



## Looking Back at the History of Medford Area Public School District *Medford Area Elementary School's Construction: A Push for Equal Education*



Rollina Acres School



Lincoln School



BROOKSIDE SCHOOL

The driving force behind the construction of the Medford Area Elementary School (MAES), which opened in 1987, was the desire to provide equal educational opportunities for all area elementary students.

In 1985, the Medford School Board and a citizens' committee proposed a \$4.1 million project for a new elementary school, which was intended to bring the majority of elementary students under one roof.

Prior to building MAES, the local elementary students attended one of six schools. The largest and newest was Stetsonville Elementary, a ten-year-old school at the time. This school is still in use today. However, the other buildings: Lincoln, Brookside, Rolling Acres, Jefferson, and Campus schools were all sold or repurposed after MAES opened.

The process started in August of 1985 during the district's annual meeting. Citizens voted (188 to 54) to approve one half a mill to the school levy to fund the construction of the new elementary school. Following this vote, the Medford School District formed a citizens' advisory committee to review plans for the proposed building.

One major point of contention during the planning stages was the location of the new school. The architectural firm Bray Associates presented two options:

- Option 1 was to convert the Community Education Center, owned by the county, into the elementary school.
- Option 2 was to build a completely new school on land purchased by the district from the Sauer family.

Building a new structure was projected to cost about \$500,000 more, but was ultimately chosen due to its greater flexibility and room for future expansion.



**The Medford Area Elementary School (MAES) opened its doors in the fall of 1987, uniting students from five local community schools under one roof for the first time.**

With the plans in place, the district still needed to gain approval from local residents. The \$4.1 million project was marketed as having no tax impact for the residents. This was due to three factors:

- The district’s debt from the 1968 high school building was set to be paid off in 1986–87.
- The district would need to borrow \$3.5 million, with \$600,000 coming from the general fund.
- The August levy had already been increased by half a mill.

Despite the promise of no new taxes, opposition arose in the form of a citizens' group called SOS (Save Our Schools). One month before the referendum vote, the group voiced concerns, particularly over longer bus rides, the loss of community schools, and potential future tax increases. As Doug Fledger expressed in a letter to the editor, “The mill rate may not go up, but the point is that if the project is not undertaken, it can go down.”

On December 10, 1985, the referendum passed by a narrow margin of 53 votes (903 to 850), allowing for the construction of MAES. The new school opened its doors to over 800 students in grades kindergarten through fourth grade in the fall of 1987.

After the school was built, the district sold the vacant properties of Lincoln, Rolling Acres, Brookside, and Pleasant Heights schools for a total of \$82,750. Additionally, the mobile units previously used at Jefferson School were sold to the Ashland School District for \$21,500.

### Building Auction Sales

**Saturday, June 20**  
10:30 a.m., 11:00 a.m. & 11:30 a.m.

These buildings are suitable for school property, private schools, youth center, day care, small manufacturing, warehouse, retail store, Historical Society, apartments, used car lots, office, etc.

**10:30 a.m.**

**LINCOLN SCHOOL** Legal description: Lots 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 & 14, all in Block 2, McCartney-Whelan Addition, City of Medford, Wisconsin. This is an irregular shaped lot with approx. 250 sq. ft. of frontage on Park Avenue, and approx. 150 ft. of frontage on Spruce Street. Both streets have curb & gutter. The East lot line is approx. 300 ft. long, and the South lot line is approx. 167 ft. long. This property is connected to city sewer & water. It is zone R-1 residential. Any use other than the present use or single family residential would require a change in zoning or a conditional use permit. The approx. 28,547 sq. ft. brick school building is currently used as a kindergarten facility. The main floor has 2 classrooms, a work/storage room, and an office. The basement has 1 classroom, restrooms, furnace room, a work room, and a storage room. This building has forced air heat with 4 natural gas fueled furnaces.

