MINNEAPOLIS – The Minneapolis Board of Education at its September 22 meeting voted to amend and approve the recommendation for Changing School Options, a comprehensive plan to create financial sustainability for the Minneapolis Public Schools. The final vote was unanimous in favor of the recommendation.

The amended plan will save approximately $7.5 million in operating costs every year, prevent severe cuts in academics and accomplish five key objectives: educate students closer to home, right-size the number of buildings with current enrollment, focus resources on fewer magnet programs, build programs of adequate size and minimize disruption while maintaining choice and flexibility.

Board Director Carla Bates offered an amendment to the plan that would withdraw Pratt Community School from the closure list. The amendment passed by a unanimous vote.

Board Director Pam Costain offered an amendment to the plan regarding the A4 attendance area, which is made up of the Bryn Mawr and Harrison neighborhoods. Under the amendment, students in the Bryn Mawr and Harrison neighborhoods would have access to Zone 1 schools for kindergarten through eighth grade and would have the option of attending high school programs in either Zone 1 or Zone 3. The amendment passed by a vote of 5 in favor to 2 opposed.

Board Directors offered additional amendments which were discussed and considered but did not pass.

Changing School Options creates three regional zones for transportation. With the exception of a few citywide options, students will attend an elementary, middle and high school in their zone. This three zone transportation model reduces transportation costs, retains choice for families since each zone offers at least three magnet options in addition to a community school and allows students to attend schools closer to home.

Families with children enrolled in a citywide special education or English Language Learner program will continue to receive transportation across zones. Based on the state's open enrollment law, families still have the option to enroll at any school in the city provided there is space available and they provide their own transportation.

Students currently attending magnet, middle or high schools outside of their home attendance area or zone will have the option of grandfathering, or being guaranteed a seat in their current school, but must provide their own transportation. Students attending a community school who live outside of their school's attendance area will be able to continue to attend if space is available, but must provide transportation.

The plan closes six buildings – four schools and two administrative centers that also house alternative programs – at the end of the 2009-10 school year: 1250 West Broadway; Longfellow; Folwell; the Lehmann Center; Emerson, which would move to the Anwatin/Bryn Mawr site; and the Brown Building, which housed Anishinabe Academy. Anishinabe has already moved to Sullivan for this school year. The Anwatin Middle School program will be phased out over the

next two years; students who are in sixth and seventh grade at Anwatin may continue at the school through their eighth grade year.

The K-5 portion of Emerson Spanish Dual Immersion School will move intact to the Bryn Mawr/Anwatin site, with existing transportation services for those outside of the walk zone. A new combined Dual Spanish Immersion-International Baccalaureate middle school program will be created at the Bryn Mawr/Anwatin site to serve Emerson, Windom and community sixth through eighth graders from the Bryn Mawr and Bethune attendance areas. This program would also serve current seventh- and eighth-grade Anwatin students.

The number of magnet schools will be reduced from 16 to 12 in order to concentrate resources on fewer magnets to strengthen their programs. Schools that are no longer magnets may choose to retain their themes. Current magnet schools that will no longer have magnet status are Cityview and Kenwood Performing Arts, Northrop Environmental and Pillsbury Math, Science and Technology. The Park View Montessori program will close.

MPS will implement a full-scale transition plan over the next year to ensure the changes go as smoothly as possible for students, families and staff. Please call 612-668-0230 or visit www.mpls.k12.mn.us
for more information.