



WELCOME TO CASS JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL
A message from your principal,
Christine Marcinkewicz

August 5, 2020

Dear Cass Junior High School Families,

Welcome to the 2020-21 school year at Cass Junior High. I sincerely hope that your summer was filled with special memories involving friends and family. The Cass Junior High staff has been working this summer to prepare for an exciting school year. I apologize for the long communication, but I am going to try to answer as many questions as I can while explaining how school will look this year.

Thank you for your patience and all of your feedback during this challenging time. Your survey responses over the past few weeks have assisted us with our initial planning, but there is a lot more to do. At this time, unless you have received a personal call from one of the school offices or administrators, we have been able to honor all requests for Monday/Wednesday, Tuesday/ Thursday, and Remote Only options. Families that noted they are flexible on the survey will be contacted regarding their placement in the next week.

It is my pleasure to share with you the new additions/changes to Cass Junior High's team!

Mr. Mark R. Cross	Superintendent
Mrs. Michelle Roberts	Assistant Principal
Ms. Rachel Hyder	District Nurse
Ms. Danielle Trezzo	Physical Education Teacher
Mr. Brad Cardott	Physical Education and Health Teacher
Mr. Kevin O'Toole	Math and Science Teacher
Mrs. Stacie Gray	Spanish and ELL Teacher
Ms. Donna Gerren	Evening Custodian
Mr. Troy Carlson	Teacher Assistant

On behalf of our Superintendent, Mr. Mark Cross and the entire Cass District 63 administrative team, we thank you for your continued support of our school district.

Return to Learn Updates

In addition to the information provided here, the school district will continue to provide updates regarding our [Return to Learn Framework](#), health and safety protocols and remote learning.

Orientation Day

Grade 5 students will be invited to school to meet their teachers and tour the building on August 18, 2020. This will be a tightly scheduled event where one parent will be able to attend with one child at a specific time. All health/safety/cleaning protocols will be followed. Please watch for an email from the Cass Junior High office.

All Cass Junior High students will receive an email notification on August 18, 2020 from Cass Junior High with schedules and other pertinent back to school information. On Friday, August 21, 2020, an 'open house/ curriculum night' video will be released for parents and students which will introduce teachers, discuss class expectations and curriculum plans for the year. This presentation will serve as our virtual curriculum night.

Chromebooks

As you are aware, we are a 1-1 device district. Returning District 63 students have kept their devices over the summer. Please note: Grade 5 students are receiving upgraded devices. Please stop by Cass Junior High School on Monday, August 10 between 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. to trade your old Chromebook for a new one. If you are not available during that time, do not worry. We can swap out your Chromebook at 5th Grade Orientation on August 18. Also, students new to the district will have a scheduled day in the coming weeks to pick up their district provided device. We want to ensure that all of our students will have access to remote instruction if the need arises.

School Hours

Cass Junior High School hours are 8:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Please be sure that students arrive between 8:30 a.m. – 8:40 a.m. so that they can be in their classrooms ready to begin the school day at 8:45 a.m.

Arrival & Dismissal

We would like to remind you of important procedures that we have in place to help us provide for the safety of students.

- All students must arrive at school between 8:30 a.m. – 8:40 a.m. Students being dropped off by a parent must use the door facing Willow Creek Lane. Any student arriving at or after 8:45 a.m. will be marked tardy.
- Please obey the 'Do Not Enter' signs. They are important to our traffic flow and safety of students.
- We will stagger students in hallways during both arrival and dismissal this year to social distance and to follow health/safety protocols. We will not be using lockers this year. Students will go directly to classrooms upon arrival.

Thank you for following these important safety procedures.

Daily Physical Education

- Students will have physical education every day. We are unable to use lockers or change clothing this year.
- All students need to have closed-toe gym shoes daily for Physical Education and recess. Heels and sandals are not acceptable and compromise student safety while involved in Physical Education.
- Students will not be using or sharing equipment. Physical Education and fresh air breaks will be redesigned to follow health/safety protocols.

Outdoor Fresh Air Breaks

Please send students dressed appropriately for the weather. Students will go outside each day.

