

Background on Current Board Deliberations

The EMID Board is considering taking a vote at their October 19 Board meeting to close Harambee and Crosswinds at the end of the current 2011/2012 school year, and eliminate them as alternative options for any of the families living in the ten member districts. This action is being driven by the collective Superintendents of the ten districts that make up the EMID collaborative. Their goal is to retain the money currently passed on to EMID within their home districts.

Last year, an outside consulting firm hired by the EMID Board delivered a report outlining three main options for Harambee and Crosswinds. The options were:

- 1- Continue operating the schools and look for ways to strengthen them
- 2- Seek and allow the schools to be operated by a different agency
- 3- Close the schools

Timing of the decision

- The Superintendents have pressed the EMID Board to act NOW to close the schools after this current school year thus ignoring Options 1 and 2.
- The interim EMID Superintendent has stated that the reason to move quickly is to provide as much time as possible for parents to make alternative school selections for the 2012/2013 school year, should Options 1 and 2 prove untenable. However, parents are not asking for this, and in fact have publicly protested this attempt.
- The State of Minnesota K-12 Omnibus bill in 2011 determined that the Commissioner of Education would form an advisory task force to develop recommendations for repurposing integration revenue funds to create and sustain opportunities for students to achieve improved educational outcomes. In not waiting for the recommendation by this task force and the subsequent legislative decision, the EMID board is taking premature action that ignores decision made by state leaders.
- The current fund balance in EMID will allow the schools to remain open for two more years – through at least the 2012/2013 school years. In addition, legislative action to repurpose the integration funding will itself not take effect for two years, meaning that the funding will still flow basically in its current format through even an additional year.
- This is happening rapidly with little chance for community input on the process or decision. This proposal was first heard by parents at the August 24 workgroup session of the Board of Directors meeting. No prior notification had been given to families. The planning group's presentation was made available publicly about one week after the August 24 meeting. On September 14 the Board of Directors held a meeting at Crosswinds to allow parents and

students to ask questions and voice their concerns. On September 21 the Board held its monthly meeting. 90 minutes of testimony were heard during Open Forum from parents, students, teachers, administrators and community members. The Board discussion that followed including asking interim superintendent Jerry Robicheau to prepare a white paper outlining the superintendent's proposal to close the schools. A Board of Directors workgroup session will be held on October 12 at 6:00 p.m. at Harambee Elementary Schools. Future Board meetings are scheduled for October 19 at 5:30 p.m. at Crosswinds and November 16 at 5:30 a.m. at Harambee.

Implications of the Decision

- Option 2, seeking to find a different agency to operate the schools, has never been explored. Additional time should be allowed for parent groups and others to identify any possible entities that could serve in this capacity, and assess the viability of a transfer of management. Various models could work for this option, including other area school systems assuming operating responsibility; charter options; and so on.
- This decision will impact the Office of Equity and Integration run by EMID. This office provides resources to all member districts in the form professional development and opportunities for students to engage in programs with students across the ten districts. No decision has been made as to how this office would change based upon the closer of the schools.
- If Harambee and Crosswinds are closed, the opportunity for other schools to learn from and model these innovative programs will be lost. These schools have served as learning labs and this role can be further expanded upon and brought to member districts.