



Shaping Tomorrow Today

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A Community Newsletter of the Jefferson County Education Association

Summer/ 2002

2001-02 school year continues effort to achieve the promise

by Dale Gatz, JCEA president

The 2001-2002 school year has been one of continued achievement, improvement, and change for both JCEA and JPS. Significantly, it was our second year of operation with new resources provided by the Performance Promise.

In August/September we welcomed nearly 600 energized new educators to JPS. As in the past, JCEA hosted four days of induction/orientation training with the school district. Because of its success, this event is being replicated by school districts all over the nation.



In addition, JCEA and JPS leaders completed work on creating a framework for making future staffing—class size—decisions. As funds become available, primarily from Performance Promise revenues, our intent is to phase in lower class sizes through the 2005-2006 school year. This plan continues to put priority reductions at the elementary level, where research says smaller classes can significantly impact student learning.

Like you we were deeply impacted by the tragic attacks on the World Trade Center. Because of our previous history of dealing with trauma and tragedy, our office and staff responded to many requests for information and support. We had useful resource information on our website within minutes of the event. In addition, we supported the decision to keep our schools open so that we could help our students deal with related issues as they surfaced.

In October and November, JCEA was very involved in working with the community to ensure the election of strong, pro-public school advocates to the Jeffco school board. We proudly recommended Vince Chowdhury, Jon DeStefano, and Debra Oberbeck. With broad-based community support, each was elected by a comfortable margin.

We also received a national report that confirmed what many of us already knew. Neither public schools, nor their employees, benefited much from the economic boom of the 1990s. Nationally, the investment in public schools and teachers salaries was stagnant over most of the decade.

This, coupled with our increasing awareness of the shortage of qualified teachers, caused JCEA to launch a "listening" campaign with our members to determine what salaries they thought were necessary to help JPS recruit and retain quality teachers. During those conversations, they also told us they wanted to be compensated for their 1999 salary sacrifice—that paid for reduced class sizes at the primary grades—and rewarded for their success in improving test scores, which generated \$10.6 million. We were not shy about communi-

cating these results and our expectations to the community and school district.

JCEA also cohosted a first-of-its-kind joint workshop with the Jeffco PTA to promote parental involvement through the Welcoming Environment Project. Over 200 people attended the training that stressed the importance of schools being inviting places where children want to learn, employees want to work, and parents and community members feel welcome. We were so excited about the results that more joint trainings are being planned for next fall.

Planning for, and working with, the legislature consumed much of our energy in November through May. Briefly, let me explain that we who work in public schools understand that every educational decision is, in fact, a political decision. This is our reality. We take pride in the fact that we establish public-education criteria against which we measure candidates. We do not ask them to pass a litmus test on JCEA issues. We ask only that they demonstrate their understanding of, and commitment to, public schools and be open to dialogue with us about issues important to us.

The district's \$6 million budget problem announced in late January also caused concern for everyone who cares about the fiscal management of our schools. We were concerned that this was the second time this department had caused a shortfall. Like you, we trust the problems in this area have been resolved.

In February and March, JCEA proudly continued its cosponsorship of the highly successful parenting conferences, Helping Kids Thrive. We are grateful to NEA for providing \$15,000 over the last three years to underwrite this important event.

Also in March, the JCEA Council vigorously debated three proposals that would impact staffing levels in 2002-2003. Ultimately, JCEA agreed to continue the multi-year program of reducing elementary class size, while adding additional teachers to the middle schools, and providing instructional coaches to the senior highs.

In April, JCEA and JPS reached agreement on the third year of our four-year contract. I said then that our settlement reflects the balanced approach JCEA has taken to negotiations over the years. We believe we can improve the quality of our schools by staying focused on student learning and by providing a highly competitive compensation package to ensure a quality teacher in every classroom.

Finally, the resignation of Superintendent Jane Hammond in May was unwelcome to us. We have appreciated her strong leadership and crystal clear vision. However, we have worked successfully with new superintendent Cynthia Stevenson for many years and look forward to working with her in the years ahead.

In closing, on behalf of all Jeffco teachers, thank you for your continued support for what we do. It makes all the difference! With "down time" comes renewal; I hope you find both this summer.



JEFFERSON COUNTY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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The year old JCEA website—[www. jcea-cea.org](http://www.jcea-cea.org)— is already being visited in numbers that continue to astonish us. From its very beginning, we designed the site to be a user friendly source of information for educators and community alike.

Members of the community can access information by clicking on the homepage "parenting" button. There you will find information about:

- **JCEA's Professional Tutor Referral Service**

Our unique tutorial service is designed to provide parents with a list of competent teachers who know how to help students who may be falling behind in their school work or may just be seeking academic enrichment. JCEA's role is to provide you appropriate information. Your job is to choose the best possible tutor for your child. For more information, call us at 303- 232-6405.

- **Helping Children Cope with Trauma & Tragedy**

If you want suggestions about how to talk to your child about terrorism and related traumatic circumstances, you can download information from the National Association of School Psychologists. These coping strategies are adaptable to most traumatic situations.

