

Cass School District 63

# Community Connections

Winter 2019



# Welcome New Staff

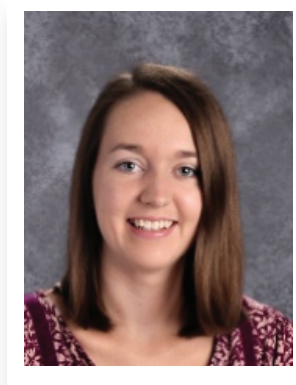
## Mr. Myles Moroney, Art Teacher

It is a pleasure to introduce Mr. Myles Moroney to Concord Elementary School as the new Art Teacher. Mr. Moroney is a graduate of Northern Illinois University, having studied Design and Education. Mr. Moroney has been teaching Art for over five years. He has also worked in Downers Grove and East Aurora teaching Elementary Art and in Oak Park/River Forest teaching summer school Art Foundations to high school students. Some of Mr. Moroney's hobbies include home improvement, playing instruments, drawing, animating and playing with his puppy. One of the things Mr. Moroney enjoys most about working at Concord Elementary School is the ability to create his own curriculum for the arts and the ability to try new things.



## Mrs. Blair Thompson, Social Worker

The District is pleased to welcome Mrs. Blair Thompson to Cass School District 63 as the District Social Worker. Mrs. Thompson earned a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from Carroll College, followed by a Masters degree in Social Work, with an emphasis in schools, from University of Illinois. Mrs. Thompson grew up in the area and currently resides in the same area with her husband and extended family. Mrs. Thompson had a year-long internship as part of her graduate studies and worked as a school social worker for two years prior to beginning at Cass School District 63. Her internship was in a Kindergarten-Grade Five elementary building and her prior work experiences were in an intermediate school and high school, working with grades from Prekindergarten through Twelve. Mrs. Thompson has also worked part-time in special recreation for five years. Mrs. Thompson enjoys traveling, reading, spending time with family and friends and being outside. Mrs. Thompson enjoys working across all age groups and getting to know her students in their classrooms and individually. She also likes collaborating with the special education team to find ways to meet her students' needs.





## **Mrs. Lauren Hodge, Special Education**

Concord Elementary School welcomes Mrs. Lauren Hodge as the newest Special Education Teacher. Mrs. Hodge received her Bachelor's Degree from Illinois State University followed by Aurora University where she earned her Master's Degree. Mrs. Hodge grew up in the area and lives not too far away with her husband, daughter and dog. Mrs. Hodge previously worked for six years as a Special Education Teacher for SASED prior to working for Cass School District 63. She enjoys spending time with her family and traveling in her spare time. Mrs. Hodge has really enjoyed getting to know her coworkers and students at Concord Elementary School.



## **Meet our Newest Board of Education Member**

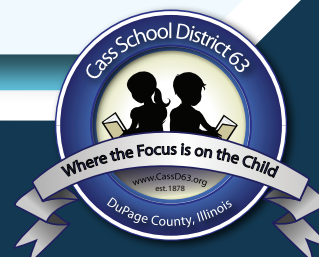


Earlier this Fall, the Cass School District 63 Board of Education selected Lana Johnson to fulfill the remaining term of Steve Alavi, who recently resigned from the Board of Education.

Lana Johnson has lived in Darien for more than 13 years with her husband, Jim and their three children. Lana received her Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration/

Marketing from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and she is currently Director of Project Management for the Advanced Group. She has been a leader in the staffing industry for 25 years and has extensive experience in human resources, marketing, and strategy. Prior to joining the Board of Education, Lana spent seven years in leadership and volunteer roles with various District Parent Organizations. She was President of the Parent Teacher Club for several years before leading the effort to consolidate the three District Parent Organizations into one; Cass Resources for Education (CARE). Most recently, she served as Co-President of CARE during its successful inaugural year.

Steve Alavi served on the Board from 2015 to 2018. He was the Board's Secretary and also chaired the Finance Committee. Prior to his election to the Board of Education, Steve was very active in District Parent Organizations, having served as the Chair of the Cass 63 Foundation for Educational Excellence. Please join us in thanking him for all of his years of service to the students, staff and community of Cass School District 63.







## OUR AMAZING BAND

Megan Duffy, the current Band Director, is in her fourth year of teaching at Cass School District 63. The district's Band Program serves students in Grades Four through Eight at Concord Elementary School and Cass Junior High School. Over the last three and a half years, the Band Program has grown tremendously in its number of participants, student skill level and musicianship, community involvement and student enthusiasm. When Ms. Duffy interviewed for the Band Director position in the Spring of 2015, Administration stressed that they were looking for improvement and growth of the Band Program. The main goal was to create a Band Program that would not only teach music, but would foster a love of music amongst the students. In the Fall of 2015, the Band Program consisted of approximately 50 students. Currently, the Band Program has nearly 170 musicians between the two schools.

