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PHOTO BY CHRISTINE SCHUSTER

Sioux Trail Elementary is one of eight Burnsville-Eagan-Savage district schools operating significantly under capacity, according to a recent report by the district's financial consultant that recommended closing several schools.

DISTRICT SHOULD CLOSE SEVERAL SCHOOLS, REVIEW FINDS

BY CHRISTINE SCHUSTER
cschuster@swpub.com

Burnsville-Eagan-Savage district officials should close three schools at the end of next school year to save money as enrollment declines, according to an expert evaluation completed this month.

The district saw its lowest enrollment figure in a decade with 8,334 students last year, and the district projects the student count will drop to around 7,600 by 2023.

The review, completed by the district's fi-

ancial consultant, recommends closing two elementary schools and one middle school and also selling off the 140,000-square-foot Diamondhead Education Center.

A specific action plan regarding the next steps for closing one or more facilities is expected to go before the Board of Education next month.

"This is a matter of financial need and not academic decline or any kind of decline in our schools as far as quality," Board of Education Chairwoman Abigail Alt said in an interview Tuesday.

The Educational Programming and Fa-

cility Review, provided by the Baker Tilly consulting firm, found underutilized facilities significantly contribute to the district's financial strain.

The district's unassigned general fund balance, which acts like a savings account for day-to-day expenses, shrunk by 42 percent from \$17.5 million in 2012-13 to \$10 million at the end of 2017-18 and is expected to keep falling this school year, according to the district.

District officials have cut the budget

Schools to 2 ▶

WEATHER

County tornado

Small twister hits farm

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HEALTH

Lake Minnetonka outbreak

Cause unclear but wasn't E. coli

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ENTERTAINMENT



Lakefront Music Fest

Thousands descend on Prior Lake

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