

Paula Reed, School Board District 2

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

Up until 2018 I was a teacher at Columbine High School and was very active in the teachers' association.

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

Our current data shows that males, minority students, and economically disadvantaged students are having a hard time meeting benchmarks. I believe there are changes we can make to curriculum and discipline to make inroads here, and I would hope to see real progress. There would also be positive and collaborative relationships between the district and the employee associations.

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?

First and foremost we can keep them in school, in-person, as safely as possible. This will require us to work hand-in-hand with Jefferson County Public Health. Second, we need to provide enrichment opportunities for kids most affected by the loss of instructional time--after school tutoring and such. This cannot come at the cost of things like art, music, P.E., and recess. These things are critical to social emotional health. We also need to dial up our SEL (social emotional learning) efforts in schools.

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

I know our history teachers want to teach history accurately and inclusively, and the state standards require this. As a board member, I would give teachers my full support in implementing and meeting those state standards.

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?

"School choice" absolutely results in resegregation of schools, and many students (including the at-risk kids I taught) do not have a choice. Furthermore, eroding neighborhood schools erodes neighborhoods and our sense of shared community, resulting in the increasing divisiveness we've seen lately. In terms of fiscal responsibility, we cannot afford to fully support the schools we have. I simply cannot see approving any new charters or options until our neighborhood schools are fully supported, and even then, I prefer to see choices embedded in neighborhood schools.

The school where I taught had everything from at-risk intervention to advanced placement. There was something for everyone.

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 am entirely opposed to all of these. They usually help those who need it least, take money away from public schools, and often tread on Constitutional lines between church and state.

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?

We need more clear bright-lines, "if this, then." Schools should be fully aware of and be able to understand criteria for closure, so they can see it coming, as it were. If it makes sense to try to save those schools, we should. If not, there needs to be plenty of notice and steps taken by the district to bring communities along in whatever transitions need to occur.

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?

I do not believe that standardized tests should be used to measure an individual student or teacher's performance. There are too many factors affecting this single evaluation. The best use of standardized tests is to see which schools and which groups of students are in greater need of support and, perhaps, in helping to determine what that support should be.

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

I would like to review which services can best be taken care of at the district level. Often our lower socioeconomic schools need more of these services, so taking care of that at the district level frees up discretionary funds for individual schools.

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?

This is an interesting question, and one I have not spent a great deal of time understanding. To me, the first place to start is by talking to K-8 teachers. They are the

experts. How do they feel about the curriculum, and what changes would they like to see?

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

Focusing on mental health and restorative justice would go a long way toward improving school safety. My at-risk intervention class had most of the kids with “behavior problems” in the school, yet I had very few classroom management issues. This was because I worked hard to build a community that kids valued and felt valued in. This meant that, when a kid started to escalate or withdraw, my parapro or I could talk to them and call them back into community. I think my understanding of how to make kids feel connected to school shows in these student testimonials:  
<https://www.paulareedforjeffcoschools.com/blank-page-4>.

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

We need to cultivate teachers from our own students, and be especially encouraging to our traditionally marginalized kids. We also need to be competitive in compensation. Asking kids who may already be disadvantaged to spend a fortune getting a degree and then only offer jobs that will not allow them to repay student loans does not attract a diverse group.

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

I will advocate for school funding at the state level and insist that competitive employee compensation be a priority in budgeting.