

Frequently Asked Questions

{The statements below are not the official statements of the Middleton School District or its leadership. The YES Committee has gleaned this information from various sources, including school board meetings, city council meetings, the MSD website, and in-person information nights.}

- **Are our schools overcrowded?**

Yes. Heights Elementary is at 145% capacity and Mill Creek at 115%, with 22 classrooms housed in 11 portables lacking restrooms. The proposed bond would fund a new elementary school for 600–700 students at Kingsbury and Carerra Way, better serving the growing community.

- **How much is the bond?**

The average annual cost to taxpayers is estimated at \$34 per \$100,000 of assessed value. The proposed bond has an expected interest rate of 3.95% per year, with total repayment estimated at \$29,145,500 over a term of up to 20 years (\$19.9 million principal and \$9.25 million interest). That's a 79% reduction from the bond proposed in August 2022 election.

- **Are we building a Taj Mahal?**

No. The school board has approved a very fiscally responsible plan with a design that is very well thought out and efficient. We have modified

the original design for this elementary school to reduce the cost. We have selected a new builder, which further reduced the cost. In addition, we have secured a donation of 12 acres for this elementary school, should the bond pass. This will save our residents over \$2M.

- **How do we ensure there are no cost overruns, and if we save money, will it be returned to taxpayers through a lower bond payment?**

If the costs exceed the funds we currently have available, we have two options:

1. Allocate more of the School Modernization Funds to cover the additional expenses. We have some of the School Modernization Funds slated for other maintenance needs in the district – most notably HVAC replacements and an elevator installation at Heights. We have some ability to allocate these funds as needed over the next 10 years.
2. Modify the building plan—for example, construct fewer classrooms initially, with the flexibility to add more in the future.

If we come in under budget, there are three potential uses for the surplus:

1. Reserve the funds for future school repairs.
2. Apply the funds toward bond payments.
3. Reduce the amount of School Modernization Funds used. These funds are restricted for use on the school only. While it's unlikely the project will come in under \$19.9 million, any amount approved

by the community through the bond will be fully dedicated to the construction of the school.

- **What pays for teachers and equipment (desks, chairs, electronic equipment, etc.)? Does the bond cover these expenses?**

Teachers: Salaries for the teachers will be provided by the state funds we receive each year which are based on student attendance. Most of the staff for the new school will likely come from those employees who are already working in the three elementary schools now operating. We hope to get all those teachers who are now teaching in portables teaching in a “real” classroom.

Desks, Chairs, Copy Machines, Electronic Equipment: These are included as part of the overall project. Some will be repurposed from existing classrooms, and others will be purchased as needed.

- **How will we handle the increased traffic on Kingsbury Road and State Highway 44?**

A traffic light at Kingsbury and Highway 44 will be installed BEFORE the new school is built. This will make Highway 44 safer for everyone — students, families, and our entire community.

It is also important to keep in mind that Middleton Schools are on a 4-day school week. The school traffic would only be twice per day, four days a week, and less than half of the year (about 160 out of 365 days).

We deserve safe roads *and* strong schools for our growing town.

- **Is this a band-aid approach? How will you deal with additional school bonds that will be added on top of current and future bonds, making taxes in Middleton untenable?**

This is a long-term solution designed for the students we have right now. In the short term, our options include adding portable classrooms, adjusting school schedules, and utilizing online learning. Looking ahead, our future solutions will depend on two things we can't fully predict: enrollment growth and financial conditions. We do know with certainty that more students are coming—but how many and how quickly remains unclear.

There are currently about 3,000 available lots in our area. How fast those fill up depends on several factors. For example, if the economy takes a downturn and stays there for a few years, growth will likely slow. On the other hand, if the economy grows quickly, we could see a rapid influx of new families.

- **What happens if the bond doesn't pass?**

Below are a number of possible alternatives the district may need to employ if the bond does not pass in May of 2025. The district may need to utilize one or multiple strategies to meet the growing need for elementary school space. The district is not limited to these options, they are simply some of the more common approaches for addressing overcapacity in schools.

1. Changing boundaries for elementary schools to equalize capacity:
This approach involves redrawing the attendance boundaries for

our elementary schools to balance the number of students at each location. The goal would be to redistribute students more evenly, utilizing existing space across all schools. Patrons should recognize that boundaries will have to be adjusted if the bond passes as well. Currently, we have three zones; if the bond is to pass, it will create four new zones.

2. Bussing new students to non-regional elementary schools: In this plan, new students who enroll in our district might be assigned to schools that are not in their immediate neighborhood. We would provide transportation to these non-regional schools that have available space to accommodate them.
3. Changing our schedule for elementary schools to Year-Round School or shifts: This option considers moving to a year-round school schedule, where students attend school throughout the entire year with shorter breaks in between terms, rather than a long summer break. Alternatively, we could implement a shift-based schedule, where different groups of students attend school at different times of the day to maximize the use of our facilities.
4. Adding more portable classroom units: Portable classrooms are temporary structures that can be added to our school sites to create additional learning space. This option would increase our capacity to serve more students at existing locations without constructing permanent buildings.
5. Shifting all 5th grade students to Middle School/Academy classrooms and relocating Middleton Academy students to the Red Brick Building: This plan would involve moving 5th graders to the Middle School and Middleton Academy and creating additional space at the elementary level. Middleton Academy students would be relocated to the Red Brick Building, which would require

renovations estimated to cost between \$4-6 million to make it suitable for use again as a student-occupied school.

