From "Susan Cousins <susan.cousins@bvsd.org>" <susan.cousins@bvsd.org>
Subject **Your Story- Declining Enrollment**
To Rob Price <rob.price@bvsd.org>
Date February 5, 2026 3:59:58 PM MST

Susan Cousins
Operational Services Communications Manager
O: 720-561-5793
M: 720-935-2733

BOULDER VALLEY
SCHOOL DISTRICT

---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Randy Barber** <randy.barber@bvsd.org>
Date: Wed, Feb 4, 2026 at 2:13 PM
Subject: Fwd: Your Story- Declining Enrollment
To: Susan Cousins <susan.cousins@bvsd.org>

Here's what I got back from one of the teachers I reached out to...

---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Susan Courson** <susan.courson@bvsd.org>
Date: Wed, Feb 4, 2026 at 1:43 PM
Subject: Re: Your Story- Declining Enrollment
To: Randy Barber <randy.barber@bvsd.org>

Hi Randy,
Attached is my response regarding declining enrollment and what a small school looks like in the classroom. I hope it provides a quick snapshot of the positives and challenges of what teachers are facing. If you need more, please let me know.
Have a great day,
Susan

On Mon, Jan 26, 2026 at 12:07 PM Randy Barber <randy.barber@bvsd.org> wrote:
> Susan,
>
> Thank you so much for your response. Outstanding.
>
> My plan was to interview and your principal, but also would be fine if you want to start by putting your thoughts onto paper.
>
> We don't have a firm timeline, but within a couple weeks would be great.
>
> Randy

On Mon, Jan 26, 2026 at 11:54 AM Susan Courson <susan.courson@bvsd.org> wrote:
> Hi Randy.
> Thanks for reaching out. I think to personalize the situation a bit rather than just numbers is an important story to tell.
> Yes would be honored to share my story. Can I write something up and share it with you? If at that point you want me to speak it or have someone else share it is fine.
> When are you thinking you want it?
> Susan
>
> On Mon, Jan 26, 2026 at 8:01 AM Randy Barber <randy.barber@bvsd.org> wrote:
> > Susan,
> >
> > I hope you had a good weekend.
> >
> > I'm reaching out because I've been thinking about how we might better help parents and staff across the district understand what it's like to teach in classrooms impacted by declining enrollment. I know you shared a bit about it at LRAC (at least I think it was LRAC) and I thought it might be good for a wider audience to hear your first hand experience.
> >
> > I wanted to ask whether you might be open to sharing your experience more broadly, in whatever way feels comfortable to you. I think voices like yours can help build understanding and context for the realities our educators are navigating.

I'm very happy to connect by phone to share more about what I have in mind and to answer any questions you might have. Please let me know if you have a few moments to connect this week.

Thanks for considering, and I appreciate what you do for the children of BVSD.

Randy

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Randy Barber | APR
Chief Communications Officer
Office: 720-561-5823
Mobile: 303-507-6694

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Susan Courson
1st Grade
Coal Creek
MA Literacy Specialist

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Attachments:

- Enrollment- a teacher's perspective .pdf

Hi Randy,

I wanted to share a classroom-based perspective on the enrollment decline Boulder Valley School District is experiencing and how it impacts students and teachers on a daily basis.

As a teacher in BVSD, I understand why smaller school sizes can sound appealing. Individual attention, close-knit communities, and familiarity are all positives. However, what often gets lost in the conversation is that very small schools come with significant challenges that directly affect the quality and consistency of education students receive.

Colorado has seen a decline of nearly 10,000 students statewide, with both BVSD down approximately 500 students. While the numbers are often discussed at a district level, the real impact is felt inside classrooms every day.

One of the biggest challenges is teacher collaboration. In smaller schools, teachers are frequently the only one at their grade level or content area. This limits opportunities to plan together, share ideas, analyze student work, or problem-solve. For newer teachers, this is especially difficult—there are fewer mentors available, fewer models to learn from, and less daily support to help them grow into strong educators.

Special education and advanced learning services are also stretched thin. Students with IEPs, gifted needs, or learning gaps require consistent, specialized support. As staffing decreases, more of that responsibility shifts onto classroom teachers, who are already managing full classrooms with limited resources. Administrators do what they can, but many are stretched across multiple roles or even multiple buildings.

When a student needs additional emotional, academic, or behavioral support during the day, there is often no one available to step in. Teachers are left in the impossible position of choosing between supporting one child in crisis or maintaining the learning environment for the rest of the class.

Specials programming—art, music, and physical education—has been significantly affected. Many specialists are now part-time and travel between schools, often without proper classrooms or equipment. Art teachers have taught on stages without tables or supplies. Music teachers are placed wherever an empty room can be found, if one exists at all. In one three-week rotation, my class received music only once due to scheduling constraints. In some schools, there are 3 different music, art, and PE teachers to service the whole school.

Student grouping and placement has also become more challenging. Teachers are intentional about balancing academic needs, learning styles, and personalities to set students up for success. With fewer sections and limited flexibility, those thoughtful groupings become harder to achieve, sometimes to the detriment of students.

Beyond instruction, essential support services are reduced or split across multiple schools: counselors, psychologists, social workers, speech therapists, physical therapists,

paraprofessionals, and even principals. These professionals do their best, but part-time schedules across two to four schools raise real concerns about consistency, responsiveness, and compliance with IEP requirements.

Operationally, schools are maintaining large, half-empty buildings with the same needs for meal services, custodial staff, and basic maintenance—diverting funds away from student-centered resources.

All of this leads to inconsistency in educational quality. Not because of a lack of effort or care—teachers are adapting constantly—but because collaboration, staffing, scheduling, and resources are fragmented.

From a day-to-day classroom perspective, this shows up in:

- Limited or inconsistent specials schedules
- Fewer course offerings and intervention groups
- Reduced materials and supplies
- Emergency situations with little to no coverage or support

The question then becomes: what is the most responsible path forward for students? There is no one-size-fits-all solution. However, when looking at the full picture—educational quality, staffing, resources, and fiscal responsibility—it is worth asking whether thoughtful school consolidation could allow us to pool resources, stabilize staffing, improve collaboration, and refocus funding on students rather than underutilized facilities.

If consolidation is considered, clarity around the *why*, the *benefits for students*, and the *timeline* will be essential. Teachers and families need to understand how these decisions connect to better learning conditions, not just financial necessity.

I appreciate the opportunity to share a classroom-level perspective and hope it contributes to a more transparent and student-centered conversation.

SUSAN COURSON
BVSD Teacher