If closing a middle school in the One91 District is absolutely necessary, then take a look at this:
Eagle Ridge and Nicolet are the closest to each other, here's what the population at each school: Found on the school websites:
Eagle Ridge- 562 students
Metcalf- 470
Nicolet- 485
See metcalf only has around 15 fewer students than Nicolet, so if anything, Nicolet would be more reasonable to close, because it is the closest to the other school Eagle Ridge.
And the last point we would like to make, is that will be over populating both nicolet and eagle ridge class sizes if metcalf closes, most of you parents cant even stand one or two of us, right mom?! Now this is making 40-50 kids in a class

Thank you for your time

Let's talk about MDE
Its members perform original plays and stories all of which are made with a message in mind. A message that's meant to help others. This is what sets us apart from others.
Hello, My name is Allison sloneker,
Hi i am Katarina wells,
Greetings i am mackinley shannon,
and we are here to speak today, because we are all
students who attend metcalf middle school. As you know
there are three schools that have been recommended to
close, as students we will be defending our school.
All Metcalf students were struck with the news that
Metcalf was one of the schools that was recommended to
close about a month ago.
Many are very upset and anxious from this news and do
not know where they are going to go to school next year,
but take a look at the distances between all of the schools,
and the main area of Burnsville and Eagan where a large
percentage of these students live:
Black Hawk, 10 minutes away,
Falcon Ridge, 11 minutes away.
Nicollet, 12 minutes away.
Oak Grove, 13 minutes away.
Eagle Ridge, 15 minutes away.
Two middle schools that are nine minutes away from each
other. Then what's going to happen to all of the students,
such as myself, who live in this area of Eagan?
From this area, that would be a 13 minute drive to Nicollet.
From the same area to Eagle Ridge is 19 minutes.
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Thank you for your time
Hi my name is Irene and I am a fourth grader at Sioux Trail. I don’t think you should close Sioux Trail because .... Their are great teachers. They are nice and they help me if I need help. Sioux Trail is a School of Excellence and I don’t want that to stop. Sioux Trail is a special place because when we get 150 Pride cards, we get to celebrate. Taste of Sioux Trail is delicious because we get to try new foods that other people in the world like. It would be better if you close another school, and those kids got to come to Sioux Trail. If you close Sioux Trail my friends might go to another school than me I might not get to see them again. It would make me feel sad and mad. Please don’t close my school.
Choosing to stay part of district 191 while living in Eagan has brought about a need to continuously defend my decision. People on my street, at the gas station and on Eagan Facebook groups all think I should open enroll my kids in district 196. Until this month, I fought back. I told them about the great schools and how I would never leave the Burnsville-Eagan-Savage School District. This month, that district showed me that it no longer has my children's best interest at hand, and for the first time ever, I have submitted the paperwork to open enroll my two daughters in district 196.

My daughter at Metcalf catches the bus at 7:11 in the morning; now you're telling me she will have to get up even earlier and ride the bus longer? Metcalf is 3.1 miles from my house; Nicollet is over twice that distance at 7.4, so how much earlier will she have to get up? Is that developmentally appropriate to have teenagers waking up that early? Why should I send my daughter all the way across Burnsville when there is a middle school in 196 that is 2.2 miles from my house? The consultant got it wrong. To allow Rahn Elementary to stay open for geographic risk, but to ignore Sioux Trail and Metcalf (the school that Rahn students attend after 5th grade) doesn't make sense. I live closer to 196 schools, why shouldn't I send my kids there?

It makes much more sense to close the centrally-located middle school in this district. Moving all the Metcalf students to Nicollet will displace students there, causing more students to be disrupted than closing Nicollet directly. The argument the consultant gave about utilities and the kitchen only make sense if you're planning on shuttering the building, but you're not.

Dr. Worner cautioned you to stay away from achievement when discussing school closings, but that is exactly what families look at when they choose other districts. No one looks at square feet per student when looking at a school. They consistently look at test scores and the culture of the school, and yet you're being told to ignore these things in choosing which school to close. It doesn't make sense.

District 191's strategic plan has two strategic directions that are consistently being achieved at Sioux Trail Elementary: to close gaps and raise achievement for all students and to create a culturally proficient school system. Is this your true focus when you are talking about closing a school that has already demonstrated large gains in these areas? Sioux Trail won an Innovation Award for its work in Cultural Proficiency in 2016 from Humphrey School of Public Affairs and has remained a district leader in cultural proficiency work. In 2017, it won the School of Excellence award for the data-driven work that has made great strides in closing the achievement gap. Sioux Trail should be a beacon school for this district, and instead you are talking about closing it.

I have a great love for the teachers and staff in 191. I have stood up for this district more times than I can count and supported the teachers whenever possible. I do not want to move my kids to a different district, but I don't see much of a choice when you close not one, but two of the amazing schools here.
191 Public Hearing, re: school closures

Good evening. My name is Nancy Anderson and I live in the North River Hills neighborhood. My two oldest children attend Sioux Trail Elementary School – I have a 1st grader in Mrs. Odegard’s class and a preschooler in Mrs. Cassie’s class. Every day after school, it is a competition as to who had a better day at school and who did more ‘cool’ things during the day.

I am also an alumni of ISD 191 and attended Sioux Trail Elementary, Metcalf Middle School and Burnsville High School. I thought I was never going to live in the suburbs again, however when my parents were ready to sell their home after 40 years of living there and they offered to sell it to us, my husband and I considered it carefully and I can honestly say Sioux Trail was a MAJOR deciding factor in our final decision to move back. The diversity of students at Sioux Trail has grown by leaps and bounds since the 80’s when I attended and it feels like the perfect place for my bi-racial Latino kiddos to be and to be surrounded by others who are culturally similar and different from them.

The need to have a balanced budget and to be a fiscally sound school district is important for the future of 191. However, finances are far from the only thing that should be considered when we are talking about children, education and staffing. My kids and all district children are worth so much more than the cost per square within their school.

I understand that standardized tests do not measure the whole student, but our Reading and Math proficiency test scores at Sioux Trail are one of the highest of the elementary schools in the 191 district. Not only does this speak to the hard working students attending Sioux Trail, but it showcases the amazing teachers and staff at Sioux Trail and the work they do. It is this team that has worked together for many years that forms the welcoming educational community our kids are so fortunate to attend. If Sioux Trail were to close, this team of teachers and staff would be split up, which is something that could never be duplicated elsewhere.

Sioux Trail is not shiny, fancy or new but it IS a staple in Burnsville & North River Hills area as a neighborhood school. The sense of community between the parents, students and staff is something that cannot be put into words or shown on a graph or chart – it is the feeling of belonging that everyone has when they walk through the doors. Since ‘graduating’ from Sioux Trail 27 years ago, I can say it still feels like home and my home school. I am so proud that my kiddos have the opportunity to attend this School of Excellence.

Lastly, it was sited in Dr. Worner’s report that Geographical risk was of utmost importance when considering which schools to close. Sioux Trail Elementary AND Metcalf Middle School house a significant number of students from our Eagan boundaries in the Northeast Corner of the district. Our neighborhood and families feel targeted for the school closure proposal. I can strongly say I know of MANY families who plan to open enroll elsewhere and/or completely move away from Burnsville if Sioux Trail and/or Metcalf schools are closed. Our family will also look into alternative options if S a u i n i g T a i l were to close. Our family believes in 191 and has hope for positive decision-making during this process that affects all of our children.
I am a parent and former PTO President at Sioux Trail. While I agree with closing schools in our district, I do not agree with the recommendation to close both Sioux Trail and Metcalf for several reasons.

My biggest concern is the Geographic Risk the district is taking closing these two schools. In his report Dr Worner states that geographic risk is the “most critical factor” when choosing schools to close and points out that if the district miscalculates open-enrollment caused by closing a building it would actually cause revenue loss where the district is trying to save money.

Later the report concludes that Rahn can’t be considered for closure because of Geographic Risk. Yet Sioux Trail and Metcalf are not identified as a geographic risk, even though parts of the Sioux Trail enrollment area are in Eagan, and Rahn Elementary students eventually attend Metcalf Middle School. The consultant even went as far as saying the Sioux Trail was NOT a geographic risk, which anyone who lives in this area will tell you is incorrect.

