# District Leadership Team Meeting

Monday, October 26, 2026 4:00 PM Central

Downers Grove Civic Center
850 Curtiss Street
Downers Grove, Illinois 60515

1. Call to Order and Roll Call
2. Approval of Minutes
   - 2.A. Minutes of the May 11, 2026 meeting
3. Review Goals Progress
   - 3.A. October 2026 Progress Update
4. Public Comment
5. Adjournment
   - 5.A. Adjournment

# Downers Grove Grade School District 58

## District Leadership Team Committee Meeting
**MAY 11, 2026**

The District Leadership Team (DLT) met on Monday, May 11, 2026 at 3:45 p.m. at the Downers Grove Civic Center.

**Call to Order**
Kirat Doshi called the meeting to order at 3:51 p.m.

**Present**
Co-Chair Kirat Doshi, Co-Chair Emily Hanus, Katie Hurckes, Craig Young, Lisa Niforatos, Brent Borchelt, Brennan Lazzaretto, James Eichmiller, Liz Ehrhart, Greg Harris, Jessica Stewart, Justin Sisul, Kevin Russell, Julie Relihan.

**Approval of Minutes**
Craig Young moved and Katie Hurckes seconded the motion to approve the minutes from the February 23, 2026, meeting. Motion carried.

**May 2026 Strategic Plan Progress Update**

- A Strategic Plan update will be presented to the Board at the October 2026 Curriculum Workshop.

Goal 1: Focusing on Learning
- Review of May 2026 update
- Additional information about the mental health screening tool is expected to be shared in the fall, after which the District will provide further details to families. Active parent consent is anticipated to be required during the initial year of implementation.

Goal 2: Connecting the Community
- Review of May 2026 update

Goal 3: Securing the Future
- Review of May 2026 update
- There was discussion regarding the process and timeline for the District to review and develop strategies to address projected low cash flow points in the coming years. This includes working with a consultant to help analyze options and determine the most appropriate course of action for both the District and the community.

Goal 4: Building for Success
- Review of May 2026 update

- Staff transitioning to the middle schools, as well as Phase III elementary staff, have received guidance on packing instructional materials and personal items. This information will be shared again in an upcoming staff newsletter.

Goal 5: Cultivating Talent

- Review of May 2026 update
- Mr. Sisul mentioned several possible ways to enhance staff recognition, including incorporating staff recognition into monthly school reports presented to the Board.
- There was also discussion about expanding student recognition, including in-person acknowledgments by name for achievements such as participation in events, athletics, and music programs.
- Dr. Russell shared an interest in exploring the creation of a Student-Superintendent Advisory Committee to help elevate student voice and incorporate student perspectives into District decision-making.

**Public Comment**

No public comments were made.

**Adjourn**

Liz Ehrhart moved and Greg Harris seconded the motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 5:09 p.m.

Downers Grove Grade School District 58
We Envision. We Seek. We Believe.

# 2023-2028 Strategic Plan
# Progress Update: October 2026

## View District 58's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan:

- View Vision 58 Document
- View Strategic Plan Website
- View Strategic Plan Prior Progress Updates

## Status:

🔵 Not Yet Begun
🔴 Not Making Expected Progress
🟡 Making Progress on Amended Timeline
🟢 Making Expected Progress
☑️ Complete

## Strategic Goal 1: Focusing on Learning: Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction

**Leaders -** Jessica Stewart, Liz Ehrhart

🟢**Objective 1.1:** District 58 will set high expectations for all learners that are designed to meet their individual needs.
🟢**Objective 1.2:** Ensure students' availability for learning by measuring and supporting their behavioral needs, while also supporting mental health.
🟢**Objective 1.3:** District 58 will implement a systematic review of (multiple forms of) data to inform transparent instructional decision-making.
🟢**Objective 1.4:** Support students in the intentional use of technology to build digital literacy and citizenship.
🟢**Objective 1.5:** Commit to regularly evaluating and improving upon our curricular offerings to ensure that students have equitable access to broader areas of learning.

**October 2026 Update**

**1.1:**The staff has started their work on implementing PLCs across the buildings. This has included review of our Fall benchmark data and creation of team PLC agendas. The building administrators have brought the PLC+ model to their Instructional Leadership Teams to support this work at the building level, which will include incorporating PLCs in the School Improvement process. We are also continuing our staff professional learning in connection with the 5 questions of PLC+.

The MTSS Intervention Guidance Document continues to frame our work in providing support to students who are experiencing academic challenges in meeting benchmark standards. Our intervention teams are collaborating and reviewing student data at established intervals to ensure interventions are meeting our

students' needs and we are appropriately setting goals to help strengthen any observed skill deficit to move students towards expected growth and achievement in grade-level standards.

