



# 63 SUCCESS

WINTER 2025 • EAST MAINE DISTRICT 63

## Building for the Future

Working on a team project in a STEAM lab. Eating lunch with friends on the middle school learning stairs. Spinning, climbing, and swinging in a brand new playground. Creating a delicious healthy snack in the Early Learning Center nutrition hub. Tackling math in a bright, welcoming classroom.

Learning unfolds in physical spaces, and how those spaces look, feel, and support learning impacts student success. Recognizing this, a key District 63 Strategic Plan goal is to **build equitable learning spaces and modernize our buildings**.

Ranging in age from 69 years (Melzer, opened in 1959) to five years (our Early Learning Center, opened in 2020), the District operates seven schools, the Family Resource Center (FRC), and an administrative office. Each needs to be well maintained, keep students and staff safe, and should ideally be designed with learning in mind.

### Maintaining Our Learning Spaces

Tasked with keeping every facility in good shape is the District's 37-member Operations Department. On the frontline: our skilled building custodians. In addition to keeping classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, and lunchrooms spotless, custodians keep a sharp eye on the entire building—indoors and out—monitoring roofs, parking lots, playgrounds, mechanical systems, and more.



*Middle school students gather on Gemini's Learning Stairs.*



**Sheila Urban**

2009-2025



**Alexandra Brook**

2013-2025

District 63 Board of Education

*Thank you for your service!*

But keeping our schools in peak form takes more than routine maintenance. All buildings—and their component parts—have “life expectancies.” Over time, heating and cooling systems wear out, roofs must be replaced, parking lots develop cracks and potholes, bathrooms must be updated, gym floors become scuffed and scratched, and playground equipment becomes outdated. To ensure that our facilities keep pace with student and staff needs (and growth) the District plans ahead. A detailed “rolling” Facilities Plan maps out needed work—and the funding to pay for it—over a multi-year timeframe.

Where does the money come from? Funds for major capital improvements (as opposed to day-to-day maintenance) don't come out of the District's Operating Budget, which covers salaries and benefits, student services, academic programs, and supplies.

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EMPOWERING ALL STUDENTS TO SUCCEED IN A CHANGING WORLD



## FROM PRESIDENT ALEXANDRA BROOK

### Bidding Farewell

After 12 years of service, and with a heavy heart, I have decided not to seek a fourth term on your District 63 Board of Education and will step down in May. Serving on the Board (for the past eight years as your President) has been one of the greatest honors of my life. I have had the privilege of working alongside so many dedicated individuals and I'm so proud of our progress. During my tenure, we have:

- Expanded and transitioned Gemini into a 21st-century middle school.
- Launched full-day kindergarten at no cost to families.
- Constructed a purpose-built preschool to give our youngest learners a great head start.
- Transformed Stevenson School into our Family Resource Center and significantly expanded services for our families and youth.
- Conducted a thorough search for a new Superintendent, resulting in Dr. Schleizer's appointment.
- Implemented initiatives that ensure our schools are welcoming and inclusive.
- Completed a ten-year facilities/life safety plan and a five-year strategic plan.

We've also faced challenges. From closing a school, redistricting, and adapting to changes in the educational landscape to dealing with a global pandemic, each required courage, conviction, and keeping an open mind. I firmly believe that each challenge made us stronger.

As I take my leave I am optimistic. D63 is in good hands with talented leaders, teachers, and staff who will continue our mission of "empowering all students to succeed in a changing world."

To my fellow Board members: I've learned so much from you. Your commitment to putting the needs of our students first inspired me every day. I know that the new Board will continue to do great things, and students will continue to benefit from your leadership. Thank you for the opportunity to serve. Together, we have truly made a difference.

*Alexandra Brook*

### Building for the Future . . . continued

Instead, as is the case with many school districts, District 63 borrows funds in the form of bonds—purchased at the lowest possible interest rate—to complete this work. Over time, the bonds are repaid.