**11:00 a.m.**

**ROLLING ACRES SCHOOL** Legal description: The SW 1/4, of the SE 1/4, of the SE 1/4, of Section 24, T31N, R1E, Township of Medford, Taylor County, Wisconsin. According to tax files records this parcel is approx. 10 acres in size, and it has gravel town road frontage on E. Allman Avenue. This property has a drilled well. It is a concrete block building with a brick exterior, and a gable type roof. The forced air heating system has 3 oil fueled furnaces. This building has 4 classrooms, kitchen, restrooms, and furnace room.

**11:30 a.m.**

**BROOKSIDE SCHOOL** Legal description: Part of Government Lot 10 (86g 50' N of intersection of crt of Hwy 64 & town road, N 48 rods, W 40 rods, S 48 rods to post 50' N of crt of Hwy, E 40 rods to PCB), Section 30, T31N, R1E, Township of Medford, Taylor County, Wisconsin. According to tax files records this parcel is approx. 12 acres in size. It has blacktop road frontage on Hwy 64 and Sunset Road. The parking lot is also blacktop. This property has a drilled well. This is a concrete block building with a brick exterior. The forced air heating system has an oil fueled furnace. In addition to 6 classrooms, this building has an office, restrooms, furnace room, dining room and kitchen.

Sealed bids will be accepted until 10:00 a.m., Saturday, June 20. The auctions will start at the highest bid on each property at the advertised date and time. Inspection of buildings any day between June 17 and sale date. Call the district office for appointment - Phone 715/749-4620 or call E.J. McClaron, property consultant, 715/749-2252.

Terms: 10% at sale - balance on day of closing or other suitable arrangements.  
For further information, call Brian Kulas - 715/749-4620 or Al Pelsin, board member - 715/679-2210



## Medford Alumni Feature

*Dana Paul, Class of 2000*



**Dana Paul lives in Medford on a dairy farm with her husband Ryan and their three boys.**

Dana (Jentsch) Paul, Class of 2000, has led a life deeply rooted in both agriculture and the Medford community. Raised on a milk farm in Medford, Dana married Ryan Paul, a dairy farmer, and now helps run their dairy farm, a life she wouldn't trade for anything.

Her story bridges the past and the future. Ironically, the Medford School District's farm is located on the original Kress family homestead, the same land where Dana's mother-in-law once lived. One of the enduring features of the school farm is the original silo, still standing proudly today. Dana takes great pride in knowing that her son is now studying agriculture on the very land where his father's family once lived, learning the same values and passion for farming that she and her husband were raised with.

Dana's educational journey in Medford was marked by several milestones. She was part of the first kindergarten class when MAES opened its doors in the fall of 1987. "I remember when we first started, the school felt pretty fancy," Dana recalled. "We did plays in the MAES media room, and I still remember the stop-and-go lights in the lunchroom."

As Dana transitioned to middle school, she was one of the first classes to use the new fifth-grade wing and the small gym at the Medford Junior High School. "The old building was a bit of a maze with all the staircases and hallways," Dana laughed. "But I always felt safe and cared for." One of Dana's most memorable moments in middle school was when Mr. Gary Coyle, a teacher, proposed to his colleague, Ms. Beth Gamoke, in front of Dana's social studies class.

When Dana entered high school, she was again among the first students to use a new addition. The east and band room addition to the high school building had just been built.

After graduating from MASH in 2000, Dana pursued a degree in business administration, marketing, and finance at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. She then moved back to Medford, where she worked at WIGM radio before transitioning into her current role as Director of Events for an agriculture genetics company.

As a mother and chairperson of the Stetsonville PTO, Dana is proud that all of her children are attending the Medford School District.



**Dana Paul was part of the first kindergarten class in the new Medford Area Elementary School building.**



## Medford Alumni Feature

### *JoDee Smith, Class of 2000*

JoDee (Sperl) Smith, Class of 2000, has come full circle in her education journey, now working at MAES where her academic path began 37 years ago.

