



Boulder Police Department Master Plan & reimagine Policing Report

Engagement Window 3: Learning Together

Growing Up Boulder & Mayamotion Healing
Summary of Findings
Published May 2022

"I believe that the police should change how they are operating currently and restructure themselves to be less of a threat to our community and more of a resource."

-- Avi, ELLOS participant (15yrs, high school)

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Overview

About Growing Up Boulder & Mayamotion Healing

Growing Up Boulder (GUB) is Boulder's child and youth-friendly city initiative established in 2009 as a formal partnership between the City of Boulder, Boulder Valley School District, and the University of Colorado; the organization is a nonprofit which operates under the fiscal sponsorship of the Colorado Nonprofit Development Center (CNDC). **GUB's mission is to offer young people opportunities to participate, deliberate, and influence local issues that affect their lives.** Since its inception, GUB has engaged with 7,500 young people on more than 100 projects. In fulfilling its mission, GUB is helping create a generation of civically engaged citizens while promoting equitable and sustainable communities for all.

Mayamotion Healing (MMH) is an organization that offers a comprehensive response to the most pressing mental health, social justice, and community issues that we face today. It offers three components of service that are grounded in the concepts of intersectionality¹ and healing-centered engagement². A multilingual, woman-owned practice that promotes a holistic health model, Mayamotion Healing's work takes into account the social and political contexts that impact our mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health with responsive modalities of healing rooted in culture, spirituality, mental health, and community.

In Growing Up Boulder and Mayamotion Healing's collaborative work on "Reimagine Policing" with young people, the adult team continuously returned to one goal: to elevate young people's voices. Throughout our engagements and this report, we have been mindful to not influence young people's responses, and we have done our best to recognize and reduce any of our own biases. At the same time, in keeping with the City of Boulder's Racial Equity work, we have named systems of oppression when our young people experience them. Our promise to Boulder's young people was that we would: 1) offer a brave space in which they might express their opinions and recommendations, 2) help them name their feelings and understand when individual experiences are part of larger systems of oppression, 3) allow them to review and edit reporting about their ideas, 4) share their unfiltered feedback with decision-makers and the community, 5) keep our adult opinions to ourselves, 6) keep them informed about how their feedback would be used, and finally, 7) offer them continued opportunities for participation when available.

¹ *Intersectionality*, n.: the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage; a theoretical approach based on such a premise. (Oxford Dictionary)

² *Healing Centered Engagement* (HCE) is a strength based that advances a collective view of healing, and re-centers culture as a central feature in well-being. [The Future of Healing: Shifting From Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement](#)

REIMAGINE POLICING IN BOULDER.

Words and dialogue are not enough.

It is time for change through action.

Partner with us to reimagine policing.

The Boulder Police Department, in partnership with other city colleagues, is working to make significant changes in the midst of local and national discussions around the need for reform in policing. The master planning process will provide a framework for the department to do a broader and more in-depth examination of community input, use data-driven strategies to review current operations in the context of changing conditions, and determine future policing goals and strategies. A principal aspect of the process will be integration of the city's racial equity work with the Police Master Plan steps. This master plan will be used as the roadmap for creating meaningful changes to public safety in Boulder in the next 3-10 years. An in-depth examination of community needs and utilization of police department resources is currently underway.

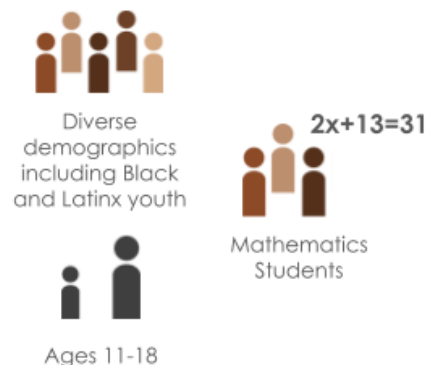
Engagement Window 3: Learning Together

Based on questions from the community about Boulder's Police Department and how it currently operates, the City of Boulder paused their planned engagement window to instead engage the community in a "Learning Together" phase of the Reimagine Policing and Police Master Plan process. The city conducted a series of online and hybrid Police Department Town Halls on several topics the community had indicated they were interested in.

One page [explainer documents](#) related to each town hall topic were created and posted on city websites and shared on social media platforms before each town hall meeting. During meetings, Chief Herold and police department staff presented relevant topic information and answered questions from the public. Community members were given the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback on the topics related to the town hall first, and then to ask Chief Herold a question about any other topic. Feedback from town halls and city websites was collected and shared with city staff to inform Engagement Window 3.

GUB and MMH's Youth Engagement Approach

In alignment with Growing Up Boulder's mission to offer Boulder's young people opportunities to participate, deliberate, and influence local issues that affect their lives, GUB and Mayamotion Healing partnered to solicit feedback from a diverse set of young people



³ The language in this section comes directly from the City of Boulder's website, [Reimagine Policing](#), retrieved on 5/15/22.

during the third public engagement window of the Boulder Police Department's Master Plan.

GUB and MMH's practices are intentional in engaging underrepresented children and youth most impacted by these issues, with special attention to supporting young people's psychological health in the process of facilitation. Using the City's engagement framework topics of Safety, Values, Hopes, and Concerns, GUB and MMH designed and facilitated high-quality, psychologically-based interventions that were both culturally relevant and accessible. The unique process was grounded in three principles: 1) positive youth development, 2) efficient and ethical program delivery, and 3) the centering of wellness of youth, families, and community. The approach also integrated knowledge about systems of oppression, power, and privilege, and incorporated therapeutic best practices for impacts of stress and trauma during engagements. Thus, the work aimed to respectfully engage and hear from young people, while simultaneously minimizing re-traumatization or tokenization.

Those interested in learning more about how the two organizations approached previous engagement windows with young folks, particularly youth of color and youth with targeted identities, are encouraged to read GUB/MMH [Engagement Window I & II Reports](#) and [Somatic Experience and Equity Lens](#).

