

East Metro Integration District, ISD 6067

Report to the Integration Revenue Replacement
Advisory Task Force

December 13, 2011

INTRODUCTION

East Metro Integration District's (EMID) vision is to create integrated communities in which all learners have knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for success in an increasingly diverse and interdependent world.

Its mission is to provide and promote integrated opportunities for students, families, and staff that expand cultural understanding and support academic achievement.

EMID is a ten-district, joint-powers collaborative. Districts included in this collaborative are St. Paul, Roseville, South Washington County, Stillwater, White Bear Lake, Inver Grove Heights, South St. Paul, Spring Lake Park, Forest Lake, and West St. Paul/Mendota Heights. The first Joint Powers Agreement was approved in 1995. The original member districts were St. Paul, Roseville and North St. Paul/Maplewood. This Joint Powers Agreement was formed to encourage St. Paul and the surrounding districts of Roseville and North St. Paul/Maplewood to partner in desegregating the St Paul schools. The enrollments of the districts surrounding St. Paul were majority Caucasian. The new Tri-District partnership created a movement of students of color to suburban districts which at that time had not experienced any significant demographic changes in their enrollment. With later changes in legislation, voluntary districts were encouraged to join with the original three districts. This new membership was called the East Metro Integration District. Out of this newly formed collaborative grew a magnet school, Harambee in 1997, which opened to serve students in Kindergarten through grade five. A second magnet school, Crosswinds, was built a couple of years later and opened in 2001 to serve students in grades six through ten. These magnet schools were built to offer parents a choice where their children could attend school in an integrated learning environment. Moreover, they were formed to respond to the mission and vision of EMID as it was formed at that time.

Today East Metro Integration District is a ten district collaborative. Our work to achieve our mission is realized through the specific services that we provide. In addition to Harambee and Crosswinds, EMID now offers a variety of services to members of our collaborative through the Office of Equity and Integration and more recently, Shared Services. The Office of Equity and Integration provides professional development, student programs, and technical assistance to our member districts, serving over 2000 youth and adults per year. Shared Services were developed by the member districts and provide a variety of curricular and instructional supports. Through this combination of approaches, EMID's programs and services have the potential to impact either directly or indirectly approximately 120,000 students which is the collective enrollment of the member districts.

OVERVIEW OF EMID'S PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE

This presentation will focus on the two most important outcomes that are the charge of the Task Force and our work at EMID. First, as stated in our Mission, we are preparing students to live, work and thrive in our global, multicultural world. Second, we are working to increase academic achievement among all students while closing the achievement gap between students of color and their

white counterparts. After addressing these two primary outcomes of our work and this legislation, we will provide a narrative of responses to the five questions.

Living in a global world

Today more than ever we are experiencing more diverse populations throughout communities in the United States and Minnesota in particular. In other words, students today can no longer expect to spend their lives in homogenous environments. Instead, they must prepare, and be prepared, to operate effectively across difference.

In EMID our two integrated magnet schools prepare students and adults for this reality and have been at the core of our work since our inception. For the past 16 years, it has been our goal to bring together students from different racial and cultural backgrounds. Not only do we bring these students together we also teach them how to be connected when they are together. There are some specific strategies that we use to help children and adults learn to adapt to and accommodate differences in order to create truly inclusive spaces. These strategies are embedded in the following research.

Research consistently finds larger reductions in racial prejudice and bias occur when optimal conditions for intergroup contact – including support by authority for intergroup contact, equal status for all participants, cooperative interdependence, and direct interaction -- are established"

(Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Tropp & Prenovost, in press; both, in Frankenberg, 2007).

At EMID we have created structures that not only increase interracial student contact, but actually help students from different backgrounds meaningfully connect and work together. Our two EMID schools provide an important vehicle for this type of learning. In our schools, we have a community cultures focus, we teach perspective-taking, and we provide structured and informal opportunities for students to understand their own and others' cultures. These strategies are found in the formal structure and informal social gatherings of students.

