of the classroom.





Learn About PLDC!

The Parkway Learning & Development Center (PLDC) was established in 2020 to house the alternative academies, formerly known as the Success Academy and the Digital Academy.

Located at the former Parkway Elementary building, PLDC houses approximately 120 students, 20% of whom are fully remote.

"PLDC is an alternative learning environment that is designed to meet the diverse needs of a variety of learners within our district," said Principal Portia Johnson. "The students who attend PLDC are in grades kindergarten

"If you ask students and their parents, they say they attend PLDC because they love it here," Johnson said. "They feel safe here. They feel accepted here."

The goal is to have a student attend PLDC for as much or as little time as they need before being acclimated back into a traditional classroom.

PLDC focuses on building positive and healthy relationships with students. An estimated 70% of the students who currently attend PLDC have experienced some form of trauma or traumatic experience in their lives. The staff at PLDC is dedicated, committed and passionate and they work together to meet the needs of the whole child, including behavioral, academic and mental health needs to ensure all students have the ability to grow and prosper as learners.

"Through our professional development and trauma training, we understand that the number one buffer, or healing agent, for traumatized children is a healthy positive relationship



with an adult," Johnson said. "Building positive relationships and rapport with students is undoubtedly a best practice in education, and when you add a trauma-aware, trauma-informed or trauma-competent lens to our work in building relationships with kids, we begin to help them heal, and when our kids begin to heal, they become better learners."

PLDC has the mantra "We are One," which feeds directly into the culture of the building. Students are greeted by name each morning and often enjoy Fun Fridays where they can take part in boxing, cooking, learning ASL, swimming and even sewing.



through 12, both with and without disabilities."

PLDC has a highly trained staff that consists of intervention specialists, counselors and more who have learned to focus on the whole child using a trauma-informed lens. Often students who attend PLDC are those that have trouble acclimating to a traditional school setting, whether it's from anxiety, trouble coping with emotions or a variety of other reasons. PLDC gives families an all-inclusive environment where students can learn coping skills and have smaller class sizes for a more individualized focus.





AHS Hosted EBC Honors Choir

On Thursday, Nov. 18, Alliance High School hosted the Eastern Buckeye Conference (EBC) honors choir. A total of 120 students from four high schools in the conference attended to showcase their vocal skills.

The choirs in attendance were Alliance, Marlinton, Minerva and West Branch.

During the concert, each choir performed one piece they had been working on followed by a series of songs directed by Dr. Marie Bucoy-Calavan, the guest director for the event. Bucoy-Calavan is the director of choral studies at the University of Akron.

"The EBC choir began as a way to bring together students from area schools in a positive way, when they typically face each other in competition and rivalry," said Carrie Chumat, choir director at AHS. "The intention of the event was for the students to create something beautiful together; and music certainly has that power – to bring people together!"

The choirs met at AHS the day of the event and rehearsed together for the day. Until the day of the concert, the 120 students hadn't performed together.

Together under the guidance of Bucoy-Calavan, the students performed "Be Like the Bird," by Abbie Betinis, "Shine On Me" by Rollo Dilworth, "Requiem," arranged by Craig Hella Johnson, and "Tshotsholoza," arranged by Jeffery L. Ames.

"It is so powerful for students to be alongside peers from different backgrounds, different communities, different teachers and different methods of learning – but all with a common love of music," Chumat said. "They all desire to be better, and to create something amazing together, and that's exactly what they do! It's always a very moving event to be a part of."



ACS WELCOMED THE HOLIDAY SEASON WITH VARIOUS WINTER CONCERTS





Teacher Spotlight: Mikayla Milburn



Mikayla Milburn is in her first year as an interventional specialist at Alliance High School, but this isn't her first experience as an Aviator. Ms. Milburn graduated from AHS in 2016 and went on to attend the University of Mount Union as an Investment Alliance scholar.