Timeline

December 2021 - June 2022

Engagement Description

In spring 2022, GUB and MMH worked with 297 children and youth, 11 teachers, and four partner groups in the Learning Together engagement window (see matrix below). Two hundred sixty-one of these students were Centennial Middle School math students who sought to use math in their everyday lives while simultaneously engaging in a current civic project. While each engagement was unique because of demographics and size, all student groups were given a review of Reimagine Policing engagement windows I and II. Key documents and websites were shared, and then the Learning Together phase was introduced. Engagement components included in-person surveys and discussions, brainstorming sessions, student-research, a variety of student presentations (mainly slide shows and posters), and share-out events. A final component of feedback from groups that worked with Mayamotion Healing was the inclusion of *somatic experiences*--that is, a description of what participants were feeling in their bodies at the time of discussion--as both a mechanism to gather data for the master plan and as a tool to support participants' mental health (see Somatic Experience and Equity Lens document in the appendix). Three of four groups provided feedback on the focus areas and value statement documents that the city published after engagement window I. All students were asked to review and analyze the data from town hall one page explainer documents with the goal of providing city staff feedback, questions, and recommendations for the next phase of Reimagine Policing. To help tell the engagement stories, samples of student work and student and adult quotes have been embedded throughout this report and are linked in the appendix. **A total of 3,087 hours was dedicated by the GUB/MMH team, youth, and educators to the project.** Engagement groups are described in the table below:

Groups that participated in Learning Together Engagement Window 3

Organization name	Program within organization/school	Ages of participants	Noteworthy demographics
Boulder Valley School District	Centennial Middle School	6th-8th grades (11-14 year olds)	North Boulder neighborhoods–37% students of color
City of Boulder	Youth Opportunities Advisory Board	9th-12th grades (14-18 year olds)	Area high schools–30% students of color
El Centro AMISTAD	ELLOS Program	9th-12th grades (14-18 year olds)	New Vista High School–100% students of color
Boulder County Public Health	GENERATIONS Program	6th - 12th grades (12-18 year olds)	BVSD & SVVSD schools–100% students of color

By the Numbers (All Engagements)

- 315 Total Participants
- 297 Youth (ages 11-18)
 - 261 Centennial Middle School (CMS)
 - 15 ELLOS youth
 - 11 GENERATIONS youth
 - 10 Youth Opportunities Advisory Board members
- 11 Facilitators of Youth groups
 - 1 Youth Opportunities Program leader
 - 5 Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) teachers
 - 1 ELLOS staff
 - 4 GENERATIONS staff/interns
- 1 City of Boulder staff
 - 1 Boulder Police Department & Police Master Planning Core Team
- 2 GUB Interns
- 1 MMH intern
- 3 GUB and MMH Staff
- **282 hours** GUB/MMH team designing, implementing, analyzing, and reporting on PDMP
- **2,702 hours** of youth work on the project
- **67 hours** partner educators’ work on the project
- **36 hours** GUB team directly engaging with children and youth
- **Total youth, educator, and GUB/MMH time on project: 3,087 hours**



“In respect to this focus area (Recruiting and Supporting a Professional Workforce with Integrity) I believe the community should provide their opinions on what integrity looks like in order for the police to understand what integrity means for the community.”

-- YOAB Youth

Executive Summary

Youth feedback and recommendations during Learning Together engagements emphasized powerful voices and stories of young people ages 11-18 in Boulder County. Not only are children and youth aware of the importance of the issue of community safety (and policing as central to that), but they also have deep insight into the social and political factors that must be considered in city decisions in today’s world. This section summarizes all youth group findings GUB/MMH facilitated this spring.

General: Each group of young people had unique dialogues around their ideas of the role of policing and strategies for what policing can look like in the future. Steeped in their lived experiences, student feedback, questions, and recommendations were as insightful and nuanced as any adult feedback. There were many consistencies across youth groups during engagement window III in terms of content and somatic responses, and very similar sentiments and recommendations were present in engagement windows I and II.

Repeated themes: All ages shared **concerns of current and historical policing practices** that include harassment, disrespect, violence, and brutality against Communities of Color, specifically Black and Brown communities. Youth as young as eleven see the issues of policing (bias, racism, targeting, inequality) play out in their city and nation. There was a strong presence of allyship of non BIPOC students for BIPOC students. Black Lives Matter was identified again in each group as a powerful and critical issue, and there were highly activated somatic responses among many student groups—especially with groups with high percentages of students of color as conversations progressed. Importantly, as a result, many youth not only participated in a cognitive experience but also a somatic one, locating their feelings and emotions through their body as a tool for building deeper awareness of their experience. In every youth group, students expressed various levels of **skepticism that any “reimagine policing” process could hold true justice or sustainable change**. Youth of color reported the strongest feelings of anger and disillusionment around reimagining the role of police. All youth spoke about the efforts as being incredibly important and impossibly difficult.

Menti (online polling software): 0% of thirty-six student responses from the “first word that comes to mind when thinking of police” Menti exercise had a positive connotation. “Questionable” and “not helpful sometimes” were the most positive descriptive words reported. Students spoke often about how **the community perception of police officers needed to change from a threat to more of a resource**.

Focus areas/value statements: Overall, youth gave the **highest rankings for the focus areas of Ensuring Right Response/Roles for Policing and Modeling Transparency and Accountability and the “Integrating with Community” as the lowest**. The 3 out of 4 groups that studied the focus areas and value statements had extensive discussions (see All Youth Focus Areas Unpacked and All Youth Value Statements Unpacked links below this summary). Youth are clear in wanting certain

police roles to cease entirely, as in the case of responding to mental health emergencies, and other roles needing to be greatly improved upon, as in hiring a diverse police department (diverse in every way), expanding the use of ICAT and other transparency and accountability measures, and ongoing officer training.

Youth believe establishing real trust with the community will be a huge undertaking. Identities continue to be central to trust and mistrust of the police, and youth want officers to shift the way they communicate with them. Many youth felt officers ought to approach youth with more maturity and respect. Others noted that **they felt police officers were out to find fault with them or carried biases against them for, for example, “just hanging out” outdoors in a large group**. Still others reported being outright harassed by the police. Issues with racial profiling and lack of police accountability were voiced in every engagement group GUB/MMH held.

Young people often asked for clarification of the focus areas and value statements. They wanted more details and clarification about what practices and policies exist *now* in the department and they are **keen to know exactly HOW new strategies will be implemented**. They want equity to be evident in all written language, and reminded facilitators that the mission of the police department is “to protect and to *serve*” the community—so police should be asking what the community wants and needs. The bottom line: young people saw the focus areas and value statements as core to the success of reimagine policing efforts, and as such, they strongly recommend that areas and statements be updated with youth perspective, content, and clarity.

Data inquiry: In addition to each engagement group’s summary of findings in the report below, overall highlights in regards to town hall explainer documents include **young people wanting to see the city collect more specific ICAT data in the future and improvements made in many areas where crime is trending up, especially in the 18-24 year old group**. Young people want to feel more safe in their city and they feel teens ought to have safe spaces to be together. Young people are quick to point out that as crime goes up, anxiety goes up, and their feelings of safety go down. In looking at the data from the budget town hall, the overwhelming response from students was that funds should be reallocated back to community services as a way of “moving upstream”. Youth spoke to the importance of understanding *why* crime happens in the first place and recommended that funding be prioritized on people's basic needs being met as a way to reduce crime. Other overall recommendations:

Young people want to see the population of unhoused individuals decrease and the amount of mental health wellness support increase. They see value in the community and the police department defining what “diversity” means *exactly*, so that everyone works from the same definition. Youth want diversity in a police force in every sense of the word. Middle school students spoke about hiring officers that have similar values as the community and that could be role models for younger children and youth.

