

Student Based Budgeting

How to Advocate for Performing Arts in the New Budgeting Paradigm

This document is intended to provide an overview of Student Based Budgeting and its potential impacts on Performing Arts programs throughout Jeffco Public Schools. It starts with an overview of what Student Based Budgeting is, moves into how Jeffco is implementing it, discuss the possible impacts to Performing Arts classes and activities, and finishes with how you can best advocate. With this new approach to budgeting, local advocacy has never been more important to sustaining Performing Arts in *your* school. The time for advocacy and for getting involved is now.

What Student Based Budgeting is and How it Differs From Traditional Budgeting

(Note that this section describes Student Based Budgeting in general, not specifically how Jeffco is implementing it.)

At a high level, Student Based Budgeting is allocating a set amount of money per pupil for each student enrolled at a school. Principals have the flexibility to utilize that budget for their school as they see fit. Typically, it allocates the money equally, on a per pupil basis, to schools within a district.

In contrast, the “traditional” approach to budgeting is to allocate teachers by school based on enrollment and a ratio – “x” teachers for every “y” students. On top of that, principals are allocated funds for various operational expenses. Within a given district, there are likely different approaches to allocations for charter, magnet, and other types of schools.

Student Based Budgeting gives principals far more flexibility to fund programs and areas most needed within their school for the student population they serve. Like all possible approaches, it has pros and cons, pitfalls and risks. Some of the significant risks inherent to Student Based Budgeting approaches are:

1. Principals might be tempted to hire more inexperienced/inexpensive teachers to save money for use elsewhere.
2. Principals may become responsible for budgets which are 10x what they historically managed. The district must provide guidance and oversight of how budgets are developed and money is spent to minimize the risk of an area or program being overly negatively impacted.
3. The district must merge the Student Based Budgeting approach with sources of funding which are directed to specific programs or needs. This will include a myriad of grants, funding for GT students, funding for special needs students, funding for ESL, Jeffco’s 3A & 3B funding, and many other sources which have a defined use. How this is done will impact the overall effectiveness of Student Based Budgeting.

How Jeffco is Implementing Student Based Budgeting

The information below is from multiple Jeffco Public Schools sources including: Jeffco Strategic Advisory Committee presentation (9/16/14), School Board presentation on budget development (9/4/14), Public video overview posted by Jeffco Public Schools on the JPS-TV YouTube channel, Jeffco Fact Sheet (11/10/14), and from discussions with members of the Jeffco Public Schools administration. Unless otherwise noted, items presented below are from these sources.

Under the past budget system, Jeffco principals control about 8% of their school budgets. As Student Based Budgeting is implemented, this number will move towards 80%. This will give principals much greater flexibility and much greater responsibility during the yearly budgeting process. Another major change is that under the current system, teachers are allocated by a ratio to schools based on student population – a one size fits all approach. In the future, principals will be allocated funds and will fund teachers within departments and programs as they see fit for their student population, within some guidelines as noted below.

Other information:

- Funding will be equitable across all schools for a given demographic of students, based on that demographic's needs. For example, for each at risk student, there is an additional financial factor.
- Funding for staff will be allocated based on average district salaries such that schools with more experienced/more expensive staff are not penalized and schools with less experienced/less expensive staff do not have a budgetary advantage. (This should help address risk #1 from the prior section of this paper.)
- The first year goal is to build Student Based Budgeting capacity and capability. Over time, the intent is for more of the central district allocations to be decentralized into this process.
- Costs for professional development for teachers is built in to the per pupil allocation and must be included in the school budget.
- **School level accountability committees will be asked to make recommendations on spending priorities. This is where you can be highly effective with advocacy.**
- Personnel costs still being allocated centrally include: Special Education staff, ESL teachers, pyschs, social workers, therapists, custodians, food services personnel, and site tech personnel for middle and elementary schools (HS site technology staff will come from the per pupil allocation.)
- Materials & supplies still being allocated centrally: Custodial, utilities, athletics supplies & coach pay, Special Education materials, Title 1 allocations.
- Principals will budget based on a "defined autonomy framework", part of which requires principals to include music, arts, and physical education in their budgets. There are also components of the JCEA contract which stipulate similar requirements. The JCEA contract only extends through the 2015 – 2016 school year.
- Seven of the ten option schools in Jeffco which have defined budgets will continue to operate in that manner. The other three will move to Student Based Budgeting.
- Agreements and contractual requirements with JCEA, suppliers, sources of funding, etc. must be adhered to.

