

Casey Focus Group – April 22, 2005

Tape 1

As I was saying this is scripted so we can have consistency in how this program is run evening to evening. There are a number of these forums. I hope that this is not too formal or canned. Lets go around though and have everyone get their voice in the room; what school your from, the age of your kids, whatever you'd like to briefly share with us.

My name is Christine - I have one son who is in kindergarten at Columbine. My name is Elizabeth - I have one daughter who is in kindergarten at Columbine. My name is Sarah - I have a third grader and a first grader at Columbine and a three-year old. My name is Chris and I have a six grader here at Casey and a first grader at Uni Hill. I'm Deborah and I have a sixth grader here at Casey and a fifth grader at Flatirons. I'm Deborah and I have a seventh grader here at Casey and a fifth grader at Flatirons. I'm Jonathan and I have a seventh grader at Casey who went through Columbine and a fifth grader who is at Uni. I'm Caroline and we have an eighth grader at Casey and a third grader at Columbine. I'm Chris and I have the same: eighth and third graders.

Okay, Lets get started. In our school district while all our schools are high quality, some have lower income and minority students and others have mostly higher income and white students. That concentration of different groups in separate schools has been increasing; it's called stratification. A citizen task force on stratification is studying why this is happening and what the school district can do to reverse the trend. Our purpose tonight is to hear your thoughts and to help the task force understand the issues. I am going to be asking you questions and you are going to be answering them and discussing them with each other. The task force members are just here to listen. The discussion tonight is being recorded and may be referred to in the task force report but your names will not be used. So please speak freely from your own experience.

We've done the introductions. Let's begin. When I ask a question, first take a minute to think and take some notes for yourself. Then, I'll ask some to start the discussion about the question.

Q: # 1 First question, increasingly some schools have mostly lower income and minority students and others have mostly higher income and white students—why do you think this is happening?

Can we ask you questions about data? I mean I just moved to this district a few years ago. I think there may be other opportunities for us to tell you about the district but this is really for us to collect your ideas and opinions. So, I think we'll refrain from doing that.

One of the things is that there are ESL programs in some of the schools; I know that's going to change. But I think that that perhaps created the problem. The placement of center-based programs like ESL and I know that some of the students from Casey will be going elsewhere next year because there are some programs opening up at Centennial, for instance, which is mainly a white school.

(Deborah) I think that white families look at CSAP scores when they make their decision and if a school has a low and even an average score they stay away from that like the plague.

I would agree.

I would echo what Deborah said about ESL programs. I think by centering those and a few specific schools in the district—you naturally create what she is talking about; which is a low range of the CSAP average. What I'd like to have is for the district to take a look at boundaries and the way they're drawn. I think that in and of itself has created a lot of the stratification here at Casey. The lines seem to be very arbitrary and sort of unusually placed. You know. It tends to include a lot of pockets of low income or subsidized housing areas which naturally carry with it that sort of situation.

Yeah I kind of agree but didn't have the best way to say it. I think it starts with the neighborhood and more with the lower income because they go to the school that is in their neighborhood because that is where the ESL program is centered and based upon where the boundaries are (I'm thinking of Columbine because that is my experience), it grabs a lot of the lower income housing families there. So then it goes into what she was saying cause then the CSAP scores are lower and then any white families who are in the neighborhood take them out (kids)—so it's a dual problem.

I have to say I think open enrollment is a great idea. I actually open enrolled to Columbine from Crestview. But it has caused a lot of stratification from what I've seen, especially in a town where there is a lot of affluent, highly educated parents who have really high expectations for their kids, who want to find the best school—the best fit for their kids so they go all over town looking for the best fit for their kids. But in the other hand if there is low CSAP scores or if there is a high level of low income or minority students they shy away from those schools and I guess from what I understand from studies; if the percentage of low income or minority students reaches a certain point whether its twenty-five percent or more, sixty, thirty, forty? Anyways, there is a level that is met that the whites start to flee.

Some patterns emerging here – that's great.

(Jonathan) I think I agree with everything I'm hearing here. I have seven things and some of them are already described so you don't have to write them down again if you think they are already there:

- 1) The first is open enrollment; whether you think it is a good idea or a bad idea. It can't be denied that without open enrollment we would not have stratified schools right now. If you look at what the numbers were before in open enrollment and what's happened since open enrollment – you can see clearly that the problem we have right now if it's a problem is a direct result of open enrollment.

- 2) The second one is a faulty interpretation and reporting of CSAP and people talk about low CSAP scores and high CSAP scores and its meaningless. As somebody who does statistics in my work its embarrassing to me that we spend so much resources and kids time and our teachers time and all the drama that goes into this and then we simply average test scores—its really shameful. I've done analysis and I know that Professor Wayne Wright did similar analysis; and when you look at average test scores you find that two thirds of the variance between test scores can be explained by the economic level of the people attending those schools. Its crazy to be reporting average test scores without taking that into account. And we now have been doing the CSAPs long enough were we could instead be recording the average growth of individuals at the school. And then we would see which schools were really doing a good job because schools with high grades and high performance CSAP kids were doing well before they came to this school and if they are doing about the same after they leave that school then I would say that they are doing an average job. But if a school starts a kid at four grades below grade level and then moves them up to just one grade below grade level then they are doing a great job. That is complete lost in the analysis that we get from the district and from the state and the federal government.
- 3) Another cause of it is that there are too many seats, partly because of decreasing enrollment and partly because of charters that we keep opening and I recognize that is not necessarily the district's choice but again if there weren't so many openings in all the schools it would not be possible for open enrollment to –there wouldn't be as many choices for open enrollment.
- 4) Another problem is the lack of differentiated funding. Some kids are obviously more expensive to teach than others so because we have instituted a free market here without thinking about how schools would respond to it. The logic thing for a school to do is to try to find the kids that are the cheapest to teach and those are the kids who have advantages at home or are wealthy, who are already doing well. So you see all these schools who are competing for high performing kids. The free market solution to that is to have differentiated funding—is to say oh, well if these kids over here are more expensive to teach for whatever reason because require extra services, special services, then that ought to be taken into account—to account when we are allocating dollars to schools. Because then if the teaching ESL kid brought you more money to your school then schools would compete for those kids. You wouldn't see schools just instead competing for the high performance, high income kids.
- 5) The attendance areas were designed with stratification in mind. If you look at the attendance areas for Columbine in particular, it was designed to include (exclude?) all of the low income housing that was remotely close to it. Some of the places that feed into Columbine are very far

away—that's not an accident. That was done on purpose. There is, it has already been mentioned that if everybody has a fear of people who are different and everybody is comfortable with people who are the same that goes for parents and for kids, for white parents and Hispanic parents. I see it with all of the families or many of the families that I know.

