

# cass community

Winter 2017  
Newsletter



## The Spirit of Volunteerism Continues at Cass Junior High School

The Peer Buddies program was established at Cass Junior High School twelve years ago and continues successfully even stronger today. The program began in an effort to give the Multi-Needs students at Cass Junior High School the opportunity to interact with their peers in a positive and meaningful way. Three mornings a week volunteer Eighth Grade Students meet in the Multi-Needs classrooms to work with the Multi-Needs Students or interact with various other activities. Not only does this interaction provide social skills training for these students, but it is a positive and fun experience for the Eighth Grade Peer Buddies and Multi-Needs Students alike. Peer Buddies is a volunteer program, which is currently open to Cass Junior High School Eighth Grade Students. The possibility of opening the program up to Seventh Grade Students is currently being reviewed.

One of the principle goals of the Peer Buddy Program is to foster positive social interaction between students. The Multi-Needs Students can be predominantly isolated throughout the day. The Peer Buddy Program gives these students the opportunity to interact with peers they otherwise would not see. It is also a wonderful experience for the volunteers. Many of the Cass Junior High School Students describe how enjoyable it is to work with the Multi-Needs Students and comment how they are fortunate to be able to participate in such a mutually beneficial program.

Please visit Cass School District 63's website for more information.  
[www.CassD63.org](http://www.CassD63.org)

# Welcome to Cass District 63



## **Ms. Delia Ercoli**

We are pleased to welcome Ms. Delia Ercoli to the Sixth Grade Team at Cass Junior High School. Ms. Ercoli is a graduate of Lewis University. She enjoys reading and spending time with her family. When not with her family, she coach's speech at Lemont High School. Ms. Ercoli is enjoying the motivated students and supportive coworkers at Cass Junior High School.



## **Mrs. Cathleen Paullin**

It is our pleasure to introduce Mrs. Cathleen Paullin as Cass School District 63 School Psychologist. Mrs. Cathleen Paullin attended Northern Illinois University and The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. Mrs. Cathleen Paullin enjoys spending time with her family, discovering new places while traveling and photography. Mrs. Paullin appreciates the collaborative staff and getting to know the wonderful students at Cass School District 63.



## Cass School District 63 Staff Honored as “Those Who Excel”

The Illinois State Board of Education annually salutes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to education in Illinois. Cass Junior High School Administrative Assistant, Virginia Hirhager, and Concord Elementary School Teacher, Julie Brncich, were recognized for receiving the Illinois State Board of Education “Those Who Excel” Award. The Board of Education presented both award winners with a crystal memento to celebrate their exceptional achievement.

Both Cass School District 63 Educators were nominated and supported last winter and spring through the rigorous “Those Who Excel” process by colleagues, parents and students. Both are truly humbled by this statewide recognition and are very proud of the recognition that this has brought to the entire Cass School District 63 community. Our district is extremely fortunate to have these two excellent staff members, Mrs. Virginia Hirhager and Mrs. Julie Brncich, who truly embrace the District’s motto of “Where the Focus is on the Child.”

# Student Council Helps To Feed Children Around The Globe



Each year, Cass Junior High School's Student Council chooses a charity to support as the fundraising focus for the school year. For the 2016/17 school year, Feed My Starving Children is the chosen organization. Feed My Starving Children is a non-profit organization committed to feeding the world's hungry children. At each Feed My Starving Children facility we hand-pack meals specifically formulated for malnourished children and they are shipped to their distribution partners. Feed My Starving Children meals have reached nearly 70 countries around the world since its inception. In the past, charities have been chosen based on experiences and recommendations from staff and students. The Student Council has always raised monies in support of the cause, but not had the opportunity to give time in service. One of the reasons the group chose Feed My Starving

Children was because students will have the opportunity to volunteer and pack meals at the facility in Aurora. Students will experience the joy of giving through their own time and efforts, not just finances. Throughout the school year, all grade levels will each have a day where they will learn about the organization, pack meals and feel the impact they have made on those in need. Along with making an impact at the Aurora facility, additional fundraising activities will take place at school and all proceeds will be donated to Feed My Starving Children. Cass Junior High School is proud to be able to create an opportunity for students to be actively involved in the surrounding community.