There are 7 Elementary schools in other districts within 10 minutes from Sioux Trail. By comparison, Vista View has only 2 schools with the same criteria. If Sioux Trail closed and my son was sent to Rahn instead, it would take me 7 minutes to drive him there and only 2 minutes longer to drive him to Deerwood Elementary in 196. And other families that attend Sioux Trail are actually closer to 196 elementary and Middle schools than they are to any schools in the 191 school district.

With any school closure you force families to reconsider where their children attend school. When you double this change for a family by closing both their Elementary and Middle Schools, you REALLY make families think about what might be best for their family. If their kids are making a big change in schools, perhaps they should make a slightly bigger change and just switch school districts altogether. Assuming our district receives $6,000/child from the state, losing 25 students to another district would cost us over $150,000. Our district can’t afford to take this risk.

Due to the geographic risk in closing a school towards the Eagan end of the district, I think instead it makes more sense to close a school in the middle of the district. Those students could more easily be moved to other schools with less of
a ripple effect than closing a school like Sioux Trail. It would also allow a building closer to the Heart of the City area to be used for other purposes.

My neighborhood has 56 homes. Five years ago only 2 kids in our neighborhood attended ISD196 schools. Today of the 50 school age kids in our neighborhood, 23 open enroll into 196. Without a neighborhood school, going to Rahn or William Byrne will have the same feel as open enrolling into another district because of the distance from our home. And the perceived advantages in the 196 district will usually be the turning point in choosing open enrollment. ISD 191 can’t risk losing any more students to open enrollment and should reconsider this proposal to close Sioux Trail.

Utility costs were mentioned as a reason to close S.T.

utility costs soften
51 utility costs are 4th lowest in district for Elementary Schools.

+ their costs are $5K lower than GP which is identical in building layout & size.

Signed.

[Signature]
Hello School Board members and Superintendent and thank you for the opportunity to speak on the recommended school closings. My name is Tracy Berkovitz and I am a mom of two children that currently attend Metcalf Middle School.

The recommendation for the district to close schools does make financial sense, however, the schools chosen by the Consultant, may not be the best choice for the district. As we know the school district receives around $6,000 per enrolled student, and has 303 students enrolled currently at Sioux Trail. The Consultant, maybe did not understand how close the 196 elementary schools are to the Sioux Trail/North River Hills neighborhood, nor did the Consultant look at how many children in the North River Hills area already enroll out of the district. If the School Board moves forward with closing Sioux Trail, I have learned through recent conversations of many families who are strongly considering or have already decided to leave 191 and enroll out of the district or move if Sioux Trail is closed.

Sioux Trail is also a School of Excellence. This took a year of parents and staff working on this award, to submit papers and backup and essays showing the school was deserving of the award. This award alone shows the amount of support Sioux Trail Elementary has. Along with, no other school in District 191 has received this award. Sioux Trail also on an average has around 100 community members and Parents volunteering throughout the year and helping to make things happen and giving the students a unique learning experience. The voters in the Sioux Trail attendance area have also had some of the highest turn outs in years where we needed to pass School Levys and always votes YES for these levies. By closing Sioux Trail we will lose some of the support of these precious voters and the district needs all the people they can get to pass future levies/referendums and change the perception in the community about our district.

The Consultant noted he did not look at test scores which is interesting with how heavy the state looks at test scores and bases different goals for students on them. Sioux Trail students test scores are significantly higher than the other students at the other elementary schools across the district for MCA tests, etc. With how much we talk about equality and how hard we work to make sure everyone is equal, yet again Sioux Trail numbers are incredibly amazing when we look at how the teachers and staff have managed to reduce the achievement gap for students of color, and students who speak English as a second Language, as 70% of Sioux Trail students met their growth target in 2018, while the state average is 40%.

It is because of the reasons noted previously I suggest the board looks at other elementary schools centered more in the middle of the district, with less geographic risk. Two noted schools that are very comparable to Sioux Trail Elementary in age of the building, and number of students is Vista View Elementary or Gideon Pond. Both these schools, are less of a geographical risk due to where the school boundaries are located, and therefore you are less likely to lose the number of student enrollees to 191, than if you close Sioux Trail. This also alleviates any neighborhood across the district to have to have two of their neighborhood schools closed. By closing Metcalf, MW Savage and Vista View or Gideon Pond, you would have a more equitable change across the district, rather than so heavily closing schools in one section of the district. By doing so, you can alleviate the number of students who will open enroll out of the district, which needs to scale back, so the district can focus towards growing again.

Closing both Metcalf and Sioux Trail would be detrimental to the district in future years. Please reconsider this recommendation and partner with us to make our school district better for the future.
I'm a parent of 3 children, one at Metcalf who is a member of their storied and national champion chess team, and two at Sioux Trail, which two years ago was named a MN school of excellence. My youngest attended Pre-K at Rahn. We've lived in our house in North River Hills for almost 16 years. We love our neighborhood, the schools, and the district. The neighborhood is invested in the schools even if a lot of the residents have children who are grown and no longer attending these schools. We are a tight knit community.

It was extremely disheartening to hear the recommendation from the project consultant to close both of our neighborhood schools. It was also disheartening and confusing to hear the rationale. The most critical factor, in the consultant's own words, is geographic risk, and QUOTE "a miscalculation on selecting a building for closure could result in revenue loss through open enrollment out-migration that may offset revenue savings that were anticipated as a result of the school closure." END QUOTE

The recommendation further states that removing Rahn Elementary from the list of candidates eliminates geographic risk in his estimation. Rahn feeds into Metcalf, one of the recommended closures. The distance between the two schools is 1.4 miles. Assuming these students would be redirected to Nicollet Middle School, the distance would increase to 5.5 miles. Meanwhile, there are 3 other middle schools with distances from Rahn that are under 5 miles away, all located within district 196. The presumption of eliminating geographic risk by keeping Rahn while closing its nearest middle school is faulty when these other options exist. Similarly, Sioux Trail is located a half mile from Metcalf, and 4.5 miles from Nicollet. The 3 middle schools in 196 I referenced range from 3.2 to 5.5 miles from Sioux Trail. Speaking as a parent I can assure you that if the burden of losing both Metcalf and Sioux Trail falls on our area, which feels very disproportionate, I would certainly take a look at all of those schools as options rather than automatically accepting a move to another school within 191, as I will have two children in middle school next fall. I love the schools my kids attend. I love the teachers and staff. I think the district is much better than it often receives credit for, and I would be very sad not to be part of it in the future. However, if the recommendation carries forward as presented, I feel that shows those of us in northeast Burnsville and our Eagan neighbors a lot about our value. Cuts need to be made for the district to be financially viable, we understand. But referring back to the quote from the consultant, a miscalculation of revenue that could be lost through open enrollment could be a very serious mistake. I urge you to consider rejecting or modifying the recommendation as presented. Thank you.

Rahn to Blackhawk Middle School 3 miles
Rahn to Falcon Ridge 4 miles
Rahn to Dakota Hills 4.8 miles
Rahn to Mecalf 1.4 miles
Rahn to Nicollet 5.5 miles
ST to Nicollet 4.5 miles
ST to Blackhawk 3.2 miles
ST to Dakota Hills 5.4 miles
ST to Falcon Ridge 5.5 miles
Hello. I am Michele Steglich. I have three children attending schools in the district. One son is at BHS, another son is at Metcalf, and my daughter attends Sioux Trail. I grew up in this district, as well. I started my education in Mrs. Inge Voelker’s afternoon kindergarten class at Neill, went to Nicollet Jr. High, and graduated from BHS in 1994. I am proud to send my children to District 191 and have been a strong supporter of our schools. I have a “We are One91” yard sign prominently displayed in my front yard. However, I have open enrollment forms waiting for me to fill out to send my children to schools in 196.

I had expected that Sky Oaks-Nicollet would be recommended for closures due to those schools central location and lower risk of open enrollment. I was shocked to learn that Sioux Trail, a Minnesota School of Excellence, and Metcalf were recommended for closure. Because of my neighborhood’s close proximity to 196, many of my neighbors already open enroll. In fact, in my immediate neighborhood the number of students attending 191 is less than those attending 196.

