



October 13, 2017

Dear Governance Council members,

I am writing in response to your letter dated September 20th, 2017 regarding Special Education at Badger Rock Middle School with multiple concerns about the content and tone. In MMSD, we are fully committed to serving students with disabilities in an inclusive environment.

We acknowledge that the percentage of students with disabilities at Badger Rock this year is significantly higher than the district average. A small school focused on project-based learning is likely a very attractive option for parents of students with disabilities. It is important to note, however, that no student has been unilaterally “placed” at Badger Rock. One student who applied for admission at Badger Rock was given early confirmation on their attendance at Badger Rock as part of a mediated agreement.

Furthermore, I am concerned about the words used in your letter. Words like “swamped” and “burdensome” make it sound like students with disabilities are unwanted at Badger Rock. Even more, your letter makes it sound as if the Governing Council would like to deny students with disabilities an education in the school simply because they have been identified as a student with a disability. Not only would such a limitation be an illegal act of discrimination, it is the antithesis of everything we stand for as a district and a direct violation of our Charter policy.

Since the start of the school year and around the time you sent the letter, our team has been supporting Badger Rock in designing instruction, interventions and physical spaces to meet the needs of all their students in an inclusive environment. Specifically, Badger Rock staff will participate in professional learning to make their project-based curriculum accessible and responsive to all of their students. We believe that Badger Rock, with support, can provide an education—fully aligned with its focus on urban agriculture-- in which all of its students can thrive.

Our team is happy to join you at the October 25th council meeting to discuss our support and guidance in more detail.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Cheatham