We plan to hold classes outside as much as possible for as long as we can. All social-distancing protocols will be followed.

Emergency Information

In a continuing effort to maintain your child's well-being as our highest priority, it is essential that the office have current and complete emergency information. Should any information change during the year, please contact the office immediately. ALL emergency information needs to be complete and up-to-date. If there are custodial or legal issues, please contact the building principal directly. This information is regarded as confidential but shared with appropriate personnel in order to address the protection of the child.

Student Medication and Health Issues

Every effort is made to ensure the well-being of your child if your child becomes ill or incurs an injury. Please take the time to review the District policy relative to the administration of medicine during school hours. If your child requires the use of an inhaler, please carefully review the permission form for asthma inhalers. Any student requiring administration of medicine needs to have a completed form by a physician on file. New, updated forms need to be completed each academic year. Please do so as soon as possible, especially if your child requires the use of an inhaler or epinephrine pen. Should you have any questions, please contact the school office, 331-481-4020. For your convenience, your physician can fax the form directly to Cass Junior High School at 331-481-4021.

While we do everything possible to ensure the safety of your child, accidents do happen. In the event of a serious injury, you will be contacted. For minor types of scrapes, a band aid and TLC will be provided, but you will not receive a call. For the health and safety of all students and staff, sick children must be picked up from school within an hour of parent contact. If you are unavailable to pick up your sick child, we ask you to please make alternative arrangements. A log of all serious injuries is maintained in the office. If you have any special medical requests regarding your child, please contact the office.

All health/safety protocols will be followed as outlined by the CDC and Illinois and DuPage County Departments of Health. Those guidelines will be shared in a separate document.

Food Allergy Management Program

School attendance may increase a student's risk of exposure to allergens that could trigger a food-allergic reaction. A food allergy is an adverse reaction to a food protein mediated by the immune system which immediately reacts causing the release of histamine and other inflammatory chemicals and mediators. While it is not possible for the District to completely eliminate the risks of exposure to allergens when a student is at school, a Food Allergy Management Program using a cooperative effort among students' families, staff members, and students helps the District reduce these risks and provide accommodations and proper treatment for allergic reactions.

To reduce the risk of issues with severe food allergies, Cass School District 63 is asking all parents who provide their children with lunch at school to not include any products or ingredients that contain tree nuts, peanuts or peanut derivatives. We thank you in advance for your cooperation on this matter.

Each year, the staff in Cass School District 63 develops and implements a Food Allergy Management Program that:

1. Fully implements the following goals established in *The School Code*: (a) identifying students with food allergies, (b) preventing exposure to known allergens, (c) responding to allergic reactions with prompt recognition of symptoms and treatment, and (d) educating and training all staff about management of students with food allergies, including administration of medication with an auto-injector, and providing an in-service training program for staff who work with students that is conducted by a person with expertise in anaphylactic reactions and management.
2. Follows and references the applicable best practices specific to the District's needs in the joint State Board of Education and Illinois Department of Public Health publication *Guidelines for Managing Life-Threatening Food Allergies in Schools*, available at: www.isbe.net/nutrition/pdf/food_allergy_guidelines.pdf.

School Lunch Program

Students will be eating in their classrooms with adult supervision each day. There may be days when teachers take their classes outside for lunch when it can be done so safely and comfortably.

While it is your parental discretion to determine what type of healthy lunch or snack is appropriate for your child, it becomes our responsibility as a school to facilitate a healthy environment for all of our students, including those with severe food allergies. For this reason and as described above, we are asking all parents who provide their children with lunch at school to not include any products or ingredients that contain tree nuts, peanuts or peanut derivatives.

Another way that we are encouraging and endorsing healthy eating is through our school lunch program. School lunches, should you choose to participate, are provided by ARAMARK, a nationally approved company, and they offer many healthy food options for students each day.

As you know, it is very important for students to have lunch each day. The nutritional value and consumption of food helps students to concentrate better in the afternoon. It is important for parents to maintain their child(ren)'s lunch accounts. The school does not have lunch to give to students who do not bring a lunch and/or have no money in their lunch accounts.

