

Vision 2025

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



Cass School District 63

Darien, Illinois

www.cassd63.org

***Strategic Plan Progress Review
June 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.

June 2025 Progress Review

Each of the three pillars include seven underlying indicators and progress toward each of these indicators is monitored by the leadership team and Board of Education. The most recent review for June of 2025 is provided under the dropdowns of each goal and indicator below. Over the preceding six months, significant growth has been demonstrated on indicators 2A, 2F, 2G, 3C, and 3F.

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. June 2025 Progress Review – Teacher, staff, and administration worked to develop the new academic grading system, which was implemented for the 2022-23 school year. 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 June 2025 Progress Review – New math curriculum resources were researched, approved and implemented for the fall of 2022, followed by science and STEM resources for 2023-24, social studies curriculum materials and resources in 2024-25, and art, music, physical education, and Spanish in 2025-26. A new STEM program was implemented at Concord Elementary School in 2022-23, followed by the STEAM program at Cass Junior High School for 2024-25. The district is looking for a new STEAM program teacher at the junior high for the 2025-26 school year to continue the growth in this area.

- 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 June 2025 Progress Review – Over the previous two years, the leadership team has provided a more comprehensive review of IAR and MAP 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 June 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 June 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 14 percent of the district's 120 employees are of a racial/ethnic minority background, which is a significant improvement over the last several years. 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 June 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 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 has led to major growth in the area of student services, and this work will continue into the 2025-26 school year.

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



1.G June 2025 Progress Review – As of the 2024-25 school year, the superintendent has implemented an informal exit interview process for staff who leave employment with the district. The main focus of the exit interview 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 June 2025 Progress Review (significant growth demonstrated) – The district has made significant changes and refocused resources toward supporting student needs in this area with the addition of a full-time social worker at each school (2.0 FTE), additional speech services (3.0 FTE), a full-time school psychologist (1.0 FTE), a change to one guidance counselor (-1.0 FTE) at the junior high only, the addition of two full-time nurses (2.0 FTE), as well as a half-time student services director (0.5 FTE). 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 for Tier I support, and the social worker provides services for Tier 2 groups, as well as Tier 3 services. Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, Concord Elementary students Tier I support will be provided by their classroom teachers for the Skills for Learning program on a weekly basis. The full-time social worker will deliver Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions in small groups and/or individually, based on the needs of the students. The district continues to assess the needs of our students and our progress with MTSS to determine how best to adapt and where to allocate resources, people, and professional development.

2.B Encourage and promote parental engagement and involvement.



2.B June 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, but this will become more frequent and regular for the 2025-26 school year. 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 June 2025 Progress Review – This continues to be one of the main targets for growth in the district. In 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 has evaluated and adjusted staffing priorities for the 2025-26 school year as the MTSS processes, procedures, and supports are put in place.

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



2.D June 2025 Progress Review – A number of district teachers have become certified to work with English language learners, and this will be an area of focus for the 2025-26 school year. One of the challenges is the district has many primary languages among the student population.

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



2.E June 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 June 2025 Review (significant growth demonstrated) – While long-term trends show that the district’s total enrollment over the previous 12 years is down slightly, the priority of where to allocate resources has changed. The district has planned for and successfully navigated significant changes with staffing, retirements, and recruiting and retaining high quality employees. The school district’s staffing is better aligned with student needs and future plans to meet those needs, particularly in the area of student services. 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 enrollment and need 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 June 2025 Progress Review (significant growth demonstrated) – In April of 2025, the district hosted its first Multicultural Celebration. This event was a huge success, with excellent attendance and participation from our families and local community. Plans are already underway for the 2026 celebration. The district also hosts an annual Art and Jazz Show each spring.

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 June 2025 Progress Review – In November 2022, district voters approved a referendum to address safety, security and HVAC needs, including the development of a geothermal heating and cooling system as part of the Phase I facilities plan. The geothermal well and HVAC system was completed in 2024, leading to significant improvements in energy efficiencies. Additionally, and as part of the same effort, the district is completing Phase II work in the summer of 2025, with replacement of old fixtures with LED lighting. It is expected that Phase III work that includes upgrading to LED lighting throughout the district will be completed in 2026.

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 June 2025 Progress Review – In addition to the geothermal HVAC project, the 2022 referendum also addressed various safety and security needs. At both

schools, the BluePoint security system has been installed, the phone system replaced, interior and exterior cameras have been installed, and the fire alarm system was replaced.

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



3.C June 2025 Progress Review (significant growth demonstrated) – The school district has completed all related work and is in compliance at both schools with the 2017 health life safety survey. 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. The next step for the district will be the next required 10-year health life safety survey.

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. June 2025 Progress Review – School district voters approved the payment of bonds for financing the related facility improvements. The district closed on the second set of bonds in 2024, maintaining the costs at or under what was shared with taxpayers at the time of the referendum. Additionally, the school district recently secured an energy tax credit of \$2.865 million to finance Phase II and Phase III facility plans, which is already having a huge impact on energy and maintenance costs, putting the district in a much stronger financial position as a result.

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



3.E June 2025 Progress Review (significant growth demonstrated) – 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 is implementing additional security measures in 2025, including two-factor authentication for employee logins.

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



3.F June 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 for the 2023-24 school year with Sunrise Transportation Services with a contract through the 2025-26 school year. The district continues work to secure special route drivers to safely and efficiently transport students whose educational needs are met outside of the district.

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



3.G June 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 continues training with ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter and Evacuate) and district leaders are trained as certified ALICE instructors. More training and work with the police department will be provided to staff over the course of the 2025-26 school year with ALICE, the, BluePoint Security system, and other safety and security procedures and plans.