

Creating a school district

The First 100 Years of the Bettendorf Community School District

written by Mary Louise Speer

From the Superintendent's desk

The Bettendorf Community School District has a long history of academic and activity excellence. There are many reasons for our student success. The district has always had a highly qualified, caring teaching staff that works hard with every student to give them every opportunity for success. The district has a dedicated administrative team that provides excellent leadership, and support staff that care deeply about the district, the community and especially every child they serve. Bettendorf is also extremely fortunate to have a Board of Education that provides great leadership and serves the district and community with a passion for providing the very best education possible for our students.

Another strength of the Bettendorf Community School District is the fact that the district has very supportive, engaged parents and community members. Whether there is a need for the passage of tax levies or a need for volunteers to serve in a variety of capacities, parents and community members have always been there to support the district. Without this support, Bettendorf would not be able to provide the excellent academic and activity programs that have become the expectation of the entire community. Additionally, the district has worked hard over the years to provide programs that serve the multi-faceted needs of our children and families.

As we look to the future there are many challenges facing Bettendorf Community Schools. Adequate funding will always be the main issue nearly every

school district will face. Maintaining a stable enrollment will be a challenge as our population ages. Another challenge will be to replace highly qualified teachers in difficult-to-fill positions as current teachers retire. Reaching 100% proficiency of all students because of the No Child Left Behind legislation presents a nearly impossible task for every district. And, continuing to meet the ever changing needs of our students while providing high quality programs will continue to be a major challenge.

The district has always faced challenges and has always found a way to continue to improve. The future will be the same. As quickly as technology is changing our world it is hard to imagine the changes we will be facing in the next five to ten years. Based on our history, there is little question that Bettendorf Community Schools and the community will continue to work together to maintain the excellence that has become the expectation of everyone within the district.



Marty Lucas
Superintendent



Bettendorf Community School District

Celebrating a century of education

Bettendorf School District is celebrating a century of education this year.

Those “100 years” are filled with teachers doling out homework and writing lesson plans. School board directors hoping they are making judicious decisions for the district’s future. Children sometimes don’t understand why school is important for their future.

The district’s roots go back to the 1850’s and to three small schools that educated the farm and village youths of the town of Gilbert (now known as Bettendorf). The Gilbert School was constructed sometime during the 1870’s.



The Wachter School on the 1800 block of Middle Road sat on land donated by Swiss immigrant Caspar Wachter.

Country kids went to school at the one-room Wachter School on Middle Road. Children living on the other side of town attended the small Stokes school somewhere between 25-27th streets on the hill.

In the beginning

At the turn of the 20th century, the city of Bettendorf was a farming community with a small downtown area. Leaders dreamed of bringing new development to the area and arranged for the sale of the former Elias Gilbert farm (where the Isle

of Capri now exists on Bettendorf’s riverfront) to brothers William and Joseph Bettendorf.

The brothers constructed the Bettendorf Axle Company factory on that site and produced cast-steel Bettendorf truck frames for the railroad industry.

In 1903, the town was renamed in honor of William and Joseph Bettendorf. Civic leaders pondered the idea of establishing their own school system. At that time, school children attended the two-room Bettendorf School located to the west of the Alter Company building on State Street.

Bettendorf Independent School District: The first two decades

The Bettendorf Community School District was officially founded in 1907 when parents and civic leaders parted ways with the Davenport Township School Board. The result was the Bettendorf Independent School District and the district’s school board held their first meeting in May 1907.



Miss Flora Seeman and her students gathered in front of Stokes School in 1907. The school closed that spring and Miss Seeman went to teach at the Wachter School.

The changes meant closing the one-room Strokes School in March 1907. The two room Bettendorf School house was located in the 2100 block of State Street.

Plans for district's first school building

The newly formed school board of the Bettendorf Independent School District purchased land from Bettendorf Axle Company for a new school. The site was located at Mississippi Boulevard and 16th Street.

Washington School (originally known as Bettendorf School) opened on Monday, Sept. 27, 1909.

Nearly 100 children excitedly reported for classes in the newly finished brick school building. "Three of the four large, well-lighted rooms are being used and soon the growth of the town will call for the fourth one," predicted the Davenport Democrat and Leader newspaper.

The numbers of students kept growing and voters approved a bond issue for an addition

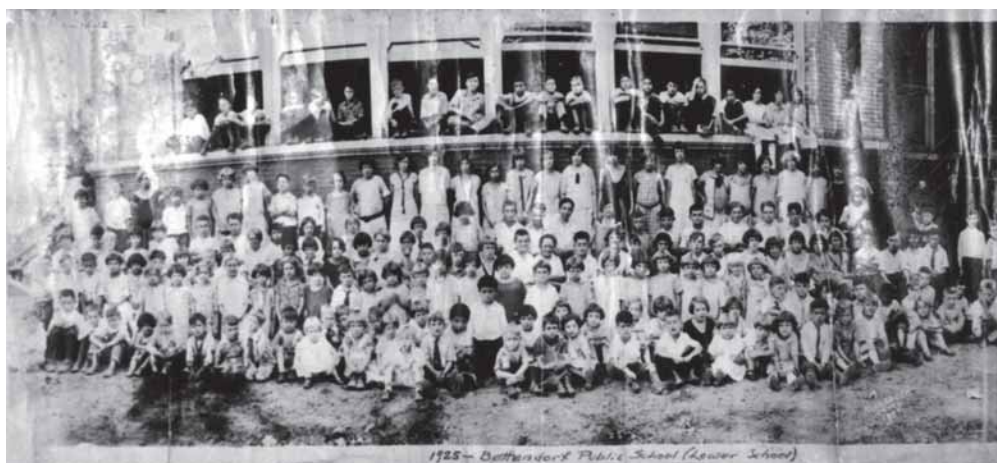
onto Washington in 1912. The school district operated on a budget of \$3,600 that year and that sum increased to \$5,800 in 1913.

