



**BADGER ROCK
MIDDLE SCHOOL**

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Date: September 20, 2017

To: Dr. Jennifer Cheatham, Members of the Madison Metropolitan School District Board of Education

Governance Council

Scott Sterner, Co-Chair
Peng Her, Co-Chair
Dave Ahmann-Community member
Amanda Analla-Community member
Cari Falk-Teacher member
Barry Golden- Community member
Lilian Hanyire-Parent member
Amitabh-Deepa Pal-Parent member
Michelle Palmer-Parent member
Nan Youngerman-Community member

From: Badger Rock Middle School Governance Council

Re: Special education placements at Badger Rock Charter Middle School

Staff

Hong Tran, Principal

Badger Rock Middle School (BRMS) is a project-based middle school with an urban agriculture curricular focus. We are a school of innovation based on cultural relevance, sustainability and resilience, design and inquiry, and sense of place. BRMS empowers its students to thrive as citizens, entrepreneurs, leaders, collaborative partners, and innovators, working to restore the natural world and better the cultural environment while creating just, nourishing, and sustainable communities.

As we begin the first of a three-year charter school contract, we find ourselves swamped by the fact that 32 students (35% of our total student body) have special educational needs as determined by their IEPs. Of the 32 students, 69% are in the behavior category (e.g., autism, emotional behavior disorder, or other health issue). This is far higher than any other school in the Madison Metropolitan School District and almost twice the District average.

Despite our best hopes and expectations for continuing to build on our growth and success from the 2016-17 school year, the District has created a burdensome situation for students, staff and our parent community by "placing" so many students with IEPs at Badger Rock. BRMS is not a School Based Alternative (SBA), as stated in a recent referral by MMSD staff. We are a project-based school focused on urban agriculture. Our school's structure and urban agriculture emphasis does not lend itself to such a high number of IEP placements. The unusually high placement rate does a disservice to students, families, teachers, and the school's ability to meet its Charter requirements. Teachers are unable to implement the project-based curriculum they created over the summer with our district-approved consultants.

Additionally, the Badger Rock Middle School Charter states, in section 6.01:

The Badger Rock Middle School Governance Council shall have autonomy and decision making authority over:

- **Marketing and registration including recruitment and selection of students**

While we have worked successfully to market Badger Rock and increase enrollment for the 2017-2018 school year, District staff's referrals, as described above, are problematic.

We request that Alex Fralin, Chief of Schools – Secondary; Mike Hertting, Chief of School Operations; and John Harper, Director of Education Services attend our next Governance Council Meeting on Wednesday, September 27th, at 4:30 pm at Badger Rock.

Additionally, we request of MMSD Administration and the Board of Education that any further "placement" of students at Badger Rock Middle School cease immediately. By charter, BRMS has the autonomy to interview students and parents to determine whether the BRMS environment is a good option for their child. We also request the opportunity to work collaboratively with the Administration to develop an application process allowing BRMS Governance Council and staff to participate in the application. We believe that this will be best achieved by creating an enrollment process in which parents apply to the school for admission, and not just to the district.

Sincerely,



Scott Sterner
Co-Chair
BRMS Governance Council



Peng Her
Co-Chair
BRMS Governance Council