*Melzer Elementary opened in 1959.*

### Hazy Lazy Days of Summer

In fact, D63's summer days are far from lazy. Instead, we use this time to undertake a range of maintenance projects while more schools are empty. A few upcoming 2025 highlights:

- Updating fire alarms across the District.
- Gemini bathroom and courtyard remodels—as well as replacing the hot water heater.
- Parking lot renovation and roof resurfacing at Mark Twain.
- Melzer sidewalk drainage.
- Interior renovations at Washington.

### Thinking Long-Term

Some projects are bigger than a summer can accommodate. Educational needs and facility codes change over time; D63 buildings need to keep pace.

For example, Apollo opened its doors in 1970 as a junior high—not an elementary school. Some of its features are outdated or do not align with programming needs. For example, many classrooms lack natural light. Likewise, special education classrooms need more space than general education classrooms—and incorporate different features.



*D63's Early Learning Center, opened in 2020, is custom designed for our youngest learners.*

Last year, the District completed a **ten-year facilities plan** and a **life-safety plan** to ensure that the most critical needs are prioritized

*Continued on page 4*



## DR. SHAWN SCHLEIZER NAMED 2025 SUPERINTENDENT OF DISTINCTION



*Dr. Schleizer, left, with IASA Executive Director Dr. Brent Clark.*

**D**istrict 63 Superintendent **Dr. Shawn Schleizer** was named **2025 North Cook Superintendent of Distinction** by the **Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA)**.

Superintendents of Distinction are selected by their peers in each of the state's 21 IASA regions based on leadership, communication, professionalism, and community involvement.

Dr. Schleizer joined the District in 2010 as Principal of Melzer School. He served as Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Associate Superintendent from 2014-2021 before stepping into his current role in 2022.

"It is clear that Dr. Schleizer's hard work and passion have left a strong impression," noted District 63 Board President Alexandra Brook. "It is inspiring to see his efforts being celebrated by those who know the field best."

## ERICA PERELGUT NAMED ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR



**G**emini Middle School Assistant Principal **Erica Perelgut** was selected as the **2024-2025 Assistant Principal of the Year** by the **Illinois Principals Association (IPA) North Cook Region** – making her one of 18 finalists for the IPA's state-wide

**Assistant Principal of the Year Award.**

A long-time member of the District 63 team, Perelgut is also a District alumna, having attended the former Stevenson School (now closed) and Gemini. She joined Apollo School in 2003 as a primary and intermediate teacher, moving on to be Assistant Principal. Perelgut has served as Assistant Principal at Gemini since 2015.

"This much-deserved recognition affirms what we already know about Ms. Perelgut: her thoughtful approach to educating all children shines through every day," said D63 Superintendent Dr. Shawn Schleizer. "It's a true testament to her dedication and impact – we are so fortunate to have her at Gemini."

**WHO'S DREAMING ABOUT SUMMER?**

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**D63 Summer Programs**

**June 23 - July 17, 2025**

Registration opens April 1  
[emsd63.org](http://emsd63.org)

Success Without Boundaries  
**63**  
EAST MAINE

## Buildings for the Future . . . *continued*

when scheduling capital improvements. Topping the list: expanding building capacity and ensuring that every school meets the specific requirements of the age group it serves.




*Installing a new AC unit at Apollo.*

Plans are under-way to ensure that the District has enough space for its growing student population in the coming years—including building additions, possibly shifting the current Family Resource Center back into service as a school, and substantially remodeling Apollo.

D63's mission is to “empower all students to succeed in a changing world.” To meet that mission, its learning spaces also need to change—helping every student achieve success without boundaries.

## D63 BOARD APPROVES 2024-2025 BUDGET



**EAST MAINE  
SCHOOL DISTRICT 63**

**Fiscal Year  
2024-2025 Budget**

Adopted on September 5, 2024  
By the  
East Maine School District 63 Board of Education

Dr. Shawn Schleizer  
Superintendent  
Alexandra Brook  
Board of Education President

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Des Plaines, IL 60016  
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Empowering all students to succeed in a changing world.

At its September 5 meeting, D63's Board of Education unanimously passed the District's 2024-2025 budget.

The budget reflects **operating revenues of \$64.1 million** and **operating expenses of \$65.5 million**, which reflects the Board's decision to draw down

\$1.4 million in reserves to fund a range of expenses.