The project consultant, Mr. Roger Worner, rated geographic risk as the most critical factor in determining schools to recommend for closure. To quote Mr. Worner: “Geographic risk—in this Project Consultant’s estimation—is clearly the most critical factor in that a miscalculation on selecting a building for closure could result in revenue loss through open enrollment out-migration that may offset revenue savings that were anticipated as a result of the school closure.”

Mr. Worner then went on to eliminate Rahn Elementary from closure consideration due to geographic risk. This same rationale should be applied to Metcalf and Sioux Trail. The closures of these two schools will open a floodgate of yet even more students into 196. And as I have watched in my own neighborhood, this leads to a domino effect. The loss of such a large number of students will further reduce funding and programming for ALL students in the district.

How does the district plan to overcome yet even more loss of funding? At $6312 per student of state funding, losing even 150 students (a potentially low estimate) for the next school year is a loss of nearly one million dollars to the budget. How many more programs will be cut from schools to offset this loss? My 5th grade daughter was so sad to learn last year that she would not get to participate in 5th grade band at Sioux Trail because elementary band was eliminated due to budget cuts. She had looked forward to learning to play an instrument in a band with her peers, just like her brothers had. Instead, she is taking private clarinet lessons at Schmitt Music.

My heart wants my children to remain in District 191. However, with continued budgets cuts I worry about the future of this district.

I urge the school board to very carefully and thoughtfully consider their decisions. Your decision will have a momentous impact on the future of District 191.
My son attends Sioux Trail Elementary. With others I’m concerned about the geographic risk in closing both Sioux Trail and Metcalf. However what concerns me more is that during this study on closing schools in our district, the intangible things in the schools weren’t considered at all.

It is true that the awards won by a school and test scores from the students can be subjective. But when a family looks to purchase a home and parents are deciding where their children will attend school, these intangible things are the main things that parents consider.

We have had children attending Sioux Trail since 2010. Over that time we have been very pleased with the quality of education received at the school and the ability of the teachers to work together as an amazing team to help learners at all levels. We’ve seen Sioux Trail excel in many areas, and over the past 3 years win several awards. In 2017 Sioux Trail was named a MN School of Excellence. In 2016 Sioux Trail received an award for the CPSS program they developed for their building. And last year Sioux Trail was recognized for its PBIS program.

- In 2017 Sioux Trail was named a Minnesota School of Excellence by the Minnesota Elementary Schools Principals Association (MESPA). Sioux Trail was one of only 8 schools in the state to receive the award that year.
- In 2016 Sioux Trail was named a top award winner in the Humphrey School of Public Affairs Local Government Innovation Awards for its Culturally Proficient School System.
- Last school year, Sioux Trail achieved Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Sustaining Exemplar status through the Minnesota Department of Education.

The awards themselves are an great achievement for the school, but these awards could not have happened without the teamwork of the staff. Sioux Trail has been a leader in our district most recently in developing a Culturally Proficient School System and using it as an example throughout our district. The success of Sioux Trail is evident as they reduced the achievement gap for their students of color and especially for English Language learners. These achievements may be lost if Sioux Trail is closed and its team of teachers is dispersed across the district.
A good analogy to this is a SuperBowl caliber football team. When a team of players comes together and works together well they can play off each other’s strengths to achieve great success. In the following year if that team is broken apart and split onto 5 other teams, it’s unlikely that each individual player can bring enough to the new team to lead them to the same success seen on that SuperBowl team. Likewise when you have a team of teachers working together, winning awards and closing achievement gaps, you are hurting our kids by breaking this team apart instead of giving them more students that can benefit from their years of teamwork and success.

We’ve lived in our home within walking distance to Sioux Trail for 15 years. When our oldest child was about to start elementary school we reviewed all of our options including open enrolling into another district and private school. Ultimately we decided to send our daughter to Sioux Trail because we loved the idea of a neighborhood school and the sense of community that comes with it. Without having Sioux Trail in our neighborhood, I can’t say that we would make that same choice today.
December 4, 2019

ISD 191 Board of Directors -

I am writing as a concerned resident and parent in ISD 191. If the board votes to approve the recommendation of the consultant, to close both Sioux Trail Elementary and Metcalf Middle School, I strongly believe the district will lose a significant number of additional students and families (and funding based on those students), beyond the many in our NE Burnsville neighborhood who have already left the district.

The consultant indicated that geographic risk was the first priority considered in his recommendation, and he said that Sioux Trail was not a geographic risk. This is not accurate. A large majority of the Cedarbridge and Rivers Edge neighborhood has already chosen to attend district 196. My children will both be in high school next year but if I had elementary or middle school age children I would most likely move my children to District 196 based on geographic location. Nicollet Middle School is further from our home in Cedarbridge than two middle schools in ISD 196.

The other factual data I believe should be considered in the Board’s decision is test scores. The consultant did not consider this information because he considered it subjective, however, low test scores is another reason I would chose to leave the district. According to the MN Department of Education website, Sioux Trail has been one of the top three schools for both Reading and Math the past three years and one of the top four schools for Science.

I encourage you to consider closing an elementary school of similar size, with far less geographic risk and lower test scores (e.g. Vista View). I also encourage you to consider leveraging Nicollet for district offices and keeping Metcalf open due to similar geographic risk (Nicollet being further away from families on the NE side of Burnsville than 2 ISD 196 middle schools). I appreciate your consideration of this information in the decision of which schools to close.

Sincerely,

Laura Brown
Today I wish to share my thoughts on the proposal to close Sioux Trail Elementary. There is no doubt that our District is facing difficult decisions that are necessary to weather this difficult time. Doubtless the choices made will touch every person who lives, works, or attends the district.

I am a parent, a voter, a business owner in this district. I was raised by an elementary school teacher and taught to value the importance of the community that develops around our local schools. I have already spent years supporting the teachers, neighborhood and District despite the fact that my oldest only started Kindergarten this year.

The community that surrounds Sioux Trail is a thriving one that has been instrumental in the highly functional environment of the school. Sioux Trail boasts EXACTLY the kinds of accomplishments that the District should be highlighting to help prevent the kind of open enrollment emergency that we are currently facing.

Sioux Trail won a Local Government Innovation Award in 2016 presented by the Humphry School of Public Affairs. It was a Minnesota School of Excellence in 2017. Sioux Trail was a top winner and awarded a grant from the Bush Foundation for it’s work to become a culturally proficient school. These achievements PERFECTLY embody the goals of Closing the Opportunity Gap and fostering Culturally Proficient Schools as outlined by our own District’s Strategic Plans.

This has been achieved by the hard work of the Sioux Trail community that is proven to work together successfully. We have strong engagement, turnout, and financial support for the efforts of our PTO. We also have a highly active electorate that consistently boasts the district’s highest voter turnout AND the highest rate of support for ballot measures concerning funding education.

These proven factors have already contributed to drawing more amazing families into our district as the neighborhood that surrounds Sioux Trail has been experiencing a natural turnover as the population has been maturing into different housing needs. By these measures, the parent-student community around Sioux Trail is among the MOST equipped to welcome additional students who can anticipate an environment where they will thrive.

The Study that was presented to you repeatedly cites Geographic Risk as the most important factor when determining which schools should be closed. As stated in the Consultant’s Study, “Geographic Risk is clearly the most critical factor in that a miscalculation on selecting a building for closure could result in revenue loss through open enrollment out-migration that may offset revenue savings that were anticipated as a result of the school closure”.

By selecting TWO schools in the North East edge of the District, it is obvious that the Geographical Risk posed in this region was tremendously underestimated and you should know that the damage of following through with that choice will be catastrophic. I contend that the Drs Worner were mistaken when later in the study they determined Sioux Trail not to pose a Geographic Risk.

While residents who currently attend Sioux Trail COULD stay in the district by attending William Byrn or Rahn which are only 1 or 2 miles away from Sioux Trail Elementary, it is far more likely that we will push just one mile FURTHER by open enrolling into 196 to Deerwood, Thomas Lake or Oak Ridge Magnet School, all of which are only 3 MILES AWAY.
The truth is, I am have already begun preparing my paperwork to open enroll into 196. And I’m not alone. There is already community discussion about ways that we can help ease the parental burden through ride sharing and carpooling.

