

Executive Director Report

TO: Board of Directors, Crosslake Community School

FROM: Dr. Jenna Leadbetter, Executive Director/Superintendent

DATE: November 24, 2025

MEETING: Regular Board Meeting

Executive Summary

CCS continues strong implementation of our Board-approved Strategic Roadmap as we approach the close of 2025. With enrollment at 562 students and robust financial health, we are actively advancing all five Strategic Directions while ensuring our students, staff, and families experience their desired daily outcomes. This report provides updates on key initiatives, federal policy developments, and strategic positioning for 2026.

Enrollment & Strategic Direction Progress

Current Enrollment (November 20, 2025):

- Total: 562 students (continuing strong growth trajectory)
- Seat-based: 133 students
- Online: 429 students (K-5: 52, 6-12: 377)

October ADM averaged 497.92 (110.6% of budgeted 450), demonstrating strong community confidence in our mission to grow environmentally literate, community-impacting learners of excellence. Our enrollment has grown from 553 on November 14 to 562 as of November 20, reflecting continued momentum.

Strategic Roadmap Implementation

Strategic Direction A: Effective, Relevant & Individualized Instruction

- Completed FIRST EVER district-wide professional development day featuring "Mentally Strong" training with Dr. Cindra Kamphoff
- Additional professional development delivered on Digital Accessibility, with resources now available to all staff
- SIS evaluation complete; implementation underway with funding (NED grant or general fund)
- Continued curriculum alignment work through district Teaching & Learning Coordinator
- Both programs delivering on Student Desired Daily Experiences through author visits, field trips, clubs, and interest-based learning opportunities

Strategic Direction B: Staff Professional Growth & Support

- Compensation Updates: Following today's board meeting, all approved salary adjustments will be implemented immediately
- Monitoring: Given Board movement on district-wide staff compensation, I'll monitor statewide developments to ensure competitiveness
- Professional Development: First district-wide PD day successfully united both programs with outstanding participation and feedback
- Digital Accessibility training completed with strong engagement
- Benefits: 2026 voluntary benefits enrollment completed, including Minnesota PFML; comprehensive Q&A document addressing all 18 questions from benefits meeting now available
- Recognition: Staff shout-outs continue building culture of appreciation across both programs

Strategic Direction C: Positive Student Interactions & Inclusive Community

- Unity Day Meet achieved record 105 participants online
- Veterans Day program demonstrated strong community connections with 133 seat-based students and community members; recording now available for families who couldn't attend
- Secret Dress Up Week fostered cross-program connections
- Both programs actively supporting families in need: Nepean fire recovery support ongoing, Eckert family support raised over \$1,000 from online staff with memorial service scheduled December 12, Operation Sandwich partnership with Bridges of Hope providing Thanksgiving meal support to ALL seat-based families
- Care Team and ReGroup counseling services providing academic and emotional support systems

Strategic Direction D: Technology Improvement

- Secured Funding: \$15,000 Cyber Security Grant from MDE approved
- SIS Implementation: Implementation underway; funding strategy identified
- Infrastructure: Pursuing additional technology grants for:
 - District-wide staff office technology refresh
 - Furniture upgrades for both programs
 - Hydration Station and Cardiac Emergency Response equipment
- Digital Tools: airSlate SignNow e-signature platform implementation underway
- AI Development: Evaluating platforms for spring 2026 pilot; MSBA model policy expected end of 2025-26
- Technology support streamlined through Helpdesk portal with "log in with Google" functionality

Strategic Direction E: Operations, Facilities & Systems

- October financials confirm strong position: \$3.13M fund balance, \$463,157 YTD net income
- Grant submissions (pending receipt) advancing facility improvements (Hydration Station, Cardiac Emergency Response)
- FORWARD initiative successfully launched across all operational areas
- 2025 W-2 forms transitioning to digital delivery through SMARTeR platform (opt-in deadline January 9, 2026)
- Comprehensive "BIG Form" launched as one-stop shop for all pre-approval requests
- Special Education Child Count deadline preparation underway for December 1, 2025

Federal Policy Developments & Legislative Session

Major Federal Education Restructuring Announced

The U.S. Department of Education announced on November 20, 2025 that several educational programs will now be co-administered through Interagency Agreements (IAAs) with other federal departments, following President Trump's March 2025 Executive Order to narrow the size and scope of the DOE.

