

Letter to Karen Morehead and Kitty Goggins

This is the letter I sent to Karen Morehead and Kitty Goggins just now for your awareness. Good to be a part of this multifaceted process with each and all of you.

*Thank you,
Leslye*

Dear Karen and Kitty,

My family is both a multi-cultural and mixed racial one which I enjoy greatly as I experience a microcosm of the real world in our own home. We adopted our 12 1/2 year old daughter when she was born through an open adoption with her Native American birth mother, and Mexican birth father. As two Caucasian parents it has been both our mission and promise to all involved (our daughter, her birth family, her adoptive family and our extended community family) to teach and expose our daughter to the many peoples in the world in which she is an active participant. And so we have thoughtfully and actively directed and participated in many a way with myriad people in her education. This began when we participated in her birth in the birthing room at the hospital where she was born in Lihue, Hawaii. As our birth mother signed over parental rights to us she asked that we honor her Spanish heritage and we agreed to do so, and thus she has always been surrounded by the Spanish language. When she started kindergarten and through the fifth grade she attended Adams Spanish Immersion School in St. Paul. Over the years as we would attend workshops and meetings at Children's Home Society in St. Paul (the agency through which her designated adoption occurred) both teenage and young adult adopted women encouraged us to teach our daughter about her heritage in any and all ways that we could include. This was our training, this was our commitment, and my husband and I are in it for the long haul. We love our daughter and wish for her to have the finest opportunities to navigate successfully through this life as a multi-cultural, mixed race young woman. This is truly only possible through being in the midst of a community that acknowledges the value of living in an integrated society and one of the crucial teaching grounds is through the school that our daughter is educated in daily.

So, as our daughter was approaching middle school we looked to continue on in an integrated fashion. Simultaneously to her attendance at Spanish Immersion School, we attended pow wows for the tribe she is enrolled in so that she felt honored to be an Indian daughter. Indian Education had brought in programs to her school for the Indian children to partake in and learn of their heritage. We selected Crosswinds as the school we felt could assist her in her continued integrated education. The timing has proved to be perfect as she looks to address her identity as a preteen along with her heritages and skin color which are different from us, her parents. Though we provide the loving direct heredity in which she is growing, we are not naive thinking we are able to provide everything that she needs when she is a young woman literally of many tribes. In good conscience as healthy parents for our daughter, we cannot

honestly ask a child of color to function predominantly in a white world. And having her in our family has brought the issues that were of interest to us to absolutely be addressed in real time exchange with others. Yes, if we are going to accept responsibility for the gift of this beautiful child, we need to expansively do justice in the way we raise her in an integrated community.

The promise of the EMID district, and for us, Crosswinds, was that urban and suburban children would co-exist in one setting on a beautiful piece of land that promised environmental learning integrating the internal and external world in which our children live. And so, at a time when our daughter was entering middle school, sometimes called no mans land, we carefully chose this promising opportunity/setting in which to participate in educating her. In her immersion in this experience this first year of sixth grade, she has opened up to addressing many challenging things relative to her very make up. In her vulnerability she is in the process of learning whom she is in a setting that can welcome inquiry in myriad ways. At the same time we, as her parents, are developing skills to assist her in addressing and discovering the woman she is becoming. As this challenging first year has come to a close, I find myself grateful that we have selected Crosswinds and the capable staff there to assist our daughter through her metamorphosis as she has entered the chrysalis state. Having chosen this path of evolution through Crosswinds, I'm not sure what other setting could successfully help her morph into the responsible, young woman citizen we aspire to support her to become.

The IB program for these middle years is icing on the cake as we know the teachers and staff engage our children in critical thinking about the world they are a part of , thus their education is applicable and meaningful. I have looked for an educational opportunity that would draw forth passion for learning, engage interest so that our daughter would know she has a valued contribution to make to this world she is growing up in as she learns to become responsible, respectful and honest. Our Principal invited a team of his educators to learn about the AVID program this year so that it can be offered to our children this coming school year enabling them to participate actively in planning their future educational pathways. He also is looking to engage parents in becoming educated through diversity training so that we go beyond fine intellectual thoughts about integration and move into real interaction that we live and share in as well as our children do in community. This first year at Crosswinds has offered opportunity to plant seeds through our talks together that will grow into our actual work together. We are invested in this cause and our dedicated time to this effect clearly represents this as we work actively together as parents, staff, educators and children.

Crosswinds is a promise through what has been proven in the community we have come to know as we hear stories of the children that have graduated and how they are navigating in the communities they are entering. Responsible parents think deeply about our children's educational paths. We have choices and we weigh them carefully. Please consider the choices you make as a School Board and all of the constituents you are responsible to include in your decisions. Besides the communities we

represent, there are great stakeholders in this process: parents and the children we all serve. And so, the decisions that are on the table should not be taken lightly and all of us that form the 10 districts of the EMID community have thoughtful input into the process. A truly representative decision can not be made unless all are included in the study that is before us of how to best educate and serve our children so they can become valued citizens of the world community. This is in our hands and I look forward to continuing to contribute with my input to this invaluable cause—a learning community for all.

Thank you for taking my words to heart and seeing my representation as valuable in this community. And, we hail from Roseville. We chose the Crosswinds option which included our district, because we hadn't found a viable school in Roseville that would address the real needs of our child's education. Feel free to contact me through email or by phone.

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