

Statement to the JPS Board of Education
by JCEA President Kerrie Dallman
January 14, 2010

President Thomas and members of the Board, I am Kerrie Dallman, a classroom teacher on leave from Pomona High School and president of the Jefferson County Education Association.

Jeffco teachers understand district efforts to provide options for the efficient use of all district facilities. While we are not endorsing the closure of any school, we do believe the search for efficiencies—and the establishment of funding priorities—are necessary given the multi-year budgetary crisis facing Jeffco Public Schools.

That said, tonight we find ourselves in a divisive process that pits schools and communities and even board members against each other. So, let's be honest and admit we would not be here except for the multi-year budget crisis we are facing. A crisis, I remind you, that is not being addressed at either the state or county levels. In truth, the decisions you will be making tonight are, at least in part, budget driven. And if no solution to this budget crisis is forthcoming, this will be the first of many years of on-going battles over school closures and program cuts.

Jeffco Public Schools is attempting to run a champagne program on a beer budget; and given our resources that simply cannot continue. This community must decide the quality of education it wants for its children and then be willing to pay for it. We cannot solve the state's fiscal problems, but we can take action this fall to pass a mill levy in Jefferson County. While not solving our budgetary problem, it would be a positive step in the right direction.

Tonight, we urge the school board to not just accept the reality of on-going budget cuts but instead to be proactive and solution oriented. We urge the school board to give this county an opportunity to demonstrate how much it values its public schools and how much it is willing to pay to support them. We urge this school board to provide us the leadership this district needs in a time of crisis by putting a mill levy on the 2010 ballot.

JCEA has been a productive partner in solving fiscal and other problems facing this school district. You know us to be realistic, pragmatic, and yes, organized. Historically, we have made the hard decisions and been part of the solution. That is our proud heritage. And, we are prepared to do so again.

Thank you!