

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Seventy-Fourth Session
February 21, 2007**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Bonnie Parnell at 3:47 p.m., on Wednesday, February 21, 2007, in Room 3142 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4406 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda ([Exhibit A](#)), the Attendance Roster ([Exhibit B](#)), and other substantive exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.leg.state.nv.us/74th/committees/. In addition, copies of the audio record may be purchased through the Legislative Counsel Bureau's Publications Office (email: publications@lcb.state.nv.us; telephone: 775-684-6835).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Chair Bonnie Parnell
Vice Chair Debbie Smith
Assemblyman Bob Beers
Assemblyman David Bobzien
Assemblyman Mo Denis
Assemblyman Joseph P. (Joe) Hardy
Assemblyman Ruben Kihuen
Assemblyman Garn Mabey
Assemblyman Harvey J. Munford
Assemblyman Tick Segerblom
Assemblyman Lynn D. Stewart

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kristin Roberts, Committee Counsel
Carol M. Stonefield, Committee Policy Analyst
Denise Dunning, Committee Secretary
Rachel Pilliod, Committee Manager
Kelly Troescher, Committee Secretary
Trisha Moore, Committee Assistant



OTHERS PRESENT:

Christopher Swanson, Director, Research Center, Editorial Projects in Education, Bethesda, Maryland

Carole Vinograd Bausell, Project Director, *Quality Counts* Editorial Projects in Education, Bethesda, Maryland

Keith Rheault, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education, Nevada

Chair Parnell:

Meeting called to order [at 3:47 p.m.] [Roll was called. Quorum present.]. This presentation is going to be by phone. We have Bill Draft Request (BDR) 34-441 waiting for committee introduction. It revises provisions governing career and technical education. We had a committee to study career and technical high schools in the interim. Most of what you are seeing is a result of that subcommittee work.

BDR 34-441 — Revises provisions relating to career and technical education.
(Later introduced as [Assembly Bill 151](#).)

ASSEMBLYMAN DENIS MOVED TO INTRODUCE BDR 34-441.

ASSEMBLYMAN KIHUEN SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

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Chair Parnell:

I would like you to look at the letter written on behalf of the Committee to Principal Joe Collins at David E. Norman Elementary School ([Exhibit C](#)). That is the elementary school that received the distinction for academic improvement in White Pine County.

The *Quality Counts* study is in your folder ([Exhibit D](#), [Exhibit E](#), [Exhibit F](#), and [Exhibit G](#)). It tracks state efforts to connect education from preschool through postsecondary education and training. For the first time, the *Quality Counts* shows the whole child. It shows what would happen if Nevada's children had preschool, full-day kindergarten, after-school tutoring, and other programs. It shows what the best-case scenario would be if we could afford to implement programs. That is why it is titled "From Cradle to Career." Look at the children in Nevada and ask, "How do their lives in general translate into their

performance in the classroom?" The latest findings are out and Christopher Swanson and Carole Vinograd Bausell will be joining us to share the results.

Christopher Swanson, Director, Research Center, Editorial Projects in Education, Bethesda, Maryland:

We are taking a more comprehensive look at the role of education throughout the life course and not just the K-12 years. It is a much broader canvas that we are looking at this year. You will see that in the PowerPoint slides, ([Exhibit D](#)). What we will start with is a brief summary of what is in the *Quality Counts* report ([Exhibit E](#), [Exhibit F](#), and [Exhibit G](#)). The "Chance for Success" is a key piece of this report, but when you place a strong emphasis in state-by-state policy indicators, the main focus is on "standards-based reform." In particular, *Quality Counts* has been one of the most prominent state report cards tracking state policies, standards, and accountability. We have commentary from an outside expert which helps to frame some of the big questions in any particular area. One thing that is new this year is our K-12 state achievement index. We have had a lot of requests over the years to, not just look at policy, but to look at student achievement.

