



October 7, 2022

Dear Center Cass Families:

As you are keenly aware, the school district has been struggling financially for quite some time now. The District has been using its early tax dollars intended for next year to get through the prior year, as well as its savings, to try and preserve the quality of education. As much as the Board and employees have tried, the educational environment has not been able to keep pace with the quality the community expects.

In 2020 when I arrived, the Regional Office of Education began their 5-year compliance audit in which our new Director of Learning, District Office Staff, and I analyzed our curriculum, procedures, and development. We were not meeting State recommendations in the areas. We also lacked the personnel to implement the deficits we found. We are trying to rectify the situation, but it takes time and resources.

Also in 2020, the new Auditors showed the Board how early taxes intended for next year were clouding our true fund balance on June 30 each year. With over half of D66's money for the upcoming school year showing as cash reserves in the previous year end, our financial situation was much worse than anyone thought.

At a [Special Board meeting](#) this week the Board considered a different auditing method called modified cash basis, which would record taxes for the upcoming year in the appropriate year they were meant for, and not to cover expenses in the current year. The Board was in favor of the new auditing method, until placing the early taxes in the proper year dropped our Financial Profile to the very bottom, which would initiate immediate State intervention. The policy was tabled until after the audit. We are trying to build the State recommended 3 to 6 months unrestricted balance, but there hasn't been enough left to build on.

Also in 2020, we underwent our required 10-year Health Life Safety audit, which revealed several systems in need of updates, as well as some maintenance items that aren't considered safety issues per code, but could become safety issues if not addressed. We also contacted Safety specialists to walk our schools and make recommendations. We used the data to complete a comprehensive [15-year schedule](#) to address the issues.

The audits above ended in 2021 (except the financial audit which is annual). The Board and Community used the information in the Fall of 2021, as well as research, to author the new [Strategic Plan](#). The Strategic Plan was shared at Community meetings and in Newsletters. Also included was the need for a referendum and why.

You may hear "referendum information" from other sources, but to ensure you are receiving the facts, please reach out to the District Office or visit the [District website](#). The District Office only sends a Seasonal Newsletter. We have another important Board meeting on October 12 @ 7:00 pm at Prairieview and a special meeting being planned for October 18 @ 6:00 pm, where community members can come and ask any questions to Community Engagement Committee or Board of Education.

I understand that the needs revealed in the financial, facility, and education audits of 2021, came abruptly and with urgency, due to size and scope of the needs, but these are the facts of the situation. The Board is asking for the amount necessary to address the needs of District 66, as well as maintain the progress for the long term.

The kids and community deserve schools in which they can be proud. Good schools do not exist without a good community, and vice versa. Thank you for your support. Contact me with questions. Enjoy the long weekend.

Sincerely,

Superintendent Wise