

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

**Seventy-Fifth Session  
February 16, 2009**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Bonnie Parnell at 3:45 p.m. on Monday, February 16, 2009, 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/75th2009/committees/](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/75th2009/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](mailto:publications@lcb.state.nv.us); telephone: 775-684-6835).

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Assemblywoman Bonnie Parnell, Chair  
Assemblyman Mo Denis, Vice Chair  
Assemblyman David P. Bobzien  
Assemblywoman Marilyn Dondero Loop  
Assemblyman Joseph (Joe) P. Hardy  
Assemblyman Ruben J. Kihuen  
Assemblywoman April Mastroluca  
Assemblyman Richard McArthur  
Assemblyman Harvey J. Munford  
Assemblyman Lynn D. Stewart  
Assemblywoman Melissa Woodbury

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Kristin Roberts, Committee Counsel  
Carol M. Stonefield, Committee Policy Analyst  
Danny Peltier, Committee Manager

Sharon McCallen, Committee Secretary  
Cheryl McClellen, Committee Assistant

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Walt Rulffes, Superintendent, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada

Heather Dye, Executive Director, Nevada FFA, Carson City, Nevada

Jasmine Dolgar, High School Graduate, Reno, Nevada

Charlie Mann, Student, Smith Valley High School, Lyon County, Nevada

Liliana Garcia, Graduate, Vocational Technical High School, Las Vegas, Nevada

Emily Feinstein, Student, Spring Valley High School, Las Vegas, Nevada

Rachel Ruzol, Graduate, Vocational Technical High School, Las Vegas, Nevada

Janis McCreary, Principal, Academy of Arts and Careers Technology, Washoe County, Reno, Nevada

Rebecca Melton, Student, Academy of Arts and Careers Technology, Washoe County, Nevada

Rebecca Blodgett, Senior, Academy of Arts and Careers Technology, Washoe County, Nevada

Stan Hall, Director, Career and Technical Education, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada

Melissa Rodriguez, Student, College of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada

Joshua Serrano, Graduate, Vocational Technical High School, Las Vegas, Nevada

Sharla Hales, Past President, Nevada Association of School Boards, Douglas County, Nevada

Jim Lemaire, Board Member, District 2, Carson City School District, President Elect, Nevada Association of School Boards, Carson City, Nevada

Norm Scoggin, Vice President, Carson City School Board, Carson City, Nevada

Carolyn Edwards, Legislative Chair Person, Nevada Association of School Boards; Vice President of Clark County School District School Board, Las Vegas, Nevada

Deanna Wright, Trustee, District A, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada

Megan Garvey, Private Citizen on behalf of Chris Garvey, Trustee for District B, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada

Marianne Garvey, School Nurse, Dayton High School, Lyon County, Nevada

Erin Danielson, Counselor, Washoe County School District, Reno, Nevada  
Kim Boyle, Director, Guidance and Counseling, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Ben Contine, Special Education Teacher, Math Department, Carson City High School, Carson City, Nevada  
LeAnn Morris, Member, Commission on Educational Excellence, 2008 Nevada Teacher of the Year, Computer Instructor, Empire Elementary School, Carson City, Nevada  
Michele Paul, Member, Commission on Educational Excellence, Third Grade Teacher, Dayton Elementary School, Lyon County, Nevada  
David Perkins, Swim Coach, Chess and Special Education Teacher, Legacy High School, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Brittney Thompson, Student, Las Vegas High School, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Chanda Cook, Director of Community Initiatives, Nevada Public Education Foundation, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Steven Linder, Vice President of Community Development, HSBC Bank Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Kay Karl, Former Clark County School District Administrator, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Ginny Jackson, Private Citizen, Washoe County, Nevada  
Tomas Murillo, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada  
Jose Gutierrez, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada  
Eva Melendrez, Parent Services Coordinator, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Verda Hines, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Melvin Taylor, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Dee McGibbon, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada  
Linda Johnson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Donna Hoffman Anspach, representing Nevadans for Quality Education, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Theo Meek, representing the Student Advisory Board from Wooster High School, Reno, Nevada  
Oscar Aguilar, Student, Sparks High School, Sparks, Nevada  
Carissa Mangubat, Student Body President, Reed High School, and a representative from the Washoe County School District Student Advisory Board, Reno, Nevada  
Garrett Menghini, Senior, Damonte Ranch High School, Reno, Nevada  
Gregory Wright, Student, Coronado High School, Henderson, Nevada  
Bradley Waldron, Executive Director, Education Services Division, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Robert Henry, Director, Adult Education, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada

Tyler Petersen, Student, Desert Rose Adult High School, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Louise Helton, State Director, Communities in Schools of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Jessica Bretzlaff, Executive Director, Communities in Schools of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Amy Marable, Dean of Students, Wooster High School, Reno, Nevada  
Patricia Carroll, Dean of Students, House A, representing Andrew Kelly, Principal, Hug High School, Reno, Nevada  
Georganne Ray, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Diane Reitz, Director, K-12 Literacy, Curriculum and Professional Development Division, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Jennifer Hill, Kindergarten Teacher, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada  
LeNora Bredsguard-Brown, former Kindergarten and Special Education Teacher, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada  
Lee Solonche, Director, Educational Media Services, Las Vegas Public Broadcasting Service  
Tom Faxtel, General Manager, Educational Media Services, Las Vegas Public Broadcasting Service

**Chair Parnell:**

[Roll taken.] Welcome to all of you here and in Las Vegas. This is the first time I have ever chaired a meeting with an overflow room.

We are here today for an important issue. We all agree that the high school graduation rate in this state is not what we want it to be. It is not something we can be proud of. What amazes me, as a former teacher, is there are so many great kids out there; kids who are wonderfully successful. I ask myself, who are these kids who do not graduate from high school. We need to know who they are, and more importantly, we need to know how to keep them in the system. That is what we are here for today.

I would ask that you keep your comments brief and share ideas of how to complete the statement "We would graduate more kids from Nevada High Schools if...." If someone states your idea before you have the chance to share it, feel free to come to the table and say "I agree." I am going to try to conclude the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

We have made copies of emails for the Committee.

Most of the students are here for specific passions. You are here because you may think counselors are the best solution, Career and Technical Education (CTE) saves kids in our schools, maybe dual enrollment, a mentoring program, or a ninth-grade transition program. I will call you to the table if this is the area you want to talk about.

In Las Vegas we have Mr. Walt Rulffes. Come to the table and we will begin this discussion.

**Walt Rulffes, Superintendent of Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I agree with you about the importance of graduation. That is why we have an initiative we call "keep your eye on the CAP," which stands for climate, academics, and participation (CAP). We use this as our theme because we want everybody to recognize and accept responsibility for graduation. It is not a high school problem; it is a problem of the community at all grade levels. The CAP is symbolic of what we want everyone to keep his eye on in order for graduation to occur. Clearly our mission is to graduate students. The mantra I have followed since becoming superintendent is that my goal is to increase the number and quality of graduates.

The chart displayed on the screen shows all of the 2007 graduation rates for all of the high schools in the Clark County School District and also shows the district average as compared to the average for the schools of choice. You may ask why some schools perform so well and others do not. The data on the chart certainly raises the question, why are we doing so poorly with graduation? Another question is who has block scheduling, and who does not. There may be a special category that interests people, where they have a passion. Many questions may arise when we talk about the various connections to these schools and the graduation rates. Does it deal with the leadership of the feeder schools, or is it socio-economic? What I want to stress today is when talking about schools of choice, the model we use to develop our Career and Technical Academies, which are not just CTE schools, are academies that have comprehensive high school opportunities for students as well as themes based in some occupational path. We find that they consistently do better in graduation, attendance, discipline, and all of the areas which lead to successful students.

Opportunities we can give students to be in areas where they can be engaged, and where they want to be, are part of the solution. This does not have to be limited to schools of choice. Comprehensive high schools can also develop themes. We are already finding that high schools are developing more themes in order to keep students in attendance.

The second point I want to make is, I have found once a student passes the high school proficiency exam, the risk of dropping out is very low. Typically, a student who passes that test is going to go on and finish. We have redirected resources in the high schools for supplemental help, such as tutoring during the week after school, along with good communications with the parents regarding the risk of a student not graduating if he does not pass a test. This has led to increased pass rates, particularly first-time pass rates. If we can get a student to pass the first time, then we can make sure the student gets into areas that are critical to college and the work place. I would start the program off today, emphasizing those two main areas.

As I look through the list of speakers, I see there are numerous programs that represent some of the joint ventures we have with the Nevada System of Higher Education. I have a list of programs that we have collaborated with the Nevada System of Higher Education. It is the combination of programs that work with students through the best practices in elementary schools through high school that I believe are helping us increase our graduation rates.

The programs not only increase our graduation rate but have reduced our remediation rate in college from approximately 37 percent down to 27 percent. That is a direct result of the programs that help students be better prepared for college. One of the first issues that Chancellor Rogers and I dealt with was the shameful rate of remediation. With these collaborations, and introducing certain programs early to students testing, we can determine what courses have to be made up in order to be prepared for math, reading, and now science in college. We have been able to dramatically reduce the remediation rate and are currently below the state average. I think we can get even lower if we continue to press on.