EMID's Culturally Responsive Teaching for Integrated Learning Environments

One of the central features of our schools and our outreach programs is our commitment to and practice of Culturally Responsive Teaching. According to Elizabeth B. Kozleski (2000) writing in *Equity Matters: Learning for Life*:

Culturally responsive teaching connects students' cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles to academic knowledge and intellectual tools in ways that legitimize what students already know. By embracing the socio cultural realities and histories of students through what is taught and how, culturally responsive teachers negotiate classrooms cultures with their students that reflect the communities where students develop and grow. This is no small matter because it requires that teachers transcend their own cultural biases and preferences to establish and develop patterns for learning and communicating that engage and sustain student participation and achievement.

The teaching and learning environment at EMID is grounded in the purpose of culturally responsive teaching. The teaching staff, and for that matter all staff, embrace the need for cultural competence in pedagogy and curriculum. This commitment can be found in the statement listed above. Moreover the teaching staff follows the basic tenets of cultural responsive teaching. As outlined by Kozleski this includes: a) communicate high expectations and establish rigors curriculum standards, b) actively engage student in their learning, c) facilitate new learning, d) understand the assets that students and families bring to their learning, e) explore personal and family histories, f) acknowledge memberships in different groups, g) learn the history of diverse groups, h) anchor the curriculum in the everyday lives of the students, i) selects instructional strategies that reflect the students way of learning, j) engage in reflective thinking and writing, k) attempt to visit the families of the students, and l) engage in in-depth study strategies for teaching in a diverse environment.

The need for culturally responsive teaching is stated by Frankenberg (2007).

Learning in racially diverse classrooms, in which students have different backgrounds and experiences that inform the perspectives they share in class, promotes complex thinking. . . Longstanding research finds a modest positive relationship between attendance of desegregated or racially diverse schools and academic achievement levels of African American students”

The need for our staff to be culturally competent is evident in the demographics of the two magnet schools.

ENROLLMENT 2011-12

TOTAL STUDENTS	419		403		822	
Boys	211	50%	204	51%	415	50%
Girls	208	50%	199	49%	407	50%
English Language Learners	79	19%	37	9%	116	14%
Special Ed/Speech	64	15%	84	21%	148	18%
White	153	37%	196	48%	349	42%
Black	119	28%	87	22%	206	25%
Asian/Pacific Islander	77	18%	43	11%	120	15%
Hispanic	66	16%	59	15%	125	15%
Native American	4	1%	18	4%	22	3%
Receive Meal Benefits	244	58%	238	59%	482	59%

Fifty-eight percent of the enrollment at the two magnet schools consists of students of color. Moreover, 59% of our students receive free and reduced lunch.

Outcomes

Over the last couple of months, the EMID school board has heard testimony from parents and students about the significance the schools have had in their lives. This testimony included the following annotated comments about the success of our programs:

- Diversity, caring, understanding and respect for others are well demonstrated by the staff and passed on and taught to the students.
- No one slips through the cracks, no one is overlooked, and each child is special, and supported academically, socially, emotionally and physically.
- There are so many races and cultures, it's just wonderful. The diversity in Harambee is so rich; it's taught me to not judge someone by their looks.
- Right from the start I was learning about the cultures of those around me in a really intimate and applicable way, and in a safe community.
- Children are taught from a multi-cultural perspective and a respect for all cultures is incorporated into the entire curriculum.

Similarly, in our out-reach programs delivered by the Office of Equity and Integration we provide opportunities for students to come together and learn from and with each other. In our out-of-school – time programs, students learn the skills of civic engagement, cross-cultural proficiency, student leadership, and service learning. With adults, we provide professional development that again, helps teachers learn the skills to connect with students of a variety of backgrounds, to create inclusive learning environments, and to learn from colleagues of diverse backgrounds. Students who participate in these programs write:

- [This] taught me to respect everyone as a person, even if you don't know them.
- I learned how to communicate more clearly and effectively with others in ways that I have not had to do before.
- EMID has opened my eyes, ears, and heart to accept one another yet even to teach different techniques and skills that an individual person can have. . . . I have better respect and more understanding of other people's beliefs and religion.
- Another factor that integration has contributed is allowing me to view the world with an open mind. Being a part of EMID it has welcomed me, accept different viewpoints and to express myself more often.
- Not only has EMID impacted my life but also helped become more aware of the diversity in my school. Not just ones ethnic background but everyone's different story and where they come from. Just because one person is African American or the same as me doesn't mean they share the same story.