- 6) There are economies in specialization. I thought that originally Columbine's district was drawn the way it was because the district made a conscious choice that they wanted to make one really good ESL school as opposed to a whole bunch of mediocre ones and I think that they succeeded. But I don't think that they expected that they would end up with eighty-five percent of those kids.

Most of this is probably reiteration, but I think that it is important to note and stress the things that are really issues. Open enrollment is a mistake. I don't agree with it at all. I think that all schools would be better if we didn't have open enrollment. Instead of having people flying off to schools that they perceive as being better schools and thereby making them better and thereby giving them more money and thereby increasing the problem. So I think that open enrollment is a problem and CSAPs are awful and we shouldn't have them. And the fact that we test kids to determine how much money to give to a school and then we give money to schools based upon kids doing well that again just extenuates the problem. Then again we are just giving money to the schools that have the smart kids—well we should be giving the money to the schools that don't have the smart kids so then it is sort of working in reverse. Then I think that a lot of that is a result of or that is causing us to become much more focused on our individual children as opposed to our society as a whole. So what happens is that when we're all as parents trying to figure out what we're going to do about school we don't think about how are we going to make the school system better for my community or for my state for my country. We're thinking how can I get my kid the best education. And that is thinking in reverse as well. So it's a very big problem but I think you start it by doing something about this stupid standardized testing cause I think that is a mistake and you stop open enrollment. Immediately you start to see the reverse of stratification because I am not going to move so that I can put my kid in a better school. Some people will but most people will not. Most people like their neighborhoods or like the area they live in and they are going to learn to say I'm going to get my kind, I 'm going to get more involved in the school whatever. We could easily have open enrolled our kids into a place other than Columbine and Casey as many people we know did but I'm very much aware of the fact that no—I have a white kid who comes from a fairly affluent family and I am going to put him in Columbine cause Columbine needs kids who are going to do better on CSAPs and are going to give more focus on the Community as a whole. So for what little piece of it that I can add to it and I think without open enrollment everyone has to do that and then the problem starts to solve itself.

I just have a couple things to say and I'll be very, very brief though most of the stuff I have heard is echoing. Although open enrollment is not going away—I think it's going to stay and we are going to make sure it stays. But CSAP are probably not going to go away either –talk about politics but I think within those things there have been a couple things happening which the district does have control over and I think one of those things is how open enrollment has been sold (kind of like a marketing thing) to parents, how its encouraged to parents. And not only the process of how is does but it does not require any base from the neighborhood before someone can open enroll out but its just wide open you can do whatever you want and its pushed on parents just very much like a sales tactic. And then, I think you covered some of this too. I think the natural progression if you have a choice if you are not forced into anything else I think that you are going to go along your cultural lines. So if, because that is the comfort level. We are definitely seeing that. So I think it is not just the CSAP scores that we have to be concerned about as stratification, it's the financial – we've reduced much—what are the percentages because they are also pretty high in some of these schools. They are not getting any diversification on that—so that's it.

I'm going on sabbatical next year so I am looking at schools in San Diego and I don't think they are normalizing what you're saying exactly. They don't just report the raw data but they are saying, well how is this school doing relative to other schools that have the same socio-economic background? This is California so you can see that a school as a whole they have a low number but there may be two or three ranked much higher on the other scale. So at least they have both of them there. Amusingly, some of the very high ranked schools have a very high average but they are not as high as the other all white schools. (Sarah) I would agree with Caroline that my standing is that standardized testing is state mandated and its not going to go away but each district can administer it in the way they see fit. So I think we would basically be going back to what it was like twenty years ago. Like we live sort of in the epicenter of Crestview, Columbine, Foothills, and I have talked to kids whose neighbors are in their late twenties and they said oh yeah we went to this school-oh yeah we went to that school and we got to choose between two to three schools in our general area. If you have to have open enrollment then you have to administer it differently so maybe there is like little pods and there are a couple of neighborhood schools and a couple of focus schools in each pod and you can choose amongst those. But you are not choosing to live in North Boulder and have your kid going to school in South Boulder so that everyone is leaving their neighborhoods. I think it would help somewhat. I mean you could change boundaries but as long as open enrollment is the way it is—

But it doesn't matter where our boundaries are...

That only equals out the ESL lower income thing, it doesn't address open enrollment at all.

A lot of parents will pick Crestview over Columbine, I mean they are both neighborhood schools but if you had me open enroll—I would choose the one that is good.

Right, but what I'm saying is that there can be boundaries for the people who go (in what is now the Foothills district) if they got moved to the Columbine district—it doesn't mean they would go—they would just open enroll somewhere else. You can change the boundaries but you can't make people go. I'm not talking about the people who will leave though I'm talking about the people who are lost.

But my concern there is, I didn't know that ESL was going to be offered at more schools, but my concern is that for example (speaking from Columbine because that is what I know), they have a really good program for second language learners there. I would really hate to see those kids uprooted and sent to a school that doesn't have as good of a program and then those kids suffer because whites are fleeing their neighborhood school.

Well, I know that Centennial started an ESL program and so children who have attended Casey are you know absolutely welcome back but kids who are just here for six grade and are in need of ESL and are in Centennial's district are being encouraged to attend Centennial. So they are not being punished in any way and kids who started in Casey aren't being uprooted and sent to another school. It's a phase in and I'm sure Centennials program will be just as good and just as wonderful as Casey's –it just needs to start.

(Jonathan) Just briefly I just wanted to say that I agree with Christine and I just wanted to add that the district could be reporting—for example a kid's freely induced launch at one school while others are free to move around the district, while kids who aren't on free and induced launch are doing at that school compared to others throughout the district. Because it is quite possible that as a certain school both groups would be doing better than the other schools in their district but their average test scores would be low.

(Deborah) I was going to say that a lot of the kids that are bussed here live in the Centennial area. So they will have the opportunity to walk to school in their neighborhoods instead of being bussed and still have their needs met so for them I think it is a win-win.

Q: #2 Second question, how did you decide what school your child would attend? What did you think about and how did you come to your decision?

(Elizabeth) I decided I wanted to be first because basically I just wanted to go ahead and use this as a confession—I was completely bowled over by the marketing for the open enrollment and I say that and then I say my daughter when

she was two and three was in the head start toddler program so she was with a lot of the children that she is now with at Columbine, totally immersed in multi-cultural and a multi-ethnic group. I have no problem with that, however, she then went to the Boulder Day Nursery on Spruce—it was there that I got just influenced where there were enough people who just kind of said if you're in the Columbine district go check out Foothills, go check out Whittier—everybody is going to Whittier, go look here, go do that. Even people,
“Well I want to check out Columbine.”
“Oh no you don't want to go do that.”