Not only has the Band Program grown in numbers, but the level of musicianship has significantly increased as well. Students can now read and perform more difficult music and are excited about the variety of band repertoire available to them. The Jazz Band and Symphonic Band often perform high school level music. Because of students' dedication to reaching excellence, Cass School District 63 has been able to add many events and performances. The Marching Band Program has been initiated again for the first time since the mid-80s. The bands are performing and competing in local competitions and festivals, with the Symphonic Band being awarded first place at the Music in the Parks Festival at Six Flags Great America in April 2018. In addition, Cass Junior High School Jazz Musicians are receiving soloist awards at various jazz festivals around the Chicagoland area. Many students have also auditioned and been selected to perform with the prestigious Illinois Music Education Association's Junior Honor Band and Junior Jazz Band two years in a row. We are extremely excited to share that we even have several students being recognized at the state level for various competitive band festivals and performances. Because of the many accomplishments of our students and the support from our band community, Cass Junior High School was selected to host the esteemed Southeast DuPage Band Festival this upcoming March.

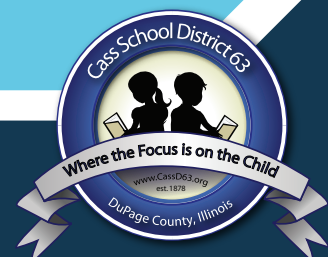
Ms. Duffy reminds students that the work is never done. As musicians, we are always striving to improve. The vision has always been to create an environment that supports students to be the best musicians they can be, as well as recognize and appreciate their individual and group efforts. The Band Students in the Cass Junior High School Band Program are fully invested and strive for excellence in each rehearsal and performance. The support the students have for one another has incredible power, and has helped to create phenomenal musicians and ensembles. Additionally, the Band Program could not have made the progress it has without the invaluable support from Cass School District 63 Administration, Staff, Parents and Community. Music Education is paramount to children's positive and meaningful contributions as members of their school and society. Fine Arts opportunities also boost children's confidence and provides skills that guide them throughout life. When students are able to see the progress they can make and have the support they need along the way, it motivates them to challenge themselves and each other, and then do more. Success breeds success, which is exactly what is happening in the Band Program at Cass School District 63.





## **Concord Elementary School First Place in Summer Reading Challenge**

During the summer of 2018 the students from Cass School District 63 once again participated in the summer reading challenge sponsored by the Indian Prairie Public Library. At the conclusion of the program, for the third year in a row, the students at Concord Elementary School earned the right to host the traveling reading trophy for the current school year. Concord Elementary School earned the trophy for the highest participation based on the student population percentage of those who completed their summer reading goals. Cass School District 63 is very proud of their accomplishments and we look forward to next summer and hope that the numbers continue to increase.





