

## Centaurus Focus Group – April 28, 2005

Tape 1

The comments that you share tonight will be shared back with the district so we are being recorded tonight and I have tested the machine. Let's go around and introduce ourselves—if you could just say who you are and where your child or children go to school.

My name is Mya and my kids open enrolled at Broomfield High School and my fourth child will be open enrolled there as a freshman and I have one left. My name is Chris and I have three children a junior and sophomore at Bristol High and a seventh grader over at Peak to Peak and she is planning on going to Broomfield in a couple of years. I am El and I have a son that goes to Boulder High. I am Julie and I have two students here at Centaurus and one at Angemine. And I am Winnie and I have a senior here and a sophomore here and an eighth grader at Monarch K-8 that plans on coming here as a freshman. And I am Becky and I have a junior here and that is my one and only. Karen; I have three that graduated from Centaurus and my youngest is a senior here. Julie and I have a senior open enrolled at Boulder High. I am Rich and I have a senior at New Vista and a daughter that graduated from Boulder High fifteen years ago. I am Stu and I have a daughter at Monarch who is a sophomore and I have one who just graduated last year from Monarch.

Well, welcome again to all of you. Let me tell you a little bit about the purpose of our evening and what we have come together to do tonight and what we will spend our time doing for the next hour and a half or so. In our school district, while all the schools are of high quality, some have mostly lower income and minority students and some have mostly higher income and white students. That concentration of different groups in separate schools has been increasing and its called stratification. A citizen task force on stratification is studying why this is happening and what the school district can do to reverse this trend. Hence, our stratification task force person in the back. Our purpose tonight is to hear your thoughts to help the task force understand the issues. I'm going to be asking you questions and you are going to be answering them and you are going to be discussing them with each other as well. These task force members are here just to listen and not participate. The discussion tonight is being recorded and may be reported to the task force but your names will not be used. So please speak freely and from your own experience if you would. We want you to talk about your own experiences and we ask you to not interrupt each other.

I am going to ask you a question and then I would like you to talk a few minutes and write down what your thoughts are. And then I'll ask someone to start the discussion on that question. Ready?

**Question # 1:** Increasingly some school shave mostly lower income and minority students and some schools have mostly higher income and white students, why do you think this is happening?

(Chris) I guess why and I think this pertains to and I don't know if you are just concerned about Boulder Valley District as opposed to another district here in Colorado but I have experience in Saint Vrain as well as Boulder Valley. And I lived in Erie. Moving to Erie from Ohio—I've also lived in Minnesota. I have found that a lot of people are more transient today with job transfers. It is hard to realize what kind of school system because you have been in so many until you are actually in it and that is my experience. We researched the school, you know—we interviewed the principal. We thought we were making a good decision at the time until we got into the school system and we were in it for three years and we realized it was not what we thought it was going to be and it was not a good fit for our children. I guess one of the reasons is the transient society. As far as you said there was some minority as opposed to the entire class being more white might mean more parent involvement possibly. Also that we do have choices for open enrollment which leaves one school possibly with more minorities than others. Because a lot of people have open enrolled into other school districts or systems which leaves the minority. I don't know if it started out that way and I think some districts and I have found Boulder Valley is more active than St. Vrain was. For me, I attended several board meetings—they just were not willing to listen. I was the minority—I wanted change for my school and nobody else wanted it so it was easier to leave the system than fight it, in my case. And I think curriculum too. I think that goes for district as well as different schools and that goes back to parent involvement—what you want for your kid, what choices are available at different schools and if the parents are involved—they don't really know what their kids are lacking or missing. I know I am all over the board here.

I agree with Chris when she was saying that people have been open enrolling in other schools. You know it has been said before but—my experience has been that certainly parents can be involved and have resources than it is easier to open enroll and get your kid into other schools. It is just more difficult for lower income families to be able to do that more often so staying with their neighborhood schools seems to be like an option that they are more left with. Because to take advantage of those open enrollment options are not quite as easy. I think it would be over-simplifying to say just that. I think that there probably are, and I have experience this and I think it has maybe changed some over the past few years but at Boulder High School for example and I don't want to make a generalization for all teachers but I think that there can be a climate where the teachers really value the differences and see the language challenges as something that enhances the learning for everyone instead of being frustrated by it and not dealing with it and having kids marginalized. I guess my experience is that in some cases that can happen—driving kids away from some of those schools.

I think the neighborhoods clearly have the same stratification. And that creates—my kids grow up in a neighborhood and all their friends are there. They go to the school that is generally the same socio-economic levels and transporting is difficult at times in the open enrollment—you know both parents work so you tend to have a segregation that happens, I think, as the natural result of this because if you look at the neighborhoods, they are relatively common in their socio-economic setting. I think that the way these neighborhoods are set up in this area I think that it will tend to happen naturally. And to

be the exception you have to be able to, number one, transport. Number two; you have to be able to overcome having your child saying I want to go to school with people I know—I don't want to go to school with people I don't know. That is a strong force you have to overcome.

So Stuart, do you see that whole neighborhood going to the same school or do you see that neighborhood open enrolling to other schools?

No, to the neighborhood school—starting from elementary that is generally where most people are going to go and if you look at our neighborhoods in Louisville they all look quite a bit the same; it is all pretty white and all pretty middle class so that is going to be tendency I think in every area is to go to your neighborhood school. To overcome that and to cross over—I think getting transportation for someone in Erie to get to Monarch, you know, is somewhat hard—you know both parents work, you are trying to get your child to go to another school and they are saying “well all my buddies are here—what are you telling me mom or dad”. I think it is a difficult problem to overcome when the neighborhoods look just like the schools that they serve.

