



Fall Newsletter

2025

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DEAR PATRIOT COMMUNITY,

The 2025-2026 school year is off to a fantastic start. Classrooms are filled with opportunity and our staff, students, and families have shown incredible dedication to making this year one of growth and achievement.

Plenty of success stories are being written each and every day at all our campuses as we ensure that every student has the opportunity to thrive both academically and personally.

As we settle into the year, I also want to take a moment to thank everyone who was able to attend the Board of Education meeting this October. I understand that many of you were unable to be there in person, so I wanted to follow up and share Dr. Rick Timbs' presentation.

Dr. Timbs provided an in-depth look at our current financial situation and projected trends over the next five years. His analysis showed a significant gap between our revenues and expenditures. This challenge stems from several factors: a Foundation Aid formula that bases aid on property value rather than the needs of our students, the expiration of temporary ARP funds that helped us address learning loss, and rising costs tied to inflation and contractual obligations.

The study makes it clear that stabilizing our finances will require a combination of exceeding the tax cap and making careful reductions, as our current reserves and fund balance are not sufficient to offset the shortfall. We have faced challenging times before, and I am confident that by staying united around our students, engaging in thoughtful planning, and strengthening our partnerships with families and the community, we will take the steps needed to ensure long-term financial stability for AVCS.

Thank you for your continued trust, support, and commitment to our students and schools.

Sincerely,

 Superintendent of Schools



For more information about AuSable Valley



Visit our district website

<https://www.avcs.org>

COMMUNITY UPDATE: UNDERSTANDING AUSABLE VALLEY'S FINANCIAL SITUATION

As a district, we take great pride in providing our students with outstanding educational experiences, strong academic programs, and safe, supportive learning environments. To continue delivering on that promise, it's important that we are transparent about the financial realities facing our school community and the steps we are taking to address them.

Where We Stand

The Long Range Financial Analysis, presented to the Board of Education in October 2025 by Dr. Rick Timbs, a leading expert in statewide school finance, identified significant fiscal challenges ahead for AuSable Valley Central School District. In short, our expenses are rising much faster than our revenues, and the gap is growing.

Over the last several years, the district benefited from federal COVID relief funding (CRRSA and ARPA), which helped us maintain staffing levels and support for students during an unprecedented time. Those temporary funds ended in September 2024, but many of the positions and programs they supported have continued. As a result, we are now relying more heavily on our fund balance (savings) to balance the annual budget, a practice that cannot continue long-term.

At the same time, state Foundation Aid growth, the main source of public school funding from New York State, has slowed dramatically. AuSable Valley is currently in a "save harmless" status, which means our Foundation Aid is being maintained but not increasing, a situation that occurs when student enrollment declines. In other words, while our costs continue to climb, our state aid does not increase.

Despite strong financial management and responsible budgeting, projections show that if no immediate action is taken, the district could face exhausting our fund balance (savings) by 2028 and could face a budget gap of more than \$6 million by 2030.

How We Got Here

Loss of Federal Funding: COVID-era federal grants have expired, but many funded positions and programs remain.

Rising Costs: Health insurance, transportation, salaries, and pension obligations continue to climb faster than revenue.

Flat State Aid Due to Declining Enrollment: Because of a drop in student enrollment, the district remains in "save harmless" status, receiving the same amount of Foundation Aid even as expenses grow.

Dependence on Fund Balance: The district has relied on savings to balance budgets.

Limited Revenue Growth: Although property values have increased, the state's tax cap limits our ability to raise revenue to match costs.

Planning for the Future

The Board of Education and district leadership are committed to addressing these challenges proactively and responsibly. Moving forward, we will:

- **Conduct** a detailed review of the 2026-27 budget to identify opportunities to reallocate resources and control spending. Short-term tax increases and cost reductions will be needed to stay financially stable.
- **Reevaluate** staffing levels and program costs, using attrition and reorganization where possible to reduce expenses while trying to preserve student opportunities.
- **Establish** and build financial reserves and avoid overreliance on one-time funds.
- **Plan** for future capital and transportation costs, including the upcoming zero-emissions bus mandate.
- **Explore** long-term solutions, such as consolidating facilities or pursuing shared services, to achieve greater efficiency.
- **Advocate** for fair and sustainable state funding for rural districts like AuSable Valley.

Looking Ahead

While the fiscal outlook is challenging, we remain confident in our ability to adapt and make thoughtful, data-driven decisions that protect the integrity of our educational mission. AuSable Valley's strength has always been its people, our students, families, staff, and community members who care deeply about our schools.

We will continue to communicate openly throughout this process and provide updates as new information becomes available. Together, we can ensure that AuSable Valley remains a district we are all proud to call home. Thank you for your continued support, understanding, and partnership.