It is important to note that when two student groups of color reviewed the data, they immediately responded by expressing feelings of activation. They generated feedback for this report based on their lived experiences and insights of the stories *behind* the data. Facilitators invested time to listen and capture their experiences and reactions (cognitive/somatic) and to process them together rather than adhering to the agenda of only interpreting data with them.

Finally, **youth shared that immigrant/migrant families fear interaction with police due to risk of harassment and deportation.** Further, youth emphasized experiences in which they and their families have been harassed by police questioning their immigration status (see example in call-out box below). They reported that experiences such as these do not build trust, but instead perpetuate the harmful history of targeting communities of color.

The following call-out box is an example of the kinds of important conversations that occurred throughout engagement window III:

Mental Health Call to Police Gone Wrong: Case in Point

One youth (who requested anonymity due to fear of retaliation) shared that when their family recently called the police to support a mental health issue in their family, the situation resulted in the family member being detained by ICE. Regrettably, this same individual is currently in process for deportation; and what's worse, the individual has yet to receive mental health services as a needed intervention.

All Youth Focus Areas Unpacked

All Youth Value Statements Unpacked

This next section includes engagement descriptions and summary of findings for each student group GUB/MMH worked with. The appendix on pp 24-25 contains resources, student data, adult and student quotes, and other engagement materials.

GUB Engagement

Centennial Middle School

By the Numbers

- 261 6th-8th grade Math students (ages 11-14)
(37% Students of Color)
- 3 Math teachers
- 2 Language Arts teachers
- 2 GUB staff
- 10 engagement hours per student

Engagement Description

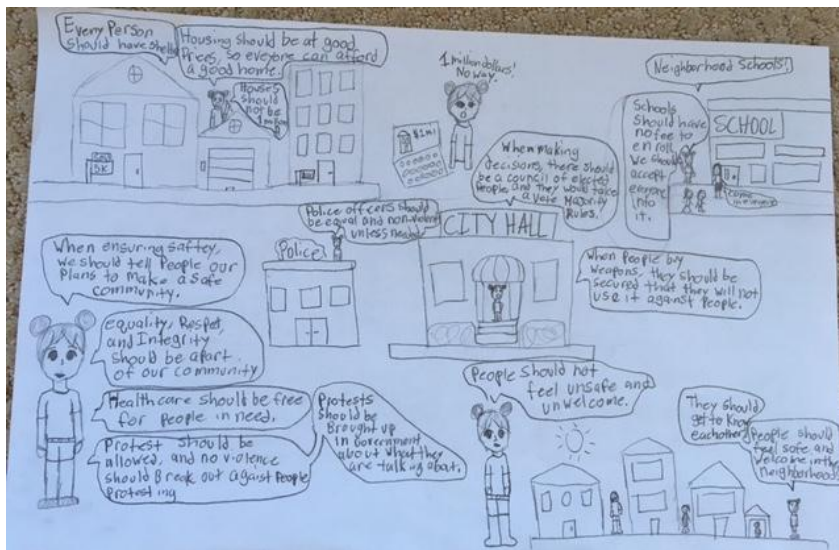
March-April 2021

In-person engagements; hybrid presentations

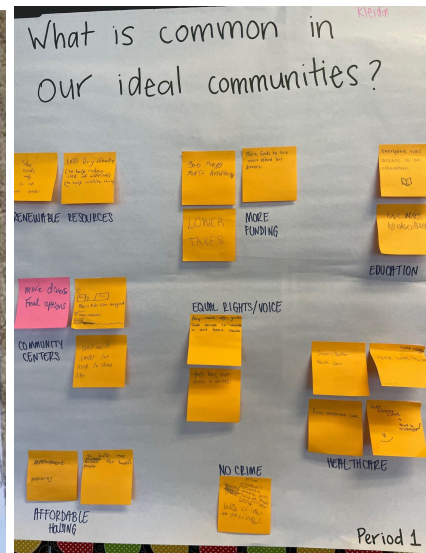


On April 4, 5, and 7, 2022, during the CMAS (state) testing window, GUB staff engaged with 261 6th-8th grade Centennial Middle School math students from 11 different classrooms. The project-based learning unit emphasized using math in a real world setting and offered students an opportunity to be civically engaged in a current Boulder city project. After learning about GUB’s mission, the Reimagine Policing process, and the Learning Together engagement window, students created a detailed map of their “ideal” community reflecting their values, hopes, and concerns, as well as their considerations of police roles and safety.

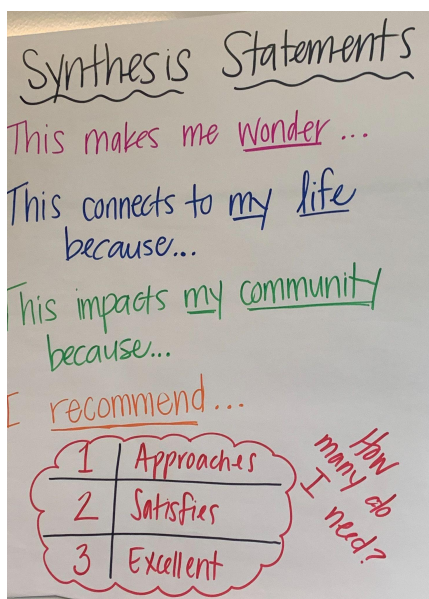
Through mind mapping and drawing, students were encouraged to think about what they would want to change about their community today. At the end of the session, students wrote the most important idea within their ideal community on a sticky note and shared it with their classmates and teacher. Sticky notes were grouped according to theme and common themes were noted.



Ideal Community drawing sample



Common themes chart



In the ideal community activity, students began to reimagine what is possible in their own community in general terms. Then, for the next 4-5 math classes, students were challenged to reimagine policing, specifically, by exploring the Reimagine Policing page on the Be Heard Boulder site. They reviewed topics and one page explainer documents from past town hall meetings and conducted their own research. Several classes further explored topics related to reimagine policing efforts with their Language Arts teachers as well. These students watched podcasts and videos, read articles and held discussions during the same 3 week period (see appendix for Language Arts learning materials).