I have just the opposite experience because I come from a neighborhood where most of the majority open enrolls out and will not attend Lafayette high schools. And I think there are several neighborhoods in Lafayette that are like that. As far as my experiences I really feel like on the parent's parts that chose to move out, it is more misperception; don't go to Lafayette schools, they are not good enough—not sure what other misperceptions are. So they don't even start in kindergarten there. By doing that, they generally—once you lose them in kindergarten, they are gone. You have the same thing. All of a sudden you are with your group kids so if you go to x elementary school you move up to their middle school and that's that. If you aren't in a Lafayette school you are not in Lafayette Middle School. So we have just the opposite of what you are saying in our area. So for me I think it is just a lot of misperception and once they are out of the system I think it is hard to have them back in their home schools.

I just kind of wanted to comment on my observations in terms of my experiences in both groups—my son actually started at a neighborhood school and then I open enrolled him in an immersion program because I wanted him to first of all learn a second language early in his life and just because I felt it was very important for him in the world that we are in to be around kids that were different than whom lived around us in the neighborhood, so in second grade I actually moved him to Washington. And then he followed the bilingual track into Casey. He is really a bright kid and he probably could have been more challenged at other schools but I felt their were very valuable life lessons that he was learning in terms of being in a bilingual program and being with kids of different socio-economic backgrounds and I really see that a lot of parents don't value that, they don't value diversity and the richness that you get from being with as wide a variety of cultural experiences and socio-economic experiences and I was also on the PTA at Casey and one of the things I observed and started thinking about was the whole Mapleton school—trying to save Mapleton school where everyone was very supportive of having this Mapleton school and how important it was to have a Mapleton school and

yet Mapleton sent very few children to Casey and yet that is their neighborhood school. They didn't support it and I really believe that the it is a white flight kind of thing. That is my observation.

I can tag on. We came in from upstate New York and originally came out of Houston, Texas and I am from the Midwest, so I have kind of been around the circle a bit. Coming in from upstate New York, we went into Monarch in Superior and I felt the need for a stronger academic program for my daughter so I went to a charter school, Summit, and I felt the academics there met her need at that time. After that it was like where do we go to high school and it was her choice to go to Boulder High School because of the diversity and the AP program there. But she felt by going to Boulder High and the diversity there she felt more real world and wanted that experience before she went onto college. I have thoroughly enjoyed the academics at Boulder High but I can relate to the neighborhood schools and the difficult of trying to move your child on to—you know break them away from their friends because you know that is who they want to hang with. You know as Boulder Valley grows and looks at more programs like Centaurus with the IB program—hopefully that will help shift the neighborhood school system back to the Lafayette schools. I think they are looking forward to meeting the vision that the parents hope for.

We moved here from the Midwest so it is the first state that we have lived in with open enrollment and I am not a proponent of it. When we came we had researched schools, which were Monarch and Broomfield, and we looked at the school we wanted our children in and then we looked at housing. So the only thing that I could see that could possibly be hurting the topic is the cost of housing throughout Boulder, that it is so expensive that people have to come out east to buy more moderate and affordable housing, and they might have the idea that they like Boulder or Fairview but they have to buy out here so they can afford it. My boys are all very good athletes and very good students and they have done very well at Centaurus. I would have to agree that there are a lot of misconceptions because we heard a lot when we moved here—oh I don't think you want to go to Centaurus. And when we moved here we spent our time visiting the schools going in and talking to staff and students at different middle schools and high schools and we chose to come here to Louisville.

Have we heard from each high school?

(Becky) Well, I guess I don't have a whole lot to add—I think everybody has pretty much covered..

But you are a little bit different because you are open enrolled here so I think that you have something special to add.

Well, maybe a little bit. I think somebody said the word fit—and Boulder Valley offers the opportunity for everyone to go where it best fits them. My son has several learning challenges—I am really fortunate that we were as poor as we were at one time so that we are able to take advantage of the opportunity we have here at Centaurus.

Tell me those who have seniors after just going through this senior process, I wonder if society doesn't help our situation. I know that colleges—you know the whole college routine that we went through was just absolutely amazing. You have got to apply to the best; you have to have your AP's; you have to have your IB's. You feel pressure starting very young now-a-days to look for choices and to look for mixes out there and I wonder how much of that society college pressure drives some of the decisions that are made by parents to start that process early.

I just had two quick comments. The one, when you were talking about what could be the possibility for the disparity—one possibility: that we saw moving from the Cherry Creek Schools to the Boulder schools is what the realtors tell you is where you want to be—what are good schools, what aren't good schools. We really didn't hear that much about it because of the age our kids were—but realtors really do play a part in what they choose to tell people. The second is I have to wonder if politics within the district don't even just play a small part because where the division lines were drawn; where Monarch was built; the reason I bring this up is because of PTA at Angevine. At Cherry Creek we did not know what school was what and I didn't know you could change boundary lines. So perhaps some people choose that they want to be at a larger school but we personally don't. You know for people who open enroll out for a smaller school we have really benefited from the smaller environment here personally. With regard to the diversity having us sign up at Monarch K-8, my oldest, who is graduating is livid when we go over there because she said where are the blacks?, where are the Hispanics?—this is not real life. She doesn't even like going over there for their functions, because it really is a white school. So we are open enrolled over there; but we are coming back.

Thanks Renee.

**Question # 2:** How did you decide what school your child would attend? What did you think about and how did you come to that decision? Take some time and think about it. Maybe it is different at the different ages for your child.

