

Vision 2025

Strategic Plan Mission, Beliefs, Values and Pillars



Cass School District 63

Darien, Illinois

www.cassd63.org

***Strategic Plan Progress Review
June 2026***

Every highly effective organization has a plan for growth, improvement and continued success. The Board of Education set a course to establish a strategic plan to guide the work of the Board, leadership team, teachers, and staff. The Vision 2025 Strategic Plan includes the three pillars shown below, with seven underlying indicators for each of the pillars. This ties directly to our [Mission and Core Beliefs and Values](#). Here is a one-page [Strategic Plan Summary](#).

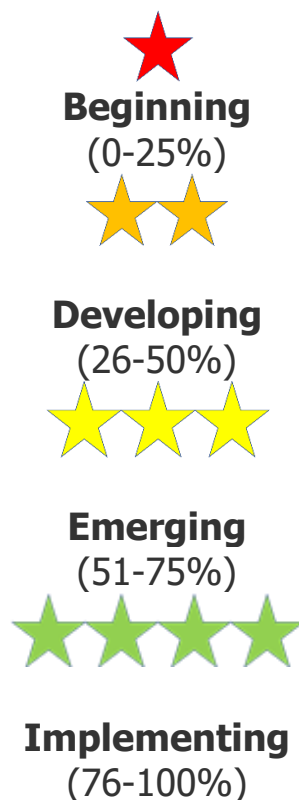
An effective strategic plan requires not only clear goals and indicators of success, but also a method to monitor progress. Each indicator is categorized under the four categories below - Beginning, Developing, Emerging, and Implementing - and is reviewed with the Board and shared with the community every six months. Over the preceding six months through June of 2026, growth has been demonstrated on indicators **1A, 2B, and 2D**, while work needs to continue on indicators **1C, 1D, and 1E**.

Previous six month progress reviews are also provided below.

Pillar 1 - Academic Growth and Achievement

Pillar 2 - Student Services and Support

Pillar 3 - Student Health and Safety



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 2026 Progress Review – The leadership team has developed a communication for sharing NWEA MAP assessment results that includes access to growth scores in Skyward, as well as an explanation video from NWEA. This will be fully implemented in the 2026-27 school year. The district implemented the current academic grading system for the 2022-23 school year to provide additional clarity to both students and 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 June 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, art, music, physical education, and Spanish in 2025-26, and English language arts in 2026-27. A new STEM program was implemented at Concord in 2022-23, followed by the STEAM program at Cass Junior High School for 2024-25. Renovations are underway for the relocation and improvements to the Concord STEM lab for the 2026-27 school year.

- 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 2026 Progress Review – Similar to 1.A, the leadership team has provided a more comprehensive review of IAR and MAP results in recent 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, a dashboard for sharing student growth information in a clear and simple visual format is an option that can be considered for communicating goals and progress.

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



1.D June 2026 Progress Review – The leadership team has reviewed data provided from area elementary districts, as well as data from District 86. The team will consider pursuing any additional data that is necessary, which may include 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 June 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 June 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.

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



1.G June 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 June 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 I 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 I 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 June 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 June 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 June 2026 Progress Review – This was a major area of focus in the spring of 2026. After reviewing student needs, recent ELL enrollment trends, and current

staffing, it was determined that the best approach to meeting the needs of the current student population, one of the two ELL teachers at Concord will be reassigned to Cass Junior High School for the 2026-27 school year. This will align staffing with student needs at both schools, and this will continue to be reviewed annually going forward.

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



2.E June 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 June 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 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. For the 2026-27 school year, the smallest class sizes have been reallocated to the lower grade levels, and future staffing above the kindergarten and first grade levels will be determined as needed in future years.

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



2.G June 2026 Progress Review – In April of 2025, the district hosted its first Multicultural Celebration, which turned out to be the biggest event of the school year with a high level of participation from our families and local community.. The second annual celebration was held in April of 2026 with equal success, and the next annual celebration is already scheduled for April of 2027. The district also hosts an annual Art and Jazz Show each spring and proudly celebrates the diverse backgrounds and history of the families of ours 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 June 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. Renovations for Phase III are taking place in the summer of 2026, which includes the renovation of the STEM lab and library, installation of LED lighting and flooring in 14 classrooms at Concord, the replacement of the retractable gym and stage wall at Cass Junior High, and the replacement of the parking lots at Cass.

- 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 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 June 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. June 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 in reducing 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 June 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 implemented multi-factor authentication in 2026 and will continue to provide and install safeguards to maintain network security.

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



3.F June 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. The district has extended the transportation contract through the 2027-28 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 June 2026 Progress Review – More in depth training and work with the Darien Police Department was conducted over the course of the 2025-26 school year. This includes drilling and planning with the BluePoint Security system, and other safety and security procedures and plans. Work with the Darien Police Department is ongoing with a cooperative and proactive planning effort.