

VIEWPOINT:

Osseo Elementary School staff response to board

(Editor's Note: The following is a letter from the Osseo Elementary staff directed to the Dist. 279 school board in response to the closing of the school.)

It is with great sadness and frustration that this letter is being written to you on this last day of school for our students. This community of wonderful and caring members needs you to know and understand what you have done. This letter is from the heart of what makes us — Osseo Elementary — a phenomenal place that inspires and prepares all students with the confidence, courage and competence to achieve their dreams.

We have chosen to exhibit grace and dignity while you chose to make decisions that would eventually impact our entire school community and professional lives. We are well aware that everyone loves their school, just as we love Osseo Elementary. We trusted you to be fair and responsible in your process. We listened as you listened. We heard as you heard. Many people spoke out for reasons to close Osseo Elementary and reasons to keep us open.

We knew and trusted you

would thoughtfully and with great care research and investigate each reason.

We were wrong. You only chose to listen to the Team Works proposal. With the mid-year budget adjustment, two of your board colleagues encouraged you to consider using this adjustment in order to hold off on closing/repurposing any buildings within our district.

The school board said they were committed to keeping an elementary building in each community that represented our district. You closed the only elementary building in this great city of Osseo.

One of our district representatives presented misinformation about the cost of keeping Osseo Elementary open at the school board open forum March 16. Were you aware of this misinformation? We were, we checked. It was your responsibility as a board member to check. It's part of your job.

Why is this a big deal now?

Had you known that piece of information, it should have leveled the playing field of what buildings to close. This makes us sad and even angry.

Now that we have started to venture out into our new

assignments, we see firsthand that Osseo Elementary, though 54 years old and the oldest building in our districts, is in incredible condition. We literally shine! Our halls are bright and cheerful. Our rooms and halls have new lighting and large windows that show off how clean and well-kept Osseo Elementary is. Our building has been well-maintained during its 54 years. Our classroom furniture reflects our commitment to giving our students the best learning environment in which to learn. The entire staff takes care of this building as if it were our own home. We all take pride in keeping Osseo Elementary in top-notch shape.

We know the roof needs repair. It will be repaired whether we are open or closed. Did you know that? So then, why did you choose to close us? Our student enrollment is the same as many buildings with similar capacity for next year. That reason is gone.

We are not as expensive as the district told you. That reason is gone. We are left wondering why.

So now, please listen to the environment you chose to close.

Osseo Elementary is a suc-

cess story. Here at Osseo Elementary we have an environment that is conducive to learning, consideration, caring, respect, challenge and responsibility. We have achieved these and many other critical character traits because every single adult that represents Osseo elementary puts forth the same thing we expect from our students. Had we stayed open, we would have become an accredited Responsive Classroom site through the Northeast Foundation for Children, a rather prestigious recognition.

We have successfully integrated our learning communities and removed all lines that tried to separate us. Isn't that what the magnet schools are trying to do? We did it here at Osseo Elementary.

Osseo Elementary is great at what it does because of all the people that love Osseo Elementary. There is not one individual or one event that makes us great — it is a collective and collaborative effort on people past and present who have contributed to the profound impact that we have and have had on all who walk through our doors. We are truly a community school because

the community of Osseo embraces this school. Osseo Elementary returns that embrace through the patronage to the community in the stores and houses. We are a part of this town and this town is a part of us. Where else do you see this happening? None of the other elementary buildings in this district has a tie to their town like we do. None of them.

So, sure we know there are a lot of incredible teachers in our district and in our schools. They are our colleagues. We respect them and their hard work. We get that. We also know the district ad to be fiscally responsible and close at least two buildings. We get that too.

But still the question remains for us. It will not go away until you can explain it with facts and not lies and mistrust.

Why close Osseo elementary, rather than a different school that lacks the pure and simple quality that our building has physically and academically?

We don't want to insult or offend other buildings, but there are at least a couple that are in very tough shape similar in size to us. We are not. This

makes no sense to us when you compare schools from this perspective.

We will go on. Our students will go on. Children are resilient and we are professionals. Next year will bring change and we will grow and celebrate the changes put before us. We really will. However, we wanted to leave you with these parting thoughts as you move forward to try to revive this once great district.

— Think about how you make your future decisions and who you listen to and believe in.

— We chose to believe in you and the process, and you let us down.

— You have forever changed the community and the city of Osseo.

— You have lost the faith and confidence that we as a staff had in you as responsible decision makers for us and our building.

— The closing of this incredible building will be the legacy of your service on the school board.