



If I had a billion dollars and marijuana money saved the day...

During my first 100+ days, I have been speaking with many stakeholders in our community. In this new communication, *On the Issues*, I'll be working to address questions asked and issues raised during these visits, directly and in a responsive manner. In this first edition, I'll be talking about Jeffco Public Schools' budget.

Is Jeffco's budget really a billion dollars in size? How does a billion dollars stack up when you need to educate 86,000 students? What do other districts about the same size as Jeffco spend? How much does Jeffco spend on central administration compared to other districts? And, hasn't all that marijuana money solved our funding problems? Let's run through these questions and look at these numbers in context.

First, is Jeffco's budget \$1 billion? Jeffco's total budget is \$979 million. However, that isn't entirely accurate. We have 14 different funds and several of them receive transfers from the General Fund that results in double counting of dollars if you simply add all the funds together. Also, over 30% of our budget has restrictions so those funds can't be used for things like lowering class size or paying our educators more. Examples of restricted funds include the debt service fund, which includes dollars that can only be used to repay bond debt, and the food service fund, which can only be used to provide food service for students. I have provided a graphic at the end of this email which provides an overview of Jeffco's budget for reference.

But how does Jeffco's budget stack up to districts about our size around the country? Nearly a billion dollars sounds like, and is, a lot of money. But that number also needs to be considered in context. Nationally, when compared to the 10 districts closest in size to Jeffco, all 10 similarly-sized districts have a larger budget than Jeffco – even when factoring in cost of living indexes. By comparison, Jeffco has a smaller total budget than any of the districts of comparable size.

<i>District</i>	<i>Total Budget</i>	<i>Enrollment</i>
Fulton County, GA	\$1,546,845,944	95,460
Albuquerque, NM	\$1,341,634,571	93,001
Lee County, FL	\$1,508,771,993	89,364
Denver, CO	\$1,815,472,452	88,839
Prince William, VA	\$1,669,914,920	86,641
Jeffco Public Schools	\$ 978,915,960	86,581
Fort Worth, TX	\$1,191,226,447	85,795
Baltimore City, MD	\$1,455,496,000	84,796
Austin, TX	\$1,459,235,696	84,564
Davidson County, TN	\$1,292,397,700	84,069
Long Beach, CA	\$1,182,020,011	79,709

Sources: Data on national ranking by size from National Center for Education Statistics; total budget figures from each district's respective website.

I'm also sometimes asked about the district's spending on central administrative costs, versus what goes to the classroom. In every school organization, priority is given to sending dollars to directly serve students. However, there are real administrative costs associated with running an organization with 14,000 employees and 86,000 students. Again, a comparison to what other districts are doing is useful. In Colorado, here's what some of the other large districts in the metro area spend per student for district administrative costs annually, according to the Colorado Department of Education.

District	District Admin Spending
Boulder Valley	\$132 per student
Cherry Creek	\$89 per student
Denver Public Schools	\$84 per student
Douglas County	\$71 per student
Jeffco Public Schools	\$61 per student

Source: Colorado Department of Education

And what about comparisons to other states? Colorado's Per Pupil Spending has been dropping from national averages since the early 1990s and is now \$2,200 less than the national average, according to U.S. Census Bureau statistics. This effect has been brought about by a mixture of competing state constitutional provisions, and it creates a disadvantage for our students as they are compared to - and try to compete with - students who have greater opportunities. Looking at all combined funds (federal, state, and local), here are the top 10 spending states, compared to Colorado:

State	Per Pupil Spending
DC	\$29,949
NY	\$24,116
AK	\$22,338
CT	\$21,484
NJ	\$21,097
WY	\$20,889
VT	\$20,291
MA	\$18,387
PA	\$17,937
RI	\$17,416
US Avg.	\$13,246
CO	\$11,010

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2015 Public Elementary-Secondary Education Finance Data

But wait, hasn't all that marijuana money made our schools in Colorado flush with cash? The short answer is no. Jeffco has received a little over \$2M since the inception of marijuana funding. This is less than 0.3% of Jeffco's annual budget for 2017/2018. To put it another way, less than a third of a penny in every dollar in Jeffco's budget comes from marijuana funds. While we appreciate these additional dollars, they are earmarked for specific purposes and the amount is so small that it has far from solved our budget issues.

We're proud of what our Jeffco schools have to offer, and we are grateful for the dollars our community has provided us to serve Jeffco's kids. We're also very proud of our efficiency. In spite of our funding challenges, Jeffco students do well on standardized measures compared to other students in Colorado and around the country, and the diversity of programming available for Jeffco kids is truly extraordinary.

When it comes to talking about the budget, let's get all of the data on the table and look at where Jeffco (and Colorado) stacks up against other places. Going forward, we will take whatever dollars are available to us and work to do good things for our kids and community.

Jeffco students, parents, families, staff, and community members may engage with Dr. Glass via Twitter [@COJasonGlass](https://twitter.com/COJasonGlass) and through his blog, <https://advancejeffco.blog/>.