**1.2:** The District continues to strengthen systems designed to ensure students are available for learning by proactively supporting behavioral, social-emotional, and mental health needs. This year's Classroom Culture designated schools (FA/PD) have now completed training and are actively implementing the curriculum to foster consistent, supportive learning environments across the school. Next year, our last 4 buildings will complete the training (ON, HE, WH, HP). To further enhance behavioral support, additional de-escalation training through the Ukeru program has been successfully rolled out within our special education programs.

Regarding student mental health initiatives, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has released partial guidance on mental health screening, with the full screening tool now scheduled for release next fall; our leadership team continues to engage with regional networks to ensure readiness and thoughtful implementation planning. Meanwhile, Positive Behavioral Support Systems (PBIS) remain a foundational, proactive framework across all of our schools.

**1.3:** Regular PLC and Tier 2/3 data meetings at each school, driving data-informed decisions to identify student needs and shape instructional design. Maintaining a focused, multi-tiered approach ensures equitable practices while deepening staff proficiency with the ECRA platform. Additionally, monitoring Forefront at the elementary level and curricular resource platforms at the middle school level ensures classroom data accurately reflects student learning progress, ultimately enriching our overall data reviews.

**1.4:** Teacher librarian instruction leverages Common Sense Media lessons to meet digital citizenship standards, in alignment with the Illinois Standards Aligned Instruction for Libraries. We continue to map specific lessons into a formal scope and sequence, and we continue to review the updates put out by Common Sense Media to ensure decisions are fully informed and effective. Teacher librarians are sharing resources with classroom teachers to support digital literacy and citizenship in the classroom as well.

**1.5:** The middle school exploratory teams are coming together to review and refine current class structures to ensure we are covering the intended standards and keeping the instruction meaningful and relevant for all students. Any needed adjustments will be implemented for 2nd trimester, and we will continue our review process throughout the school year. Additionally, plans for next year will take place, as this year had some class anomalies that were only needed in the first year of transition.

## Strategic Goal 2: Connecting the Community

**Leader - Justin Sisul, Julie Relihan**

🟢**Objective 2.1 -** District 58 will build and enhance two-way communication that is equitable, inclusive, and culturally responsive.
🟢**Objective 2.2:** District 58 will foster strong relationships with all families and the extended community.
🟢**Objective 2.3:** District 58 will provide families with opportunities for parent/guardian education and collaboration based on needs.
🟢**Objective 2.4:** District 58 will provide and receive support from community partners to help with District 58 initiatives and resources.
🟢**Objective 2.5:** District 58 will build consistent collaboration opportunities between neighborhood schools to celebrate successes and shared learnings.

**October 2026 Update**

**2.1:** We have continued with the next steps in our ParentSquare rollout, focusing this year on middle school classroom implementation to improve home-school connections. Middle school teachers use ParentSquare regularly this year to communicate with families about everything from academic updates to club, activity and sports reminders.

When we reviewed our spring communication surveys, we did notice an area for growth in middle school communication, so we are thrilled to see this implementation take hold so quickly and consistently across our staff. Additionally, we have made a more concerted effort to share tips and information with families *and* staff regarding ways to effectively utilize and manage ParentSquare.

**2.2:** As we have reviewed the fourth year of the strategic plan, we see this work aligning closely with Goal 5, Objective 5 as well as Goal 2, Objective 2. We have taken steps over the past several years to cultivate even stronger relationships with families, particularly those new to the District. The remaining portion of this goal focuses on leveraging community partnerships to reach out to and support new families. We are so fortunate to have a myriad of community partnerships that currently exist and others who continue to offer support. Our plan is to convene a large meeting of all community partners in January, 2027 to discuss ways that we can continue to support our students and families with all of the resources that are available to us in District 58.

**2.3:** Parent education opportunities continue to be made available for District 58 families and are communicated regularly through our newsletters, social media and other venues. We continue to highlight the opportunities provided by the Glenbard Parent Series, and more locally are hosting Ready, Set Tech in November which is a national PTA initiative that was championed by the Kingsley PTA and is supported by our technology department. In January, grit2 is sponsoring a keynote speaker for all staff who will return in February for a parent education event as well.

**2.4:** The work here aligns with 2.2 and 5.5; we look forward to continuing to strengthen our community partnerships and are grateful for the organizations who already support our staff and families including but not limited to the Education Foundation, our PTAs, grit2, and so many more.

**2.5:** This work aligns with Goal 5, Objective 5 as we continue to celebrate the achievements and successes of our students and staff. The District's Annual Report is a great recent example of something that highlights our district, our individual schools and our staff members and reaches the entire Downers Grove community each year. We continue to seek additional recognition opportunities and look forward to bring forward increased Board recognition ideas for January or February implementation.

