



Testimony for the Government Operations Committee

March 15, 2013

Testimony from Eric Celeste

1993 Lincoln Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55105

What you are considering with HF592 is nothing less than whether to continue Minnesota's commitment to integration in the east metro. I ask you to support the Perpich proposal to take over governance of the Crosswinds School as a clear declaration that Minnesota still believes in integration and the value of the arts in education.

Perpich and Crosswinds are a wonderful match for each other, but you will hear that from many sources. I want to focus on the context of this decision, where the Minnesota Legislature fits in the nearly three year struggle to keep integration alive in the East Metro Integration District (EMID). The core issue at hand is governance: as a manager, EMID has failed Crosswinds and Perpich could reinvigorate a multi-million dollar state investment there.

EMID is a collaborative of Saint Paul and nine suburban districts. Each member district school board appoints one of its own to the EMID board. When times are good, this model almost works, though even then no member of the EMID board really has EMID's interests first and foremost. In recent years, as times became dangerously lean for all our public schools, EMID became the watering hole at which wary districts eyed one another as the funding stream dried up. Our own board began to openly describe our students as dollars "leaving" their home districts and in 2011 they began a serious push to close our schools so they could keep more of this money at home.

EMID families worked hard to fend off this effort in 2011, and succeeded in keeping the schools open and convincing the board of the value of the programs that had been built over the preceding decade. But the EMID board continued its quest to redirect funds from EMID back to member districts, removing virtually all integration funding from the schools and refusing repeated calls by families to build a sustainable funding model. The board's lack of focus on Crosswinds led to a decline in enrollment that further challenged the school in a vicious financial cycle. Member districts have been so afraid of the attractive choice Crosswinds provided for their community that only one district even mentioned Crosswinds as an option on their website!

By the time the EMID board again raised the notion of closing our schools in 2012, EMID families had come to the conclusion that EMID governance itself was the biggest challenge to the health of our schools, and agreed that EMID needed to relinquish that governance. But the EMID board and families found common ground in their appreciation of the programs developed at EMID schools.

Today students in grades 6-10 attend the Crosswinds year-round program and learn from an accredited International Baccalaureate curriculum. Half the students are minorities, half qualify for free and reduced lunch, and more than a quarter require special education services. By every measure Crosswinds is a remarkably diverse community, defying the trend toward segregation among schools of choice in Minnesota.

Most impressive is our success at truly integrating students of every stripe into a close-knit community of respect for one another, self expression, and joy in learning. Crosswinds is a community where the kids sit together at lunch tables rather than eyeing each other suspiciously from various cliques. Crosswinds is a community where every student feels welcome to join the orchestra, band, or theater program. Crosswinds is a community that attracts students who struggle in their home districts, but find the support they need here to catch up and close the achievement gap.

One of my own children required an individualized education plan and a variety of accommodations at Crosswinds. Yet he always was included in every activity by his teachers and was rewarded with friendship and respect from his peers. Special needs did not isolate him, and Crosswinds launched him on a path that now has him succeeding in his third year of college. My other child picked up the cello for the first time in 7th grade and has now had the experience of playing with an award-winning orchestra for the past four years.

The EMID board saw all this and more through the testimony of dozens of families, teachers, and other experts at many board meetings. Not a single community member at any of these meetings ever questioned the value and contribution of Crosswinds. Yet when the EMID board asked for proposals for taking over Crosswinds, only one entity offered to keep the school intact: the Perpich Center for Arts Education.

Seeing this, the EMID board voted to ask Perpich Center for the Arts to seek the authority it required from the Legislature to take over the school. The Perpich Center recognized the excellence of the Crosswinds program and the wonderful match it represents for Perpich. Where Perpich Arts High School invites students who yearn to express themselves through the arts and builds an integrated community as a result of that expression, Crosswinds invites families seeking an integrated environment and builds self and peer respect through the expression of the arts. Where Crosswinds wants to share the lessons of its integration model with other districts around the state, Perpich has long had an outstanding professional development operation that reaches out to teachers statewide.

Most critically, Perpich has a board appointed by the Governor whose job it is to attend to the mission and success of the Perpich Center and its school. They were quick to act when EMID invited Perpich to create a proposal, authorizing their director to take action. Their focus and agility stand in stark contrast to the divided attention the schools have received from the EMID board. Perpich promises the kind of governance that can make Crosswinds prosper and become a model for the whole state.

Of course, in another demonstration of poor stewardship and understanding of state processes, the EMID board has given Perpich only until April 1 to get the legislative authority it requires to do take over Crosswinds. I've heard some suggest that what we need is more time, and I agree that the EMID board should have given Perpich the whole legislative session to seek the authority it requires. But I want to be very clear about this: more time under EMID governance is no longer a viable option. Families have been exhausted by the years-long battle to keep the schools open, they have lost faith in the leadership of the EMID board, and they will flee Crosswinds in even more dramatic numbers than we've seen these past few years if the school is not granted competent governance for the 2013-2014 school year. There will be no program left to build on if Perpich is not given authority this year to run Crosswinds in the fall.

The Crosswinds Arts & Science School sits in the northwest corner of the South Washington County School District. It is a \$26M facility built by the state of Minnesota to house this unique year-round, integration, arts and science program. The building has won international awards not just for its design, but also for the process used to create that design, which included staff of Crosswinds and close attention to the program they were creating. Today, the South Washington County School District wants the legislature to turn down Perpich's bid to govern Crosswinds and hand the taxpayers of Washington County a levy-free school building.

This is the choice you face and must decide promptly. If you do not give Perpich authority to carry forward a successful integration program in the next few weeks, you will instead be handing over a facility designed to do that job to a local district as a free gift. Please do not jettison the east metro's most important integration program.

I ask you to vote to preserve the 15 year investment the state has made in Crosswinds, a program that can teach districts around the state how to make the most of the growing diversity that is Minnesota's future. Please save Crosswinds for future students and teachers, give it the governance it needs and deserves from the Perpich Center for Arts Education.

Sincerely,

Eric Celeste
1993 Lincoln Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105

Testimony from Tami Bayne-Kuczmariski

2252 Emerald Lane

St. Paul, MN 55119

Mr. Chair and committee members,

I come to you with the request that House File 592 be moved forward and that the Perpich Center be granted funding for the governance of a model multidistrict respectful culturally diverse integrated middle school. Middle school is one of the most crucial times in an adolescents life.

In this time where the arts, busing and choices are either being cut or taken away we have a chance to provide this model to families who are seeking the working alternative to a safe cultural diverse environment where everybody counts. Where people come as they are and are readily accepted.

My daughter who when she came to Crosswinds, was considered a “model student” by her former Principal has thrived at this school. In our district my daughter would have been sent to a Junior High, through their school choice lottery that was the furthest from our house. At that time our district was talking about changes that could involve bussing cuts or redistricting due to a budget shortfall.