**Chair Parnell:**

I would like to ask you two questions. Are the programs that you have found successful going to be in jeopardy due to the potential budget cuts?

**Walt Rulffes:**

Absolutely. The first one that would probably go is the supplemental help in high schools to help students pass the high school proficiency exam. Those were extra dollars we allocated to the schools, and the schools determined how best to use them. Some schools used the funds for after school programs, some used it for buying back prep periods in the high school, and some even had Saturday classes. The continued progress of high school graduation rates is in immediate jeopardy. I have publically stated that I cannot make the guarantee that we can increase the graduation rates with the magnitude of budget cuts that we are seeing.

**Chair Parnell:**

So are innovation and remediation dollars primary to you?

**Walt Rulffes:**

They are, because they have short-term results. There are a number of long-term impacts that will occur from the budget cuts, but the loss of supplemental help in high schools will show immediate decline in our pass rates for the high school proficiency exam.

**Chair Parnell:**

Are there any questions? I do not see any. I would like to ask if there are any other school district superintendents with us either in Las Vegas or here?

Mr. Rulffes has mentioned the schools of choice. These are magnet schools in Clark County, and also math and science, theater arts, and career technology schools and classes. We will hear from both the north and south Career Technology Education proponent students that would like to say why those classes have kept them in school.

**Heather Dye, Executive Director, Nevada FFA, Carson City, Nevada:**

I work with the Nevada Association for Career and Technical Education (NACTE), representing the teachers in the state. I know there will be other people discussing the statistics, one being high graduation and low dropout rates, but I want to say that obviously we think Career and Technical Education (CTE) is important to keep kids in school and to graduate.

**Jasmine Dolgar, High School Graduate, Reno, Nevada:**

I graduated from Reno Technical Institute (RTI), in Washoe County, now known as Academy of Arts and Careers Technology (AACT). In high school I was involved in basketball, volleyball, 4-H, Future Farmers of American (FFA), and Skills USA. Being a part of these programs, I was able to learn about Career, Technical Education (CTE).

When I was a junior I switched from going to North Valley's High School to RTI and took two CTE classes: Agriculture Education Leadership 1-5 and Business Computer Systems. In these classes I was able to learn soft skills which made me more employable when I graduated from high school, as well as while I was in high school. Career and Technical Education is the way to keep students in school. Only 1.5 percent of students involved in CTE classes dropped out in 2007 compared to 4.8 percent of students who were not involved in CTE. The goal of CTE is to provide high school students with high employable skills that can range from golf course management to certified welding, culinary arts, or graphic and design.

In my specific classes, I was able to learn how to utilize responsibility, liability, and accountability. To keep students in high school from dropping out, you have to give them a reason to stay in school. Employability is one of the biggest reasons, and that is why you need to endorse CTE classes.

**Charlie Mann, Student, Smith Valley High School, Lyon County, Nevada:**

I am a graduate of the Smith Valley High School. During high school I was a participant in FFA, 4-H, National Honors Society, Student Council, basketball, and track. While involved in these activities, I learned dedication, teamwork, and commitment. All of these attributes helped me stay focused and keep working until the job was finished. I also learned career skills as a member of FFA. In FFA and agriculture education, I learned job interview skills as well as how to weld. Through my high school these activities allowed students to participate and practice skills that they can use after graduation. Some students may not want to go to college, but FFA allows these students to prepare for the workforce.

At my high school graduation, three of the top five students were part of agriculture education or FFA. This proves that agriculture education courses help our students toward graduation. The graduation rate for these students was 82.8 percent compared to 67.4 percent for other students. According to the national FFA student magazine, called *New Horizons*, a study showed that 81 percent of FFA students are interested in obtaining an education and going to college to receive a degree. In December 2008, 49.1 percent of Nevada agricultural education students report that they plan to attend a college or university.

In conclusion, I feel that agricultural education helps prepare students for the outside world, as well as to keep them motivated toward graduation.

**Chair Parnell:**

We will go to Las Vegas now.

**Liliana Garcia, Graduate of Vocational Technical High School, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I am a graduate of Vocational Technical (Vo Tech) High School, now known as Southeast Career Technical Academy (SECTA), and I am also a graduate of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). Having graduated from a career-oriented high school, I am a firm believer that career education provides many benefits for students. While in high school my field of study was accounting and office technology, and the education and training I received allowed me to acquire both the core knowledge and the attitude necessary to succeed in both college and in the workplace. It also gave me a clear picture of

what I wanted for my future and kept me motivated to stay in school and to excel in college.

I became involved in many extra-curricular activities that made it possible for me to obtain enough scholarship monies so that it was not necessary for me to incur debt while in the university. I owe it all to the high school teachers who pushed me through career training.

I now work for UNLV in its accounting department, and I plan to pursue a masters in business administration in the fall. If it had not been for the opportunities given to me in high school, I would not be here before you today.

**Emily Feinstein, Student, Spring Valley High School, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I am currently serving as state president for Nevada Distributive Education Clubs of American (DECA), an association of marketing students. I am also an active member of Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). As a member of these organizations for the past four years, I have had some exciting and rewarding experiences, and I thank all of you for letting me share them with you today.

Career and Technical Education helps bridge the gap between what we learn in the classroom and the application of these skills when we enter the real world. It is these programs that keep students in high school, help them graduate, and prepare them for the real world. Whether students plan to transition from school to work or higher education, the soft skills these programs offer help us to be a step ahead of the rest when we leave high school.

I am planning on studying international business at Johnson and Wales University, and I feel that my involvement in CTE and Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) in Nevada, and my leadership role in Nevada DECA have been rewarding and have helped prepare me for this experience. The lessons and skills I have learned, I know, will benefit me far into the future. I look forward to sharing more with you on the leadership opportunities of CTE and CTSO next week when I join many of my fellow student officers in Carson City for the Legislative Conference.

**Rachel Ruzol, Graduate of Vocational Technical High School, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

My field of study was accounting and office technology. During my senior year, I was vice president of Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA). When I went to college I used the skills from both of these activities. Last May, I graduated with a degree in accounting and currently work at St. Mary's Hospital as a staff accountant.

The main reason I stayed in school was due to my parents; they never let me give up, and I am the first generation in my family to have a college degree. I am very fortunate to have had all the opportunities they did not have. Without the proper education and skills I obtained in high school I would not be the successful person I am today.

**Chair Parnell:**

We will come back to Carson City.

**Janis McCreary, Principal of Academy of Arts and Careers Technology, Washoe County, Reno, Nevada:**

We are in the process of adding on to our school with some bond roll-over money from four years ago. Next year we will open up as a four-year high school.

I brought an educational accountability brief ([Exhibit C](#)) that gives more statistics on how students taking at least one career technical class have a 15 percent higher graduation rate, as well a higher passing rate on the proficiency scores.

I recently returned from a national conference on career and technical education where I heard speakers reporting that when they switched to a four-year high school, by the time their freshmen got to their senior year, they had 100 percent graduation rates in the career technology high schools. That was exciting to me.

The students, who come to our schools, come for a variety of reasons. Some come for the higher level of technical skills, and some come because it just was not working for them at the traditional high schools.

**Rebecca Melton, Student, Academy of Arts and Careers Technology, Washoe County, Nevada:**

Last year, as a junior, I attended Reno High School, and took a 3-D graphic design and animation class at AACT. This allowed me to get all of my academic classes at Reno High School and still have a chance to do my art at AACT. It has given me opportunities in the public as well. I have created a promotional document for AACT to become a four-year high school and the yearbook cover, and now I am working for other clients within the school district as well as my church. This year I am taking the class again as a two-year program. I feel all of this is putting me a step ahead of everyone else going to college. It is a great experience.

I was involved in a competition, mentioned earlier, called Skills USA. A fellow student and I did a promotional bulletin board where we won gold at state and then went to nationals and won silver. I won \$15,000 in scholarship money.

**Rebecca Blodgett, Senior, Academy of Arts and Careers Technology, Washoe County, Nevada:**

I was enrolled in Spanish Springs High School, but it just wasn't working out. My parents and I decided to switch from there to AACT. I started with the health occupations class and then realized blood just was not for me. I then went into entrepreneurship and realized that starting my own business was not the best plan for me either. I am currently enrolled in the video broadcasting class, and I have never been so happy in a class. It allows me creativity, to do things for school. We have a film festival coming up that we are all submitting pieces for. It is pretty entertaining, and I am so happy that I switched to full time at AACT. The teachers are amazing; the classes are so small that you can actually get one-on-one help from the teacher when you need it.

**Assemblyman Bobzien:**

Forgive me if I keep referring to the school as RTI, I am just used to the old acronym and have been there a number of times. It is a wonderful facility. It sounds like you are both doing great now that you have found your niche.