The Study that you were presented with spent some time comparing data about Sioux Trail directly with Vista View. It found that they were virtually identical in several factors including age and condition of building. Then it tried to distinguish some characteristics that might differentiate the two. It turns out that Sioux trail happens to have 6% smaller capacity (5k sq fee) and 35 fewer students currently enrolled… a difference of only 11%. Truth be told, the changes in overall enrollment that result from closing any elementary school renders that bit of data a foolish one on which to base this decision.

The Study also contends that NEITHER Sioux Trail nor Vista View pose a geographic risk. I have already outlined the fallacy of that assumption as it pertains to Sioux Trail. On the other hand, students attending Vista View have SIGNIFICANTLY more options that would keep them within the District. Where Sioux Trail Students had 3 options within 3 miles that would result in them abandoning this District, Vista View has FOUR options within that same range that ALL keep them enrolled in this District. The resulting loss of students from the North East part of the district seems a steep price to pay simply because Sioux Trail has a measly 6% fewer square feet.

The proposal in front of you, to close Sioux Trail, especially with the additional proposal to close Metcalf constitutes an attack on the North East region of this district. You try to boast being Community Strong, but this poorly thought out proposal is simply COMMUNITY WRONG and will have disastrous results. According to your own Guiding Change Document, you stated that it would be Unacceptable to have specific groups who feel targeted, create geographic imbalances in inequities, or to perpetuate negative messaging or points of view. That is would be the exact outcome if you close both Sioux Trail and Metcalf.

Don’t be COMMUNITY WRONG.

Laura Schmitz
Good evening, my name is Denise Engberg, I am a 30 year resident of North River Hills. My concerns about these recommended school closings are from the perspective as one of 1200 households in the North River Hills neighborhood.

The newspapers write that ISD 191 has been in a “chronic” state of declining enrollment for a number of years and the decision to close schools has not been an easy one. This is a bitter pill to swallow and the resulting fallout of closing Sioux Trail and Metcalf forces one community to shoulder the closure of both of their neighborhood schools. This possibility is a double whammy both emotionally and economically.

The emotional connection, identity and pride that our community has enjoyed with Sioux Trail and Metcalf over the years will be difficult to lose, but the closure of both schools hits the people of North River Hills neighborhood even harder financially.

Through a conversation with a local realtor who specializes in northeast Burnsville, the closure of one neighborhood school reflects poorly of the area, but for both of the neighborhood schools to be closed will be extremely detrimental to property values.

Even as the news came out about the possible closures of Sioux Trail and Metcalf the market values for homes in the north river hills neighborhood immediately took a hit. She recommended that anyone interested in selling their home in our neighborhood should wait a few years, until the “dust settles and the district turns things around.” she went on to explain “that one of the biggest selling points that influences a future home buyer is the reputation of the local schools and Burnsville has a reputation of being less desirable than that of neighboring school districts”.

If indeed Burnsville has that reputation, why close a school that was recognized as a 2017 Minnesota school of excellence, was awarded by our own district with the 2018 Community of Excellence - Spirit of Excellence award along with other recent local and state recognitions. Sioux Trail could be marketed to work in the district’s favor to help turn around the perceived reputation to the surrounding community.

We are currently losing over 2000 students to other districts every year. If the district abandons the east side with closing half of its four schools it will only compound the problem, encouraging more families with means to leave ISD191 and enroll in other districts that are closer and offer more opportunities for their children. Tax dollars to benefit our community will be lost as well with property values plummeting.

In closing, it was mentioned in several of the realignment meetings that the future boundary changes to the remaining schools would equally reflect the broad scope of demographics that exists across the district.

Shouldn't the closures that are being considered also be equally shared across the district? The loss that these closures bring need to be realized equally and not so keenly concentrated in one area of northeast Burnsville.

You have a choice, do not close both Sioux Trail and Metcalf. This will adversely affect the east side of the city of Burnsville and ISD191 for years to come. Thank you.
Metcalf and Sioux Trail Proposed Closing

Jean Ann Jensen

Time in District

We have lived in the district for 25 years. The year we moved here was the year the High School had an arson fire. Three of my children have attended Sioux Trail, Metcalf and graduated from Burnsville High School. This proposal looks and feels targeted and is causing us to leave the district.

Geographic Risk

Since Geographic Risk is the highest factor, the consultant got it wrong.

There are 4 schools on the East side that are high geographic risk: Rahn, William Byrne, Sioux Trail and Metcalf.

Closing one or more of these schools will cause a large number of students to leave the district.

District 196 is very close to this side of the district and open enrollment is a very viable option, many already do so.

This proposal will not result in fewer students leaving the District but a large number of students.

The District will need to significantly increase the decrease in student enrollment for the next school year.

This will decrease funds available for the budget in the next school year.

Closing Metcalf will increase the number of students open enrolling as District 196 Middle Schools are better quality and closer.

Increased transportation costs for closing Metcalf as a large number of students are farther from the middle school.

School Quality

Intangible factors are what parents look for in a school.

Many parents have moved into the area for the following reasons: Diversity in neighborhood school, quality of neighborhood school, test scores of neighborhood school and quality of neighborhood.

Sioux Trail has been awarded the following: Top award winner in Humphrey School of Public Affairs Local Government Innovation Awards (LGIA) included a grant, Named Minnesota School of Excellence by Minnesota Elementary Schools Principles Association(MESPA)-1 of 8 schools to receive the award in 2017, Achieved Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) sustaining Exemplar status from MN Department of Education.
Test Scores for Sioux Trail: Top 3 Test scores in the District for Elementary Schools for the last 3 years, Sioux Trail results for traditionally low scoring population is higher than many schools therefore closing the achievement gap, test scores in the 50's for both reading and math versus 20's for low performing schools.

Test Scores for Metcalf: Consistently in the 30's over the last 4 years. Metcalf has consistently scored better than Nicollet.

Metcalf is a great school with some growing pains and I had no hesitation sending my 6th grader to Metcalf. Nicollet still has racial problems that have been there for last 25 years with little or no improvement. My children will not be attending a school with a history of problems.

Excellence in a school does not transfer when students move to a different school. The results of a good school stays with the culture of the school. Bringing more students in a good school increases the excellence in the district.
Dear ISD191 School Board,

Our new Latino Parents Committee has taken the task of being the voice of our community. As a first task, we convey our voices to share opinions or suggestions that we ask you to consider in regard to the closure of schools.

With the changes that we will experience in the near future, we want you to be extra vigilant with the next items, without particular order:

- **Number of students per class.**
  - We know this number will increase to a cap that is the most common generally, but since this has not been the experience for many of our teachers, we ask you to consider additional support, to avoid unnecessary stress and for teachers to focus peacefully on educating our children.

- **Extracurricular activities**
  - In activities where excellence has been demonstrated, such as the chess club, please evaluate how to keep the group together and active, as they have fought so hard to be in the place they are now.

- **Discipline**
  - Unfortunately this is an issue that especially at the secondary level in recent years has been worrisome. With the increase of student body, we wonder, what preventive measures are considered?

- **Communication**
  - We hope the language is not a reason for not keeping the lines of communication open. The fact that we parents do not communicate with schools much, does not mean we are not interested, we only trust the education system. Most of the time we find out about problems in a reactive way instead of having talked about the matter preventively.

Thank you very much for your attention. Please know that we are open to share some time with you and see if there is any way we can support our district and community together.

Sincerely,

Pedro Santos, Angelica Montoya, Natividad Reza
Latino Parents Committee representatives
My name is Katlin Ring. I have been at Sioux Trail for 10 years. At Sioux Trail our vision is growing together, putting kids first. Our community lives this everyday.

On election day, Sioux Trail is home to Precinct 4. As far back as the Secretary of State reports, Precinct 4 has approved all levy and referendums at or above exceeding the level they passed the district as a whole. Not only does the Sioux Trail
Community support our schools. They typically have the highest voter turnout in the district. On November 5 they had the most votes in the 1911 referendum. Their 637 votes made up 20% of the yes votes in the entire district.