These quotes demonstrate that within integrated structures, intentional instruction to support students and their families in connecting across racial and cultural differences results in cross-cultural proficiency and skills for a global world. This instruction cannot effectively happen in homogenous environments where children cannot test their knowledge in real-life experiences.

These strategies do not just apply and help people connect across racial and cultural differences. They have values that extend far beyond racial integration. For example, developing this skill and strategy increases our collective ability to create a civil society, one in which we can dialogue with differences and achieve mutual understanding and mutually acceptable outcomes.

Specific regional initiatives within EMID to increase student learning

As the nation has come to recognize the importance of increased academic achievement amongst all students, we have turned our attention to ensuring that students in our schools participate in an increasingly rigorous learning environment. In particular, we are advancing the following particular initiatives to increase student learning.

Our magnet school teachers participate in professional learning communities (PLC). A PLC is a national initiative intended to strengthen the teaching and learning environments within schools. A PLC accomplishes the following; a) establishes a shared mission, vision, values and goals of a school, b) establishes collaborative teams, c) creates a collective problem solving strategy, and d) creates continuous improvement strategies. PLC's problem strategy for students is driven by three critical questions: 1) exactly what is it we want our students to learn, 2) how will we know when each student has acquired the essential knowledge and skills needed, and 3) what happens in our schools when students do not learn.

In addition, we provide in-depth professional development to teachers throughout our member districts; as a result, teachers provide more culturally responsive instruction, create more effective learning relationships and environments, and overall, improve their practice. For example, our participants report:

- We are driven by data in our classrooms - it is how we plan for each and every day. What we don't have time for is to hear different strategies about how to reach those kids that our "data driven research" is not meeting. We see their faces everyday - they are not a statistic, they are real! It is here (EMID development) that we get ideas and feel energized to go back to our classes to try and implement them. We believe that they can learn, but we need opportunities to help them get there!
- I am a school psychologist in the St. Paul Public Schools. I have attended EMID sponsored presentations; have provided me with valuable information on background theory as well as practical strategies for improving student success. I have used these ideas in my own practice and have also shared what I have learned with staff at my schools.
- I have student survey data to support an increase in student engagement and attitude toward math, and have watched the MAP scores of my students increase at a more rapid rate than previous years. The average increase in the MAP tests by the students I teach increased by 7.5 points half way through the year. A 10 point increase is an entire school year growth, so if this trend continues, students will grow more than one grade level during this school year.
- I can see that they are "keyed in" by the fact that they WANT homework and DO extra homework that I assign. [Also], we have been able to utilize EMID dollars for 3 struggling

Kindergarten ELL students so they could come to school every day, vs. every other day. That has made a MARKED difference in their achievement. They are still below grade level, but they are learning their kindergarten basics at a much more progressive rate AND their English is progressing more than it was when they were only coming every other day.

Students from our member districts who participate in our outreach programs also report increased academic engagement and achievement:

- If I had not joined EMID I believe I would not be paying attention in class, I actually could of seen myself dropping out of class. To be honest I never cared about school until I realized that it is not just me that was having trouble with schoolwork. I learned if you can work as a team with peers from other schools then it would not hurt to open up and work as a team with people you go to school with everyday. I felt like I opened up a lot and my grades have improved.
- I am now attending Central High School, which has a huge population of diversity. This diversity has amplified my comfort level to a point where I have pushed myself to do my best; I am now in many advanced placement classes with an A-B average grade. Integration has closed the door of underachievement in my life.
- An open mind in school has definitely helped me learn to understand and participate in the class discussions in classrooms that I had struggles in such as AP Human Geography and English IB. Being able to express and accept ideas has improved my test scores because of the increase in understanding of the subject. A record of advanced classes and a high grade point average will benefit my future in college. Education is an important part of my life because I will be one of the first children in my family to have an opportunity to attend college. Integration has given me a better chance of succeeding in education and a motivation to finish school. It is evident that integration has played a huge role in my educational life and I wish that every student could have an equal opportunity that EMID has given me.