For the final task of the unit, students selected a topic that was important to them, analyzed the available data connected to that topic, made observations and recommendations for the Learning Together engagement window, and created a visual presentation. Synthesis statements (like those shown on left) were used to help

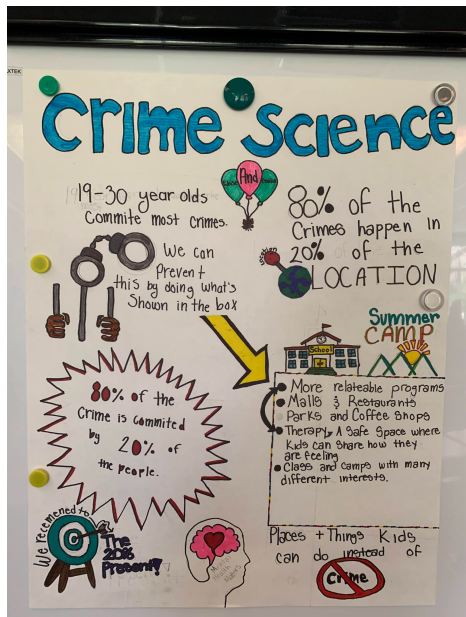
students frame their findings. Working mostly in teams, students represented their data analysis and recommendations in a variety of ways: slide show, posters, comics, letter writing, and plays. An entire day of student presentations was held on April 21, 2022 to twenty-one city staff members and other decision makers and stakeholders who asked questions of and provided feedback for the youth (see sample presentation [here](#), a sample poster below, and more samples in the appendix).

“My favorite part about this project was that it was different – nice to see the kids step outside of their usual math student behavior. I enjoyed seeing them respond and communicate their values and ideas. It offered some insight into them as people – not just math students. This kind of community level involvement is right up their alley at this age. Hopefully, we sparked some community activism!”

–Ms. Hullinger, Teacher

Summary of Findings

Middle school students are interested in the same kinds of police reform as high school students. They are very aware of national trends related to unjust policing practices, and they recognize and freely describe policing issues in their own backyard. The majority of students focused their attention on topics related to recruiting for diversity and representation, redefining police roles, decreasing crime trends, providing officer training excellence, and meeting mental health needs and the needs of the unhoused. Teens want to feel safe when exploring their city. They want safe spaces to hang out



with their friends, and they describe, “crime and feeling safe do not go together.” Reflecting their personal values, students’ ideal community maps and drawings often included the words “safe”, “inclusive”, “equality”, and “diversity”. As one student stated with reason and wisdom, “an ideal community is where everybody can be safe and happy and live their own lives”. In addition to their Learning Together recommendations, these middle school students expressed the desire for adults in our community to listen to teens’ needs and recommendations. The data supports this: while 74% of students felt it was important to include young people in decisions that affect their lives, only 61% felt they could help improve their community by sharing their opinions and ideas. These figures correlate with GUB staff and teacher observations of students in each group who expressed skepticism for the Reimagine Policing engagement process. They seriously doubted that adult decision makers would fully listen to their recommendations or follow through to

make necessary equity and safety changes they feel are needed for the community to experience a better life in Boulder.

“Something I was pleasantly surprised by was the level of data gathering the students had done and their awareness of serious social issues.”

–Community member

MOST FREQUENT RECOMMENDATIONS BY ALL MATH STUDENTS

Student quotes accompany each recommendation

1. Recruit for diversity of all kinds—Increase percentage of women, LGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and bi-lingual officers; increase officers' ability to meet the needs of our diverse community; start using more inclusive, non-binary language on explainer docs and collect more data on diversity.

“Diverse representation in the police department increases our comfort level by having officers look like us.”

2. Recruit for shared values—Students spoke about hiring officers that could be role models to youth—that youth could look up to and respect; ensure that officers share the same values of the Boulder community: diversity, equity, and inclusion; the department needs to work to shift overall negative perceptions to positive ones.

“Get people of the same culture to recruit the people of that culture.”

3. Expand use of ICAT—Youth recognized the ICAT as a best practice tool for training and accountability; they want to see more improvement in data collection and reduction of crime and police practices over time; they see the following training as essential: anti-bias, anti-racism, anti-targeting, de-escalation strategies and diminishing use of force rates.

“Advance the use of the ICAT. There have been improvements, but we should do better.”

4. Redefine police officer roles—Create more alternative response programs ie. have police respond to emergencies and mental health practitioners respond to mental health calls; adjust budget accordingly.

“We need to rethink the roles police officers play and have the percentage of alternative responses keep going up.”

5. Prioritize initiatives that reduce youth crime—Data is clear in regards to the highest crime rate occurring in late teens to young adulthood; patrol high crime areas; conduct outreach programs and develop relationships.

“My group recommended that BPD enroll more young people in mental health care programs for a decreased cost so that there is less crime among this group of people.”

6. Prioritize initiatives that support mental health and wellness—Youth are aware of the national mental health crisis and are aware of the high incidences of mental health issues in our own city; They see clear connections between crime and existing mental health resources.

“We want there to be less worry and all people to feel safe in our community.”

7. Prioritize initiatives to reduce the number of community members who experience homelessness—Youth are concerned by current homeless population numbers and want to see homeless individuals get their needs met; they advocate for affordable housing for all.

“Housing is very expensive and there's a lot of people living on the street because they have nowhere to go and can't get help because they have no money and I feel someone should do something about it and help them get on their feet.”

8. Listen to young people—Young people have a lot to say about the world around them; they think young people ought to have a voice in shaping their communities (just as other community members do), but don't feel adults listen to them as often as they'd like.

“I want adult decision makers to have children and teens (especially girls) in mind in whatever decisions they make.”

9. Prioritize creating safe spaces for teens and cultivating a greater sense of community safety overall—Crime data showing crime rates going up was concerning to all students. A significant percent of students responded to the question, “How will your recommendation make Boulder better for everyone?,” by stating that less crime equated to feeling more safe; that having people of all backgrounds in our community creates more comfort, and that there would be less worry with less crime.

“We want diversity; it makes us all feel a little safer.”

The word cloud* below captures middle school student responses to the question, “**How will your recommendations make Boulder a better, more ideal community for all?**”



*For a larger image of this cloud and to review individual student responses, see Word Cloud document in appendix

“Our youth see the world in a very unique and wonderful way. They see and understand things I don’t. Students, continue to find what your passions are and use your voice to be heard. Stay connected, keep finding data that’s important, and keep asking questions!”