## Did You Know?

### Community Connections Committee

Rich Brandeis, Chair  
Christine Marcinkewicz  
Mary Kate Favia  
Jeffrey McCollian  
Matthew Etherington

Concord Elementary School families donated items for needy families in the area in conjunction with the Darien Lions Club, Woman's Club and Park District.

Cass School District 63 partners with Darien Rotary to support Food For Kids. We pack food for needy families to send home on Fridays.

Thanks to donations by the Fine Arts Boosters Parent Organization, the Concord Elementary School Fourth Grade Class attended the Symphony and Cass Junior High School students will attend the Opera.

Concord Elementary School's Prekindergarten Program earned the prestigious Gold Circle of Quality from the Illinois State Board of Education.

Cass Junior High School Art students partner with University of Nebraska Omaha students to create art in the virtual worlds.

# Concord Elementary School Students Turn The Page(s)

With apologies to Bob Seger, students at Concord Elementary School proved during the summer of 2016 that they are the ones who know how to “turn the page”. Students in Cass School District 63 once again participated in the summer reading challenge sponsored by the Indian Prairie Library. Twenty public and private schools in the area, covering grades Kindergarten through Nine, participated in the program. At the conclusion, it was determined that the students at Concord Elementary School had earned the right to host the travelling trophy for the 2016/17 school year.

During the summer reading program 34 Concord Elementary students read 1,099 books. This represented a 102% increase over last year’s total of 544. The number of students participating increased from 18 the previous summer. Students set individual reading goals when logging in as participants in the reading program. The winning school was selected not only by the volume of books read, but by the number of students who met their individual goals as well.

The trophy was officially presented to Concord Elementary School during a Patriotic Assembly in September and is proudly displayed in the Concord Elementary School Library. Congratulations to our Concord students on their accomplishments. We can’t wait to see how many books they can read next summer.



## The State of Cass School District 63

Posted on the Cass School District 63 website ([www.CassD63.org](http://www.CassD63.org)) are the 2016 State Report Cards for Concord Elementary School, Cass Junior High School and Cass School District 63. The report cards show that, based on the State’s mandated annual Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), the District and its schools are once again achieving, as expected, at an impressive rate in comparison to students throughout the state of Illinois. School Officials and staff are extremely proud of the academic efforts and gains of the students of Cass School District 63 and it is readily apparent that school families value the importance of a quality education and take the time and effort to continually encourage and support their children to take advantage of the educational offerings available to them.

Also, posted on the District’s website is the annual financial audit completed by an independent auditing firm. The Fiscal-Year 2016 Audit, shows a surplus of approximately \$125,000 of revenues versus expenditures. The audit also confirmed that the District is in good financial standings, using appropriate financial policies and exercising sound and safe accounting practices.

In addition to consistently planning to successfully meet students’ needs to allow them to be productive and successful members of society and being a responsible fiscal steward to the school community, School Officials also continually plan for the care and wellbeing of the District’s facilities. Back in 2013, the District invested approximately \$2.5 million to upgrade and maintain the interior of the District’s schools. This past fall, the District Administration recommended and the Board of Education approved refinancing two bonds to generate \$1.75 million to reinvest in the District’s facilities. Specifically, these funds will be used to replace the Cass Junior High School roof this upcoming summer and to complete needed exterior work at the junior high and Concord Elementary School, which will include, but is not limited to tuck-pointing, fascia, soffit, eaves, flashing, facade and shingle work.

Cass School District 63 District Officials hope that the school community takes pride in the District students’ academic success, as well as the well-maintained schools that meet the needs not only for today’s children of the school community, but for future generations to come.