Community Budget Forum

Share Your Voice on the 2026–2027 School Budget

Wednesday, December 3, 2025 — 6:00 PM

AuSable Valley Middle/High School Auditorium

Your Voice Matters

As we plan for the 2026–2027 school year, we want to hear directly from our families, staff, students, and community members. This is your opportunity to share ideas, ask questions, and help shape a responsible, student-centered budget for AuSable Valley. Join us for an open, honest discussion about how to keep AuSable Valley strong—today and for years to come. Together, We Build the Future of AVCS.

What to Expect

- A brief overview of the budget development process
- Discussion of state funding challenges and the impact of "save harmless" due to declining enrollment
- Updates on district priorities
- An open discussion and community feedback session

Why This Matters

Your input helps guide the Board of Education and district administration as we:

- Understand community priorities and values
- Make Informed, transparent financial decisions
- Balance fiscal responsibility with student and staff needs
- Plan for the future while maintaining high-quality educational programs

Can't Attend in Person?

You can still share your thoughts by completing our Community Budget Input Survey. The Community Budget Input Survey will remain open through December 19.

Scan
Here



Or Visit:

<https://qr.link/ZSpe4t>

FIELD OF FLAGS AT AVCS HONORS VETERANS

Seniors in the Participating in Government class at AuSable Valley Central High School created a Field of Flags beside Route 9N as a tribute to local veterans.

The display of 72 flags is timed for Veterans Day and serves as the students' way of saying "thank you" to community members who served. Each flag is dedicated to a veteran, and the project also raises funds for the Disabled American Veterans (DAV).

Social Studies teacher Jennifer Daniels introduced the idea this fall, and the students embraced it immediately. Their fundraising goal was \$500, but they collected \$860, which was enough to sponsor all 72 flags for the Field of Flags. Daniels said every student could name at least one veteran in their life and felt this was a meaningful way to honor them.

Several students have close personal ties to military service. Senior Jarrett Winters said multiple family members served, including a step-grandfather who fought in Vietnam and a Godfather who served in the Navy. He said he hoped the display would surprise them. Senior Tommy Brawn also kept the project secret from his family so they could experience the impact firsthand.

With guidance from AVCS Director of Facilities



Randy Pray, students used measuring tools and a ground hole-punch to place each flag exactly three feet apart. The quiet, steady work created a reflective atmosphere as the hillside filled with red, white, and blue.

The Field of Flags offers a powerful message of gratitude to all who travel between Ausable Forks and Keeseville. Proceeds support DAV Chapter #179, which provides specialized services and transportation for disabled veterans.

PATRIOT PROFILES



JACKIE BURKE
AFES
SECRETARY

What do you enjoy most about working at AVCS?

I enjoy the dedicated teachers and their commitment to our students. One thing

in particular is the diversity and meaningful connections I have made throughout the years within all our buildings.

How long have you been at AVCS, and what motivates you on a day-to-day basis to support AVCS?

I started out as a substitute aide in 2015, and I have been with the district for 10 years! My motivation is to try to make a difference and positively impact students.

What makes the people you work with special?

Our team has a small family feel, and everyone genuinely cares about one another. We check in on each other, we have friendships and we work hard everyday to do the best we can for our students. This is where my heart belongs.



KAYLENE LUNAN
MIDDLE SCHOOL
COUNSELOR

What is your inspiration?

It's the counseling team and the energy we have in the building. The middle-schoolers always

have energy. There is never

a day that is the same. It's always changing, and I am fortunate that I work with a great team and feel very supported.

What is your favorite part of your job?

I get to work with students. I say to my students that they make me a better parent. I love that they hopefully learn from me, but they also teach me a lot of things. I have my perspective on things, but I also get to see things through the eyes of our students, which helps me be the best I can be for my job.



SHARON BAINBRIDGE
LIBRARY
MEDIA SPECIALIST

What motivates you come to work every day and be part of the AVCS family?

The welcoming environment of our school, student smiles and terrific colleagues.

What is the best part about your job at AVCS?

Each day is different. I am able to support student learning and provide a positive atmosphere in the library for everyone.



DANNY BARBER
BUS DRIVER

What is the best about working at AVCS?

I absolutely love working with the kids. It's incredibly rewarding to connect with their unique personalities and watch them grow. Hearing

their laughter and being there for them in those moments brings me so much joy.

What makes the team you work with special?

This team is truly special because we all share a genuine passion for being around the kids. Each day, we enjoy interacting with them, and that common bond is something we all agree on.

What is your favorite memory working with the school?

