

**ELIZABETH MEYER SCHOOL AND JOHN MIDDLETON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**  
**PROPOSED ADDITION/RENOVATION PROJECT**  
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**1. What are the space needs at Meyer School?**

- Currently speech, interventions and ELL services are provided in classrooms, using dividers, while other ordinary classroom activities are going on.
- There is no library for the students. Field trips are provided to the Skokie Public Library one to two times per year and parents bring library books around to the classrooms because of limited library use.
- Music has been cut down to once a month and is being taught in the classroom.
- Speech services, occupational therapy, and sensory motor breaks are delivered in the hallways.
- The multipurpose room is used for lunch, art, physical education, and the morning and afternoon care program.
- A gym is needed. Without it, physical education cannot be taught every day as required by the State of Illinois.
- There are not enough classrooms to teach all of the District 73½ pre-kindergarten students who are identified with a disability. There also are not enough classrooms at Meyer to provide for least-restrictive environment for all students at District 73½. Currently we have blended options at Meyer (the Molloy Education Center does not offer this option). The blended options can accommodate students with disabilities as well as students identified as at-risk or tuition-based students. Currently when we are at capacity at Meyer or if a student requires an instructional program, that student is placed at the Molloy Education Center, a self-contained building for students with disabilities. Some of our students require such a restrictive placement, but others are placed there solely because it is the best option we have available. In some instances we are not meeting the Federal IDEA guidelines for providing the least-restrictive environment, due to space constraints.
- Teachers who don't have offices/classrooms work in the small teacher's lounge, which is not only where teachers have breaks and lunch, but also where teachers hold meetings and use office equipment. The lounge is the location for the school's only copy machine, a screen and projector, laminator, Ellison dye cut machine, poster machine and book binding machine.
- A small bathroom was turned into a technology office where two people often work.
- A closet was turned into an office that also is used to store physical education equipment, music and art materials.

**2. Why does there need to be an addition to Elizabeth Meyer School?**

- To accommodate everyday Physical Education
- To allow all students to be educated in the least-restrictive environment
- To eliminate administering assessments in hallways
- To allow small group instruction to take place in quiet, confidential space
- To allow development of appropriate Music/Art curricula
- To allow space for appropriate library collection for early childhood
- To provide appropriate space for occupational therapy and sensory breaks

**3. Can the addition to Meyer be smaller? Why must it be 23,300 sq. ft.?**

- The Board of Education, administration and a Community Planning Committee determined that more space was needed at Meyer. A needs assessment study was prepared by the architect, with the assistance of the Board of Education and staff members to determine the size and configuration of the addition.
- The current proposed additions to Meyer and Middleton will adequately address the space needs listed in questions #1 and #2.

**4. Why does there need to be an addition/renovation to John Middleton Elementary School?**

- A multipurpose room is needed to accommodate every day physical education classes
- To eliminate small group band rehearsal in hallways and vestibules
- To allow for small group instructional space

**5. What is the cost of the addition for a homeowner?**

- A property taxpayer with a \$250,000 house now pays \$324 annually on the current outstanding debt.
- When the current outstanding debt is paid off in 2018, the new bond/debt issuance will not cause the payments to increase.
- The new bond issuance of \$10.3M is structured to be paid off in 2027.
- Property owners will not see any change in their taxes due to this new bond/debt issuance.

**6. How does the District know that there will be additional out-of-district special education students to fill the new classrooms?**

- Enrollment at Molloy's early childhood special education program has been steady for eight years, and projections for the future show the same enrollment, based on early childhood populations in Niles Township. The added space in District 73.5 would provide Skokie families with an option that is much closer to home.