Crosswinds is 10 minutes from our house. I had a chance to be part of those talks and as a result an application was made to Crosswinds. I ultimately left the choice up to my daughter.

My daughter has thrived in the year round school environment. I believe a lot of the enrichment she has received in her multicultural arts education has carried over into her outside dance life.

We live in a rich culturally diverse world please let Crosswinds continue to nurture students to be culturally diverse savvy thinkers.

I thank you for your time. I ask that you vote to move this forward

Testimony from Dr. Mary E. Hess

1993 Lincoln Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105

I am writing to you with a strong recommendation that you support HF592, which will be heard in committee on Tuesday, March 12th. This bill enables the Perpich Center for Arts Education to take over governance of Crosswinds School.

This action is necessary because the East Metro Integration District, a district formed and funded by state action, has asked the PCAE to take over governance because EMID is no longer able to manage this school. I write to you with the strong recommendation that you support their request – this school is a jewel in the state, and it would be tragic to lose it simply because the legislature does not take this action. The bill requires so additional funding, merely reallocating existing funding, and both EMID and PCAE are in agreement on the governance transfer.

Now, let me offer several personal and scholarly reasons why you should support the continuation of this school.

I live in St. Paul, and although my eldest son began in a St. Paul public school when we first came to town in 2000, we moved him as quickly as we could into an East Metro Integration District school. He graduated from Crosswinds in 2007, and is now a junior at St. John's University in Collegeville. Our youngest son has gone all the way through EMID Schools: first Harambee, from kindergarten on, and now he is in the 10th grade at Crosswinds.

At a time in which multiple criteria suggest that Minnesota is becoming more diverse, and we are facing more difficult challenges than ever as we seek to integrate many different children and families from multiple settings and contexts into shared schools, two of the brightest spots on the scene of attempts to engage that diversity in positive and effective ways have been the EMID schools Harambee and Crosswinds. The EMID Board has voted to cease governing both of these schools, but the Roseville School District is taking on Harambee, and the PCAE is seeking to take on Crosswinds.

Scholars note (and I'll include the citations below) that educating children for success in a country as diverse and globally connected as ours is, demands equipping them with skills and practice in collaborating across multiple cultural contexts. Integration of schools –integration of our society – requires many skills that are not easily tested on multiple choice tests. I have heard certain members of the EMID board state that these schools are failing, because they have not more quickly and decisively closed the “achievement gap.” I put that phrase in quotation marks, because I believe that they are defining that gap in very narrow terms, and assessing it only using the marker of certain narrow, content-based multiple choice tests.

There is clear scholarly evidence that such assessment misses the mark almost entirely. One reason why my husband and I put our children on long bus rides to these two schools, when there are public schools all around us in our neighborhood, is because we know that our children need to grow up a school environment that cherishes diversity and supports deep cultural engagement, while at the same time holding high academic standards.

Integration is far more than de-segregation. Integration demands and requires learning how to communicate with cultural competence, it demands and requires awareness of structural and systemic inequalities and clear efforts to erase such inequalities. Integration is very hard work in the world we live in, and I have found no other schools in the East metro public system that are doing this work as well.

A recent article in a leading education journal (*Teachers College Record*, out of Columbia University) identifies four key factors for meeting the needs of ALL children in schools: evidence-based instruction, long-term collaboration and engagement with teachers, community engagement, and response to the non-academic needs of students.

Crosswinds has been working hard on all four of these areas. Long before other area schools were pursuing evidence-based instruction, Crosswinds had trained and was supporting its teachers in implementing such work via the Profile of Learning process. That work continued even once the Profile of Learning had been abolished and new standards were being imposed. Further, Crosswinds certification as an IB program goes far beyond the basic standards that the state has identified towards commitment to an internationally recognized body of standards.

On the second criteria, the turnover rate of teachers at Crosswinds is substantially lower than that of most other public schools in the east metro area. That fact alone demonstrates “long term collaboration and engagement with teachers,” but there is other evidence as well, such as the large number of teachers at Crosswinds who regularly take on additional informal tasks during inter-sessions and other periods in the school year. Indeed, the highly unusual year-round calendar of Crosswinds is yet another marker of innovation – and it is a pattern that districts around the country are beginning to find compelling, but struggling to implement. Crosswinds has already done so.

The third factor identified – that of community engagement – is in some ways harder to document, but nonetheless is very present at this school. All of us parents have made the decision to send our children to schools that for many of us are a long drive away from home. Even given that distance challenge, a greater obstacle to parent involvement than most schools carry, Crosswinds has consistently had very high levels of parent participation in parent-teacher meetings, in support for schools events, and in fundraising efforts.

The fourth factor – support for non-academic needs – is perhaps the most vibrant and compelling piece of the Crosswinds success story. Many elements of Crosswinds that outsiders might not first identify as crucial to integration – the year round calendar, the commitment to music and the arts, the IB certification – are all elements integral to creating and supporting a school culture that takes seriously all of the personal and social elements of learning. These are key pieces to why integration is working at Crosswinds. Yet even so, these are only academic markers of an underlying commitment to drawing ALL students into learning that works for them, and supporting them amidst a culture of care that has very high expectations for all students.

Crosswinds has very low “pull-out” rates, compared to other schools in the district. This means that rather than providing services to children whose needs are not being met in the classroom, and who therefore have to be “pulled out” for special education or for behavioral issues, Crosswinds classrooms are working so well that there is much less need for such intervention. This is a direct consequence of the climate of this school. being focused on real integration and support for students’ non-academic needs.

Systemic racism is a problem throughout Minnesota, indeed throughout our country. It has an impact on every element of a student’s learning experience. At Crosswinds, however, that destructive element of our shared context is directly engaged, and students, teachers and parents are invited to collaborate together in ways that are slowly beginning to ease the worst of racism’s effects. We cannot possibly expect one small school to overturn a century of oppression, but it is reasonable to expect open discussion, clear collaboration, and shared effort to engage racism directly – and these things are part of the very fabric of Crosswinds.

Every high school in our country has to deal on some level with student identity groups, a natural part of student developmental growth, but Crosswinds students, teachers and parents consistently testify to the softer edges of the cliques present there. Kids regularly mix across lines of identification. Kids who are “geeks” hang out with “theater nerds.” Kids who are moving from shelter to shelter hang out with kids whose parents have six figure incomes. Kids who are multi-racial and kids who are monocultural share and learn together. The kids themselves point with pride to their shared school identity being “weird” compared to the other, much more obviously identity-divided high schools they encounter on field trips. There is a community and level of inclusion present in Crosswinds that I have never experienced in other schools.

Speaking very personally for a moment, as the parent of a child who lives with cerebral palsy and an autism spectrum challenge, I can tell you that I have not found any better place for my child to learn and grow – and believe me, I have looked very hard. Indeed, one reason that the academic achievement statistics at Crosswinds are not higher is precisely because of the high number of children with special needs who attend the school. Yet these kids are doing much better in Crosswinds than in the districts they came from. I could give you story after story of specific student growth. My son is now a junior at St. John’s University in Collegeville. He is succeeding there in large part due to the fine preparation and education he received at Crosswinds.