To give some background for this year's report, when we got to our tenth anniversary report last year, we took a retrospective look at the developing state policy over the past ten years or so and its relationship to student achievement. In moving into the next generation of *Quality Counts*, we had a dilemma in front of us. Given what we have prefaced on standards-based policies over the years, the question was "how do we start dealing with that in an era where all of the states are implementing the policy of No Child Left Behind (NCLB)?" This entailed looking at how K-12 education, our traditional and continuing focus, connects with other states in education and other social and economic institutions. Along with this broader perspective, we are putting more emphasis on hard outcomes to balance our continued focus on policy. An important concern we have in education is being in a competitive nation. We need to look at education in new ways. Education is one of the most central concepts in American culture. It is the American dream. Education is more important now than it has ever been. The idea behind "Chance for Success" is pretty easy. What are students' chances for success given their socio-economic and educational conditions in that state? What if that child had grown up in a different state? Intuitively, I think we know that it would make some amount of difference, but how much of a difference? That is really the motivation behind "Chance for Success." We take a state-by-state perspective on the types of factors that impact a young person, and eventually, an adult. There is an educational theme running throughout the "Chance for Success" idea. The foundations for learning are laid in the household. Typically, education here is reflected in the parents' education, employment, and income.

In the schooling years, this is traditionally what we think of in the field of education. We look at early participation and kindergarten programs, hard indicators in elementary and secondary school reading and math, and then high school graduation rates and rates of participation in postsecondary education. When we move into the post-schooling year, the question becomes the return to education: Can you do well in the labor market without a good education? We are looking at adult education within the State, which is a good proxy for the type of economic and workforce opportunities that might be available to someone with a good education. We look at indicators such as average annual income and study employment rates.

We performed statistical tests to determine whether the differences we are seeing between national norms in a particular state are significantly different. If a state scored higher, they received one point. If they scored lower one point was taken away. The analysis showed that there are significant findings from a statistical perspective. We tallied the indicators, which gave us our final scores. We are never surprised when there are differences between the states. What did surprise us was just how many differences we are seeing between the extreme ends of the scale. If we look at the map (page 16 of [Exhibit D](#)), there is some very strong geographical patterning. We see that the states with the lowest chance for success scores, which appear in red, are in an extended geographical area that runs from the southeast to the Deep South, then into the Southwest and into the West Coast. The lowest state is New Mexico, which is a negative twenty-three, followed by Louisiana, Arizona, and Texas. The highest performance area is in New England, and the Mid-Atlantic states, as well as parts of the North Central region. The number one state on the list is Virginia with a score of 22 points, followed by Connecticut, New Hampshire, and New Jersey.

This is one way to look at "Chance for Success." You get a more useful perspective if we map this out. If we start all states with the score of zero and add points as we go, indicator by indicator, we get a person's sense of chances for success as he grows up in a state. Are they continually improving? Are they continually declining?

If we take Virginia and New Mexico, the top state and the bottom state, we get very different pictures. Virginia starts off fairly well. The public schools perform above average and there are strong economic opportunities in the state, so chances for success improve. It is the opposite picture for New Mexico. Children start out with substantial socio-economic disadvantages. The schools are underperforming and there are economic weaknesses. Sometimes the areas in the middle are the most interesting. Wyoming and California have very different perspectives. Wyoming starts out with an advantage,

socio-economically. The public schools do okay and then there is a weak economy for adults in the end. California is a little bit of an opposite picture. It starts off looking very much like New Mexico with a lot of socio-economic disadvantages, and then there is some economic strength that pulls prospects up in California. Nevada is a state that starts out with an average socio-economic picture when we look at conditions such as families with young children. When we move into the school years, we start to see a decline. Preschool and kindergarten involvement levels are at, or a little below, the national average. The performance at the K-12 schools, graduation rates, and postsecondary participation is below average and we see the decline continue. There is a mixed picture when we look at the labor market. Educational attainment levels are a little below average. The employment rates are fairly high, so there is a little uptake there at the end. We encourage you to take a look at these patterns because we think it leads to the next question, "What can we do about it?" That is where policy comes in.

