In the 1950’s, Harry Collins had a dream. As District 29’s second principal of what was then a one-building school district, he knew that young children could better flourish in an environment designed around their unique needs as early learners. He understood that a thoughtfully designed building, built and furnished for young children, would only serve to strengthen Northfield’s commitment to its present and future students. Collins was set on creating “a place of their own,” as he would always say. And in the fall of 1959, the dream was fulfilled as the doors of the new Middlefork School first opened to children in kindergarten through second grade.

Northfield’s little school on Wagner Road had clearly developed into an example for others to follow.

During a period of declining enrollment and financial challenge in the 1970’s, it seemed inevitable that Middlefork would have to close, and a merger with neighboring AVOCA District 37 was thoroughly explored and vetted. However, the community made it clear that it was invested in preserving this very special educational space, and worked together to keep Collins’ dream alive.

The Northfield community and District 29 are as strongly committed to Middlefork today as Harry Collins and Mary Osborne were 60 years ago. We continue to recognize the importance of prioritizing the interests and developmental needs of children as a best educational practice, and are continuously working to make sure we are fulfilling this promise through our curriculum and facilities. In 2014, District 29 took a step back to reassess our buildings, and developed a major capital improvement plan that resulted in the new Sunset Ridge School. As part of that plan, the District 29 Board of Education pledged to commit $2M in reserve funds to make much needed upgrades to Middlefork. These funds were earmarked not only for infrastructure improvements, but also for updates in learning spaces that would reaffirm our commitment to Middlefork as an important part in the journey of Northfield’s youngest students.

As you will read in the following pages, planned capital improvements to Middlefork School taking place this summer will bring 21st century academic and security improvements to the building. These modern renovations will reinforce and enhance Collins’ original mission to maintain a child-friendly environment that honors the unique strengths and abilities of each child, providing a secure and engaging learning environment for our youngest students for years to come.

Dr. Edward Stange
Superintendent, District 29
THE MIDDLEFORK SCHOOL
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

FUNDING

In 2014, the District 29 Board of Education allocated $2M to capital improvements at Middlefork School. The scope of the project was determined based on the level of available funding and input from staff and community members regarding the prioritized needs. The budget was based on a long-term comprehensive financial analysis (revenues, expenditures, and fund balance) of the District by both the Finance and Facilities Committee and a third-party financial analyst. The $2M draw from the District’s reserve funds will drop the balance of that account to approximately 70% of its annual operating expenditures, well above the 40% minimum level set by the Board of Education.

21ST CENTURY LEARNING SPACES

The research on 21st century learning environments highlights the importance of versatile learning spaces, areas that promote collaboration, and instruction in Science/Technology/Engineering/Math (STEM). The Middlefork School capital improvement project will completely redesign the existing library into a “Learning Center.” Books, both fiction and non-fiction, will be housed in the main area and reorganized on shelving to allow for easier access. The installation of a new MakerSpace STEM Lab will give students room to build, explore, and create using integrated project-based techniques, and new student gathering stairs will be added inside the Learning Center to provide an area for student collaboration and presentations. Adjacent to the new Learning Center will be multiple new break-out instructional spaces and resource rooms, which serve as flexible areas for small-groups. With generous financial support from the District 29 PTO, the new Learning Center will also include the addition of some ergonomically designed student furniture.
REMEMBERING MARY OSBORNE

Miss Mary Osborne, Middlefork’s first and longest serving principal, passed away this last winter at her home in St. Charles, Illinois, at the age of 94. She first came to District 29 to teach 1st grade at Sunset Ridge School. But when Middlefork School opened its doors in 1959, she was tapped to be its first principal, and remained so until her retirement in 1988 after 43 years of service. Mary was a driving force in establishing the nurturing, family focused, child-centered ideals that are still woven into the fabric of Middlefork School today. She will forever be an integral part of the District 29 legacy.

INSTALL STATE-OF-THE-ART SECURITY ENHANCEMENTS

An unfortunate reality for schools today is the requirement of a variety of structures and systems to protect staff and students from potential dangers. Using the recommendations we received from nationally recognized security experts while designing Sunset Ridge, the improvements at Middlefork School will significantly enhance the security of the building. New features will include new doors and frames for classrooms, and a complete renovation of the main entrance that incorporates a pass through window, security-filmed glass, and locking mechanisms that restrict access to the entrance. The building will continue to use video surveillance and the RAPTOR Visitor Management System as part of the security protocol, and a new intercom communication system will be added. While we cannot compromise our security by disclosing certain specific details regarding the security enhancements, and no safety plan can provide a 100% guarantee, we believe that Middlefork School will be well prepared in the event of an emergency.

REPLACE ORIGINAL GALVANIZED DOMESTIC WATER PIPES

A significant portion of the project budget is allocated to replace all of the original galvanized domestic water piping in the building. Along with new faucets in every classroom, this will ensure the new water supply is 100% modernized. Prior to 1986, manufacturers used naturally occurring zinc in the galvanizing process, which contained impurities such as lead. Over time, it’s possible for those impurities to contaminate the water supply. While the District has not found evidence of lead in the water supply, it’s important to take action against this possible risk. Additionally, galvanized steel pipes tend to corrode from the inside, and that corrosion gradually reduces the integrity of the pipe and restricts water flow. Finally, galvanized pipes and fittings eventually rust and begin to leak. If any leaks occur behind walls, they can cause considerable damage before they are visible.

AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENTS

The Middlefork renovation project will also include several aesthetic improvements. New LED lighting, flooring, and ceiling tile will be installed in the main hallway, lobby, and Learning Center. Colorful wall paint and furniture, as well as patterned flooring, will also be installed in the new Learning Center. These enhancements will ensure that the entire school maintains a uniform appearance that is inviting to students and staff.
**UPCOMING EVENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APR 30</td>
<td><strong>Special Board Meeting: Seating New Members</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sunset Ridge School</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAY 14</td>
<td><strong>Education Committee Meeting</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sunset Ridge School</td>
<td>5:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAY 14</td>
<td><strong>Board of Education Meeting</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sunset Ridge School</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>JUN 11</td>
<td><strong>Board of Education Meeting</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sunset Ridge School</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>JUL 16</td>
<td><strong>Finance/Facilities Committee Meeting</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sunset Ridge School</td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>JUL 16</td>
<td><strong>Board of Education Meeting</strong>&lt;br&gt;Sunset Ridge School</td>
<td>7:00 p.m.</td>
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**DISTRICT BOARD MEMBERS**

- Adelbert Spaan, President
- Anne Peterson, Vice President
- Amanda Alpert Knight
- Nancy Detlefsen
- Bill Hayes
- Jill Mirkovic
- Scott Subeck

**DISTRICT 29 ADMINISTRATORS**

- Edward Stange, Ph.D., Superintendent<br>stangee@sunsetridge29.org
- Mary Frances Greene, Ed.D.,<br>Associate Superintendent &<br>Middlefork Principal<br>greenem@sunsetridge29.org
- Tom Beerheide, M.S.Ed.,<br>Chief School Business Official<br>beerheide@sunsetridge29.org
- Ivy Sukenik, Ed.D.,<br>Sunset Ridge Principal<br>sukenik@sunsetridge29.org
- Emily Dunham, Ed.S.,<br>Director of Student Services<br>dunhamem@sunsetridge29.org
- Sheri Styczen, MEd,<br>Director of Technology<br>styczens@sunsetridge29.org
- Corey Dreher,<br>Director of Buildings and Grounds<br>dreherc@sunsetridge29.org

Contact board members at:<br>d29_schoolboard@sunsetridge29.org