

Date: Thu, 29 Sep 2011 14:09:28 -0500  
To: South Washington County School Board  
Subject: the power of collaboration/EMID schools' value  
Dear SOWASHCO School Board,

I'm one of the parents in the South Washington County School District who sent her daughter to Crosswinds Arts & Sciences Magnet. Her life was greatly enhanced by the experience, as is the life of everyone of the other 800 or so students who attend the EMID schools. Although you may think the potential closure of the EMID schools is about a lack of achievement or the desire to use the buildings to serve more students in the collaborative, I fail to understand how closing the schools would address these concerns. First, student achievement is much broader than the NCLB standards - as you know, many schools fail to make AYP, but that doesn't mean their students aren't making progress. When you start out at the third grade level in reading, it's nearly impossible to get to the 8th grade level in one year. You all know as administrators how these numbers don't tell the whole story.

As for the buildings "serving" more students, well - you can't stuff more kids into the buildings – unless the motive is to get the Crosswinds building for your own district. I find this idea mean spirited and dishonest. When your students come to Crosswinds or Harambee and they have life-changing experiences, I fail to understand what could be improved by closing the schools down. You would deny 800 plus kids the experience because the rest of the 120,000 aren't getting the same experience? I think the goal was to learn from Crosswinds and Harambee and bring those lessons back to your schools so all your kids could benefit. If you weren't taking advantage of the learning opportunities with EMID schools, I wouldn't blame the schools or their teachers. I would blame a failure of the imagination. You should support the EMID schools as laboratories instead of supporting their closure. I wish you could have seen the Crosswinds production of *The Wiz* at the end of last school year. That production says it all about how hard the teachers and students work together to intentionally create community.

When SOWASHCO entered into the EMID collaborative agreement, it was because pooling resources could have a much broader effect than standing alone. If you support closing the schools, then you are supporting the destruction of ten years of experimentation on how to successfully bring children of many different cultures and ethnic backgrounds together to form a common sense of place and community in an academically enriching environment. I hope that you will take time to encourage a more thoughtful approach to your relationship to the EMID collaborative schools. Your board, intentionally or not, is allowing the destruction of two very valuable jewels.

Sincerely  
Kelly DeBrine