

Vision 2025

***Strategic Plan Mission,
Beliefs, Values and Pillars***



Cass School District 63

Darien, Illinois

www.cassd63.org

***Strategic Plan Progress Review
January 2025***

The Cass School District 63 Strategic Plan is built on three pillars, with seven underlying indicators for each of the pillars. The pillars are as follows:

Pillar 1 - Academic Growth and Achievement

Pillar 2 - Student Services and Support

Pillar 3 - Student Health and Safety

An effective strategic plan requires not only clear goals and indicators of success, but also a method to monitor progress. Our method is to categorize and show progress for each pillar and indicator under the following four categories:



This is not intended to be an exact science, but just a simple method to provide a quick visual overview of our progress. Work and progress toward the Vision 2025 Strategic Plan will take place with the leadership team and staff, while progress will be monitored quarterly by the Board.

Pillar 1 - Academic Growth and Achievement

- 1.A Evaluate current progress reporting to determine if there are more effective methods for communicating academic and behavioral progress to parents.



1.A. January 2025 Progress Review – Teacher, staff, and administration worked to develop the new academic grading system, which was implemented in the fall of 2022. This combines the strengths of standards-based grading with the traditional clarity about how a child is performing academically. Work continues on reporting assessment and student growth results with appropriate benchmarks for comparison, as well as additional methods for communicating progress individually to parents, as well as generally across the school community through the [School Report Card Highlights](#).

- 1.B Research and evaluate current data and needs to determine recommendations regarding curriculum, materials and resources for the Mathematics, Science and STEM, Social Sciences, Reading and English Language Arts and special curriculum areas.



1.B January 2025 Progress Review – New math curriculum resources were researched, approved and implemented for the fall of 2022, followed by science and STEM resources for the fall of 2023, and social studies curriculum materials and resources in the fall of 2024. A new STEM program was implemented at Concord Elementary School in the fall of 2022, followed by the STEAM program that was implemented in the fall of 2024 at Cass Junior High School.

- 1.C Provide comprehensive periodic reporting regarding the academic achievement and growth of our students on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness (IAR) and the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments.



1.C January 2025 Progress Review - In the fall of 2023, the leadership team provided a more comprehensive review of IAR results through the [School Report](#)

[Card Highlights](#). This work will continue as the leadership team looks to provide more in depth information on local assessment and growth data, and looks for ways to share this more meaningfully with parents through a dashboard format on the new school district website when it is implemented.

- 1.D Survey recent graduates and review data to determine high school preparedness and identify areas in need of improvement.



1.D January 2025 Progress Review – Local school district leaders are collaborating on a data collection process for our recent graduates through the High School Transition Student Survey. The purpose of this data will be to assess and review how our recent graduates feel about their preparation for high school and help the leadership team and staff identify areas of strength and potential improvement. If necessary, additional data will be collected and reviewed.

- 1.E Recruit and retain a high quality and diverse staff that is reflective of our students, families and community.



1.E January 2025 Progress Review – Employing a highly qualified and diverse faculty and staff is a critical need in schools today, particularly with challenges of recruiting new employees with shortages in certain areas. For the most recent school years, the district has employed 16 new employees in 2022-23, 13 in 2023-24, and 17 for 2024-25. Approximately 10 percent of the district’s 120 employees are of a minority background. Progress has been made and every effort will continue to hire and retain a diverse staff that is representative of our students and community.

- 1.F Develop a comprehensive professional development plan and enhance growth opportunities for teachers and staff.



1.F January 2025 Progress Review - The district has provided mentoring and support for over 40 staff members hired in recent years, mostly through the new teacher mentoring program. Orton-Gillingham phonics and dyslexia training has been provided for all staff from kindergarten through 3rd grade, including all new recently hired staff. The school district has also provided cultural competence and student engagement training to help meet the needs of our students from

various backgrounds, as well as their social and emotional needs. Training has also been implemented in the area of safety and security, including training all staff in the ALICE model, and specified district administrators holding ALICE-certified trainer qualifications. The district is currently focused on our work toward the social and emotional needs and growth of our students. Work commenced in the 2023-24 school year to complete a comprehensive review of special services to align multi-tiered systems of support, Section 504, and special education services, while providing full compliance and the highest level of services and support for our students in their least restrictive environment. For the 2024-25 year, a director of student services position was added to support the ongoing efforts in this area. This will continue to require additional investments in professional development and staff support.

1.G Conduct employee exit interviews to provide input into areas of potential improvement.



1.G January 2025 Progress Review – As of the 2024-25 school year, the superintendent has implemented an exit interview process for staff who leave employment with the district. The main focus of the exit interviews is to gather information to assist with climate, culture, professional development, employee support, mentoring, and employee retention.

Pillar 2 - Student Services and Support

2.A Review and evaluate social and emotional curriculum and learning opportunities available to our students.



2.A January 2025 Progress Review – The district has supported student needs in this area with the addition of a half-time social worker (total 1.5 FTE), additional speech services (2.5 FTE), a full-time school psychologist (1.0 FTE), two guidance counselors (2.0 FTE), two full-time nurses (2.0 FTE), including one at each school beginning with the 2024-25 school year, and a half-time student services director (0.5 FTE) beginning with the 2024-25 school year. Through the multi-tiered systems of support, much work has been done putting supports in place for students in all three tiers. All students at Cass Junior High School meet with the school counselor for the Choices program on a weekly basis, and the social worker provides services for Tier 2 groups, as well as Tier 3 services. All students at Concord Elementary meet with the school counselor for the Skills for

Learning program on a weekly basis while working with peer-mediation and problem-solving interventions among students. The social worker is delivering all Tier 2 and Tier 3 social work interventions in small groups and/or individually, based on the needs of the students. The district comminutes to assess the needs of our students and our progress with MTSS to determine where best to allocate resources, people, and professional development.

