

## **EDUCATION STUDY MATERIALS**

Committee Members: Helen Amoroso, Lisa Decker, Evie Hudak, Christina Manthey and Bette Seeland.

### **League Positions - based on LWV EDUCATION POSITIONS IN BRIEF - 2023**

#### **LWVUS**

- Support equal access to education, employment, and housing.
- Support federal policies that provide an equitable, quality public education for all children pre-K through grade 12.

#### **LWVCO**

- Support of a pre-K through 12 public education system in which a balanced curriculum of humanities, arts, and sciences leads to life-long learning for all students. Support of a stronger leadership role for the Colorado Department of Education to promote educational improvements and standards for early childhood education.

#### **LWV Jeffco**

- Support of policies which promote efficient administrative and financial practices in the Jefferson County School District.
- Support for a Jefferson County School budget that provides a high-quality education for all.
- Promote conscientious review of charter school applications and renewals along with comprehensive and continuous oversight of charter schools in Jefferson County.

### **Shifting Demographics and Statistics**

The state demographer reports that the population for Jefferson County increased from 55,854 people for the period of 2000 to 2020, but the state demographer also reports that the population for school-aged children declined by 29,918 in that same period. The evidence of this decline is supported by the decline in the birth rate.

Numerous numbers have been reported for the population of Jefferson County Schools. This has somewhat to do with different terminology for different reporting requirements. When a report refers to membership, it is referring to the number of students that are actively enrolled in grades PK-12 during the October Count “window.” The official enrollment count is the number of students that the Colorado Department of Education uses to count funding. The difference is primarily attributable to preschool students who are not in special education.

The numbers that were used in the reports that were issued at the time the school district was announcing the elementary school closures specifically excluded the charter schools.

The October 2022 count is now available. The total district membership for October 2022 was 77,092. The membership of the charter schools was 9,215. The membership for district-managed schools was 67,688. The official district enrollment for funding purposes is 75,929. Membership

distribution by articulation area is illustrative of changes that are occurring geographically within the district.

### **School Board Basics:**

#### **Members and Terms**

Danielle Varda	District 1	Term expires	11/25
Paula Reed	District 2	Term expires	11/25
Stephanie Schooley	District 3	Term Expires	11/23
Susan Miller	District 4	Term expires	11/23
Mary Parker	District 5	Term expires	11/25

### **Elections:**

Next elections are in November 2023, where two positions will be open on the ballot: District 3 (currently Stephanie Schooley) and District 4 (currently Susan Miller). Candidates must declare their intent to run for these open positions by September 1, 2023. Candidates for this election do not run by party. The candidates must live in the district for which they are running, but are elected at-large by all Jefferson County voters.

### **Board Meetings:**

Regular Board meetings are at 6:00 p.m. on the first Thursday of the month (~~next meeting:~~ you can watch meetings live, online, or view a video or audio recording of past meetings at their website, [jeffcopublicschools.org](http://jeffcopublicschools.org).) Study sessions are at 3:00 p.m. on the Wednesday following the Regular Board Meeting.

Board of Education website: <https://www.jeffcopublicschools.org/about/board>. To view the board meeting remotely, visit: <https://livestream.com/accounts/10429076/events/3542310>. This link also includes recordings of past board meetings.

**Next meeting dates:** Special Study Session, at 2:00 p.m. and Regular Business Meeting, at 5:00 p.m. on May 11, 2023; Study Session on June 7, 2023, at 3:00 p.m.; Study Session on June 22, 2023, at 4:00 p.m.; Regular Business Meeting on June 22, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. (Always check the School Board website to confirm additional or changed meeting dates and agenda items.)

### **What the board does:**

- Unified Improvement Plan ([UIP](#)) – the state-required annual improvement plan that responds to the [District Performance Framework](#), which CDE provides to represent the district's success in achieving on the state-mandated performance standards and in the areas needing improvement.
- Charter Schools - approval of new applications and renewals.
- Budget - how the district allocates all state and federal funds it receives.
- SBB – determination of how much money goes to individual schools to allocate as desired.
- Approval of contracts with the teachers and support personnel associations for salary and benefits.

- Legislative agenda - the Board establishes a framework of broad legislative priorities. For this year they are:
  1. Responding to declining enrollment
  2. School funding efficiency and effectiveness
  3. Redesign of state accountability system
  4. Financial priorities - reducing the Budget Stabilization Factor, providing a balanced school finance formula, and avoiding new grant programs that would use resources which would be better allocated equitably to school districts.
- Upcoming important decisions for the board include evaluating potential school closures for K-8 and middle schools, budget and charter school renewal and new applications. More on these topics below.