My other son, our youngest, is at the opposite end of the education spectrum, easily qualifying to enter the lottery for Capitol Hill in St. Paul, for instance. He is eligible for talented and gifted support, but we have deliberately and intentionally kept him at Crosswinds because we recognize that he is learning far more of the cultural competence and other skills he’ll need to thrive in adulthood, than he would in other schools.

Crosswinds is a vital resource as a lab/demonstration school for the rest of the state. The mission of the Perpich Center for Arts Education is extraordinarily well aligned with the arts/science emphasis of Crosswinds, and the PCAE has committed to keeping the program of Crosswinds intact. The state invested a large chunk of funding in building the facility that now houses Crosswinds – do you really want to see that investment turned over to the South Washington County school board, who simply want the building but none of the innovative programming which resides in it?

I urge you in the strongest possible terms I know to support the PCAE in their efforts to take on governance of the Crosswinds School.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary E. Hess". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial "M".

Dr. Mary E. Hess
1993 Lincoln Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55105

Citations:

Ernest Morell and Pedro Noguera, "A framework for change: A broader and bolder approach to school reform," *Teachers College Record*, August 4, 2011 (<http://www.tcrecord.org> ID Number: 16503, Date Accessed: 3/10/2013 9:02:48 PM).

Lorri J. Santamaria, "Culturally Responsive Differentiated Instruction: Narrowing Gaps Between Best Pedagogical Practices Benefiting All Learners," *Teachers College Record* Volume 111 Number 1, 2009, p. 214-247 (<http://www.tcrecord.org> ID Number: 15210, Date Accessed: 3/10/2013 9:03:56 PM)

Jerusha Osberg Conner, "From International Schools to Inner-City Schools: The First Principles of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Program," *Teachers College Record* Volume 110 Number 2, 2008, p. 322-351. (<http://www.tcrecord.org> ID Number: 14538, Date Accessed: 3/10/2013 9:04:36 PM)

Tyrone C. Howard, *Why Race and Culture Matter in Schools: Closing the Achievement Gap in America's Classrooms*, Teachers College Press, New York, 2009.

Testimony from Tom Nelson

2087 Lamplight Circle
Woodbury, MN 55125

Good afternoon,

My name is Tom Nelson and I have been a Woodbury resident since 1973. Since becoming a Master Gardner in 2006 I have been aware of the role Cross Winds is playing in showing young people sound gardening principles and priorities for sustainable practices. Both air and water concerns are addressed and many of the young people there are actively involved in propagating native species and learning gardening basics they will carry with them for many years I hope.

Crosswinds is a unique kind of school and one I think we really need more of.

Woodbury is a large and relatively prosperous community and can, I think, afford whatever additional education facilities are needed. But Crosswinds does things not taught or offered at other schools and I would vote to continue diversity in our education system.

I certainly endorse the idea of a Perpich school going in there.

Thank you.

Testimony from Holly Ingersoll

651-442-5403

Thank you for taking my written testimony and considering a vote to pass HF592.

We are a new family to Crosswinds. My son, Ihsan, is a sixth grader this year. He was underperforming at his previous school, a public school with a very good program and a great reputation. He had been there since kindergarten. It just didn't spark his interest for learning. We decided to start looking for a 6th grade program. We spent some time looking at a few charter schools and one private school, where we would have had to apply for a scholarship. Then, Ihan's therapist suggested that we look into Crosswinds. After we toured Crosswinds, he said there was no contest, even if he got into his previous first choice. I agreed and we couldn't be happier! I had never heard of this school and I was from a participating EMID district.

Ihsan has an IEP, but is excelling, as he is challenged and supported, wherever it is needed. At Crosswinds, they know my child, which means **they have hit on something that should be shared**. Many experienced parents have told me that having Ihsan is like having three children. He is an amazing person and I can't believe we found a school that can meet his needs. He is playing trombone in the intermediate band, was in the school play, Joan of Arc, and got all A's this quarter. He is finally being challenged in math, which has been a complaint for him since second grade. The problem was the complexity of Ihsan, he was hard to teach, challenge and support all at the same time. I remember his IEP once said he would get 40% of the work of the other children, but it would have to be at a higher level. Now, he excels at 100% of his assigned work.

Ihsan testified to the EMID board that he has a high standard and that Crosswinds exceeds it! That was quite a thrill for this parent to hear. He asked that they transfer governance to Perpich for Arts Education, instead of let this program and this amazing lab for integration education disappear.

The passage of HF 592 would make sharing the success of Integrated Teaching/Learning, available to the entire state, as Perpich Center for Arts Education is a statewide entity that ensures that best practices in Arts Education are made available to teachers throughout our state – a state that has been struggling with vast disparities in educational outcomes for racial minorities and others who do not discover their personal genius in a typical MN classroom. Crosswinds' foci are Arts and Sciences, taught through an **intentional integrated model**.

When I walk into Crosswinds' lunchroom, children are sitting together at round tables (intentionally created atmosphere, as the architects can attest). This is not a school that is merely "diverse", where children segregate at lunch tables, but really "integrated" and sit **together** for reasons even I don't completely understand. But I know that Ihsan's life is richer and so is mine. He is developing in ways I could have only dreamed. I have not met a child at Crosswinds who did not, in some way, let me know that "this is like a family, here". **Crosswinds serves 50% children of color and 50% receive free and reduced lunch. Almost 30% are receiving special education services, more than twice the state average.** When children enter Crosswinds grade levels behind in academic testing, they are at grade level as they get ready to graduate and move on to their next educational experience with confidence and experience to be true global citizens.

With the confidence and know-how of Perpich to run a top-notch school that already serves our state, while providing superior teacher training statewide, it would be a travesty to let this successful program die. That is exactly what will happen if this bill is not passed and signed by the governor by **April 1st**.

Crosswinds models how integration and education go hand in hand to close the achievement gap in Minnesota.

Testimony from Ihsan Ingersoll

My name is Ihsan Ingersoll. I am a new student here at Crosswinds. I am in 6th grade.

I must say, this is the 1st time in 4 to 5 years that I've felt challenged. Crosswinds meets my expectations, which were high.

I chose this school over the Montessori MN charter school and I would like to stay in a public school, if possible. The problem I have is that the other public school that I went to was not as educational as Crosswinds.

I hope you will keep Crosswinds open for as long as possible so that I can get the most out of school.

Testimony from Joan E. Leonard

I am writing in support of HF592. My grandson Ihsan, who has Autism was not being challenged in school.

My daughter carefully investigated other programs, and enrolled him in Crosswinds last September. It hard to describe the transformation in only one year. He looks forward to school, is engaged, and grades have gone from C's to A's. His speech is clearer and he has friends and teachers he loves.