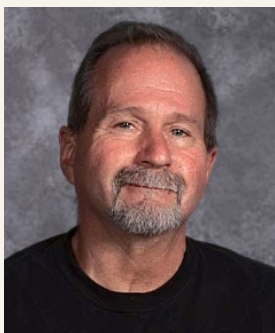
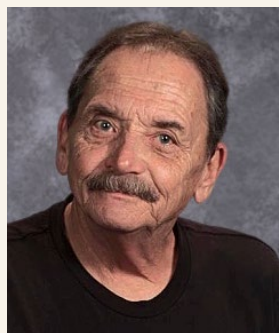
While her time as a staff member at AHS has been brief, she has already shown herself to be an asset to the AHS team.

"Mikayla has been a wonderful addition to AHS," Principal Kristy Woodford said. "She works hard to build relationships with students. Students, in turn, work hard for her in the classroom and on the volleyball court."

Not only has she made an impact in the classroom, but she has made strides as an assistant volleyball coach for the high school team.

We can't wait to see all Ms. Milburn will accomplish as a staff member at AHS!

Team Spotlight: Transportation Staff



The transportation staff consists of three hard-working individuals - Diane Hale, Larry Boone and Vince Kuhanec - who have decades' worth of experience between the three of them.

"The Transportation Department office team of Diane, Larry and Vince work hard to make sure our students get to school safely and on time," said Nick Cowles, director of operations for Alliance City Schools. "It takes a tremendous amount of planning and dedication to get our students to and from school and numerous extracurricular activities every day. We appreciate everything they do and are proud to call them Aviators."

Ms. Hale is the administrative secretary for transportation. She has worked for the district since 2015.

Mr. Boone was employed as the transportation supervisor from 1994 to 2016 when he retired. He returned later that year to be the head mechanic.

Mr. Kuhanec is the head mechanic and has worked for the district since 2001.

We thank Ms. Hale, Mr. Boone and Mr. Kuhanec for all they do to help ensure the students have a safe and reliable way to and from school.

Staff Spotlight: Sherry Watson



Sherry Watson has worked as a teacher aide in the Alliance City School District for the past eight years. She is currently

working at Alliance Early Learning School and is constantly making an impact on the students in Laura Hackney's classroom.

"Sherry is the calm in the storm," Ms. Hackney said. "She is a soothing presence for our students when they need some extra guidance."

As a teacher aide, Ms. Watson assists Ms. Hackney with the day-to-day responsibilities of the classroom and often works one-on-one with students who need a little extra help. She is a helping hand in the classroom and assists in many ways.

AEELS is lucky to have Ms. Watson as a member of their team!



Alumni Spotlight: Lexi Austin '15



A 2015 graduate of Alliance High School, Lexi Austin has accomplished much in her time since walking the halls of AHS.

Austin attended Capital University where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing in the spring of 2019. She currently works as a registered nurse at OASIS Surgery Center as a

pre-operation and recovery room nurse.

"My first year of being a nurse was in the height of the Coronavirus pandemic," Austin said. "I learned quickly to always be flexible and up to learning new things on the spot. Alliance High School always made sure that we were challenged in many ways. I think being exposed to that early on helped make the transition into having an ever-changing career much easier."

Her decision to become a nurse stemmed from her love of science - a passion Al Eibel, a retired science teacher at AHS, helped her to realize.

"Mr. Eibel was one of many teachers at Alliance High School that had a strong influence on me," Austin said. "He helped me realize my love of science and the human body in general. He

also instilled the importance of effective studying habits that I continued to use throughout nursing school."

The study habits Austin learned in high school had a tremendous impact on her college years. She encourages all current high school students to develop good habits as they will carry over to college, careers and even everyday adult life.

"It's important to keep your future in mind when making choices," Austin said.

During her time at AHS, Austin was involved in several activities, including volleyball, student council (which she was class secretary of), student senate, key club and foreign language club.

Austin recently moved back to Alliance after spending a few years in Columbus. She and her high school sweetheart and fiancé, Seth McConnell '13, purchased a house and welcomed their first child, Nyah Shay, in February.