The precinct 4 community has shown up for Sioux Trail for over 50 years. They not only support Sioux Trail. They show up at the polls every November and special election to support
Our entire one community. They truly embody what it means to be community strong. What we ask of you is that you merge other communities into Sioux Trail. Keeping Sioux Trail open will financially benefit our district for years to come.
My name is Bobbie Kunkel and I have taught at Sioux Trail for 16 years. At Sioux Trail our vision is Growing Together: Putting Kids First. We live, embrace and share this vision every day with the community. I decided to share my concerns with the board tonight as our district is faced with a difficult and emotional decision to close three schools. Currently Sioux Trail is a school that is recommended to be closed at the end of the school year. According to the report Sioux Trail was not considered a geographical risk school. Even though it's on the eastern border of 196 and 191. I am compelled to share that I completely disagree with that factor. I encourage the board to contemplate the following information when challenged with the decision to close ST. Currently, our families have the option to open enroll their children to our neighboring district 196. You must put this into consideration when making the recommendation to close ST. Currently, ISD 191 receives around $6,000 per student enrolled in the district. If a student open enrolls that money goes to the new district the student attends. If 20 kids open enroll its $120,000. Is the district willing to risk this type of financial loss by closing border schools? In my opinion that is like just handing ISD 196 free money that we can and should preserve for the betterment of our district. As an invested educator to the district I
am being honest and telling you ST families are preparing to leave 191. It is discouraging, disheartening and frustrating to hear my first grade students and families share about which schools they are selecting if ST closes. Trust me the schools they are selecting are not 191 schools. ST is a geographical risk. We have the opportunity to embrace these supportive, dedicated and loyal families. We must keep them in 191. I ask that when you make a decision you are careful, proactive and intentional with your considerations and identify an elementary school that is in the heart of the district. It's essential 191 retains families, we must increase student revenue and blaze the trail with the dedicated, talented and committed staff we have in ISD 191. This is our time to let 191 be a role model school district. We deserve it. However, closing two East side schools will automatically make that side of the district an isolated island and is not a financially sound decision for a district that is facing declining enrollment. ST is a geographical risk. What do you want for our community? What do you want for current student population? What do you want for the financial future for 191? What we ask of you is that you merge schools into Sioux Trail. We have the systems, culture, and expertise to support excellence for all students.
Keeping ST open will financially benefit our district for years to come.

ST is a geographical risk.
Hello, my name is Sharron Stalock and I have worked at Sioux Trail for 11 years. At Sioux Trail, our vision is Growing Together; Putting Kids First. We live this vision every day.

We ask that you reconsider the process you are using to close schools in Burnsville.

**Forward not backward.** Instead of looking backward and taking our cues for closing schools from the past. Let’s focus on the future. We can say we are closing school x, y, or z OR we can say we are merging schools x and y to create a NEW entity as we expand our successful pathways programming. Announcing to the community we are merging schools to create something better instead of closing a school rebrands the process and creates a positive perception. Wouldn’t it be better to engage community members in creating something exciting instead of merely closing schools?

**Strategic not reactive.** It is fiscally responsible to react to declining enrollment. With our quick timeline, we are missing opportunities to communicate with families, plan for smooth transitions, and promote the positives to our community. We are in a very unique situation as a district so our staffing and design plans for implantation need to be unique as well so that teachers, principals, staff, families and students can feel prepared and excited for what’s to come. One dad stopped me last Tuesday morning and asked where his children would be going to school next year and when he would know. He wanted to know by January 15th because if he wasn’t okay with the decision, he would put in an open enrollment request for ISD 196. Strategic planning, communication and engaging our families and staff will be key in retaining and reattracting our current population. Our district has communicated how much can be saved by closing a school building. Have we considered the opportunity costs to closing Sioux Trail? How many families will leave and go to a neighboring district and what is the lost revenue attached to that?

**Broad versus narrow.** In this process you have defined school as the bricks and mortar that house the students, educators and staff. We ask that you broaden this definition to include the history, the systems, the culture and the vision created in the school. We have heard many times that we can’t use test scores, systems, or awards in the decisions because they are too subjective. This would be like not using sales, productivity, or market share numbers from a business. To make a well-informed decision, the board must use many educational metrics. Positive data doesn’t just happen, it takes years of focus, creating systems and building on success. There are schools in our district that do not have these embedded systems in place. Do we have
that kind of time with declining enrollment and high stakes tests creating perceptions of us?

Forward, Strategic. Broad. Please keep these ideas in mind as you make decisions that change the trajectory of our district. Thank you so much for listening. What we ask of you is that you merge other schools into Sioux Trail. We have the systems, culture, and expertise to support excellence for all students. Keeping Sioux Trail open will financially benefit our district for years to come.
While the district is facing challenging financial times, and it does make sense to close schools, it doesn't make sense to close schools that will drive more families out, nor does it make sense to close a School of Excellence that has actually attracted families to move into the district. Long before Sioux Trail was validated a School of Excellence by MESPA, my husband and I bought our house, excited that our children would follow in his footsteps and attend Sioux Trail and Metcalf. My children have thrived in that environment, and while emotionally I am sad to think of Sioux Trail closing, it also doesn't make the best financial sense for the district. By closing two schools that border 196 and 197, and have multiple other school options within a short drive of the neighborhoods serviced, you risk more families leaving. I know I have often contemplated moving my children to 196 as I pass 5 elementary schools and two middle schools on my way to work. However, we have believed in Burnsville and the importance of community and neighborhood schools, and kept our children here. With the changes coming, we are investigating our options, up to and including open enrollment in another district. The more families that leave from this decision, the less state funding for the district.

Closing Sioux Trail means additional bussing and transportation costs, as there are many children who are easily able to walk to school that will no longer be able to, as the neighborhood is surrounded by major roads children should not be expected to cross. Closing Metcalf, you will need to bus every child who attends further into the city. What is currently a 10 minute bus ride, will now be 20 or more. This is also allowing more time for middle schoolers and high schoolers to be on the bus together, not to mention making wake up times even earlier, at an age when we know sleeping in is best.

While I know Nicollet is tied to Sky Oaks and houses the district kitchens, all of the suggested uses for Metcalf would allow Nicollet still to be accessed by the district, negating the arguments for keeping Nicollet open, when the consultant said the ideal situation was to have a middle school on each side of the city. Since the buildings won't be shuttered, this argument doesn't hold up. It also displaces the least number of students, and comes with far less geographic risk, as every elementary school that feeds into Metcalf will now have to travel further, and are close to many other out of district schools.
I came here tonight thinking I was going to say one thing, and after listening to other speakers, I've changed my mind. I support the board for having to make the tough decision to close schools. I see that there is much more at hand than I previously realized. My children attend William Byrne and are not facing the possibility of their school closing. In order to stop the "bleeding," so to speak, I don't agree with the choice of Metcalf being recommended to close. Although we would welcome students from Sioux Trail with open arms, I have to agree with everything being said here tonight. Sioux Trail and Metcalf are not the correct choice. We have already seen the decline in enrollment due to this area's close
proximity to the school district. I have to admit with the budget cuts and recommended school closings now more than ever, I feel like I need to step up and do more. I want to be part of whatever movement is needed in this community to change the perception that people have of our district because we face it the whole elephant in this room is why is everyone leaving? That should be the biggest focus and change that comes from what we are currently experiencing. The schools being considered for closure in North East Burns before convinced now need to remain open. It only makes sense to look towards the inner boundaries for schools closed rather than those sitting near the borders of another district. These closers need to be work
that continues to keep capacities near 90% disorders in our district. We have failed as a district to identify how to combat this issue. The found data on the U of M’s website on law school from the Institute of Metropolitan Opportunity with a study on open enrollment.

From 2010 that identifies district 91 as a district which has high open enrollment outside of our district. I want to know why there hasn’t been more of a focus on what we can do differently to attract and keep families in our district.