—Harry Oaxaca, Executive Director BVSD

GUB/MMH Engagement

Youth Opportunities Advisory Board (YOAB)

By the Numbers

- 10 YOAB board members (30% PoC)

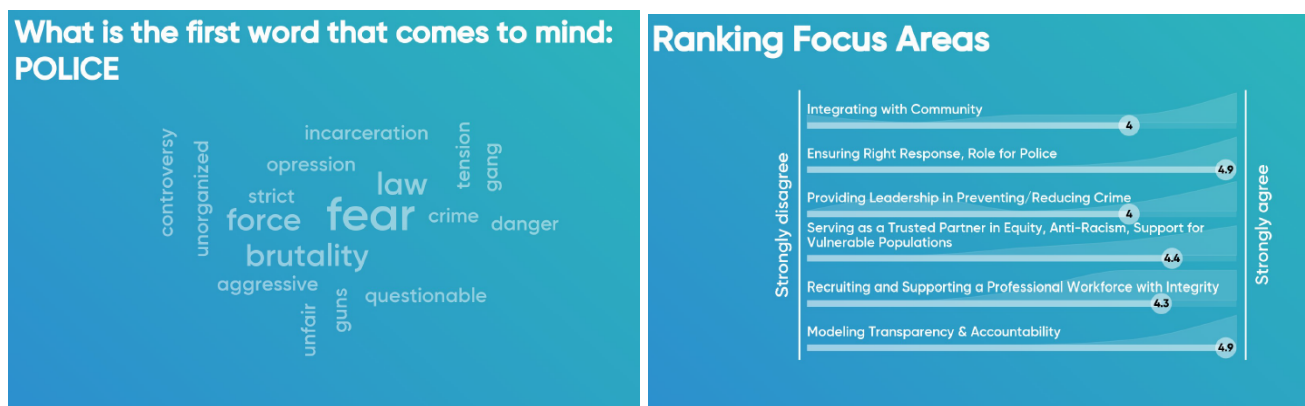
- 1 Youth Opportunities Program Coordinator (PoC)
- 3 GUB/MMH staff (1 PoC)
- 4 engagement hours per board member

Engagement Description

April-May 2022

Virtual engagements

YOAB board members are a civically invested group of students from area high schools, committed to helping make our community more just and equitable. In session one, GUB/MMH met virtually with board members to acquaint them with the Reimagine Policing process. To provide important context, the goals of engagement windows I and II were reviewed and youth feedback summaries of each window were highlighted. Using Menti interactive software, students shared their perceptions of police officers as they wrote down “the 1st word that comes to mind when they hear the word police” (see word cloud below). Then, after studying the focus areas currently proposed by the city, students ranked them on a scale of 1-5 (see infographic below). A thorough explanation of engagement window III was given and a complete examination of the Reimagine Policing page of the Be Heard Boulder website followed. GUB/MMH staff outlined the research plan for session II, and board members expressed their thanks for the opportunity to learn about and provide recommendations for the Reimagine Policing process.



In session II, YOAB board members explored the Reimagine Policing site with peers. They read about each town hall and analyzed the data on explainer documents. Board members noted data that surprised them, felt important, or that they had questions about. Students were tasked to share their findings in session III with peers and the GUB/MMH team.

In session III, students shared their findings from the previous session by using Padlet software (Padlet is an online program used to capture brainstormed ideas). Based on their town hall data inquiry, board members made recommendations for a reimagined Boulder Police Department. They also made recommended changes to the draft focus areas and value statements and offered questions and opinions for the same (see summary of findings and all linked data below).

Summary of Findings

YOAB board members spent four hours over three sessions to complete online Mentimeter and padlets, to review town hall data, and give feedback to focus areas and value statements. Their Menti responses to name the “first word that comes to mind when you hear the word police” included 17 words, all with negative connotations. Like the other three youth groups, they believe the focus areas and value statements provide the foundation for all future Reimagine Policing work and, as such, feel strongly that the documents be updated to reflect youth perspective before going on to the next engagement phase. They felt most strongly about the areas Accountability and Ensuring Right Response/Police Roles and ranked those the highest. Overall, their questions and feedback were sharp and their discussions frank. YOAB board members’ recommendations often included pearls of wisdom and compassion. They saw establishing broad diversity in the police force and mental health service calls led by professionals as critical. Finally, they saw equity as the binding thread that wove across all problems and solutions.

TOP RECOMMENDATIONS BY YOAB BOARD MEMBERS

Student quotes accompany each recommendation

- **Focus Areas & Value Statements Key to Process**

- Out of the six focus areas, Accountability and Ensuring Right Response/Roles for Police received the highest ranking.
- Nuggets of wisdom, such as “accountability brings trust” and “compassion towards marginalized groups” are sprinkled throughout.
- Young people cited focus areas and value statements as vague and needing detail.
- Board members asked many questions and are seeking many answers. Many questions involved the word “How”. How is that going to happen?

*“Providing leadership, reducing crime” is already the claimed “goal” of the police force. What does this entail that’s **different** from our current strategies?*

*“The community should provide the police department their opinions on what integrity looks like in order for the police to understand **what integrity means to the community.**”*

*“Fair” is a very vague term, especially when problems like **systematic racism** are very well known and discussed.*

- **Recommendations from Data Inquiry**

- YOAB board members suggest that the data that’s collected in the future be more specific.
- They equated more crime to feeling less safe and more anxious.
- If there are “resources” available to the community, then say what those are and link them in data documents.
- Like other groups, they see a diverse police department as being a key goal. YOAB members see value in the department defining what they mean in terms of diversity, so that the community and the Police Department are working from the same definition.

- They see mental health as a major issue and seek more alternative response programming for those calls—and that if they are going to be out on those calls, that they need more progressive training.

*“They’re saying they’re trying to hire more diverse officers and they have a road map, but I think they need to be more clear. What is the **roadmap** and what do they even **mean** when they say they want to **hire more diversity**? Are these resources available in Spanish?”*

*“Have a less scary person (respond) if you are going through a mental health crisis or having anxiety. **Those experiencing a mental health crisis experience more anxiety when police respond.**”*

- **Other Recommendations—**

- Making everyone in the community feel safer by shifting negative perceptions of police to more positive ones. Direct correlation between a positive perception of police to a decrease in youth worry and anxiety.
- Demilitarizing uniforms would create comfort.
- Approach youth with more maturity and respect
- Everyone deserves kind and constructive behavior from an officer
- Train to meet everyone’s needs (cultural, language, background)
- Community needs to define police roles; stop taking on antagonizing roles

*“I’d like to see **youth and the way that police are represented as scary and authoritative change**...I’d like to see different approaches to how the police department can shift into a more positive light. **Less fear-based.**”*

*“I’d like to see **police officers approach youth in a more mature way**...sometimes their approach comes off as accusatory. **I’d like to see police have a better understanding of youth and be less accusatory.**”*

YOAB Focus Areas Unpacked (Padlet data)

YOAB Values Statements Unpacked (Padlet data)

YOAB Recommendations Unpacked (Padlet data)

Mayamotion Healing Engagement

El Centro AMISTAD’s ELLOS Program

By the Numbers

- 15 Youth (ages 14-17)
- 1 MMH Staff
- 1 ELLOS Staff Adult
- 2 engagement hours per student

“I think social workers should be our first responders to issues related to drug use and mental health, instead of armed officers. This has worked well in other cities and can work here too.”