One thing that *Quality Counts* does is create an opportunity for success. We do look at some state policy efforts to align K-12 education with early and later stages of education as well as work life. We can divide policy in a similar way, such as early childhood, postsecondary, economy and workforce, to identify key policies. We identified 15 key policies here. There is a readiness theme aligned with this, which determines whether a child leaving one stage of school is ready for the next, as defined by that state. We have information on alignment of standards, or assessment of readiness, and intervention of students deemed not ready. States are in different places in terms of how aggressive they are and what strategies they use. We did a lot of work on high school issues and have a separate annual report that focuses just on high schools and college readiness. High school reform is one of the top issues in educational policy making.

Policy efforts that are not formally enacted do not get credit in our survey. Substantial policies used are things such as early childhood education, which links to "from school to work." If you tally up the number of policies to see the range of activity across the states, states can have anywhere from 12 of these 15 policies, all the way down to 2. The states with the fewest policies are usually locally controlled. Nevada is right in the middle. It is ranked 25th and has six out of the fifteen policies. Postsecondary education is an area where there is less activity. The policies that Nevada has in place are early learning standards in line with K-12, kindergarten standards. They are most common across the state. Next, three out of the five are linked to the economy and workforce. The areas that are not showing up yet are work readiness and college-ready framework.

The last main point is our K-12 Achievement Index. We are not grading per se, but we are ranking the states. It is important to have consistent information available for every state. The indicators that we look at span the elementary and secondary grades and include an even balance of status and growth measures. The status level is how a state is performing currently, using the most recent data available. The growth indicators tell us what improvements have been made over recent years. It is important to understand and interpret the data in forms of state policy activity. The indicators that we look at are achievement levels and gains, poverty gaps, high school graduation rates, students who perform at high levels in eighth grade math, an analysis and significance testing. We assign a score and tally up the points for a final score. There is some geographical clustering that is not as dramatic as it was for "Chance for Success." We often see quite a range for states, which range anywhere from negative 14 to plus 20. The top state is Massachusetts, with twenty points, followed by New Jersey and Vermont. The lowest ranking states are Mississippi, with negative 14, followed by a cluster of states with negative points. Alabama, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Virginia all have negative points. We can see that Nevada is also in that lowest range: a negative 9. If you look at the first group under achievement levels (page 26 of [Exhibit D](#)), currently Nevada is consistently performing below the national average. In the next set of indicators we see that with the exception of fourth grade math, achievement in Nevada is holding pretty steady over time. Graduation rates are below the national average. Advanced Placement (AP) test scores are below the national average, but have been improving over time.

We see among the top ranking states that they are getting their points for high levels of performance by making improvements over time. At the opposite end of the spectrum, we see states with the lowest scores losing many of their performance points and gaining a few points for improvements made over time. In some cases, like West Virginia, they are losing ground on a couple of the indicators.

Carole Vinograd Bausell, Project Director, *Quality Counts* Editorial Projects in Education, Bethesda, Maryland:

Quality Counts continues to reflect a more than ten-year commitment by the states for K-12 academic contents standards. The schools and districts are held accountable. I would like to share some of the highlights from our survey of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) in the U.S. Department of Education. We employ a rigorous methodology to ensure that our findings are as accurate as possible. Unlike last year, *Quality Counts 2007* does not break states into standards of accountability sections in the report. I will point out new developments in this policy arena.