## Strategic Goal 3: Securing the Future: Finance and Facilities

**Leaders - Greg Harris, Kevin Russell**

🟢**Objective 3.1:** District 58 shall oversee and ensure referendum resources with an eye on timely and efficient project completion.

🟢**Objective 3.2:** District 58 shall continually plan to make sure resources are available to support District initiatives.

🟢 **Objective 3.3:** District 58 shall maintain balanced budgets by complying with existing Board policies and implementing a capital policy
🟢**Objective 3.4:** District 58 shall explore possible revenue sources and achieve savings.
🟢**Objective 3.5:** District 58 shall preserve buildings long-term with appropriate investment and efficient utilization.

**October 2026 Update**

**3.1:** Phase 3 construction is substantially completed. Punchlist items are being methodically addressed. Additionally, the District's construction partners will address the remaining air-conditioning related issues as Pierce Downer throughout the school year and in particular, over winter and spring breaks. The updated system will be fully tested and conditioning will occur in the spring and summer. The administration is hopeful that, over the next several months, the construction years will be in the past as the leaders prepare to focus their efforts on new initiatives.

**3.2:** The Board of Education passed a balanced budget for FY 2027 at the regular September meeting. Although a small surplus is projected, the budget does not comply with policy 4.20 (Fund Balances). This policy calls for a year-end fund balance to current-year expense ratio of 33-35%. Based on the FY 2027 budget, this ratio is expected to be 32% on June 30, 2027. The policy requires that this gap be remedied with a financial sustainability plan, due to the Board of Education by the end of January 2027. This will be delivered to the Board of Education at the Financial Workshop on January 25th, 2027. At this time, the plan is for the Board of Education to approve a sale of bonds under the district's debt service extension base (DSEB). Depending on the board action, this sale would be completed by the end of January. The proceeds of this bond sale would be deposited into the Working Cash fund. The amount of funds generated by the sale will be strategically calculated to satisfy fund balance requirements over the next several fiscal years. Please note that if the Board approves this sale, the funds should only be used for fund balance stabilization and not for one-time or recurring expenses. These funds will be used to cover the low cash point of the fiscal year.

**3.3:** The FY 2027 budget approved by the Board of Education includes a $750,000 transfer of operating funds to the Capital Projects fund, as called for by policy 4.152 (Regular Capital Facilities Planning). The Board of Education understands that the District's budget does not currently have a large enough surplus to grow fund balances at the rate that will satisfy Board Policy 4.20 (Fund Balances). Additional revenue and/or expenditure controls are necessary over the next several fiscal years to ensure the District is on the correct financial path.

**3.4:** District leadership has adopted a "pay-as-you-go" mentality for approving any new spending in the current fiscal year. When any new initiative with an associated cost is proposed, there must be a conversation about reducing spending elsewhere in order to pay for it. The administration is currently assessing the possibility of expenditure reductions for FY 2028, but nothing nearly as dramatic as the past two years. Efficiencies are being pursued, especially around the District's costly transportation program. District administrators are applying for grants and lobbying other government agencies for financial support to help offset the costs incurred by the District related to the Interim Housing Center (IHC).

**3.5:** The FY 2027 budget includes a $750,000 transfer of operating funds (the source being the Operations & Maintenance extension) to the Capital Projects fund. This transfer will be added to the existing fund balance and used to pursue the highest-priority projects post-referendum. These projects have yet to be determined, but they will begin as early as the summer of 2027. The Director of Buildings & Grounds is currently working on identifying the most significantly needed projects and coming up with price estimates. Recommendations will be presented to the Board of Education at the January workshop. Board policy calls for an increase of this

transfer by CPI for each subsequent fiscal year. This money will be an important part of preserving school buildings and continuing to invest in public infrastructure.

## Strategic Goal 4: Building for Success: Implementing the New PK-5 and 6-8 Models

**Leaders - Jessica Stewart, Liz Ehrhart**

🟢**Objective 4.1:** District 58 will work to ensure smooth transitions to a 6-8 middle school model for all stakeholders, especially in the first year of transition.
🟢**Objective 4.2:** District 58 will work to ensure equitable access to curricular, programmatic and instructional resources, through the examination of school boundaries based on building utilization.
🟢**Objective 4.3:** The District will examine the use and implementation of resources that provide intervention and enrichment to the student experience (curricular and extra-curricular).
🟢**Objective 4.4:** The pre-k/5 elementary structure will be examined in order to optimize opportunities and innovative experiences.
🟢**Objective 4.5:** Middle school structure will be examined in order to optimize opportunities and innovative experiences.