- [Here is a link](#) to a Jeffco public presentation posted on the Superintendent's site with a tremendous amount of detail on how Student Based Budgeting will be implemented.

Potential Impacts on Performing Arts Classes & Activities

Given we do not have exact budgeting guidelines, general risks too look out for include:

- Music and theater classes in a given school could be funded at different levels than in prior years. The publicly available information about the defined autonomy framework does not specify what restrictions may exist for increasing or decreasing Performing Arts funding.
- It may be possible for a principal to add an additional specials offering at the elementary level, reducing the time available for music and its resulting benefits to the students.
- It may be possible for a school to fund Performing Arts at a similar level as last year, but change the offerings to include less during school hours and more after school. This creates conflicts between arts and sports and eliminates opportunities for kids who must ride the bus or have other after school activities.

As stated before, these are general risks based on the level of information currently available. It does not mean that these issues will necessarily occur. To help influence positive decisions for Performing Arts, and to minimize the chances of the above impacts, do your part to advocate!

How you can best advocate going forward

With the decentralization of money being budgeted, 90% of the advocacy you need to do is now right within your own school:

- If possible, join your school's Accountability Committee. If there are no spots currently available, then...
- ...attend the Accountability Committee meetings and talk to your Principal and Accountability Committee members about the importance of Performing Arts – right now – and often. Ask how you can become involved. Encourage your Principal to deeply consider the benefits of strong Performing Arts programs and to fund them accordingly.
- Utilize the resources on our web site, and others, to download research materials outlining the benefits of music on student achievement. Share these materials with your Principal and within Accountability Committees to positively influence budgeting decisions.
<http://www.jeffcopaadvocacy.org/research-and-data.html>
- Talk finances with your Principal. Performing Arts teachers typically handle much higher ratios of students than do other teachers. Because of this, an additional music teacher, for example, can provide a cost benefit to your principal over adding a teacher in a different area. The money saved can be used for something else. Said differently, if the average teacher teaches 30 students per class, but a Performing Arts teacher can teach 70, that then allows the Principal to add yet another teacher to fill a niche need which may only have 15 students in a class. The message is cost savings + flexibility for your Principal.
- Ensure your Performing Arts teacher(s) are active and working with school Accountability Committees and staff committees involved in the budget decision making.

- Understand the concepts around Student Based Budgeting, how Jeffco is implementing it, and what the potential impacts are to Performing Arts classes at all levels within the school system. Talk to your neighbors and other parents about voicing their support as well.
- Consider not settling for the status quo. Ask for more. Utilizing the available research, push for enhancements to your school's Performing Arts programs. This may include instruments, materials, training, breadth and quality of offerings, and quality/availability of instruction.

The final 10% of the advocacy you need to do is at the district level:

- Ensure your voice is heard at all levels. Write to the school board members and to Superintendent McMinimee in support of funding Performing Arts classes and activities. Discuss the need for highly qualified Performing Arts teachers. Share research materials from our web site, and other sources, to show the positive impact of music on student performance.
- If you aren't getting satisfaction from discussions with your own school, consider escalating your concerns to Mr. McMinimee (dmcminim@jeffco.k12.co.us). This is the first year of Student Based Budgeting and the challenges for principals, administrators, and the district as a whole are tremendous. There is likely to be a level of uncertainty about the process and the impacts of each budget decision along the way. Be sure to do what you can, as a parent, to positively influence those decisions for the benefit of Jeffco's students.