Letter of Intent for a Charter to Serve Students in Coal Creek Canyon
August 2023

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Regional Opportunities for Thriving Schools is Jeffco Public Schools’ response to the Board of Education’s (Board) request for a comprehensive plan to ensure thriving schools and extraordinary student experiences across our district.

On Thursday, August 24, 2023, district staff recommended that the Board consider a closure of Coal Creek Canyon K-8. Grades 6-8 will close at the end of the 2023-24 school year. Grades K-5 will close at either the end of the 2023-24 school year OR the 2024-25 school year.

The district will seek charter school interest in a quality educational option designed to serve students in the Coal Creek Canyon area beginning in the 2025-26 school year. The district may support a short-term agreement (1-5 years) for a charter school to use school space before starting the disposition process.

This process will inform the staff recommendation to the Board on October 12 regarding the timing of the closure of grades K-5 at the current Coal Creek Canyon school. This process will not impact the timeline for closure of grades 6-8, which will occur at the end of the 2023-24 school year.

TIMELINE

- **August 24, 2023**: Letter of intent requirements posted online
- **August 25–September 29, 2023**: Submission window open to receive letters of intent
- **September 29, 2023**: Letters of intent due
- **October 2-10, 2023**: Jeffco will review letters of intent
- **By October 12, 2023**: Applicants will be notified of the status of their submission
- **October 12, 2023**: Based on the viability of the letters of intent received, Jeffco staff will update their recommendation for the timeline of when grades K-5 at Coal Creek Canyon will close, potentially allowing time for the community to transition to a charter school
- **Spring 2024**: Charter application window opens
- **June 2024**: Jeffco Board of Education votes on new charter school applications

This letter of intent will provide formal notice to Jeffco of an applicant’s intention to submit a new school proposal for the 2025-2026 school year. The information presented in this letter is non-binding.
SUBMISSION

Submit completed letters of intent to charterschools@jeffco.k2.co.us.

All submissions are due by **11:59 p.m. on September 29th**. Letters must be complete to qualify for consideration. If you need more space than provided on the PDF, please feel free to attach supplementary documents to your submission.

If you have any questions, please contact charterschools@jeffco.k2.co.us.

**LETTER OF INTENT - BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

| Proposed school name | Jefferson Academy Coal Creek  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Follows the pattern of Jefferson Academy Elementary and Jefferson Academy Secondary)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grade configuration</td>
<td>K-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model or focus</td>
<td>Core Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary contact person</td>
<td>Tim Matlick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>720-432-4040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tmatlick@jeffcoschools.us">tmatlick@jeffcoschools.us</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed school leader (if known)</td>
<td>Though there are some experienced and new principals we have spoken with, it is not prudent to provide names at this time. However, JA’s Executive Director would oversee and support the school and the principal.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnering with a charter management organization?</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, name:</td>
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LETTER OF INTENT - ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>2024-2025</th>
<th>2025-2026</th>
<th>2026-2027</th>
<th>2027-2028</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-kindergarten</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
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<td>1st Grade</td>
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<td>2nd Grade</td>
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<td>3rd Grade</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Grade</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th Grade</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
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LETTER OF INTENT - NARRATIVE

The Letter of Intent narrative is a three to five-page document providing the District with the information listed below.

1. The names and qualifications of individuals who form the steering committee in charge of developing the charter school.

   As this might be a Replication or Conversion school instead of a new Charter Contract School, a steering committee may not be required. However, the following are key individuals that will work on this project:
Tim Matlick, Executive Director, Jefferson Academy - Overseeing 5 locations including a Core Knowledge elementary and largest homeschool programs in Jefferson County
  • Community Superintendent for Charter Schools, Jeffco Public Schools
  • Principal of a K-8 Core Knowledge school & founder of 3 homeschool programs
  • Founding Co-President, Colorado Association of Charter Authorizers (CACSA)
  • President/Treasurer, Colorado League of Charter Schools (CLCS)
  • Co-Founder, Jeffco Charter Schools Consortium (JCSC)

Carrie Mott, 6th grade teacher, Jefferson Academy
  • Current Colorado Principal License

Christa Westbrook, 4th grade teacher, Jefferson Academy
  • Pending Colorado Principal License (coursework completed & passed Praxis)

Luke Holocher, Business Manager, Jefferson Academy Elementary (K-6 school with 750 students)

On Monday, September 25, we met with Coal Creek Canyon community members including teachers, parents, homeschool parents, leaders of the parks & rec district as well as others. We are waiting to finalize who in the community is interested and able to partner in this work.