Note that we have a school board observer (Mary Olson) attending and reporting on school board meetings, and her summary of recent issues and priorities is set forth below.

### **District Leadership Staff**

Tracy Dorland, Superintendent  
Brenna Copeland, Chief Financial Officer  
Jill Ibeck, Chief Information Officer  
Jenifer Jones, Chief Human Resources Officer  
Renee Nicothodes, Chief Academic Officer  
Matt Palaoro, Chief Student Success Officer  
Tara C. Peña, Chief of Family, School, and Community Partnerships  
Lisa Relou, Chief of Strategy and Communications  
David Suppes, Interim Chief Operating Officer

### **Strategic Plan – Jeffco Thrives 2025:**

**Jeffco Thrives 2025** is the [Strategic Plan](#) for Jeffco Public Schools. Built on an opportunity “to move our district from good to great to extraordinary, Jeffco Thrives is focused on four priorities”:

- Our Learners. Our Future.
- Our People. Our Strength.
- Our Operations. Our Foundation.
- Our Community. Our Legacy.

### **School Board Meeting Observer Corps Report From Mary Olson:**

School funding was a large part of the Public Comment and the Legislative Update agenda items during the March 2023 School Board meeting. Ed Bowditch (partner, Bowditch & Cassell Public Affairs), the Jeffco lobbyist, delivered the Legislative Update. He mentioned Governor Polis's State of the State address from earlier this year. Polis spoke about adequate school funding and buying down the Budget Stabilization Factor (BSF) to fully fund Jeffco schools by 2024. Our members may want to know more about the proposed changes, especially understanding the relationship between Amendment 23, the school funding equation, and the BSF.

Other topics included the charter renewal for Doral Academy, with passionate pleas from its teachers, parents, and students to renew the charter, and the financial reports concerning the spending of the bond monies on Capital Improvements.

April 12, 2023, School Board Meeting: During the study session there was an in-depth report on the tentative budget for schools and departments. We have included information from that report in these study materials below.

### **New charter applications:**

The application must contain the following information, which is evaluated in the approval process:

- Student performance standards and objectives.
- Description of educational program and curriculum.
- Evidence of sufficient parent/student support to form a school.
- Evidence of fiscal viability.
- Facilities plan with “viable facilities options” including cost.
- Plan for governance, including parental and educator involvement.
- Employee policies and practices.
- Discipline, expulsion, and suspension policies.
- Intentions regarding transportation and food service.
- List of requested waivers of state laws and district policies.
- Plans for serving students with special needs, including budget and staffing.
- Detailed information about any charter/education management organization to be hired.

Charter application timelines:

- Applicant submits a Letter of Intent to Apply by February 1. Applicant submits the application by March 15.
- Within 15 days of receiving the application, the district determines whether the application is complete. If it is not, the applicant has 15 days to resubmit a complete application.
- A district review team meets with the applicant to determine a timeline.
- The District Accountability Committee reviews the application; it may ask questions of the district and the applicant. It then submits its recommendation to the Board of ~~for~~ whether to approve or deny the application. the board of Education holds a public meeting for public input on the application (the meeting is not yet set but is likely to be in May 2023).
- The Board of Education votes on the application within 90 days of the application deadline (no later than June 15, 2023, unless the Board grants an extension).

Charter applications this year:

- Alexandria School of Innovation - Leyden Rock
- John Dewey Institute - imbedded in ASI Leyden Rock
- Alexandria School of Innovation - West Lakewood
- John Dewey Institute - imbedded in ASI West Lakewood

Charter renewals this year:

- Woodrow Wilson Academy
- Excel Academy
- Compass Montessori
- Doral Academy

### **School closures**

This year, the Jeffco School Board made recommendations and decisions for closure of elementary schools, resulting in the closure of 16 schools for the 2023-24 school year. The determination was based on a variety of factors including District declining enrollment and demographics. Starting this year, the board will make determinations for K-8 and middle schools, with the final decisions being made prior to the 2024-25 school year. At this time, there is no published timeline for these decisions, other than a reference to beginning the process in April 2023. This will be an area that our members can monitor.

### **Budgeting**

The Jeffco Board adopts the final budgets in June of each year (for the next school year), with the budgeting process starting in February and continuing through June. The draft school and departmental budgets and negotiations start in February, and in April, budget estimates are presented (revenue and expenses). In May the proposed budget is presented, and the School Finance Act is finalized by the Legislature (providing the actual dollars for the next year); then in June, the Board adopts the final budget.