(Rich) Let me start because we had a fair number of direction changes. She started out at Flatirons elementary school, which was our neighborhood school and it is has always been a good neighborhood school, so around the time she was in third grade—Flatirons developed a good reputation at being able to really help and develop special needs kids and she had the same teacher for second and third grade and the percentage of kids that needed extra help as a teacher aid as the supply went down was very great so she was reading lower than grade level but that was average or above average for her class so were very perturbed at where that was going to go—even though they were doing their very best at Flatirons. So we actually moved here in third grade to Bixby, which was a private school, for a couple of years. It was very clear that she did a lot better with more hands on and more experiential learning. She went to the choice program at Platt, which was generally pretty good for her. But because she went mostly to a small school she wanted to get into a large school environment and the social scene so she decided to go to

Boulder High. The first two years of Boulder High were pretty difficult for her. She did reasonably well - but she just felt pretty lost, pretty unnoticed and found herself. I know Boulder High is great and works out well for a lot of kids, but for my daughter it was not the right choice and fortunately she was able to get into New Vista, fortunately for her. The first four weeks at New Vista they knew her better and who she was and her issues better than they did after two years at Boulder High and that was a very good choice for her. She would have graduated either way, but her last few years of high school would have been pretty unhappy. One other thing, and I am not here to toot the horn for New Vista, but one of the things for the previous question, which I think is somewhat relevant, is that we were pleased that New Vista divided up students into advisories with students who were much different from themselves and the whole purpose was to force kids together who were not necessarily in a peer group or a click. That was a very, very positive experience and I think it has created a school community that would have been very, very hard to create at a larger school. It is that kind of—and New Vista is that diverse. It is that diverse in terms of kind of kids, but not racially. But I think that notion—designs and processes that help kids to get to know one another and move them away from their core group, is a really great way to help kids who are different to feel welcome and included in the school.

When we moved here we looked at Forest and we had four boys but the programs that they had to offer were about the atmosphere of the school, the size of the school. I've always stayed very active with my kids and I truly believe that if a parent stays active with their kids then your kids follow your standards and are going to succeed wherever they are. So we didn't look at the test scores or the ratings or anything we came into the schools and we went to Monarch K in Broomfield. Broomfield was a very cold reception for us and we did not see any diversity, which we feel for our kids to be successful in the world today, they need to be with diverse groups of people and learn how to get along. When we came to Centaurus, they took two hours with us. They brought in kids for us to talk to—so we were like the school appearance was not as nice as Monarch. It was the year that the high schools had opened—we moved in here the year that Monarch had opened. And we looked at Angevine—we were impressed with Angevine because they spent time with us. We really liked Broomfield but my husband said that is too far out for us, from where he works - so we decided that we would choose Centaurus.

All my kids had different reasons for going to Broomfield. My oldest son actually, our home school was Horizon and we lived right next to Legacy, but it wasn't built yet. Horizon was just huge—we went there two years—did fine but decided to come to Broomfield and did better there I think. The second son it was sports that took us there probably. Basketball. Just the feeling at Broomfield—saying that Broomfield was colder—Monarch was cold but Broomfield was nice.

When people know that my kids are open enrolled at Broomfield they ask me—well why are your kids open enrolled at Broomfield why are you not da, da, da, da. They are just so friendly.

Broomfield has great community support. It just keeps going and going. All the neighborhood kids go to Legacy now. I'll ask them if they know someone who is a pretty high-profile kid and they have never heard of him—at Broomfield you know everybody—sometimes too much. But mostly size—I guess.

When we moved into Broomfield—it was the longest we had lived anywhere and my oldest is a ninth grader now but my kids were in preschool then. All I heard was not to go to Lafayette elementary or our neighborhood school and the rumors you would hear were incredible—they sell drugs on the corner. Luckily, a friend of mine down the street told me that she sent her boys there and she liked the school and I should go check it out. So the year she was in kindergarten I joined the PTO. I got on committees. The principal there had me working on the reading program and I got to meet all the teachers and was like this is a great school. So for me I went in and found out it was a pretty good school and this was the place for me to be. But that is not what you hear around the neighborhood. Every summer you go the pool and you hear—“you took your kids there?” And it is very unfortunate. Somebody says oh no don't go there but my kids have all been there and the test scores were lower but my kids were higher so I did not care that they were lower.

Yeah, I agree. Every year the test scores would come out and they were lower and lower and lower and I kept thinking oh no what am I doing. And then, and my daughter was in second grade, and that was the last time I did that—she was reading a grade above her level and I went through all of her teachers and she had great teachers, I knew the staff. Why am I panicking—she is doing fine. It is scary and you have to talk yourself through that.

I totally agree. I think a lot of parents are so focused on the test scores—particularly if you've got second language learners and stuff, you are going to have lower test scores. But it was interesting, I know when Eleanor Brown was at Casey, she would show different parts of the test scores, so that if you took out the second language learners; their scores were higher than some of these other schools, but then look how it is published in the media. Of course, the total number—people are so focused on this whole no child left behind and they do not see beyond it. The other thing is that my experience at Casey was that whenever there was a problem at this school it was always getting reported. It was not brushed under the rug—it was addressed. A number of the events that were recorded I know were absolutely accurate. There were probably more problems at other schools but they are probably just not recorded; because they just do not want that statistic in the paper.

I chose our school, our neighborhood school, because I think that the community created by a neighborhood school is the most magical thing that public education can do. Like Julie said, 'if our neighborhood school had a really bad reputation maybe that would have really influenced me, but it would have to have been pretty significant' And I think that at the elementary school level you make friends for life and I think your parents make friends for life—I think that is an important thing. I think then when all your

friends are going to the same school that is a pretty hard thing to break. But I am a big supporter of neighborhood schools. That is a critical issue.

First to talk about test scores, my kids have been educated in Minnesota and Ohio and they were very large school districts and they wasted so much time focusing on the test and if you failed the practice test, then you had a whole bunch of extra work that you had to do and they taught and prepared specifically for the test, so I put no weight in the test after that. I don't know if parents realize that. Secondly, when I moved here I did not know that open enrollment existed for the first year and a half and then a neighbor told me. I don't know if everyone knows that it is an option especially those who have moved here into the area new. Like for me I was just fighting a losing battle and did not know that I had other choices. The other problem was that my kids had been educated in different states and I blame that on myself because of moving around. But different school systems teach different curriculums—one teaches phonics, another one teaches whole learning, one teaches core knowledge, another one teaches conceptual math. So it was hard for my kids to jump into conceptual math because they had never been taught that. What I found coming to Erie, and I don't think other schools are like that, they were heads and tails above others who were in their grade. Because they were educated in Minnesota and Ohio and Erie did not have any accelerated classes—they were all kept together and my kids were just bored to death. Then I found out about open enrollment and then I had to decide who has core knowledge and who has phonics and who has whatever. I have actually open enrolled into two different schools; we actually started by open enrolling into Peak to Peak for the academics and it was the year that they had built the new school and it was our chance to get in and it was easy for me to get all three kids in—they did not have a soccer program and Amanda found her way to the Broomfield soccer team. She just felt so welcome. She loved the girls—I mean she just felt a part of the school. That just played such a role in her choice for her second year in going into Broomfield High School. Peak to Peak met her academic needs but she wanted a bigger school, she wanted a football team, a soccer team. So how do you decide—they wanted more than just the academics which they had at Peak to Peak, and it being a new high school, it just did not provide those social opportunities and competitive sports. So at Broomfield they are well-rounded now, they have the bigger school, they have the sports, they are more well-rounded now and the social—it was just a better fit for them than Erie or Peak to Peak.