--Elias, 17yrs ELLOS member

Engagement Description

April 27, 2022

Virtual engagement

On April 27th, 2022, Mayamotion Healing facilitated a two hour focus group with the ELLOS Program at New Vista High School. ELLOS (Engaged Latinx Leaders Offering Social-change) is a program at El Centro Amistad for Latino youth (ages 12-18) which uses a positive youth development approach to address substance use prevention and other factors leading to high school drop-out. The engagement was supported by the leadership of the ELLOS Program Coordinator and Mentor. This group of youth reviewed the Police Masterplan context including previous windows of community engagement, including their peers’ perspective and input in window I. The participants of the group were engaged throughout the session; activities included responding to online surveys, questionnaires, and providing feedback on the City’s Report including ranking the focus areas and value statements. ELLOS created a collage of the “first word that comes to mind when hearing the word police” and continued by creating a Jamboard with anonymous feedback on safety and policing. When asked to rank the City’s proposed focus areas and values statements, as well as the “first word that comes to mind with police”, students suggested the following:



ELLOS Students’ Menti response to question: The first word that comes to your mind when you hear the word “police”. Menti creates an image of the words, making the words that are repeated multiple times larger.

*****Throughout the ELLOS engagement, youth shared how well they feel their experiences are captured through music - sometimes expressing into words when they struggle to explain. There were robust conversations regarding the phrase “f the police” and how it is used in Hip Hop and Rap culture. Music has been an excellent tool for youth to express themselves throughout many movements, and this phrase stemming from political expression of Black and Brown communities. This has been a topic criticized (mostly from White folks) of how communities of color express themselves and the tendency to censor them. By way of incorporating alternative ways of expression, youth offer another wonderful opportunity to look deeper, beneath the surface.***

Ranking Focus Areas



Summary of Findings

A recurring theme from these youth was their strong perception of fear of the police due to racial profiling and immigration status. They highlighted skepticism that “reimagining police” would actually result in reducing or eliminating police’s racial profiling and racist practices. They expressed that training would likely not be “enough” to shift the balance of power/accountability when considering improving the current police system. The group discussed the importance of examining the history of policing and how the first police task force was created in the 1700’s to hunt down run away slaves and return them to their slave owners. This conversation evolved to the importance of acknowledging how the violence and murder of George Floyd and others happened, and a desire to prevent the killing of Black and Brown people that has been happening since the inception of policing. The group discussed recent and old school Hip Hop and Rap as a modality to convey their perspectives on police brutality and violence towards communities of color. Youth engaged in these powerful conversations with a strong understanding of systems of oppression and institutional racism identified in policing and incarceration. When asked to provide feedback to the City’s proposed focus areas and values statements, students suggested the following:

ELLOS Focus Areas Unpacked (Padlet data)

ELLOS Values Statements Unpacked (Padlet data)

“Relationships are important but if you go in with pre-judgment in a marginalized community, you have already lost.”

–ELLOS Youth member

Mayamotion Healing Engagement

Boulder County Public Health’s GENERATIONS Programs

By the Numbers

- 11 Youth total (ages 12-17)
- 1 MMH Staff
- 3 GENERATIONS Staff
- 1 GENERATIONS Intern
- 2 engagement hours per student

Engagement Description

April 28, 2022

Virtual engagement

On April 28th, 2022, MMH facilitated a two hour focus group with GENERATIONS participants. GENERATIONS supports youth during their teen years as well as their parents/guardians to prevent school dropout and reduce incidences of unplanned pregnancies through mentorship, self-empowerment tools, and culturally responsive programming. The engagement was supported by the leadership of the GENERATIONS Program Youth Specialist. Similarly to all youth groups, this group of youth reviewed the Police Master Plan context and previous windows of community engagement, including their peers’ perspectives and input in window I and II. Activities included responding to online surveys, questionnaires, and providing feedback on the city’s window I report and looking at data from town halls. GENERATIONS students created a collage of the “first word that comes to mind when hearing the word police”, ranked the focus areas, and continued by creating a Padlet with anonymous feedback on focus areas and value statements (see below).



GENERATIONS Students’ Menti response to question: The first word that comes to your mind when you hear the word “police”. Menti creates an image of the words,

making the words that are repeated multiple times larger.



Summary of Findings

A recurring theme from the group was their powerful perception of fear and intimidation of the police. They also shared an overwhelming experience in which police believed adults more often than youth, even in situations in which youth were seeking help and support to be safe. They expressed a strong distrust of police and an emphasis on harassment from police questioning documentation status of Spanish-speaking families. Students explored the history and creation of policing and shared strong sentiments of not wanting police in their communities. Instead, students expressed wanting to shift resources back to communities that promote health and wellness. Youth engaged in these powerful conversations with a strong understanding of systems of oppression and institutional racism identified in policing and incarceration.



“Focus [more] on the cause of the crimes and how to prevent them. Just punishing someone isn’t going to prevent the crime.”

–GENERATIONS member

When asked to provide feedback to the city’s proposed focus areas and values statements, students suggested the following:

GENERATIONS Focus Areas Unpacked (Padlet data)
GENERATIONS Values Statements Unpacked (Padlet data)

Conclusion

What young people said

During spring of 2022, 297 children and youth in middle and high schools in Boulder and Boulder County reviewed Learning Together town hall topics and data, weighed in on existing focus areas and value statements, and spoke candidly about what they felt was important in the reimagine policing process. Students shared their lived experiences passionately, and provided recommendations for Reimagine Policing efforts. The programmatic inclusion of *somatic experiences* was used as both a mechanism to gather data for the master plan and as a tool to support participants’ mental health.

Conversations were often activating, especially for students of color, and the GUB/MMH approach was most beneficial.