In order to help assist in reminding you about lunch for your child(ren), I would like to respectfully request that you develop a routine for your family to make sure your child(ren) either bring a lunch to school and/or have money in the lunch account each day.

- Although we will accept cash or a check in an envelope clearly labeled with your child's name and lunch on the outside of the envelope, for health and safety reasons we are asking all parents to please pay online.
- To pay by credit card, please go into the [Lunch Payment Portal](#) and put money into each of your child's accounts. Money is subtracted from each individual child, not by family. Due to the nature of the system, it may take two to three days from the time you pay with a credit card to the time the payment actually hits the lunch account. Please plan accordingly.
- Lunch menus are sent monthly via NoteTotes and are also available on the District website. Please see the lunch menu for the cost of the lunch and milk.
- Within the Lunch Payment Portal, there is an area where you can put in your email address. PLEASE ENTER YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS into this section. You will receive email notifications once your child(ren)'s account drops below the amount you set. You are able to customize this feature based on your preferences.

If you have any questions about the lunch program, please call 331-481-4020 and the lunch staff will assist you.

Building Security

For health and safety purposes during the 2020-21 school year, visitor access to the school will be limited in both number and location.

Because the safety of all students is our top priority, building security is emphasized. All staff members wear a lanyard and photo identification. Every room is equipped with a telephone. In addition, our Emergency Preparedness Team has compiled an emergency management plan to address varied types of emergencies, natural or man-made. This is a critical area of concern as well as priority. Every room and staff member has a copy of the plan. As the principal, my whereabouts are always known and a phone is readily accessible. This is true of the entire administrative staff, our office staff and custodial staff.

We also have a visitor check-in system. This system requires all visitors to submit a state driver's license or photo identification card. The license or card will be scanned to run a sex-offender background check. Once the check is successfully completed, a photo visitor pass will be printed for the visitor to wear to gain access to the school.

In addition to the emergency management plan, and visitor check-in system, we have a drop-off location in our foyer between two locked doors. When parents drop-off items (lunch, homework, band instrument, etc.,) they will be placed on the table and labeled using a Post-It Note to identify student name and classroom.

Student Development

Our team eagerly awaits the challenges of a new school year! We are excited at the prospect of identifying specific curricular goals to enhance your child's learning experiences. Beyond the academics, we value a holistic approach to fostering positive social interaction, appropriate choices, and social-emotional development. Please take the time to review the district calendar and Cass Junior High School Parent/Student Handbook which highlights policies, procedures, and general information. Our staff will review the discipline policy with your children. Following is a highlight of some of the initiatives that will be facilitated this year. A more comprehensive description of each initiative will be shared with you in upcoming newsletters, emails and team websites.

- **ASSESSMENT PROGRAM** – Students in Grades One-Eight will be participating in the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) testing in the Fall, Winter and Spring this year. This is a nationally-normed test that adapts to the students' needs and gives teachers specific information about students' current levels of performance in the areas of reading and math. Students will take the tests on the computer under the supervision of their teachers. This data will be used to plan instruction based on the specific needs of students and will be shared with you after each administration of the test.
- **ONLINE TEXTBOOKS** – Reading, Math, Science and Social Studies books are available online. You will be receiving information about online access from teachers. Online textbooks have extra examples and even provide step by step instructions about how to complete homework tasks. Please take advantage of these wonderful technology tools. In addition, all links to specific textbook pages needed for lessons will be embedded in a daily Google Classroom communication.

How can you help your child(ren) prepare for school?

To maintain the health and safety of students and staff, we are implementing social distancing protocols throughout the school day. These are some examples of the changes being put into place:

- All people in the school building are required to wear masks,
- Desks will be spread apart in the classrooms and excess furniture is removed,
- We have discontinued the use of lockers,
- Hand washing schedules are developed (e.g. before lunch, and after lunch)
- All classrooms are equipped with hand sanitizer
- All classrooms are equipped with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) (e.g. Masks, gloves, face shield, plexiglass partitions, disinfectant)
- All outdoor Physical Education areas, blacktop and the gym floor will be labeled to help students with social distancing
- Increase and documentation of all cleaning/disinfecting protocols

Here are some ideas and ways to help students prepare for re-entry into school and build more independence.