I was convinced by people that the Anglo children were overlooked because it was such a strong ESL program that they basically spent all their time getting those kids up to speed and so the kids who were already ahead of their grade were overlooked or bored. So I didn't even go visit and I open enrolled into Foothills and Whittier and I didn't get in the first round. So my husband and I still didn't go visit. “If she doesn't get in, we'll just start checking out private schools.” Didn't even check it out. But when we didn't get in the second round, we went and visited—bowed over, loved it. Went to Kristin's class, she—well first we went and talked to Lynn Widger, the principal and we grilled her. We said here is every negative, single thing we've heard; please respond to this and she held her ground and gave us satisfactory answers and basically said its up to you from here on out -come visit the school. So we did, without child. Umm, she didn't want to leave—loved the teacher and that's how we made our decision. And we got into Whittier and we stayed at Columbine. So that was our decision and we really felt like it was meant to be because I kept professing I want my child in not the ninety-five percent upper, white middle class schools and so I really wanted to get into Whittier (doesn't she mean Columbine) because it was mixed, acceptably mixed in my mind, close-mindedness. But I guess I thought we ended up where we needed to be and its just been wonderful.

(Caroline) Well, historically Chris and I have always come up against other parents in discussions because its like why –so its helped that there are some other kids who have come in there now. “Wow, you're sending them there!” There is this theory about Columbine, there is this stigma about Columbine—which basically kind of maybe is not a good thing for our kids, I suppose. But it made us be more stubborn and not want to give up our neighborhood school. We tend to take a little bit different look on it and part of it he said with the other question was we tend to look at the bigger picture of society and not just how is it going to benefit our kids but how does it benefit society as a whole, and what does it mean as a kid for you to go to a neighborhood school and walk home from school? He can walk home, it helps out his independence—he is happy, he loves it and he feels very connected to the school. Another part of it is that in Boulder, we feel like we have to take every opportunity to search for any kind of cultural difference that's not Anglo. Because then I mean I'll sort of take him to Denver once in a while because we need to find as much diversity as possible, even though Columbine is kind of weighted in one area. When Conner went there the first time, which is why we are just so happy about Columbine, there were

twenty-seven languages represented in that school, twenty-seven different languages! I don't think there are now cause that was way back. That is something that you cannot find anywhere and also as kind of a bonus in our opinion was the financial diversity. You know having the kids exposed to and acknowledging that not everybody makes a lot of money, you know a lot of middle ground, you know a lot of poor kids and I think its good preparation for them before they move on through the other grades and into life.

(Sarah) I too was inundated and overwhelmed with the whole open enrollment situation/process/frenzy. But I resisted somewhat. Not completely. Basically our requirements were we could walk to school, it felt like our neighborhood, and so we started looking at our neighborhood school and schools we could walk to. And when I found out about Washington my first thought was that he was very good with the English language so I thought might as well start him on a second language; its an opportunity that I never got as a child, my husband never got as a child and its actually easier to get to from our house than a neighborhood school, so we chose Washington. And then when we had to make a choice again after Washington's close, we didn't want to commute up to Uni-hill. It was mostly proximity to the school, the language and the diversity.

Tape 2

I didn't notice all of the open enrollment stuff. I don't pay attention to the paper that much. We live like four houses from the corner and my daughter started at Washington, so it was proximity. The neighbors raved about the program; neighbors across the street just had a kid go there from kindergarten through fifth grade. And both my children are adopted and they're racially mixed, so diversity was a big piece of it for me and then just the icing on the cake was learning two languages. Now, I would go anywhere that I had to—I would commute to Pioneer to get the dual language if I had to, but at that point in time, it was just very handy.

(Deborah) My kids went to Mapleton so this was our neighborhood. It was really important for my kids, my daughter, who had to spend her last year in Whittier, to be in this neighborhood because most of her friends lived in this neighborhood. I would say that this location was one of the first that academically any school that you would go to in this district you are going to get a good education. It is just the overall picture of what you want to give your child. And being able to go to a (now I live up in the mountains) so this is my neighborhood because my kids know it, we shop at Ideal. So my daughter can walk places from here because she doesn't get to walk to school, but she can walk to places like Ideal or she walks to soccer at North Boulder Park. So that was huge and the size was also good cause my daughter and son were used to a small school and felt comfortable here. I feel like my daughter is getting a really enriched education; academic, cultural, the size is nurturing. She is not in the bilingual program but because she is around the second language she is picking up the language just by being around it all the time and I think that's great. So again, I think location, size is what we were looking for and enrichment.

(Deborah) I have a slightly different perspective; my seventh grader went through private school, kindergarten thru fifth grade. So I thoroughly embraced open enrollment. I had no allegiance to a neighborhood school. We were already driving and were already in the car everyday. So we looked at every single middle school except Boulder High and I mean we met with every principle, investigated every program, and took her. After I did the initial investigations, we took her to every open enrollment night and had her visit every school, and both my husband and myself and our incoming sixth grader, all ended up choosing Casey as our number one. And it was surprising to me, everyone was shocked. Mary was the only one from private school who came here and most of them went to Summit. I guess initially it was a sense of community—wanting her in a community that we felt would be responsive to her needs, that felt as though problems were opportunities. I was used to being very involved in the school and I wasn't relishing the idea of becoming a number, of having to make appointments for my issues. I really wanted to feel a sense of community and connectedness. The bilingual program was a huge straw for her. She does a lot of art and stuff like that outside of school. So that was particularly interesting to us. So the bilingual program met her academic needs because again she is bright and felt that that would be a challenge for her and it was something that we were all interested in. I really embraced the diversity, the cultural diversity, and the economic diversity was important to us so that she would get a sense of the real world and she doesn't think that everybody has a house in Vail and goes to Europe every summer. And its been an incredible experience for us and we're just thrilled.

Deborah (enters the group late); my kids go to Columbine; a fourth grader and a first grader.

(Christine)We didn't go to Columbine for diversity. We just went where we were placed. We were in the Columbine district so we went to Columbine. Final decision not to open enroll. The third grade teacher a Columbine is our neighbor so I am not sure if this way of making a decision is going to be successful for other people but we went and talked to her and I sat down and talked to her for an hour about it and she said it was a great school-that she was honest about it. Another way we found about it was by going to a get to know you night. There were only four parents who came that night—I felt sorry for them. My husband went to Crestview and he said that there were seventy parents there for kindergarten. Just because the interest level was high for Crestview, my husband thought well lets go with Columbine. We are pretty equi-distant between Crestview and Columbine, so we would have maybe been at Crestview, but we are at Columbine and we are happy there. The neighbor told us that the kindergarten teacher was exceptionally good. And she is. We haven't met any bad teachers yet. So the way we chose it is by talking to people.