I am wondering, as you both alluded to things not working out in your previous situations, and I have always thought of CTE as an incubator for educational ideas that could be applied more broadly to everyone who is in school, are there certain things, now that you are on the other side of it, that you wish your previous school environments had more of that would have made things better for you?

**Rebecca Melton:**

I know this probably is not possible, but I really like the small class setting. That has helped a lot, especially in the classes where a student is struggling. In a big class, it is hard to speak out and show that he does not know what is going on. Also, I wish they would keep some of the programs they have. Some of the schools have been cutting out their art programs, and it would be nice if the high schools could keep those as well as normal CTE schools.

**Rebecca Blodgett:**

I would have to agree because in my classes I felt completely lost and would ask the teachers for help and could not get the help that I get at AACT. Last year I was struggling with my math, but I actually was able to pass.

**Janis McCreary:**

We are in the process of recruiting eighth graders for our new freshman class next year. We are going to take only 100 out of the 300 who have already applied. The reason we have a large number who have applied is that the parents want a smaller environment. Our school will be built for 600 to 700 students where other schools have 2000, 2500 or 3500 and higher. It is the smaller environment that allows the students to really get to know each other without peer pressure and allows them to really get involved in school.

**Chair Parnell:**

Mr. Dugan was here last week and did a wonderful job talking about the plan that Washoe County School District has to increase graduation rates, but he uses the terms rigor, relevance, and relationship. You have talked about the relevance to your life as well as the relationships. Because you are at this school, and have a smaller class size, you have a greater chance of developing relationships, not only with your teachers, but with your core group. You have made it clear that relevance, relationship, and connection has been incredibly important.

**Janis McCreary:**

Our teachers work together so the academic classes have relevance in applying them to a welding class, for instance.

**Stan Hall, Director of Career and Technical Education, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

It is my pleasure to bring two former students with me today to provide testimony.

**Melissa Rodriquez, Student, College of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I graduated from Vo Tech High School in 2007 now known as Southeast Career and Technical Academy (SECTA). As a student there, I earned some tech-prep credits through the office technology and accounting program that I was enrolled in. We all have concerns regarding the low graduation rate in the State of Nevada. I would like to point out that as a graduate of Vocational Technical High School, I have found Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs have performed well in two important areas. The CTE graduation rate in 2007 was 71.10 percent which is 3.7 percent higher than the state average. The CTE dropout rate in 2006 and 2007 was 1.5 percent, which is considerably lower than the state average of 4.8 percent.

Another important point I wish to make is that in 2007 and 2008, 1,630 students earned college credit. This equates to a savings of almost

\$1,000 excluding the books which is a considerable amount for someone going into college.

I would like to ask that you continue funding for Career and Technical Education.

**Joshua Serrano, Graduate of Vocational Technical High School, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

While I was attending Vocational Technical High School (Vo Tech), I was in the drafting program where I learned a lot of skills that I continue to use today. I am currently a drafter at a company. If I did not have these skills, I have no idea where I would be today.

I am attending my last semester at the College of Southern Nevada (CSN). I will be getting an Associates Degree in Computerized Architectural Drafting (CAD). Thanks to the tech program, I have credits I earned in high school that rolled over to college. It accelerated my education at CSN. Involvement in this career program encouraged me to be involved in other programs. I was class president all four of my high school years. I was also an ambassador at Vo Tech and was a member of a student organization of Latinos.

This program impacts a lot of students, and I am here as proof. I am a successful person today and will continue to strive to become more successful.

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you very much. One of the things you brought up that I would like to have others speak to is the idea of dual credit and dual enrollment. You do get Nevada Career Technical Education (NCTE) from the tech-prep programs that our systems of higher education provide with the high school students. Something we might want to talk about, not only for CTE programs, but also in college, is do we need to expand the idea of sophomores in college and dual credits, and some things that many other states are doing so that students can get that dual credit.

**Sharla Hales, Past President of Nevada Association of School Boards, Douglas County, Nevada:**

You asked how we could graduate more students from Nevada schools, and I have three things that I think can help answer that question.

First, we need to remember that teenagers make choices based on now, not on far-off consequences. If you have been the parent of a teenager, you know the phrase, "what were you thinking?" The answer usually is, "well, I wasn't." Brain research shows that adult brains are able to use rational processes to

make emotional decisions, but teenager's brains are not yet developed to do that as well. They are light on rational analysis and heavy on emotional impulse. We have structures in place to protect teenagers from bad decisions, such as: they cannot drink until they are 21 years old; they cannot drive with friends until they have 6 months driving experience; and they cannot get married until they are 18 years old, unless they have parent permission. An impulsive marriage at 14 years old, or speeding to show off, can have disastrous consequences and so can terminating an education without a high school diploma.

Do we have enough structures in place in Nevada to guard against these impulsive decisions? Let me give you one area you might want to be concerned with. There are three statutes on the books that you may want to consider changing. Two of them allow students to drop out to work. You may want to increase the ages or eliminate those statutes.

Second, you may want to focus a spot light on the dropout situation. As Walt Rulffes has said, this is not a school problem. This is not a legislature problem. It is a community, a business, and a family problem. The more we can focus and communicate that this problem exists and enlist help from all other entities in increasing expectations and creating a culture in which we value education, then we can really get at the root of the dropout problem.

Third, I urge you to give those closest to the problem the tools to fix the problem. I know you would all like to solve the dropout problem. I know it may be tempting for you to want to implement a program or spend money statewide to address the problem. From massive Las Vegas to tiny Tonopah, there are huge differences, and the people who understand the dropout situations best are those on the front lines. I urge you instead; consider giving maximum resources and tools to the local school sites—to the districts to use with their principals to get the job done.

Our principals are very competent; they understand (CTE), and rigor and relevance; they understand remediation and credit retrieval; they understand all of those things, and they need the resources and tools to address them.

The CTE programs are hardest to maintain in the smaller districts. In those small districts CTE programs are definitely at-risk with budget cuts. The principal of Douglas High School told us that if he has to cut one more school teacher, a CTE program will go.

**Chair Parnell:**

I really think so much of it comes down to commitment. The one young man from Smith Valley High School spoke about a small high school. That community has made a commitment to their agriculture program. I think we can never forget or underestimate the importance of a school and community commitment to find a way to accomplish this goal. There again, it is always local control. What better group to say that to than school board members?

**Jim Lemaire, Board Member, District 2, Carson City School District, also President Elect, Nevada Association of School Boards, Carson City, Nevada:**

I have a couple of topics that are bubbling forth with respect to the 3-Rs. I would especially address relationship. Of course relevance is an important part of the CTE program, but because the participants get to interact in smaller groups, or tribes, they get to find their own tribes within the school. Any program, whether it is CTE, sports, arts, or music, anything that allows the students to find their peers, is a huge benefit.

If we have our programs severely cut, while it is still possible to get money to build facilities to enhance our arts and technical career programs, with teacher cuts it may not be possible to staff them. It may send a mixed message that we are cutting you for the next two years, but now we want the citizens to come together and fund some developmental efforts. We are hoping drastic cuts are not necessary and you will be able to put the money back very soon.

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you for all of the work you have done in creating that committee, having the meetings, and for your presentation at the last board meeting.

**Norm Scoggin, Vice President of Carson City School Board, Carson City, Nevada:**

I agree with what everyone here has said about the graduation of high school students in the State of Nevada. There is another area that I think we should consider. Some 16, 17, or 18 year-old students are going to drop out of school no matter what we do. These are the students we also have to look at. An extremely important area is the adult education programs. Not all young people are going to be students at 16 or 17 years old. There may be legal or social problems. They might go to work and then realize at 22 to 30 years old that education is important. We need to keep our adult education programs, whether in the various high schools, or even at the prisons because these areas are extremely important.

Throughout the State of Nevada, many students are graduating from the adult education programs. They are getting their education when they feel it is important to them. Maybe not necessarily when we feel it is important. If you would keep that in mind, the adult programs are also going to provide a very serious part of the solution.

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you. In the reports that came out on recommended cuts for K-12, one of the things that disturbed me was we have had almost a 17 percent increase in enrollment in our adult education classes. That means there are people who have wandered away from high school and are now realizing that education is very important to them and are going back to school. To me that 17 percent increase is really important, yet the recommendation is to cut the budget in that area. We have to make sure we have that program available for everyone. You are absolutely right, we do not know what happened to those students to make them drop out, but if they are 19 or 20 years old and want to come back for their diploma or GED, then we should be there and encourage them to do so.

**Carolyn Edwards, Legislative Chair Person, Nevada Association of School Boards, and Vice President of Clark County School District School Board, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

[Read from prepared text (Exhibit D).]

**Chair Parnell:**

Dr. Rheault spoke last week, and he did bring our attention to this, and we do plan on revising that section in one of our education bills.

**Carolyn Edwards:**

[Continued to read from prepared text ([Exhibit D](#)).]

**Deanna Wright, Trustee for District A, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I am also speaking as a mother of two children attending schools in the Clark County School District [Submitted prepared notes ([Exhibit E](#)).]

