From "Randy Barber <randy.barber@bvsd.org>" <randy.barber@bvsd.org>
Subject **Your scan (Searchable PDF to Self)**
To "randy.barber@bvsd.org" <randy.barber@bvsd.org>
Date April 10, 2026 5:30:57 PM MDT

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Attachments:

- scan_randy.barber_2026-04-10-17-30-10.pdf

Thank you so much for coming and listening.

I'm not here to say "keep everything the same." I know you are making difficult decisions for the sake of the district as a whole, and we at Whittier have also felt the impact of declining enrollment: part-time specials teachers, part-time librarian.

But I would be negligent if I didn't share what makes Whittier such a unique gem in the Boulder community, and ask that you consider ways to preserve these qualities as you make your decisions.

Whittier is a place where diversity, internationalism, and open-mindedness are our bedrock.

A parent asked me recently, *"When was Whittier desegregated?"*
I was proud to answer: **it never was segregated.** *Early photos show Black and white students learning together.*

We are named after John Greenleaf Whittier, a famous abolitionist.
One of our black alumni, Grace Lingham, attended Whittier from 1907–1913. In an interview with the Carnegie Library in the early 1990s, she shared that she couldn't recall discrimination at Whittier, though she did later in Boulder.

Just last week, a mom of color told me she had moved her child between several schools and was ready to homeschool. When she walked into our building and saw a photo of Grace holding hands with a white classmate, she thought, *"Maybe this school is worth a try."* *Show photos*
Today she says her family feels welcomed and supported like nowhere else, like they belong. That story is true for many of our families.

Two historical decisions shaped Whittier in lasting ways.

First, during the last consolidation in the late 1990s, the district and school board prioritized desegregation. Boundaries were intentionally drawn for Whittier to include the mobile home parks of San Lazaro, Vista Village, Mapleton, Woodland Park family housing, and part of Newton Court, while also maintaining west Boulder neighborhoods like Mapleton Hill and the Casey area. The result was a socio-economically and culturally diverse school community.

Second, in this same time period- and for the same reasons- Whittier adopted the IB program. For over 20 years, IB has provided a framework that doesn't just include diversity, it elevates it. Students learn required standards through big ideas: if they study the American Revolution, they explore what it means to take a stand, across time, cultures, and even as kids in their **own** communities.

Jane Goodall visited Whittier because of our Roots & Shoots work.
We partner closely with student action organizations like GUB and Classrooms for Climate Action.

This is unique in Boulder. We are the only IB Elementary (PYP), while all neighboring districts have multiple.

Whittier has also been a haven for families from around the world- Mexican families, Bosnian refugees, and today Afghan and Sudanese families. Amala from the district office sent her children here. Our custodian from Bosnia has been here over 25 years and sent both his son and grandson (open-enrolled). These connections run deep.

A few years ago, Rob, you suggested we might need to "rebrand IB" as we weren't used to the need to promote from when we had no room for open enrollment. We took that to heart, clarifying our mission for prospective families. We didn't always do that with the board, and I worry some of you may only remember our legal challenges.

But today, over 40% of our students open enroll *in* to Whittier, many because they value diversity within an IB framework. This has actually **increased** our diversity. Many families are mixed-nationality or families of color whose children aren't captured in our multilingual student statistics. My own daughter's class includes families with one parent from Russia, Armenia, Japan, Italy, and France, as well as the Mexican, Venezuelan and Israeli students who are in our ELD program.

At the same time, we are very much a neighborhood school. Besides those in our boundaries, many open-enrolling families live nearby, in the Flatirons, Foothills, and Columbine neighborhoods. Location matters, because many of these families from west Boulder, bring significant social and economic capital that benefits *all* students.

The Whittier Moms group that meets monthly at Rosetta Hall has 85 emails on the list. Our annual auction raises significant funds. Hug and go, Garden to Table, we are *never* short on volunteers. These resources support everyone, including the 40% of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch, as we are a Title I school.

This year, our Giving Tree supported over a third of our families, with another third donating to meet *every last request.* We also funded a boot drive for 30 families, all through our PTA.

And this generosity goes both ways.