Second school needed for youngsters on the hill

In 1917 the Bettendorf Board of Education bought four lots of land for \$1,000. The property was located at the corner of Central Avenue and 27th streets.

The Sable Lumber Company sponsored an essay contest to solicit names for the school.

Estella LaGrange submitted the winning name of "Bellevue School" and won a big furnished dollhouse.



Above, the upper school students of Bettendorf School. Below, the lower school students of Bettendorf School in 1925. The school later became home to the Family Museum of Arts and Science. After its demolition in 1997, the land was used for new housing in an established neighborhood.

1920's and improving school life

Bettendorf was growing and so were the numbers of students who attended Washington and Bellevue schools. Staff worked hard to educate children for their futures within the grade 1-8 school system.

But national trends showed that younger children benefited from attending kindergarten programs. Having the space available was a necessary component. A four room addition was completed at Washington School during the 1922-23 school year. Records show Paula Koepke was the first kindergarten teacher in the district.

The schools were updated to reflect more modern standards. For the first time teachers could switch on electric lights, a huge improvement over the former smoky kerosene lamps. The installation of an indoor restroom and drinking fountain helped improve sanitation and student health.

Most Bettendorf children considered their education completed after graduating from

the eighth grade during the 1800's and early 1900's.

When students took the initiative to attend high school, usually they did so because a caring teacher encouraged them to keep going. Often the realities of farm life meant youngsters were needed at home to help with keeping up with the heavy workload.

Schools grow as city grows

By 1924, the district had expanded both schools to eight room buildings, according to a special "New Home Edition" of the Democrat newspaper. The town had grown dramatically from 973 inhabitants in 1910 to a city of 3,000 people.

1930's and the Great Depression

During the economically challenged 1930's many Bettendorf families gritted their teeth and hoped better days ahead lay ahead.

The Bettendorf Company closed in late 1930, leaving hundreds of workers scrambling for whatever jobs they could find. Some former workers found employment in the onion fields in eastern Bettendorf and Pleasant Valley.

Relief societies set up school lunch programs in the three Bettendorf schools, Washington, Lincoln and Lourdes Catholic.

New names for schools

The Bettendorf school board, including Mayor Hansen, approved a name change for Bettendorf's two schools in 1932.

"Whereas the names of Washington and Lincoln are inseparably associated in the



Lincoln School 8th grade graduates, 1941.

minds of loyal American citizens, now therefore be it resolved by the directors of the Independent School District of Bettendorf, Iowa, that the name of the school formerly known as 'The Bettendorf School,' be changed to Washington School and the Bellevue School is hereby changed to Lincoln School."

Lincoln and World War II news

Civic minded volunteers learned the ins and outs of serving as air raid wardens during Tuesday night classes at Washington School.

A new gym, stage and showers were added onto Lincoln School in 1947-48.

Another president comes to Bettendorf

In 1949, school district officials realized they needed to build a new school in order to keep up with growing numbers of youngsters.

Construction crews built the new Thomas Jefferson School at 610 Holmes Street in four months. Educators expected to have about 120 children attending classes.

Jefferson's opening struck a bright note in many children's school experience. An Aug. 1949 Democrat newspaper article described the bright pastel shades, animal pictures and green boards found in each classroom. The dress codes of the time stipulated that girls had to wear dresses.



This August, 1949 newspaper article, above, was part of a Jefferson Elementary history project by the 1987-88 first and third graders.

Below, Principal Bonnie Fisher shows off a new Iowa flag in the mid 1980's.



Growth, growth and more growth

The Aug. 24, 1950 headlines in the Davenport Democrat read “Expect Student Enrollment in Bettendorf to be 900. Crowded conditions exist in two schools.”

The numbers of students was expected to shatter all previous records in the city. All of the classrooms at Jefferson, Lincoln and Washington would be used during the 1950-51 school year. The district furnished bus tickets for students who planned to attend Sudlow School or Davenport High School.

Bettendorf residents and school officials finally decided it was time that Bettendorf had its own high school instead of sending students to Davenport or LeClaire. Voters approved a bond issue to construct a high school at 729 – 21st Street and that building educated students in grades 7-12.

Superintendent Walter Eriksen coordinated the extensive work of creating a high school from scratch. The work involved hiring 23 faculty members, ordering equipment and furnishings, and keeping the community involved and informed.

Student committees began working on naming a school mascot, school colors, song, newspaper and establishing social functions in the spring of 1951. This helped create more excitement in teenagers who hated the thought of having to leave Sudlow and Davenport High School.

In the school’s earliest years, there were no girls’ sports, but girls could become cheerleaders. Gym classes were held in a garage near the school during the first year.

The \$750,000 high school opened in 1951 between 21st and 23rd and south of Central Avenue. Students in seventh and eighth grades transferred from Washington and Lincoln schools to the high school complex. The high school curriculum included a course in agriculture.



In 1951, Robert E. Owen was the first principal of Bettendorf Senior High School. The building later became the home to the Mississippi Bend AEA offices.



The facility at 800 23rd Street was home to junior high students in the early 1960s. William Price was the first principal. In 1973, it was renamed Neil Armstrong School and originally used for only fifth and sixth grade students.

Jackson School opened at 3311 Central Avenue during the second semester of the 1952-53 school year. Children in grades K-3 attended school there during the first year. In coming years, the building would house older students depending on need levels.

Voters approved another bond issue to expand Thomas Jefferson School with new additions at the east and west ends of the building.



Quiet please, we're on the air!

