

3:09 – 6:56 am Sunday 1-22-2012

Letter for Presentation regarding Outcomes of Board Meeting Wednesday 1-25-2012

Outline

- I. Introductions to Board Topics
 - A. Survival Short-term
 - B. Long-term Growth and Development of EMID and its Shared Services
- II. Historical Context and Connections Then to Now
- III. Legislature and politicians – Actions to-do and NOT to-do
- IV. Concluding Song, “Lift Every Voice and Sing”

This is an Open Letter to the EMID Board, Concerned Members of EMID Families, and the “Beloved Community”

Good morning.

Happy Sunday.

If you can, right now, please print out this letter and hold it in your hands to read it. It is meant to be a living, breathing, dynamic document that you take with you to this coming Wednesday’s EMID Board Meeting at Harambee. It will be the basis of my presentation there and will be released in various forms to the media to help get the message out that EMID is serious about its commitment to desegregation and integration within its public schools and in the shared services that benefit all of its members because of their Joint Powers Agreement.

This letter is the Guiding Document for anyone to use and share who wants History and Context and a way into doing what is right. As we go forward together, with united voices and compassionate hearts, we will continue the efforts of those who lived, loved, and died serving the cause of justice for all.

Please pause before you read on, and take a look at your actions this past week - from last Sunday, January 15th, the day that would have been the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s 83rd birthday, to this Sunday, January 22. What did you do? How did you spend your time? How did you honor his birthday? Where did you go? Who were you with? How are the people in your life affected by the national holiday meant to celebrate the life of this amazing leader, what he stood for, and why he died before he could see the fruition of his powerful dream? What did you do? 7 days, only 168 hours – 126 if you take out about 6 hours of sleep a night; how long do you spend in traffic, on your commute? Another 6? Eating? Food prep? Family mealtime? At least 15 would be my hope – healthy food, healthy families. We’re down to about 100 hours. Now we have work: 5 days at 8 hours a day. Goodbye 40 more. 60 hours left. “Discretionary Time.” How did you spend it? What do your choices tell you about you? What are your priorities? Your passions? Your commitments? What did you do? Think about your actions and how they align with your values. Just as “we are what we eat,” we eat more than food during the day – we “eat” all that comes to us in a day: the environment in which we live and work – we “eat” the noise around us, the air we breathe, the atmosphere we help create; our surroundings influence us and we influence them. What goes around comes around.

Please think about who you are as a chosen representative on the Board of the East Metro Integration District. Why is the service you provide in this role important to you? Why are you doing the work that continues the effort that moved so many to also serve the cause of Civil Rights in this great country of ours? How are your actions now connected to theirs back then? This letter is an invitation to consider how important your life and your work is. Thank you for reading it and for taking the time to reflect on how your actions offer hope and help to so many.

2. For those of you willing to read on and think about what I have to say, my hope is that you will take with you from this letter words that inspire you. I want us all to spend our days doing what really matters and affects those in our lives and in the world in positive and helpful ways. We have the power to do this. Starting now.

My hunch is that not one of you has printed out this letter. Oh, well. Maybe you will when you are done reading it. So for now, please do this: copy and paste the blue link below onto your browser into a new address and go to the site. There you will find another letter: the one MLK wrote to his fellow clergymen while he was in the Birmingham, AL jail back in 1963. I read excerpts of it to my journalism students when I was teaching at Hastings, MN on the banks of the Mississippi River back in the 1970's. We took a metaphorical journey together back in time then and went down the river, down south through the middle of this great country of ours, back to when it wasn't so great for the "coloreds," for those who did not have the privileges of the white folks, back when even though *Brown v. the Board of Education* 1954 Supreme Court ruling said that we must have equality in education, we did not.

Please take time/make time in your role as an elected official of your school district and as one chosen to serve on the Board of the East Metro Integration District to read Dr. King's letter. It is long. It will take about 20 minutes out of your Sunday. It will be worth it for you. If you have never in your life read a letter this long, please do it now. His words need to be in your mind and your heart as you go into the Board meeting Wednesday night. Thank you.

Dr. King's letter, dated 16 April, 1963; shared by the African Studies Center of the University of Pennsylvania. Please go to:

http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html

In the letter, you will find this famous excerpt: "I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford to live with the narrow, provincial "outside agitator" idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds."

We cannot afford to do anything Wednesday night that does not allow the Legislative process going on at the Capitol and across this nation to play itself out. We do not need to take any action on Wednesday night to cut anything out of the EMID budget. We need instead to acknowledge all the hard work that has gotten us to where we are tonight and take a step backwards to look at all we have accomplished together here on the east side of St. Paul.

EMID was created to serve and to lead as a shining example of collaboration shared through Joint Powers for the good of all the families and taxpayers whose revenue was collected to be spent in integration efforts here in the east metro. We have done that. We should continue to do that. We can do a better job of doing that.

But we should not stop now. What we should do is take a time out and do nothing at Wednesday's Board meeting other than get to know one another better as allies and co-workers in the process of carrying on the Civil Rights Movement. It has grown up since the 1960's to become the Human Rights Movement. We are living in times that connect us more broadly to one another than when Dr. King made his

statement above. Now, thanks to the power of the Internet, “Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere. . .”

We are ALL interconnected, “caught in an unescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

3.

My plea today, Sunday January 22, 2012, is that you reflect upon the words of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. from the year of his death, 1963. Take them into your heart and mind. Consider the impact they have on us in the Here & Now. Believe that the actions you take on Wednesday night in your role as an EMID Board member should be made not in response to the local, “parochial” and immediate “needs” that appear to be so critical at this time, but in response to the greater Cause of why we are here in the first place: to continue the fight to have one and all “be judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

Your actions on Wednesday night will affect our ability as educators within this East Metro Integration District 6067 to carry out our Mission, as mandated by the State of Minnesota. We need to be seen as trustworthy of the investment of tax dollars that have been spent by EMID. We need to be judged by the content of the character of our actions on behalf of those of all skin colors, of all ages, of all backgrounds. We are all in this fight together. We must not let the dissension of times past and in times present stop us from working together on behalf of what is right for all of our children. They depend on us to “carry on carrying on” the movement to make the world more just and fair.

I urge you to take NO action to cut the budget for the shared services among the member districts of EMID. Do nothing until we are made to do so under the purview of the laws of this great state of Minnesota. Stay united in the message that the East Metro Integration District “walks the talk” of desegregation, and that we know “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” Public education is still the greatest, best hope we have to serve the Common Good. Let the dollars stay put, as-allocated, until and unless the landscape of the political process changes after the next legislative session ends and we are forced to look at ways to do this Common Work with fewer dollars. Until then, let us just carry on with all the much-needed work we currently have on our plate and look for ways to work in greater harmony together.

Let the melody of the song I’m sure you know carry you into your Sunday: “Lift Every Voice and Sing” - praises – Let us go to Wednesday’s meeting looking only for more praises, not for budget cuts; that is premature. Let us celebrate our work together on behalf of the Dream, the Legacy, the Mission we share with those in the Civil Rights Movement and its great leader, Martin Luther King, Jr. EMID was created to carry on the effort. We need to do all we can to do so. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Anna Barker, Media Center Resource Teacher
Crosswinds Arts & Science School

EMID 6067