

The Weekly Comet Update

From Tom Meyer, Superintendent of the Bellevue Community School District

Believe In The Blue! Believe In Bellevue!

Upcoming Events, Early Dismissals, and "No School" Days

- December 12 - HS Winter Concert
- December - 14 2-Hour Early Dismissal for Students - Teacher Professional Learning
- December 15 - Elementary Winter Concert
- December 19 - MS Winter Concert
- December 21 - 1st Semester Ends
- Winter Break - December 22 through January 4; Teacher Professional Learning
- January 5 - Students return to school
- January 16 - No School for Students - MLK Day

Weather Information

Winter is upon us, and some basic weather information to be aware of in regard to late-starts, early-dismissals, and days with no school based on the weather and other situations:

1. **A determination is typically made before 6:00 AM to not have school or for a delay.**

At times this decision may be later than this, but we try to make a decision earlier to allow parents and others time to plan and make necessary personal schedule changes.

2. **Information will be shared in various ways.**

- Email and Text - All parents (primary contact) who have shared a valid email address and cell number will be notified via email and text.
- Social media Facebook - Tom Meyer Twitter - TomMeyerBHS
- Radio and TV - Dubuque and Maquoketa radio stations and area local TV stations

3. **The safety of our students, parents, staff, and others traveling to school is the primary concern on all days.**

At times the weather "sneaks" up on us, but we continuously look at weather reports and projections when unfavorable weather conditions are possible. It is normal to analyze the weather at or before 4:15 AM on days when conditions are going to be potentially problematic.

Bellevue CSD Referendum - Press Release Community committee to propose plan for new elementary school

School to be built in phases, partially funded by bonds

BELLEVUE – Bellevue’s 170-year-old elementary school is out of space and time. In order to provide equitable educational spaces for Bellevue’s youngest learners, the Bellevue Community School District may ask voters to approve a general obligation bond during a special election on March 7, 2023.

The \$13.1 million bond, which requires voter approval, will partially fund phase 1 of a five-year facility master plan. The first phase includes a new building at the middle/high school campus for third through fifth grade. The remainder of the project will be paid for using a combination of district PPEL and SAVE funds. PreK through second grade will remain at the current elementary school for the immediate future where they will have much-needed additional space once the 3-5 students are relocated.

Phase 2 will include an addition to the 3-5 building for PreK through second grade and/or renovations and improvements to the high school’s fine arts and CTE spaces. Phase 2 will be funded using state sales tax revenues and will not affect property taxes.

“We went back to the drawing board and had many discussions with teachers, staff and community members to come up with a plan we feel has the least impact on property owners,” said board member Janet Sieverding. “Over the years the community has grown, education has changed and needs of our children have changed. It’s time the school changes and grows for the children.”

This proposal is the result of a community-driven facility planning process that began in August 2021 when the district hired OPN Architects, MODUS Engineering, and Fehr Graham Engineering to conduct an assessment of both the elementary school and middle/high school buildings, sites, and infrastructures.

Following the assessments, the district convened a committee of community members, parents, business owners, and school employees. Over the course of the summer and fall, the committee considered the results of the facility assessments and past facility plans and arrived at a proposed solution that addresses the district's most critical facility need – the elementary school – in a fiscally responsible manner.

The \$13.1 bond is less than both of the prior two proposals, which voters rejected in 2018 and 2019. By using multiple funding sources over a period of five to eight years with phased construction, the committee was able to minimize the tax impact. Property taxes will increase \$2.70 per \$1,000 of taxable value. This is less than both prior proposals.

“The district has made a concerted effort to take the feedback from the community and incorporate it into our plan. We are using our own funding to help minimize the burden on the taxpayers while gaining the space we need to support our increased enrollment,” said board member Matt Wedeking.

The committee agreed on the proposed plan only after considering multiple concepts, including a combination of renovations and additions at the existing elementary school site. Building a new school at the middle/high school campus was ultimately the preferred solution for several reasons. One, the cost of renovating and adding onto the existing school was not less than building new. Two, the existing site is too small to accommodate a building, play areas, and parking that can meet modern teaching and learning needs. And third, due to the small site, construction and demolition would have taken place in phases over the course of multiple years, which would have been disruptive to learning.

The current elementary school, built in 1848, is one of the oldest structures in Iowa that continues to be used as an elementary school. There are not enough classrooms to meet Bellevue's growing enrollment. Classrooms and corridors are undersized, and many spaces do not meet accessibility and code requirements. Systems, including the building's boiler, are past their life and need to be replaced. The age of the building also makes it impossible to meet current safety standards.

“Our staff should be commended for their efforts. For the past four years since the last bond failed they have continued to ‘make it work’ in regards to an increased student population and limited classroom space,” Marty Ploessl, board member. “The time has come for a long-term solution, and we owe it to our students to provide an improved learning environment, they deserve better.”

Addressing the need for a new elementary school has long been a community priority. This summer, the Bellevue City Council and Bellevue Municipal Utilities hosted a public community visioning meeting. The results of those conversations confirmed that schools are one of the reasons people choose to live in Bellevue and there is support for replacing the existing 170-year-old elementary school.

Community members in the upcoming days will be circulating a petition that would require the school board to call the election. Residents of the Bellevue Community School District who are eligible to vote can sign the petition. Signing the petition is not voting for the proposal. It is a step toward calling the election, which would be held in March 2023.

Community members will present the petitions and the proposed plan to the school board at the January 9, 2023 regular meeting.

Photos of facility advisory committee: [Bellevue FAC](#).

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