Programs Transitioning (Most Relevant to CCS):

- Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) – including the Charter School Program (CSP) and all Title programs (Title I, etc.) → partnering with the Department of Labor (DOL) with emphasis on workforce development. This has the most potential impact on charter schools like CCS.
- Postsecondary Education programs → partnering with DOL
- Indian Education programs → partnering with the Department of the Interior
- Foreign Medical Accreditation and Child Care Access Means Parents in School programs → partnering with HHS
- Fulbright-Hays grant programs → partnering with the Department of State

Programs NOT Currently Affected:

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and Office for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) are not affected by this announcement, though administration officials indicated these functions could potentially move to other departments in the future.

Impact on CCS:

Many questions remain about practical implementation for schools, students, and families. The Administration has indicated the transition should be seamless for school leaders and parents, though clarity is still needed on operational details. We will continue monitoring these developments through MACS and our federal partnerships.

AI Policy Timeline

MSBA's model AI policy will release at the end of 2025-26 school year. Our strategic approach:

- Continue transparent AI utilization and platform evaluation
- Develop internal guidelines aligned with our values
- Position for adoption ahead of requirements

2026 Legislative Priorities

MSBA, MASA, and MACS platforms go to their boards in December 2025, with January 2026 rollout. It will be another interesting legislative session. Key focus areas anticipated:

- Special education funding reform
- Teacher recruitment/retention
- Technology and cybersecurity support
- Charter school equity and federal program administration
- Mental health services

Delivering on Desired Daily Experiences

Students

- ✓ Feeling appreciated, understood, cared for, and included (Unity Day with 105 participants, Veterans Day program, support initiatives for families in need)
- ✓ Academic and emotional support systems in place (Care Team, ReGroup services, counseling referral forms available)
- ✓ Relevant, interest-based learning opportunities (author visits, field trips, clubs, cooking club including online students)

Staff

- ✓ Empowerment and creative freedom within supportive structure
- ✓ Professional development and evaluation processes (Mentally Strong training, Digital Accessibility, Teacher Catalyst training with positive feedback)
- ✓ Recognition and competitive compensation (today's board action, regular staff shout-outs in Friday Focus)
- ✓ Technology and resources (ongoing improvements, Helpdesk portal, SignNow implementation)

Families

- ✓ Timely, effective communication (weekly Friday Focus newsletters, monthly Tremolo and Family Flyer, virtual office hours)

- ✓ Standards-aligned, engaging educational activities (Veterans Day program recording available, department meetings scheduled)
- ✓ Access to qualified staff and support programs (hiring Online Math Teacher and Online Special Education Teacher)
- ✓ Community connection and environmental education (Operation Sandwich Thanksgiving support, Bridges of Hope partnership)

Financial Sustainability

October actuals demonstrate alignment with strategic investments:

- Revenues: 32.4% collected (on track)
- Expenditures: 25.7% disbursed (controlled spending)
- Cash position: Strong liquidity maintained
- Multi-year projections: Return to surplus operations FY28

Looking Forward: Priorities Aligned with Strategic Directions

Immediate (Through January 2026)

- Implement compensation updates from today's board meeting
- Finalize technology grant applications
- Review legislative platforms and prepare advocacy through MACS
- Continue FORWARD initiative momentum
- Monitor federal education program restructuring impacts

Spring 2026

- Launch AI platform pilots (Strategic Direction D)
- Continue SIS implementation with funding confirmation (Strategic Direction D)
- Advance HRS Level 3 Certification work (Strategic Direction A)
- Strengthen enrollment for 2026-27 (all Strategic Directions)

Recommendation

The Board's Strategic Roadmap continues to guide our decision-making effectively. I recommend the Board:

1. Affirm continued implementation of the Strategic Roadmap with current adjustments
2. Support legislative advocacy aligned with our Strategic Directions, particularly monitoring federal education program restructuring impacts
3. Maintain strategic reserves while investing in identified priorities
4. Acknowledge the strong culture of care and community demonstrated by staff in supporting colleagues and families during challenging times

Conclusion

CCS is successfully executing the Board-approved Strategic Roadmap while maintaining operational excellence and financial stability. Our growth from 553 to 562 students in just one week reflects community confidence in our programs. Our students, staff, and families are experiencing their desired daily outcomes as we build meaningful connections with each other, the community, and the environment through exceptional and relevant learning experiences.

The federal education program restructuring announced this week presents both opportunities and challenges, but our strategic positioning through MACS, combined with strong internal operations, ensures CCS will continue thriving as we work toward our vision. The upcoming legislative session will require vigilant attention to charter school impacts, particularly regarding the transition of the Charter School Program to the Department of Labor.

Our staff's demonstrated compassion in supporting the Eckert family and families affected by fire, combined with our commitment to continuous improvement through the FORWARD initiative, exemplifies the CCS values that make our district extraordinary.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Jenna Leadbetter

Executive Director/Superintendent

Crosslake Community School