

Equity for charter schools in Jeffco

By The Denver Post Editorial Board The Denver Post

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There has been a lot of consternation in Jefferson County about the agenda of the new majority on the school board, much of it rooted in uncertainty over the board's direction.

Recently, one priority has begun to take shape — equity in charter school funding — and we like how it looks.

The children who attend charter schools deserve the same degree of taxpayer support as those who attend district-run public schools. Charters are public schools, too, though they have different governance structures.

Charter equity is the premise the Jeffco school board is starting with, and it's a sound one.

A bit of history is helpful in understanding this priority.

Jeffco is not required to equally share with charters additional operating money approved by voters, called mill-levy overrides, and it has not done so.

Voters have approved three of these overrides in the last two decades, and while the district has shared some of the override money with charters, it has been [far from a full distribution](#).

The per pupil funding in district-managed schools has increased \$1,414 from mill-levy overrides, while charter school per pupil funding has only increased \$247 from this source.

Affording charter school students a share of override money that is proportionately equal is the right thing to do for the students of Jeffco's [16 charters](#).

The district is fashioning its budget for the coming year, and the board has tentatively earmarked \$3.7 million to close half the gap between charters and district-run schools. The proposal is raising questions among those who would like to see the money spent elsewhere. Realistically, there always will be debate about spending priorities, and that conversation should be encouraged.

However, we would hope opponents keep in mind that fundamental fairness is at stake in funding charters on par with Jeffco's other public schools.