Many similar themes and recommendations from engagement windows I and II were recommended by our youth in engagement window III. These words of summary in GUB/MMH's engagement window I report continue to ring true:

For adult decision-makers wishing to enact change, our engagement groups offer numerous recommendations, including a safety system that includes mental health workers, investment in community needs (such as culture, housing, and mental health), less police access to and use of lethal force, police who partner with the community instead of punishing them, and a police force well-trained in the areas of racial bias, disability, cultural differences, and homelessness.

On one hand, young people believe that:

- Transparency and accountability are essential in all aspects of policing
- Equity, diversity, and training are the keys to changing the policing system
- Supporting mental health needs and the needs of the unhoused population should be city priorities
- Police officer roles should be redefined and budgets reallocated
- Focus areas and value statements are foundational documents and critical to the success of all future reimagine policing efforts (and should updated to reflect teen opinions)

On the other, young people are skeptical that:

- Any meaningful change will actually take place—they want to believe that change is possible, but they're old enough to have seen plenty of reform fail and the violence and targeting of Black and Brown communities has persisted since George Floyd's murder
- Adult decision makers will support their recommendations in final drafts of the focus areas, value statements, and master plan

GUB/MMH see this period in the Reimagine Policing process with our youth as pivotal.

GUB/MMH's promise to Boulder's young people was that we would: 1) offer a brave space in which they might express their opinions and recommendations, 2) help them name their feelings and understand when individual experiences are part of larger systems of oppression, 3) allow them to review and edit reporting about their ideas, 4) share their unfiltered feedback with decision-makers and the community, 5) keep our adult opinions to ourselves, 6) keep them informed about how their feedback would be used, and finally, 7) offer them continued opportunities for participation when available.

The GUB/MMH team has kept this promise and we encourage city staff and adult decision makers of influence to keep theirs by following through on the changes young people have declared are needed for real change. The best medicine for teens' skepticism may be a simple one—a reciprocal process of engagement where city staff report back to them and let them know how their recommendations were heard.

Growing Up Boulder, Mayamotion Healing, and the young people represented in this report appreciate the time and dedication that you, the reader, have taken to consider the findings in this report. Children and youth told us that they value kindness, compassion, and respect for all identities. They hope for less police bias, less fear of police, and more safety and systemic change. Finally, the authors of this report hope to keep “Reimagining Policing” in impactful ways throughout this master planning process with our young people and in our city and county of Boulder, CO.

GUB/MMH Team Reflections

Reflections on GUB/MMH Engagement Process⁴

- **Build in equity from the beginning.** The GUB/MMH team embraces the sentiment: “those closest to the problem are those closest to the solution.” Partnering with historically and currently targeted groups was intentional, and centering their perspective and experience provided profound feedback.
- **Include conversations about race and the intersection of identities.** Start as early and as often as possible, returning to the way that systems of oppression impact our experiences of the world.
- **Create brave spaces by starting with respect and maintaining integrity.** The GUB/MMH team led with respect and sought to create brave spaces in which to have courageous conversations. As a result, youth shared highly personal ideas, emotions and authentic feedback about policing and safety. GUB/MMH returned to the young people with our draft report to ensure that we represented their words correctly and revised it accordingly.
- **Employ culturally grounded and healing practices.** Healing-centered, trauma-informed, culturally and linguistically relevant practices, and a variety of learning and engagement methods demonstrated an inclusive and accessible way of engaging diverse groups of young people.
- **Honor individuals and groups.** GUB/MMH staff values learning the unique group dynamics of each engagement group and then personalizing engagements accordingly to make them as meaningful and successful as possible. We plan with partners in a way that honors each group, and we regard young people as equals and experts of their own lived experience.

Reflections on young people’s feedback

- **Moving from institutional punishment to restorative practices.** “See the person, not the crime.” During our engagements, young people repeatedly reminded us of how we can shift our dominant narrative and culture in order to witness each other in relationship with each other rather than separate from ourselves. There is a call from youth for people in positions of power to invest in the healing of someone who created harm and center them and their needs, instead of responding with punishment. Young people and their facilitators discussed how Indigenous peoples have used restorative practices instead of detentions and incarceration to support one’s healing and reintegrate them into the community.

How institutional racism affected our young people

⁴ These sections were also shared in GUB’s Reimagine Policing Engagement Window 1 Report, and they are repeated in this report due to their ongoing relevance.

Even at a young age, our young people were keenly aware of institutional racism and oppression. The consequences of systems of oppression have affected our young people in the following ways:

- **The impact of racialized culture on mental and physical health.** Youth of color in our engagements shared a spectrum of strong somatic responses and negative mental health experiences when exploring safety and policing, much of which indicated high levels of stress and fear at an early age. The field of public health has documented that when people are racialized⁵, people of oppressed races experience worse health outcomes over their lifetime due to toxic stress. Our youth experienced varying degrees of distress and trauma, depending upon their levels of power, privilege and oppressions in our society.
- **Individual experiences connected to the history of institutional racism.** Institutions have played a key role in the creation and perpetuation of structural racism; it is historically documented that policing was built upon a foundation of white supremacy and policing of runaway slaves⁶. Using a cultural humility framework⁷ allowed us to examine how and why these institutions [such as policing] were created and the historical and modern implications of those systems. When young people in our engagement groups shared their fear of being harmed by the police due to their race, culture, or other identifying characteristics, we were able to help them connect their individual experiences to institutional systems. In all groups, our young people demanded that institutions dismantle racist structures and create systems that promote equity, dignity, and justice.
- **School to prison pipeline.** Young people have wisdom and knowledge about who is targeted, both in school and by police, and what this means for their own identity formation⁸. In response, facilitators helped youth understand how they are already internalizing racist ideologies, either about themselves or about others⁹. For example, during the engagement with the ELLOS Program, the group of all Latinx/Brown young men described repeatedly feeling racially profiled in school and by police for their Brown skin and ethnic names. They recognized that these two identities set them up with a disadvantage with authority due to implicit bias and racism. Based on what youth shared, we were able to help young people question these narratives and offer the opportunity to disrupt the link of school punishment and incarceration through an anti-racist approach.
- **Police are not part of community wellness.** Youth have shared time and time again that their own communities keep them safe - and not law enforcement directly. The data which suggests that police should 'integrate with the community' speaks for itself.

Next steps: opportunities for success

- **Accountability of decision-makers to young people:** Just as our young people demand accountability in the policing system, they demand accountability around what will happen with their input from us, the adult decision-makers. Young people, plenty of whom have previously

⁵ "Racialize" means to make racial in tone or character OR to categorize or divide according to race.