(Jon) My kids have gone to Columbine, Whittier, and Casey. The reasons we chose those schools was:

- 1) Great teachers
- 2) Great principal

- 3) Nearby school
- 4) Bilingual program
- 5) Cultural diversity
- 6) Small school if you can get it

I can also say about Casey that it feels like the teachers are incredibly dedicated to the school. Again because of the size, they know every student that walks in that door and you know the teachers are here to stay and to make this work. And that is just so valuable—you can just feel that when you walk into this school.

<The task force is considering what to do in the following areas :>

Q: #3 A) For schools to have more economically and ethnically diverse student populations without sacrificing quality what should the district do in terms of open enrollment; should the rules of OE or should the steps involved for parents or anything else be changed if so how?

(Caroline, then Elizabeth, then Sarah and then we'll go from there) I know that other people are going to know a whole lot more about open enrollment and all the stuff involved. But I just wanted to put out there first—I don't know the specifics but I've heard a lot of good things about how I believe Fort Collins runs their open enrollment program and I just don't the specifics. But I've heard from a lot of parents that how they work their program is they have kind of a base that they need to get to in the neighborhood schools and they have limits on how many people can open enroll out and things like that. I think its probably more complex than that. I just thought I would put that out there and see if anyone knows a little bit more about that.

The one things I was going to say and this is based solely on my personal experience is I think there should be some sort of rule. I'm not suggesting how it could be enforced, but everyone needs to visit their neighborhood school and not just visit where you can sign for someone on a piece of paper so you can say you visited. But where you can actually go to the open house, meet with the teachers, walk around—so you can have some sort of interaction with the school because had I done that, I don't think I would have gone to the open enrollment process. I was so swayed before I even heard about it. You know the whole Boulder school district is great except for Columbine. But its my own fault for not checking it out and forming my own opinion about that. But had I known, well I'm not even allowed to sign up for open enrollment until I go and talk to the principal and the teachers and kind of see what their program is. I can still decide not to do it but if I had that, if everyone had that, I think we would see that; boy they are not so alien and it's just not such a bad place. It might discourage people from opting out.

(Sarah) I think everything I was going to say, was said. From someone else who couldn't be here tonight; a mother from Columbine who said the same thing you know how do you do this—do you have something signed that says I visited my neighborhood school. That's an idea. Capping the number of students who can open enroll out to another school is a good idea. Like Caroline was talking about I think some school districts do that.

And then the geographic pods like I was talking about where you have like two or three schools to choose from. I think it would be an interesting thing to do, to look at other school districts and find out how they administer open enrollment and particularly districts that don't have problems with stratification. You know I think that's definitely one way to start. You know look at all the different ways and think would this method help our district.

(Jonathan) I think I'd like to understand the ability that our local district has to alter open enrollment at all. You know I mean I understand that it's a state law—that there is open enrollment but where does the district—we've talked about how well the district can administer it the way they want to—but we don't know what those boundaries are. We have the ability to issue rules and regulations about open enrollment, they can talk about the priorities in that process, even restrictions in terms of numbers and kinds of kids who are in that, we can limit it in certain areas—let me give you an example. What we did at Community Montessori—we literally set in terms of priorities; everyone in South Boulder does not have as much priority as North Boulder, so geography is an area. And we said kids who have less advantage than other kids; kids who are on free and reduced lunch, have a higher priority than other kids in terms of getting in. Some folks would say that you are in troubled waters if you use race as a basis although there are cases where you can do that; you just have to be pretty clear so the district has capacity in terms of the rules and regulations and priorities in which places and space availability. If the school is full, we don't have to allow open enrollment into a full school. Open enrollment happens when there are seats available in the schools. That may be obvious but it is significant for a district that isn't growing in size like Boulder.

That is determined by teacher?

No, it's determined in two different ways. There is building capacity and there is program capacity—and usually program capacity is a lower number than building capacity. What you decide is that a school is full based on its program capacity.

After hearing how much control we have over it, I think we should make it as difficult as possible to open enroll. Whatever restrictions we could put on you leaving the neighborhood schools, we should. Just so it's a more conscious decision—its not just oh whatever school I want. It should be if I don't want to go to my neighborhood school I have to do this and this and this and this. Wow, maybe its alright to go to my neighborhood school.

(Jonathan)

- 1) Reduce empty seats—closing schools or stopping a new charter school, which the district to its credit has tried to do, and that saves money also.
- 2) Differentiated funding—if we really believe in a free market then we want to make sure the market sends the right signal so if some kids are more expensive to teach than the money that goes with those kids to the school should be greater. Then the market will reflect reality and we won't have kids competing for kids who are less expensive to teach.

- 3) The third thing is quotas and we've already heard that both of you can have quotas over people to leave the neighborhood schools. Or quotas based on economics. Race-based quotas are probably illegal, but economic-based quotas are more legal. Yeah, we are trying to do that now; there was mention of the Montessori experiment.
- 4) The fourth thing is accurate reporting of test scores, average test scores are just not very useful. It would be much more useful to have all kids compared to their peers. You may not be able or want to say; make those comparisons based not on race, but on economics. You can ask how the kids are on free and reduced lunch doing compared with those at other schools. You can also just do the same thing with kids who are not on free and reduced lunch. Also look at growth of kids, irrespective of where they came from how much did they grow in one year and again we can just look at the averages and I know the district has the ability to do the latter. I know they have done some of the former, the latter—it amazes me that its not being reported but that is partly the Daily Camera's fault—I think they could do a better job too. And the attendance area is the last thing and I know that people said that changing the attendance areas isn't going to solve the problem. But if a lot of these other things are done at the same time, then changing the attendance areas would also help.

I want to make sure that we touch on the funding issue. And I agree with Chris about making it as difficult as possible to OE, because I know that a lot of Casey parents have experience this. People are just shocked and amazed that my kid goes to Casey and none of that is based on fact. When I say does that person have experience at Casey or have they been at Casey no they've never even walked through the front doors but the rumor mill is just ripe with inaccurate and outright falsehood about the school so I think that there ought to be a way that some people just address the neighborhood falsehood and not even stepping foot in the school. I really do think they have to figure out a way to base their decision on fact and not on falsehoods.