I don't want to bore a couple people in this room because I am sure that some of you have heard this before but I think that these east county schools were neglected by the Boulder Valley School District for a long time and then when it became an economic issue with people open enrolling out of the district, they noticed that they were losing not only the money that goes with each student but the community because with each student—well I think they figured out that well maybe we need to rethink this. Honestly I think that there is an elitism in our board and you said that we would not be identified on tape so I am taking your word for that. I am glad to see that they are coming around and listening to what needs to happen for everyone, for all the students. One thing that I have a pet-peeve about is the standardized testing—it is like we have to compartmentalize all the kids and it is not just like individually—it is not about the kids it

is about the numbers. It is just the opposite of celebrating diversity. The reason we came to school here was because Tim was having difficulties in another school that he was going to and we started looking at other schools with his special ed. case manager and I took him to different schools and asked well what did you think of that and he said oh well its okay. Or oh I liked that place Mom. When we came to Centaurus, he was like oh I like this school mom and so I think it is about fit again. I think the reason that this school fit for Tim was because of the diversity here—it seems like everybody here seems to feel comfortable in their own skin. And it is okay if you are black, white, yellow, you are special Ed, you have a wheelchair, you don't have a wheelchair, I mean everybody seems to accept each other for who they are because they recognize that everyone is different and they are accepting of that.

I wish all your principals could be here to hear you talk so kindly about your schools. We started with all the schools in Boulder Valley and just talking about all of them being wonderful schools. I will share when parents come for open enrollment tours—I tell them you are not going to make a poor decision here—every high school in our district is an excellent high school, what you have to decide is what feels right for you and your student. What is right for you? We are really fortunate to be in a district that has such outstanding schools. We truly are. Okay the next question.

**Question # 3 A)** For schools to have more economically and ethnically mixed student populations without sacrificing quality, what should the district do in terms of open enrollment? Should the rules of open enrollment or the steps involved for parents or anything else about open enrollment be changed and if so, how?

Are there any guidelines with this because it used to be when you open enrolled, you could have another principal give a reason why you wanted to leave the school—write it down. I mean that used to be how it was and that is kind of scary, but I don't know if now we ever get the kind of true picture of why parents leave and we get “well... oh I went for the IB program”. Yeah, they might have, but the real reason I feel is a different reason. The process now is filling out the application and submitting that application directly to the open enrollment office. So you are saying that that can change it.

That is what I am saying. Should we change it and if so, how should we change it? What would you recommend the district consider in terms of open enrollment.

What change is the ultimate goal?

Well, I think that the ultimate goal is to have schools that are more ethnically diverse and more socio-economically diverse so that our schools are not so stratified.

That will be one of the debates. I think that you have asked a very important question to what end or what purpose. We just know from committees here that stratification has hurt we have had schools that started out with equity before this started out and why. We are trying to figure out why stratification and what changes we can

make to stem that. Because we think that that is a value to have schools that are as diverse as the district is in general. And if any other changes need to be made tell us that also.

I have a question. Is the goal to maintain the diversity in the neighborhood that already exists or is it to diversify all schools so that there is diversity because social economics is a reality?

The two documents that we have referenced as a school system—one of those are the boards strategic priorities and one of their priorities is to respect and honor diversity. The other major document is the profile of the new century graduate and the profile of the new century graduate speaks about a multicultural society and respect and honor for diversity and being able to live in and experience different kinds of people. I can only go back to those documents which the board has used as anchor systems, if you will, for themselves philosophically.

So what should change?

I think that transportation is a huge obstacle. Well, even in our situation—both my wife and I work, we thought about having our child go to Fairview. But the transportation part of that equation really is difficult to overcome and I think until the district provides both consistent before and after school transportation so that the people who are in a situation that can't make that work without a parent quitting their job can be enabled to have an opportunity to go where they would like.

This is conundrum. I almost feel like I am back in the sixties talking about bussing. Transportation is a question we are going to talk about a little bit later tonight too.

I went to a high school where there was bussing and it did not work. I mean it made the issues worse. There was racial fights in the hallway during the day. You were late getting to class. The lunch room was half here and half there—it did not work so I don't know if you can force that. I agree that transportation for the most part...

It is just something that I think should be available for me.

Right, well for the most part—maybe I could work part-time. Had I had a full-time job maybe my kids would not be able to open enroll because of the transportation issue. I mean the only—my reason for open enrollment was to provide a better, well-rounded education for my children. Unless you make every high school exactly equal in every single terms to keep people in the neighborhood high schools I don't think you are going to keep people from searching out a better option and I do believe that there are good qualities in other schools and in different schools—as far as programs offered, quality of teachers, quality of administration, quality of facilities—until that is equal across the board I think that you are going to get people seeking out a better solution. I don't feel—I am glad that the rules were the way they were—I don't want to see a change because I was able to get the options that I wanted for my children.