Growing up near Medford's park, JoDee couldn't wait to join her two older brothers at school. One brother, just 13 months older, ended up in the same grade, and together they walked through the doors of MAES when it first opened in 1987. JoDee fondly remembers her kindergarten year, noting

how her teachers made it a phenomenal experience. Highlights from her early years include spotting Easter bunny footprints in first grade with Mrs. Karen Dallas, listening to Mrs. Julie Hemer read Beverly Cleary books in second grade, and filming a "School's Cool" video with Mr. Scott Woller in third grade.

JoDee's positive experiences continued in junior high, though she recalls the building's quirks, including bats flying through the hallways. At Medford Area Senior High, she thrived in extracurriculars, playing in the 200-plus member band under Mr. Henry Clark and marching at a Green Bay Packers game. She also supported her brother, a 1998 State Champion wrestler, as part of the cheerleading squad. A highlight was her first airplane ride during a Spanish trip to Mexico with twelve close friends.

After high school, JoDee attended UW-River Falls before transferring to UW-Eau Claire, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Communication Disorders in 2004. She later returned to Medford, married, and completed her master's in vocational rehabilitation and evaluation. Committed to helping others, JoDee worked with high school students and adults transitioning into the workforce before taking a job at NTC assisting adults returning to college.

While serving on Medford's Transition Council, JoDee collaborated with Joseph Greget, the district's Special Education Director, and decided to pursue a career as a special education teacher in the Medford School District. She loves her job and the positive, collaborative environment at MAES, where everyone is dedicated to helping students.



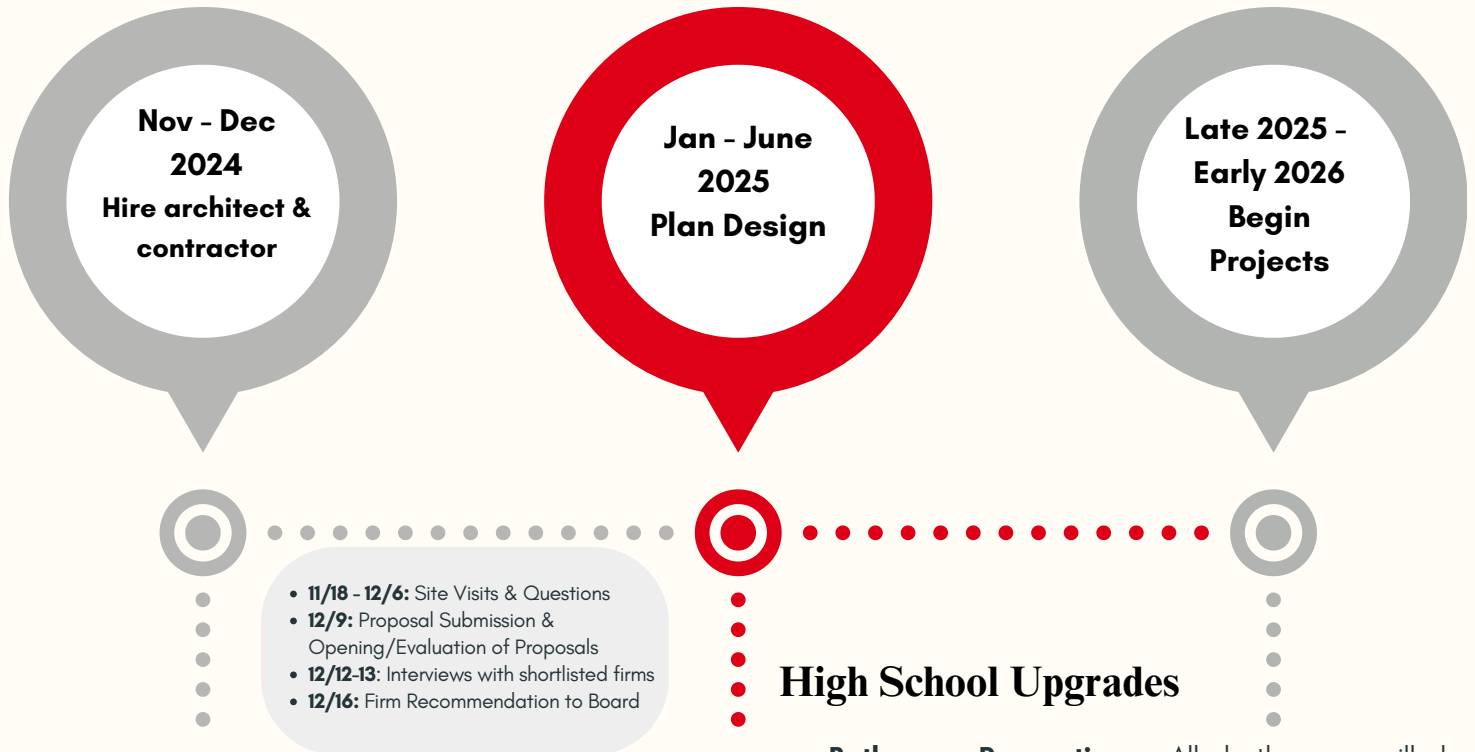
**JoDee Smith, was part of the first kindergarten class at MAES and now currently works in the building as a special education teacher.**