I don't think that the district will even support some of the schools in getting the word out "hey we are just as good as some of these schools." I don't feel like the district really does anything to support that. I don't think the district supports families who go to their neighborhood schools. I think open enrollment is the thing and it like takes over your family for four months when you are trying to figure out where to go and it is just ridiculous. I mean I think that...I like that you have choice but that shouldn't be your first choice. Your first choice should be to look at your neighborhood school, but I don't think that the district supports that at all. If people were encouraged to go to their neighborhood school by the district and get information from the district which says that this school is just as good as that school, I think people might listen to that. I don't know what the district can do to change how people look at that right now, but I think it needs to change. I think, again, in helping schools with the CSAP scores and getting information out, that this is not the only way to judge a school. The paper, the Daily Camera, doesn't help at all—what they say about the schools and then they show the CSAP averages. A lot of people just look at that, and want it in a sound bite but you know it takes a lot of work to get the truth. And I again think boundaries have to be

visited. I know with Baseline closing, that would have been our neighborhood school, but now supposedly our neighborhood school is Manhattan which is thirty-five minutes drive from my house, which is ridiculous, and Casey is twelve minutes. So that, I think, needs to be revisited. My kids would be on the bus for over an hour. And I do think with closing schools like Baseline—I think really made people in this area revisit looking at Casey because there is no other option. But there is Centennial, true, but that is North Boulder, this is Central Boulder.

The numbers have increased pretty dramatically here at Casey—it is a combination of a lot of things but I think the Baseline closing certainly had something to do with it. I'm concerned that if you make it really, really difficult for people to open enroll—I understand where you are coming from with the stratification issue, but I'm a parent who wouldn't be able to participate in a program that's really important to me if I wasn't able to open enroll. And also I like the idea of controlled open enrollment, where you set a number of free and reduced lunches. After a school reaches a number of open enrollment, then that school is closed until the next year, the next kindergarten class. That forces people to go to other programs or go to their neighborhood school or whatever. But I would want schools like Uni-Hill and Pioneer to be exceptions to that because they need to have this, well you know we're saying this stratification its really awful that these schools, some schools have so many—you know the population of disadvantaged children, its making their CSAP scores look terrible. Well, at Washington, that was part of the package when you went there. You accepted the fact that you were never going to have that excellent or high score school because you knew that fifty percent of the population and that the model that works best they would just aggregate the test scores. I think you would see that the English and Spanish speakers are doing better in a program like that, but I don't know, as there is a lot of research that I haven't read. Anyway, there are certain exceptions that would have to be made to that rule.

A rebuttal, if you don't have open enrollment-- then programs that you have like at Uni-Hill had it washed into the ESL programs propagate out through all schools, so every neighborhood school has that opportunity because there is no where in Boulder or in Colorado where it would not be smart to know how to speak Spanish. The theory is that its not just you eliminate open enrollment and if your neighborhood school doesn't have an ESL program oh well you lose. No, get an ESL program into every school. Well there is a big difference between ESL and dual language.

Whatever dual immersion. What I'm making is—open enrollment makes it okay for just certain schools to have certain programs. If you don't have open enrollment then people in a neighborhood who are affluent, well guess what that neighborhood school will get all the cool stuff like dual language immersion and labs and whatever. Its not just about forcing people to the neighborhood school because you don't want white flight. Its forcing people to go to the neighborhood school because it will make the neighborhood school better.

Okay, but one thing the dual language model at least the one that Washington and Uni-Hill and Pioneer use which is supposed to be the best requires fifty percent of the

population to be one language and fifty percent of the population to be the other. In other states I think they do other languages like French and English. It's the fifty percent because they switch from their first language to their second language—its complicated. I don't think that you can mess with that.

I've heard of a program in Minneapolis where they have almost no Spanish speakers but the English speakers were immersed in Spanish all day. It was not dual language but Spanish. Those students came here and they were fabulous Spanish speakers.

We definitely have a number of schools in the district that have no attendance boundaries like the New Vista high school and all of the focus schools. The more that you restrict open enrollment, the less those schools exist—whether it is bilingual or whatever they do. Parents from any school where they are going to be at risk for their program being completely shut down are going to be totally against any of these—I think this stratification issue needs to be dealt with but not at Uni-Hill or Pioneer. (Sarah) I would strongly agree with Chris that its people at their neighborhood school then maybe they would make it what they want but maybe if I were at Crestview and they pushed and pushed and pushed for Spanish classes they would have Spanish classes during the school day but they aren't really going to do that after going through the closures. So, but I agree with you, if you go to your neighborhood school you are going to make it what you want. And I really agree with Deborah that this school board needs to be supportive of all the schools in the district not just their favorites and this is a touchy subject and I'll try to tactful. But I've been though a lot with it.

I'll agree with that.

There are certain members of the board who have actually been less than Supportive of Columbine and a particular has made derogatory remarks about our school in public-televised board meetings. And that is completely inappropriate. And I think all the schools deserve equal treatment whether its district wide fundraising that's divvied up equally or whether its just the words that are used when talking about the school. And that is certainly something that can be changed in the district very easily—should be. If parents of the schools could be encouraged, by whatever means necessary, to visit their neighborhood school—I think a lot of change could be made right there because they're all good schools.

I agree.

I don't know if the district does this on purpose, but the district does not support Columbine in the press or whatever they do. I think the district made the problem and they have a responsibility to fix it and I hope you do. I'm not holding my breath. Its partly getting the parents to think for themselves, but it could be something else. One of the first things on my list is the board members and derogatory comments, because that was very blatant throughout the school closures and throughout the Community Montessori and Columbine merger—some pretty, extremely unprofessional

and negative comments made about Columbine. To some degree, blaming Columbine for being a focus school, when, wait a minute, we are a neighborhood school and this focus has happened because the district has laid it out as it is. I'll stop there. The other part of it is that I want to address which is directly a reflection of some of the things that my daughter has gone through as a part of being there since she was in first grade. One of the reasons that we wanted to go to Columbine was because it was our neighborhood school and we wanted to support that and Madeline visited it and we really liked it and we got to see who the teachers were and one of the things we thought was going to happen is that she would learn Spanish cause that was one of the things they said they were going to put into the program and over time that has dwindled away and within a program have developed a way to make Spanish part of the curriculum and the day but she has lost out every year they have tried to implement that. So that has been very disappointing and I know that they are trying everything they can but probably it comes down to money, and having someone there who really knows how to teach Spanish as a second language to native English speakers. So making that part of the curriculum, not in the dual immersion kind of way, just so that there is something that the English speakers (Anglos) that can't speak Spanish and that's predominately at Columbine, is you know, my daughter is the only Anglo in the fourth grade class. She is starting to experience "why don't you learn to speak Spanish so we don't have to speak English". So she is experiencing the reverse of what I know these kids have experienced themselves, coming into a new country and not being able to speak English. So two issues, having Spanish so that she can speak Spanish with native Spanish speakers, but also the sensitivity training that needs to be going on; on the district level, on a community level, the education that needs to happen. You know, speak about white flight, speak about what happens to a lot of very well-educated white folks that don't really the time to understand what is really going on and to educate themselves and you have to do that we have to make that part of what we do and I know that's real sensitive stuff.

