



Board of Education Meeting Cass School District 63

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

Tuesday, April 21, 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 FOIA requests from Justin Wenig, the Lake County Gazette, and Michael Henry.

D. Student and Staff Spotlight and Recognition

Since the last Board meeting we have recognized our teacher assistants in honor of Paraprofessional Appreciation Day, our assistant principals Megan Conlin and Michelle Roberts in honor of National Assistant Principal Week, Beth Dooley and Zainab Tapal in honor of National Library Workers Day, our employees with Ivy League Kids in honor of Afterschool Professionals Week, and last but not least in honor of Administrative Professionals Day, Amy Perez, Jess Chapman, Maggie Adelman, Kathy Mensik, Amy Underhill, and Gayle Wilson.

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any Board member, a consent agenda item can be withdrawn and placed on the regular agenda for independent consideration.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 April 21, 2026 Regular Meeting Agenda
- B. Approval of the March 24, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
- C. Approval of the March 24, 2026 Closed Meeting Minutes
- D. Approval of Personnel Recommendations

We have three items for consideration as part of our personnel recommendations, including three new staff, a contract that includes a new benefit for our school psychologist, and recommended salary adjustments for two groups of staff members for 2026-27.

New Staff Recommendations

We had a great month landing three outstanding candidates to recommend for three hard to fill positions. The team did a great job screening and the recommendations, salaries, and notes on each are as follows:

Marykate Trabulsy

Concord and Cass Speech-Language Pathologist

2026-27 Salary: \$79,590.45

Marykate has perfect experience for this role and comes highly recommended after spending the previous eight years in East Maine District 63. She also embraces the role across our two buildings. This is the vacancy that was originally created when Sharon Chacko left in December for a family move to India.

Sarah Mueller

Concord Speech-Language Pathologist

2026-27 Salary: \$75,248.29

Sarah will replace the retiring Jane York, and has two years of experience in Addison's Early Learning Center. This is an ideal background since she will be working with our preschool and kindergarten students. Sarah also has great leadership potential and will raise the bar in meeting the needs of our little ones.

Ryan Kuhlman

Cass STEAM Teacher

2026-27 Salary: \$57,540.40

The teacher in this unique role has to relate well to our kids in a dynamic and flexible learning environment, and be organized, resourceful, and an outstanding facilitator of learning and discovery. While licensed as a social studies teacher, Ryan nails the key things we were looking for and has experience as a teacher assistant at Hinsdale South working with both art and technology. He is also beyond excited about our e-sports program! We believe Ryan will take our STEAM program forward and build it to what we envisioned when we started this two years ago.

School Psychologist Tuition Benefit

I had shared with the Board that our school psychologist Sara Zimmerman is pursuing her doctoral degree, something we totally support in her professional growth. As part of our effort to keep Sara as a key team member for the future of our student services program, I am recommending that we cover the tuition cost of her doctoral program, a benefit that is otherwise extended to our administrators, and beyond the current teacher benefit of \$300 per semester hour. Sara is not part of a regular contract or collective bargaining agreement, so I am recommending a straightforward contract that outlines this and her other benefits going forward.

2026-27 Salary Adjustments

While the Board approved 2026-27 salaries in February, we always continue to keep an eye on things that need to be adjusted one way or the other, typically for the harder to fill positions as well as market conditions.

The first is to adjust the hourly rate to \$20.00 for four of our teacher assistants, both to retain our strong people hired the previous two to three years, and also to provide a little salary separation from the newest ones and any we still hire. The cost for doing so is next to nothing and I think it will send a good message and set us up well. We are also doing a little bit of internal shuffling with our assistants for next year to make sure the right people are in the right roles. Overall, it is such a good group that we have and I appreciate the Board's support of our past salary adjustments to the market.

The other group is our drivers. Keith Monaco and I thought we had a driver, but he went to First Student for the higher rate of pay. In looking at the private sector competition as well as some neighboring

school districts, I am recommending that we increase our base rate from \$23.00 to \$25.00 per hour, and then we would need to likewise adjust our three current drivers to \$28.00 for the two with the most experience, and \$27.00 for the one with somewhat less. As much as I never prefer to adjust pay beyond the CPI, sometimes it is necessary and I think this is the right thing to do. Perhaps most importantly, it gives us the best chance to get another driver and then this will all be paid back and then some.

The adjusted 2026-27 Compensation Schedule is included below with the recommended adjustments noted in red.