I know that we are talking about graduation rates today, and I would like to echo Dr. Rulffes in that there is no one magic bullet or one program that will fix everything. We need to increase funding for our K-12 education. We do not want a blank check from the Legislature, but we want the funding to adequately support the programs that we know will continue to improve graduation rates. We need to pay teachers better to make sure we can retain highly qualified teachers to help and invest in our students and help them grow. We need to offer more technology in every classroom, every day. We need to have more

life skills classes in our comprehensive schools to help our students become well-rounded, contributing members of society. A one-size-fits-all approach is no longer good enough. School choice, career and technical schools, and block scheduling all have earned us great success in Clark County, but are in jeopardy of being lost because of lack of adequate funding. We can improve graduation rates in Nevada when adequate, basic support is given. We need to invest in our future and help students succeed in any way we can. Smaller class sizes, smaller school environments, more choices, and classes that will help them continue to grow not only in their daily lives, but in their career and professional lives are some of the keys to the success.

**Megan Garvey, Private Citizen on behalf of Chris Garvey, Trustee for District B, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

Nevada, and in particular, Clark County, faces many challenges that influence the graduation rates of our students. High school classes with 40 or more students per teacher, some of the lowest per student funding in the nation, a transient population, and what most people would label a modest teacher salary, have played roles in limiting our success in graduating our students from high school. Despite these hurdles, we have traditionally seen a greater level of success in obtaining these graduation caps when students are involved in activities beyond the basics. Sports, art, music, theater, vocational and professional enrichment programs, as well as magnet schools, career and technical academies, and empowerment schools provide environments that motivate students and result in well-prepared graduates.

Instead of eliminating those elements of education that result in higher graduation rates, we need to protect them. I urge you and your fellow legislators to do what is necessary to invest in the future of our children and our state. As entrusted leaders of our communities, we look to you to have vision, strength, and tenacity to find the solutions that will preserve and enrich educational systems of Nevada. In this time of economic crisis, cutting education's funding is the worst possible thing we could do. Education matters.

**Chair Parnell:**

I would like to hear from our school counselors. This is a personal passion of mine. I believe counselors really help in areas of intervention, in talking to students, finding them something to keep them in school, and often, helping through really rough times.

**Marianne Garvey, School Nurse, Dayton High School, Lyon County, Nevada:**

With the requirements counselors have in high school settings for testing and a variety of other expectations, the amount of time they have for what they have been trained for is extremely limited. As a certified school nurse, I find

myself working very closely with counselors to try to provide the opportunity for students for their graduation. I am here to represent not the students who are amazingly articulate and who have spoken today, but the students who will never be able to speak like that.

We know that all students will not be able to go to college, but every one of them must graduate from high school. It is a platform of life. In my daily work with our students, I see a small group of students who, as referred to before, do not realize that high school is not the end of their experience, as they are going to work; however, they have no idea what they are going to work at. It is a multi-focal problem that includes school, business, family, and community.

My concern is that the school-to-work opportunities need to be strengthened. Counselors really try to do that by looking at academic planning for students and looking at engagement with local higher education institutions as well as with community employers and businesses in such things as job shadowing, tours of facilities, unpaid internships, and opportunities to actually experience what different jobs are like. Just as one of the previous young ladies very articulately explained, she thought she was interested in health careers but found that she does not like blood. More of these young people need opportunities to rub shoulders with people who have made choices and, in many cases, reinvented themselves. As our world has changed, what we have pursued in higher education, many times, changes as we learn more about ourselves.

I am sure the program in Reno is ideal, but some of our smaller rural counties do not have those opportunities with career and technical education. The funding for K-12 is important for smaller communities. As you stated, the commitment of the communities, such as Smith Valley, is important. We need smaller class sizes so those students who do not feel they fit in, have opportunities to interface with the excellent teachers in Lyon County even with large class sizes.

I also agree with what was spoken regarding local solutions. I do not think any one solution in one area can be a one-size-fits-all. I am looking for opportunities in high school for a Certified Nurse Assistant program, so again, to encourage rubbing shoulders with people and what is called soft skills for students who are starting to look at what they "may" want to do. High school could be seen as just the platform to launch them into real life and real employment opportunities.

**Chair Parnell:**

I can see the relationship between the duties of the school nurse and of the counselor. Often times, children who are troubled and cannot get in to see

the school counselor will end up in the school nurse's office. Thank you for caring and counseling as well as doing your job as school nurse.

**Erin Danielson, Counselor, Washoe County School District, Reno, Nevada:**

Counselors have an extremely important role in raising the high school graduation rate. We meet with students on a one-on-one basis, and our goal is to meet with each student on our caseload. Sometimes our caseload is over 650, and sometimes it is 250. That number is almost impossible when we are dealing with students coming in and out of school. We are dealing with student's personal issues such as divorce, suicide, and other things. We do work closely with the nurse.

We try to generate a 4-year plan for those students. What do they want to do if our high school is not for them? Where do they want to go? What do they want to be? Counselors are important, and five counselors at one comprehensive high school is just not enough. There is a need for more counselors. We need the opportunity to meet with our students; we need more programs and more resources. The academic 4-year plan needs to be developed in the middle school.

We can keep students involved and engaged and wanting to go on to be freshmen in high school if they know what they want to be, and they develop that plan in the eighth grade. They can come to us with a developed plan and we can work with them to make sure that happens.

If we are losing art programs and various other programs in the high school, how can we talk to them about what they want to be when they finish their education? We need more programs and lower class sizes. I'll ask you, can you sit and pay attention when there are 40 other kids shouting and learning and making decisions of fight or flight? Counselors are able to sit and stay focused. This is extremely important. I want to sit with each one of my students three times a year to discuss where he or she wants to be in four years. I constantly hear school boards, administrators, and teachers say it is counselors who do a lot for students in general.

**Chair Parnell:**

We were talking about Assembly Bill No. 212 of the 74th Legislative Session and the ninth-grade academic plan. We recognize that counselors really need to be spending their time on what they were trained for, that is counseling, not being test administrator, clerical person, or organizer. Has A.B. No. 212 helped? Was it a start, and should we continue to look at the impetus for the bill to give you more time to sit down with ninth graders and start working on a plan? I have heard a number of people say we need that plan prior to the ninth

grade. We will probably look at that, but do we need to keep going in the direction that A.B. No. 212 started?

**Erin Danielson:**

Yes. I definitely think so, but I think counselors need to be more involved. We are the ones developing the plan; we are the fingers that change schedules in the offices, dealing with those students one-on-one, so there needs to be more of us to do more of this type of work. Yes, it is working.

**Kim Boyle, Director of Guidance and Counseling, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I would like to address the academic plans before I talk about the transitional activities with our counselors.

We in Clark County find that the academic plan is so valuable that we have implemented it from the sixth-grade level on in our districts. I just wanted to make sure you were aware of that.

Today, I want to talk about transitional activities within our school district from our guidance and counseling programs. We know that transitional activities are important for our students, and what we have created in our school district are three documents for our students. *Moving On To Middle School: A Transitional Planning Guide* for our fifth-grade students addresses information, such as class schedule changes, behavior expectations, academic strategies, diploma information, and positive social skills.

At the middle school level, we have created *Moving On To High School: A Transitional Planning Guide* for our eighth-grade students. This is information that helps prepare our students to make educational decisions in high school, helps provide information on diploma requirements, and makes recommendations for courses of study and postsecondary options for our students.

At the high school level we also provide a document called *Moving On To College and Career: A Transitional Planning Guide*, which assists our students in preparing for graduation, planning for postsecondary options, identifying and securing financial pursuits at postsecondary level as well as for training.

These documents are provided to our schools through our counselors. Our guidance lessons are created for our counselors so that the information can be consistently provided to our students.

Our school districts also understand the importance of our counselors and that they assist our students in navigating through the system by supporting them with their academic, personal, social, and career needs.

**Chair Parnell:**

Could we get a copy of the sixth-grade transitional as well as the high school transitional booklets?

**Kim Boyle:**

Also, I want to let you know what our ratios for Washoe County and Clark County School Districts are. Our high school counselors are at 400 to 1, our middle school counselors are at 500 to 1, and we do have some elementary counselors. We do not have one in every building; unfortunately, we have 50 schools that are sharing 25 counselors. We do not have elementary counselors in every school.

**Chair Parnell:**

I would like to hear from some teachers.

**Ben Contine, Special Education Teacher, Math Department, Carson High School, Carson City, Nevada:**

You asked earlier, who are these kids who are thinking about dropping out, or at-risk for dropping out? I can tell you exactly who those kids are. I see them everyday. We have three tracks in math; the higher-end track will go into geometry as freshmen, the standard track will start out in algebra I as freshmen, then there are the students that I teach. They come in not quite ready to be in algebra I, so we split that algebra class over two years. We also have what are called resource classes for those students with learning disabilities.

I teach the algebra IB class, the second year of the algebra class. Those kids are at the highest risk for not passing the math proficiency exam. That exam is the number one reason that many of our students will not graduate. Most will pass a reading or writing proficiency exam. The math exam is the one most frequently failed.