Transportation—once you get to high school and especially when you are in ten, eleventh, twelfth. We have transportation at Centaurus but we have more people riding with friends than with a parent or bussing. Some of them would not be caught dead on the bus. I think some of the things that might help as you said there are inequalities and as you said people are going to open enroll out. Maybe, if especially this was their first child and maybe they were going to a new school—maybe they could have to—the student would have to come and shadow at the school and the parents would have to come and tour it—that would help in the cases where they are getting misinformation. They could come and see for themselves and make a requirement that you have to come—you and your student or just your student have to come and visit the school. I mean they have nights where we have nights at Centaurus here where they showcase the school and parents can come in and we are all welcome to and other schools have evenings that we can all come and it is not the same as coming to the school during the day when the school is in session.

Karen brought up a good point about a source of cool transportation. That is a very good point. That is something that the district should not ignore because a lot of kids would not be caught dead on a school bus. If you could make it look like a teenager's car that would be perfect.

Like a Lamborghini.

Yeah that would work. Yeah, a fleet of Mercedes would work.

I was thinking about what Al just said about Casey and the scores and people have the impression how kids would do that and one of the things that you could do without sacrificing quality is like schools like Summit who have brought kids together who are doing very, very well. It is possible in a school for people to not sacrifice quality but to understand that kids have different needs. I think within a school and Casey is a good example. I think some of those things can happen. I guess I am not just thinking about second language learners but in general—from lower income. People talked about here about not knowing about open enrollment—there might be a different approach to how open enrollment is explained to people if transportation is not an option—people who have not taken advantage of it might have that option. Transportation might be a key part of making that happen.

I think I am lost—aren't you talking about not, and excuse me for the way I am saying it, but a lost Anglo Saxon person not going to Monarch, going to Fairview that's an even swap of the normal people for Fairview right. You are talking about diversity, about different ethnicities right. So I think you answer addresses it more—people who are not English speakers do they even know that there is open enrollment—do they even understand the process because that is why you want to get more of those people open enrolling into Fairview, attending Summit, am I right? (Agreement in the background.) Is that what we are really asking?

You can go either way with how you are going to accomplish that? Are you talking about more mixed distribution? Yeah but the kids who would not go to Casey are still not—because of the image. That is going to have to be overcome because the image is that quality is going to be lost—because second language learners and low-income kids are there. There is a real big assumption that kids with other kids of a more high economic sort together—well of course the achievement is going to be better and that will take care of everything. I think that is how things have moved the way they've moved. I remember Bill Belick who was talking about this while he was on the school board six or seven years ago as far as what is happening in neighborhood schools.

Are we really looking to keep kids and schools in their neighborhood as opposed to open enrolling out?

The original question is about more ethnically diverse schools and more socio-economically diverse schools, so yes and no?

I think the question is—I have done both open enrollment and neighborhood schools; and I have been from all of that. You have to sit back and say are charter schools and open enrollment contributing to this stratification I mean is that—the rules of engagement right now are almost ghettoizing some schools.

So, with that question, are there pieces of the process of OE or the guidelines that you would all would recommend be changed?

In addition to the one that I mentioned earlier where they would have to come and shadow, maybe the administration could hold firm on caps and you know if you have some schools that are overcrowded and some schools that are under crowded and say that you know this school is full we cannot take anymore open enrollment you will have to stay where you are.

How many people leave the district if you cap? That is the problem. That makes it worse.

I can add another awful icky part of this and that is to say when Peak to Peak opened all the people that fled the Lafayette schools and came to our school then went to our school and then to the free charter school. So you should be concerned that they flooded to us and then flooded to the free charter school—it changed us dramatically.

**Question # 3 B)** For schools to have more economically and ethnically mixed student populations without sacrificing quality what should the school district do inside the schools themselves in terms of academic programs, support programs, extra staffing, etc.? For example, what programs should be offered and where?

Wouldn't an easy answer be equality?

What do you mean by equality when you say that?

Similar programs in all the schools, same funding, same facilities,

But couldn't that not be the same in one school than in another; for example Lafayette schools have lower class size so they could help their readers than it got opened up to the whole district. So just saying equality because you offer the same program but if you have diverse populations—the same program is not often equality across the board. The other program that is a little dicey is fundraising. You know at Casey—we are thrilled that we made two or three thousand dollars at a benefit. It is like oh my gosh. And then you look at your other schools that make ten thousand dollars...

Like Boulder High

Boulder High does make a lot of money and we give that money to the teachers and we distribute it and all that. But I am trying to say that it is a real issue because why should a school that maybe has less middle class parent—you know not get a fair amount.

Is there a piece in there in terms of what should the district do?

I mean there has to be cap in terms of how much you can raise. Or some sort of equalizing somehow so if you are going to have a fundraiser. If this school makes ten thousand dollars there has to be some equalizing—that can help in terms of programs and stuff.

Do you think that will really help? Because will the ten thousand people not say well it was really four thousand and call it a day.

I think it should be equalized within the district but what the parents do for the school should be not anybody else's—it is the schools' business. If you have some active parents who choose to do this I don't think they should share the benefit from it. Make sure that the other schools know how to do the same thing.

Yeah but you are not going to raise the same amount of money at wealthy neighborhood school than you are at poor one—you are just not. It is not going to happen—they do not have the discretionary income. So just because you tell them oh we did this make a wish list—and we got ten thousand dollars here. These parents can't afford to feed their children they have multiple jobs and I think that is what we are dealing with.

I think I agree with both. I mean it seems unfair that the parents in the school that are working toward something for their kids have to share it. It just means that they are going to stop giving. It is still unfair.

What else would you like to see the district do inside the schools?

I think things like community liaison in the roles where someone is connected with the minority community—I think that that is a very critical role—in order to give support to kids who may not be in the majority. What they are struggling with at Boulder High is this middle group of kids—they are kind of lost. I mean you have this AP program and special focus programs for those who are second language learners. But now we are struggling with some black kids who are very able to take advanced classes but aren't because they are saying things like there is nobody else like me in that class. That's a group that we are struggling with at Boulder High. But they do not feel comfortable going into an honors class or an AP class—there is nobody else in that class who looks like me. So I think it is really trying to figure out how you provide some sort of a mentoring program even if it is getting assistance from the wider population to help some of these groups and role models for some of the more marginalized students and stuff. But I think the roles—there is the teamwork and the chemistry between teachers so there is a real support system for minority children—I heard community outreach and a liaison for minorities and role models.