- E. Approval of Monthly Financial Reports
- F. Approval of the District Bills

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

- A. Administrative Reports
- B. Review of Recommended English Language Arts Instructional Materials
Over the course of the school year, our leadership team and teachers reviewed in depth our English Language Arts curriculum, resources, and instructional materials. This is part of the normally planned five-year cycle, and the resources we recommend are one of the most important things we bring to the Board for approval. We want to answer all of your questions, while also making sure you know that this has been carefully vetted over the previous year. We don't take this lightly, which is why we have heavy involvement from our teachers as we make these decisions and recommendations.

Five Year Curriculum Review Cycle

Unless this changes, the forward looking five-year cycle is as follows. This is the same track we have followed in past years, with the exception of delaying by one year our last math adoption since we were in the midst of the pandemic at the time. The renewal cycle keep things as balanced as possible from year to year both in terms of the budget, as well as the workload for planning and research.

- 2026-27 - English Language Arts
- 2027-28 - Mathematics
- 2028-29 - Science
- 2029-30 - Social Studies
- 2030-31 - Art, Music, PE, SEL

Goals and Next Steps

In line with Board policy, our goal with curriculum recommendations is transparency with exactly what we are recommending for purchase, as well as the publisher, cost, substantive changes, and the rationale for our recommendations. The cost from year to year can vary considerably, depending on the curriculum area we are updating, as well as what is being recommended, along with any necessary related professional development. Once we have Board approval, we move forward with ordering and it is budgeted for the next fiscal year.

Materials for Review

Details related to each school is presented differently below for ELA, in large part because of the nature of the materials and resources specific to each grade level. For reading materials, it is all presented in one document. For those of you who want a deeper dive in advance, there are more links than you can count! It is not our intention to get into all of those items during the meeting, but this is provided for transparency. The principals and I will touch upon some key highlights to share with you during the meeting, and of course we will answer any questions from the Board.

Academic Standards

Nothing with the curriculum resources we are recommending fundamentally changes any standards. In fact, the updated resources are needed to allow us to focus more on the current academic standards as well as our student growth, rather than having our teachers spend the first year or two of the new five-year cycle learning how best to implement new curriculum and resources. There is nothing wrong with that when it's necessary, but we didn't think that was needed this time around. With an exception or two that we will highlight, we are largely staying with our same publishers, and this is something everyone was in agreement with looking forward.

Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan

As a reminder to the Board, the Illinois Comprehensive Literacy Plan pushed for a return to a focus on phonics, vocabulary, and fluency, versus the whole language approach that turned out to not be the best practice. We have followed this research-based initiative with our reading approach and interventions, and the materials being recommended support this direction. Our reading committee studied the literacy plan and helped determine the resources needed to support this

area of growth.

Purchasing Novels

Something that changed since the last ELA adoption is that the school district, rather than parents, purchase the novels needed in grades 6 through 8. Grade 5 novels are not annotated and get passed down, but they are at the end of life and falling apart. We made this change in part due to the concern that parents were already paying higher registration fees at the time, and we did not believe that parents should have to purchase curriculum materials and that these should be provided by the school district. Our new approach is for more common, and I think that has been a better practice. As a result, we purchase 500 of each, to allow for 100 per year for kids to annotate for effective teaching and learning. The novels total about \$79,000 and they are much of the basis of our junior high language arts literature and ELA curriculum.

Budget and Cost

Regarding cost, this is a big year because ELA is typically the most expensive, usually followed by math and science. One thing to keep in mind when we are recommending almost \$250,000 in instructional materials is that this is for over 700 children per year in grades K through 8 for the next 5 years. Even though we have to pay it up front, this comes out to about \$70 per student per year. This is not to diminish or downplay the significant investment, but just to provide some context to the value we get for the total cost. It's literally the foundation of our reading, literacy, and language arts curriculum across the district.

Hopefully some of this background information is helpful, but we will cover the highlights and answer any questions from the Board.

C. Review of Recommended Bids and Quotes for Phase III Facility Projects **Phase III Asbestos Abatement Quotes**

Midwest Environmental is our asbestos abatement consulting firm, and we work through Midwest to secure qualified contractors, as well as monitor the process to make sure we are in compliance with all related rules and regulations.

At their recommendation as the most cost-effective approach, we sought competitive quotes through Midwest Environmental. This resulted in three submissions, with Valor Technologies as the lowest at

\$35,000 to complete two Concord rooms that require abatement to complete the Phase III renovation project.

