September 28, 2026

Chair Collin Beachy, Vice-Chair Kim Ellison and Members of the Board of Education
Minneapolis Public Schools
Davis Center
1250 W. Broadway Ave
Minneapolis, MN 55411

Dear Chair Beachy, Vice-Chair Ellison and Members of the Board of Education,

This letter is on behalf of the Prospect Park neighborhood in response to the Transformation Proposal presented by Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS), and in support of Pratt Elementary School, which under all three proposed options would cease operating as a community elementary school after the 2026–2027 school year.

There is broad and deep support in Prospect Park for public schools in general and MPS in particular. Over the last 50+ years of direct community member experience, we have found that elementary school students, particularly students of color and students from low-income families, benefit from smaller community schools like Pratt. MPS's recently presented plan does not appear to have properly considered the impact of recent boundary changes on Pratt's enrollment, potential future population growth in Southeast Minneapolis, and expected changes to Glendale Townhomes in the next two years by MPHA. In our view, closing Pratt would have an outsized and unjustifiably negative impact on our children, neighborhood, and city. Therefore, Prospect Park's Board of Directors and Community Members request the School Board:

- Vote to delay the Transformation
- Provide more details regarding enrollment plans, costs, and funding priority decisions
- More directly engage with our neighborhood leading to any decisions

Pratt has a long, rich history. It opened in 1898 with 37 students and one teacher and grew along with the city and neighborhood through the baby-boom years. Since the 1970s, the school and neighborhood have experienced repeated citywide educational initiatives that have significantly disrupted the school and community, often without accomplishing the stated goals. After closing as an elementary school in 1982, Pratt immediately reopened as a community education center; elementary classrooms returned in 2000, and the school subsequently grew again into a K–5 school. Thanks in part to the $2,954,035 invested in the school by MPS between 2014 and 2023[1], Pratt has been valued by students, parents, teachers, and community members as an urban school able to provide differentiated and supportive experiences for the

[1]https://www.mpschools.org/about-mps/school-transformation/previous-engagement-and-reports/building-reports/pratt-elementary-school

wide range of students in the community. This experience is consistent with educational research finding benefits from smaller schools, particularly for disadvantaged students, while recognizing that school size alone does not determine educational outcomes.[2] Specific to Prospect Park's unique neighborhood history, our community has partnered for several years with Pratt school on the incredible Jackson Family Project. The project honors the Jacksons' resilience, creativity, and activism in the face of segregation and discrimination, and it extends their influence into current Pratt school classrooms and our neighborhood's community life.[3]

Progress is never steady and systems are never perfect. The COVID-19 pandemic, changes made by Minneapolis during the Comprehensive District Design (CDD), the teachers' strike, and staff turnover have all disrupted Pratt School and our community. In the last 5 years, Pratt's enrollment has remained below previous levels, which may make Pratt appear to be a candidate for closure or consolidation; however, the full picture is more complicated. MPS's 2024 facilities review counted 211 students at Pratt, or 85% of the building's design enrollment, which the district itself classified as "efficient" building utilization. And, before the attendance boundary changed due to the CDD, between 2015 and 2021, Pratt had an average enrollment of 274 students[4]. We would like to see at least one option considered to restore Pratt's previous enrollment and keep it open to continue the benefits from all of our recent investments.

Communities like Prospect Park—with multigenerational families, recent immigrants, university students and faculty, renters and homeowners, and households across a wide range of incomes—are constantly re-forming themselves. In Prospect Park, one of the main institutions through which we do so is Pratt school. This was visible last winter during the federal government's Operation Metro Surge, when neighborhood networks and relationships built through Pratt helped residents share information and support affected families.[5]

Closing Pratt now would have a negative impact on the children and community members of Prospect Park, the school district, and Minneapolis. Existing families with students at Pratt would lose their neighborhood school and, depending on the Transformation option and home address, would instead attend Pillsbury, Dowling, or Webster, all of which are many miles away. Families with students would not be attending school with their neighbors. Everyone in Prospect Park would lose a neighborhood institution that generates connections among generations of residents; crucial to sustainable communities. Families at Glendale Townhomes could face even more disruption. We understand that MPHA is planning a major redevelopment of Glendale, with first-phase construction tentatively scheduled for late 2027 or early 2028 and relocation of residents during construction. For some families, this could overlap closely with the loss of their neighborhood school. The Glendale project alone plans to add 100+ new households to the neighborhood, and the interactive map the district shared projects a 34.5% increase in enrollment over the next ten years for our area of the city[6]; closing the last remaining[7] community elementary school in Southeast Minneapolis does not make sense.

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[2] Kathleen Cotton, *School Size, School Climate, and Student Performance*. School Improvement Research Series, 1996.
[3] *Prospect Park's Jackson family inspires generations of neighbors.* Minnesota Daily, 2 April 2025
[4] https://elementaryschools.org/directory/mn/cities/minneapolis/pratt-elementary/272124003434/
[5] *MPS Parent: The Cost of Closing Minneapolis Schools.* Star Tribune, 22 September 2026
[6] University Community Enrollment and Projected Change, Interactive Map, September 2026
[7] Marcy Open now a magnet school; Motley, or Southeast Free School closed 1982; Tuttle closed 2007

Most importantly, it is not clear what benefits the proposed plan would have. The MPS Student Experience is ambiguously defined and there are no concrete steps indicating what would change under this plan to improve it for our community members. There does not appear to be a clear accounting of the savings the district expects from the plan, let alone the priorities for those savings. The assumptions beyond projections of future enrollment in the baseline and planned scenarios are not clear and appear unreasonably optimistic, especially given the recent history. And, despite the district's claims, Prospect Park's community members have not been engaged in any meaningful way, given the major changes proposed and the impacts to our lives.

One of the unique things about Prospect Park is our historical memory and experience sustaining an urban community in the face of constraint, change, and entropy. We are used to dealing with capital maintenance, budget challenges, diversity of opinion, generational evolution, bureaucracy, and changes in public policy and educational philosophy. We understand the nature of the challenges facing the city and, specifically, our schools. We'd welcome a well-thought-out, clearly presented plan that addressed the many real issues facing MPS—money, buildings, staffing, enrollment, and equity. But the district has not yet demonstrated that the benefits of this plan justify the costs and disruption it would create for our neighborhood and others.

We need more details from MPS, time to understand those details, and time to provide feedback through a democratic process. Moving ahead with the plan now would be unserious and reckless. Therefore, we urge the School Board, Superintendent, and our elected representatives to reconsider the proposed Transformation options and closure of Pratt, and vote to delay the plan.

Finally, this issue is not just about schools; it is about the kind of city we are going to live in. Pratt is almost a spiritual center for the neighborhood, and we cannot quietly accept its closure. While the challenges and opportunities facing MPS and our city will not go away, the best hope will be to leverage, rather than alienate or abandon, communities such as Prospect Park and our community elementary schools like Pratt.

Sincerely,



Eric Amel, FAIA
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c. Minneapolis School Board: Chair Collin Beachy, Vice-Chair Kim Ellison, Abdi Abdul, Joyner Emerick, Sharon El-Amin, Lucie Skjefte, Adriana Cerrillo, Greta Callahan, Boisey Corvah, Zion Webster, Lori Norvell (Clerk); Pratt Elementary School Principal Justyn Burgess;
Mayor Jacob Frey, Ward 2 Council Member Robin Wonsley, PPA Staff, PPA Board of Directors.