I am not sure whether I would like to see the district doing this or not but an idea that I think works is to have some schools have a reputation for doing something great and at district school A they have.

Everything we do are almost excessive in terms of the outlays that we have and I don't know how you go about reducing the cost of entry into some of these things and do a little less of these high scale to make it really accessible and comfortable for others but there is room for that. I agree the Monarch band and whole music department just went to Disney and it cost eleven hundred dollars per student to go and a lot of students did not go because they could not afford it and we fundraised and we had two kids to send and it was really hard. We were blessed! We were lucky to get it done and get them sent. I did too. I mean I did not think about other people. I was just thinking about myself and how I was going to get it done—and the fees for jazz band is seventy-five dollars a year. I spend a thousand dollars with two kids going to high school last year and I do not have the money for that—I wish I did but I don't.

I think the district has done a good job addressing those things. I think it took a long time coming. Lafayette schools now have gotten a lot of things in the last five years or so. Unfortunately I don't think it makes a big difference. Time will help that when people start to recognize that there are a lot of focus programs in Lafayette schools now. We have a tag school. We have a math school. And I don't know if, am I wrong Mac, it did not change enrollment did it?

We just started. It just started—we are still in the developmental stage. And I think we are probably two or three years away from talking about now.

So hopefully in two or three years we will start to see a swing. But one of the things that just occurred to me talking here. Everybody talks about the schools that their kids went to favorably but if it did not work they could find another school that was favorable. I don't know how we can get the word out that when you come in here all our

schools are good and you can't make a wrong choice. How do we convince parents to know that because the ones who are choosing to go elsewhere don't know that and don't believe that and until we get parents to believe that I don't know if it matters what we do. Well, I don't know if it is necessarily like that we still have to keep striving and keep doing programs and things like that and I think the district has done a lot of that but until these parents are convinced that every school is good and good for their kid.

So for the realtors...

Well Wright Elementary had a lunch for the realtors and six years ago at Lafayette Elementary we invited the realtors to lunch and only four showed up that time but we tried.

Well, there was a good turn-out at the Wright Elementary lunch.

**Question # 3 C)** So for schools to have a more ethnically and socio-economically mixed student population without sacrificing quality what should the school district do in regards to transportation, location of schools or definition of attendance areas?

I don't think you can do anything about location of schools—I mean they are where they are.

I don't think they are badly located.

You know Superior has had a big growth with I know just for Centaurus, like Angemine has a feeder school, Monarch has three feeder schools. We do have a lot of kids who open enrolled from MS to come here because we are closer so maybe we look at the boundaries would help.

To comment on Lafayette Elementary, living in Erie, we live in a very select community being from Weld County, Boulder County and St Vrain's school system, Boulder Valley and I know a lot of the kids who live in Arapahoe Ridge and those communities—the majority of them go to Peak to Peak so that is their neighborhood school—the school with all their buddies at the same school and I know it has a bad stigmatism like when I moved here my realtor said I am not showing you anything that feeds into Centaurus High School cause I would not send my own kids there.

They have said it to me not knowing that I had a son that went there.

So the realtors are a big issue. I think Erie contributes to a lot of Lafayette Elementary's issues-because the community is so split on so many things and really in Erie if you open enroll on the St. Vrain's side you are an outcast because you are abandoning your home school. For example with my daughter-in-law, there were ninety kids in their class and they only ended up with fifty something and the top thirty in the class left and the majority of them were transient kids, that had been educated somewhere else, who came to Erie tried it out too, it was not okay, you know that was for the parents

who were not getting anywhere and everybody lost. Which made them lose a teacher and all sorts of funding so they are made at anybody that open enrolls—so it is a double-edged sword—the community is on you for leaving. So do you stay for that or do you do what is best for your kid? So I think that in Erie, a lot of things are going on so that is affecting Lafayette too.

But that happened to me too. I actually pulled my kids out of Boulder Valley School, my two older ones and put them into St. Louis cause I hated Cold Creek. I hated it. I pulled them out and St. Louis was the best for those two kids. Now I have a special needs kid and St. Louis is not the best school for that kid and I still hate Cold Creek but she was in the child find program which is a phenomenal program—I hope that the district people keep it forever. And we kept her at Fireside cause that's where she was and I had the same thing—my kids were stigmatized because they hate Catholics. Now it is the same exact thing because we are going to Fireside and not my neighborhood school. So that's a tough thing too and I do not know if the district can address that at all.

Do you want people to stay in their home school because it is more diverse? Do you want to make it open to everybody so everybody is open enrolling everywhere? And you know a lot of Erie is growing and they want better, and I want to open enroll but I can't. You know I graduated from Erie High School and I was an outcast and they don't want to for different reasons.

I think boundary lines were interesting for Monarch when it was formed. That was a huge battle and it would have made a difference in Monarch if they would have made the boundary lines different. That was an opportunity for the district to do that but I think they reacted to the pressures put on them by the parents and kept that more of a Louisville school.

When we moved here, one of the comments made to us by the Monarch staff was you can only come here if you live in Rock Creek. We were like okay. But it is not like that because there are people from all over Louisville but that is what we were told at the time.

That is originally what they were thinking of doing at the time.

I have two quick thoughts. One is the transportation, I don't know what the transportation is like in East County or what the negotiations have been like with RTD and so on but I also have experienced with younger kids that the starting time of schools makes it difficult as well and I don't know to what degree. I know that it has been talked about and why the starting times are as early as they are but that could be a factor. The other thing I just want to mention is that when you are talking about what you want to accomplish is one how do you bring students back to the neighborhood schools who fled—are you going to do that. The other question is are you going to everyone to open enroll and make it as easy as you can for kids to go elsewhere and I think you almost have to look at those situations separately and say what is the strategy for this and what is the strategy for that.

