

Vision 2025

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



Cass School District 63

Darien, Illinois

www.cassd63.org

***Strategic Plan Progress Review
January 2026***

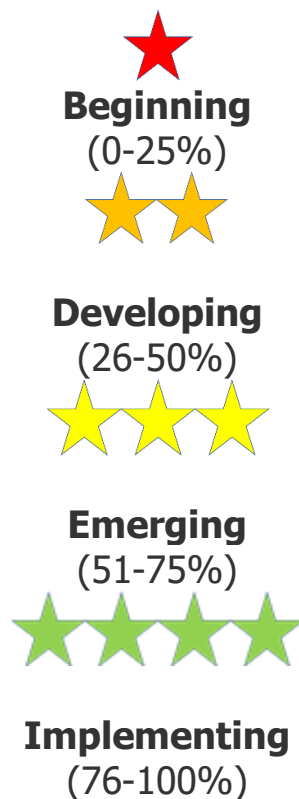
The Cass School District 63 Strategic Plan is built on three pillars, with seven underlying indicators for each of the pillars. The pillars are as follows:

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 a simple method to provide a quick visual overview of progress. Work toward the Vision 2025 Strategic Plan takes place among the leadership team and staff, and is monitored semi-annually by the Board.

January 2026 Progress Review

Each of the three pillars include seven underlying indicators and progress toward each indicator is a continuous effort. The January 2026 review is found under each indicator below. Over the preceding six months, growth has been demonstrated on indicators **1F, 2C, and 3G**, while work needs to continue on indicators **1A, 1C, 1D, 1E, and 2D**.

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 2026 Progress Review – The leadership team will continue its work on developing clearer communications on assessment and student growth results, as well as additional methods for communicating progress individually to parents. The district implemented the current academic grading system for the 2022-23 school year to provide clarity to parents.

- 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 2026 Progress Review – New math curriculum resources were 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 in 2022-23, followed by the STEAM program at Cass Junior High School for 2024-25. Plans are being made for relocation and improvements to the Concord STEM lab for the 2026-27 school year, while staffing needs will be determined for the Cass STEAM program for 2026-27.

- 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 2026 Progress Review – Similar to 1.A, the leadership team has provided a more comprehensive review of IAR and MAP results over the previous two years, but work will continue in developing clarity with the information on

local assessment and growth data for parents and the community. Now that the new website has been implemented, work is being done on a dashboard for sharing student growth information in a clear and simple visual format.

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



1.D January 2026 Progress Review – The leadership team will be reviewing data provided from area elementary districts, as well as data from District 86. The team will also pursue additional data necessary by surveying our graduates to assess their preparation for high school.

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



1.E January 2026 Progress Review – Employing a highly qualified and diverse faculty and staff is a critical need in our schools, 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, 17 for 2024-25, and 16 for 2025-26. Approximately 15 percent of the district's 120 employees are of a racial/ethnic minority background, which is a significant improvement in retaining a staff that is representative of our students and community. The biggest challenge for all school districts is retaining the highest performing teacher and the team is currently reviewing retention data to provide the Board with a comparison to state and national data.

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



1.F January 2026 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. There has been a heavy emphasis on school safety training now that the school district has implemented the physical security features in the Board's original plan. This includes training in the ALICE model, work with our local police department, the social and emotional needs and growth of our students, Orton-Gillingham phonics and dyslexia training, 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. A major emphasis has also been provided in the area of student 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 effort will continue across all grade levels and staff.

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



1.G January 2026 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. While informal, this has been helpful in determining how the district can better support our staff to promote retention, as well as their professional growth.

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 2026 Progress Review– 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, additional speech services, a full-time school psychologist, a change to one guidance counselor at the junior high only, the addition of two full-time nurses, as well as a half-time student services director. 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 1 support, and the social worker provides services for Tier 2 groups, as well as Tier 3 services. Beginning with the current school year, Concord Elementary students Tier 1 support is provided by their classroom teachers for the Skills for Learning program on a weekly basis, while the social worker delivers most 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 January 2026 Progress Review – Looking to parents as active partners in the education of their children has been a major priority for the district, particularly with the transformation at Concord Elementary where both the leadership and staff is working to create a welcoming atmosphere, while embracing parental involvement. A wide variety of activities and opportunities are offered and whenever possible, the district welcomes parents into our buildings. Recent examples at each school includes the science fair and wax museum at Cass Junior High, and the after school programs and the Shining Comet Awards at Concord Elementary. Through the virtual meeting opportunities, the district gets a high level of participation at both schools with parent-teacher conferences. Also, the recent implementation of Parent-Square has allowed for improved and instantaneous communication whenever needed.

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



2.C January 2026 Progress Review – The school district has made incredible progress in the area of students services and MTSS. Since the initial stages in 2023, the district's leadership team and school service personnel and specialists began work to improve the district's MTSS framework and systems to better meet the needs of our students. This resulted in the establishment of seven goals and a new direction for student services in the district and professional development with staff is ongoing. 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 most recent two school years. This has also helped return several outplaced students to our school district.

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 2026 Progress Review – This has and will be a continued area of focus for the district to determine how best to meet the diverse language needs of our students. Several district teachers have become certified to work with English language learners, and the district is considering joining an English Learners (EL) consortium focused on this topic.

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



2.E January 2026 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 2026 Review – 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 January 2026 Progress Review – In April of 2025, the district hosted its first Multicultural Celebration, and the second annual celebration is scheduled for April 17, 2026. This event was a huge success, with excellent attendance and participation from our families and local community. The district also hosts an annual Art and Jazz Show each spring and proudly celebrates the diverse backgrounds and history of the families of our students.

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 2026 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. In the summer of 2025, the district completed Phase II, including the installation of more LED lighting. Plans are under way for Phase III in the summer of 2026, which is expected to include the renovation of the STEM lab and more LED lighting upgrades as well as replacement flooring in designated areas at Concord, and the replacement of the parking lots at Cass Junior High.

- 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 2026 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, the fire alarm system was replaced, and additional door security enhancements have been added.

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



3.C January 2026 Progress Review – The school district is in the process of finalizing work from 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. January 2026 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 received an energy tax credit of \$2.865 million to finance Phase II and Phase III facility plans. This has been very helpful to energy and maintenance costs, putting the district in a much stronger financial position.

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



3.E January 2026 Progress Review – In 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 planned for the handling of a cyber attack, and is implementing additional security measures in 2025-26.

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



3.F January 2026 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, and currently plans to extend the transportation contract for the next two years.

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



3.G January 2026 Progress Review – More training and work with the police department will be provided to staff over the course of the 2025-26 school year with the local police department, the BluePoint Security system, and other safety and security procedures and plans. Work with the Darien Police Department is ongoing and proactive with a cooperative planning effort.