It clearly has been on a downward spiral for a number of years. If we could have gotten ahead of this maybe we wouldn’t be where we are now. I am someone thought, that is ready and willing to explore and help institute change. I think there will be more opportunity to work on change by keeping Sioux Trail and Metcalf open.
My name is Sarah Henrich. I have been teaching special education at Sioux Trail for 6 years. I also grew up in Savage. I attended MW savage elementary school, eagle ridge junior high at the time, and then graduated from Burnsville High School in 2009, so this district is near and dear to my heart.

At Sioux Trail our vision is Growing together: Putting kids first. We live this vision every day. Something that sets our school apart from others, is our Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). We have had a PBIS team since 2011. The team includes administration, teachers, other staff members such as educational assistants and even a school parent. We also have a student group called PAWS. These students are PRIDE leaders in our school. PBIS is a constant thing that is apart of every school day and surrounds anyone who walks in our school. We have large posters around the school of our students showing PRIDE. We have a school mascot, Shadow, students earn PRIDE cards for demonstrating being prepared, respectful, involved, dreaming, and/or excelling. We were the first school in the district to achieve Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Sustaining Exemplar status through the Minnesota Department of Education in 2017-2018. We achieved the status again last school year (2018-2019). Some measurements or assessments that this team takes are the Tiered Fidelity Inventory (TFI) and the PBIS self assessment survey (SAS). The TFI refers to the different tiers of intervention. Tier 1 is for every student and is universal, tier 2 is targeted for students who may be at risk, and tier 3 is the smallest which is intensive support for a specific individual. We have continuously shown improvement on both the TFI and SAS assessments as a school every year. We have a solid tier 1 (PRIDE) and are also the farthest along in our tier 2 and tier 3 interventions in the district. We have implemented different interventions such as check-in and out for students, we also have token economy or folders for specific students for tier 3 interventions. The district has a PBIS team and every fall and spring the members go on a walk-thru in each school to collect data around PBIS. This fall the district’s ratio for
the amount of positive interactions to negative interactions, was 3.31. This demonstrates what I said earlier, when I said PBI and PRIDE are just apart of us, if you have ever been in a school you know how behavior can significantly impact the culture, the learning, everything. That impacts how students and families feel about a school, which impacts where the students will attend and enrollment. At Sioux Trail we have such a strong and positive culture that it would be a shame to destroy it.

What we ask of you is that you merge other schools into Sioux Trail. We have the systems, culture, and expertise to support excellence for ALL students. Keeping Sioux Trail open will financially benefit our district.
other large equipment.

The students who attend

this school are not necessarily

Sioux Trail is not necessary

their home schools, so transportation

cost also plays a large role.
December 4, 2019

Good evening. I am here tonight as not only the mother of a Sioux Trails first grader, but also as a member of the River Hills Community, where both of our neighborhood schools, Sioux Trail and Metcalf, are being considered for closure. I want to start by saying how strong of a community the River Hills district is. How involved we are in our schools and how families move to our community for this very reason. With both of our schools being threatened with closure, what do you, as a school board, think that says to our community? To our students? Additionally, what it says to the people who were considering moving to our community? We sit on the boarder of the 191 and 196 school districts. We have many elementary schools within 5 miles of us that we could open enroll to. But we don’t. We actually had never considered open enrollment, until now. I know neighbors, my best friend and sister in law, and many others who are also considering selling their home or open enrolling if Sioux Trail and/or Metcalf closes. In fact, with the deadline looming, some have already filled out their open enrollment paperwork. If financial reasons are the justification for closure, then this comes at a great cost for district 191. If just 10 families open enroll one student to another district, then district 191 stands to lose $60,000. Imagine if that amount doubles, or even triples.

In 2017, Sioux Trail was named a “Minnesota School of Excellence.” One of only eight schools in the state to receive the award that year. The MCA scores for the past 3 years at Sioux Trail have been in the top three across elementary schools. In 2018-2019, the Math scores at Sioux Trail were 59 with a score of 52 for Reading - compared to Sky Oaks who had a 29 in Math and 21 in Reading. That is a difference of 30 for both math and reading. Sioux Trail also has a record of supporting marginalized students by reducing the achievement gap for both students of color and EL students. Last year, the percentage of EL students who met their growth target was 70%. The state average was only 40%. Combining these awards and test scores with community and parent involvement, cultural inclusivity, neighborhood location, and the unbeatable school administration – Sioux Trail is a recipe for success. Exactly what parents are looking for when they are searching for a school. To not consider these respectable achievements when making a decision on closures not only shows a lack of acknowledgement and support from the school board, it tells our community – but more importantly our students - that none of these accomplishments matter. When they do.

Our school may currently not be at capacity, but it can be with the realignment of the boundaries. Does it not make more sense to fill a larger more successful school with students? Or to close it and take a risk that students new schools do not meet their academic needs? The answer here is easy. Please do not fail our children who are on a track record for success. Make the right decision.

Thank you.

Jodi Boucher |
Good Evening-

- My husband and I are both teachers working in two different nearby school districts. We have three sons, two currently attend Sioux Trail and we have one at Metcalf. We have chosen to keep our children in district 191 schools because of the excellent teaching staff, neighborhood schools, along with the diversity this district provides. While other districts strive for perfection in the balance of Equity, your teachers at Sioux Trail have it nailed. No matter what each student walks through the door with (or without) each day, the playing field becomes equal for all when they enter through Sioux Trail’s school doors. They feel loved and cared about no matter what they left behind at home.

- Our family has had many long and hard conversations about the fact that it is hard to not feel “targeted” on our end of the district since all three of our children are feeling the impact of the recommendations that the consultant made due to the geographic clustering of these two schools. Having a first grader share that the conversation at lunch or recess includes discussions amongst 7 year olds about “when our school will close” is heart- breaking.

- Our home is located one mile from Sioux Trail in a large cul de sac near black dog park with 16 houses on it. We have lived there for 19 and a half years. We currently have 15 children living on the block under the age of 14. There are currently 7 children on the block that have yet to enter Kindergarten. One of 7 is currently in the pre-k program in the district- and one of my questions is were all of these children included in your projections for a district that is continuing to decline in enrollment? I also ask- How are we reaching out to young parents to let them know that District 191 is a great option? I question where the consultant obtained the data from in order to project how many K students we will have for the next five years, partly because as a district we always have students that don’t register for Kindergarten, they don’t attend any district early childhood programs and they don’t go through preK screening. At Sioux trail we have even had to create an additional K class in previous years in order to accommodate the amount of students we had show up at school that weren’t included in projections for the year.

- In looking through the consultants report, his recommendations do not make sense for our district. Suggesting that Sioux Trail is not a geographic risk is NOT a true statement - especially when you have students attending Sioux Trail that live in and have a home address of Eagan. Another statement was that Sioux Trail had lower enrollment than Vista View (if I did my math correct it was a difference of 35 students?) which seems completely trivial when this number fluctuates from year to year. If this study had been completed two years ago would this factor have swayed the consultant to lean towards
recommending to close Vista View instead? It also talked about Sioux Trail using the most utility costs per student, yet there have been contests in the past when the schools competed in the district against one another to lower utility costs and Sioux Trail won the award so many years in a row that they stopped doing the competition.

- I encourage you to take your time in making your decision. This is a decision that should not be taken and/or made lightly. Taking less than a year to research and receive feedback from resources does not feel long enough when you are a few making decisions for hundreds, potentially thousands of people in this district. Closing schools comes with it a heavy burden of bringing back enough students to "refill" those buildings once they are closed. That is also a hefty task.

- I encourage the school board to re-think their focus and concentrate on schools in the middle of our district. There are several elementary schools that are clustered within 1-4 miles from one another that would provide for easy transportation and rezoning of boundaries within the district while not adding to bussing expenses and amount of time students are spending being transported across the district. The district offices and early childhood centers based in the middle of our district near the heart of the city makes much more sense than focusing on one end of the district. Taking a look at schools that are underperforming whether it is test scores, or by receiving feedback from teachers about “schools they prefer not to be in" may benefit students and staff members across the district. Redistributing students to nearby schools rather than across the district can help promote growth in students in areas that are not currently being nurtured.