Jackson youngsters dabbled in the world of broadcasting. Teacher Mary Bowlin's combined second and third grade class wrote and recorded a 30-minute radio program in 1963. Students wrote a commercial and news, sports and weather reports. Broadcasters were selected by class vote on the basis of voice quality and originality of their compositions.

"This is station WXYZ of the Jackson broadcasting system. The Blue Bees defeated the Red Bees in a stinging game last night. A flood washed out the ants and a tornado forced birds north for the winter."

The staff included news broadcaster Jim Allen, sports by Mark Sadel and weather by Conrad Flick. Bill Connors was the announcer. Gail Whisler won the top commercial honors with a singing testimonial about "Tubers" potato chips.



Jackson Elementary opened in 1952. It later became the home to the district's administrative offices and was renamed after former Superintendent Ray Stensvad in 1986. The building was demolished in 2006 to make way for the new Neil Armstrong Elementary School that opened in August 2007.

Construction work not completed yet

Work began on the new Mark Twain school at 1620 Lincoln Road. The \$175,000 edifice was expected to be open for classes by Oct. 6, 1956.

Construction of a fifth elementary building in the district, was necessary because of an influx of new pupils.

The District expected to have about 1,300 students enrolled by the fall of 1956, for an increase of 150 children over the previous year. The school district employed 84 people including teachers and administrative staff and operated on a budget of \$634,000.

On Mark Twain's opening day, the building was a single story facility with seven rooms. The official first year enrollment was 206 children.



Mark Twain opened in the fall of 1956 with 206 students in attendance. Loretta Eller became principal during the 1958-59 school year.

Do children really need a library at school?

Mark Twain School was the first elementary school in the district to have a central library. Rosalind Meyer, the high school's librarian, used her expertise to help the elementary school staff's vision come true.

"With the aid of two high school girls, no money, no equipment, no budget, almost no encouragement (except for) the okay of the superintendent, and the whip-cracking of the principal, the existing volumes were shaped into a central library that functioned," Meyer said.

Yes, students have a say at school

Lincoln School initiated a student council with representatives from grades 1-6 during the 1958-59 school year. After elections were held, Carol Ballantyne was flabbergasted to learn she'd been chosen as president. "How did I do it? I didn't think they would elect me." She hugged her sister Anne, who was an alternate. "She's my good luck charm."

At the second meeting in January 1959, "six year olds pensively weighed suggestions to beautify the corridors and listened intently as an upper classman earnestly proposed methods to improve playground behavior." The council was the first implemented in a Bettendorf elementary building.

Growing Grant Wood

Grant Wood Elementary School opened in 1960 with seven classrooms, locker rooms for boys and girls, an office suite and bathrooms. The school was named in honor of Iowa artist Grant Wood who is best known for his oil painting "American Gothic."



Bus transportation at Grant Wood Elementary in the early 1960s.

On a good note: Bernie Vogel

Bernie Vogel began his career with Bettendorf School District as director of vocal music for the Bettendorf junior and senior high schools in 1956.

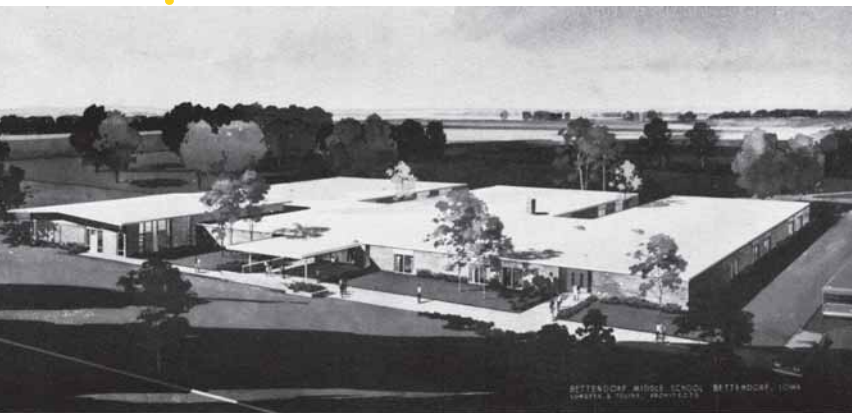
"Selby Ballantyne, the superintendent who hired me, was a great salesman and popular community figure," he said. "Selby promoted Bettendorf as the fastest growing, most exciting city in Iowa."

When Vogel and his wife, Mary Frances, moved to the city there was essentially no development north of Duck Creek, he said. When the school officials began building Bettendorf Middle School on Middle Road, people wondered why they would locate the school way out there, north of the city.

New Middle School ahead

The headlines in the Jan. 31, 1963 Bettendorf News read “Middle School in Home Stretch.” The new \$467,863 middle school on 23rd Street opened on Feb. 18 to approximately 700 students in grades 6, 7 and 8. The move gave high school students more space in their facility by 21st and Central Avenue.

Students had mixed reactions to occupying a building with other grade levels. “I don’t mind the sixth graders except when they run down the halls. They about knock us over,” eighth grader Allen Smith said.



BETTENDORF MIDDLE SCHOOL
BETTENDORF COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
BETTENDORF, IOWA

This drawing of the new Bettendorf Middle School, designed by Lundeen & Toline Architects, was part of a flyer describing the project to the community. Leo Gerst was the principal at the new building that was funded by a bond issue in 1962.

Expansion Continues

A second addition with eight classrooms and a kindergarten room was added onto Grant Wood Elementary School in 1964.

Construction got underway on the new Herbert Hoover Elementary School. The new school, equipped with 21 classrooms, administrative offices and a multi-purpose room, was intended to ease some of the population strain on the district’s other elementary buildings.

But the building schedule fell behind and Grant Wood prepared for double duty as Aug. 29, the opening date for the 1966-67 school year, approached. The school educated about 1,125 students in two shifts for the first few months of the school years. Grant Wood youngsters attended morning classes from 8 a.m. to 12 noon and Hoover students from 12:30-4:30 p.m.

