



Board of Education Meeting

Cass School District 63

District Community Room, 8502 Bailey Road, Darien,
Illinois 60561

Tuesday, February 17, 2026
7:00 PM

Agenda

I. **Welcome and Call to Order**

Our Mission, Beliefs, and Values

Board Agreements and Protocols

Vision 2025 Strategic Plan

IASB Code of Conduct

A. Pledge of Allegiance

B. Roll Call

C. Recognition of Audience, Announcements and Correspondence

This is an opportunity to welcome guests, make announcements, and share Board correspondence.

The Board received and responded to FOIA requests from Allium Data and Michael Henry.

D. Student and Staff Spotlight and Recognition

Since the last Board of Education meeting, we recognized Cass Junior High school counselor Lia Lamb in honor of National School Counseling Week. Lia plays a critical role in the social emotional growth of our students, as well as assisting in crisis and intervention situations.

E. Public Comments

This is the first opportunity for any guests to comment, per Board Policy 2:230.

II. **Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda allows for approval of routine action items together in one motion when discussion is typically unnecessary. Upon the request of any Board member, a consent agenda item can be withdrawn and placed

on the regular agenda for independent consideration. Questions in advance of the meeting are appreciated in the event any background information needs to be obtained.

- A. Approval of the February 17, 2026 Regular Meeting Agenda
- B. Approval of the January 20, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
- C. Approval of the January 20, 2026 Closed Meeting Minutes
- D. Approval of Personnel Recommendations

This month we have received a maternity leave request for kindergarten teacher Kelsey Daniluk which is expected to begin on approximately April 16 and end on September 29. Retired teacher Anya Schlottmann will serve as the long-term sub while Ms. Daniluk is on leave.

We also have two expected resignations effective at the close of the school year. Concord music teacher Kali Sheldon was married this past summer and is moving to Elgin. Also, Candy Papanicholas had always planned to work as a Concord teacher assistant for a short time after we hired her after she retired as a teacher.

- E. Approval of Financial Reports

While concerns remain in the transportation fund similar to most years, I think our overall finances are shaping up well as we move well past the halfway point of the fiscal year. Depending on the timing of local property tax receipts, it is possible that we will end FY26 with a fund balance of over \$10 million on a cash basis, more than double where we were six years ago. These healthier balances should provide some cushion so that the district can better manage through any future needs or funding issues that inevitably arise. We also had some good luck and fortunate timing, but kudos to our Board and staff for the discipline and effort it has taken to get here.

- F. Approval of the District Bills

The bills this month are pretty straightforward. You will see a payment to Reed Construction of \$43,000 for work from this past year as we continue to push for the contractors to button up our previous projects. We will likely have an additional set of bills added on Tuesday prior to the meeting.

III. **Reports, Updates, and Informational Items**

- A. Administrative Reports

We will briefly touch upon the highlights of our administrative reports at the meeting.

- B. Federal Impact Aid Advocacy and Funding Report

Since the last Board meeting, I attended the FLISA annual winter meeting, in which we work with other school districts across the country in our smaller federally impacted lands group. This is in large part to prepare for impact aid advocacy in Washington, D.C. in March as part of the larger NAFIS conference. The plan on our FLISA Executive Board is for me to serve another two-year term and as the Messaging Co-Chair representing D63 for that timeframe and when Travis McGuire is ready to step in and get more involved. I will share more details and updates on our funding status at the meeting.

C. Student Learning and Academic Growth Presentation

At the meeting, we will review with the Board some highlights of the 2025-26 High School Transition Survey, which reflects current freshman class perceptions of how well their education in Cass School District 63 prepared them for high school in five academic subjects and seven skills. In addition to the data, included at the bottom of the summary page are a few key highlights and potential areas of focus looking forward.

We will also touch upon the Overview of Student Learning and Achievement, which provides a very simple overview of our fall achievement on the NWEA MAP assessment from this fall. Later in the spring, we will review our student growth as we collect data from our assessments through the school year.

D. Update and Discussion Regarding Phase III Facility Planning

The City of Darien held the bid opening for summer street projects, including our alternate bid 2 for the replacement of the Cass Junior High School parking lots. The lowest overall bidder was Builders Asphalt, a contractor the city has had successful projects with in the past.

The bid for our specific project came in at \$175,147.21, which was the second lowest of the five bids received, While about \$10,000 higher than the lowest alternate bid 2, it was also about \$8,000 below the final estimate from the engineer. As a reminder, we targeted our recently awarded \$50,000 matching state maintenance grant for this project, effectively taking the final net cost down to just over \$125,000. Some of the bidding details are provided below and assuming the Board is good moving forward, later in the meeting we have two related action items to approve the alternate bid, as well as an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Darien.

Also included below is the current budget estimate range from the

architect for the base and the alternate bids with contingencies for our Phase III project bid. We discussed a budget of about \$1.275 million so if the estimates holds true at the time of bidding, it is going to make the alternate bid a challenge, but time will tell. We also have to account for the Cass parking lot bid and the asbestos abatement in two classrooms at Concord, but I feel confident that we will get there with the base bid.

I will share more on this and answer any questions at the meeting.

IV. **Recommended Action Items**

A. Approval of 2026-27 Registration Fees

For some time, our district had among the highest elementary district registration fees in the area. The rationale for the higher fees at the time seemed to no longer apply and after restructuring these for the 2021-22 school year, they have remained unchanged since that time. My recommendation for the 2026-27 school year is that the regular student registration fees remain unchanged.

There is a different calculus on transportation fees, something I believe we need to stay ahead of, both for reasonably maintaining control of the size and number of routes, and also in consideration of the health of the transportation fund. I think this is especially important in light of expected state reductions in our mandated categorical funding, the biggest concern being transportation reimbursement for us. As a result, this fee is recommended to increase from \$275 to \$300. If your child rides the bus regularly, it is hard to beat the cost per day.