Among other things, the District is committed to continuing its free Summer Enrichment Program - previously covered by federal COVID grants as well as continuing to offer band, orchestra, and athletics at no charge to families, making them more accessible to all students. Finally, reserves will fund cost increases in our special education services. Find the full budget on our website.



## FROM SUPERINTENDENT DR. SHAWN SCHLEIZER

### With Deepest Gratitude

Board President **Alexandra Brook** and Board Member **Sheila Urban**

will not be seeking reelection this spring. Both have served the District with dignity, grace, and unwavering commitment, together contributing an impressive 28 years of service to our students, families, and staff. As professional educators and parents of District graduates, their unique perspectives and steadfast dedication to our community have been invaluable and will be deeply missed.

Their service has coincided with significant changes in the District. When I informed my predecessor, Dr. Scott Clay, D63 Superintendent from 2009-2022, of their decision not to seek reelection, we took the opportunity to reflect on their remarkable contributions. Both Dr. Clay and I had the privilege of witnessing these significant changes alongside them, many of which were made possible because of Alex and Sheila. We share our heartfelt thoughts on their lasting legacy.

### Sheila Urban

Sheila joined the Board in 2009. A lifelong resident of D63 and proud graduate of Nelson and Gemini, she brought a deeply informed, child-centered focus to her leadership—and as an elementary school special educator herself, her insights and student advocacy have been a guiding force. Sheila's outgoing personality, passion for our mission, and thoughtful consideration of all perspectives have left an indelible mark on the District. Her legacy of dedication and compassion will continue to inspire.

### Alexandra Brook

Alex joined the Board in 2013 and has served as Board President since 2017. As a middle school math teacher, her professional expertise, diplomacy, and consensus-building skills have been instrumental in uniting the community during times of both peace and challenge. Her calm demeanor, grace in navigating difficult situations, and unwavering passion for education have left a lasting legacy in the District.

Please join me in thanking President Brook and Member Urban for their extraordinary contributions and wishing them continued success and fulfillment in the future.



## DISTRICT NEWS: #63SUCCESS



**FIRST STEPS GOLD CIRCLE OF QUALITY** • In September, First Steps Preschool received its fourth **Gold Circle of Quality** designation from ExceleRate Illinois. Administered through the statewide Illinois Network of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) - under the direction of the Illinois State Board of Education and other agencies - ExceleRate rates early childhood programs based on **teaching and learning, family/community engagement, leadership and management, and qualifications and continuing education**. The Gold Circle of Quality recognizes the best of the best: programs that have met or exceeded the benchmarks for all of these standards, as validated by an independent assessor.

**ROTTEN APPLES** • Gemini's fall play pulled in a packed house last October. Audiences at three performances followed the Evil Queen, Wicked Stepmother, Big Bad Wolf, Little Red Riding Hood, Pinocchio, and Prince Charming as they sought to unravel a mystery that would enable them to escape a frightening mansion on a dark and stormy night. Mark your calendar now for the school's spring musical **Lion King Jr.**, which runs April 24-26.



**WINTER CARD CONTEST WINNER** • Apollo 2nd grader **Ubaid Sabith's** dark, swirling sky and snow-white trees adorned the front of the 2024 District 63 winter card. More than **50 students** from every school contributed entries. Sabith was recognized at the December 5 Board of Education meeting; he's pictured here with Board President **Alexandra Brook**. All of our Best in Grade winners were honored with a special video—and all entries were displayed at the Niles-Maine District Library.

**WE CARE 2024 MAKES A DIFFERENCE** • A heartfelt thank you to all of our staff members and families who donated to this year's campaign. **Thousands of cans, jars, boxes, and bags of non-perishable food; personal hygiene products; and household items** are now available in the Family Resource Center Marketplace to D63 families in need.



## BOARD OF EDUCATION

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**SHEILA URBAN**

East Maine School District 63  
Educational Service Center  
10150 Dee Road  
Des Plaines, Illinois 60016

## ADMINISTRATION

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# 2025-2026 Registration Opens March 17

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