## Tell your Story

If you or someone you know is a Medford alumni and would like to be featured in an upcoming edition, complete the online [Medford Alumni Survey](#). Alumni could also stop by the Medford School District Office, 124 W State St., to fill out a paper copy, or contact Laura Lundy at [lundyla@medford.k12.wi.us](mailto:lundyla@medford.k12.wi.us) or 715-748-4620, ext. 5523.



## Upcoming Project Planning Timeline



- **Bathroom Renovations:** All bathrooms will be renovated.
- **Technical Education Expansion:** The existing technical education building will be remodeled, connected to the main building, and new classroom and lab spaces will be added.
- **Classroom Additions and Remodels:** Eight new classrooms will be added to the high school, and several existing classrooms will be expanded to create larger learning spaces. An ADA accessible exit will also be added from the lower floor to improve safety and accessibility.

## Districtwide Maintenance

The district will address larger maintenance issues across the entire district listed in the long-term [10-year facility plan](#). Below are examples of some of the larger items slated to be completed:

- Upgrading the district’s fire alarm systems for enhanced safety.
- Replacing aging boilers to improve energy efficiency and heating reliability.
- Replacing roofs and upgrading electrical systems in multiple buildings to maintain the safety and functionality of the district’s facilities.

## Elementary Improvements

- **Cafeteria Floor Refurbishment:** The cafeteria floor at Stetsonville Elementary will be refurbished.
- **Drainage Improvements:** The berm around Medford Elementary will be replaced to improve drainage, protecting the building from water damage.

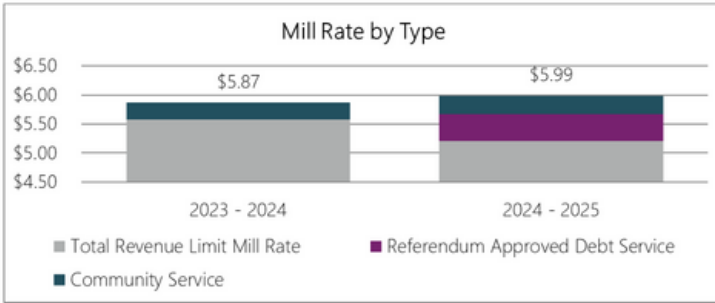
## Middle School Renovations

- **Bathroom Renovations:** The existing bathrooms in the middle school auditorium will be completely renovated.
- **Gym Floor Refurbishment:** The middle school gym floor will be refurbished to create a more durable and functional space.
- **Cafeteria Door Replacement:** The main doors in the middle school cafeteria will be replaced to improve safety, accessibility, and energy efficiency.



## School Finance 101

### Lesson 1: How do I Calculate my School Taxes?



In order to calculate your 2024 school tax, take the mill rate of \$5.99 and multiple it by \$1,000 for each \$100,000 worth of value.

