

# **Vision 2025**

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



***Cass School District 63***

**Darien, Illinois**

**[www.cassd63.org](http://www.cassd63.org)**

***Strategic Plan Progress Review  
January 2024***

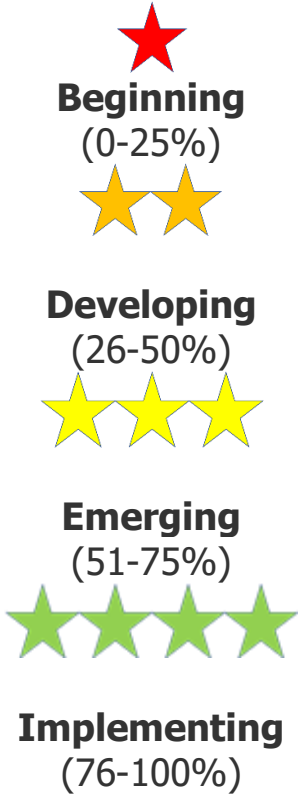
The Cass School District 63 Strategic Plan is built on three pillars, with seven underlying indicators for each of the pillars. The pillars are as follows:

**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 2024 Progress Review – Over the spring and summer of 2022, staff and administration worked to develop the new academic grading system. This system, which was implemented in the fall of 2022, combines the strengths of standards-based grading with the traditional clarity about how a child is performing academically. Work will continue 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.

- 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 2024 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. The staff will be studying social studies curriculum materials for potential implementation in the fall of 2024. A new STEM program was implemented at Concord Elementary School in the fall of 2022 and STEM is being reviewed for changes for the fall of 2024.

- 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 2024 Progress Review - In the fall of 2023, the leadership team provided a more comprehensive review of IAR results through the [2023 School](#)

[Report Card Highlights](#). Similar work will be done in 2024 to provide more in depth information on local MAP assessment data.

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



1.D January 2024 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 2024 Progress Review - Employing a highly qualified and diverse faculty and staff is one of the greatest challenges in schools today, particularly with challenges of recruiting new employees with a shortage of teachers, school service personnel and workers in general. For the 2023-24 school year, the district employed 18 new staff members, including many in what are considered hard to fill positions. Despite the challenges, our new staff are highly qualified and licensed to perform their duties. The school district has adjusted compensation and contracts to help with recruiting and retaining the highest quality staff. Progress continues and every effort remains 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 2024 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 also continues to look at our needs as it relates to the social and emotional needs and growth of our students. Work is also under way to conduct 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. This will also 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 2024 Progress Review - An informal employee exit interview process has been implemented, but this will become more formalized beginning in the spring of 2024.

## 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 2024 Progress Review - Additional support with an added half-time social worker and additional speech services has allowed for much greater support of our students in both schools. In addition to having a full-time school counselor at each school, the district now employs 1.5 social workers, a full-time school psychologist, and a full-time district nurse. 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 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. Work continues to help identify students at risk and provide appropriate interventions whenever necessary.

## 2.B Encourage and promote parental engagement and involvement.



2.B January 2023 Progress Review - The school district continues to seek ways to involve parents in their child's education in a meaningful way. The key part of this is communication from the district to the parents and between the parents and teacher and school. Much of this is accomplished through the Cass63 Connections, which is provided to parents weekly throughout the school year and retains a high level of readership and engagement when needed. More work will continue on how to engage parents meaningfully at school and through the CARE organization.

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



2.C January 2024 Progress Review - 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. Much progress has been made during the 2023-24 school term with formal assessments, structure for data collection and review, and providing appropriate interventions at each tier. The district has engaged with a consultant to review programs and services to make recommendations to better meet the needs of our students, including providing appropriate services in the least restrictive environment. This will also drive potential training and resources for teachers and staff to meet the needs of our students.

## 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 2024 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.



January 2024 Progress Review – Long-term enrollment trends show that 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.

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



2.F January 2024 Progress Review - Long-term enrollment trends show that 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.

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



2.G January 2024 Progress Review - The district hosts an annual Art and Jazz Show at Cass Junior High School each spring. The district is at the beginning stages of planning a cooperative cultural event with the involvement of students, staff, parents and families. The timeline for this is yet to be determined.

## 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 2024 Progress Review - District voters approved a referendum in November 2022 to address safety, security and HVAC needs as part of a comprehensive facility plan, including the development of a geothermal heating and cooling system. Design and engineering has been completed, the project has been bid, and work is underway on the geothermal wells. Asbestos abatement is being addressed during the winter and spring breaks of the 2023-24 school year, and the interior HVAC work and other improvements will be completed during the summers of 2024 and 2025.

- 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 2024 Progress Review - The BluePoint security system has been installed and training and implementation is underway with staff. The phone system has been replaced. Exterior cameras have been installed and interior cameras will be completed during the summer or fall of 2024 after interior HVAC work is completed. Additional planning and work for the replacement of fire and burglar alarm systems is in the planning stages.

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



3.C January 2024 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 the completion of the 2024 projects. The school district also recently passed its annual health life



safety visit with no violations identified by the DuPage Regional Office of Education for 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 2024 Progress Review - In November of 2022, school district voters approved the payment of bonds for financing the related improvements for facility improvements. The district will close 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 parts of the project.

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



3.E January 2024 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 will implement additional security measures in 2024.

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



3.F January 2024 Progress Review - For the 2023-24 school year, the 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 has been successfully implemented with Sunrise Transportation Services through a contract that runs 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 2024 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 2023-24 school year, and with the implementation of the BluePoint Security system.