⁶ This historical fact has been documented by multiple sources; here is a popular media article about it. [Black Lives Matters: Police departments have long history of racism](#)

⁷ The National Institutes of Health (NIH) defines cultural humility as "a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another's culture, but one starts with an examination of her/his own beliefs and cultural identities." [3 Things to Know: Cultural Humility | Hogg Foundation](#)

⁸ [Identity formation or development](#) is the complex process by which people come to develop a sense and understanding of themselves within the context of cultural demands and social norms.

⁹[Oxford Clinical Psychology - Racial Disproportionality in the School-to-Prison Pipeline](#)

been let down by adults in positions of power in their lives, are skeptical about whether their ideas will be taken seriously and whether change will really happen. Whether all, some, or none of the young people's ideas are implemented, we adults have a responsibility to dialogue with the young people about why their ideas were or weren't implemented. Their *future* civic engagement depends upon our transparency, deep listening, and action *now*.

- **Help our young people take action:** Multiple groups of youth requested the opportunity to share their ideas with other youth and the larger community. Suggested methods for action included creating a performance (dance, spoken word, other), designing and painting a mural, and hosting a youth summit about Reimagining Policing. We do not currently have the funding to do this, so if you or your organization is interested in supporting such a project, please contact GUB/MMH at info@growingupboulder.org.
- **Representation matters:** In the tender time of young people's identity formation, it is essential that they witness positive and safe representation of their own identities and feel valued and celebrated within the larger community. Youth shared feeling safe when around their community, hearing their language, music and traditions. There is a request to increase opportunities for community safety through the arts and culture as well as PoC in leadership and policy making positions within Boulder County.

Partners and Appreciation

GUB/MMH would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to our project partners who generously gave their time to make these engagements possible, especially the young people and their teachers and mentors with whom we worked. We wish to express our gratitude to our young people who gave of themselves so freely in this work. They took on charged topics and made themselves vulnerable. Thank you to each one of you!

GUB/MMH Partners:

- Boulder Police Department
 - Stephen Redfearn, Deputy Chief, Boulder Police
- Boulder Valley School District (BVSD)
 - Centennial Middle School
 - Amanda Amundson, Math teacher
 - Ruth Hullinger, Math Teacher
 - Tina Kleidon, Math teacher
 - John McCluskey, Principal
 - Katie Mills, Language Arts teacher
 - Sophie Ramus, Math teacher
 - Debbie Valette, Language Arts teacher
 - BVSD Leadership Team
 - Kristin Donley, STEM Coordinator Northwest Network (NWN)
 - Erin Greenwood, STEM Coordinator East Network (EN)
 - Kiffany Lychock, Director of Teaching & Learning NWN

- Harvey Oaxaca, Executive Director NWN
- Boulder City Council
 - Rachel Friend, City Councilor
- City of Boulder Staff
 - Tina Briggs, Parks and Rec Planner
 - Ryan Hanschen, Engagement Specialist
 - Sarah Huntley, Director of Communication and Engagement
 - Wendy Schwartz, Reimagine Policing Project Manager
- Community Partners
 - Tiffany Boyd, Classrooms for Climate Action
 - Madi Gore, Sustainability Consultant
- ELLOS (Engaged Latinx Leaders Offering Social Change)
 - El Centro AMISTAD program
 - Israel Alvarado, Program Coordinator
- GENERATIONS
 - Boulder County Public Health program
 - Daniella Escobar, Youth Specialist
- Growing Up Boulder/Mayamotion Healing Team
 - Maya Sol Dansie, Founder Mayamotion Healing
 - Cathy Hill, Education Director GUB
 - Mara Mintzer, Executive Director GUB
 - Keaton McCargo, CU ENVD Undergraduate GUB Intern
 - Nettie Skievaski, CU ENVD Undergraduate GUB Intern
 - Olivia Szeliga, Communications and Development Coordinator, GUB
 - Deryn Wagner, Senior Project Manager GUB
- University of Colorado, Boulder
 - Louise Chawla, Professor Emerita, CU Environmental Design program

Appendix

Sample engagement materials, and other additional data concerning GUB/MMH's approach, are included below. If you would like additional information or if you have any questions, please email us: cathy@growingupboulder.org or info@mayamotionhealing.com.

Sample Engagement Links and Learning Materials

Centennial Middle School

Language Arts:

- [Brainstorming Solutions](#)
- [Engage Slides](#)
- [Multimedia Text Set](#)
- [Reimagine Policing LA Support Plans](#)

Mathematics:

- Ideal Community Samples
- [Overview Reimagine Policing Unit \(student-facing\)](#)

- Sample class presentations: [sample 1](#), [sample 2](#), [sample 3](#), [sample 4](#), [sample 5](#), [sample 6](#), [sample 7](#), [sample 8](#), [sample 9](#), [sample 10](#)
- Sample chart, “[What is common in our ideal communities?](#)”
- [Top recommendations by all students](#)
- [Word cloud image \(large\) and data](#), “How would your recommendation make Boulder a better place for all?”

ELLOS, GENERATIONS, & Youth Opportunities Advisory Board (YOAB) Focus Areas and Value Statements Data

- [ALL YOUTH Focus Areas Unpacked](#)
- [ALL YOUTH Value Statements Unpacked](#)
- [ELLOS Focus Areas Unpacked](#)
- [ELLOS Value Statements Unpacked](#)
- [GENERATIONS Focus Areas Unpacked](#)
- [GENERATIONS Value Statements Unpacked](#)
- [YOAB Focus Areas Unpacked](#)
- [YOAB Value Statements Unpacked](#)

[Student Quotes \(All groups\)](#)

Resources & Links

Alternate Models to Traditional Policing:

- [Ithaca, NY’s Department of Community Solutions and Public Safety](#)
- [Eugene, OR’s Reimagining Public Safety](#): CAHOOTS program
- [Denver, CO’s Support Team Assisted Response \(STAR\) program](#)
- [Center for Policing Equity](#)

Be Heard Boulder Website

- [Explainer documents from each Town Hall](#)

[Boulder Police Oversight Panel](#)

[Boulder’s Racial Equity Plan](#)

[Centering the Somatic Experience and Using an Equity Lens](#)

Disrupting School to Prison Pipeline

- [MILPA](#)
- [Padres & Jóvenes Unidos](#)
- [Dignity in Schools](#)
- [Willful Defiance](#)

[GUB/MMH Engagement Window I and II Reports](#)

The Mayamotion Healing Model:

- [Healing Centered Engagement](#)
- [Outline of engagement structure for “Reimagining Policing”](#)
- [Mayamotion Healing Services:](#)
 - Individual, Family, & Community Therapy
 - Community Engagement & Movement Building
 - Racial Equity & Social Justice Consulting
 - Cultural grounded mental health and somatic programming & resources