

**Kathy Miks, School Board District 5**

**1. What has been your role(s) in supporting our Jeffco Public Schools in the past 5 years?**

I am a Jeffco graduate (Go Tigers), my husband is a Wheat Ridge graduate (Go Farmers), and my three children are Jeffco graduates. Thanks in part to the strong education and experiences we received, we all have good jobs. I coached volleyball at Columbine High School for ten years where I was honored to work with hundreds of amazing young ladies and help teach them teamwork, persistence, good time management skills and the importance of setting goals and working hard to accomplish them. I am pleased to still be in touch with and have endorsements from many former players. When my children were in school, I worked with a group of moms and sons to start and run a 3v3 basketball tournament that raised funds for Jeffco Schools Foundation. I was active in PTA and sat on the accountability committee, so I understand what it takes to set high academic goals, and marshal resources necessary for success.

**2. How will you know you are successful at the end of your term? What is your top goal?**

I will know my time on the Jeffco School Board has been successful at the end of my term if..

- there are lasting processes in place to ensure that Jeffco students are engaged and being inspired and driven to meet the goals they set
- nearly all Jeffco students are learning a year or more and are academically on track to meet the grade level standards in each subject
- all Jeffco students can envision a bright and hopeful future and are getting the skills they need to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

My top goal is to ensure the funds entrusted to the School Board are used in the most efficient and effective ways possible to ensure Jeffco students and staff are safe and Jeffco is once again one of the Nation's top performing districts.

**3. The COVID-19 pandemic has created enormous challenges for our schools. What can we do to meet the educational, emotional and social needs of our students during the pandemic?**

To meet the education needs of our students we can ensure all students have access to full time in-person learning, with a remote program to meet the needs of students whose parents chose that option. Additionally, we can provide the academic supports necessary for our students to catch up; this can range from small group learning to additional academic time.

To meet the emotional and social needs of our students we can ensure that all extra-curricular activities remain available to all students who wish to participate. Extracurricular activities are fun, build a sense of community and belonging, and foster social, emotional and mental well-being. I know firsthand how many of the students I coached stayed connected to school because of their athletic opportunities. From athletics to band, choir, theatre, debate, speech, student government and clubs we must provide the opportunities our students crave and need outside classrooms. And this is true for all our students, from elementary chess and reading clubs to middle school cooking

and bowling clubs, to high school activities and athletics. All students must have opportunities. I support the development of all aspects of our children – academic, mental, social, emotional, and physical – for joy and long-term success.

**4. Our history is a dramatic story. How would you ensure a more accurate and dynamic teaching of our history?**

As a high school coach, I know how important it is to keep students engaged and connected to the things they need to learn, especially when they are hard. I hope all of Jeffco’s teachers are providing dynamic learning opportunities every day; I certainly know my desire to give back came in part from talented social studies teachers who shared the importance of being engaged, participating in student senate, and attending girls state. My children also had talented history and social studies teachers and were constantly debating, building, and role playing as ways to really learn history.

If there are any inaccuracies being taught, whether in history or any other subject, I would encourage discussions with teachers and principals. If there are not satisfactory answers of more systemic inaccuracies, I would encourage those be brought forward so the School Board can address them. I remember being told “those who don’t know their history are doomed to repeat it.” All Jeffco students deserve to know their history so they can help build a bright future for all.

**5. In your view, does “school choice” (including choice enrollment, magnet schools and charter schools) contribute to segregating our schools and make it more difficult to meet the needs of all of our students? How would you address this issue?**

It is time for Jeffco Schools leadership to make fact-based decisions. From closing schools to allocating funds, far too many decisions have been made without first seeking facts, then engaging the community and deciding what is best for students and staff. Determining if “school choice” contributes to segregating our schools shouldn’t be my view, it should be determined by facts. If all Jeffco students were required to attend the school that is inside the boundaries the district set and there were no choice options, would our schools be more or less segregated? Until we know if that is true or not, I don’t know how one addresses the issue. I know from my years of experience coaching, leading teams and managing large organizations that making decisions based on facts rather than anecdotal stories leads to greater success.

Does “school choice” make it more or less difficult to meet the needs of all students; factually we know the answer is no. Without “school choice” we would not have Jeffco Open School which provides amazing opportunities for the students they serve. We would not have Mt. Phoenix Community School which uses the Waldorf model, nor would we have the Montessori schools all which serve students so well. As the mom of three children with very different learning needs, I am grateful we were able send our daughter to a Jeffco high school that was outside the boundaries the district set. Meeting the needs of all students is meeting the needs of every student.

**6. What is your position on Tax Credits, ESAs, and Vouchers/Choice Scholarships. Would you support legislation to implement any of these policies in Colorado?**

I support what is best for the students, staff and families in Jeffco Public schools. As a professional in the science field, I strive to have facts before making decisions. Without

knowing the details of any of these programs it is impossible to say if I would support them or not.

