



Welcome to Chalk Talk

We are happy to present the new name for the district parent newsletter, **Chalk Talk** submitted by Steve Ricigliano. Steve will receive a donated grocery store coupon worth \$50 as the grand prize. The two runners up were Jeffco Enews and Great Expectations both submitted by Kristi Sagrillo. Kristi will receive two \$25 Barnes and Noble gift cards. All prizes were donated. We appreciate all of the submittals and specifically want to thank Steve for his winning recommendation.

District and teacher's union at an impasse over pay

This week an impasse was declared by the Jefferson County Educators Association (JCEA) - the union which represents many Jeffco teachers. The compensation package at the heart of the impasse was collaboratively developed by the district and JCEA negotiating teams. Jeffco's Board of Education supports the proposed contract settlement; the board of the teacher's union does not and has declared an impasse.

The compensation package offered:

- **A one-time, one percent payment to all teachers in the fall**
- **Step increases (steps are years of service)**
- **If the district is allowed to keep \$11 million funded by the state but held in reserve by state mandate until January 2010, the one percent given as a one-time payment would become an ongoing salary increase.**
- **The district is increasing its PERA (Public Employees Retirement Association) contribution by .9 percent as mandated by legislation**
- **The total package for most teachers adds up to 4.5 percent**

The teacher's union is advocating that Jeffco use more of its reserves and federal stimulus money to give teachers a larger salary increase. **The stimulus money is one-time money that is spread across two years and cannot be used for compensation increases.** The district does have a healthy reserve balance - \$160 million. The reserves are like a savings account; it's there when an unexpected emergency or crisis

Times are changing

Parents may notice a change coming in the 2009-10 school year in school start/end times. In response to community member budget forums held earlier this year, the district realigned bus schedules to make them more cost efficient.

More than \$500 thousand will be saved by streamlining bus routes throughout the district. Nearly a third of Jeffco Schools will be affected by this change.

The time your child is picked up at the bus stop may be changing as well. We know this will mean some adjustments for some families, and for that we apologize in advance. Schools will try to minimize the impact these changes may have for students and will communicate scheduling changes to all parents and students as soon as possible. Please feel free to contact the school if you have questions or concerns.

occurs. Jeffco's crisis began with the loss of the mill levy election and became worse with the economic downturn. **If the district didn't have the reserves to fall back on, budget cuts for next year would be much deeper** - \$29 million instead of \$12 million. Those deeper cuts would mean more jobs lost.

The district intends to use the reserves over the next five years to save jobs, keep reasonable class sizes and keep vital instructional programs that make a difference for students. With the planned spend-down of reserves, by 2013-2014, the district's reserves will be dangerously close to dipping below what is required by state law and Board of Education policy.

What are the next steps in this impasse? A mutually agreed upon mediator is brought in to try and reach an agreement. There is no date set for negotiations to continue.



Funding education - A legislative balancing act

Colorado state legislators are used to doing a balancing act when it comes to funding education, but

this year's legislative session was more challenging than usual. The big plan to reform funding for K-12 education was downsized as the General Assembly grappled with precarious tax revenues and a guessing game about federal stimulus money.

The School Finance Act, officially known as Senate Bill 256, had legislators debating the size and timing of funding cuts. The key issue with the bill was whether there should be a \$110 million reduction in the overall increase in state aid to K-12 schools next year, or as the Senate proposed, a \$150 million cut. After much debate it was decided to give school districts the \$110 million – but the funds can't be spent until Jan. 29, 2010, when the state legislature reviews December revenue forecasts and decides if further state budget cuts are needed. Even more cuts could be made if the Legislature is forced into a special session during the summer due to a further decline in the economy.

The following education related bills were passed during the 2009 session:

- **House Bill 1319**—Creates the nation's first statewide dual enrollment plan that allows high school students to earn a high school diploma and a college associate's degree simultaneously.
- **House Bill 1057**—Allows parents to take time off from work to attend school functions related to their children's education.
- **House Bill 1312**—Creates a loan program to help schools

Jeffco reaches out to dropouts

Students who drop out of high school are unlikely to have the minimum skills necessary to be successful in today's workplace. High school dropouts are more likely than high school graduates to be unemployed. Under the best of circumstances, they can face a lifetime of lower income levels and occupational status.

Jeffco Public Schools is reaching out to people who left school before obtaining a high school diploma through the Office of Dropout Prevention. **The office partners with schools, parents, students and community agencies in order to help students be successful in school.** Its primary goals are to assist students in returning to school if they have dropped out, and prevent future students from dropping out.

A new [Project Finish Line Web site](#), aimed at high school-aged students, was recently launched to help connect struggling students to educational options they might not be aware of, and help students get their diploma. For additional information, call 303-982-6559, or e-mail apace@jeffco.k12.co.us.

