

Background on East Metro Integration District

The East Metro Integration District (EMID) is a collaborative partnership between the St Paul School District, and nine suburban districts that are contiguous with St Paul. EMID includes two schools, Harambee (K-5) in Maplewood, and Crosswinds (6-10) in Woodbury.

The mission and purpose of the schools is to provide an environment, curriculum and programs that offer an alternative for kids and families along several lines.

1. A day-to-day culture of integration and diversity.
The student bodies at the schools are made up of roughly half from St Paul and half from the surrounding suburbs. Both schools have high levels of cultural diversity, with students spanning multiple categories in terms of race, ethnicity, language, income levels, and family national origin. A key consideration is that “diversity” alone does not equal “integration” – the staff and teachers at the schools actively manage day to day activities, classroom interactions and events to promote and encourage cross-cultural relationships and inquiry.
2. Magnet foci: Arts & Science at Crosswinds and Environmental Science at Harambee
The approach to learning and critical thinking at both schools is geared to reflect the interconnectedness of post-educational “real life”. Classes and lesson plans are constructed to incorporate multiple perspectives, and to show how facts, subjects and knowledge in one area are related to those in another, in ways that initially may not seem intuitive. The schools have offered, for example, a Social Studies class that teaches students about how urban, suburban and rural areas interrelate geographically and economically; or class projects that combine theater and history, or math and music. Crosswinds offers an arts and science focus which provides a much higher proportion of in-class hours to art and music instruction than neighborhood schools.
3. International Baccalaureate Program
The IB Middle-Years Program at Crosswinds provides a framework for the curriculum that stresses critical thinking and inquiry. Students need to develop a community service project as part of the IB requirements. The IB program is accredited, and is recognized by colleges as an indicator of a rigorous core education, similarly to AP classes.
4. Year-Round Calendar
Many students benefit from the EMID school year calendar, which starts immediately after Labor Day like most schools, but then continues through July. The shorter time off greatly increases knowledge retention from year to year, and means shorter “ramp up” times in the fall.

Structure

- These two schools are considered part of the member districts, and families in each of the districts can choose to enroll their children in them as part of open enrollment. Bus transportation is

provided to each school for all kids living in the member districts. Currently, about 800 students attend the two schools.

- Funding for EMID comes from a dedicated amount paid by each member district. Each member district first receives funding from the state designated for integration services. The portion passed on to EMID supports not only the two schools, but also coordinated integration services that can be utilized by all the member districts through the Office of Equity and Integration (OEI).

Academic Success

- The schools are thriving near capacity, with graduation rates from grade to grade at least at par with schools in the member districts.
- Students finishing 10th grade at Crosswinds, historically have very high success and achievement rates when moving on to 11th and 12th grade, and also have a relatively high proportion of students who are accepted and do well at multiple specialized schools in the Twin Cities, such as St Paul Conservatory for Performing Arts, Perpich Arts High School, Avalon School, etc.
- Students work together in culturally and otherwise integrated -- and award-winning -- activities such as orchestras, band, Lego league, robot competitions, theater productions, etc. In addition, multiple individual kids who have academic or artistic goals and passions out of the “mainstream”, and who therefore were “at risk” at the more typical neighborhood schools, have been able to succeed at Crosswinds and Harambee.