6. Move students to online classes for parts of their work: In this scenario, some students would participate in hybrid learning, where they complete a portion of their coursework online while still attending school in person for specific activities or subjects. This would reduce the number of students physically present in the school buildings at any given time.

- **Why don't developers contribute to the cost of schools?**

The Idaho Constitution does not allow school districts to collect impact fees from new developments to fund school construction. Even if we managed to make this constitutional change, it would take years to generate enough funds, making it an ineffective solution for immediate overcrowding.

For this elementary school, we are grateful that the developer of the surrounding neighborhood plans to donate a 12-acre building site to the school district, should the bond pass. This will save our residents over \$2M.

- **Are we teaching DEI or “woke” curricula? How do we know it isn't happening?**

Our programs comply with the latest guidance from President Trump's administration, and we signed the required document affirming that compliance.

According to President Trump's guidance:

Schools may not operate policies or programs under any name that treat students differently based on race, engage in racial stereotyping, or create hostile environments for students of particular races. For example, schools with programs focused on particular cultures, heritages, or regions of the world would not, in and of themselves, violate Title VI, so long as they are open to all students regardless of race. Nor would cultural or historical observances—like Black History Month or International Holocaust Remembrance Day—so long as they promote awareness without engaging in racial exclusion or discrimination. However, schools must ensure that no programming discourages participation from any group or creates a hostile environment for students of any race.

So, what do we teach?

- Do we teach that everyone is equal and should not be judged by the color of their skin, gender, or any other factor? Absolutely.
- Do we teach kindness? Yes.
- Do we teach students how to handle mental health challenges? Yes.
- Do we honor those who fought for civil rights? Yes.
- Do we do any of this without parent knowledge or involvement?
No.
- Do we have kitty litter in our bathrooms? No.
- Do we make biological girls use the same restrooms as biological boys? No.
- Do we teach Critical Race Theory (CRT)? No.

How can someone be sure of all this?

There are a few ways:

1. Contact our elected school board trustees – they work for you.
2. Review our school board’s established curriculum and policy process.
4. Ask for curriculum materials—we’re happy to provide them.
5. Visit our classrooms. We’re quite literally and figuratively an open book.

As for the term “woke”—that one’s tricky. It means different things to different people. That’s why it’s important to focus on facts, transparency, and values we share as a community.

- **Why should senior citizens pay for schools when they don’t have children in school?**

Economic Impact: Good schools help maintain strong communities. They can increase property values and keep crime rates low.

Social Responsibility: Public education is a shared civic duty. Most people benefited from taxpayer-funded education at some point in their lives, and paying into the system later in life helps continue that cycle for future generations.

- **Why are we paying for students who live in Star to attend a Middleton school?**

Middleton School District has proposed building an elementary school in the city of Star, Idaho. This is a common arrangement where local residents contribute to both city and school district taxes.

Here's how it works:

School Construction and Funding

The Middleton School District is responsible for building and operating the school, even though it is located within the city of Star. Funding for a new elementary comes from property taxes paid by all residents of the district, including those living in Middleton, Star, and other areas within the district's boundaries.

City of Star Taxes for Infrastructure

Since the school is located in Star, the city government is responsible for providing essential infrastructure around the school. This includes:

- Streets and roads leading to the school
- Sidewalks for pedestrian access
- Street lighting to improve safety
- Water and sewer services for the neighborhood

Residents who live near the school, within Star's city limits, pay taxes to both the City of Star and the Middleton School District. The city taxes help fund infrastructure and services that benefit the school and surrounding neighborhood, while the school district taxes pay for the school itself.

Difference for Other Middleton School District Residents

On the other hand, residents who live in other parts of the Middleton School District but outside of Star—such as in Middleton or rural areas—still pay school district taxes to support the school’s construction and operation. However, they do not pay Star city taxes and therefore do not contribute to the costs of streets, sidewalks, or other city-provided amenities around the school.

This setup ensures that the cost of education is shared across the entire district, while the cost of city infrastructure is covered only by Star residents who directly benefit from it.

- **Why do we allow students who do not live within the MSD school boundaries to attend our schools, even though they aren’t part of our tax base and don’t pay for our bonds or levies?**

In 2023, the Idaho Legislature passed a law (SB1125) that requires schools to accept students from other districts, if space is available. Because we do have some space at our middle school and high school, we had to accept some out of district students.

- **Why are we not considering changing our school district’s boundaries? Star still has plenty of land to build within our school boundaries, which would add more kids to our schools. When will we make Star step up and take care of its students?**

Changing school district boundaries in the state of Idaho involves many steps, requires cooperation and agreement from all parties, and needs

approval by the State Board of Education. There is not enough support for this change to begin the arduous process.

- **Why do we have a four-day school week?**

In 2020, the school board voted to adopt a four-day school week. This is a popular policy for many families. In Idaho, 76 of our 115 school districts have adopted a four-day school week.

- **If homeschooled children are getting vouchers and are allowed to attend some classes, do they pay? If not, why not?**

We don't have a definitive answer yet—we've asked the same questions of the state. The State Board of Education is currently in the process of developing rules to align with the recently passed legislation. In short, we will be required to follow whatever guidelines the State Board sets. That said, we still have a responsibility to educate students who reside within our district boundaries. As for how vouchers will be managed or transferred, that remains unclear at this time.