Can I just say this is way off the subject. I gave every member of the school board a book that is called "Como Speto." Which is an examination of ten immigrant families from Mexico into the school system in San Antonio, no El Paso. And why they failed in the American school system just for that very reason what you're saying just so that the district can educate themselves about ya know why is it that our Spanish speakers don't always succeed in this environment. Its way more complicated than people understand.

Did you get any responses?

One person thanked me. I doubt if very many people bothered to read it but they have it if they want to.

Q: B) For schools to have more economically and ethnically mixed student populations without sacrificing quality what should the district do inside the schools themselves in terms of academic programs, support programs, staffing etc. for example what programs should be offered and where?

(Elizabeth, Chris, and then Sarah)

I guess I kind of come at this after how I started there was no way that I was going to Columbine. We absolutely love it! So in terms of interior programs for my daughter, I actually like the fact that she is the minority. I personally tout Columbine to people but then I find myself hesitating because I don't want the school to get too big and I don't want it to change too much. The one thing that I have suggested for the adults is I would like to see a Spanish class for adults so that they could support their kids. For twenty minutes a day in kindergarten but she is immersed. I mean ya know its eighty-five percent Hispanic so whether she is in a dual immersion program or not she is immersed. I would like to say, ya know I can count to ten, but its almost like a duality there. I would love myself to learn that culture and be involved on a more intimate level with the parents and everything there. So maybe if there was some program in the school to bring us together and I could help with the literacy. I don't need to read and write Spanish just to be able to speak it that would be great. Something just like that to bring the two different cultures together, speaking as a minority in that school.

(Chris) Something along that line I think something that started happening at Columbine maybe this year, they now have a program where when Spanish speakers are off to their ESL sessions, the non-Spanish speakers are now I don't know if everybody is but now optionally they go to an SSL session. I think it does a couple things: 1) gives the kids an opportunity to speak some Spanish and learn a second language but it also 2) makes them consistent with their Spanish-speaking peers. Suddenly they're all kind of going to this specialty thing and there is not this you have to go to special class and they all sort of feel the same more and I think that's one of the things that's important to do is to try to get these kids to realize you know you think you're really different but there is a whole bunch of stuff that is exactly the same when you get past this communication barrier—I think you find that all of your perceptions of the other culture are altered once we understand that culture. And the way to do that is to understand that language so then what Elizabeth just said—I think that would be awesome. If there is some way that we could through the schools and with our children get in touch with the other languages as well, that would be huge.

(Sarah) Its not a difficult question for me but I think it's a difficult question cause if you pose that question to all the parents in Boulder, I want French, I want math, I want Spanish, ya know. So in a way it is not a simple "what programs do you want in your school." I want Spanish. Luckily that is what I got and I would love to have adult Spanish classes. How do you support the programs that are existing in a school—my understanding in terms of how the school board is elected—they supposedly have these little districts that they represent but they are elected at large. But maybe it would work better if they really did have a certain number of schools that they were responsible for that they answered to that they knew then they knew principals and the programs, the students and the teachers they would be advocates for the schools.

Clarification: not just what programs do you want in your school but what programs you think would lead to great diversity/ destratify it

The SSL program would help as an example.

However there was a survey done who either open enrolled out or had up and coming elementary school kids and what do you want from your neighborhood school and a huge number of them said Columbine would be attractive to me if it offered Spanish as a second language. They didn't know that it actually did.

If I asked my husband before I came here what could they do to destratify Columbine what should I say and taking into account if they actually lower the open enrollment and do all these things that have been suggested. I'm sorry if you want to get Columbine to be destratified put a math and science magnet there, they will come there and they will grow. I have faculty members that I teach with who openly drive their kids to a school twenty miles away because of the math program in Bear Creek. I was like math in kindergarten. You have a PhD and you cannot teach your kindergartner more math than they can get in there. I know that there are plenty of people in the Columbine district who are poor but there are plenty more big expensive houses in that district openly driving their kids to Bear Creek for the math and science and I know that not everybody loves math and science and I know someone else may want music and art. But I know Boulder has a lot of math and science people. You put a math and science magnet there and it would not be like reinventing the school but it would be good. I think it would work but not overnight.

If people would educate themselves about Columbine or what any other school offered—they do teach math at Columbine and they do teach science and all kinds of things.

No, no, no you got to give them a magnet—you have to be better.

I don't think that she is saying that they don't do that. I think she is saying that you have to advertise it.

That is where people have to be educated about their school before they are able to be involved in open enrollment. So they see what the curriculum is and they see the math and all the beautiful projects and every subject—how they touch it on so many levels and let them learn about that. Then they see that its not just about Spanish. I really don't know where it all got started where these schools got their reputations but I heard someone say to me once—Casey is like inner-city.

I don't know if the district did anything to help stop that. I don't know if the district has done anything to help reverse that. One thing that could help is to not bus ESL students to Columbine. Take them somewhere like Centennial.

If we are talking about actually programs then you could make sure that a few schools in the area have excellent ESL programs around and programs for students who are economically challenged. You can build it from that basis up. So that the

stratification is addressed that way and then everybody benefits from a culturally diverse experience from these schools.

You were saying add a math and science magnet—that is what has caused the math and science stratification as it stands now. Because I want my kids to go to Summit instead of Casey because Summit has this higher level of challenge. But the kids are getting a better education so I have a friend who lives right across the field here—her daughter could have walked in her pajamas practically. She started commuting her kid to Summit. Not everyone is going to educate themselves like you are saying.

Well Summit doesn't have an attendance boundary. Three hundred kids commute there from somewhere.

It can work both ways – you can design a school that because of a magnet it makes things less diverse or you can design a school with a magnet that results in diversity in schools. For example just this weekend we are putting experiential education focus into Uni-Hill which is one of the things that has kept that a segregated school. Putting an IB program into Whittier is one of the things that keeps that school integrated. Very strategic.

Yeah, while allowing some of the schools to not offer ESL services and allowing them to require kids to sign a waiver that they waive their rights to ESL students, then the district is allowing a school to cope out and become segregated.

Q: C) for schools to have more economically and ethnically diverse student populations without sacrificing quality what should the district do in terms of transportation, location of schools, and definition of attendance areas?

There is no transportation problem if you go to your neighborhood schools. The problem is significantly lightened.

As being the minority at Columbine, we are also in the minority of being a two-parent working family there so one of the services that is not provided is the after-school care. So she is bussed to another school for that. Originally that was kind of the final line for us. In the fall she was there and they had four kids. But now they are bussing them to Crestview, which in the long run is okay because she has more kids to play with but if the services were provided there more two-parent working families who don't have grandparents at home would come there. It might be a factor.