My favorite memory is taking the Pre-K classes for ice cream every June. It's a tradition I look forward to each year, and seeing their excitement makes it so special.

Scan the QR code to view our Patriot Profiles, and visit our district website <https://www.avcs.org>



LULA PFENDLER BECOMES FIRST AVCS STUDENT BOARD MEMBER

Beginning July 1, 2025, New York State instilled a new law that gives students a voice within their schools. Every school across the state added at least one student board member, allowing students to participate in public meetings and provide their perspectives within their school community.

AuSable Valley's first student board member is Lula Pfendler, a junior who is an active participant in academics and athletics at AVCS.

As a student board member in accordance with the new law, Lula attends public meetings and contributes to discussions. Student board members, however, do not have voting rights and are excluded from executive sessions and non-public meetings.

The New York State School Boards Association values student representation on the Board of Education. Including students in school governance ensures that their voices and perspectives are considered in decision-making processes. Student members can also help bridge the gap between the school board and the student body, ensuring that student needs and concerns are effectively communicated.

Here's our Q&A with Lula and her early thoughts as a Board member.

What has the beginning of the experience been like as a student board member?

Overall, everyone on the board has been very welcoming, and I am extremely honored to have

been chosen for this position. However, I have found it a little stressful, as I know it is a very important role and I want to make sure everyone's voices are heard.



What interested you in becoming a member?

For many years I feel like I've had ideas and thoughts that I have wanted to express, but I didn't have an outlet to relay my ideas through. The main reason I wanted to become a member of the board was to be able to give me and my peers a voice in our school community with me

being a middle ground between the students and the adults.

What type of impact do you hope to make as a member?

I want to make a long-term difference in our school community. I hope that I can create a standard of communication between the student member and the Board of Education so that from now on, and for many years to come, student voices will keep being heard year after year.

How important is it for there to be a student voice within the Board of Education?

I believe that it is very important to have a student voice. The members of the Board of Education are not in school every day, and they are making important decisions that can affect students. Having a student voice makes the Board of Education more aware of things and can lead to them making more educated decisions that will only benefit the student body.



Board of Education Members

Aubrey Bresett	Jason Fuller
Lee Pray	Margaret Rondeau
Scott Bombard	Jason Parrow
Kenneth Bruno Jr.	Lula Pfendler

STARTING SCHOOL YEAR OFF WITH PLENTY OF SUCCESS AND MEMORIES

Students and staff have returned to our campuses this fall with great energy and excitement and settled into routines promoting academic and personal development.

Both of our elementary schools have had a fantastic beginning to the year, filled with family engagement and community spirit. Students and their families enjoyed VIP breakfasts. The fun continued with Trunk or Treat events at each building, bringing families, staff, and community members together.

At the middle school, students have not only excelled in the classroom but also enjoyed learning beyond the walls of school. Field trips to Rulfs Orchard and SUNY Plattsburgh offered hands-on experiences that connected classroom learning to the real world. In addition, middle school students have been showcasing their creativity through art projects displayed throughout the school.



PATRIOT HOMECOMING: HIGH SCHOOL ENJOYS YEARLY FESTIVITIES AND FUN



After plenty of achievements in the classroom this fall, our high school students finished out the first quarter with homecoming festivities in October. The week wrapped up with our annual afternoon field day where our seniors stormed the turf and brought all their energy to the rest of the day that featured games including flag football and bean bag toss as well as chances to stop by the ice cream truck and cotton candy stand. While our faculty will not want you to read this, the Class of 2026 defeated the faculty team in a spirited kickball clash that may or may not have featured some creative scorekeeping. Most importantly, our students all had a great day together!



AVCS BACKPACK PROGRAM RETURNS

We're excited to share that the AVCS Backpack Program is up and running again this year to help meet student needs in our elementary schools.

Thanks to newly secured funding from the Foundation ofCVPH, the program is expanding to include our Middle High School as well! The Backpack Program provides food and essential resources to students and families in need. If you would like more information about program qualifications or available resources, please reach out to your school's guidance counselors by phone or email for assistance.



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Happy Thanksgiving to Our AVCS Community!

PATRIOT VISION

The AuSable Valley Central School District will be an innovative school district for our student body. Our district's diverse population will be guaranteed a rigorous curriculum that encourages all pursuits of excellence necessary to empower future generations. We will ensure every student is prepared for a rapidly changing future in a safe, comforting, and inclusive environment. We will exemplify positive character traits among students, staff and community members to promote PatriotPride. Our program will be built upon a foundation of integrity, empathy, respect, and a strong work ethic. ThePatriot Community will utilize data driven decisions and clear goals while being fiscally responsible.

AuSable Valley Central School
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