The Board is currently working on the FY 2023-24 budget. The public presentation and discussion of the proposed budget took place on May 3, 2023; a public hearing is scheduled for May 11, 2023; a proposed public presentation and discussion scheduled on June 7, 2023; with the final Board discussion and vote to adopt the budget scheduled for June 22, 2023. As noted above, the April Board Meeting previewed the proposed budget.

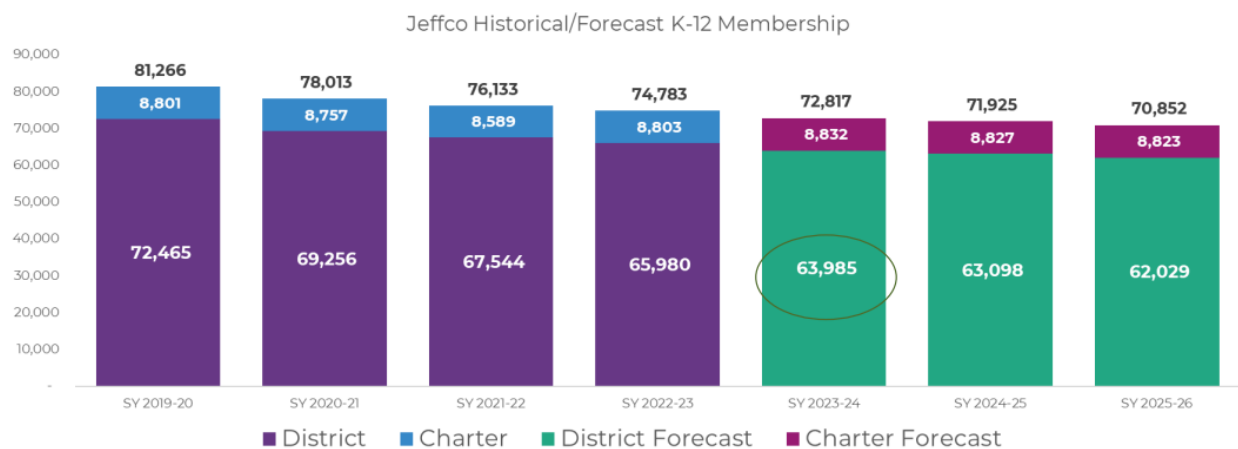
School funding in Colorado is determined annually per legislation and referred to as the School Finance Act. The Act prescribes total program funding using a per-pupil funding formula and accounts for the majority of Colorado school funding each year. To accommodate revenue challenges, the state incorporated what has been titled the Budget Stabilization Factor (BSF) into the school finance funding formula. This formulaic factor was introduced by the state to help balance its budget by proportionately reducing the prescribed funding levels for each school district.

The BSF was implemented in 2010-11 to reduce the level of K-12 funding so those funds could be used for other state funding needs while remaining within legal limits of the School Finance Act funding formula. The statewide funding deficit gap as evidenced by the BSF grew for four years during the Great Recession, peaking at 16 percent (\$1B) in 2012-13. From 2013-14 through 2019-20, the state had made progress in reducing the amount of the BSF.

The state is still working on reducing the BSF, but based on current suggestions to reduce the BSF this year by Governor Polis and the Legislature, the Jefferson County school district is

concerned that the proposal would provide it with fewer dollars than other districts in the state. This is currently being debated in the Legislature and may be an area for the League to follow and take action if necessary. (Note that because the Colorado General Assembly adjourns on May 8, it is likely the final determinations have been made for this year.)

Enrollment drives revenue in the district, and declining enrollment is impacting the budget. Jeffco will serve just under 64,000 K-12 students next year (plus 9,000 charter students), which represents an 8,660 student membership drop (12%) since 2019-20. The district estimates that future declines should average 1,050 annually for 4-5 years. Jeffco is funded on an average of a 5-year enrollment, which has helped Jeffco's headcount for budgeting purposes be higher in recent years than the actual number of students. However, the Board was informed that this "cushion" is fast diminishing.



Based on current information the Board has, it does appear that the per pupil revenue amount will increase for FY 2023-34 by 9.1% (to approximately \$10,000/pupil), with the district share for the total program currently estimated (in April 2023) to be approximately \$687,500.

The projected free and reduced lunch (FRL) eligible count of students will be 18,112 (28%) in FY24, consistent with the multi-year declining trend in Jeffco; the decreased FRL count impacts the district's at-risk supplemental funding from the state and thus its overall per pupil rate.

