
AN OPEN LETTER TO BOULDER FAMILIES

THREE THINGS KEEP SCHOOL AGED FAMILIES LIKE MINE IN A CITY, BOULDER'S LOOSING ALL THREE.

I've served BVSD in financial and equity roles for years, and it's given me a window into how the district builds and manages its budgets, forecasts enrollment, and how it reacts to them over time. I've come to know a little bit of what those projections do and do not tell you. They tell you how many kids live near a school today, guess how many may live near a school tomorrow, and mostly speculate about why that number is changing. And they do not tell you what the city could have done about it. Much frustration, I've come to observe, lies in the fact that neither it seems can the city or most of our current leaders.

I'm the parent of a middle-schooler, so I know that families stay in a city for three reasons, and Boulder controls all three.

Housing families can raise children in, not housing in aggregate. A one-bedroom rental that turns over every eighteen months produces no students for BVSD. A three-bedroom house a family can hold for a decade often produces two assuming that family can afford it. Boulder continues to produce one kind over the other and the estimated market rate for affordable to middle income housing has been effectively zero since before the pandemic.

For families like mine, our services are a big part of why we choose where we choose to live. Our paks, our pools, rec centers, library, child care. They're no amenities, they're the things families check before deciding to live in Boulder, or Louisville, or Longmont, or Lafayette. We are closing or abandoning them as unusable to families.

I believe that parks are for kids, and that families want public spaces and community infrastructure we can enjoy. Streets, paths, parks, and the maintenance and safety that make it easy for me to let my thirteen year old daughter use them.

So here's where I stand with the parents, neighbors, and community on the proposed closure of Flatiron, Douglass, and Mesa Elementaries

I'm calling in the strongest terms on the School Board to reject this proposal tomorrow, and return with a transparent districtwide plan. Saving this amount of money, while causing this amount of disruption and loss is not something many of us can square. It's not math that many of us can square, so we must do it together with the affected communities in the room, before we decide. That is equity. The cost of closures don't land evenly, they land on the neighbors and communities affected, and we cannot be picking winners and losers within a system we all participate in without much damage.

Concretely, that plan shows the whole map at once: every school, middle schools, boundaries, feeder patterns, dual language, and any further consolidations, so a parent can see where their child lands in 2030 and not just next August. It publishes the enrollment model with its assumptions on the page, rerun against the Comprehensive Plan this city approved on August 21. It shows the savings net of one time costs, year by year, next to the alternatives that were never modeled: shared use of buildings, focus and magnet programs placed in under enrolled schools, boundary and open enrollment reform, and the district's own administrative growth. And every one of those numbers carries a name and a date. Who owns this, and when will it be delivered. That is what transparent means. Anything less is a brochure.

Then plan for the schools that remain. Consolidation is arithmetic, not a plan for thriving school communities. Before one family is asked to move, every receiving school should have its class sizes, staffing, transportation, before and after care, programming and arrival traffic answered in writing, with money attached to each answer, and families should be told what their children gain in terms the district can be held to a year from now. Name who carries the cost of the transition, because it does not land evenly, and say what is being done for them. Then say out loud what it takes to fill these buildings again: homes families can afford, parks and paths kids can use, and services that stay open. A district can consolidate its way to a balanced budget. It cannot consolidate its way to more children.

And I am calling on Boulder City Council to take a written position, like others have.

This November, we must be part of a broader conversation. We must seek leadership that establishes a standing city and district table, that reconciles our district, and community, and families needs. The city needs to own its half of the table, and be a meaningful partner in investing in a housing pipeline that are attainable to families, parks and paths that are safe for kids again, and rightsize our city finances so that services are cut last not first.

While it's true that BVSD ultimately decides whether a school closes, Boulder decides whether families can afford to stay here, whether our kids can safely enjoy this city, and whether this remains a place where families want to put down roots. If we want to save our schools, we have to start fighting for the families who fill them, and I intend to fight.

Sincerely,

Aquiles La Grave

AQUILES LA GRAVE

Boulder parent · Candidate for Mayor of Boulder