Please move this legislation for Perpich to continue this great program for other MN students. The calendar and program should be a model for the country!

Testimony from Jacki McCormack

I strongly urge you pass HF592.

Crosswinds is a school. Yet it is more than a school. It is a place where ALL are welcomed. All are part of a community. All are accepted for who they are. All are given an opportunity to become who they want to be.

It is common knowledge that Crosswinds was established as a desegregation school. Half the students were to come from St. Paul and half the students from the surrounding districts. The theory was if you mixed students (and staff) from a wide variety of ethnic, cultural, economic, etc. backgrounds, we, as a society, would learn about each other and mix together. The theory was based on instead of seeing the United States as a “mixing bowl” (mixing everyone together), we should be more like a “salad bowl”, celebrating all of our differences while working together.

However, theory is often different than reality. Putting a bunch of students who look different from each other, students who believe different than each other, etc. in the same building doesn't mean they will get along with and accept one another. True integration/inclusion takes work. It takes intentionality. It takes a belief that we are all of value. It takes a belief that we, all of us, are better when we celebrate each other and value each other.

I am a parent from District 622. I have one child who is Caucasian, who attended Crosswinds. I have another child, who is Asian, who currently attends Crosswinds. Both of my children received special education services at Crosswinds. When my older daughter attended Crosswinds, District 622 was part of EMID. My younger daughter is open enrolled in Crosswinds as District 622 is no longer part of EMID.

So why do I keep my younger daughter at Crosswinds when District 622 has an Equity Alliance which is one reason they withdrew from EMID? The answer is there is a huge difference between having school enrollment numbers that reflect diversity and a school that welcomes diversity.

I ask all of you to look at who sits together in the school cafeteria. I believe that in most schools, students who look alike, who believe alike, etc. sit together. That is not the situation with Crosswinds. Crosswinds welcomes diversity. Crosswinds welcomes my daughters. Crosswinds welcomes my family. Yes, and Crosswinds gives my daughters a good education.

Testimony from Leslye Taylor

I urge you to pass HF592!

Over the past 15 years Crosswinds has become a community model for integration. It has been a living experience of integration for each one of us that has become part of this community because of our children. Our children drew us together to realize how vital a living experience of integration is from their earliest age on earth. Whether we are those children, parents, teachers, administrators or community members, we have done a lot of living together in this CROSSWINDS lab.

My family consists of white parents and a multi race daughter whom we affectionately call "Many Tribes" as she is of 4 Native American heritages and Hispanic descent - we adopted our daughter at birth. Now as a young teenager she is seeking to find out who she is, as all teens do, and she has a few other layers/directions in which to explore. We, as her parents have these areas to explore too as we aren't just continuing to learn about her races, yet also her learning styles and we have found a community that is eager to learn this in a concerted effort with us. The teachers, staff have been responsive coupled with directive from their experience, which is being revealed in our daughter's learning experience in every way imaginable.

I was at an Occupational Therapy Symposium the other day and one of the workshop presenters made a profound comment that I cannot forget: "Our approach is not to teach our children what we know, yet to learn together what works for them". Crosswinds allows us just that opportunity through integrated learning for our children. It has been a successful program where it counts. It's been nurtured by the teachers, staff, community, parents and the state, an investment to not take lightly.

Thank you so much for your thoughtful consideration of allowing Perpich to assume the governance of this fine program, Crosswinds Arts and Science Middle Years School.

Testimony from Heather J. Lund

651.489.8638

heatherjlund@gmail.com

Crosswinds Arts and Science School has succeeded in exceeding the state average on tests, despite a student demographic that includes 50% students of color, 50% of students receiving free or reduced cost lunch and more than twice the state average of those receiving Special Education services through an IEP (nearly 30%).

For a state that has struggled to reduce the achievement gap, we are provided with a wonderful opportunity to learn from this model, consider it further, imbed it as a lab school at Perpich Center for the Arts, and study its potential for replication.

I ask for your positive consideration of this request to install Crosswinds Arts and Science School at Perpich Center for the Arts.

A technologically literate citizenry is essential in our modern world, and Minnesota's economy depends on the strength and education of a creative and innovative workforce.

The need for highly skilled workers in technology fields is estimated to grow by 50% in the next ten years according to a 2009 report from the U.S. Department of Labor. More alarming, there is a critical shortage to fill these positions **today**, with no national pipeline or pathway to place the US at a competitive edge in this knowledge based economy.

At the same time demand for highly skilled, highly paid workers is at an all time high, Black, Hispanic, American Indian, and low-income students continue to graduate from high school at painfully low rates. According to *Education Weekly*, for the last several years, Minnesota has *earned* the lowest graduation rates in the nation for African American, American Indian, and Hispanic - Latino students.

In the 2010 report on graduation rates, only 43.6 % of our states African American students graduated from high school, compared to 51.6 % for the nation; American Indian students graduated at 42% compared to an average graduation rate of 46.6, nationwide. This persistent achievement-gap all but ensures that these students, many of whom come from several generations of poverty, will be forced to perpetuate the cycle, with a string of low paying jobs over their lifetimes.

Of those who pursue higher education, only 12% of baccalaureate degrees in engineering go to all underrepresented minority groups, combined. Another 15% go to women, the lowest levels in 20 years.

We face both a moral and economic challenge, as well as an opportunity. Engineering degrees in the US are at the lowest rates at a time when the U.S. requires diversity in an increasingly globally competitive work environment.

Based on a recent report from the *National Action Council for Minorities in Engineering (NACME)*, the U.S is the only developed country that will *grow* in the next 40 years, with the Hispanic population tripling, and representing 30% of the total population by the middle of the century. This is a wonderful opportunity to grow U.S. innovation, however, with a 2010 dropout rate of male Hispanic students at 20% nationally—and the highest of all underrepresented minorities—the future for underrepresented minorities, low income students, our state, and the nation, looks rather grim.

Stanley Lithow, President of IBM International and past Deputy Chancellor of New York City schools, wrote in his article, *A Silent Crisis: The Underrepresentation of Latinos in STEM Careers* (Education Week, July, 2008) that America's goal, through strong STEM Education, must be to raise the standard of living for **all** of our children, not just some of them.

This economic and moral imperative requires that students from all ethnic groups be prepared for the 21st century and a more secure future. STEM education implemented at an early age provides a pathway to STEM careers, and a way out of poverty for many underrepresented minority students.

Many large technology companies are providing programs geared towards college students, from underrepresented groups in technology fields. Reports show, however, that most students lose interest in STEM by the time they reach the fourth grade.

The federal government in the 2009, *Nation's Report Card*, put fourth grade science proficiency scores hovering at about 34%, with MN scores slightly better at 43%. Underrepresented minorities in Minnesota scored at 13% as an average, and students who qualified for free or reduced cost lunch scored at 21%.

