

Equity for Edgewater Elementary

TO: Jefferson County School Board and District Leadership
FROM: Edgewater Mayor John Beltrone, Edgewater City Councilmember Hannah Gay Keao, Edgewater Mayor Pro Tem Cory Reid-Vanas, Lakewood City Councilmember Sophia Mayott-Guerrero, Edgewater Collective Board President Isabel Cruz, Edgewater Collective Executive Director Joel Newton
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In 2018, Jeffco Public Schools voters passed ballot issue 5B by a mere 1,537 votes. This measure would not have passed without the strong support of Edgewater and NE Lakewood voters. 5B promised significant capital improvements for our neighborhood schools, including the removal of deteriorating modular buildings, replacement of old playground equipment, and a new addition for Edgewater Elementary.

In 2022, the district determined that due to declining enrollment, \$4.2M of capital improvements at Edgewater Elementary was not necessary. Area elementary students also lost an additional \$6.3M of capital improvements due to the closure of Molholm Elementary in NE Lakewood. With actual capital construction costs completed at Edgewater Elementary and 2023-2024 enrollment numbers now available, the reduced investment is neither acceptable by our community nor backed by quantitative reasoning.

The district's initial budgeted capital commitment to Edgewater Elementary was \$5.5M. Actual commitment totaled only 50% or \$2.7M. The district rationalized this reduction in investment because of falling enrollment at the school. However, if a proportional amount of capital investment reduction is based on enrollment decline since 2018, **Edgewater Elementary should receive an extra \$1.8M of capital improvements.**¹

Additionally, when applying an equity lens, Edgewater Elementary should receive a greater investment in capital improvements per pupil than much of the rest of the district. Our Title 1 school serves a school population where 83% of students come from low-income families and 85% of students are historically underserved non-white students (largely Latino at 77%).

The hard work by teachers and staff, community investments made by the City of Edgewater and Edgewater Collective, and the allure of a now established 2-way dual language Spanish-English program has allowed Edgewater Elementary to turn a corner. Waitlists exist for PreK and kindergarten age students, enrollment numbers are up for the first time in years, and the school exceeded district enrollment models from the spring for 2023-2024 by over 17.5%.² All of this happened even though the vast majority of Molholm Elementary students, and importantly for future enrollment its entire articulation area, were combined into Lumberg Elementary.

Edgewater Elementary families as well as area taxpayers deserve to see the full benefits of capital improvements promised in 2018. Our neighborhood school should not be disproportionately penalized because the district spent \$175M capital project overruns and undisclosed investments in athletic facilities in other more affluent parts of the district; it wasn't purely increased capital costs that led to the lack of investment of 5B funds –which we voted and paid for– in our community.

Our community is committed to seeing all our schools thrive, including Edgewater Elementary. This year, Edgewater Elementary PreK and fine arts are being taught in deteriorating modular buildings, our kids must settle for used playground equipment stripped from closed schools, and the school did not receive a remodel comparable to other district schools.

We are asking the district to fulfill their promise to voters and students made in 2018 by completing the following before the 2024-2025 school year:

- Building an addition to Edgewater Elementary**
- Removing all modular buildings**
- Building a new playground that meets district standards**
- Installing a digital marquee sign**
- Creating an open enrollment zone for elementary students in the Jefferson articulation area to encourage continued growth and better balance enrollment between Edgewater and Lumberg**

Calculations:

1. \$2.7M or 50.1% of the \$5.5M budget was committed to the school. Enrollment declined at Edgewater Elementary from 408 to 295 students from the 2018 to 2024 school years while district enrollment declined from 86,131 to 77,092 from 2018 to 2023. The enrollment difference between Edgewater Elementary and the district was 17.2%. A 17.2% budget reduction is \$0.9M or \$1.8M less than the \$2.7M amount reduced.
2. Projected enrollment for Edgewater Elementary in the Spring of 2023 was 251. Actual enrollment was 295 at the start of the school year. Numbers exclude PreK.