- Both Sioux Trail and Metcalf have a history of retaining tenured teachers. When positions open in the buildings across the district tenured teachers bid into those positions because they want to be part of the community on that end of the district. Sioux Trail currently has a reputation for being a school teachers want to be at. When teachers retire from that building they come back to sub. Last year of the 12 classroom teaching positions at Sioux Trail we had only one teacher leave to take a district wide position.

- As a parent if I go online to research schools, how old a building is, the amount of students in a building, the amount of space being utilized and utilities cost per student do not come up on the top of my list of things to weed through about each school.

- You currently have two schools that are recommended for closure that are beacons of light projecting out onto main roads leading into the district. Sioux Trail shines brightly
onto Highway 13 and Metcalf casts its light out onto Diffley and Cedar Avenue. Metcalf is well known nationally for the competitive Chess Club it breeds. While Sioux Trail is not only one of the top 3 elementary schools in the district in both reading and math scores, it has also won several awards including the MN School of Excellence Award in 2017 by the Minnesota Elementary School Principals' Association (MESPA) being one of only eight schools in the entire state to receive the honor that year. A quote from the communication put out by district 191 stated “MESPA cited Sioux Trail's commitment to 21st century teaching and learning. Sioux Trail has been a leader in implementing District 191’s work to become a Culturally Proficient School System (CPSS), which supports personalized learning. The school won a Local Government Innovation Award from the University of Minnesota Humphrey Institute for its CPSS work and success last year. Sioux Trail has also celebrated significant growth in student proficiency as measured by state standardized tests.”

- As a parent that is 100% wanting this exact thing for my own children- I ask how can this truly be one of the schools our district is looking at closing? One that is in the media for doing well, thriving and celebrating student success, growth and diversity!

- On days when I drive my children to school in the morning, I can't help but notice the other busses that come through our neighborhood. There is currently a bus that goes to Seven Hills in Bloomington that stops in the church parking lot across highway 13 from Sioux Trail Elementary School. There is a St. Johns bus that stops daily in our neighborhood up the street from our house. We also have families within a two block radius from us that carpool to Minnehaha Academy, Visitation in Eagan and to schools in District 196.

- The families living within our neighborhood have options. And those of us fighting to keep our neighborhood schools open have chosen to say “Yes” to District 191. We are the parents out there encouraging voters to pass the Levy’s. We are the parents supporting the active PTO’s evident in both buildings that are contributing to putting money back into the buildings. We are the parents that assist in raising money for indoor recess activities for the students at Sioux Trail, helping fund replacing the mats on the stage at Sioux Trail and helping fund a new community park built at Sioux Trail. We are the parents that each year watch friends and even family find options they feel are better for their children than district 191 and yet we have chosen to stay. We are the parents out there telling our neighbors with young children why we keep our students in District 191.
When you are deciding on how you will vote. I encourage you to think about the impact NOT having THESE parent voices out there in support of the district could have on a district that is already struggling. If we don’t have neighborhood schools to fight for there are all these other options that cater to our area already. And many of them provide our students with more programs, options and activities than district 191.

This end of the district should be reconsidered and looked as potential schools to attract students To our District rather than cutting off the Eagan end of the school district. If you Truly feel this end is a detriment to the district, you need to be prepared when people leave, which leads back to the issue the board is focusing on….MONEY...when families leave so do the student dollars attached to them. Which means that ultimately your 2000 students that open enroll will become greater, which ultimately means additional teacher and program cuts throughout the district. By closing these schools you will create a long lasting decline in enrollment adding to the current issue and sad affair the district is already in.

If you vote to close both Metcalf Middle School and Sioux Trail Elementary School my three boys will no longer attend schools in district 191. Proximity wise our home is closer to two middle schools out of our district than Nicollet. My children have expressed their opinion that if they don’t get to go to school with their neighborhood friends they don’t care where they go to school. If as a district we are looking at redoing our boundaries and rezoning our schools we have had to tell them there are no guarantees they will remain with their friends.

The dollar amounts that add up when you equate the years my own first, fifth and eighth grade students still have in school becomes a significant amount of money the district will watch walk away. I know our family is not alone when we look at the options out there and realize that if neighborhood schools Do NOT remain a priority to THIS school district then the world is our oyster.

- If you aren’t familiar with our end of the district I encourage you to drive through our neighborhoods where there are signs of children and families. I see this on a daily basis when I drive through the Sioux Trail neighborhood and see the blow up holiday items in the yards and snowmen in the yards. I could be mistaken but those are clearly signs of youth and a thriving neighborhood. I have yet to see my elderly neighbors that are original owners in the neighborhood build a snowman because they thought it was fun!
Hi, my name is Lisa Bitner. My situation is a little different than most. You see, I have a very special little boy. My 8 year old son has Sanfilippo Syndrome. It’s a rare terminal disease. It causes regression, and will eventually take his life.

My son is in the amazing special education program at Sioux Trail. His team is wonderful. I can tell how much they care about him from the meetings we attend and from how excited he is to go to school. As I said, will regress. Not only physically but intellectually as well. His team is helping him keep the skills he has as well as helping him to learn new ones. For our family this is huge!

This program doesn’t just help though, it helps other special children as well. One of whom I saw run up to him and give him a hug on his birthday. For nonverbal children, connection with peers is difficult. Knowing that my son has friends at school means more than words can say. Not only does he have friends in his special education classroom, he has friends in his typical 2nd grade classroom that he visits a few times a week as well.

What happens if Sioux Trail closes? Where do all these connections go? What happens to his amazing team that cares so much and is helping him continue to thrive? I was told they would do their best to keep the teams together, but like most things in life there are no guarantees.

Sioux Trail isn’t our home school, Gideon Pond is. We were told that Sioux Trail has the best special education program for , so we send him there instead of to our home school with his brother. Money seems to be a big part of the reason for closing Sioux Trail. Please keep the cost of moving Sioux Trail’s special education program in your thoughts. There is a lot of equipment and space required to run this program. Where would everything fit if it had to be moved to another school? How much money would it cost to move and reinstalled all of the equipment?

This may all be too personal, and you may argue that this only affects a small amount of children. But someone has to stand up and speak for those who can’t. Thank you for your time.
December 4, 2019

Dear ISD 191 School Board Members,

I wish to address the proposal to close Marion W. Savage Elementary School, my teaching home for the past twelve years.

Marion W. Savage Elementary has been a pillar of the Savage community since the early 1950s when Savage was still a small farming community. Originally named Savage Elementary, the school was renamed in the 1980s to honor the town’s namesake, Marion W. Savage.

While sentimentality is not a strong point for keeping a building open, I do question the recommendation of closing Marion W. Savage (MWS) for a variety of reasons. I hope the board can provide some clarity and response to my questions.

First of all, the consultant gave the recommendation to keep lower capacity Rahn open for geographical reasons which is understandable based on Rahn’s proximity to ISD 196. However, the boundaries for MWS are intertwined with those from ISD 719- Prior Lake-Savage Schools. We have students in our attendance area with neighbors and neighboring streets attending ISD 719. While 719 has been been bursting at the seams and capping open enrollment, with the opening of a new elementary school in the fall of 2020 and building additions and renovations at all other buildings, open enrollment will be opening up again.

With our strange boundaries, close proximity to ISD 719, as well as Shakopee, how can Rahn be recommended to remain open for geographical purposes, but MWS is not?

Additionally, MWS has approximately twenty-five students attending MWS on a variance from other district elementary schools. Was the number of in-district students on a variance attending MWS looked at when making this recommendation? Were families on a variance ever asked why they sent their children to MWS over another ISD 191 elementary school? Have parents who have children on
a variance been asked if they will keep their children in ISD 191 if MWS closes? I feel these are important questions to be addressed.

On the school district website, the consultant, Mr. Worner, says "the risk of losing students to open enrollment if it’s closed was considered small.” What does small mean? How were the numbers calculated? This is a vital question that needs to be answered. At MWS we have seen a mass exodus of students leaving for neighboring districts and charter schools. As a resident of Savage, I hear the discussions of negative perceptions of our district compared to neighboring districts. While this conversation is not necessarily factual, it does play into parents deciding to send their children to our district. By closing a school that is intertwined with another district’s boundaries, how can we say the risk of losing students is small? I feel more data is needed to support this argument in order for the public to understand why MWS was recommended for closure.