The programs and services we offer at EMID strive to address the academic needs of students and staff. Moreover, we offer services that will provide students with the skills needed to live in global society.

Shared Services

Our member districts have engaged in planning and programming that will address student learning between and among the members of the collaborative. (See appendix A) Shared services were established based on the foundation that all districts are knowledgeable and experienced partners; that we have visionary leadership; that we share a mutual commitment to students, learning, and innovation; that collaboratively we can solve problems; that all districts benefit from sharing human and financial resources. The goal of shared services is to increase rigor and services to all students within the collaborative. Shared services projects have included the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) college-readiness system, the Atlas Rubicon curriculum mapping project, a kindergarten readiness summer camp, and professional development for world language and elementary teachers and for school leaders.

We have begun regional implementation of AVID. “AVID is an elementary through postsecondary college readiness system that is designed to increase school-wide learning and performance. The AVID system accelerates student learning, uses research-based methods of effective instruction, provides meaningful and motivational professional development, and acts as a catalyst for systemic reform and change” (www.avid.org). AVID has been shown to effectively engage students of color in rigorous learning, and results in 84 – 93% of enrolled students completing college entrance requirements. (www.avid.org/abo_dataandresults.html).

We have actively facilitated and supported our member districts’ work to align their curriculum to standards that ensure rigor for all students and enhance student learning. Through Atlas Rubicon curriculum mapping not only are we implementing this type of work in our two magnet schools, but we also provide leadership and support for our member districts to engage in this important work.

OUR SUCCESS DATA

A full detailed discussion of the status of our students’ can be found in Appendix B.

Reading scores of EMID magnet school students as measured by Minnesota MCA assessments have shown steady increases. Between 2010 and 2011, EMID students’ reading scores changed by the following percentages of students proficient in tested grades:

- Grade 3—68.8% to 72.8%
- Grade 4—65.8% to 70.9%
- Grade 5—55.2% to 68.5%
- Grade 6—68.4% to 54.1%
- Grade 7—61.2% to 65.8%
- Grade 8—63.5% to 64.7%
- Grade 10—65.5% to 74.5%

New math standards and a new math MCA assessment prevent direct comparison with previous years’ data.

Results on Minnesota’s GRAD graduation tests are a source of pride. Ninety-eight percent of tenth grade students have passed the writing assessment, and 88% of tenth graders have passed the reading assessment. These scores are at the state average for percent passing, and average student scores also are at the state average, despite the fact that 30% of EMID magnet school 9th and 10th graders are special education students (more than double the state average of special education students).

Since EMID magnet schools have a year-round calendar, our magnet school students have fewer instructional days between the start of the school year and MCA assessments. As a result, teachers also utilize the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessments from Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) as another way to measure student growth. Students take MAP at the start and the end of our year-round school year. Results from 2011 showed that 55% of assessed EMID students had above

projected growth in reading and 52% in math when compared to NWEA's national sample. Grades five, nine, and ten showed especially remarkable growth with students. Map scores can also be used to project a student's level of proficiency on grade-level Minnesota Standards. With more instructional days before the final assessment as compared to MCA assessments because of the year-round calendar, 71% of EMID students were projected proficient in reading on Minnesota Standards while 56% were projected proficient in math.

The need for a comprehensive Strategic Road Map that directs us to the future.