- **Youth Suicide Information**

As a result of the disturbingly high number of Jeffco youth suicides, many parents are seeking mental health information. You can get it by downloading information from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's "Suicide Prevention and Intervention," and by linking to the Jefferson Center for Mental Health website.

- **School Accountability Report information**

On September 13, 2001 Colorado released the first School Accountability Reports for every school district in the state. You can download JCEA's reaction, as well as access additional information necessary to assess the quality of your local schools: "A Quality School Checklist, The Numbers Parents Want"

You can also access: "CSAP: A Guide for Parents" (a brochure in both English and Spanish), "Colorado School Accountability Reports: Resource Guide" (developed by the Colorado School Public Relations Association), and "NEA Low Performing Schools Resources" (developed by the National Education Association)

- **Helping Kids Thrive: Our annual parenting conference**

Helping Kids Thrive (HKT) is an annual parenting conference sponsored by the Jefferson Center for Mental health, JCEA, Jeffco PTA, JPS and many other community organizations. The purpose of the conference is to provide hands-on, practical information that

parents and other adults can take with them to help children grow in positive ways. Watch for registration information this fall.

- **Parents as Partners:**

The Parents as Partners project is the result of continuing collaboration between JCEA, Jeffco Council PTA and the school district. Parenting information is presented in "tool kit" form. Currently, it includes information on discipline, homework, parent-teacher conferences, problems at school, report cards, testing, school transitions, and other resources. You can download the Parents as Partners publication as a .doc or .pdf file.

Parents as Partners is continuing its work supporting "Welcoming Environments." The W.E. program is designed to increase parental involvement in the teaching/learning process by working within each community to make schools more inviting places for all. Information and resources are accessible from this site.

- **Home & School Parenting Brochures**

Parents can also download valuable information that will help their children improve their learning at home and at school. You can download the following in a .pdf format: "Ten things teachers wish parents would do to improve student learning," "Make parent-teacher conferences work for you and your child," "Parent tips for report card follow-up," "Make vacations fun and educational," "What can parents do when there are problems at school," "Homework: It can help!," "Dealing with discipline: Helping your teenager get the most out of school," "Your Child: Ready or Not - Caring today can help your child tomorrow!," "Discipline: It doesn't have to mean bad," "Looking at Academics and Activities: Keeping a Proper Balance"

- **Cooperative Decision Making**

In JPS, Cooperative Decision Making (CDM) is a school process. It is used to ensure there is the staff, parent and community involvement needed to "provide a quality education that prepares all children for a successful future." You can download information in a .pdf format from this site.

- **Parenting support available from NEA**

JCEA's national affiliate, the National Education Association (NEA), provides resources for parents. Link to them here.

- **Jefferson County Council PTA**

The Jeffco PTA represents nearly 20,000 parents and is a valued member of the Jeffco education family. Their mission is to advocate for the rights and well-being of all children and youth to promote quality education. You can link directly to their website.

- **Shaping Tomorrow Today**

JCEA's community newsletter is published during the year. From this site you can download current and previous issues.

Research shows that students with unionized teachers do better in school

By Bob Chase, National Education Association President

In a speech at the National Press Club a few years ago, I raised eyebrows with the suggestion that the “new unionism” would deliver greater quality in our public schools. Some snickered that unions were the problem, not the solution. But now academic research proves those naysayers are wrong: **Teacher unions can and do make an essential difference in helping our students and our schools.**



Most recently, Indiana University's Robert M. Carini analyzed 17 “prominent studies” that examined the link between teacher unions and student achievement. His conclusion? “Unionism raises achievement modestly for most students in public schools.”

Specifically, Carini reported that students with unionized teachers scored higher on standardized tests and were more likely to graduate from high school. This is very good news for American education. After all, nine out of ten children in America attend public school, and two out three public school teachers belong to a union.

Better SAT and ACT scores

Carini's findings are consistent with another research study published two years ago in the Harvard Educational Review. It showed that students in states with a higher percentage of unionized teachers did better on the SATs and the ACTs than those in the non-union states.

Based on the accumulated evidence, Professor Carini recommends that policy makers and school districts view teacher unions more as “collaborators than as adversaries,” because “unions have a solid track record of supporting policies that boost achievement for most students.”

As to why teacher unions raise student achievement, Carini says more research is needed. However, I would point out that there now is strong evidence as well connecting improved student achievement and higher teacher salaries – and of course unions boost teacher pay.

Higher salaries pay off

A study released last year by Columbia University researcher Constance K. Bond found that states with significantly higher

teacher salaries had higher 4th and 8th grade math scores, lower student drop-out rates, and lower teacher attrition rates – even after taking into account factors such as state poverty rates and parent education levels. “Paying teachers more improves student achievement,” Bond concluded.

She also emphasized that to recruit and retain quality teachers, we must close the gap between teacher salaries and the salaries of other people with a bachelor's degree: “Teachers want to educate children. They just are looking to be paid what other professionals receive. It's not about greed. Money does, however, matter.”