**October 2026 Update**

**4.1:** Continued work is occurring to support new staff who have joined the middle schools this year. Building-directed opportunities and the additional plan period during the school day have allowed for increased collaboration and conversations across classrooms about student learning. We are starting initial conversations regarding next year's schedule and reflecting on any adjustments that need to be made for next year.

**4.2:** The District is in receipt of the updated Demographer and has shared it with the Board of Education. We will look to map out next steps based on Board feedback. This will be at the discretion of the Board as to when they would like the administration to move forward to review enrollment projections in connection to operations across the District.

**4.3:** The larger gifted committee has convened to begin its work of establishing updated criteria for gifted programming across the District. We are reviewing our current identification practices in connection to student data and discussing ways to ensure we are reaching students through a variety of data points. The elementary teacher librarians and the middle school gifted ELA teachers will continue to review and refine the content for classes across the program.

**4.4:** The transition to a single, unified preschool program has been an exciting success as staff from Indian Trail and Henry Puffer have officially joined together as Grove Preschool, now centrally located at Henry Puffer Elementary. Staff members are already benefiting from daily collaboration and regular professional interaction, which has fostered a strong sense of shared identity, pride, and community. Recent environmental enhancements, including a new dedicated fence surrounding the preschool playground, are supporting daily programming and student safety. As part of integrating two complete programs into one site, staff is actively working through the logistics of organizing and repurposing materials from both locations, ensuring all specialized resources and equipment are thoughtfully placed to best serve our students and programs.

**4.5:** In the first trimester of implementation, the District is settling into the new model and the structures put in place for the transition. We are evaluating implementation and ensuring we are reflecting on our practices. The

District's middle school exploratory teams continue to review our current course offerings, making adjustments as needed. Our middle schools continue to explore extracurricular offerings by reviewing input from students and finding staff who are available to support different clubs and activities.

## Goal 5: Cultivating Talent (Maximizing the Potential of Students, Staff, and Families)

**Leader - Justin Sisul**

🟢**Objective 5.1:** District 58 will analyze and explore our existing and potential staffing practices and structures in order to achieve more equitable experiences for all students.
🟢**Objective 5.2:** District 58 will review, expand, and support equitable opportunities for students to explore and develop their individual talents
🟢**Objective 5.3:** District 58 will establish a culture that recognizes, celebrates, develops, and supports the talents that exist within the District to promote the retention of staff.
🟢**Objective 5.4:** District 58 will recruit and attract high-quality staff who are representative of the larger community (for all positions).
🟢**Objective 5.5:** District 58 will engage with the local community to enhance the student, staff, and school experience

**October 2026 Update**

**5.1:** As we experience the first year of a new preK-5 and 6-8 model, as well as the second year of budgetary reductions, the review of staffing practices will be a critical component of this school year. We continue to align to our class size targets and closely monitor those classes which may be above the target in a given year; we also will be looking closely at office staffing, student supports (resource, social work, etc.) to ensure that we are maintaining the level of support for our students and families that we have come to expect in District 58. This occurs in a variety of ways, but most commonly through dialogue with administrators, school teams and individuals.

**5.2:** There is a significant amount of energy behind new club and intramural offerings at the middle schools! We are eager to see this continue to grow and expand so that even more students benefit from these offerings. Additionally, last spring we completed interest surveys for students regarding these activities and clubs; their responses have informed many of our choices.

**5.3:** This work aligns with Goal 2, Objective 4 as we continue to celebrate the achievements and successes of our students and staff. The District's Annual Report is a great recent example of something that highlights our district, our individual schools and our staff members and reaches the entire Downers Grove community each year. We continue to seek additional recognition opportunities and look forward to bring forward increased Board recognition ideas for January or February implementation.

**5.4:** We continue to strengthen our partnerships with universities and our presence at job fairs; we will be sending representatives to the Northeastern Illinois University job fair early next month, as an example, because they have a strong dual language program as well as a diverse educator pool. We are also strengthening our pipelines, seeking opportunities for additional practicum students and student teachers to become a part of District 58. Our personnel department has spent considerable time working to develop these relationships and create internal systems to ensure that our staff can be connected with eager preservice teachers. Additionally, the District Equity Leadership Team is reviewing our application process to ensure that there are no unseen barriers for applicants to become part of our organization.

**5.5:** We have taken steps over the past several years to cultivate even stronger relationships with families, particularly those new to the District. The remaining portion of this goal focuses on leveraging community partnerships to reach out to and support new families. We are so fortunate to have a myriad of community partnerships that currently exist and others who continue to offer support. Our plan is to convene a large meeting of all community partners in January, 2027 to discuss ways that we can continue to support our students and families with all of the resources that are available to us in District 58.