Our FET community is strong and consistent, hosting celebrations, sharing food, building bridges, and shaping school practices. Our Culture Club -a PTA sub-committee- helps create events like Whittier Around the World, featuring Mexican Danza and Casey Bailie Folklórico, many performers current or former Whittier students.

No Whittier event is complete without Los Dos Bros Taco Truck. All their kids went here. One of their daughters, Cintia, my former fourth grader from 2010, returned years later as a student teacher (driving from Metro State- just because she wanted to be here) and now teaches children herself. That full-circle moment mattered deeply to our community.

Share family quote on international photos page.

Our staff mirrors this commitment. We have many bilingual educators (even though we're not a bilingual school), many teachers with international experience, and an average tenure of 13 years. Our librarian curates books in roughly 20 languages. Our music teacher teaches songs from family cultures. Our FRS coordinator, Alexis, has been the glue holding support systems together.

I'll end with data, because it matters. Last year, Whittier had among the highest ACCESS growth scores in the district. And I heard from our attendance advocate -We currently have only six students identified as chronically absent, compared to nearby averages closer to 25. I'm not saying we're "better." I'm saying *this is what's working.*

Students feel they belong and they succeed academically.

Share yearbook cover contest- This is what kids feel represents our school - and parent quote

This isn't about me as an IB Coordinator saying, keep my school and job the same. It's about valuing Whittier's identity and long history. **At a time when our nation feels increasingly divided, what we have here actively counters that**, building empathy and open-mindedness across differences.

We would love to welcome more students and staff. We have space. We have experience. I would gladly train new teachers in IB. But if Whittier were moved east, many neighborhood families—the ones who bring shared resources—would not follow. That would undo what the district intentionally built over 25 years ago.

Please consider this history, this community, and this balance as you make your decisions.

There's a reason our motto is **"Where the World Meets in the Heart of Boulder."**
Thank you for listening.

Alysia Hayas - ELD Teacher and IB Coordinator at Whittier

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Miss Myers. Date: 1900-1909

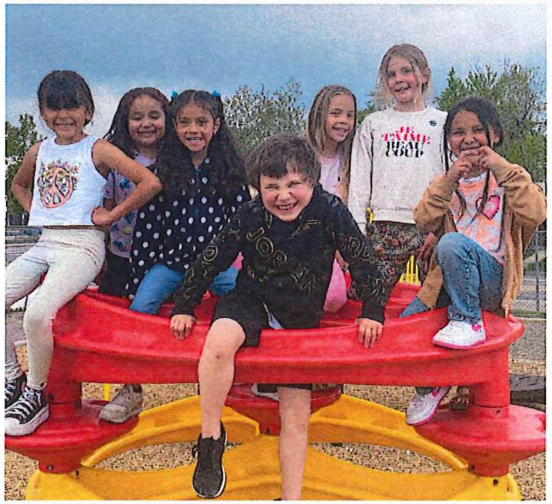


Fran Bascom
Student
1919 - 1926

Grace Lingham
Student
1907 - 1913



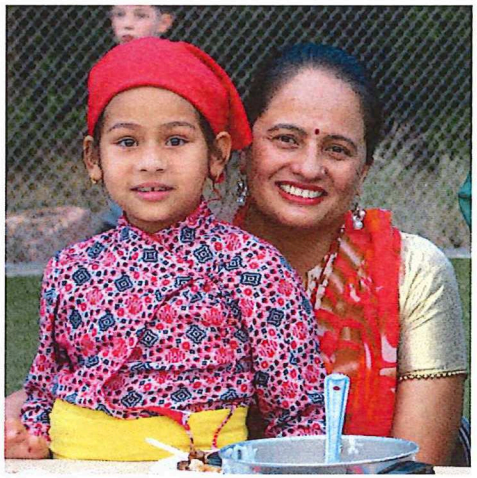






"Every day at Whittier is a reminder that the world is bigger than this awesome town. They're falling in love with learning while at the same time figuring out how to celebrate differences, how to lift one another up."

- Current parent -







"If you're looking for a neighborhood school with a deep commitment to diversity, a curriculum that emphasizes exploration and social emotional learning, and teachers who care deeply about your child - choose Whittier."

- Current parent -