For the first time in *Quality Count*'s history, all 50 states and the District of Columbia received credit for having adopted standards in three core subjects: English/language arts, mathematics, and science. The fourth core subject is not far behind. Only Iowa and Rhode Island have yet to adopt history standards. Although states continue to develop their standards over time, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) reports that the quality of such efforts can vary. According to an AFT analysis, 40 states have standards in mathematics and science that are clear, specific and grounded in content at all grade levels. In contrast, states fared less well in their English language arts standards. Only 14 states have standards in English that meet the AFT criteria for quality at all grade levels. This is down from 31 states last year. This drop is due in part to changes in the AFT evaluation criteria. *Quality Counts* found that most states now supplement their content standards with resources or guides for teachers that elaborate on the standards themselves, making them more user-friendly. Many states also choose to revise their standards on a periodic basis. Aligning state assessments to state content standards continues to be a priority for states. Nearly all states report that their tests are aligned with their content standards in both English language arts and mathematics at all grade levels; however, the number of states reporting aligned assessments in their testing scores plummet when it comes to other core subjects.

We can clearly see the influence of NCLB in this pattern of assessment alignment. Under the NCLB, the results of state assessments can lead to consequences for public schools and districts that receive federal Title I money for disadvantaged students. Many states choose to go beyond the federal law. Some states have other criteria for evaluating schools, while others choose to apply the same consequences to all schools whether they are Title I or non-Title I schools. Twenty-nine states rate schools on their own state-developed criteria. Many states also have rewards, assistance, and sanctions based on their performance regardless of Title I status. Seventeen states reward high performance with additional funds, 35 provide some form of help to low performers, and 33 apply similar sanctions to both Title I and non-Title I schools that fail to meet achievement targets.

Christopher Swanson:

We are not looking at teacher quality or school finance this year, which are two of our long-standing policy categories. We put those two categories on hold and are presently engaged in discussion with the education research and policy community to figure out how best to address these issues. The entire content of our printed report, as well as the state-specific highlight reports ([Exhibit E](#)), are available online. There is one for every state, which gives you the state picture as well as national comparison. We also have an online database called "Education Counts," which is a clearinghouse for the hundreds of policies and

other variables we collected on states for the past 10 or 11 years now. That is also a good source of information if you are looking for data on a particular policy or achievement issue.

Chair Parnell:

Is there anything that Nevada could pay particular attention to, or any comments on Nevada and where we should go from this point?

Christopher Swanson:

We engage in outreach to states, and what I have been looking at this year is on page two of the report (page 3 of [Exhibit E](#)). That is the easiest way to see where a state's weaker and stronger areas are. The one area that stands out in Nevada is the fact that early foundations seem to be very good. The socio-economics and the characteristics of families and parents with small children are predictors of readiness to learn as students begin attending school. The biggest reason for concern lies probably during the formal school years when participation rates and early childhood programs are at or a little below the national average. Nevada has a relatively decent picture when you look at economic opportunity, and that is where we see Nevada leveling out in the trajectories.

Chair Parnell:

When you look at the states, do you take into account the transiency of that state?

Christopher Swanson:

That is not something that we look at here. If we take a snapshot of conditions in states and assume that the population stays in that state, it just would not be realistic. We do not use that in our analysis, although we are trying to find ways to try to include more of that information in the future. Economic growth and economic opportunity come from an educated workforce. You can have homegrown workforces or try to attract them from other parts of the country. We will be looking at that more in the future.

Assemblyman Hardy:

Do you have any recommendations when taking into account English Language Learners (ELL), as to what we should do if we want to be successful?

Christopher Swanson:

We are not an organization that advocates positions per se, but we try to promote policy discussions. In terms of looking at how this information could be used, different states, different organizations, and agencies will use them in different ways. We highlight some of the key ways in which education plays an

important role in the life course. That can be formal education, or in the earlier years, the foundation for education. We pulled some key indicators together in this report. What we are trying to get into discussion is that learning is a lifetime process. We try to think of ways to connect the different stages of learning and education.

Assemblyman Hardy:

Is there a comparison of states that have full-day kindergarten with those without full-day kindergarten? I do not see that broken out in the report.

Christopher Swanson:

We did not have that information in our data sources. We are looking at the percent of kids enrolled in kindergarten.