I think boundaries—there is transportation issue for kids at Columbine for kids who live at 55th and Valmont can't walk.

The drive time is important even if you live two miles outside of the area you get transportation. Sometimes your neighborhood school is fifteen miles away instead of two so maybe you would still need a lot of transportation because those kids would need to be bussed.

We are going to have these busses crossing each other all over town.

It seems like these boundaries are drawn to go out of their way to encompass a low income housing district or a trailer park. I mean its not just Arapahoe to Baseline and a pretty little rectangle. Casey's boundaries go way out of their way to include an economically diverse community.

So do Columbine's.

So if we are talking about capping then maybe the thing that you did at Community Montessori should be done again. Something incorporated along those lines in general for OE would help out with transportation.

We touched on the creative OE for Community Montessori and we could provide that with more schools and provide restrictions so that we could have people who live closer to their schools going to them and thus less transportation.

I don't see anybody walking to Columbine except you, you!

Everybody drops their kid off, except for the busses. It seems like everybody is getting dropped off.

People who need the ESL services get bussed in from other attendance areas.
How many?

And because of that, that's created the problem.
Do you happen to know the numbers who are bussed in?
No I don't.

Isn't the bussing the effect of the boundaries which we are talking about here?
When did they come about and how did they come about?

They've been in effect for a long time, except for school closures—there have not been any boundary changes within central Boulder in decades. That Columbine boundary and that Casey boundary have been in place for a long time.

I think it's the centralized programming that's driving it because its just a few schools.

I've been back in the district for a long time and they were in place before that so you have to...

Just to make sure—somebody said that there should be ESL programs at every school in the district so that a kid could go?

So that a child could go to their neighborhood school and not have to be bussed in. For example Mapleton, six years back, had an ESL program and I think they closed

it. And all of those kids who were living in the Mapleton district were being bussed to Columbine and they couldn't walk.

Yeah, its an economy of scale and the old thinking historically was center based programs were cheaper to operate because you get better efficiencies with teacher resources and training and the facility and materials. You put all the kids in one school instead of five or six. It had side effects that probably people didn't foresee and now we're here talking about them.

That policy combined with open enrollment is what created that problem.
When was open enrollment created?

It really came about in the early nineties nationally when people started to clamor for more options and alternatives.

Most of the choice that happens within the system is from neighborhood school to neighborhood school. There is certainly a lot of choice to schools like Uni-Hill which is a focus school.

Tape 3

Q: D) For schools to have a more economically and ethnically mixed student populations what should the district do in terms of the how the strengths and differences of schools are measured and communicated or in any other area we have not already discussed?

I think we have already talked about that in getting equal support from the district and the board for all the schools and celebrating their strengths.

Go through the school choice issues in the paper and any school that had excellent and they don't have any free and reduced launch kids.

Now Boulder High is an excellent school rated by the state as the largest ESL program in the state in the district.

For high school there is so many fewer.

Is it really rated excellent because I had a friend who said don't send your kids to Boulder High. I put my kids in Fairview because its rated higher than Boulder High.

They both have excellent ratings currently for what that's worth.

That's because Boulder High has Spanish speakers.

Boulder High didn't have that rating the entire time since Boulder has been rating schools but Fairview has had an excellent rating all five years.

Boulder High has had it like three of the five or something but it has had it.

Back to the issue of communicating about the different schools that goes back to educating the public on what the curriculums are in the schools. I mean all I know about a lot of these schools are the rumors. I mean this school has this and. Maybe even publicizing the curriculum, I mean this school has this.

Communication is part of the problem—that is great (feedback).

It should be publicized for every school.

I think people should understand that they are getting a really good education there and all around. Its not just about ESL and that's all they do.

I really feel this district is heavily lacking in communication with the community. There is just no communication and yet we want people who aren't paying attention to vote for the school board.

I also want to know are you going to do this focus group with people who are at Centennial or Flatirons.

I do know the schedule. We are doing one in Lafayette tomorrow. One at Columbine for Spanish speakers. One in Louisville that is supposed to discuss why they are choosing to open enroll out of diverse schools—a lot of them go into Louisville and into Douglas from Lafayette's diverse schools. We want to get to those parents on why they made those decisions. At Creek side on the 27th will be similar to this group and Centaurus High School on the 28th will be the high school parents which is a diverse school like Casey.

I have a neighbor across the street that is open enrolling into Creekside and I didn't think there was anybody who open enrolled into Creekside. I mean I was just baffled there that they were so looking forward to getting away from Columbine that they were willing to drive not to Bear Creek but to.

Creek side really has a similar makeup to Columbine so it really doesn't...

Well, no, that's why I thought it so strange.

I'm wondering if you are going to talk to any parents who chose to go to Centennial—ya know and all the white schools.

Was there any?

Louisville.

The one in Louisville. Well, you are talking about the ones who are choosing to open enroll out.

The one in Louisville to get the elementary parents who chose to go to Louisville or Douglas from Lafayette.

I think it's a really important thing to do in Boulder.

(Deborah) One of the things and I don't know how the district could play a role in this but I was a member of the head start policy for three years and one of the things that I learned from that was a lot of ethnic families don't understand what it takes to be

involved in the school system so they don't. So they are intimidated. They don't know about PTAs they don't know about back to school night. They don't know the questions to ask at a parent-teacher conference. They don't know that parent-teacher conferences exist. And so what I'm saying is if you could at least install those programs in school and a mentor or something then you would get more parents at the back to school night and then there would be more interaction between Anglos and Hispanics and wouldn't be so much of them and us. And it would be more of just the neighborhood school. Again, I don't know where that answer falls into which question. There are certain stratification issues that even though we are trying to address stratification is here and we don't want it. In some vein obviously it does exist and we need to work within those parameters as well and allow people to be part of the system and to support the system with that.

(Jonathan) This question is important because there are a lot of things that the district could do that would not be politically divisive. You could publish the test scores in the different ways that we talked about, in addition to the ways that they are already set out and work with the Camera to make sure that that gets to people. Very few people would object to that and similarly the district has kind of left it up to schools to advertise. And for some schools that is easy and for some schools that's hard. Is there a reason that the district doesn't do a better job saying these are the schools, this is the information, schools can advertise also. There isn't any reason why the school district wouldn't want to provide that information right?

Q: What other thoughts do you have on what's been discussed tonight that the task force could consider? Having reflected here tonight, any parting thoughts that you would want the committee to consider?

(Carole) I just want to thank you guys for actually taking what is probably the first step in talking through things with people. The next step is probably taking that out and seeing if there are people—I think maybe there are not enough people of the groups that you really need to be talking to. But as a parent I really appreciate that you are doing this and really looking for ways to address these issues.