**7. Why does the District have a pre-K program?**

- Legally, school districts are required to educate and/or fund the education of children with special needs beginning at the age of three.
- The Skokie School District 73½ community has always valued early childhood education.
- The research is clear that early learning experiences promote later success in school. See "[Early Learning Changes the Course](#)" by Megan Meyer
- Many of our district's young children have limited opportunities for language and social skill development; being in school with other children and specially trained teachers will provide children with the foundation they need to develop vocabulary, language, foundational literacy, and play skills.
- The Kindergarten Common Core Standards, Social-Emotional Learning Standards, and Early Learning Standards call for children to demonstrate literacy and numeracy skills and social skills. If children start Kindergarten with no previous school experience, they typically lag behind their classmates who have been in preschool.
- Children who have no background knowledge and who have skill deficits often require the support of an instructional interventionist, social worker, speech therapist or occupational therapist. As they get older, it becomes harder for teachers to close the gap, as peers with more skills and experience make more rapid gains.
- The transition to Kindergarten for students who have attended preschool at Meyer is seamless. The preschool and kindergarten teachers communicate and collaborate to ensure that the Meyer preschoolers are ready for success in kindergarten.

**8. What other types of funding has the district considered for this project besides issuing \$10.3M of bonds?**

- The Board of Education considered using a portion of the Working Cash Fund for the project; however, the Working Cash Fund will be needed for operating expenses for the school district in the future. Future projections showed that it was fiscally responsible to issue bonds which the District's legal debt limit capacity.
- The District applied for the Illinois State Board of Education Qualified Construction Bonds that became available in January. These bonds were a means for the state to use federal funds to reimburse local districts for the interest on bonds for school construction. Unfortunately, our school district was not approved to receive these funds.
- The addition of two classrooms to educate other Niles Township special education early childhood students at Meyer is expected to generate approximately \$180,000 in new revenue annually, which will help support the addition.

**9. Why does the District choose to not go out for referendum for this project?**

- Payments for current bonds will terminate in 2018. The district would have the legal authority to issue \$10.3 million in new bonds that would not cause taxes to increase.
- Legally the Board of Education cannot run a referendum campaign. Such a campaign would have to be created and run by members of the community, who would have to raise funds for items such as surveys and campaign materials. It likely would cost approximately \$10,000 - \$20,000 to run a referendum campaign.

**10. What effects will this addition have on the market value of my home?**

- Studies show that people are willing to pay more for their home if it is located in a district with good schools.
- On realtor.com, 91% of those surveyed included school boundaries in their decision-making process for choosing a home. See "[The Right School District](#)" "[How Much Do Schools Affect Real Estate Prices?](#)"
- Good early childhood schools are a draw for young families.

**11. What have previous bonds been issued for?**

- 2002 - \$5,340,000 Working Cash Fund Bonds funded large capital projects such as: asbestos removal at McCracken and Middleton, replacement of windows at Middleton, library renovation at McCracken, floor replacement at McCracken and Middleton, painting at all three schools, roof replacement, tuck pointing, upgrade of technology infrastructure, acoustic improvements at Meyer gym/cafeteria, security system upgrades, and sidewalk replacement.
- 2007A - \$5,870,000 General Obligation Limited Tax School Bonds, plus \$1.3M from the Working Cash Fund, were utilized for the McCracken addition, which was 23,300 square feet. The addition included three science labs/classrooms, band room and small practice rooms, multipurpose room, technology lab, production studio, one classroom, technology office and server room. This project was budgeted at \$7.5 million, but came in under budget at \$7.3 million.
- The process of refunding bonds is not to issue additional debt. When a school district refunds bonds it is to refinance current outstanding debt, similar to refinancing a mortgage. The 2007B and 2009 Bonds were both Refunding Bonds.

2007B - \$715,000 Taxable General Obligation Limited Tax Refunding Bonds were issued in conjunction with the 2007A bonds for the addition at McCracken.

2009 - \$3,190,000 - Refunding Bonds were issued at a lower interest rate in order to save taxpayers \$163,810.

- In 2004, a referendum to increase the Education tax rate was approved by 67% of the voters of Skokie 73½. The Education Fund pays for all instructional

materials, all education staff salaries/benefits, all technology equipment, and all staff development. The referendum allowed the District to continue current class sizes, full-day kindergarten, band, choir, musicals, sports, district-wide transportation services and other educational programs.