If intervention is to be successful in the freshman or sophomore year for students with learning disabilities as well as students without, or undiagnosed disabilities in math, they need to have low class sizes and the support necessary from special education teachers who will allow them to get to the material in a manner that suits their learning style. Whether that style is kinesthetic, or visual, the students will have some kind of intervention that breaks them out of

the standard cycle of failure that many of them have experienced throughout their school experience.

If the students to teacher ratios start getting up into the 30 and 45 to 1 range, the chances of the students succeeding at that level are almost none. The good news is that we can make a difference at the state and local level. The other side of it is we have a responsibility to make a difference. I suggest, for those students struggling particularly in math, we need to find qualified teachers; and in special education we need to keep the class sizes low. We also need after school intervention and tutoring programs, which are exactly what are on the cutting block right now. They need to be saved.

**Assemblyman Munford:**

Do you find it difficult for teachers to stay after work with students? Do the teachers at your high school announce on a regular basis that the students are welcome to come after school for extra help if they do not quite understand something that went on in class during the day? I am asking if the teachers do that and if the students take advantage of that opportunity?

**Ben Contine:**

The students that we are talking about, usually from around second or third grade, have somehow figured out that they are not the good math students. Either by their performance or maybe from struggling at home, by the time they get to high school, they are already convinced that they are not good at math; it is already established in their minds throughout their whole school career.

When you tell them that they can be successful at math, it takes a lot to convince them that is true. The second part that you are talking about is what do you need to do to be successful? You are going to need to come in after school. At my level we have had to require that. These students, in general, will not voluntarily stay after school. Based on homework or some kind of assignment or performance indicator, we have had to require that they come in after school. What they generally discover, however, after we have required them to come after school, is they get their homework finished; they feel like they understand it. They come in with their shoulders a little bit higher. We do not have to force them after that. If we can get them in the door, contact the parents and let them know we need to support the student through this, the parents will almost always say, absolutely. We have asked the school for support with that issue, and although we treat it like a detention, procedurally, we do not call it that.

**Assemblyman Hardy:**

Maybe we will not have to call it detention as much as retention.

**LeAnn Morris, Member, Commission on Educational Excellence; 2008 Nevada Teacher of the Year, Computer Instructor, Empire Elementary School, Carson City, Nevada:**

After listening to the comments and wonderful things that have been said, I felt I needed to come up and speak as well.

Something that has not been mentioned up to this point, but only alluded to is elementary students. If we wait until middle or high school, it seems to be too late. I am the computer teacher at Empire Elementary School in Carson City, and I am building a foundation for some career and technical skills for kindergarten through fifth grade. There are students who come to my classroom who are in fourth and fifth grade, yet are at a pre-K reading level. Technology and equipment they can use helps them build their confidence and be able to do what they need to do in order to get the basic skills that they need. I would really like us, as a state, to look at the elementary level to bring this issue to this level, and, I believe, where it needs to start.

**Chair Parnell:**

Ms. Morris, you actually do something that the career technical teachers were talking about, but you are able to start with kindergartners. Anymore, working with computers is relevant to little kids so they like to go to school; that is a fun part of their day, so that drops that issue down to the K-6 level which we have not been spending time on.

**Michele Paul, Member, Commission on Educational Excellence; Third Grade Teacher, Dayton Elementary School, Lyon County, Nevada:**

I teach the little guys. As I sit and look at my classroom of 21 students I can identify some students who are already at risk of not being able to graduate from high school. The reasons are family issues, lack of reading skills, and lack of want of reading skills. Unfortunately, the things that are being cut or that are up for discussion are the interventions that we try early on to help these children and give them the skills they need. The more we cut away, the less opportunity they are going to have to catch up. You know there are many dedicated teachers who work really hard to give these children all of the skills they need, but we cannot fix everything. Sometimes they need to go in for a little extra reading help, a little extra math help, as well as some counseling to get through the things that face them everyday. You and I cannot even imagine what some of them go home to. It is those things that are being cut.

After school programs do help, but it is not a panacea. Often in rural areas where children have to take the bus to school, there would be no transportation for them for after school tutoring. We need to look at interventions for the younger children to help them get the literacy and math skills that they need in order to be successful in high school.

**Chair Parnell:**

One message I am hearing from everyone is that the innovation and remediation money, first passed in 2005, has really worked. It has all the parts you have said. It can be used at any level, it has local control, and you can look at your audience and say these are the needs at this school which may be very different from the needs of another school.

Please let it be known to everyone on Ways and Means and Senate Finance, as this Committee does not deal with budget, only policy. If there is a message to be sent to those two Committees, it seems that it would be to keep that innovation and remediation money at the top of the list.

**Michele Paul:**

Just for clarification, both LeAnn Morris and I are on Commission for Excellence in Education. We are aware of the effect those funds have made. Thank you.

**Assemblywoman Mastroluca:**

Could you clarify the importance of parent involvement? Is there any value to parental involvement when it comes to helping students when they get to middle and high school?

**Michele Paul:**

Parent involvement is something you cannot put a value on. You may have a student who is below grade level, but if the parents are involved and want that child to grow, they will put in the extra time, meet with the teacher, and put together an education plan to help their child, not only at school, but at home. It is key to making those students that are behind, successful.

The children whose parents are not as involved, and do not value education for their family, are three steps behind.

**LeAnn Morris:**

It is really important to have parent involvement, but often we need to educate the parents on what they need to do to help their own children. We help the child at school, but we need the parent's help when the child is not in school. We do a lot of education for parental involvement after school and evenings as well.

**David Perkins, Swim Coach, Chess and Special Education Teacher, Legacy High School, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

My participation in these activities is my statement about the importance of after school activities. My suggestion to assist graduation lies in the problematic area of identifying students, which is difficult in Las Vegas because of its transiency.

As a special education teacher, I work with approximately 12 different kinds of assessments. My suggestion is to make one assessment that we can do here in Nevada, which would be based on Nevada power standards. It would save us millions of dollars. A school has to pay anywhere from \$400 to \$2,000 in order to get these tests, but if we were to make it in-state, we would have a unitary element to identify any student in Nevada. The way I have the plan organized, a teacher could check on any student to see what area he may be having problems in. Sometimes we have a student in algebra who we do not realize, until he has been in the class for awhile, cannot do even double digit subtraction. My plan would eliminate that problem and standardize the entire state.

**Brittney Thompson, Student, Las Vegas High School, Las Vegas, Nevada**

I am with the Partnership at Las Vegas High School (PAL). It is an internship program where we do not attend school on Wednesdays. We actually attend an internship for one semester. We are able to shadow workers and get a real feel for what we actually want to do in life instead of wasting our time.

I would like to point out that there are only about 140 junior and senior students in the program, with six teachers and one counselor dedicated to us. The teachers work together to fit our needs. Some of us do not have parents or the foundation at home, but we get that at school from our personal teachers. If we have problems in English, it does not just affect that class, it affects all of our classes. All of our teachers come together to figure out what we need, not only in English, but every other class we attend.

The teachers are great and work together like a community. In essence, we have a small class size and know every student in our group.

**Chanda Cook, Director of Community Initiatives, Nevada Public Education Foundation, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

The Nevada Public Education Foundation was created by the Legislature in the early 1990s. In 2005 we convened the Ready for Life Movement which is a collaborative effort and is a cross agency to improve Nevada's success at engaging and graduating ready-for-life students and reengaging those who left school prematurely ([Exhibit F](#)).

In November 2008 we had a statewide dropout prevention summit in partnership with America's Promise Alliance as well as some of the sponsors in communities throughout the state. Approximately 300 were in attendance, representing all stakeholders. Out of that meeting, we developed a priority list of things to increase our high school graduation rate. I have emailed those to the members of the Committee. They focused on several things, such as strengthening schools, establishing early warning systems to support struggling students, ensuring that all high school students have equal access to advanced courses, and postsecondary learning. They also support the implementation of state requirements for the individualized graduation plans in sixth grade in Clark County, and ninth grade in Washoe County and the rest of the state, which was seen as something very critical. Other priorities were supporting students and families and building effective policies. I appreciate the Legislature being willing to listen to the community around those policies.

Another thing that is really important that I keep hearing from our partners is a statewide central data warehouse for information to share with schools, juvenile justice, social services, public health, and nonprofits. It would include longitudinal tracking that follows youth exiting the education system. We do not know who is serving whom. There is duplication and gaps in information. It is important to know where our students are, if and why they left school, and how can we get them back.

We have heard a lot about creating career connections; that is critical as students want to know why they are learning what they are learning. The other thing touched on by one of the school board members was creating a community ethic that values education. We need that connected infrastructure to serve our youth and, as Nevadans, build a community ethic that values education.

**Steven Linder, Vice President of Community Development for HSBC Bank Nevada, Las Vegas Nevada:**

HSBC Bank Nevada is an issuer of general purpose, private label, revolving credit cards and is part of HSBC North America, one of the largest banking institutions in the United States. I also have the honor to serve as Chair of the Partnership Advisory Counsel for the School Community Partnership Program of the Clark County School District.