While Bond did not look at the role of unions, she did cite Connecticut as a prime example of a state where higher teacher salaries have given student achievement a lift. I know first-hand that a high percentage of teachers in Connecticut are unionized, and that teacher unions have played a major role in raising teacher salaries in the state.

"Paying teacher more improves student achievement"

Based on Carini and Bond's findings, it seems evident that if unions press for higher teacher pay and pursue the other measures that research tells us will also improve education – such as smaller class sizes – our students will benefit not just “modestly” but mightily over time.

Editors note: *One out of every hundred Americans is a member of the National Education Association (NEA), JCEA's national affiliate. Our national president, Bob Chase, began his term in office by focusing on what he called "new unionism"—a belief that teacher unions/associations ought to get more involved in promoting quality schools and improving student learning.*

This was pretty radical stuff for many "traditional" teacher unions that could only bargain, because of state law, compensation and working conditions. For example, teachers in relative progressive Maryland just this year won the right to negotiate on issues that impact teaching and learning.

JCEA has never been a "traditional" union. We have always viewed ourselves as a "professional" union and believe that by working together and with our community we could positively impact the teaching/learning process.



Shaping Tomorrow Today

Shaping Tomorrow Today is the community newsletter of the Jefferson County Education Association (JCEA) and is published periodically throughout the year. Comments may be mailed to: JCEA, 1050 Wadsworth Blvd., Lakewood, CO 80215. Our phone number is 303-232-6405; our FAX number is 303-238-2215. Visit our web site at www.jcea-cea.org.

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JCEA welcomes new readers

JCEA is continually updating the mailing list for **Shaping Tomorrow Today**. If you are a new reader, welcome!

Obviously, this is a newsletter that reflects the thinking of the 5,000 teaching professionals in Jefferson County. We hope you find the information in this newsletter helpful and at times provocative. We want you to be able to trust the information you read in this newsletter, and we hope it reflects the integrity of the profession it represents.

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JPS still doing more with less!

When Jeffco voters passed a mill levy override in 1999 for the first time in 16 years, the school district began receiving significant new funding targeted at increasing student achievement. In the 2001-2002 school year, here is how Jeffco Public Schools compared to neighboring districts in per pupil revenues and the amount of funds raised through mill levy override elections:

School District	Per Pupil Revenue	Mill Levy Override	Difference from Jeffco
Douglas County	\$5,776	\$327	-\$102
Jeffco	\$5,879	\$420	—
Adams 12	\$5,993	\$525	\$115
Boulder Valley	\$6,167	\$661	\$289
Cherry Creek	\$6,237	\$493	\$359
Denver	\$6,410	\$428	\$532

Note: The School Finance Act provides most of the funding for school districts. This year, Jeffco received \$5,325 per pupil from the state, \$134 from the specific ownership tax, and \$420 from the mill levy override.

Fact: Approximately 75% of Jeffco graduates go on to college.

Fact: Jeffco students score above the state average on the CSAP and college entrance exams.

Fact: Jeffco teachers average 13 years of experience and over half have master's degrees.

Fact: The Jeffco PTA has approximately 20,000 members.

Fact: Jeffco school buses travel over 25,000 miles each day, equivalent to a trip around the world.

For Your Information

JCEA members elect new officers to two-year terms

Current president, **Dale Gatz**, was re-elected to his position. Dale is a sixth grade teacher on leave from Peiffer Elementary School.

With the retirement of current vice-president Mike Henthorn, **Nancy Henderson**, a math teacher at Ralston Valley High School, was elected as JCEA's new vice-president.

Current secretary **Karin Carter**, a teacher on special assignment (TOSA), was elected to a new position, treasurer.

Her former position will now be filled by **Bruce Miller**, a science teacher at Columbine High School.

Two receive JCEA Excellence Scholarships

Each year JCEA awards one or more scholarships to deserving Jeffco school graduates who have demonstrated an aptitude and interest in pursuing the teaching profession.

This year the Association decided to give one and renew one. Matthew Hilbert from Arvada High School will receive a new \$1,000 scholarship and plans to attend Metro State.

Another Metro State student, Hannah Ellison, received the scholarship last year and the committee has decided to renew her \$1,000 scholarship next year.

As the Excellence Fund, which also includes the Dave Sanders Quality Teaching Foundation, continues to grow, JCEA hopes to provide four, four-year scholarships and significant funding of professional development and training opportunities for Jeffco teachers.

Tax-deductible contributions are welcome from members of the community. Just make a check out to: **The JCEA Excellence Fund** and mail it to: JCEA, 1050 Wadsworth Blvd., Lakewood, CO 80214.

Harris poll says you trust us!

This spring the very reliable Harris poll reported that teachers are second only to clergy when it come to public trust. A full 88% say "they would trust teachers to tell the truth." JCEA knows that trust is something that must be earned and can easily be lost.

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Public Education



"The Jefferson County Education Association exists to empower educators to promote professional rights, responsibilities and practices to achieve educational excellence within a changing society."