Is there a plan for you guys to report back—here is what we found out, here is what we are going to do, and here is what we are not going to do.

The answer is yes and Rich will tell you in a minute.

Any more feedback?

Were you suggesting any more groups? Yeah, well talking to the groups that were open enrolling out.

The white flight.

The one in Louisville.

Why, I mean what are the main reasons? I mean is it cultural, academic or a combination? The communities in Boulder are very different from the communities in Lafayette.

I think those people are very different from us really. So as many of those—I think those people are more important than us.

This has been very enlightening—don't underestimate how valuable this has been.

(Jonathan) I think its important to let the whole community know that the segregation exists because without that it makes it more possible to ignore it. Its just making the communities at the various charter schools, predominantly Anglo charter schools, --to make sure that those people know that this is happening.

One of the, I think that you will find that the schools that are one hundred percent Anglo want some diversity. Maybe they don't want a lot of the negative stuff that comes with it but they don't want their kids to grow up in a world where they are not exposed to anyone who is different. You know, I think they probably share some of our values that they want their children to see that not everyone has a house in Vail. The thing is they don't want to sacrifice what they consider to be their high academic standards and if they had to sacrifice that then they would probably give up the diversity. But I am sure there are some people who would probably embrace some diversity if they could tell that they were going to keep their high academics for their children.

When Mapleton was closed, I kind of thought that Mapleton was a cross between Whittier and Flatirons, and my kids got split up one had to go to Whittier and one had to go to Flatirons. The difference between those two schools is major and Flatirons is a wonderful school and my son is getting an excellent education and they really do a lot to do community service and a lot of community programs. But the difference between Flatirons and Whittier, and what?—they are like two miles apart, what they have at Flatirons and Whittier struggles to get things financially—maybe even the support of the district. I don't know that for sure but it certainly feels that way. It was astounding to me, I couldn't believe it. My daughter got a good education at Whittier it was a different environment and I feel that my son is getting a really good education at Flatirons but it is a completely different environment.

And making sure that the education process with the curriculum and the issue of struggling to get things is certainly big at Columbine. And the disparity between the fundraising at schools with twenty and thirty thousand dollars and others that struggle. Even some that get five or ten. That has to be part of the sensitivity training, the educational process that has to go on every single level, including within the schools—both the high Anglo and the high Hispanic so that I mean we are talking about some real deep sociological issues here. We have to start saying it like it is and not sugar coating it.

Well, it is eight thirty.

(Elizabeth) Parent involvement-maybe the term liaison is not correct but I think there would be more parents who are involved if they knew what they needed to do. There is just a cultural difference there that they don't even understand—you know a time that you meet with their teacher until the week of and then they don't have transportation or something.

You mean be more involved in the individual school that your child is going to or you mean be more involved in the process of even deciding to open enroll and take advantage. Well, both, but it would start even in the school we were talking about if there is four parents who show up to teacher night—

Well that's not happening all the way up. Maybe that happened in kindergarten but that education process has really improved at Columbine specifically—there are twenty or thirty people who show up—at least fifteen who show at Columbine.

Well, you don't have the Hispanic families being involved and what I am always told is oh that's a cultural thing. What I think we need to do is to help educate. You know bring them in. We don't want them to feel intimidated. You know we want them to come in. We need it!

(Rich) I wasn't introduced. I am one of the co-chairs of this project here with Mac and I wanted to thank you first of all tonight. We've been studying this issue for weeks and weeks and weeks. And we've talked with each other; we're a fifteen person task force. We've brought in principals, parents. We've split up into sub-committees. We are up to our ears in this subject but we felt it was really important to come out and discuss things with parents about this issue. Certainly test some of what we have been hearing to see if it is true, if it resonates with you. This is the first night we have had this focus group and then we are going to have a sit down with the school board and we will make some recommendations. I am sure of that. As you probably noted it is going to be up to the school board to make some decisions.

Oh no!

I know when I mailed a progress report to them; I know that mentioned some of the things we've been talking about tonight, some of the concerns and I saw a lot of heads nodding. We are hoping that we can craft something that will be effective, reasonable, and have a positive impact. We don't have any details to report because we have not come up with anything.

Just to explain my groan a bit. I was really following closely the fundraising policy issue, the KH policy and to me that was a litmus test of where the board stands on some of these issues and you could tell how dedicated board members were by their responses to that whole issue. I mean you could see people who were totally and culturally unaware because of how they responded to that issue. Every single board member has given their opinion and that policy issue is probably going to be approved by every single person who is on the board. I mean they changed it—they modified it. It is not nearly as bad as it was but there are basically some really—one thing in that policy is that schools who are able to raise more funds are allowed to use them for substitutes, there are funds for substitutes—schools like Columbine and Uni-Hill can't.

I don't know about that particular issue. But the school board created this task force and these are the cards we've been dealt. So one of you mentioned that you are glad that we are looking at it—we are glad that we are looking at it too.

So you will go with them—with whatever comes out.

We are going to explain to them why it is important. Hopefully we will have some recommendations that the task force feels strongly about and I expect the task force to be there supporting the recommendations and the community.

Late may to early June for recommendations.

There are some of us that have a priority at the end of June. Some of us do not want to leave work undone.

It has taken six or seven months and we have really worked under a compressed time frame. This is really a year to a year and a half job. I think that however long you want something to take it will take be that ten years or six months. But it will be an extensive process. There will be a lot of things that they have to talk about. Some they can implement quickly some they cannot. Some are going to be really financially dependent and it may take a conversation with the community in terms of potential taxes. They will deal with this. It won't get done over night. They are prepared to do something comprehensive and we are prepared to do that.

Are you a district employee? No, I'm an attorney. I had two daughters got through the district. Two years ago, I helped with the vision, research, graduate project. It was a major effort throughout the district. I was really glad that it was done. More importantly a year and a half later I was privy to a report that went through how they had implemented that and they did some things that were important. Some of these projects get put on the shelf but to see these things used and used to make an impact is great. My experience in the last few years have been good. I hope this continues—we've been working hard. For a person who has been working with these plans its hard. Hopefully you get the best information and make a good decision.

So in your meetings with the task force have you come up with answers? A lot of this resonated. I was dreading getting all sorts of new information. Tonight resounded.

If the board and the district could somehow put their hands out to let the parents be involved up to and with the board member all the way.

If there is a way for them to do it, it is going to the board meetings.

Well, that doesn't always work because some don't trust the board members.

They don't trust this district there is a real divide.

I don't think the board members trust the parents.

I think the board members have been condescending to a lot of us parents. And I think we have to feel valued. And I really think they need to reach out.