In 2023, a \$100,000 property paid \$587 in school taxes. With the passage of the referendum, that same property, assuming the assessed value stayed the same, will pay \$599 in school taxes for 2024. This is a difference of \$12.

### Lesson 2: How Does State Aid Help Lower My Property Taxes?

Voters in the Medford School District approved a referendum for \$22,665,000 in November. This means the district will raise that amount to fund important projects and needs. But here's the good news: the state will help pay for a big portion of it.

Right now, the state covers about 71% of this cost. This means they will contribute roughly \$16 million in the form of state aid to help cover the cost to taxpayers.

### Access Medford School's Digital Newsletter

Follow these steps to subscribe:

- Send a message to Nicole at [gebner@medford.k12.wi.us](mailto:gebner@medford.k12.wi.us).
- Write "Newsletter Subscription" in the Subject Line.
- Scan the QR code with your phone
- OR go to [www.medford.k12.wi.us](http://www.medford.k12.wi.us) and click on the "newsletter" under the "District News"



### Lesson 3: Where do I find the school taxes, tax credit and referendum levy on my property tax bill?

December is the month when tax bills are typically issued. The sample bill to the right of this article highlights the sections related to the school district portion including:

- Medford School Levy
- School Levy Tax Credit
- Referendum Levy

If you have questions on your tax bill related to the school portion of your taxes, please contact Audra Brooks at [brookau@medford.k12.wi.us](mailto:brookau@medford.k12.wi.us) or the clerk in your designated taxing district.

Sample Tax Bill				STATE OF WISCONSIN REAL ESTATE PROPERTY TAX BILL		TOWN OF		COUNTY		BILL NO. Correspondence should refer to parcel number	
Property Address										PARCEL#:	
										ALT. PARCEL #:	
Assessed Value Land	Ass'd Value Improvements	Total Assessed Value	Ave. Assmt. Ratio	Est. Fair Mkt. Land	Est. Fair Mkt. Improvements	Total Est. Fair Mkt.	A star in this box means unpaid prior year taxes.				
12,500	244,300	256,800	1.1107	10,900	220,000	230,900					
Taxing Jurisdiction	Prior Year Est. State Aids Allocated Tax Dist.	Current Year Est. State Aids Allocated Tax Dist.	Prior Year Net Tax	Current Year Net Tax	% Tax Change						
TOWN OF COUNTY	61,989	64,624	1,745.06	1,844.35	-6.94						
TOWN OF WAUSAU	211,935	214,829	454.04	455.96	-4.03						
MEDFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT	62,108	65,092	256.32	270.12	5.77						
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,366,064</b>	<b>1,354,702</b>	<b>3,440.60</b>	<b>3,558.08</b>	<b>3.44</b>						
	First Dollar Credit		45.49	46.08	1.34						
	Lottery & Gaming Credit		161.34	151.26	-6.24						
	Net Property Tax		3,233.77	3,360.74	3.95						
School taxes reduced by school levy tax credit	\$ 264.15	IMPORTANT: Be sure this description covers your property. This description is for property tax bill only and may not be a full legal description.									
<b>School Levy Tax Credit:</b> School taxes are reduced by this amount each year. a) This is already included in the Medford School Levy above											
<b>FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY</b> - Voter Approved Temporary Tax Increases											
Medford School District	Total Additional Taxes	Total Additional Taxes Applied to Property	Year Increase Ends 2046								
	\$	\$									
<b>TOTAL DUE FOR FULL PAYMENT</b> PAY BY \$ 3,360.74 Warning: If not paid by due dates, installment option is lost and total tax is delinquent subject to interest and, if applicable, penalty. Failure to pay on time. See reverse. Installments may be paid as follows:											
<b>Referendum Levy:</b> Shows the overall amount levied toward the facility referendum each year. a) This is already included in the Medford School Levy above b) In future years, the Medford School Levy above will be adjusted for the state's reimbursement											