During the 2008-2011 schools years there was compelling evidence that it was time for a broader, more comprehensive re-evaluation of the mission of EMID. The first evidence of this need was the withdrawal of two member districts; North St. Paul/Maplewood in 2008-2009 and Mahtomedi in 2009-2010. Also during this period two new districts joined EMID: Forest Lake and Spring Lake Park Lake. The second major change during this time period was in July 2010 when a new superintendent was hired to replace the retiring superintendent. The new superintendent refocused the mission of EMID to concentrate not only on the programs of the two magnet schools serving 880 students, but also to give greater attention to services and programs to the full 120,000 student enrollment of the member district. In November 2010 the new superintendent initiated a strategic planning process. That process focused on data collection in three areas; a) utilization of outreach services provided to member districts, b) the future of Harambee and Crosswinds, and c) funding of EMID programs and services. This data collection commenced in January 2011. Stakeholders were interviewed in focus groups, in person, phone interview, or via electronic surveys. Stakeholders included in the data collection were school board members, superintendents, EMID administrators, parents, and teachers. A major initiative of the strategic planning process was to develop ideas of how to increase collaboration among the ten districts, given that a large portion of resources were allocated to fund the two magnet schools. The magnet schools enrolled less than 1% of the students from member districts. The outcome of phase one was to collect data on two major areas; 1) the future of the two magnet schools, and 2) the shared services of the outreach programs.

Regarding the two magnet schools the following three options were considered by the EMID School Board

- Option 1: Strengthen schools under current structure: EMID schools have the potential to transform into models of integration and high student achievement; however, it may require additional time and investment.
- Option 2: Transfer governance of schools to different operator: The nature and environment of the schools seem to be highly valued, though direct student education is a small portion of EMID's overall purpose and core competency. Therefore, perhaps EMID should refocus its efforts away from operating the schools.
- Option 3: Merge students back into home district schools: this option is similar to option 2, in terms of reprioritizing EMID's focus. This also assumes that current EMID students could smoothly integrate back into home district schools

The recommendations that focused on the **shared services and outreach** were outlined in the following:

- There is an opportunity for EMID to shift from mostly direct service to focus on strengthening and coordinating member district programs.
- EMID as a coordinator of member district programming has the potential to leverage current offerings to increase overall participation without dramatically increasing costs.
- EMID as a technical assistant to member districts can deliver its knowledge base of “best practices” to strengthen and develop member district programs.

After extensive public input the board decided that the 2 magnet schools would continue to operate under the governance of the EMID Board. However, a restructured funding process would be developed to ensure that the schools would be self-supporting. An outcome of this restructured funding would ensure that more resources would be available to a broader base of students, the 120,000 students enrolled in the member schools, and expand professional development opportunities to staff in the member schools.

The outcome of the shared services discussion was to create a system that address all three of the recommendations listed above. This, too, would advance services to a broad base of students who would benefit from added resources needed to address student learning.

This was only the first phase of the strategic planning process. EMID has embarked on phase 2. This was initiated at the EMID board meeting November, 2011. The expected outcome of this phase 2 is to extend the services available. A “Strategic Road Map” will be created that will be the guiding document for the future of EMID. It is the intent to create our own picture and be proactive rather than being told what we should look like. This road map is to be complete by May, 2012 and will include extensive public and stakeholder input.

Task Force Input and Recommendations

To conclude our report, we would like to provide specific responses to the five questions posed by the task force.

1. What meaningful links are there, if any, between racially integrated schools and students’ educational outcomes?

The literature is clear that segregated schools, whether intentionally or unintentionally, are unequal schools (Ryan, 2010; Cashin, 2004; Anderson, 2010). The belief that segregated schools could produce equal outcomes has historical roots in this country, and is well-documented throughout the centuries from 1892 Plessy v. Ferguson Supreme Court decision through President Nixon’s 1972 televised education address (Ryan, 2010) and even today. Still, the fact that schools that are characterized by racial and economic segregation produce unequal outcomes is well-documented throughout the history of this country, as well as and up through today (Kozol, 1991; Kozol, 2005; Ryan, 2010; Cashin, 2004; Anderson, 2010).