**Question # 4** For the district to have ethnically and socio-economically mixed student populations without sacrificing our quality, what should the district do in terms of the strengths of different schools and how those strengths are measured and how they are communicated or in any other area that we have not already discussed?

I have a thought on that—I think that the media. I think you have to banish the media a little bit and maybe it is highlighting a story about a school and taking a school that has perhaps a mixed population of kids and really highlighting that in some sort of a feature story. Really managing the media to kind of help get the word out about what the school is all about so you really don't look at the CSAP scores and make assumptions. Somehow I think the district communications person needs to really forge a relationship with the media in terms of maybe highlighting and getting that word out and celebrating the successes for some of these schools.

We need a marketing director to put together some good literature that really explains what the school is about—how does it address the special needs, how does it address the AP, or IB or whatever. I am recalling the literature that I have seen—you know each school gets that much that says here is the population here is what my focus is and that's all. It does not really reveal what that school is about. Something that we could give to the realtor so that the parents actually read and form their opinions rather than on what the realtor said.

What about the school websites too—you could use that. You could do—that is what I do now. That is the first thing I do.

I think if we could get the kids on video—you know one for each school or something. I do not know how you could do it but I think if people could see that the kids were laughing and having a good time. It meant so much to me to see the kids and meet the staff. You walk in this door and Ray just makes you feel like you are the best person who has ever walked in that door. If there was some way each school get out that sense of what they were about and make it more—I don't have a lot of time to read the stuff in the paper—I mean we just get the Sunday paper but if we had an opportunity to see a five minute video we would be much more likely to take a look at that. I am not sure how we could make that happen and get it to the realtors and with the public in general but I think we would be much more happy with that.

It sounds like we could use some training or some focus groups with the realtors with the messages that we have been communicating.

Yeah I think that work has begun and for the first time we have been getting realtors calling us and asking for material to give to parents so I think that we are seeing some positive pieces there. But I think it is like Mac says two to three years to see if the things we are doing is making a difference.

Joan's comment about the website is really good and if you could do a virtual tour that would be really good with the students.

That is a good idea!

When people move here, people that are Catholic and what a Catholic education that is a whole different thing but when they move here they put in Catholic schools they pop up with our website and we fit one niche and it is not perfect but we fit that one niche. And a lot of people have gotten stuff off our website. We try to talk about things that—we don't have a gym and how do you talk about school kids without a gym—I don't know but we are doing it. So if we could convince schools to bring us kids without a gym—you could certainly do it because you have so many things to offer them.

So are you trying to keep people in or trying to let people more around.

Both, we don't want to lose kids.

But I think that it would be better if kids in their neighborhood went to their neighborhood school. If their neighbors I would have loved it—that is better; except where the socio-economic issue can't get that way.

However we are building in Broomfield and as an incoming Junior in the fall—I personally would be devastated if she had to go to Legacy—I don't know anything about Legacy but to have one kid in Boulder Valley and to have one in an Adams club and not have the option to get her back her that would be horrible for her. It is huge. Especially when they thrive here—they don't care if they have friends, if they are not involved but no biggie if they are thriving then I am thankful for the opportunity.

One of the things that bothered me though to be real honest with you guys is that a junior at Monarch—they came out of LMS from pokey, pokey St. Louis and went to LMS and they thrived at LMS. We looked—my son is a very talented musician and he wanted to do jazz. My husband said that is it—he has to go to Fairview because that is the only place they have good music. And I said I don't want to go to Fairview for lots of reasons—and he has wonderful friends who don't do drugs and I know their parents, who I can trust with my kid. There are a lot of other pieces at Monarch and it is our neighborhood school why can't I send him there, why can't I send him to the neighborhood school why do I have to get in the car and take him somewhere else. That bothered me a lot—what we did is we took a chance and Monarch's music has grown a lot and he is doing fantastic. At Disneyland, he just won best solo of all the kids that were at the festival. That was a Monarch student and a Boulder Valley student and it was not a Fairview student. We can have all kind of schools with good bands.

And that is a good story.

Yeah it is a good story. But now our next one is not a band person so do we have them go to another school and now that is a conundrum and I think is our neighborhood

schools had more equal. That we did not have to go drive some place because your kid likes bowling or your kid likes whatever. That would be better.

I think that the parent issue comes in to as a kid moving from Iowa starting at Humungo or Vana West in the seventies, concept six, a year-round school. So part of the parent issue, for me, when I have a shy kid I picture myself going to Legacy or Broomfield High knowing that for her it would eat her alive because her friend base is here and her poms or whatever has already begun for her high school career and fortunately for her we are able to open enroll her back into here. She is just that type of kid. She is just not an outgoing kid.

I made it my mission when my kids first went there and there was so many opposition in our neighborhood—I made it my mission to convince people that Lafayette schools were great schools and I would tell people. I had so many people call me on the phone and finally my daughter came to me and said Mommy why do so many people call you and what is wrong with our school that you always have to defend it. And I quit, that is enough these schools are great schools for my kids and if everyone chooses to go somewhere else that is their choice but I know these are great schools and I am here and I just got to that point. I tried to pull my ninth grader who is here now out of this school. We talked about possibly moving and she said well I am living with my girl friends because I am not leaving my high school. To me that says it all—she has a great group of kids, we know all the parents, she is having a great experience, she does sports, and you know it is a perfect place for her to be. I am tired of defending. I mean I will if anybody wants to talk to me I will defend Lafayette schools upside down and sideways but I don't fight anymore because I just feel like you hit a wall. I don't know how to reach those parents.

If I have to say everyday that you are at a good school—then they begin to think what is wrong with my school.

**Question # 5:** What other thoughts do you have on anything that we have discussed tonight and what might be important for the task force to consider?

