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Subject **{BVS Board} Melissa Zenz Speaker from 1/27: South Boulder Follow Up**
To "bvs.board@bvsd.org" <bvs.board@bvsd.org>
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Dear Board--

Thank you for the opportunity to do a drive by of the data I collected on South Boulder last night.

I wanted to send a follow up and introduce myself further (as 2m doesn't do a lot of justice). Professionally, I am a Market Research Director with a past at JP Morgan Chase, Local tech unicorn Ibotta, Meta/Instagram, and now PayPal/Venmo. I work extremely closely with senior leadership to produce and triangulate data in an unbiased way to make hard financial business decisions. Creating new products, sunsetting other products, migrating user bases from one to another, etc. I believe this problem is like-for-like with what you are facing. I have also worked agency side where I come in as a third party view and consult, which is what I am trying to do here.

I can assure you, my data analysis is unbiased, and there are people in Mesa's corner who weren't thrilled I didn't cherry pick. Ultimately, I want to understand the landscape as much as you do for a positive community outcome. I am not a "save my school!" type.

On a personal note, I am out of district. We attended Three Creeks in north west Jeffco. My oldest experienced bullying in kindergarten. The kids grew up way too fast and the staff was templated and robotic in the way they engaged. My middle child who was in pre-k at the time (daughter) told us she was a girl while my son was going there. We celebrated her, socially transitioned, but I knew come Kindergarten she could not go to that school. And I wanted my son who went from sweet and cuddly to hardened by 1st grade, back.

Fast forward, I wasn't thrilled with what I was seeing/hearing in Jeffco. I made the bold move to look north and initially found Bear Creek. I called Tanner and told him what we were looking for in school... I want a high performing school but an equal focus on social/emotional. And, I told him about my daughter. He said "have you ever heard of Mesa?" candidly, I had not. I am from Jeffco, not Boulder. I attended Mesa's open house with the intention of also attending Bear's, and never ended up attending Bear's. I knew this was the place for my family because of the high performing and environment for everyone Josh fosters.

Ok, enough about me. I would like to talk to you about the meeting last night.
I really appreciate the board member who said we need to look at this through a community lens. I totally agree and have so.much.data. I want to share with you about the dynamics of South Boulder. The 1 pager is a good Tl;DR but I promise you will see the story becomes even stronger in the points we're making when you see the depth of the data.

The board member who said they will not take into account any other data other than property values is concerning. In these decisions, we must take into account economic data (property values), customer data (in this case, our students), and behavioral data (what people are doing in practice). If these three factors are not considered, bad business decisions will be made and people will leave-- which will hurt your economics in the long run.

I will send you more information, but for now I want you to understand where I've landed.

- You have two schools who are stars in your portfolio, who serve the community's holistic needs. You have the high performing elite school and the high performing school for everybody. (Bear/Mesa)

- These schools are located in a geography appealing to many in the South Boulder zoned areas, so-much-so many opt out of creekside because of geographic preference. Either one of these schools CANNOT, capacity wise, take on the other if one shuts down.

-Similarly, combining them would not work (i.e. Mesa for k-3 and Bear for 4-5) because they have fundamentally different philosophies and serve different needs in the community.

- Creekside has already gone through a consolidation to help with their enrollment numbers, AND a new building. It seems historic efforts to save this school are not helping. The dashboard goes back 7 years and is well in the negative net enrollment (-207 in 2018), losing 231 students this past year.

- From the data, we see so many zones for Creekside choosing BCIS (50) University Hill (42) High Peaks (34) and yes, across the highway to Bear/Mesa (25) and Montessori (27). I've been told Creekside has a transient community with professors, perhaps this isn't the right demographic to locate an elementary school

- I am also aware Creekside has higher numbers for Latino/Hispanic populations. Their mobility number for these students is high (25%), compared to Mesa (5%)... I want the best for these students just like I want the best for my LGTBQ daughter. They would thrive at Mesa... Although, would need to consider transportation

- Creekside Tl;DR-- BVSD has tried to save this school and has already cost a ton in investment to do-so. I don't think the demographic (transient professors) is right for an elementary school to be located there and the behavioral data is screaming this, with so many not taking advantage of this school and opting for different solutions. Financially I would cut your losses trying to make this location work.

Ok. I've outlined the dynamic. Here are my thoughts on potential solutions. Overarching theme, you do not kill the two stars in your portfolio (chase wouldn't kill Sapphire and Freedom).

This is where you all as educators can get much more creative than I, but minimally:

Option 1: Keep Bear, Mesa, sell montessori ($$) and turn creekside into a profit driving early learning center ($$). Use transportation already available to zoned creekside residents to bring those who want to stay local to Bear/Mesa

Option 2: If you think Creekside is necessary to keep as an elementary school... Keep Bear, Move Mesa to Creekside (rebrand), Make Mesa today an

early learning center ($$), sell montessori ($$).
I have doubts about this approach because I think there is a strong geography pull that will make this more difficult (i.e. so many in the neighborhood across the way) and would require more transportation to get the larger numbers of residents from the Bear/Mesa neighborhood across the way to Creekside. However, I do think there's merit to the idea of decoupling building from school (leadership, staff, etc.) when thinking about solutions.

As a next step I would like to meet with various members of the board. I will be reaching out directly to schedule time. If you feel so inclined to meet with me sooner, please reach out directly.

Thank you for your consideration to this matter!

Melissa Zenz