When HSBC originally received its bank charter in Nevada in 1993, it opened its call center in Las Vegas for 1,300 employees. HSBC contacted the Clark County School District and United Way of Southern Nevada to seek guidance on how the bank could become involved in the community. Both groups provide important leadership in maintaining stability for the citizens of

Clark County. Through partnership with these groups, the bank has adopted three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

HSBC is a strong supporter of educational initiatives and believes that students gain invaluable experience in their development by being exposed to real-world applications of their academic pursuits. The Partnership office of the Clark County School District has a 25-year history of providing these experiences for students. Through many of its programs, businesses can partner with schools to help students in many ways. Students who are exposed to real-world problems and solutions are more prone to link academics with success in life. Enthusiasm is generated in a student for college and careers, leading to a greater proclivity to graduate from high school.

The Partnership office is a wonderful vehicle for businesses to connect with the schools. From the largest corporation to the smallest business, there is a place for everyone who wants to make a one-on-one connection with a student to share the value of education and its relevance to the world of work. Nevada schools are doing a tremendous job with limited assets and are to be commended for keeping their eyes on the education of students as the most important aspect of their jobs.

We in the business community support and encourage the school community partnership as a means to better graduation rates in the State of Nevada.

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you for your volunteer work in this effort.

**Kay Karl, former Clark County School District Administrator, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I would like to speak on three things: one, we need early childhood education; two, we need full-day kindergarten; and three; we need a way to deal with students in third grade who have not learned to read, write, and do math.

**Chair Parnell:**

I agree those would all be terrific. Keep telling everyone that wherever you go.

**Ginny Jackson, Private Citizen, Washoe County, Nevada:**

I am a parent of two graduates of the Washoe County School District and am now a community member. I have been involved in educational issues at the community level for almost 20 years.

I am here to address Assemblywoman Parnell's question, how can we graduate more students from high school? Everyone here today has had wonderful ideas

for improving education and for increasing the number of high school graduates, and I support every suggestion. If we cannot increase funding, I strongly support maintaining funding for education.

Everything here has focused from ninth grade up. In the past few years we have made strides in increasing testing scores in the elementary grades, but then we hit middle school and high school and those strides do not seem to be nearly as great, and in some cases we have not made any at all. Something I believe could be looked at in terms of improving high school graduation is a focus on middle school. We do not start our high school education when we walk in the door at ninth grade. When my children were in middle school, it was a less than ideal experience. There could have been more educational rigor in the middle school years. We could look at those years as the beginning of our high school education. That is when the kids start deciding who they are and who they are going to be. What they are going to value, what they think of school, and which path they are going to take. We need to spend more time focusing there and not waiting until high school to buckle down.

The second point has been alluded to by previous speakers, and I want to address parent involvement.

Studies have shown that everyone thinks that friends have the most influence on high school students. Friends are important and they are influential, but there have been studies that have shown the most influential person in a child's life is the parent. I am defining parent as whoever the caregiver is. It may be the traditional parent, or it may be a foster home. The educational community needs to spend time and effort in supporting the parents and providing resources to them if the parents do not have access to the resources. You would like to think parents have all of the skills necessary to raise a functional citizen who would be ready to walk out the door at 18 years of age and be all grown up, but the fact is, a lot of our parents have not had the necessary opportunities and need help knowing what they need to do to provide their children with the ability to be successful. I have never met a parent who wants his child to fail. There may be reasons they cannot provide the needed support, but they do not want their children to fail. We need to provide opportunities for those parents to succeed.

We have done some things in Washoe County, such as the Parent Involvement Resource Center (PIRC), a federal grant that has been expanded to the State of Nevada. We have been using those resources to improve parental involvement and to give parents the skills they need to be effective parents in an educational sense. Those kinds of things need to be expanded. Washoe County has Parent Involvement Facilitators (PIFs) who work in the schools with the

students. As a fallout from the budget cuts, all of the PIFs at the middle and high school levels have had to be cut. Those are some of the people who are the most welcoming in a school and are available to give the parents the most assistance. Our teachers and counselors have all they can do to educate our students, we cannot ask them to educate the parents as well.

I want to emphasize that parents are an extremely important piece to make a child successful, whether in first grade or twelfth grade. Parent involvement and middle school intervention are two things that I think need more attention than is currently given.

**Chair Parnell:**

I would like to give kudos to the very few school districts that have a position for parent coordinators or for parent outreach. It is sad to see that parent coordinators at the statewide level are not going to be funded.

**Tomas Murillo, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada (Speaking through a translator.)**

As a Latino parent of two girls in the Washoe County School district, I believe strongly that parents need education. We need to be educated from the kindergarten level so that we are able to help our children so they can feel successful from the very beginning of their school education. I also believe that parents need educational programs to keep us informed on how we can support our children and how we can help educate them. Hopefully, we can continue with that support throughout the education of our children all the way to the university because unfortunately, Latinos are one of the groups that have even less opportunity to graduate.

**Jose Gutierrez, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada**

I am a parent of two children in the Washoe County School District, and I agree with the person who just spoke. Our Hispanic community has the highest school dropout rate before graduation. The children drop out, because as parents, we are not educated enough to help them and encourage them to know that education is the most important thing in their lives. I would like to have more parent education because, as a Hispanic people, we spend a lot of money on personal expenses versus education for our children. I have a son who is entering middle school. When he was in elementary school, I did not have a problem, but now the problems begin. Now is when we need to help and encourage them.

**Chair Parnell:**

It is interesting that, in the last few minutes, the whole issue of middle school has come up. I have been working with my research person from Legal, and as we are drafting, I am taking input. You will be part of whatever bill we end up

with. One area we have all talked about and consider very important is what we did previously with high school reform; we need to drop it down and look at how we begin to reform our middle schools.

**Eva Melendrez, Parent Services Coordinator, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

We are responsible for developing, coordinating, and implementing internal and external programs that are focused on increasing parent involvement in student academic achievement. Every program that we have done with our communities in reaching out to our parents has always been well received. Parents are always asking what they can do to help, especially now, given the crisis we are in as a state with the budget crisis. Even more parents are contacting us daily asking what they can do to help, what resources are available to use so we can help our children beyond the classrooms.

I want to stress that what I have found is that regardless of the background the parents have come from, they all have dreams for their children and want what is best for them when it comes to education. They are willing to step up, and we have the ability to provide those resources and recognize that a true partnership between schools and homes requires that we value and honor a family's engagement, knowing that it comes in different forms from family to family.

**Verda Hines, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I am a parent of three children in the Clark County School District. I need to stress the importance of parent involvement in school. Only because of my involvement with the Parent Teacher Association and the schools which my children attended, was I able to maneuver through the school system and get them as much help as I have. I have three special needs children that have issues that are often different from other children's. If I were not involved with the school district, there is no way I could have been able to get them the help and services that they need because I would have had no knowledge of what or where the help is and how to obtain it.

As far as dropout rates are concerned, I am concerned because I have two high school students, and their friends hang out at my house all of the time. Several things are coming into view that concern me with the educational system here, and it is all about funding. One is communication. Teachers and counselors do not have time every time there is a need to change a student's records to contact a parent. I do not want anything going on with my children that I do not know about, but they can go in and change my child's class schedules in high school without my knowledge. I do not know what is going on until I get a report card. This to me is unacceptable, and it is all about

funding. Counselors do not have enough time to call each parent. A 14- or 15-year old student with special needs cannot be responsible for the decisions surrounding his education.

Not every child learns the same way. With class sizes being so large, most teachers cannot address learning styles with a classroom of 45 to 50 students. They teach the lessons one way, and if the student does not understand it that way, they will not understand it at all. If you put a child who is not necessarily special needs, in the sense of needing resource classes, into a 50-person classroom; that child is not going to succeed. I have a son with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), who has struggled with this since he entered high school.

I also want to address a group of people who have not been spoken of today and they are those who are just above the poverty line; just above getting the fee waivers for classes. When my 38-year-old daughter was in school, there were no fees for classes. Education in Nevada is very inequitable. If you live in an area that can afford to support all the extracurricular programs, it is wonderful. If you do not live in those areas, such as the west side of Las Vegas, then your children may be getting an education, but it is not an equitable education. This concerns me. Education has to be funded for all children. If it is not, children are not going to learn. You may have a child interested in cooking, but the parent cannot support the \$30 to \$40 fee that goes with that class. I just want to see funding for education increased in this state because when I moved here eight years ago, this was a much better school district to be in.

**Melvin Taylor, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

Please remember that our children are not a line item on your budget that can be vetoed just to have a balanced budget. We cannot balance the budget of Nevada on the backs of our children.

**Dee McGibbon, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada:**

My daughter attends year-round at Fremont. I have heard the proposal of changing Fremont to traditional scheduling. To me, the year-round schedule is wonderful for the children because it keeps their minds occupied and focused on their learning experiences and requires less time for the teachers to review the prior year's work.