In the 2011 Data Book –and follow-up to the 2008 report from NACME, *The New American Dilemma*, 29% of school-aged children are from underrepresented minority groups and growing steadily. In their *Call to Action*, NACME states that STEM education must be “infused throughout K-12 curriculum, using active hands on, project based learning” if we are to engage these students as 21st Century citizens and workers.

The Minnesota Department of Education agrees, and in 2009, revised State Science Standards—which were implemented in the 2011 academic year -- STEM education –and engineering in particular—have been ‘infused’ into all grades, starting in Kindergarten.

Access to high quality STEM education at an early age will provide young students with the background knowledge they need to build confidence and enthusiasm, boost academic achievement, and prepare them for rigorous coursework in high school, and beyond. This pipeline of students, interested and capable of pursuing high paying careers in technology will build an economic foundation for themselves and their families, and create stronger ties with their communities, while satisfying our economies demand for high skilled technology workers.

As the above experts recommend, Crosswinds provides both early STEM education *and* project-based learning to Metropolitan area students.

Crosswinds focuses its educational efforts on true integration, and creative, collaborative classrooms. The schools educators understand that today’s students need more than the three R’s (reading, writing, and arithmetic) of the past; they require the 4’Cs, --creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, and communication skills-- if they are to succeed as 21st century citizens and workers.

This type of learning results in a *growth mindset*, as termed by The George Lucas Education Foundations, *Edutopia*. Those with a growth mindset are more willing to tackle challenges, learn from failure, and see criticism as useful feedback. Deeper learning and greater confidence, makes students much more likely to pursue advanced course work in high school, and pursue college.

As a Minnesota taxpayer, citizen, educator, and non-profit employee, I thank you for considering this request on behalf of Crosswinds, Perpich Center, and **all** Minnesota students, parents, educators, and businesses.

Testimony from Carrie Dickson

Maplewood, MN

As a parent of a Harambee first grader, and a resident of the Maplewood-Oakdale-North St. Paul school district (ISD 622), I am writing in support of the bill to give Perpich the authority to continue the program at Crosswinds Arts and Science School. I support it because this school was built with state money for the intention of creating an integration program that serves kids from many districts with an arts and science focus.

I watched as the school was bled dry by the East Metro Integration District school board. 9 of the 10 EMID districts did not market this school to their students (St. Paul is the exception), and the board created so much turmoil and took away so much funding that they left it with no money and less than optimum enrollment. These are the same arguments, now, that you will hear from opponents of this bill. It is clear that Perpich can do a much better job of governance, because they have shown us they can with their arts high school. Most importantly, they have shown us they have the will to do it. This is something the EMID board lacked.

I do not wish to see state taxpayer money squandered and given to a wealthy district because of a lack of foresight and serious conflicts of interest on the part of the EMID board. This building belongs to all of Minnesota, and it should remain open, with its current, successful programming, to all of us.

When my kids are old enough to be looking towards middle school, I want us to have the option of choosing Crosswinds. Amazingly, even if we do not choose to send our kids to Crosswinds, they will have benefited from its mere existence, in outreach and professional development on effective integration.

Please move this bill through quickly so that this Minnesota gem is saved.

Testimony from Laurel LeBlanc

I am writing in support of HF592, allowing Perpich Center for Arts Education to assume governance of Crosswinds Arts and Science School and continue a program that should be a shining example of innovative education and integration success in Minnesota.

This is a state issue, not a local one. Crosswinds was built by the state with a \$26M investment to share innovations in education among students in 10 east metro districts. Perpich, as you are well aware, is an effective state agency able to share what this school has developed with regard to true integration (not just a diverse student body), supporting all kinds of learners, engaging and inspiring students with exposure to the arts, and demonstrating how science applies to everyday life with the entire state of Minnesota. If the program is abandoned and the building transferred to District 833 the building alone would benefit just one district. If 833 needs more building space for their students they are fully capable of requesting funding from their taxpayers just like Saint Paul, Duluth, or Rochester would have to do.

Recent studies show that open enrollment has actually increased racially isolated schools in Minnesota. Crosswinds offsets that trend by being a fully integrated school of choice. It is 50% students of color, 50% free and reduced lunch, and nearly 30% special needs. Yet the school is exceeding state averages in achievement and students who stay all five years see the achievement gap disappear!

One of my children is gifted academically and musically while the other has a neurologic disability. Both are succeeding to their highest potential and both are also accepted and valued under these programs. At Crosswinds there are students that would succeed anywhere and chose Crosswinds but, more importantly, there are students who have a chance to succeed because of Crosswinds, their needs not being met in another school environment. I want my youngest and other students like him to continue to have this chance.

Plenty of students value communication skills, critical thinking skills, expressing their opinion, and becoming a responsible citizen. Respectfully working alongside different opinions, cultures, perspectives, and abilities should be modeled and taught in any school, especially as students learn to navigate an increasingly global economy and see the result of the political deadlock paralyzing our nation.

Nowhere have I seen this done more successfully than at Crosswinds due to the consistent, intentional message that differences are good, that all students have gifts, and that working together for a common purpose using everyone's gifts is vital to the success of a community.

Please help keep the original mission of Crosswinds alive, honor the investment made by the state for integration, and ensure innovative programs are shared statewide by supporting its transfer to Perpich Center for Arts Education.

Testimony from Barb Outcalt

8964 Pinehurst Road
Woodbury, MN 55125

I am writing in support of the Perpich-Crosswinds Proposal, HF 592. I have followed the progress of this school since its inception 15 years ago. The school has remarkable achievement scores with a diverse population including those who require special education services. As a retired public educator, I know how difficult that feat has become! Crosswinds is a model for closing the achievement gap. The school will fit well with the mission of the Perpich School, and the staff and students can continue to learn in a voluntarily integrated public school. I hope that additional testimony will be given in the Senate to this proposal.

Testimony from Kim Zaiman

189 Sterling St N
Maplewood MN 55119

I am writing to strongly recommend your support for HF592, which would allow The Perpich Center for Arts Education to take over governance of Crosswinds Arts & Science School. This is an incredible opportunity to bring the lessons learned in this state-established educational model to the students of the entire state of Minnesota. Amazing things happen every day in this learning community. All of it is done with great intention and a focus on preparing students to become global citizens. Isn't it our duty to prepare our children to compete in and contribute to a global society?

On my daughter's first day of school at Harambee, I waited with other parents picking up their children. I saw her round the corner and come down the hallway. She had an enormous smile on her face and she was holding the hand of a girl wearing a hijab. She was thrilled to tell me about her new friend. At that moment, it was confirmed that our family's selection of Harambee was the right one. My daughter has finished at Harambee and is now a 7th grader at Crosswinds East Metro Arts & Science School.

In our post 9/11 world, there is so much fear and anxiety about people that are "different" from us. It has always been my belief that first-hand experience and knowledge are what lead to understanding and compassion for others. Here were these two young girls, Christian and Muslim, Native American and Somali. Simply grinning and giggling. None of that mattered to them. They were just two people who were new friends. It was beautiful.