Positive Attitude: As a parent myself, I understand that the decision to send your child(ren) to school and/or keep your child(ren) home during such a challenging time is a big one. As you know, how your family approaches and manages events, obstacles, challenges, and successes is largely determined by you. Your child(ren) will be looking for guidance and you will be their first resource. Please stay positive, and put on a strong, happy smile. This will go a long way in your child(ren)'s success.

If anything comes up during the school year, keep the lines of communication open with the teacher(s) and support staff. If you need further assistance, please reach out to the Cass Junior High School Office (331-481-4020) and we will support and assist you in any way we can. For specific social/emotional assistance, please contact Mrs. Lia Lamb, our school counselor, at llamb@cassd63.org.

School Supplies: Please label all school supplies with your child(ren)'s name on them. Please use permanent marker and/or stickers/labels. Students will not be able to share supplies as part of our health/safety protocols. If you ordered a school supply kit from CARE, all of the supplies will be delivered directly to the teachers' classrooms.

If your family will be "remote only", there will be scheduled pick up times for supplies and devices.

Backpacks: Since the use of lockers has been highly discouraged during the pandemic, please send your student with a backpack which can hold all of their materials for the day. Students will carry all of their belongings with them all day.

Water Bottles: All of our drinking fountains will be shut off/covered as part of our health/safety protocols. Students need to bring a water bottle with an attached straw (this will help minimize students having to remove masks) that they can refill at the water bottle refill. You may also send your child(ren) to school with an extra bottle of water they are able to keep sealed in backpacks.

Masks: All students and staff will be wearing masks that cover their noses and mouths every day throughout the school day. Mask breaks outside in the fresh air will be scheduled by each teacher. It is our goal with the smaller class sizes and the ability to be outside (weather permitting) and social distance in Physical Education classes, students will be able to get extended time without a mask during Physical Education.

To help your child get accustomed to wearing a mask all day, you can practice at home. Start slow with the amount of time your child wears a mask, and then slowly increase the time each day. Another idea is to have your child(ren) try out a few different varieties of masks to see which types are the most comfortable.

When school starts, please send your child to school wearing a clean mask, with 2-3 more clean masks sealed in a plastic ziplock bag. If one mask becomes uncomfortable or dirty, your child will have a spare or two to switch out. All masks will be sent home each day.

Chromebooks: Please be sure to send the Chromebook (fully charged) and the charger in the bag provided to school each day your child(ren) attends.

Remote Learning: On the days your child(ren) are remote learning, it is important to follow the learning schedule as best as possible. Remote learning will be different than the emergency distance learning you experienced last Spring. Teachers will be following a regular school day schedule 8:45 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. on Mondays – Thursdays, with an alternate schedule on Fridays. The specifics of each class's schedule will be communicated by the teachers each day.

In order to provide consistency and help make things as easy as possible for students and parents, all staff will be using Google Classroom (Grades 1- 8) to send out the daily schedule, lessons and work. All links for the learning for that day will be embedded within Google Classroom. In addition, all staff members will be using Zoom for all live lessons and meetings. These Zoom links/invitations will also be embedded into the Google Classroom. There will be some live instruction, some videos, some textbook/curriculum links, and some independent work each day.

Zoom Etiquette

The teachers will be teaching the students and sending to parents the Zoom Etiquette and Expectations for school.

- Students will be required to use their names to be admitted to the Zoom meetings.
- Both video and sound should be on. Teachers can also control this on their end.
- While participating, students must follow all school rules and behave as if they were in the regular classroom.
- Students should be fully dressed and ready for the day.
- Students should be in a learning environment free from distractions (pets, toys, other objects that make noise or can be distracting to them and/or their classmates).

It is my hope that I have answered some of your questions and have explained some of the health/safety and curriculum/instruction things the staff has been diligently working on this summer. On behalf of our team, welcome to the 2020-21 school year. Thank you for your continued support and patience during these challenging times. I know if we continue to keep the lines of communication open and work together, we will have a great school year.

Happy Learning!

Christine Marcinkewicz

Christine Marcinkewicz
Cass Junior High School Principal
District Director of Technology