We have had excellent experience with Valor, as their work was professional, clean, and on time on a recent job for the district and I would recommend that we move forward with their quote under action item IV.F.

Phase III Interior Renovation Bids

For our summer 2026 Phase III renovation project, we had four bids submitted, three of which were very close and competitive. Unfortunately, we determined that the lowest bidder does not meet three of the seven required bidder criteria and qualifications.

The good news is that two of the remaining bids were also very competitive, and both contractors met all seven criteria. The next two best bid options both end up with Reed Construction as our general contractor for Phase III, as they were for our successful Phases I and II projects.

Regarding cost, our original hope was to squeeze in both Alternate Bids 1 and 2. The move to our second lowest bidder is an increase of \$48,000, to \$1,330,000. While not a staggering increase, we have to keep in mind the potential for change orders or other unforeseen things that may come up as we tap into some of our reserve O&M funds, not to mention the other work we are completing this summer related to the parking lots and other routine maintenance. This is outlined in the bid opening results document below.

As a slightly more conservative approach, the base bid captures the rooms with the greatest need at Concord, and the stage/band room wall is also a priority. This is the Alt Bid 2 option that also has Reed as the lowest responsible bidder at \$1,175,000. These details are highlighted in the attachments below.

While we could do it all, I want to be transparent that this would significantly tap into our O&M reserves, and it doesn't hurt to have some cushion for any change orders or surprises. If that is the approach, Travis and the Board can determine how best to tackle remaining rooms in future planned maintenance or renovation projects. The rooms we have included in the base bid are by far the biggest

priority, and if we do need to prioritize, I think the retractable wall is more important than the four additional Concord classrooms.

Also included below is an in-depth review from our architects that outlines the bidder qualifications and breaks down the recommendations. Since we had an unusual outcome with a bidder that does not meet the criteria, I have also consulted with the attorney. We all agree that the Board does not have to award to the lowest bidder, but to the lowest responsible bidder who meets our criteria as outlined in the specifications and original bid documents.

This has been shared in more depth with the Facilities and Finance members, and Dr. McGuire is fully engaged and also aware of the impact on his FY27 budget under either scenario, and is completely supportive of either decision. I will be happy to answer any questions in advance, and also welcome any discussion and direction at the meeting.

I have no hesitation with the recommendation to move forward with the recommended Base and Alternate Bid 2 from Reed Construction totaling \$1,175,000. If the Board wishes to get it all done, the Base and Alternate Bids 1 and 2 from Reed Construction would total \$1,330,000. This action is under agenda item IV.E.

IV. Recommended Action Items

- A. Approval of Final Revised 2025-26 School Year Calendar
The 2025-26 School Year calendar needed to be revised to include the eLearning Day on January 23. There have been no other adjustments to the calendar.
- B. Approval of 2026-27 Federal Funding Consolidated District Plan
While a bit of a formality since this is mostly internal work, Board approval of the District Consolidated Plan allows us to move forward with the annual application process for our federal Title and IDEA grant funding. To make sure we do it the right way going forward, Katie Doyle and I completed a couple of the requirements at our most recent CARE meeting. Related documents from that meeting and related to the District Consolidated Plan are provided below, including our Parent Compact, parent engagement meeting that was held in conjunction with the April 13 CARE meeting, and the recommended Parent and Family Involvement Policy for next school year. Keep in mind that much of the language and references included are to make certain that we are compliant with grant requirements and able to access FY27 funding.
- C. Approval of English Language Arts Primary Instructional Materials
- D. Approval of Phase II Facility Project Change Orders

We have this on the agenda in the event we are ready with a necessary and previously planned change order. All of this is in an effort to get the final details on Phases I and II completed and paid in the current fiscal year.

- E. Approval of Recommended Bid for Phase III Interior Renovation Work
- F. Approval of Recommended Contractor for Phase III Asbestos Abatement
- G. Approval of 2026-27 Food Service Management Company Renewal Agreement

We are entering the third and final year of our agreement with Just a Dash. We are required to approve the attached state renewal agreement each year. Additionally, our lunch prices have remained stagnant for the past two years, so we are also recommending a lunch price increase of \$.25 per lunch to \$4.25 for student lunch and \$4.75 for adult lunch for the 2026-27 school year.

With full awareness of our collective frustration with the lunch program in general, I would like to take a few minutes to discuss a possibility for future consideration when Dr. McGuire and the Board has the next opportunity to pursue a new vendor and options beginning with the 2027-28 school year.

V. **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