Muddling through Hoover-style

Herbert Hoover Elementary School was scheduled to open in Oct. 1966.

However, school officials discovered that finding a clear pathway to education is never simple. A corn field stood between Herbert Hoover and the Greenbrier addition on the west. Work crews could not proceed with street construction before the corn was picked. The farmer intended to sell the property to the Harvey Construction Co. as part of the new subdivision but that deal got mired down in misunderstandings.

Eventually the controversy boiled over into a sea of mud on Dec. 8. Students and their mothers struggled through boot high mud along the 3100 block of Windsor Drive to

News of the muddy conditions at Bettendorf's newest school, Hoover Elementary, was an international news event. The school opened in October, 1966; the muddy mess was eliminated in 1967.



reach school. Dennis Kohl, 6, tried to take a short cut and got bogged down in the field west of school. He had to be rescued by Trevis Twitty of Bettendorf.

The images were captured by photographer Phil Hutchison and replayed in newspapers all over the world, including The London, England's Daily Telegraph.

The walking woes continued to plague school families into the next school year.

Lincoln School was remodeled and a library added in 1968.

Bettendorf Middle School's new annex and bubble top gym were expected to be put into use during the 1969-70 school year. The inflatable was about 112 feet by 148 feet. Later, educators would eulogize the bubble as staying hot in the summer and cold in the winter.



Hoover students take time to stretch during class.

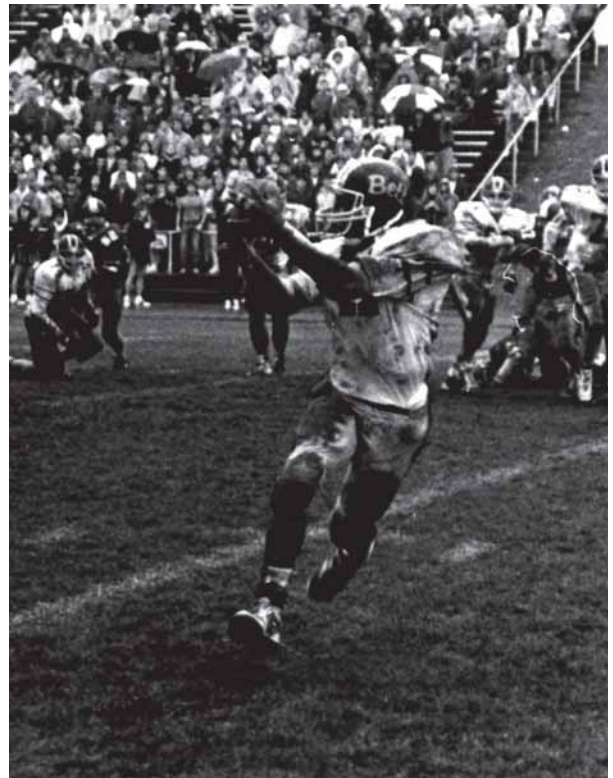
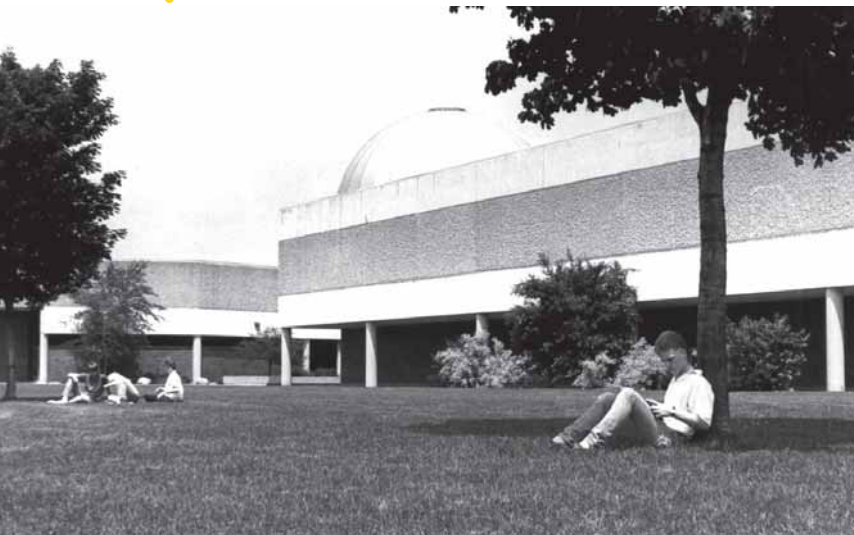


"The Bettendorf Bubble breathed a last beleaguered breath when Jim Kennedy unplugged the air supply," according to the June 28, 1978 Bettendorf News. Kennedy purchased the bubble and planned to use it for something, somewhere, according to photographer Ron Burbridge.

Yes, we need a new school!

Bettendorf's population grew to 21,860 in 1970. About 1,400 students and their instructors were squashed into a facility that would accommodate about half that number. Superintendent Ray Stensvad, along with district educators, quickly realized there was a need for a new high school to properly educate the students for the future. The existing building by 21st and Central Avenue was "a handicap to all students and a crisis to the community," Stensvad said.

District officials celebrated the successful passing of a \$5.4 million bond issue for a new high school building at 3333 18th Street.



Bubble trouble

A March 19, 1971 windstorm and power failure caused the middle school's bubble gym structure to collapse. The bubble was sent to New York for repairs and returned on June 15. During the interim, P.E. classes were held to the Bettendorf Community Center.

Part of the middle's school's bubble burned on May 31, 1974 and caused about \$10,000 in damage. The incident was later determined to be an accident caused by children playing with fire.