My daughter is working on a science-fair project, learning through the process, and the teachers have taken the time to work with her in the classroom. The smaller classes for the elementary students on up is more beneficial because they can be one-on-one with their teachers. They can

understand the work they are doing instead of coming home and saying I do not know what to do.

I am a volunteer at Fremont school and help the teachers as much as I can. I talk to the principal, the people in the office, the teachers, and I get very involved in my daughter's school work. I try to get an update on how she is doing every week.

There is another thing I would like to suggest with regard to lowering the dropout ratio. I read an article on the Internet about going to school four days a week. It proposed that if students went to school four days a week, it would help increase their education because they would focus on school work for four days and then have the weekend to do sports or to work. They would learn more and it would enable them to graduate from high school.

A lot of parents I have talked to are interested in variances in order to go to Fremont because of its being year-round. A lot of parents work.

**Chair Parnell:**

I have to stop you there as that is an issue specific to Carson City. We can talk about the benefits of 45-15 or year-round, but the issue of Fremont would be for the Carson City School Board, not the State Legislature. I do not think a decision has been made. Those parents need to make sure they are at all of the remaining school board meetings and town hall meetings to talk about the options for cutbacks. That would be a more appropriate place for that discussion.

**Dee McGibbon:**

A smaller number of students per class, 18 is a reasonable number, to allow one-on-one with teachers. I have seen the benefits of smaller classes.

**Linda Johnson, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I sit on a lot of committees and boards, but I am here today as a parent of four children in the Clark County School District.

There is a difference between a quality teacher and a highly qualified teacher. In the State of Nevada, we are getting what we pay for. I have spoken to numerous administrators who go to other states to recruit teachers, and when they interview, interviewees do not even finish the interview when they are told what the salary is. If we are thinking that we are getting the highest qualified teacher, it is not true. We are getting the highest qualified teacher who will settle for the salary offered in Nevada. Just being qualified does not make you a good teacher. You can know a lot about math, but not be able to teach math

to students. I want to support the thought that it begins in elementary school. Most elementary teachers will tell you that they are not good at everything. They are not the best in math or the best in writing. If your child happens to get a teacher who happens to not be good in math, a few years in a row, your child will be behind, and it is difficult to make up those first few years. It builds year after year. I cannot say enough about the teachers who are truly the quality teachers in this state who get one-on-one interactions with their students.

I had a child I honestly thought would never pass the writing proficiency, but in the ninth grade, he had a teacher who truly inspired him and pushed him to get to a higher level, and he passed the writing proficiency on the first try.

To me it is all about the quality of teachers. When we have so many substitute teachers in the classroom today, how do we expect the students to pass proficiencies? What are the substitute teacher's qualifications? Let us put the funding into having high quality and qualified teachers.

**Donna Hoffman Anspach, representing Nevadans for Quality Education, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

It is very important that we all recognize that the efforts to reduce the dropout rate should not only fall on our schools, but also on cohesive partnerships throughout our state and within our own communities. That is why since 2005, Nevadans for Quality Education ([Exhibit G](#)) has been partnering with Nevada Public Education Foundation and its Ready for Life movement. I could speak volumes on the inroads they have made in our communities and engaging our youth. They are on the right path. I would like to leave a final word to encourage this Committee that if you do not know, learn more about this foundation and draft legislation that eventually can support their findings and recommendations.

**Theo Meek, representing the Student Advisory Board from Wooster High School, Reno, Nevada:**

[Read from prepared testimony ([Exhibit H](#)).]

**Chair Parnell:**

I have a quick question about closing the campus for just the ninth graders. How on earth do you track who is staying and who is going?

**Theo Meek:**

That was everyone's reaction when it was first suggested, but we easily accomplished it with color-coded identifications (IDs). Students who have not

reached sophomore status have black and white IDs, then everyone else, grades 10 through 12, have the regulatory red and white IDs.

**Oscar Aguilar, Student, Sparks High School, Sparks, Nevada:**

[Read from prepared text ([Exhibit I](#)).]

**Chair Parnell:**

I have to say that getting good grades to be able to play football on Friday night really helped my sons. A great benefit.

**Carissa Mangubat, Student Body President, Reed High School, and a representative from the Washoe County School District Student Advisory Board, Reno, Nevada:**

[Read from prepared text ([Exhibit J](#)).]

**Chair Parnell:**

Carson High School has a program called the Link Crew. It is kids at the high school hooking up with eighth graders before they come into the high school. The new students have peer mentors helping them all the way through from that terrifying time of entering high school with 800 kids in the freshman class when they already feel lost. One thing we are hearing from everyone is that we have to be so careful with those incoming ninth graders. That is a fragile time in the student's life.

**Garrett Menghini, Senior, Damonte Ranch High School, Reno, Nevada:**

[Read from prepared text ([Exhibit K](#)).]

**Chair Parnell:**

I want to thank all of you. As we continue dialogue through bills we may be hearing or issues of budget and hearings on education issues, I hope you are not too far away, and we might be able to call on you again.

**Gregory Wright, Student, Coronado High School, Henderson, Nevada:**

[Read from prepared text ([Exhibit L](#)).]

**Bradley Waldron, Executive Director, Education Services Division, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I am here to speak on behalf of over 30,000 students who attend Clark County School District Alternative schools and programs annually. These schools provide academic, career and technical training, and child care services for a very at-risk population. These include dropouts, potential dropouts, teenage mothers and fathers, and essentially, students who do not fit into the typical education environment.

These schools include Sunset High Schools, credit retrieval high schools, behavior and disciplinary schools, a clean and sober drug-free school, adult schools, second language programs, correctional schools, both juvenile and adult, academies for independent studies, credit by examination, and a school for abused and neglected children. These educational programs produce many wonderful success stories for students who might otherwise become disengaged in the educational process. Last year alone, over 2,000 students received their high school diplomas, and another nearly 2,000 received exiting general education degrees (GED) and vocational certifications.

I realize your task is huge in this legislative session, but please keep in mind that these programs in schools are not only essential for our present students, but, maybe more importantly, for the children of these children who will be better able to compete and succeed if they grow up in a household of educated parents.

**Robert Henry, Director, Adult Education, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I am speaking on behalf of many high school dropouts who have chosen to reengage in our educational system through adult education. Looking at the opposite side of improving graduation rates, we would need to better understand why students choose to drop out. I have done considerable research in that particular field.

You have had many people speak to you regarding prevention and intervention programs. I see the Department of Adult Education as providing postvention; particular services for those reengaged students who chose to return to school after recognizing that they made a mistake. The kinds of students who drop out are gifted and talented students, students who have been in advanced placement (AP) classes, and been in honors programs, and they leave schools for individual reasons. I have spoken with many students who are typical kids in high school, as well as those students who have individual challenges and have their own reasons for having left school. In talking to them and asking them what we could have done differently that would have kept them engaged, unequivocally, they have said that it is the issue of relationships. They are seeking relationships with significant individuals in school. They have mentioned multiple times that their counselors, as well as classroom teachers in some cases, have spent some time to keep them engaged. Unfortunately, the amount of time available has not been able to mitigate those particular factors that pull students away from school; that being the community kinds of things, the fun in ditching. Students have spoken about the importance of having a significant adult who would take an interest in them on a regular basis.

The second most important thing that students have mentioned is the idea of relevant curriculum. You have heard a lot about the excellent opportunities for students, but in some cases, those particular programs are not enough to mitigate the individual circumstances that many of our students face.

With that I would like to give you the opportunity to hear from one of our students who was previously in a comprehensive high school, did leave, and has now reengaged at our Desert Rose Adult High School.

**Tyler Petersen, Student, Desert Rose Adult High School, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

During the past seven years the school has had over 1,500 graduates. Those are students who would not have otherwise achieved a high school diploma. That is not limited to adults or young people. The age spectrum is from 17 to 85 years old.

One of the biggest problems we need to address is a viable way to remediate credits. In Clark County School District it takes one semester to create a high school dropout. If you fail one semester, that is a high school dropout. That is three credits which equates to three years of summer school and \$600 in debt. Some students do not have the time or the money to make up a semester. Students will leave school for a number of reasons, pregnancy, family problems, and sometimes, simply life. We need to come up with ways to keep students engaged, active, and able to remediate credits.

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you, and may I ask you if being credit worthy is one of the reasons you decided to leave the comprehensive high school?

**Tyler Petersen:**

Yes, it was. I am actually from out of state and had moved here at the beginning of the school year. There were family problems at home so that, in the end, I was credit deficient. If I would have stayed in Foothill High School, I would have gone to summer school this year and reenrolled as a fifth-year senior, more summer school, and then adult high school. Right now I am on target to graduate in September. That is a comprehensive high school diploma.

**Chair Parnell:**

Congratulations for that, and thank you for being here.