2.B Encourage and promote parental engagement and involvement.



2.B January 2025 Progress Review - The school district continues to seek ways to involve parents in their child's education in a meaningful way. The district has also sought parental input through surveys, including for the area of student services and the lunch program during the 2023-24 school term. One key part of the district's communication is through the Cass63 Connections, which is provided to parents weekly throughout the school year. The Connections retains a high level of readership and engagement among parents and staff. The 2023-24 school year also included the beginning of more building principal communications to parents on an as needed basis. More work will continue on how to engage parents meaningfully by making certain they feel welcome at school, as well as through our parent organization CARE, and through any other potential community engagement opportunities.

2.C Review the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to determine any areas of need.



2.C January 2025 Progress Review – This continues to be one of the main targets for growth in the district. In June of 2023, the district's leadership team and school service personnel and specialists began work to improve the district's MTSS framework to better meet the changing needs of our student population. Since that time, the district engaged with a consultant to review services, met with all stakeholders, and developed a new framework and systems to best meet the needs of our students. This resulted in the establishment of seven goals and a new direction for student services in the district. Additionally, the district has hired a part-time director of student services to assist with leading and facilitating these changes over the course of the 2024-25 school year. The district is currently evaluating staffing and budget priorities to best meet the needs of all students for the 2025-26 school year and beyond.

2.D Conduct an evaluation of services for English language learners (ELL) to determine if a greater continuum of services is needed.



2.D January 2025 Progress Review - A number of district teachers have become certified to work with English language learners, and this is an ongoing priority. One of the challenges is the district has many primary languages among the student population. Work will continue with our staff and students in this area.

2.E Analyze student medical needs and onsite service to determine adequate staffing levels.



2.E January 2025 Progress Review - The district has added and hired two full-time nurses at both schools over the course of the previous three school years. This has had a major impact on meeting the many medical needs of our students in the school setting, as well as providing better long-term proactive planning and health procedures and meeting our student assessment and identification needs as well.

2.F Evaluate community demographic data and enrollment trends to determine impact on long-term staffing needs.



2.F January 2025 Progress Review - Long-term enrollment trends show that the district's total enrollment is largely unchanged over the most recent 12 year period. Staffing levels are monitored annually and the leadership team regularly updates the district's staffing plan for recommendations for the ensuing school year. The largest driver of this plan is student enrollment and need by grade level to determine if three or four sections of a particular grade level are needed, as well as considering the personnel necessary to meet the academic and social and emotional needs of all students. Staffing plans for the 2025-26 school year and beyond are being developed.

2.G Provide cultural events and opportunities for students, families and the local community.



2.G January 2025 Progress Review - The district hosts an annual Art and Jazz Show at Cass Junior High School each spring, and is currently planning a Multicultural Celebration with the involvement of students, staff, parents, and families in April of 2025.

Pillar 3 - Student Health and Safety

3.A Develop a comprehensive master plan for the improvement and replacement of heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems.



3.A January 2025 Progress Review – In November 2022, the district passed a referendum to address safety, security and HVAC needs, including the development of a geothermal heating and cooling system. Design and engineering work was completed and geothermal wells were installed over the course of late 2023 and early 2024, and the interior HVAC work was completed in the summer of 2024.

3.B Research and make recommendations for upgrading video surveillance systems, phones and internal communication equipment, security lighting, fire alarm panels and other safety and security needs.



3.B January 2025 Progress Review – The November 2022 referendum also addressed safety, security and HVAC needs, including addressing various safety and security needs. The BluePoint security system has been installed, the phone system replaced, and interior and exterior cameras have been installed. The fire alarm system was also replaced in the summer of 2024 with the other interior work at both schools.

3.C Complete necessary requirements to maintain ongoing health and life safety compliance.



3.C January 2025 Progress Review – The school district has made progress with compliance with all health life safety items from the 2017 survey at both schools, and final documentation will be provided to ISBE after planned Phase II work is completed in the summer of 2025. The school district also consistently passes its annual health life safety visit with no violations identified by the DuPage Regional Office of Education at either school.

3.D Determine the most efficient options to finance the necessary improvements to indoor air quality and HVAC systems, safety and security equipment, and health and life safety needs.



3.D. January 2025 Progress Review - In November of 2022, school district voters approved the payment of bonds for financing the related facility improvements. The district closed on the second set of bonds in February of 2024, maintaining the costs at or under what was shared with taxpayers at the time of the referendum. Additionally, the school district continues to pursue alternative sources of revenue to finance future Phase II planning, including through the federal energy tax credit.

3.E Conduct cyber security audit to determine any necessary safety protocols to ensure the protection of student and district data.



3.E January 2025 Progress Review – In June of 2023, the district installed network security improvements, including separating various components so not all services are compromised in the event of a cyber security attack. The district has also raised its insurance limits to cover the cost of a security issue, and plans to implement additional security measures in 2025.

3.F Research and develop a comprehensive plan for student transportation staffing and services.



3.F January 2025 Progress Review – The school district conducted a public transportation bidding process which allowed the district to retain drivers for in-house special education routes, while outsourcing regular transportation routes. This plan was successfully implemented in the fall of 2023 with Sunrise Transportation Services with a contract through the 2025-26 school year.

3.G Conduct comprehensive, periodic reviews of the Emergency Operations and Crisis Plans with local law enforcement and other emergency services.



3.G January 2025 Progress Review - Progress has been made with communications and cooperative planning with the Darien Police Department. These efforts will continue as the school district staff has been trained in ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate) and district leaders are now trained as certified ALICE instructors. More training and work with the police department will be provided to staff over the course of the 2024-25 school year, and with the implementation of the BluePoint Security system.