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Subject **{BVS Board} Declining Enrollment Thoughts from a BVSD Parent**
To "enrollment.helpdesk@bvsd.org" <enrollment.helpdesk@bvsd.org>, BVSD Board <bvs.board@bvsd.org>
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Hello, all.

Causes

1. Declining birth rates. Birth rates are declining almost everywhere in the district (and nationally, at less than 1.6 per couple when replacement rate is 2.1), but most notably in North Boulder, where they have dropped by about 250 births per year compared to 2006. Boulder Reporting Lab

2. High housing costs pricing out young families. Boulder's high housing costs make it difficult for young families to stay in the area. This and the aging population are having a pronounced impact on the funding available to the district. Boulder Valley School District, Boulder Reporting Lab.

3. Families having children later. Sadly, many families are having fewer children, and later, which reduces the school-age population in the near term. Boulder Reporting Lab

4. School choice/open enrollment migration. In 2024, 36% of BVSD families opted out of their assigned school through open enrollment. This meritocracy is a good thing, as parents have more say what is the best fit for their child's education, and schools help each other improve through competition. Most parents (about 70%) nationwide wisely support school choice. Boulder Reporting Lab,

5. Larger statewide problems: More people are leaving than entering Colorado for the first time in 22 years, due in large part to poor leadership and policies at a state level. In just three years, irresponsible CO state leadership burned through a $2B surplus and turned it into a $1.5B deficit. More regulation (we are sadly now the sixth most-regulated state in the country, in part directly causing businesses e.g. Palantir (the largest public company in the state) and 100 other large companies (and countless small ones) to increasingly flee CO to business-friendly states), taxes (3rd highest local sales tax of any state, and one of only nine states that tax Social Security benefits), fees (tons of hidden "taxes") and crime (7th most total crime out of 50 states, 2nd in property crime, 8th in violent crime, 5th in rape, 10th in aggravated assault, 12th in robbery) are parts of a statewide problem beyond what the district can directly affect, other than individuals voting for new and better state leadership to reverse Colorado's accelerating decline. Westword

6. Residual COVID policy damage: BVSD had some of the most onerous and harmful covid control policies, which had no scientific, medical or historical basis, no health benefit, and which caused massive educational, social, psychological and emotional damage / trauma to children and families. Many families chose homeschooling because of this, and they are likely not coming back. Actual accountability and an apology ("sorry we really screwed up on covid response") from BVSD and BCPH might help.

7. Ideological indoctrination: This is a national problem in many areas, and of special import in BVSD, where DEI / "woke" / divisive / America-hating / anti-white neoracist / ideologically-driven teaching has infected many classrooms. For example, ideological activist Rob Anderson wrote to the parent community in 2020 that "we [BVSD] will carry on the work of [domestic terrorist group] Black Lives Matter." That went over like a brick balloon with many BVSD parents, who just want a good education for their kids, and not having their school train their kid how to be a violent Leftist activist. The "go woke, go broke" effect that many large companies (e.g. Bud Light, Target, Cracker Barrel) brought on themselves by alienating more than half of their potential customers, has affected BVSD enrollment as well. Many parents are tired of partisan indoctrination replacing actual education, e.g. in reading, writing and math, which I and other parents can attest has been happening in many classrooms. This and #8 also contribute to the ongoing enrollment crisis at our previous school, Shining Mountain Waldorf.

Suggested Solutions

BVSD is already trying several things, with mixed results. Here's an honest assessment of what's working, what's been tried, and what more could be done:

Already underway (promising):

- The "Bright Futures" open enrollment preference gives an enrollment advantage to families who live outside the district but work within it — 320 students applied and 269 accepted seats. This is a low-cost, high-impact lever worth expanding. Boulder Valley School District
- Boundary redraws were approved in September 2025 to take effect in 2026-27, aimed at feeding more students into underenrolled schools. Boulder Reporting Lab
- Schools with critically low enrollment are being offered the chance to develop specialized programs to attract families — Heatherwood's STEAM curriculum is an early example of this working. Boulder Reporting Lab

Structural/fiscal actions worth pursuing:

- **Strategic school consolidation** — rather than waiting until budgets collapse, proactively merge the most underenrolled schools while redirecting those savings into stronger programs at the remaining schools. The community backlash is real, but the alternative (death by a thousand cuts) is worse.
- **Expand the "Bright Futures" model** — the largest contribution of out-of-district students since 2015 helped offset losses in resident students, suggesting this pipeline has real potential if marketed more aggressively to surrounding communities. Boulder Valley School District
- **Differentiated school programming** — give every underenrolled school a distinctive identity (Montessori, Waldorf, language immersion, arts, STEM, outdoor education) rather than letting them all look interchangeable. Boulder families are highly educated and respond to program quality and uniqueness.
- **Early childhood investment** — build stronger pre-K pipelines that feed directly into K enrollment, creating relationships with families before they make private/charter school choices.
- **Get ideology out of the classroom** – make it clear to all faculty and staff (and verify) that personal political views and partisan ideology does not belong in the classroom. Encourage diversity of thought, love of country, and respectful, vigorous debate.

Harder, longer-term: The underlying birth rate declines and housing affordability trends are largely outside the district's control. And the state is burning through its goodwill much faster than it's replenishing it. The district's time and energy are best spent on the levers it actually controls — program differentiation, open enrollment policy, school quality, and right-sizing. That means the honest long-run solution involves right-sizing the district's footprint — fewer, fuller, better-resourced schools — while using the savings to improve quality enough to retain the families who do remain.

Respectfully,

Michael

BVSD Parent for seven years

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