

## Crosswinds and Harambee

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*Here is the letter I just sent to the school board members. I also want to take a moment to thank other families for writing! I've been so impressed with the letters so far and thankful that there are those of you who are able to write very detailed letters dealing with the complex issues going on. I don't even pretend to understand all of the in's and out's of this situation, but I do know that each family has it's own perspective and story to share, so hopefully the school board will get the idea that this cannot be done behind our backs!*

*Patty Schlenker*

----- Forwarded Message -----

To our School Board,

At the end of last school year, we as parents were told that we had at least two more school years before the possible threat of closing our schools might happen. We feel deceived and are reeling from the latest news that you, as our School board tried to take action at the last meeting to vote on closing the schools after this year. In light of these recent developments, we would like to take a moment to share what EMID schools mean to our family.

Our three children have attended EMID schools from their first day of Kindergarten. They are all currently middle school/high school students at Crosswinds. Years ago when we made the choice to join what was then Tri-District, now Harambee, we were attracted by the year round calendar, the multi age classrooms, the integration of a variety of students from the east metro and the obvious passion the teachers and staff possessed for teaching the kids. As we went on in years, things like diversity, caring, understanding and respect for others were well demonstrated by the staff and passed on and taught to the students. It was an environment that we knew was special and unique. In the K-5 grade school environment, our kids spent their days in a safe, secure "second home". They knew that they and their peers were cared for intensely by the teachers and other staff. No one slipped through the cracks, no one was overlooked, and each child was special, and supported academically, socially, emotionally and physically as such. Harambee fulfilled its mission for the kids "To create a community of learners whose achievement and well-being are enhanced by diversity, which is valued and celebrated."

As each of our children "graduated" from Harambee and headed to Crosswinds, we knew with full certainty that more caring and supportive people would pick up where Harambee left off. Despite many challenges at Crosswinds with a changing

administration and reorganizing, it has been our privilege to have our children remain there as students, committed to their teachers and what they stand for, quality education, positive life skills, highlighted by responsibility, and the fulfillment of the schools mission: "Crosswinds is a culturally diverse education community where each student's special talents and needs are recognized as he/she becomes a responsible citizen and an environmental steward." Our three children have experienced the teachers at Crosswinds who have gone over and above to help fulfill that mission. With our oldest entering 10th grade at Crosswinds this school year, we will begin our 11th year with EMID. We have always known that this district is a gift; one that we don't take for granted and are so thankful for. Our nervous anticipation, 11 years ago, when deciding on a school for our children has become a proud commitment to this district and its teachers, staff and mission.

Please put aside the politics for a moment and view this from all angles. Parents don't take the choice of school lightly for their children and the families that make up this district are here for very real, important reasons that can't be measured by statistics or test scores. If you talk to the teachers, the students and the parents, you will find out that this district is NOT a tiny, unnecessary waste of integration funds or a disappointing mass of achievement gap data. This district has educated and supported hundreds of children and families over the years that believed in the missions of both schools and remained loyal to them.

We humbly ask for your reconsideration in regards to closing these two schools. We are depending on you, as our School Board to fight for our schools, students and valuable teachers!

Sincerely,

The Schlenker Family  
Patricia and Scott  
Lauren (10th grade)  
Nathan (9th grade)  
Kayleigh (8th grade)