Carole Vinograd Bausell:

One of the areas in which Nevada is higher than the national average is English language learners. One way our report can be used is to take things that stand out and try to see how they fit in with other areas, such as what kinds of early learning and assessments do you need to see if children are ready to learn. That would be matched with characteristics of your population, including ELLs. You would look to see if this is addressed in the preparation and assessment for children in the early years of schooling.

Assemblyman Hardy:

Does the data about ELLs and kids in all-day kindergarten exist electronically?

Christopher Swanson:

That is not part of the data source available. Most of the information that we have in "Chance for Success" comes from the American Community Survey. This survey is relatively new and keeps information on approximately 3 million people. The first year that this survey was fully implemented was in 2005.

Assemblyman Mabey:

I have a question about the U.S. Bucks Attainment Trend (page 7 of [Exhibit D](#)). It appears that Nevada is the only state that shows the younger adults having a lower education level than the older adults. Can you comment on that?

Christopher Swanson:

This information has been presented in various ways. The younger generation should be doing better than the older generation if you look at the education level, but that is not what we are seeing in the United States. This is the opposite of most of the world.

Assemblywoman Smith:

There is a group at the University of Nevada, Reno, that is studying this issue.

Assemblyman Denis:

Regarding post-education and lifelong learning, are you looking at other types of education that might not be a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, or a Ph.D.? Are there other types of learning considered and is there a way to measure them?

Christopher Swanson:

I have been part of higher education discussions that are looking at new ways of providing education. College is not just four years anymore. Some are open, active, 2-year institutions that do not conform to our traditional ways of thinking on this issue. We have to look at education in different ways.

Assemblyman Stewart:

You have Nevada ranked below a number of states in the category of steady employment. From statistics I have seen, Nevada is usually one of the lowest in the unemployment rates. How do you define steady employment?

Christopher Swanson:

What you see in our study is that the rates are low, but on page two of the State Report (page 3 of [Exhibit E](#)), you will see an uptake at the end showing that Nevada does have a better employment rate in comparison.

Assemblyman Beers:

I do not see high school and technical education in this study. Was it part of the study?

Christopher Swanson:

That was not a focus of this study. Some of the school and labor force alignment issues do deal, either directly or indirectly, with some aspects of vocational and technical education.

Assemblyman Beers:

May I suggest that this be added in the next study?

Christopher Swanson:

Another annual report called "Diplomas Count" focuses on graduation and high school issues. The report is due out in June. Work readiness also will be looked at in that report.

**Keith Rheault, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education,
Nevada:**

One of the key points stated was that location matters. If you are from a state that has a lot of negative indicators will influence how successful the schools will be. I agreed, in general, with everything in the report. However, one thing that was understated in the presentation we just had was the fact that Nevada ranks 51st in preschool participation. We are 50th in the number of parents who are an educational team and 48th in the number of parents who do not speak English. When you put that all together, it is an indicator that we should be providing all-day kindergarten with all of these at-risk indicators.

Chair Parnell:

Meeting is adjourned [at 4:43 p.m.]

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Denise Dunning
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Bonnie Parnell, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Committee Name: Committee on Education

Date: February 21, 2007

Time of Meeting: 3:45 p.m.

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
AB 151			Revises provisions governing career and technical education
	A	Committee on Education	Assembly Agenda
	B	Committee on Education	Sign in Sheets
	C	Assemblywoman Bonnie Parnell	Letter to Principal Joe Collins
	D	Dr. Christopher Swanson, Director, Research Center, Editorial Projects in Education	<i>Quality Counts 2007</i> Power Point Presentation
	E	Dr. Christopher Swanson, Director, Research Center, Editorial Projects in Education	From Cradle to Career "Nevada"
	F	Dr. Christopher Swanson, Director, Research Center, Editorial Projects in Education	Education Week Study
	G	Dr. Christopher Swanson, Director, Research Center, Editorial Projects in Education	From Cradle to Career "Supplemental Ranking Tables"