Amazing things happen every day in these learning communities. All of it is done with great intention and a focus on preparing students to be global citizens.

Crosswinds' Mission is to provide and promote integrated opportunities for students, families, and staff that expand cultural understanding and support academic achievement. Crosswinds' vision is to create integrated communities in which all learners have knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for success in an increasing diverse and interdependent world.

This is not just about my daughter and her classmates. It is about the on-going vision and mission of Crosswinds school through the support of Perpich and its long-established network which provides professional development state-wide. I feel that Crosswinds is of immeasurable value to the current and future community-at-large and that it is essential that the program at Crosswinds continue and be carried around the state.

Please, let me be absolutely clear:

NOW is the time to take supportive action on HF592. We have been given a deadline of April 1 and it is vital that you act without delay.

I implore you to authorize governance of Crosswinds to the Perpich Center for Arts Education. Both of these entities have very clearly expressed their intent to continue the vision and mission with which this school was formed.

Peace,
Kim Zaiman
Parent of Elizabeth, Harambee Alum and current Crosswinds 7th grader

Testimony from Curt Sward

Please pass HF592, the Crosswinds/Perpich Bill.

Crosswinds is one of the very few schools that have a year-round schedule and year-round schooling seems to be an advantage to the students, the community, and the nation.

Perpich would continue this system upon taking over Crosswinds.

Combining this system along with Arts and Science focus, diversity and integration, and status of a State school would be a winning program.

Testimony from Joe Ryan

Woodbury, MN

My name is Joe Ryan. My wife Stephanie and I have two sons attending district 833 schools, Jack is at Woodbury Middle School and Logan is at Woodbury Elementary. I am a risk management professional, a volunteer sports coach, adult leader in Boy Scouts, and my wife and I are both veterans. As a Green Beret who served 14 countries, I learned a lot about fairness, about setting the record straight, and about standing up for justice. That is why I am here to speak in favor of keeping Crosswinds open and run by the Perpich Center, and in opposition to the backroom lobbying done by members and leaders of District 833.

I have toured the Crosswinds building. It is a gorgeous campus – among the best middle school facilities in the state. Perpich has proven that they understand secondary school education and they are committed to continuing to work with the underserved population who calls Crosswinds home. Although the building is only a mile from my house, until recently I didn't know the types of valuable programs being offered there. With the proper marketing provided by the Perpich Center, there is no doubt that the Crosswinds program will thrive and grow.

As you know, if this bill does not pass, district 833 will receive the building. They are pursuing only one plan for the building. That is to uproot an entire neighborhood elementary school community and relocate it to the Crosswinds Middle School building. More than 170 students who walk to their neighborhood school today will now need to be bussed, with no students within walking distance to the new building. Further, one of our two magnificent special needs programs will also be moved into a building ill-suited to their needs.

District 833 has put together a single plan for the Crosswinds School. They've determined that if the plan is ruled unviable, then they will start looking for a second plan. (Does that sound like who you'd entrust with a 30 million dollar state asset?)

District 833's plan calls for shutting down the established and successful International Baccalaureate program at Crosswinds, while planning to spend tens of thousands of dollars to start up a brand new IB program at Oltman Middle School. (Does that sound like sound fiscal management to you?)

District 833 has presented a picture to you of sound fiscal management. They've done so while knowing the district is in its sixth consecutive year of budget deficits. The Un-reserved Operating Fund Balance as a percentage of Operating Expenditures has been dropping in recent years and is currently less than two-thirds of the state average. While the district brags about their bond rating, they fail to mention that Moody's has given 833 a negative outlook two years in a row.

On the other hand, Perpich has proven that they can run a school as an efficient enterprise. They can manage a budget, and meet their obligations.

As word of the single plan has dribbled out, there has been quiet opposition from parents, neighbors, and the community. The opposition would likely be louder, but parents and teachers alike are concerned with retaliation for opposing the district. Sad but true, bullying is still alive in education. Two years ago when our administration tried a similar plan to close our school, we filled auditoriums with a thousand people to oppose.

On a fairness issue, I'm concerned about the precedent of giving control of a state school to benefit one school district. If Perpich were to be given control, the school would continue to benefit all interested students. While I am very opposed to the use of government at any level to exercise eminent domain in any but the most essential circumstances, 10 years ago the state leaders determined that the property that the Crosswinds Campus sits on be seized from one of the founding farm families of Woodbury because the establishment of this school was that important. To close Crosswinds also sets a dangerous

precedent of frivolous use of eminent domain, which will create other problems outside of handing this school over to the local district.

By voting yes, you would be showing your commitment to our state having a progressive and excellent education system for all Minnesota children including children that would not have opportunities to excel in a diverse environment without this program. A no vote would destroy two great schools that have the highest diversity populations in the community; Crosswinds, which would cease to exist, and Woodbury Elementary, the most diverse neighborhood elementary school in the district.

Please vote yes to allow Perpich to continue to grow the mission of Crosswinds - a mission so critical that the state exercised eminent domain to acquire the land. Please prove that the leaders we have entrusted with the stewardship of our state are unafraid to stand up to bullying and lobbyists and follow through in continuing to support a successful program in Crosswinds that you and your predecessors created.

Testimony from Susan Larson

15239 N. 63rd Street

Oak Park Heights, MN 55082

I am writing to express my support for HF592, an act to allow Perpich Center for Arts Education to assume governance of Crosswinds Arts and Science School. My two sons attended Crosswinds Arts and Science School for grades 6-10 and I am grateful for the education they received. HF592 will preserve the important programs at Crosswinds while nurturing it as a lab school with professional development that will benefit districts statewide.

Crosswinds brings together a racially diverse student body from urban and suburban communities. The student body includes 50% students of color, 50% free and reduced lunch and nearly 30% students with special needs. The staff at Crosswinds has been successful in closing the achievement gap for these students. But the magic of Crosswinds is that it is not just diverse, it is truly integrated. If you visit the lunchroom, you see students of all ethnicities sitting together.

My 12th grader struggled to fit into his elementary school in Stillwater. Teachers called him socially awkward, odd, and different. He was teased by kids who called him “Ninja boy” because he is of Asian descent. A wise principal said Crosswinds might be better for him. At Crosswinds my son was accepted. The curriculum was innovative and rich with arts and rigor. For the first time in his life, he excelled academically and socially. He is now set to graduate from Perpich Arts High School and looking forward to starting college in the fall.

As our State is grappling with the best means to educate our students and prepare them for the future in the midst of an increasingly diverse and more global world, we could learn much from Crosswinds. The school was established 15 years ago with state funding and support from multiple school districts. It has developed into a truly model program of inclusion, academic challenge and arts education. At the foundation of the curriculum is an arts and science magnet program which fosters development of creativity, exploration, and critical thinking. Crosswinds has an integrated curriculum that allows students to make connections between disciplines, and this in turn allows them to develop skills that go beyond rote learning.