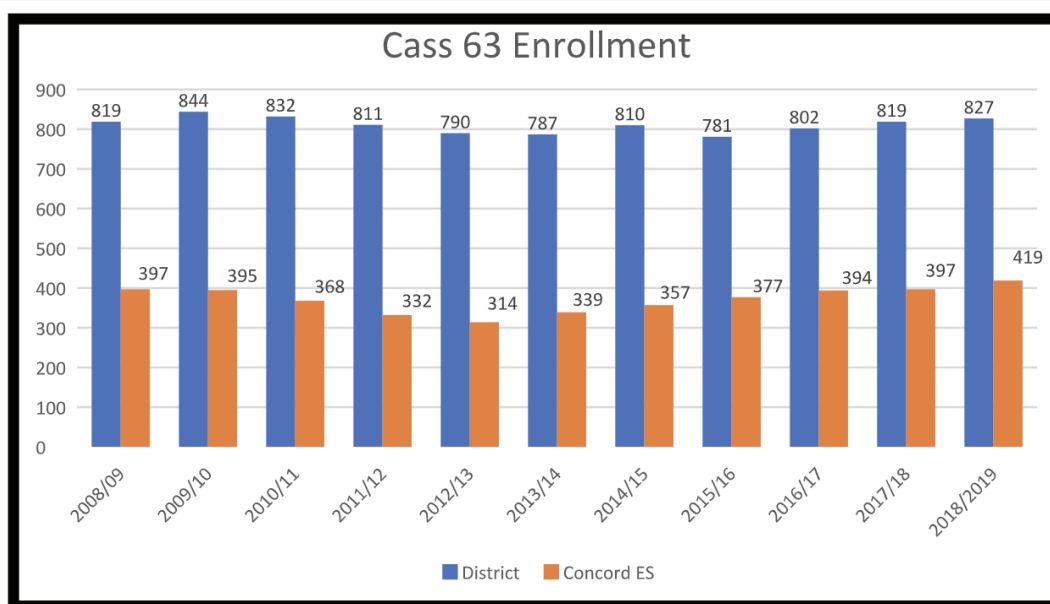
# Facilities' Planning for the Future

As can be seen in the bar graph below, total enrollment in Cass School District 63 has seen an uptick over the past several years. While number of students enrolled was below 800 for three out of four school years from 2012 through 2016, the recent trend has shown a yearly increase in number of students, perhaps on the way to a return to early 2000's levels, when enrollment neared 1,000 students.

This is even more apparent when looking at the enrollment for Concord Elementary School, which consists of students in grades Kindergarten through Grade Four. These numbers have increased from a low of 314 students in 2012/13 to 419 total students in the 2018/19 school year. If this trend of increased enrollment continues in the coming years, Cass Junior High School will also find itself with much higher attendance within the next few years as students advance to higher grade levels.

While it is too early to say for certain if increasing enrollment is a trend for Cass School District 63, factors such as turnover of neighborhoods in the District to younger families, with grade school age children, could well be underway. This is something the Administration will have to continue to monitor for possible increased demands upon District resources.

District 63 continues to operate on sound financial ground. The District's annual independent financial audit\* and budget\* for the 2018/19 fiscal year, both confirm Cass School District 63's financial solvency. The District recently received the Illinois State Board of Education's highest rating of "Financial Recognition."



\*Financial Information can be found at [www.CassD63.org](http://www.CassD63.org)



## Concord Elementary School Students Help Veterans

Concord Elementary School experienced another successful food drive to help support our veterans this Thanksgiving season. With the kind and generous donations from our Concord Elementary School families, they were able to donate more than 43 bins of food (1,153 items) collected for the Caring Patriots. The Caring Patriots organization provides Thanksgiving meals to many Chicagoland veterans. The organization collects supplies throughout the fall by partnering with various stores and schools, such as Concord Elementary School. The donations brought many smiles and comfort to those veterans in need.

In addition, Fourth Grade Students helped organize, sort and prepare the donations. Students were able to take away that working as a team and putting empathy into action makes a difference to others. Concord Elementary School Students were eager to help and create special cards with kind messages to the veterans. Caring Patriots was thrilled to see students taking time to help others in need and make such a meaningful donation.

## Did You Know?

Concord Elementary School in the fifth year of its partnership with the Darien Rotary Club. Together, we participate in the Food for Kids – Changing Lives Through Nutrition Program. Packs of food are provided to students in need on Fridays before they leave school for the weekend.

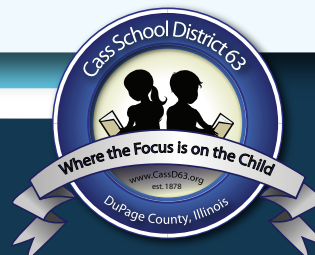
Eight students from Cass Junior High School were selected to perform with the Illinois Music Educators Association Junior Honor Band after a competitive audition last weekend. Approximately 500 students from the Chicagoland area auditioned for this honor group, and we are proud to have had EIGHT students selected to perform. We are proud of our students who represent us at this prestigious event!

This year, we have students with 27 different native languages in our classes.

Two Cass Junior High School Students were honored at Indian Prairie Public Library as finalists in a writing contest. We are very proud of their accomplishments.

Concord Elementary School staff, along with some anonymous donors and business partnerships, were able to provide many of our local community/families with gifts this Christmas.

Congratulations to Cass Junior High School's Junior Varsity Volleyball on an undefeated season! The team went 10-0! We are very proud of our girls.





## **Cass School District 63**

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[www.CassD63.org](http://www.CassD63.org)

### **BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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**Laura Anderson, Ed.D.**, Principal, Concord Elementary School  
District Director of Teaching and Learning  
**Christine Marcinkewicz**, Principal, Cass Junior High School  
District Director of Technology  
**Robert Strande**, District Director of Fiscal Services  
**Leland Wagner**, Assistant Principal, Concord Elementary School and Cass Junior High School



**Isabella- Fourth Grade  
Colored Pencil  
Concord Elementary School**

### **Community Connections Committee**

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Christine Marcinkewicz  
Mary Kate Favia  
Matthew Etherington