Terriers celebrated the opening of a permanent gym structure on May 25, 1978 with an open house and dedication. The new facility cost more than a million dollars and it gave the P.E./Wellness program 22,000 square feet of playing space and 13,000 square feet for locker rooms, halls, office and storage space.

Farewells to Washington School

Washington School closed in June 1973. "A part of me will go with that school because I spent so many happy years there," Florence Carroll told a reporter. "I see it go with deep regret." Carroll retired in 1963, after beginning her teaching career at Washington in 1922. She taught primary grades until accepting the role of principal in 1935. She remained head of the school until 1956-57 school year and then returned to teaching until her retirement in 1963.

District officials hoped to find a developer to take over the building and perhaps rehabilitate it for offices. It later became the first home of the Family Museum of Arts and Science.

Remembering Miss Carroll

In every school district, there are many people who give of themselves quietly, and unheralded for the most part. Sometimes their service lasts for years. In other cases, a teacher may only stay for a few years but still make an impact for the better on their students.

Miss Florence Carroll (1892 - 1980) left a high water mark for the better on Bettendorf school children. During her 48 years of teaching and being a principal, she instructed more than 2,000 youngsters at Washington and Jefferson schools.

"There's no finer place to teach than in Bettendorf. The people are wonderful or I would not have stayed here 48 years," she said in an interview with the Bettendorf News.



Roy Ballinger, a former PE instructor, brought a helicopter to Mark Twain's playground during the 1973-74 school year. The school's science department used the occasion to study first hand how helicopters fly.

School named for astronaut Neil Armstrong

The former junior high/middle school building on 23rd Street was remodeled and opened in the fall of 1973 as a school for fourth and fifth graders. The name Neil Armstrong was chosen by the first class entering the building.

New school, open philosophy

The new Bettendorf High School was constructed at a cost of about \$8 million and opened for classes in the fall of 1973.

The building's open space construction reflected the latest educational trends. The open spaces had few permanent walls and the idea was to fulfill educational goals in a setting other than the traditional classroom structure. The master design allowed for future expansion.

An extensive special education program was added in 1977 with easy access for physically handicapped students at the high school.

The high school's Donald A. Schaefer Planetarium offered the first annual "Christmas Star" program in 1974. The planetarium was equipped with a Spitz Model 512 System star projector and computer automation controls and helped open up the world of astronomy to students and the greater community.

Other features included a spacious library, a state-of-the-art careers and vocations area, science labs, physical education facilities, an Olympic size indoor pool, acoustically treated music rooms, and a large auditorium.



The careers and vocations division, above, provided varied learning experiences in woodworking, metals, and welding. Left, Mr. Don Schaefer works with high school science students. Mr. Schaefer was later honored by having a scholarship fund established in his and his wife's names.

1980's – The Closing of Lincoln School

Lincoln School closed in 1980 and the 135 students transferred to Neil Armstrong Elementary School or went onto Middle School. Keeping the school open was not a viable option because of the small numbers of children attending classes at the building.

10th anniversary celebration

The Neil Armstrong Elementary School community celebrated the school's 10th anniversary in 1984 with a display of moon rocks supplied by NASA, letters from astronauts Neil Armstrong and Dale Gardner, and a showing of "The Eagle has Landed," movie.

"Congratulations. You may have noticed changes that have occurred over these ten years," wrote Neil Armstrong from his Lebanon, Ohio, home.



Kathy Fry continues to teach kindergarten in the new Neil Armstrong building in 2007.

"Our world is in a constant state of change, and it is likely the most interesting of activities and careers that will be available to you as adults do not exist today. It is important that your education prepare you for a changing world. I wish I had your future," he said.

Good-bye Jackson and hello Bettendorf Foundation

Jackson students, 137 strong, and their teachers gathered in front of the building at 3311 Central Avenue for a final photograph in May, 1985. The school closed a month later and the big paper butterflies hanging in the corridor were taken down and the recess bell pealed its last. The district converted the school into an administration center.

The Bettendorf Community Schools Foundation formed in 1985 with a mission of enhancing the education of students, fostering innovation and excellence in the schools and providing broader educational opportunities to the students, staff, faculty and residents of Bettendorf.

Sixth elementary opens

The student population kept growing and spreading over a wider area and district officials realized it was time to build a sixth elementary school at the north end of Bettendorf.

The district personnel used the "school-house fund," now known as the physical plant and equipment levy (PPEL), to pay for construction of Paul Norton Elementary School in 1985. The school became a full three-section (meaning three classes per grade) in 1991.

Principal Jack Bregman appreciated having the opportunity to open the district's newest elementary school during the 1985-86 school year. His experience with the district began in 1958 when he was hired as the principal of Lincoln and Jackson Schools. Bregman and his staff, many who had taught at Jackson, helped plan amenities for the new "North" end school. "We had quite a bit of input before the building was finished. I remembered thinking we wanted to have a telephone in every classroom and we got that done," he said. Students help finalize the name selection of Paul Norton, a prominent local artist. Mrs. Norton graciously donated artworks for the school named in her husband's honor.



Students at Paul Norton School, which opened in 1985, gained computer experience in the new computer lab.

1997, a time of Changing times and needs

In Feb. 1997 voters approved the "Changing Times, Changing Needs" \$9.7 million bond referendum to upgrade district schools. The final vote was 3,184 or 87.7 percent supporting the referendum. About 447 people voted "no."



Superintendent John Finnessy

"The community of Bettendorf has given themselves and their children a great gift," Superintendent John Finnessy said during an interview with the Bettendorf News.

Farewell to famous Bettendorf sites

The former Lincoln School was demolished in July 1997 and the land reconfigured for a small neighborhood park. During the demo-



Washington School was torn down with a 9050B Case Track backhoe. Area residents took home bricks as mementos of the neighborhood school.

lition, a copper time capsule was found in the school's cornerstone with copies of the Daily Times, Davenport Democrat and Der Demokrat newspapers from 1917.