- 7. In 2017 five schools were suddenly put on the chopping block for closure, traumatizing those school communities that had primarily more diverse, lower income and higher need students. This past year a school was suddenly closed with no forewarning. In the future, how would you ensure the community is treated with respect in these decisions?**

Surprise school closing in Jeffco have gone on for far too long. The Jeffco Schools Board has ignored their responsibility to create a transparent process for when and how to evaluate school closings and that needs to change. Over a decade ago Martensen and Russell Elementary schools were closed, then Zerger and Pleasant View. Then last year the Jeffco Schools Board allowed Allendale to be closed without even a Board vote. The school closings were supposed to “save money” and only Russell has been sold. As a member of the Jeffco Schools Board I will advocate for a community driven process that sets guideline for when school closures should be considered. This needs to be a transparent process that ensures community engagement and requires a vote of the School Board

- 8. Reliance on test scores to evaluate schools and teachers seemingly punishes teachers who teach in schools with special centers serving high need students. It also causes enrollment drops in schools serving diverse students. How would you mitigate the over emphasis on test results to evaluate teacher and school performance?**

No one would want to be measured on just one metric, especially if the work you do every day makes no impact on that metric. Fortunately, in Colorado we are able to measure the amount our students learn in a year and compare that to how much other students across the state, in their cohort are learning. We know the teacher evaluations use more than one measure in the part of their review that measures their effect on academic growth and achievement. We also know there are many other metrics used to measure teacher effectiveness, so our teachers' evaluations aren't just based on test scores. We know academic achievement is critical for all students; we also know teachers need to attend to the social and emotional needs of our students.

- 9. Jeffco Schools has a visible funding equity issue between newer wealthier schools and older lower income schools? How would you address this issue?**

Jeffco's Student Based Budgeting (SBB) model sends more funding to schools with higher number of at-risk students and those with high populations of students with more intense academic needs. The SBB model also sends more money to schools with lower enrollment. This model was put in place to help level the playing field so all schools have the resources to meet the needs of their students. I commit to continuing the annual evaluation of the funding levels used in SBB and encourage anyone who has ideas for improving the funding model to work with school board members, so all schools have the resources to meet students' needs.

**10. K-8 science seems to be overly focused on content, engineering and skills and less about curiosity and method. How will you look at science curriculum in your policy making decisions?**

As a professional in the science field, I know how important it is for Jeffco's curriculum and resources to teach students the skills they will need both in careers and in encouraging lifelong curiosity. My Jeffco education positioned me well for success at Colorado School of Mines and for a successful career in a science field. I have been fortunate to work in the aerospace industry on solid propulsion systems, and now as an innovation leader in the building insulation field where I lead a team of scientists, engineers, and technologists. I have received five patents and co-chaired the Expanding Your Horizons Conference to introduce math and science careers to young women while they are at a pivotal time in deciding what to do with their lives. And while test scores aren't the only measure of preparedness, last year over 70% of Jeffco's 8<sup>th</sup> graders that took the CMAS assessments didn't meet grade level standards. I know that means most of Jeffco's students are not prepared with the skills they will need to have successful science careers and this breaks my heart. I am passionate about ensuring our students have the skills they need to enter science fields. I want all students to have the same or better opportunities that I have had. The lifelong curiosity skills I developed is one of the reasons I am running for School Board. I will bring both the curiosity and disciplined methods for understanding large organizations and a proven track record of creating collaborative solutions to complex problems to the Jeffco Schools Board.

**11. What are your views on the school safety needs that Jeffco faces?**

School safety for me encompasses physical safety as well as the mental well-being of students and staff. In our ever-changing world we need to prioritize spending to ensure Jeffco facilities are safe places for all. We also know cyber bullying has increased and over the last year and a half when our children were learning remotely mental health needs increased significantly. In fact last spring Children's Hospital declared a Youth Mental Health state of emergency. Jeffco has increased the number of social emotional specialists in our schools, and we need to ensure those prevention measures are working. We also need to be sure we are meeting the immediate needs of those in crisis. Having coached hundreds of young ladies on the Columbine Volleyball team for a decade I know the importance of both keeping facilities physically safe and meeting the mental health needs of students and staff.

**12. How will you address the issue that Jeffco staffing does not reflect the diversity of the student body?**

Having grown up in Jeffco I know that we have become a much more diverse community. According to current district data, one in three Jeffco students report their race as something other than white. I know how important role models have been to me. When I first started as a scientist, as a woman I was very much in the minority. This has changed over time as more women have pursued science careers, so I know there is no overnight answer to increasing the diversity of our staff. I support implementing recruiting practices to help ensure we are reaching the broadest base of qualified candidates for all Jeffco positions. I also support better understanding if the issue is recruitment, the composition of the offers being made, and or retention. Just as it has been important for me to have role models in my career, I support efforts to ensure all students see successful role models among Jeffco staff.

**13. What will you do to address the low salaries for teachers and support staff as well as other factors effecting teacher and support staff retention?**

Having recruited, hired, and managed as part of my career, I know how important it is to attract and keep high quality personnel. I know how much we invest in training and how expensive it is to recruit, hire and train new individuals. Jeffco must look at all of our compensation models and ensure we are adequately compensating our employees. Just recently we learned Jeffco has over seventy open bus driver positions leading to bus routes being cancelled and parents scrambling to find transportation for their students. I have also heard maintenance crews are under staffed as compensation for electricians and plumbers hasn't kept up with the marketplace. We know compensation is only one of the components individuals decide to work for an organization so not only must we ensure our compensation is adequate we must also ensure Jeffco is a great place to work. I look forward to bringing my experience creating a collaborative culture and my experience leading innovation to the Jeffco Schools Board.