My 10th grader recently competed in the World Savvy Challenge for the 2nd year. World Savvy has challenged him to think about solving global sustainability problems practically. Through this program he had the opportunity to travel to Bangladesh where he studied climate change. He and his classmates are applying their World Savvy learnings and building a vertical garden within the school.

While my children are at the end of their career at Crosswinds, I am sad to think other students may not have the opportunity to be a part of this school. If the legislature doesn't pass the Perpich/EMID bill by April 1 the \$26 million state-funded building will be turned over the South Washington County school district. Sadly, South Washington County would close the Crosswinds program; lying off staff, forcing students to find a new school, and ending this excellent learning environment. That would be unfair to Minnesota taxpayers, who built Crosswinds to be a model for true integration.

This is the opportunity for Minnesota to embrace innovation and excellence in education. It is an opportunity for Minnesota to grab a leadership role in this changing world. I hope you will allow Perpich Center for the Arts to assume governance of Crosswinds. It is a logical, progressive match that would work beautifully for students and staff, and which would benefit all Minnesotans.

Thank you for your consideration

Testimony from Robert V. Drehmel, MD

Woodbury, MN

I am writing in support of the Perpich-Crosswinds Proposal HF 592. I am a family physician in Woodbury practicing in this community for the last 29 years. My dedication has been to enhancing the health and wellness of families in this community. Crosswinds has had a similar dedication in promoting education to a diverse group of eager students looking for a chance to succeed in a very unique setting. I hope we can continue to offer our children an option in learning environments. Crosswinds has proven success in promoting excellence. As a doctor, I am held to a community standard of excellence utilizing evidence-based medicine. In other words, prove to me, through data, that quality medicine is being practiced. Crosswinds has such data. They have proven that they succeed and need to be allowed to continue in their journey. I am asking our legislators in both the House and Senate to step up and pass this proposal.

Testimony from Jocelyn Stein

St. Paul, MN

My 10th grade son has attended Crosswinds since 6th grade and has experienced incredible academic and artistic success during this time. It is my sincere hope that the Crosswinds program can continue under the Perpich Center so my younger kids (and all Minnesota kids) can have this amazing opportunity too. The teachers and staff of Crosswinds are of the highest caliber and take their jobs very seriously and teach with great passion. As a parent, I have watched my son blossom in his confidence, academic abilities and artistic talent during the past 4-1/2 years at Crosswinds. He is accepted for the unique and special person that he is, as are all the kids. The teachers truly take care to create an environment of inclusion and instill in the kids values of hard work, respect, responsibility, perseverance and care for the community. The program clearly works and must continue so other Minnesota kids can have this experience. All kids deserve to know that they are special and can succeed! I respectfully ask legislators to please support HF592 and SF530 so Perpich can continue to grow the Crosswinds program.

Testimony from Kristen Konop

White Bear Lake, MN

I am writing in support of bill HF592 where Perpich Center for the Arts would take over the Crosswinds Arts & Science Magnet School Program.

My name is Kristen Konop. I am a founding teacher of the Crosswinds program, as well as having had a 14 year long teaching career at Crosswinds School. I am currently teaching in a different district in the East Metro which has given me a new lens in which to view the work that is being done at Crosswinds.

Since I have left Crosswinds there are a few things I have been reminded of:

1. All districts are dedicated to their students.
2. All districts want to see their students grow.
3. All districts want to see their students succeed.
4. Educators work hard every day to benefit their students.
5. Across the state, each district seems to be buying into a similar paradigm about student achievement.

These observations lead me to two questions: 1. Where's the innovation? 2. Why is Minnesota not taking the national lead on this?

Minnesota's Innovation is sitting at 600 Weir Drive in Woodbury, MN in a program called Crosswinds. This is a place where just like the rest of the state the staff wants to see their students grow & succeed. This is also a place ripe with innovation. This is the place the TERI Project (Teacher Education Redesign Initiative) grew out of. <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/teri/> This is a place where lenses of Arts & Science are continually used to build connections between differences to create a community of acceptance. This is a place, in a time where bullying is reaching epidemic levels in schools, students find support and refuge to be themselves in a safe, supportive community. This is a place where you walk into the lunchroom you don't see division among the students at the lunch tables.

This program can be used as a different way, an innovative way, to lead and change education. Minnesota needs to grab hold of one of its most unique educational resources and start growing it and sharing it with the nation.

Testimony from Carol E. Rydeen

Threadsbydesign@yahoo.com

"I am writing to support HF592 / SF530 to allow the Perpich Center for Arts Education to take over the Crosswinds Arts and Science School. I urge you to make sure the bill gets prompt hearings in the House and Senate so that it can be passed before April 1, otherwise the East Metro Integration District board will disband the Crosswinds program and give the \$26 million building to one school district, instead of having it serve all Minnesota."

I have worked at Crosswinds for eight years. Over those years I have seen many students of different culture; economic and social backgrounds come together and become friends while working together in their daily classes and activities. I also see the students sitting at the lunch tables together, not by race or color but as friends, it is a delight to see these people looking past outward appearances and enjoying each other's personalities.

With a year round school schedule the students have been able to build a kitchen garden. They start seedlings during the winter and in the spring plant them outside. Because of the year round schedule, students have a chance to tend the produce from seeds to mature fruits and harvest them for the cafeteria where they are prepared and served on the line as part of the menu. This brings students back to the foundation of what the State of Minnesota was founded on, Agriculture. It also gets the students excited about eating fruits and vegetables because they grew them. Finally they learned about the different types of gardening in different countries/cultures and new techniques that are being developed right here at our own University of Minnesota.

Testimony from Tom Nelson

2087 Lamplight Circle
Woodbury, MN 55125

My name is Tom Nelson and I have been a Woodbury resident since 1973. Since becoming a Master Gardner in 2006 I have been aware of the role Crosswinds is playing in showing young people sound gardening principles and priorities for sustainable practices. Both air and water concerns are addressed and many of the young people there are actively involved in propagating native species and learning gardening basics they will carry with them for many years I hope.

Crosswinds is a unique kind of school and one I think we really need more of.

Woodbury is a large and relatively prosperous community and can, I think, afford whatever additional education facilities are needed. But Crosswinds does things not taught or offered at other schools and I would vote to continue diversity in our education system.

I certainly endorse the idea of a Perpich school going in there.

Thank you.

Testimony from Jill Jackson

St. Paul, MN 55107

The Perpich-Crosswinds proposal deserves support because it will benefit all children and families in Minnesota by using research-based Best Practices.

Students who have attend the after school tutoring program I direct in St. Paul find Crosswinds a fine choice for their beyond elementary years. I strongly support Crosswinds mission and work.

Please engage the Crosswinds community in questions. Answers can be found and shared so a fact-based decision can be made.