2. What educational opportunities are at risk, if any, for all students (not just poor and minority) if we make changes to integration revenue in Minnesota?

Research is clear that segregation is a key factor in inequality. “It isolates disadvantaged groups from access to public and private resources, from sources of human and cultural capital, and from the social networks that govern access to jobs, business connections, and political influences . . . It reinforces stigmatizing stereotypes about the disadvantaged and thus causes discrimination” (Anderson, 2010:2).

In addition to the harm that this causes poor and minority students, inequality that is connected to segregation presents educational risks to students white and middle- and upper-class students in two ways: first, segregation undermines democracy, and second, inequality that disproportionately impacts one group also decreases the quality of life for all. In relationship to democracy, Anderson (2010) reports that without sufficient contact and relationships across racial and cultural differences, those with decision-making authority are unable to effectively account for the concerns and perspectives of all their constituents. Second, several studies have found that when societies experience notable inequality, there are negative effects on all members of the society, regardless of social standing. This is true even in developed and technologically advanced countries. “Almost every modern social problem—poor health, violence, lack of community life, teen pregnancy, mental illness—is more likely to occur in a less-equal society” (Pickett & Wilkinson, 2009:Introduction).

3. Historically, considering how districts responded to Minnesota’s school desegregation rule, what worked and what didn’t work (educational structures, strategies, and programs)? Why?

Current integration practices in Minnesota districts vary significantly. This is due mainly to a lack of clarity around the purpose of integration policy. EMID supports the recommendations of the Statewide Task Force on School Integration to clarify outcomes of the integration revenue program and identify measurable indicators of success. Strong integration policy is a critical component of a larger agenda focused on eliminating disparities and creating educational equity for all Minnesota students. Without clear outcomes, it is difficult to determine what has worked.

In order for true integration to emerge, a two-pronged approach is necessary. *Structural shifts* address the arrangement of schools and flow of students in a district or region. *In-school strategies* address the policies and practices that affect students and staff. Integration serves as a key structure of opportunity and a foundational element for transforming schools, districts, and communities. To achieve the full benefit of integrated learning, schools and districts must address structures and systems that serve as barriers to opportunity. Teachers and school leaders need preparation and support to meet the unique educational needs of a diverse student population. Policymakers should examine all aspects of the educational experience through a lens of equity, excellence, and opportunity

4. What are the current measures of success in a given district? Are they data-driven? What should the measures of success be?

Increased accountability and attention to results is vital to achieving educational equity through integration. All partners – state, district, and school – need clearly identified metrics against which to evaluate progress and measure success. EMID supports the recommendations of the Statewide Task Force on School Integration to establish clear and definite state level measures, oversight, and accountability to track district implementation of integration efforts. Measures of success should address the following outcomes:

- a. Equitable academic outcomes
- b. Access to opportunities
- c. Intercultural learning
- d. Racial balance
- e. Strong communities

We support a focus on results. The state should establish metrics for measuring success and progress, monitor indicators at the school level, and identify statewide and regional benchmarks for elementary, middle school, and high school implementation.

5. How should Minnesota allocate the dollars that, in the current biennium, are going to integration revenue?

Intentional integration efforts require categorical funding tied to educational outcomes. The funding formula must address variability in district need while maintaining appropriate incentives for districts to reduce racial isolation and prepare children to thrive in a diverse world. We support a categorical funding source to support integration efforts that meet the identified outcomes. We also support an appropriation for integration transportation grants to provide pupil transportation services to students who participate in student transfer programs (e.g. Choice is Yours, magnet schools) or inter-district student exchange programs (e.g. classroom partnerships, inter-district summer school) that are part of an approved integration plan. Finally, we believe that a responsible funding formula is aligned to a district's integration responsibilities, includes a mix of aid and levy, and includes incentive-based factors (e.g. participation in a regional integration collaborative, progress toward outcome metrics).

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