Later that summer, the old Washington School was torn down. Area residents visited the site and carried away bricks as souvenirs.

Modified year begins

In August 1997, Neil Armstrong School began a modified year pilot program to help increase learning opportunities for its students.

Preparations for switching to a new calendar began during the 1994-95 school year. The biggest challenge was finding a way to pay for a chiller system to make it possible to educate students during the summer months.



Dave Lewis served as principal at Neil Armstrong, leading the change to the modified calendar. Lewis climbed to the roof in his pajamas after students met a reading goal.

Grants from the Scott County Regional Authority and Riverboat Development Authority helped the district pay for installing an air conditioning system.

Having a chiller system in place was the final component needed to begin a modified year

schedule at the school. District officials believed having shorter breaks would help improve students' ability to retain what they learned in school.

Breaking news, new rooms a'coming

The middle school broke ground for a new science and music wing on Sept. 11, 1997, according to an article in the Nov. 1997 Terrier Times. "Many of the rooms that aren't being built will look new because they will be remodeled. Teachers and principals alike are looking forward to starting the next school year with brand new rooms and spaces," wrote student reporter Daniel Werner. Ten year later, in 2007, Middle School will see another face lift of remodeled "pods" that were added in the 1970's.



Middle School students prepared for the 1992 winter holidays with the annual Student Council Food Drive. Students brought in 9,504 items for the Bettendorf food pantry, helping local families with food baskets, toys and clothing.

Equipping schools for 21st century

In 1998, the Edison Center at 438 - 16th Street, opened. Project READY is a work-study program for high school students, shared between Bettendorf, Pleasant Valley, and North Scott school districts.

Modernization of Bettendorf's older elementary buildings began during the summer of 1998. The district's priorities included new media centers, remodeling staff working areas, and upgrading mechanical systems, including air conditioning in all the buildings. Construction crews added permanent walls in the language arts area of the high school. A major source of funding for the projects was from the PPEL fund.

And so it ends

An era came to an end in 2000 when co-Principal Regina McGill announced her retirement after 34 years at Bettendorf Middle School. In 1995, Superintendent John Finnessy endorsed the concept of having McGill and Rick Herrig share principal duties. She brought knowledge of the

district and her administrative experience to the partnership and Herrig knew about budgets and running a school. The experience worked well for them but sharing principal's duties is not for everyone. "It has to be two people that mesh," McGill said.

McGill later returned to the district to master mind a \$3 million physical education grant that included expanding the PE time for students and adding a fitness center at Middle School.

Dr. Finnessy died Saturday, July 15, 2000, after a long fight with cancer. Finnessy served as superintendent of the district from 195-2000, having a long range vision for the district as it entered the 21st century. The Bettendorf Community Schools Foundation established the John Finnessy Innovation in Education Award in his honor. This award is given annually to those people whose Foundation grant application most readily typifies the type of innovation that was championed by Dr. Finnessy and is at the core of the Foundation mission according to a press release from the Foundation.

In the year 2001

The district implemented all-day kindergarten in all six elementary buildings in 2001.



Regina McGill, above, served 34 years at Bettendorf Middle School.



The Newest Gem in the District

In 2007 Neil Armstrong Elementary School moved to a new building on the site of the former Ray Stensvad Administration Center & Jackson Elementary School.



Third grade students at Neil Armstrong helped build boxes for packing. The school moved to its new building over the summer.

“One of our goals was to make a child-centered 21st century learning facility center to meet not only the needs of the Neil Armstrong students, but also helps other needs in the District,” said Kevin

Hatfield, principal. “The new school will be able to help with after-school programs and other District activities. The building itself has a lot of unique features including the innovative approach of a small, thematic work room in between grade-level classrooms. The school also has interactive white boards in the classrooms and state-of-the-art technology.”

The crowing feature is the rotunda center piece of a tile project called “Old to New - The City of Bettendorf Mural Project.” Artist Sally Gierke worked with students, teachers, parents and people from the community in designing 420 4- by 6-inch tiles for the mural.

The community got their first look at the \$8.7 million project July 29, 2007 during a formal dedication and open house. Principal Kevin Hatfield and his staff welcomed children to the building for the first day of classes (modified year schedule) on Aug. 2, 2007.



Sally Gierke engineered a community art project for the foyer of the new school, helping to give it a true community feeling.

Letters from students of 2006-07

Years from now people may wonder what the lives of ordinary students were like in the early 21st century. The following letters were written by students during the 2006-2007 school year to save a piece of today for tomorrow's students.

*A day at Armstrong School
on 23rd Street, Bettendorf*
By Ashley Hertter

Thursdays are always great for me!

A normal Thursday at Armstrong in 2007 is very fun! We go inside and put away our things. go into our room. and put our homework on our desks so Ms. (Donna) Johnson can check it.

Then we go to specials (classes) at 8:35 a.m. First, we go to art. I like art because you get to express your feelings on paper. In art right now we are doing freedom Paper Quilts about the Underground Railroad. Also this year, we've been working on a clay mural that will be there for over 75 years.

After art we go to gym. I like gym but sometimes when we have to jog, it hurts my legs a lot! In gym, we play matt ball. I love that game but I don't like all of the yelling and fighting. We also play continuous dodge ball that means everyone for himself/herself.

Then we go up stairs to our room and we start our work for the day. First we have reading. I absolutely love the book I'm reading and it is called "The Dead Man in Indian Creek." After reading we have a bathroom break. Usually if we are quiet in the hall we get five minutes of social time in the room. Then at 10:30-11:20 a.m., we work in our language book called "Word Wisdom."