2. **Where the school will be located** (either at the current Coal Creek Canyon school facility (11719 Ranch Elsie Rd, Golden, CO 80403) or at another location).

   The proposed location is at the Coal Creek Canyon K-8 school location pending a lease approval between Jeffco Public Schools and JA/Coal Creek Canyon School

3. **The proposed grade levels to be served in year 1 and at full buildout.**

   Current plans are to open with a full K-8 program that serves all current students in order to keep families together and in this school community.

   A few new components would be added as they have been requested repeatedly through community conversations and would also help offset/supplement the cost of the school:
   - PreK program
   - Before and after school care
   - Homeschool program
4. The proposed opening date of the school

The proposed opening date of the school is August 2024. This would allow the conversion school to capture all current families, including 6-8th graders. It is critical to keep as many students as possible enrolled in the school in order to generate the income needed to operate the school long-term.

5. A brief rationale for the proposal - why a charter school is being proposed.

It was at the request of the district and Colorado League of Charter Schools that Jefferson Academy started looking at supporting this community through a replication/conversion charter school. After meeting with parents, teachers, community members and local Parks & Rec leadership, it became apparent that there is a high level of support for “finding ways” to continue hosting a viable and thriving school in the canyon. The general sense received from our meetings is that many families value the current academic program and are hoping for a high performing charter school that uses a more traditional format, similar to what is currently in place. This aligns with JA’s performance and academic model. Additionally, with experience in hosting homeschool programs, before and after care programs and PreK programs, JA sees an opportunity to serve the whole community which might encourage families to return to the school either as traditional or homeschool students.

6. Please provide a brief description of why your charter organization has the capacity to provide quality education to the students of Coal Creek Canyon.

With multiple campuses and three ‘central office’ staff members, JA is uniquely positioned in the district to support a new campus without negatively impacting current academic programs. Each current campus has a principal and other leadership staff whose sole focus is their building. Under this model, the Coal Creek Canyon school would also have a dedicated principal, most likely part-time, who would be supported by JA’s Executive Director, HR Generalist and Community Engagement Specialist. Having highly experienced leadership available to focus on the conversion school will provide the guidance and in-person availability needed to make the school successful. Additionally, one of JA’s current Business Managers could easily take on the budgetary oversight for this campus following the model currently used for the homeschool programs.

One of the 5 goals in JA’s current strategic Plan includes the following:

As an organization with multiple campuses and programs, we recognize that there are many pathways to success for our students. We seek to fully embrace and communicate
Following the strategic plan, in partnership with the district, we have been able to add a program in the north Jeffco area to support pregnant teens and new moms under 21 years of age in securing their high school diploma or GED. Additionally, we developed a program for 6th - 12th grade high performance athletes whose training schedule does not allow them to attend a traditional 5-day a week program. JA’s experience in developing successful programs and overseeing multiple campuses lends itself to understanding the needs and challenges facing this project.

Finally, a critical component to making the school financially viable will be widespread community support, including that of the homeschool families. JA leadership has extensive experience with homeschool programs and currently hosts programs in 3 locations with approximately 1,100 students. Ten Coal Creek Canyon students already attend 2 of JA’s homeschool programs making the connection with homeschool families much easier and brings instant credibility within that community.

7. Please provide a brief description of how the school’s financial model will sustainably support the model given the projected PK-5 enrollment of approximately 50-60 students.