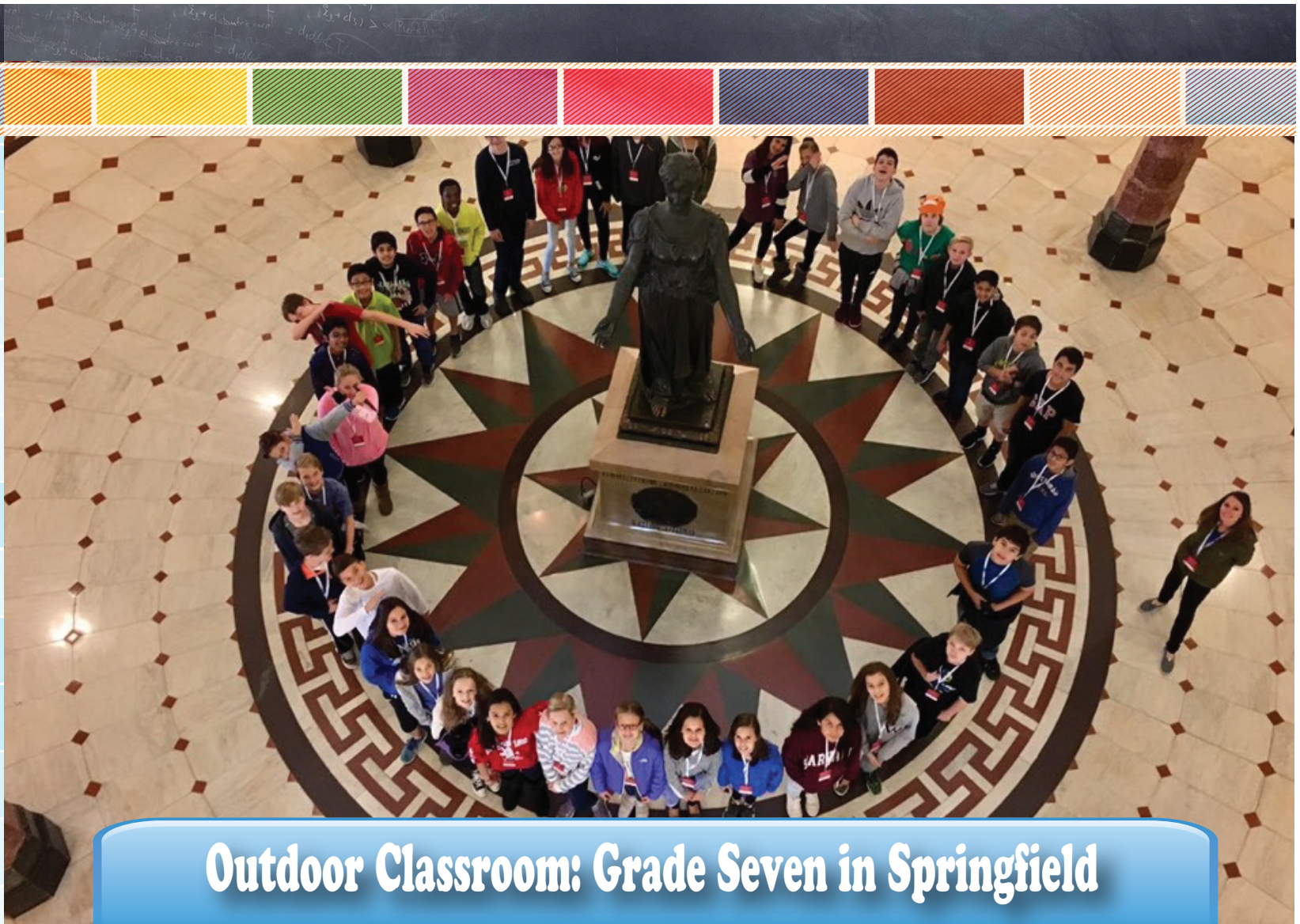
# Top Honor Earned

Cass School District 63's Blended Prekindergarten Program has achieved the Illinois State Board of Education, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services, and the Illinois Department of Human Services Gold Circle of Quality Award. The Gold Circle of Quality is the highest level attainable and rates programs on improvement systems for early learning and development programs for children from birth to age five using the ExceleRate System. The ExceleRate System unifies all of the state's early learning programs under a common set of standards, across multiple settings, to provide families with important information about quality early learning programs.