After Language, we have science where we are learning about the respiratory system. I think the most fascinating thing about the respiratory system is the trachea because yesterday we saw a movie about it. They showed what a trachea looks like in a live human body. Right after science we go down to the cafeteria to have lunch and after ward we go to recess.

By 1 p.m., we go to the room and Ms. Johnson reads out loud to us and at 1:05 p.m. we go to Social Studies. I am doing research on the state of Nebraska. At 1:50 p.m., we go back to 4A and have math. Right now in math we are learning about estimation. It is pretty fun!

At 2:50 p.m. we write in our assignment books then we get the papers that need to go home. After that we put up our chairs and go get our things from our lockers. Then we go to our room and line up. When the bells ring we walk out the doors of the school.

*A Day in the Life of a Seventh Grader
at Bettendorf Middle School*
By Anna Fry (with help from Kimberly Ruth)

7:40 AM: "Come on Anna, we're going to be late!" my mom yells up the stairs.

"Coming!" I reply as I grab my backpack and run downstairs. My mom hands me my cereal bar as we climb into the car on our way to school.

I look out the window at the gray sky. *It's* Just another day of school. I'm in seventh grade now, and we seventh graders feel much more powerful than the little sixth graders. I hear my mom mumble something about the traffic, as I take the last bite of my Honey Bunches of Oats cereal bar. Finally, my mom dumps me off on the corner and I start walking toward the front of the building.

7:50 AM: As I open my locker my friends congregate nearby as we do every morning. I hear things like, "I love your hair," and "What did you do over the weekend?" the usual. The first bell rings, and as quick as they came, the girls were gone, off to TA. My friend Kim and I head to class, and I drop books or paper every step we take. Just another sign this is going to be a great day.

7:56 AM: Mrs. Sawyer is the first teacher I see every day and she always puts me in a good mood with her cheerful greeting of, "Good morning my sunshines!"

The fifteen minutes of TA is a great time for students to bond and at the Terrier Times, (the

newspaper) we really become a family. Sometimes it can get pretty hectic when deadlines are near, but we always manage to pull together to finish the paper. With Mrs. Sawyer as an adviser, how can we not? She not only guides us to be better journalists, but better people.

8:15 AM: "Gutentaag!" is the next greeting I hear from my German teacher, Mrs. Sassman. In seventh grade, we are lucky to have three languages: French, German and Spanish. I am currently taking German, and it is ausgezeichnet (awesome)!

9:01 AM: My next stop is to Mr. Winter's classroom, who, like his name always gives us a blizzard of information at 90 miles an hour! Mr. Winter teaches us about history, which is important, but more importantly he teaches us about life and the skills we'll need to succeed.

9:47 AM: As I am leaving Social Studies, a thought hits me. I left my gym clothes on the kitchen table! Oh well, I think to myself, I will just borrow a white shirt and black shorts from my friendly P.E. teacher, Mrs. Patterson. Today I am excited because we are the first ones to use the new video game bikes, which is part of the school's new exercise room. Other activities we do in P.E. are rock climbing, archery, floor hockey, tennis, and games such as pickle ball, dodge ball, mat ball, and other activities that end with the word ball.

10:33 AM: After Kim and I quickly change, we head down to Pre-Algebra. In seventh grade the kids are divided into three classes, Algebra, Pre-Algebra, and regular math. That way kids can be challenged at their own ability level. Math is one of my favorite classes because of my classmates who make learning math fun. I also like my teacher, Mrs. Senneff, who makes the meticulous subject of math enjoyable and easy to learn.

11:19 AM: I slowly walk to my science class dilly-dallying as long as I can. Science is not my favorite class and I'm not usually a procrastinator, but with science I somehow find a way. The labs are fun and exciting, but we do them seldom in seventh grade. So far our class learned about the

circulatory system, cells, and the heart. Very fascinating subject to some, but not me.

12:01 PM: Finally, after a very uneventful morning, our freedom has arrived. Lunch. You can practically see kids' shoulders rise, like the weight of school, well the thinking part of it, has been lifted from them. But not for long. We pick a line; regular lunch today. The pizza line can become pretty long, but on chicken nugget day, the regular lunch line goes back past the office. After making our way through the maze of people we get our napkins and sit down. Our table is right by the napkin and plastic utensil stand. We sit there everyday with the same people and it never changes. A lot of my friends sit at other tables, but I couldn't sit with them because either you commit and sit there everyday, or not at all. Lunch can be a hard time for some people if they don't fit in as well as some. For new kids it can also be tough to find someone to sit with. But most students try to be kind, and invite kids to sit with them if they don't have a table. Or at least that's what I'd like to believe.

12:31 PM: I'm relieved to be heading to language arts, a class I enjoy because of the activities we do. Sometimes we read out of magazines, or a book that studies the English language, and sometimes we write papers about interesting topics. Mrs. Inch also let's us have fun, as we learn as much as we can.

1:17 PM: We make our way down past the library to the little room in the back that frequently goes unnoticed. The SAIL room. Mrs. Marcek smiles at us and says, "Have a seat and write the definition for debacle." Each week we have a word that we define and write a sentence to expand our vocabulary. We do numerous projects studying topics that we get to choose. In SAIL we read books separately and discuss them together. This class has a very comfortable environment where we can share our feelings and know our ideas will be accepted. Most days we regrettably leave after playing a close match of quiz book. For about 5 minutes before class ends, Mrs. Marcek asks questions from a book to two teams and the team that answers first receives a point. It's super fun, and we even have a theme song we listen to before we play!