I worry that we are fighting for stratification as our goal—we are fighting an uphill battle. That we will spend a significant amount of resources that could be better utilized. I think that neighborhood school sought to be the goal of Boulder Valley and I think that we could take the resources and make smaller class sizes and better programs. That would be a better use of resources for community and society to try and fight a battle that I think is a losing battle. I think I would tell the neighborhood change—the stratification is going to be same as the population in general. So I question the utilization of resources to any significant extent when we are dealing with all kinds of other financial problems in the district—in particular class size, programs that you have to pay eleven hundred dollars and all this I hear. I mean wow, oh man, it is hard to go to school these days.

I just want to go on record and say that if you are moving to Colorado you want to go to a Boulder Valley school. So and that was seven years ago so they have good quality.

You're overturning that law where you're sixteen year old cannot drive anybody.

I am happy for the choices. I am happy for open enrollment. I don't think that every kid is a good kid at the neighborhood school and I think that there are choices that a kid can excel to their fullest potential. I agree with Stuart—I think that resources could be better used to improve the schools that are losing kids for whatever reasons by improving their programs and their class sizes whatever they need to bring them up to be more equal to the class sizes that are closed so that nobody else can get into.

I just think that open enrollment is great and I think that is a huge advantage that Colorado has over many other states. So I did not mean to give that impression—I think trying to force stratification or destratification is a difficult step.

Maybe just having the kids that really need to go to somewhere else is a really good thing. But I think that for a whole bunch of kids that going to their neighborhood school would be a really good place for them. My daughter is an example she open enrolled because she needed to go to a certain school because of special ed and you can have another kid go to a certain school because he has special math skills but I don't really think that is ninety percent of the population and some of those things like we talked about like class size can be very expensive and the money needs to be there for those things too.

Maybe what it comes down to is if you are going to have open enrollment which a lot of us have benefited from—there really has to be some pretty good reason for it. You have to kind of decide that okay these six areas are items that we would consider to open enroll.

We need to do a better job about educating parents about open enrollment is that what you are saying?

Well, I think we can't just say okay these three kids want to open enroll to x school and they were picked from the lottery and they are in—I think there needs to be more to it—why do they want to go there. Is it really going to benefit them? Do they have a bilingual program that is not offered at the neighborhood school and the parent wants the child to have that experience? I mean I think maybe somehow you have to control the open enrollment a little bit more and maybe decided on some criteria that makes you eligible for open enrollment and it is not just I want to go there because it is core knowledge or something. I don't know. I am just throwing that out there that there has to be different criteria then we are using today.

It goes back to Rich's question do you want open season on open enrollment or do you want neighborhood schools?

I think the goal we heard initially is where we are today is not meeting the goals of the district in terms of the diversity in terms of the goals for the twenty-first century student and where we are sitting today we are not positioned to meet those goals and you can debate whether those are the right goals but those are the goals we are seeking to meet today. And what the twenty-first century students should look like that is pretty well-done study so if those are the goals how do you move all these schools toward that goal?

Is it legal to allow open enrollment based upon you have to take in so many minority students as you have taken other students so you have a quota per se is that legal or is that against state law?

Well, some schools have set enrollment guidelines to strive for a higher number of minority or dual language students.

So a school can determine but what about the district determining that to some extent and the district to a large extent determines that...

The district by law has the ability to regulate open enrollment by choice so there are some criteria in the statutes. Generally speaking there are priorities. You have seen them if you have filled out the open enrollment forms. You can set different priorities if you want to put the first priority of the vision to a school you are eligible if you are for free and reduced lunch. Or that you have a pierced left ear. There are various case law that you can use race but it is under a very examined definition but SES is a very legitimate criteria that can be used in determining eligibility for school attendance.

Well, why don't we use that because that would stop mobility quite easily in the BVSD?

Could we encourage minority students? If they had a priority would they maybe be encouraged to do that.

So is the statement that perhaps the district should look at SES requirements in terms of open enrollment to better balance the schools in terms of OE?

Yes.

What is SES?

Socio-economic status. Income.

The other question I have to is you brought up the question of Boulder High, if you don't have enough blacks in that class isn't it better to have a group of Hispanics here where they are comfortable where they have a group to be with and can relate to rather than throwing them off in a handful of a few people. Some kids might like to be

off in that doing their own thing but some might like being in their own culture because others relate to their cultures. I know that when we had the long community here that was a huge thing they needed to stay together.

How much do you want to split it up? I just think that you make the best schools that you can possibly make and you make sure that the word gets out there and you still market it—you still make sure that it is marketed—that is only going to do so much.

The argument or notion of whether it is caps or what criteria it is on has been mentioned in different ways but and I don't mean to sound negative about this but it is very possible that this goal of the district is not necessarily the goal of the majority of the parents. There are parents here who want their children to go to school to experience real life and interact with kids who are different for themselves and there are lots of parents who want their kids to get into college and that is their primary goal and they could care less about or they do not see value in whatever perceived sacrifice there might be about them going to a school that is more diverse so some of them are in this and it is a tall order. I don't know how you move this community of parents towards embracing this goal of the district. Otherwise when you talk about caps and neighborhood schools you just create this separation.

You all have been here almost two hours. Thank you so much for the information that you have shared—what you have said tonight will be helpful to the task force as they work on this issue for our students and our schools. Is there anyone else who just has something that they need to say and have left on the tape before they walk out?

You have been great to work with tonight. I just feel so honored to be in the Boulder Valley School District—because we just have such great parents here. And I am glad that some of you have open enrolled to be here.

Thank you. You get some idea of the richness and complexness of this topic. Its very deep and very broad. It has many facets. There are just several things that have provoked all of this. We went back to a study—actually I commissioned a study from Colorado University by Ken Howe and he has become quite famous for it. He explored this issue of stratification and test scores and the results of all of that and he used terms like very creamy and white flight and some pretty provocative terms in that. We have had several things that

Well, within the Lafayette community, for example, there are probably fifteen hundred kids who have OE'd out of here.