Sincerely,

Jill Jackson, Program Director

Building Blocks Tutorial ALC

St. Paul, MN 55107

Testimony from Shannon Hannigan

St. Paul, MN

Dear Committee Members:

My unique and wonderful son is a 10th grader at Crosswinds Arts and Science Middle School and I can't possibly communicate what a blessing the school has been for him and for hundreds of other students who did not find a comfortable home in a more traditional school setting. He learned to love school at Crosswinds, he learned to love teachers and classmates there, he became a life-long learner there. He has thrived in the Crosswinds atmosphere because it is built on a deep foundation of intentional integration, the understanding and acceptance of all students and all learning styles - an approach which also demonstrably shrinks the achievement gap among students in its population.

This atmosphere is created and sustained by an extraordinary staff and faculty who teach a conscious curriculum designed to foster real integration. This is educational programming that needs to be shared with many more schools and students in our state, which is why EMID has asked the Perpich Center for Arts Education to continue Crosswinds and share their knowledge; it is also why **Bill HF592** is so very important and deserving of your support.

The other proposal under consideration by EMID is the South Washington County School District's plan to use the Crosswinds building for a mainstream elementary school. They have been forthright about having no interest in preserving the integrity of Crosswinds' programming, or in preserving the design of the award-winning building which was designed for that programming! By allowing this costly mistake to happen we would also lose fifteen years of crucial learning and discovery about ways to genuinely address the achievement gap in Minnesota.

Please give **Bill HF592** your urgent support. By preserving and sharing what Crosswinds teaches, Perpich and Minnesota could lead the way in addressing our greatest education needs nationally. We could, by teaching what Crosswinds has learned, re-establish Minnesota's role as a national leader in education.

Thank you for your attention –

Shannon Hannigan
St Paul Resident and Literary Arts Teacher

Perpich Center for Arts Education
6125 Olson Memorial Highway
Golden Valley, MN 55422
shannon.hannigan@pcae.k12.mn.us

Testimony from Donald and Kazuko Larson

133 East Park Drive
Hibbing, MN 55747

I am writing to you about an important issue for all of Minnesota. My grandson's school, Crosswind Arts and Science School, is in danger of closing. HF592, which is revenue neutral, will allow Perpich Center for Arts Education to take governance of the Crosswinds and continue its successful mission. Perpich has a long history of providing staff development and instruction for arts for the entire state of Minnesota and addresses the needs of students that work and think creatively. HF592 will expand Perpich's expertise to the middle school level allowing students and families from across the state to benefit from their unique programming and staff development.

If legislation is not passed by April 1st, the EMID school board, will give the state-funded, \$25 million dollar facility to South Washington County free of charge. They are fighting hard to undermine our efforts to pass this bill, so they can use the building for their own programming. This will cut off the programming that not only has helped our grandsons, it will effectively be unavailable to anyone outside the South Washington County School district as they have capped open enrollment for the 2013-14 school year for grades 1-12 at 3% of their total population and kindergarten at 1% of their total population. As a taxpayer, I am concerned that a building built by the state for the purpose of integrating underserved students from the inner city and suburbs would go to any school district for free. But when it goes to a district with capped open enrollment that just built an extravagant, \$60 million high school, I am a bit perplexed.

Finally, Crosswind's programming has been successful on many different levels including addressing the achievement gap despite having a population of over 50% receiving free and reduced lunch. HF592 is a step toward improving the quality of education for the state. We hope we have your support.

Testimony from Anna Barker

6135-C Courtly Alcove
Woodbury, MN 55125

Please add me to the long and substantial list of folks who SUPPORT the Perpich-Crosswinds Proposal.

As a University of Minnesota Extension Service Master Gardener and Tree Care Advisor since 1991, I have been “growing youth” alongside plants & trees at Crosswinds since before the school building was put up on the 37-acre east metro site on the riparian edge of Battle Creek Lake. What we have done here with prairie restoration and development of our biomes into a DNR certified School Forest/ outdoor classroom serves also as a living metaphor for the growth and development of human diversity and curricular integration.

Our work can be shared throughout Minnesota in both the Perpich and the School Forest network of schools. I encourage the House Education Finance Committee to honor the investment made at Crosswinds and transfer the governance to Perpich so that our work here in the arts & science and Environmental Education can be replicated and disseminated as a curricular role model for others.

Thank you!

Testimony from Daniel Larson

15239 N. 63rd Street

Oak Park Heights, MN 55082

As a parent of both Crosswinds and Perpich students and a teacher in a former EMID school district, I feel I have a unique perspective to share about the Perpich proposal and my enthusiasm for its possibilities.

As an educator, I recognize the academic success that Crosswinds has accomplished. In the two of the past four years, Crosswinds has surpassed the state average in graduation reading scores for the state. This is quite the accomplishment considering a free and reduced lunch rate hovering around 50 percent.

But the soul of Crosswinds is its culture of inclusion. It is a unique culture that I have not witnessed in any other environment in 20 years of teaching. Students do not segregate themselves by skin color, activities, or the clothes they wear. They are a blend of backgrounds that have been guided into one cohesive family by an outstanding staff.

I know this because before my oldest son came to Crosswinds, he was described as socially awkward, quirky, odd, and different--the same words you read or hear in the news describing young men doing unimaginable things. He was labeled with a behavioral disorder and required to have a full-time special ed aide. Our darkest day as a family was when school officials informed us his teacher did not feel safe around him, and parents complained about our family's involvement in karate. As a result, we were asked to supply our own mode of transportation to church activities because parents were concerned for their children's safety. This was deeply hurtful as karate is an important part of our family's Japanese heritage and culture.

We came to Crosswinds as our last hope. At the end of his sixth grade year and to our surprise, Crosswinds made the recommendation that he no longer needed special ed services because he did not exhibit the behaviors documented in our home district. I believed the culture, the integrated arts and science curriculum, and the highly skilled staff had worked a miracle. However, seven years later, I realize that it was no miracle as we are one of many families at Crosswinds with this type of story.

After finishing at Crosswinds, he went to Perpich Arts High School. There he has received an academic and art instruction that is unparalleled. He has been accepted to several top-ranked art schools and is currently making a decision on which one to attend. Crosswinds and Perpich have changed his life, and I will be eternally grateful.

Testimony from Lauren Hart
lauren.jacqueline@gmail.com

I am writing in support of the Perpich-Crosswinds Proposal, HF592. I have followed the remarkable success of Crosswinds school via one of its faculty members. Crosswinds excels in helping all students achieve regardless of their ethnicity, social economic status or disability. Building on this experience, Crosswinds can serve as a model for other schools in the state through Perpich Center's governance and professional development, Artsience program and outreach services.

The research done at Crosswinds on best educational practices will benefit ALL of Minnesota's students. Combining Perpich and Crosswinds Schools offers a solid proposal for strengthening the unique and important work of both these schools.

It is my hope that testimony will also be given in the Senate in support of this proposal.

Thank you.