Finally, there is the issue of the age of MWS. Yes, it is the oldest in the district, but it has had numerous updates and is extremely well maintained. According to the facilities report prepared by Mr. Worner, it costs an average of $0.96 per square foot to run MWS. This cost was below that of four other elementary schools in our district--Neill ($1.07/sq. ft.), Gideon Pond ($1.02/sq. ft.), Harriet Bishop ($1.27/sq. ft.) and Rahn ($1.12/sq. ft.). MWS is also larger than these four schools at 82,700 square feet. Why would a larger, more cost efficient school be recommended to close rather than a smaller, more expensive to run school?

Ultimately, we do need changes to our district if we want to be sustainable in the future. However, the recommendation of MWS is puzzling for a variety of reasons. By reaching out to the decision makers of our district, I hope to better understand why this recommendation was made so we can move forward to support our students, staff, families, and community.

Thank you for your work in our district.

Respectfully,

Annie Jarzyna-Ingles

Second Grade Teacher, Marion W. Savage Elementary, ajarzyna@isd191.org
ISD 191 School Board,

I was shocked to hear that the consultant hired by the district recommended Sioux Trail Elementary and Metcalf Middle School for closing. One of the greatest factors for everyone surveyed going into the school closing discussion was geographical risk. Sioux Trail and Metcalf pose a substantial geographical risk to the district, as they are both very close to the Eagan border. There are already students from this area open enrolling into ISD 196 – if the decision to close these two schools is made, a great number more will open enroll or move out of ISD 191. This mass exodus would pose a significant financial loss to the district, amplifying the budget trouble the district is already facing.

Beyond the geographical risk, there are a number of non-tangible factors to consider. Sioux Trail has received numerous awards in the last 5 years, including being named a Minnesota School of Excellence in 2017 by the Minnesota Elementary Schools Principals Association - an award that was only given to 8 schools that year - as well as achieving Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Sustaining Exemplar status though the Minnesota Department of Education for the 2018-2019 school year. Sioux Trail also has a history of high test scores and helping traditionally marginalized students which has reduced the achievement gap for students of color and EL students. I understand that test scores are difficult to compare, but it is easy to see a difference between Sioux Trail and other elementary schools in the district. The consultant did not take these into account because they are difficult to measure, but these are the things that parents are looking at when they decide where to send their children to school. Taking away a school that helps all students from all backgrounds achieve would be a huge disservice to our students and community.

Truthfully, our family has been considering moving for a handful of years. When our oldest started school, we put moving on the back burner because we didn’t want to take her out of her school community and away from her friends. We had even decided if we were going to move into a bigger house, that we should look within the Sioux Trail boundaries. If the decision to close Sioux Trail is made, we will move out of the district as there are other districts that I would rather have my children in. If my child will have to change schools anyway, it will be the perfect time to move.

By not truly looking at the geographical risk of the schools and not considering the non-tangible items, the consultant made a very poor recommendation for which schools to close. I sincerely hope that you take all factors into consideration before moving forward and deciding which schools should be closed.

Thank you,

Alysha Larkin
What is the purpose of school? Why we have schools, is it not to educate children and add excellence to their community. Let us not be so small minded that we strip away the very virtue of which public education is founded. That is something that can't be measured. I am confused and disappointed in the recommendations that the school board has received. First I would like to talk about Metcalf and how this recommendation does not hold water based on it being on the edge of district and that is why you are not considering closing Rahn elementary. The other part is that you say to move the superintendent and their staff to Metcalf. Yet the reason why Nicollet is not being considered to close is because of the food service connection to Sky Oaks. So my question to you is what should I know about the superintendent and their staff that you do not want them in close proximity of the elementary students. Nicollet is the center of the district according to the recommendation. I would think having the superintendent office in the center of the district would be better.

Now onto Sioux Trail, I find it hard to believe that the security of the students is not a concern for our district. The fact our district thinks class rooms without doors is acceptable, especially with recent events that our nation has gone through, is eye opening. The quality of the structures should be considered. How they are set up for learning, is there to much of a distraction from noises from other classes.

I know you do not want to focus on awards but there is a reason why Sioux Trail won the School of Excellence and the other schools have not. Here is what it means to have a school excellence award. And I quote:

"Through the MN School of Excellence program, grounded in national research on high-performing schools, MESPA has created the premier opportunity in the state for validating greatness in a school community," said Jon Millerhagen, MESPA executive director. "This school improvement program examines the entire school community through six national standards, ensuring there is a holistic approach to creating a plan for future achievement and celebrating the unique accomplishments of each School of Excellence." https://www.mespa.net/2017SOE

The fact there is six national standards that Sioux Trail either met or exceeded makes me truly question why this award is a non-factor in closing a school that has infused excellence into this district.

One more point about these closings is your inability to produce district lines that would show how the district will be affected. I am sure the Nicollet parents along with the border schools that are being closed would want to know why their child is being moved to a different school and never told about it prior to it happening. When redrawing the district lines, have them make sense to the people living in the area. If I have to drive by a school to get my kid to their school, why would I not open enroll them.

Lastly according to the superintendent this process is typically longer than a few weeks so the board truly has dropped the ball in all aspects of this process.

Mark Burtnett #26
Nicollet Middle School

When people say Nicollet Middle School is a bad school and has bad reputation to the district, I disagree 100% and I had two students graduate from Nicollet and they both are in honors or high achieving and I have one art achiever and I have one art Nicollet middle school and she is in honors and doing well. She is doing amazing as well and expected and I expect the same faith for her as my graduating student. One may need more work and effort than other and that when we need to come to the same table and stop blaming the school. The district need to work together. Nicollet does awesome job & has alot to offer.
I want to remind people just schools have more diversity does not mean it is bad school. Sky Oaks and Nicoret have the best fields & best community and people from other school feel it is bad schools I feel like they don't want diversity. I love Sky Oaks & Nicoret and it has been foundation schools for my children and I hope people would and it does not mean other and it does not mean others. We can come together as community.
My name is Julie Curtis - I live in the North River Hills neighborhood. And probably unlike most people present today, I am not a current 191 parent or student. I am the parent of a 1-year old. And I am here to tell you I am watching and weighing. I am also a manager of business analysts - business professionals whose job is to identify root cause of business problems, conduct deep analysis, propose solutions, and see those solutions to successful completion.

Future Ready:
Wearing my business hat, I have read the full Recommendation Presentation by consultant Dr. Roger Worner. I was shocked on two fronts: first, that academic performance and opportunity gap closure results, or school culture, were not at all part of the analysis and consideration. For a district whose slogan begins: "Future Ready," this makes zero sense. Second, one of the top factors was geographic risk. To my understanding, very little investment was made to conduct and collect quantitative data. I think you have and will hear tonight from families that that was grossly inadequate.

Community Strong:
Wearing my community member hat, my husband and I are your target demographic for growing this district. We are dual-income and had our choice of every suburb in the TC metro, we are well-networked with many friends who are young families looking to root down. We chose N River Hills, largely because of the neighbors and because of Sioux Trail elementary. When purchasing a home, young families consider safety and quality community neighborhood schools. I have been recommending this school district to friends also looking to move out of the city - I have three families currently looking. Until recently, I have praised this district. But now my message has changed. Now I’m saying: wait. And I myself, for my son, am on the fence. The options I had when purchasing my home are still completely open to me. We could buy elsewhere, we could open-enroll, etc. Right now it is very obvious to me as a prospective parent that the district is at a cross-roads: choose budget as the ultimate decision-maker, or choose values of Future Ready and Community Strong. People don’t enroll their children b/c facilities were built yesterday, or because class sizes are a bit small. We enroll our children on the quality. That is what sells. To close Sioux Trail - your award winning elementary sends a very strong message about the school district to those of us shopping. As of right now, I am waiting to see if this school board will live up to the values shared on the website.

I don’t feel this recommendation will make us Future Ready or Community Strong. I think it is Community Wrong. The school board must consider the message that is being sent to those that are looking to enroll in the coming years. This is the wrong message.