

In the Neighborhood March

Growing up in Greeley, we didn't have much choice in where to go to school. Nearly everybody went to District Six schools. We had a few religious/ church based schools and the Lab school at the University, but little else. Home school was unheard of. So, if you lived in Greeley or Evans, you went to regular public school. District six was an innovative and lauded district in those days. I remember when Jackson elementary school was featured on the game show ***To Tell The Truth*** promoting the teacher of the progressive all-boy kindergarten. Somewhere along the way, things have changed and the district has faced academic watch and less than stellar graduation rates. Now, with the currently proposed budget cuts, adding insult to injury, I fear education here will not soon regain its past exemplary status.

For these and other reasons, parents have demanded expanded choices for their children's education. We now have a private elementary school, several religious schools, on-line and home schools, and the district even has diversified with alternative schools and charter schools, that still come under their jurisdiction. Now, if you don't like the education your child is receiving, you have a choice; however, I don't believe choice is a panacea for failing progress, or low graduation rates. To succeed, students need parents who believe education is paramount, skilled teachers who believe students can succeed and school and district leadership that supports all.

Many parents choose charter schools for their children, often believing that charter schools are private institutions; but they are not, charter schools are public schools, and they receive state funds. The main difference between regular public and charter schools is in curriculum, educational philosophy, class size, and parent support. Charter schools have their own school board of directors; however, they still must operate under the overriding umbrella of their school district. They often are run more like a business and have a different relationship with teachers. Charter school teachers generally are not part of a union, and are at-will employees. Charter schools offer a different curriculum than the rest of the district. Many charter schools embrace the Core Knowledge curriculum or some parts of it, other charter schools may feature other curriculums, depending on age of students and whether they are elementary, middle or high

school . Many people may believe, as I once did that Core Knowledge focuses on basic learning and skills and has no emphasis on arts or physical education or other specials. This is patently untrue. Core Knowledge curriculums offer a nationally shared, standards based curriculum that follows a sequence, and is rich in art, music and cultural literacy.

Greeley has a “friends” of Core Knowledge School in Frontier Academy. Other charter schools in District Six are the University Schools (formerly the Lab School) and Union Colony Preparatory School. Most of these schools, particularly the elementary schools have maximized enrollment and have long waiting lists. There are several open charter schools nearby in Windsor and in Milliken. If you are willing to drive 15 minutes south or west, a charter school could be a choice for you. Charter schools do not have to honor district boundaries. If you cannot provide student transportation choice in schools may not be an option for you, unless you home school, or choose an on-line service. District Six is not obligated to provide transportation.

Whatever kind of schooling you choose for your child, know that you are your child’s most influential teacher. If you believe education is most important, your child will also, insuring their best chance of success.

Beverly Wallace is a Greeley native, and a product of the Greeley /Evans school system, as is her entire family.

Although this district is strongly criticized, we all believe we received a good education here and went on to be very successful. This is due in no small part to the dedicated teachers we had, and the universal attitude that there is nothing more important than education.