### **Student-Based Budgeting:**

Jeffco implemented Student-Based Budgeting (SBB) districtwide during the 2015-16 school year. SBB is a way to build schools' budgets by providing them with dollars instead of allocated staff. In a student-based budget, the school receives an amount of money for each student it serves with some adjustments accounted for student needs, using the SBB formula. The school then determines the number of staff, supplies, materials, and other expenditures wanted within its SBB budget.

Schools receive a mix of allocated dollars through SBB and allocated staff from central departments. Most core expenses are paid from SBB, although many direct student services are provided by allocated staff funded out of departmental budgets (e.g., special education, speech therapy, social workers, operations staff like custodians and field maintenance, etc.).

The district uses the SBB system to increase transparency and decentralize decision-making, working individually with each principal at each school. This supports customizing the budget for individual schools to meet the unique needs of students. SBB also aligns to the way that the district receives funding – on a per pupil basis. Importantly, SBB is different from the per-pupil funding the district gets from the state. It is the way the district allocates some of the per-pupil funding it receives.

Starting in April 2022 through January 2023, Jeffco partnered with a third party, Education Resource Strategies (ERS), to see how SBB in Jeffco was working, especially since schools are needing to rebalance their budgets to serve smaller numbers of students, and to analyze and redesign the funding formula and process. Budgets for the 2023-24 school year were built using the new formula. The following summarizes ERS's findings (October 2022):

- SBB allocations have increased on a per-pupil basis since SY17.
- Smaller elementary schools in particular experience limited resources available for spending beyond minimum required resource levels.
- There is significant variation in spending at each school level and size quartile, and smaller schools at ES, MS, and HS levels all spend more than larger schools.
- The equity size factor does not adequately adjust funding so that schools of different sizes have proportionate and equitable purchasing power.
- As a function of total spending in the district, Jeffco spends more per pupil in schools and less on expenses outside of schools – relative to comparison districts.

#### How does SBB work in Jeffco?

For the portion of school services that are supported through SBB, Jeffco allocates financial resources to schools using a combination of enrollment and student and school characteristics. For FY24, the following formula is being used to determine the SBB for each school. It includes:

- Base Weight, which is a standard dollar amount allocated to schools for each student in each grade.
- Size Equity Factor, which creates a sliding scale of dollars allocated per student for each grade level, based on school size. This is intended to supplement small schools to account for costs that may not be covered by the base rate, and to reduce dollars at larger schools to help subsidize the small school cost.
- At-Risk Per Pupil Factor, which is an amount allocated for each Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL)-enrolled student.

The revised formula (and the budgeted associated dollars) is summarized in this chart:

## Student-Based Budget – Per Pupil Amount for FY24

Base Per-Pupil Factors	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>Base Weight</b>	K-5: \$7,191	6-8: \$6,262	6-8: \$6,262
Per student in each grade	6-8: \$6,262		9-12: \$5,879
<b>Size Equity Factor</b>	<190 \$750	<375 \$400	<710 \$300
Per student	<220 \$630	<450 \$290	<860 \$250
<i>Note: K-8 schools are considered Elem and use K-5 enrollment for Size Equity Factor. 7-12 are considered HS and use 7-12 enrollment. All other schools use K-12 enrollment.</i>	<240 \$510	<525 \$190	<960 \$200
	<260 \$380	<600 \$90	<1060 \$150
	<280 \$250	<810 \$0	<1190 \$100
	<310 \$120	<830 (\$125)	1190+ \$0
	<460 \$0	<850 (\$175)	
	<480 (\$175)	850+ (\$225)	
	<550 (\$225)		
	<560 (\$275)		
	560+ (\$350)		

At-Risk Per Pupil Factor	Elementary	Middle	High
<b>At-Risk Factor</b>	\$1,073 per FRL	\$1,073 per FRL	\$1,073 per FRL
Per FRL-enrolled student	student	student	student

The SBB formula deliberately allocates additional resources to serve students identified as "At-Risk" (see above). Together with Title I allocations (a federally funded grant program that is separate from the SBB allocations), roughly \$24 million in SY21-22 was distributed to specifically support students experiencing poverty and/or homelessness. For FY24, Jeffco has expanded access to Title I funding so that more schools will receive this supplemental report, providing \$500 per FRL pupil where the Title I percentage in the school is 55-64.9%; \$800 per FRL pupil where the Title I percentage of students in the school is 65-77.9%; and \$825 per FRL pupil where the Title I percentage of students is 78-100%.

This year's SBB budgeting:

After adjusting for compensation increases, the school budget SBB allocations for FY 2023-24 are \$11.4 million lower than for FY 2022-23, a 2.4% reduction, due to efficiencies through school consolidations and overall enrollment declines. The total for 2023-24 is \$464.7 million.