2:03 PM: “Do re mi fa so la ti do,” I hear coming from the room down the hall. That can only mean one thing. Chorus. We file into the large room, Kim gets the folder, and we sit down. Mrs. Walters wants us to become the best singers we can be, but sometimes it’s not as easy as it looks. Many kids talk when we are supposed to be singing, and it makes it harder to concentrate. Other kids try as hard as they can to make sound come out, but some how it is blocked by their closed mouths. Mrs. Walter’s should get credit for having to deal with those kids. Through thick and thin, we always find a way to hold our act together during concerts, and we end up sounding good.

2:45 PM: When the bell rings, signaling the end of the day, kids are already practically out the door. Today was yet another day of my 13 years of schooling I will receive in Bettendorf. I’m proud to be part of such a wonderful school like BMS and so far it has been a great experience. I open my locker and gather my books and homework and shove them into my backpack. Kim and I talk happily with no worries as we walk out of the building. The school day is finally over! Until tomorrow.

A high school student’s letter

By Emily Kenneke, a junior at Bettendorf High School

By the end of eighth grade, high school seems daunting. Some think, Oh great, another four years of school. Being a somewhat normal teenager, I felt the same way.

Senioritis hit early, leaving its mark on me during freshman year. I couldn’t wait to be done with school and move on with my life, but then I found Drama Club. During the past four years, I’ve been involved in the tech aspect of the three plays that Bettendorf High School presents each year, and my opinion of school has changed dramatically. The past three years have flown past!

In Drama Club I’ve found family, which maybe is the best way to describe the club. Family. There is no one there that I can’t go to talk to or just call and bounce off a crazy new plan or idea. It has truly had a major impact on my life.

Reading this, you might think it’s a ploy to get all high school students to join drama. Well, maybe it is, but school isn’t just about the activities we participate in, its about the friendships we make. Yes the classes are important, too. Although challenging, some of the classes that I’ve enjoyed most have been the ones where I was allowed to voice my opinion about some topic that had no relevance to what was being studied.

For example, in pretty much any history class, current events are a major grade. Teachers encourage us to get involved and learn something outside the safety of the school walls. Eventually, all the students will be in charge of changing the world in some way, big or small. This perhaps scares some, but it’s always been one of the things I’ve liked most about school.

The fact is that we are for the most part on our own during the day. No one is responsible for getting us to class on time or getting homework done, no one but us. I think it teaches a great sense of responsibility to students and gets them ready for the “real world” which awaits us all after high school.

In the daily life of high school students there are classes of course, and lunch, and usually some extracurricular activity as well as a load of homework lovingly dished out by their teachers.

But, there is also the social aspect of school that sometimes is overridden by statistics and test scores in a parent’s search for the best education for their child. Most of the time a teenager’s favorite part of the day is talking with friends, especially when they only see them before or after school. It’s a way to help each other with homework or to help relieve the stresses when some heavy class loads are bearing down.

All in all, the best part of high school is freedom of choice and the ability to get involved. I think that’s the best advice I’ve ever taken and given. “To get out there and get involved,” Emily Kenneke said.

A parent's view point.

Bettendorf High School's "classrooms without walls" concept has been replaced with wall systems that block out sounds from adjoining rooms.

Some of the concerns in 2007 are having cell phones ringing and text message going on during class time. At the beginning of the 2006-07 school year, administrators implemented a new rule where these communication portages are required to be kept in lockers during the school day. The rule is mostly adhere to but teens still get into trouble once in awhile, according to an unnamed source.

Security is a huge concern in light of school shootings in a few well-publicized cases. Students are also required to wear their student I.D. card while at school and visitors must sign in at the main office and receive a visitor's badge to wear during their time in the building.

The parking lot off Maplecrest is an interesting place to be at 8 a.m. in the morning. Students hurry in looking for places to park their cars as parents drop off younger students along the sidewalk next to the building.

A few non-readers drop off students in the fenced area marked for busses only. Drivers have to keep a sharp eye out for panicked student drivers' trying to find a parking stall before the bell rings for the first class.

The bottom line is for all students, our children and those of our neighbors, to receive the best possible education. Certainly as parents and guardians, we have a say in what happens through our vote and in keeping up to date on what is happening in the district.

I can only believe that the parents of 2107 will feel the same way.

Planted in the schools

Bettendorf students are often taught the gift of giving and honoring those who have given their own lives.

Since former Grant Wood teacher Karla Kunzman loved yellow tulips, second grade students at the school packaged tulip bulbs to sell at a special event at the the Niabi Zoo to benefit Karla's young daughters.



Kunzman, a 29 year-old first grade teacher at Grant Wood, suddenly died of a congenital heart defect on July 2, 2006.

In October 2001 Herbert Hoover Elementary dedicated the school's courtyard garden to the memory of Nicole Wooldridge, a Hoover student who passed in May 2001 after battling cancer. Nicole attended Hoover from kindergarten through 4th grade. Nicole's mother, Lisa, also taught at Hoover Elementary School.



Bettendorf School District facilities through the century

Bettendorf School (1907-1927)
Washington School (1927- 1973)
511 16th St.

Bellevue School (1917-1923)
Lincoln School (1923-1980)
951 27th St.

High School (1951-1975)
729 21st St.

High School (1975-present)
3333 18th St.

Jackson School (1952-1985)
Ray Stensvad Administration Center (1986 -2006)
Neil Armstrong Elementary (2007-present)
3311 Central Ave.

Junior High (1954-1961)
High School (1961)
Neil Armstrong (1973 -2007)
800 23rd St.

Middle School (1961-present)
2030 Middle Road

Thomas Jefferson (1950-present)
610 Holmes St.

Mark Twain (1956-present)
1620 Lincoln Road

Grant Wood (1960-present)
1423 Hillside Drive

Herbert Hoover (1966-present)
3223 S Hampton Drive

Paul Norton (1985-present)
4485 Greenbrier Drive

Thomas Edison Center (1998-present)
438 16th Street