Conduct Code Online!

The district's Conduct Code for students and parents outlines district policies designed to promote safety through responsible behavior. The Conduct Code includes all Jeffco School policies related to student rights, conduct and discipline. Every parent should review it with their child. In the past, parents received a printed copy of the Conduct Code at the beginning of the school year, but beginning with the 2009-2010 school year, the Conduct Code will be available to all families on the [district's Web site](#).

In an effort to “go green” the district will post the discipline code online –

pay for renewable energy projects, as well as hybrid and electric buses.

- **Senate Bill 90** - Seeks to improve parent involvement in education. The bill will create a state advisory council. It directs the new council to advise public education entities concerning best practices and creates a grant program to support parent involvement.

The following two bills will put Colorado in the running for additional federal stimulus dollars, which would be awarded to an unknown number of educationally top-ranked states.

- **House Bill 1065** - Creates an identifier system for principals and teachers that can be used in with other data, such as individual student performance, to evaluate teacher performance, the effectiveness of teacher training programs and the distribution of high-performing teachers in different kinds of schools.
- **Senate Bill 163** – Will align local, state and federal education standards so schools are following one set of rules statewide.

See the full text of bills online at: <http://www.leg.state.co.us/>

Jeffco Schools tobacco free

Beginning with the 2009-2010 school year, **Jeffco students will not be able to possess or use tobacco products at school** or anywhere on school property. Some high schools currently have “smoking pits” where students can smoke when they’re not in class. In August, those areas will now be closed and the use of tobacco products will have consequences for the students who disregard the new smoking policy.

There will be support and intervention for students who want to stop smoking in the form of counseling and classes. Students possessing cigarettes or any other tobacco product, will have it confiscated by school administrators.

Colorado state law now prohibits anyone under the age of 18 from possessing, using, distributing, selling or buying any form of tobacco.

saving money and valuable resources.

Parents will receive a sign-off form (signature page) at registration asking them to confirm that they know the conduct code will be available online. If families do not have access to a computer, a printed copy will be provided to them. Additionally, there will always be copies in the school’s office and in each classroom.

Senior high students will be asked to sign the signature page. By signing the form, high school students acknowledge that it is their responsibility to read and discuss the contents of the Conduct Code with their parents. Once again, if senior high families don’t have access to the Internet, a printed copy will be provided to them.

Stop the summer brain drain

by Ann Svensen, Family Education Network

Kids Lose One to Three Months of Learning

Did your child's brain shrink last summer? Probably not, but it may have shifted into reverse, according to a study by Dr. Harris Cooper, professor of psychology at the University of Missouri-Columbia. The study found that when students return to school after a long summer vacation, they've lost one to three months worth of learning. [Read More.](#)

Good news about Jeffco Schools

Used crayons and other school supplies that Jeffco students throw away are like gold to children in countries around the world. Over the past 10 years, the non-profit group *Books for the Barrios* has partnered with many Jeffco schools to recycle used school supplies and send them to children in need. [Read More.](#)

Members of Jefferson County Retired School Employees Association (JCRSEA) are distributing 500 books to Jeffco second-graders throughout May. [Read More.](#)





Stop the summer brain drain - Continued

Kids Lose Most in Math

The decline is more detrimental for math than it is for reading. "All students lose math skills," says Cooper. It may be because community and home environments give kids more opportunities to practice reading than math. The study also found that income has an impact on how much a student loses or gains in reading. Middle-class children actually gained in reading over the summer, while lower-income students experienced losses. Cooper attributes this to the enrichment activities that many middle-class kids participate in over the summer, such as camp and trips.

What You Can Do

Your kids don't have to spend the summer stuck in reverse. "Parents can help their kids retain educational skills," says Cooper. He suggests the following five tips to kick off a learning-filled summer.

1. Keep lots of books around and make regular trips to the library. Most libraries schedule special summer events for kids. Sign up your family!
2. Think about what your kids may be learning next year when you plan the family vacation. Talk with teachers to find out what they'll be covering in class. If it's a unit on the civil war for example, you may want to schedule a visit to Gettysburg. If it's geology, visit a national park.
3. Keep math in mind. Since kids lose more math skills than anything else over the summer, try to do some special planning to find math-related activities. For example, if you can't decide whether to sign your child up for "Shakespeare's Theater" or "Math Magic" at the local community center, go with the math.
4. Consider summer school or tutoring. Struggling kids can get a lot of different kinds of help from these programs. Summer school can also enrich and accelerate learning in areas where kids show a special interest.
5. Call the curriculum coordinator in your child's school district, visit the school board office, or contact the schools of education at local colleges and universities to find out what educational programs will be offered in your area over the summer.

Remember to keep it fun! You don't want to sour your kids on learning during the summer break.