To achieve the Gold Circle of Quality Award, a program needs to demonstrate high quality on 15 ExceleRate standards, verified by an independent assessor. Within the standards, there are four domains consisting of teaching and learning, family and community engagement, leadership and management, and qualifications and continuing education. In addition, Gold Circle Programs meet and exceed specific quality benchmarks on learning environment, instructional quality, and all program administrative standards; group size and staff/child ratios; staff qualifications and professional development.

Research in science and brain development shows that children who are more meaningfully engaged in early learning experiences from infancy through the first five years of life are more likely to be successful in school and in life. High quality early childhood experiences not only improve the child's cognitive abilities but cultivate vital behavioral traits such as motivation, sociability and self-esteem. With the right engagement, children can form a healthy foundation of neural pathways in the brain, which impact their ability to think, react, process and grow. For more information, visit: [www.ExceleRateillinois.com](http://www.ExceleRateillinois.com).

ExceleRate Illinois is administered through INCCRRA under the joint direction of the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, the Illinois Department of Human Services and the Illinois State Board of Education.



## Outdoor Classroom: Grade Seven in Springfield

The Seventh Grade Class took an inaugural trip to Springfield, Illinois this fall to build an educational learning experience that prepares students to learn about the impact and legacy of Abraham Lincoln, as well as to better understand our state's government. Students visited The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Lincoln's Home, Lincoln's Tomb located at Oak Ridge Cemetery, as well as both the new and old State Capitol buildings.

Prior to the trip, students participated in cross-curricular Social Science and English Language Arts work to prepare them for the trip. This work included research, creation, and presentation of informational brochures highlighting the historic locations to be visited. Students also learned of the function of state government and the offices that are held in Springfield. Students had sufficient background knowledge to understand the value of the trip but came away with an abundance of new information as well. We are proud to provide students with very knowledgeable tour guides and teachers who engaged students with their knowledge and challenged students with their questions.

This trip was a great stepping stone, as students will continue to learn about Lincoln's legacy during the study of The Civil War and the abolishment of slavery in Social Science this winter, as well as their reading of Chasing Lincoln's Killer in English Language Arts this spring.



**Cass School District 63**  
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Darien, Illinois 60561-5333  
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[www.CassD63.org](http://www.CassD63.org)

## BOARD OF EDUCATION

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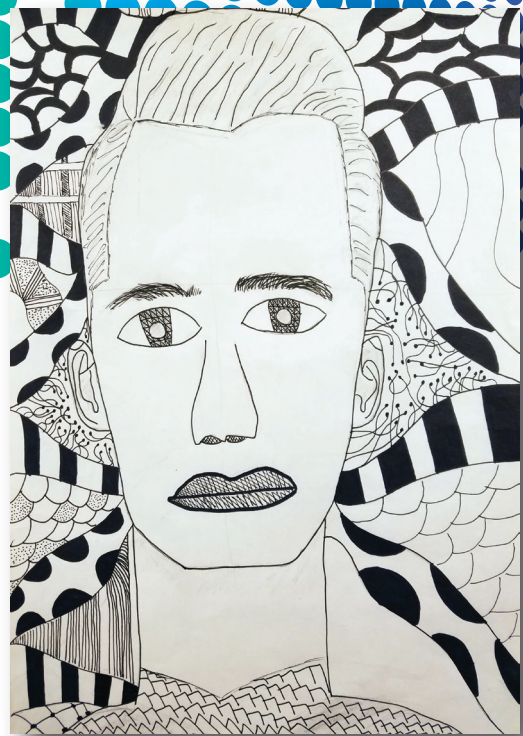
## ADMINISTRATION

Kerry J. Foderaro, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools  
Laura Anderson, Ed.D., Principal, Concord Elementary School  
District Director of Teaching and Learning  
Christine Marcinkewicz, Principal, Cass Junior High School  
District Technology Director  
Terry Murphy, District Director of Special Services  
Robert Strande, District Director of Fiscal Services  
Katie Girardot, Vice Principal, Concord Elementary School and Cass Junior High School

## Cass Artist's Corner



Anna - Third Grade  
Watercolor  
Concord Elementary School



Damian - Eighth Grade  
Ink  
Cass Junior High School

View more on Artsonia! <http://tinyurl.com/Concord-Artwork> & <http://tinyurl.com/Cass-Artwork>