Like many data points among districts, registration fees are all over the board. If you are interested in comparisons, here is a recent [survey of area district fees](#) for the current school year. While we have maintained our fees at the same level over the previous five-year time period, the gap has closed considerably in many cases, particularly when you add the smaller "nickel and dime" fees some districts in the area charge.

The attachment breaks down the recent history, as well as approximate revenues generated from our current fees. The lunch fee will be set closer to the end of the school year. I welcome any questions prior to Board action on fees later in the meeting.

B. Approval of 2026-27 Assistant Principal Contracts

Our two assistant principals work on one-year contracts and I am recommending that Megan Conlin and Michelle Roberts receive new

one-year contracts with a 2.7 percent increase in their current base salaries. The only recommended change in benefits is three additional sick days to reflect the longer work year for our administrators. This was something that was important to our team, does not cost the district any money, and is a family common practice. There is no other substantive change in their contract language, and this is the same CPI-based salary increase that is being recommended for the vast majority of the staff.

C. Approval of 2026-27 Non-Union Employee Salaries

With a few exceptions included, I am recommending that we provide 2.7 CPI-based salary increases for 2026-27 to all employees not currently under a contract, or with another exception such as individuals on the retirement track. The CEA contract is also tied to CPI and will reflect the same pay increases as well.

As for the other exceptions, there is a recommendation for an adjustment for the two library assistants and we continue to review the compensation for teacher assistants to keep us competitive, particularly at the lower end of the scale. This is a struggle for many districts and to compete and treat our staff well, we have increased their wages substantially over the previous five years.

The one exception is our highest paid teacher assistant, who is currently making \$38.91 an hour, which is 55 percent higher than the next closest two on staff who make \$25.04. As a comparison, the next highest paid teacher assistant I could find in the greater area of 13 school districts is \$33.03.

This is nothing tied to performance, but the outsized pay relative to similar positions was established many years ago, with different expectations of the role to serve as an interventionist. Perhaps that was true at one time, but this individual has served for years as a teacher assistant, now at the level of earning almost as much as a starting teacher. She is not an interventionist, so we either need to begin to rightsize the salary, or redefine the role completely.

Two or three years ago, I recommended an increase that was less than the others, but it wasn't zero. This time around, I did reach out to our legal counsel to make sure I was not opening the district up to any concerns by freezing salary. Our attorney agreed that as long as this is tied to her role specifically and nothing to do with any other factors that

could be misconstrued, then compensation could be handled differently.

I would not suggest reducing pay as she has been a dedicated employee for many years and this is not her fault, but the pay rate makes no sense and relative to the others, she has been overcompensated for years.

I welcome any questions on this, preferably in advance if you have any concerns so that we can avoid discussing an individual situation in open session. Of course this will be handled with the employee with sensitivity, but I wanted to be transparent with the issue and start addressing it now.

- D. Approval of Extended School Year Memorandum of Understanding
Just as we did last summer, we are planning to offer extended school year services to preschool students within the district, while partnering again with Woodridge School District 68 for ESY services for our K-8 students.

Since ESY services are not part of our teacher contract, last year we developed a memorandum of understanding with the Cass Education Association outlining the hours and salary for staff who provide these services. The recommended MOU with the CEA is mostly unchanged from last year, outside of the CPI reference to provide that increase for those who return to work in the program.

Assuming the Board approves this recommendation, staff members involved for the first time would earn the compensation shown in the MOU, while those returning would get the 2.7 percent CPI above the numbers shown. This language seemed to make sense going forward so that a new MOU doesn't have to be developed each year, until such time changes are made in the future, or if it is eventually added as part of a future teacher contract. CEA President Scott Kondraschow is also in agreement with the MOU and language as presented.

- E. Adoption of Resolution Regarding Declaration and Sale of Surplus Equipment

This type of resolution is utilized when more substantial equipment is no longer needed and recommended to be discarded or sold. In this case, we have an old 29 passenger bus that is no longer in service to get off of both our insurance and the parking lot.

As the Board knows from past discussions, there is not a big market for

rusty old school buses that are no longer serviceable for the school setting. The intention is to accept sealed bids with a minimum asking price of \$500. Keith Monaco and I discussed this and he has some feelers out there, but anyone interested is going to be pursuing parts, scrap metal, or perhaps renovating it and turning it into some other type of use. He and I agree that if we do not get an acceptable bid, we will probably scrap it. No one can say we don't get all that we can out of our old buses!

To move forward, I would recommend the Board approve this resolution and we will make it happen.

- F. Approval of Cass Junior High Parking Lot Replacement Bid with the City of Darien

This action is subject to any earlier discussion regarding the Phase III facility planning updates.

- G. Approval of Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Darien for Pavement Replacement Work at Cass Junior High School

The recommended IGA outlines the parameters of our bid and work with the City of Darien for the parking lot replacement. I am not yet certain when the city will approve the IGA, but it is expected some time in March. In talking this through with Darien Municipal Services Director Dan Gombac, I thought it made sense for us to approve this first, then the city council can approve their contract for their base bid, as well as their alternate bids 1 and 2. We are alternative bid 2.

V. **Closed Session**

- A. Discussion of Information Regarding the Appointment, Employment, Compensation, Discipline, Performance, or Dismissal of Specific District Employees. 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1)

After the most recent conversation with our school attorney, we will need to enter closed session for an update following last month's discussion regarding the actions of a former employee.

VI. **Conclusion**

- A. Public Comments

This is the second opportunity for any guests in the audience to share public comments, per Board Policy 2:230.

- B. Board Member Comments

This is the opportunity for Board members to share any comments, as well as to announce the next meeting date, time, and location.

- C. Adjournment