We do not believe that a school with 50-60 students is financially viable in the canyon. However, by adding several of the components listed above we project that families will return to school as their needs are served. By providing before and after school care, families that currently take their students down the mountain in order to secure school and after school care might see Coal Creek Canyon as a better option for their children and move them to the school. Creating a PreK program will develop a pipeline for new and higher enrollment which will matriculate through the program in subsequent years. Lastly adding a homeschool component will provide increased enrollment and revenue that can, together with the funding for traditional students, make the school financially viable.

Early financial modeling is showing that a school with 80-85 traditional students, 10 tuition based PreK students and 40 homeschool students (.5 FTE) could be financially viable in the school’s early years. We are not prepared to present a full budget at this time as more information is needed from the district regarding what is included in the proposed lease, the cost to purchase the building and a community survey is needed to determine likely enrollment and grade levels which will impact staff.

There are potential outside funding sources to help during the early years of the conversion. NONE of these funds is included in our financial modeling as they are not guaranteed funds.
- Monday a few community members stated they would be interested in supporting the growth years of the school instead of paying tuition to their current private schools
- The Daniels Fund has a new initiative to help support charter expansion
- CDE’s CCSP Grant for Startup, Replication and Conversion charter schools may be available

8. **Please provide any other applicable information you would like the review team to consider.**

One intriguing idea came up during Monday’s community meeting. Homeschool families mentioned that it is difficult for their children to make friends in the mountains due to the separation between homes. They requested that the school consider adding a homeschool component inside the traditional school either supporting subjects like math or for electives. This type of model is allowed by statute and also Jeffco policy with some restrictions.

Out of this conversation came the idea of looking at a model used in parts of Wyoming where smaller schools provide academic programing only Monday – Thursday. On “Super-Friday” they bring multiple schools together for a day full of electives. The idea of bringing in homeschool students for “Super-Friday” programming with traditional school students might be something that fits the needs of the canyon community without incurring additional costs to staff for a separate homeschool program or lease of a local church.

**Supplement to address opening August of 2024 instead of August 2025:**

Our projections show that should Jeffco close 6th – 8th grade in the 2024-25 school year, the limited window of opportunity to make a financially successful conversion school would most likely close. With dwindling enrollment and limited resources at CCCK8, next year families would begin to position themselves for a longer-term, more secure educational option and move to other schools. In our community meeting on Monday, families stated that once they move their children they would likely not move them a second time just to try a new/conversion school at the current campus. Rather, they would be more likely to remain at the school if a viable option were to step in for the 2024-25 school year.

With JA’s experience in developing, opening and overseeing programs, and with Jeffco’s partnership as expressed by the Superintendent last week, an August 2024 opening is quite possible. It will take a tremendous amount work and will necessitate pushing deadlines/moving quickly to make this happen. However, our belief that is that this is the best path to success for that community.
# EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR LETTERS OF INTENT RECEIVED FOR COAL CREEK CANYON

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Rating</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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| **Fully Developed**   | The response reflects a thorough understanding of key issues, such that the reviewer has essentially no unanswered questions about the section. Key issues include:  
  ● Financial sustainability to serve a small school community  
  ● Evidence of the capacity to provide quality education  
  ● Qualifications of individuals who form the steering committee  
  The response addresses the topic with specific and accurate information that shows thorough preparation; presents a clear, realistic picture of how the school expects to implement the criteria; and inspires confidence in the applicant’s capacity to carry out the plan effectively. Examples or evidence are provided for all appropriate sections. |
| **Mostly Developed**  | The response addresses or meets an appropriate level of expectation for addressing key issues, leaving only a few clarifying questions for the reviewer. Examples or evidence are provided for all appropriate sections if available. If examples or evidence are unavailable, a timeline to include or submit this information is stated in the application.  |
| **Partially Developed** | The response addresses key issues in some respects but has substantial gaps in several areas, leaving a number of questions remaining for the reviewer. Examples and evidence may be found in a few appropriate sections.  |
| **Not Developed**     | The response is wholly undeveloped or significantly incomplete; demonstrates lack of preparation; or otherwise raises substantial concerns about the viability of the plan or the applicant's ability to carry it out. No examples or evidence are provided.  |