**Louise Helton, State Director, Communities in Schools of Southern Nevada,  
Las Vegas, Nevada:**

Communities in Schools (CIS) was founded in 1977 and is the nation's largest dropout prevention organization. Notice I did not say program. It is not a program. CIS operates in 27 states and the District of Columbia, serving 1.2 million elementary and secondary students in more than 3,250 schools. CIS provides services for students inside schools with resources that most often already exist within a community. A CIS site coordinator brings in, and sometimes provides, resources requested by the schools and parents. Whether a student needs eyeglasses, help with homework, a nutritious meal, assistance with college applications, or just a safe place to be, CIS finds and delivers the resources right inside the schools where the children can access them.

The basic premise is that the schools cannot do this alone. These children are suffering, but many times it is not academic problems that are their biggest issues. CIS was founded on the concept that students can achieve academically only when their personal circumstances and the social issues they bring to school with them are mitigated. It puts together what we call a designed community-based integrated student service model that actually has some science behind it. It is really important when you are spending your dollars to know that the things that might remedy the situation have been tried, tested, and proven at a research-based level.

We have created a paper ([Exhibit M](#)) on the things that we do in order to work on the dropout epidemic. We realized that this is a very important problem and deserves a lot of attention. We know that the epidemic is pervasive, and the end challenges that are facing public education are the biggest problems. If we fail to comprehensively address these, we are not going to change anything.

People are worried where the money is going to come from. We know how much it is costing us, you have to capture that idea first of all, and that it is a cost benefit situation. When you look at the cost of imprisoning kids who do not graduate and cannot make it as productive community members, you end up with a lot of people incarcerated. Sixty-eight percent of this nation's prison populations are high school dropouts. Nevada dropouts accumulate ten times less wealth and are less likely to own homes or businesses or to vote. Nevada dropouts are more likely to be dependent on public assistance, making it more expensive to support the services that the state needs.

By contrast, look at the return on our investment when you make sure that kids are graduating. We would have \$623 million more in wealth in this state if all heads of households were high school graduates. We would have \$230 million in health-care savings over the course of the lifetime of each class of kids that

we are losing every year. You have heard some statistics from a speaker regarding the number of kids who are not graduating compared to the number of kids who started in her freshman class. We would have \$2.1 billion more by 2020 if students of color would graduate at the same rate as white students. This list of savings goes on and are here for your review, but we would like to tell you exactly how we do the work we do. Jessica Bretzlaff will tell you more.

**Jessica Bretzlaff, Executive Director, Communities in Schools of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I identify with many of the stakeholder groups here today. I am a mother and very recently a student. I was also a high school dropout who reengaged with the school system. Ultimately I went on to do my graduate work and have an MBA. I feel very strongly about this issue and have invested my life to this mission of finding out why kids drop out of school and to figuring out what we can do about it.

What I want to bring to your attention today is specifically what we know about why kids are dropping out. Everything that has been said today is accurate, but I want to inform you of a large study that was done in 2007 by the National Dropout Prevention Center in conjunction with Communities in Schools nationally. It was a Meta-analysis of over 3,600 research pieces on why kids drop out of school. This is a group of nationally acclaimed researchers who did research on other nationally acclaimed researchers. Out of these 3,600 articles, the study compiled a list of 25 significant risk factors. They are not surprising, but I am going to read through them because they are absolutely comprehensive and critically the reasons kids drop out of school.

**Chair Parnell:**

We are not going to have time for all 25. Is there is a way you can condense them?

**Jessica Bretzlaff:**

What Communities in Schools does nationally is to mitigate those risk factors. Locally, in Clark County, we created an initiative called the Fellows Academy ([Exhibit N](#)) in conjunction and partnership with the school district. It actively engages the school and the community together because as others have said, this is a community-based problem, not simply a school-based problem. That is absolutely accurate.

Schools want to be engaged in obtaining these risk factors. What they do not have are the resources. We have brought together a team of people who can work with the schools on mitigating these resources and act as an intermediary

between the schools and the community to vet what is in the community and to bring in the best resources that are already available in the community. When those resources do not exist, they help create community strategic collaboratives around these issues.

To date, the initiative has been cost neutral for the school district. Our results are very significant by bringing these resources into the schools. We have seen that our fellows were absent approximately 20 percent less than our control groups. They had fewer suspensions and behavior issues, their grades improved significantly, and they were promoted at a rate almost four times higher than the kids in the control group. Really, we all know that we need to bring these resources to the kids because access and transportation are huge issues. If we can make schools the place where these kids can get the resources, not only will schools become the most important place to them, but students will stay in school where they need to be to learn.

**Amy Marable, Dean of Students, Wooster High School, Reno, Nevada:**

Theo Meek put everything into a nut shell and wrapped up all the good things happening in Wooster. To recap on a couple of items I feel are important and to give you a little data, we have implemented the rigor, relevance, and relationship framework at Wooster. That, along with our freshman focus, has increased the attendance rate of our freshmen and decreased our retention rates of them. This semester, we were at 34 percent retention with our freshmen, and we have lowered that by nine percent this semester. One benefit of our closed campus is it keeps the kids on campus because once they leave, they do not return; and if they are not there, they are not learning. The second reason is we are working a privilege system. We are definitely moving in the direction where we want our students to know that there are privileges in place for them for the good works that they do.

We also have freshman teams where the biology, English, and math teachers all share the same students. They have the same prep, they meet and discuss those students, and they are working on interventions along with an administrator and a counselor. The students are seeing the same teachers day after day; they know who their counselor and administrator are who are attached to them. They have a lot of people they can go to at any time.

We have mandatory tutoring for those who are falling behind in those classes. They stay after school Monday through Thursday to raise their grades, and once they have raised them, the reward is that they no longer have to attend.

Another program is our mentor program, which is very successful, and our Parent Involvement Facilitators (PIF) program that is extremely involved with the students as well as the parents.

If we are going to change, and keep kids in school, I think looking at our freshmen and our freshman focus has proven to be very successful.

**Patricia Carroll, Dean of Students, House A, representing Andrew Kelly, Principal, Hug High School, Reno, Nevada:**

As you have a copy of Andrew Kelly's document ([Exhibit O](#)), with his ideas of what we need to do to get more kids to graduate, I am just going to tell you a story.

This is a picture of one of my students, but I cannot show you his face, and I cannot tell you his name. However, our whole concept at Hug High School is about the small school structure that Andy Kelly has implemented over four years ago. Because of this small school structure, the student and teachers, and teachers and teachers, and students and administrators, and students and counselors, and everybody involved on campus have this unique opportunity to build some quality relationships. This is what has driven Hug forward.

The story I want to tell you regarding my student is that he was a student at Hug on a variance last fall, and he earned a 0.00 GPA. The vice principal of my school pulled him in and told him since he was not making it in this school, he would have to go to a different high school in Washoe County. The student begged not to go, and was told to "go ahead and come back to me next fall and prove to me that you can have a good semester someplace else." He came back this fall and said he did not want to go to the other high school, it was just not working for him, he was just a number. "Please let me come back," he asked. The administrator told him, "if you are ready to get to work, come on back." This student was our student of the quarter. He went from a 0.0 to a 4.0. With that said, there are volumes to be said for the small school communities that we have instilled at Hug. Twenty teachers, a counselor, a vice president, a dean of students, and a secretary are all contributing to the lives of 350 students. What an impact it has made.

**Georgeann Ray, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I am a parent of one child in elementary, two in high school, and one child who has graduated, all in the Clark County School District. My children are not the ones who will not graduate, but as a parent involved in the Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) and as the President of the Northwest Region Parent Educational Advisory Board, I do have concerns for all of the students. My

primary concern is with the budget cuts. Many of the cuts that are being proposed are hitting the programs that we as parents feel are most important to keep at the high school.

One cut in particular that helps our high school students is block scheduling which helps credit retrieval. As the student from the adult high school that spoke earlier said, when you have block schedule, the student is able to make up some of the courses he may have failed. In answer to your question of who are those students that are not graduating, the teachers and principals know. The principals need to be given more autonomy for the programs at their schools. They need to be able to say where the money is best used for the students in their school.

It is a travesty that Chaparral High School has a 45 percent graduation rate, and the comment was that they were showing a great improvement when they were able to implement the block scheduling. If there is any way to keep the funding for programs such as this, things that have been shown at the high school level to be working, do what is necessary.

**Chair Parnell:**

It is Clark County School District that looked at eliminating block scheduling. That is because they are not expecting the funding from the state that they were hoping for. Each local school district is making the decision of where they can cut back. It is just Clark at this time that has made a policy decision that block scheduling will be cut. It is not necessarily happening in any other school district.

**Diane Reitz, Director of K-12 Literacy, Curriculum and Professional Development Division, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

We would like to close with the notion of rigor, relevance, and relationships and also how to increase the graduation rates with the length of full-day kindergarten. Today we would like to share the benefits of having full-day kindergarten and the importance of professional development training that the Division of Curriculum and Professional Development assists with our teachers.

**Jennifer Hill, Kindergarten Teacher, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I am a current teacher of full-day kindergarten and a former teacher of half-day kindergarten. I have been able to see noticeable differences in the achievement of the students participating in the full-day program compared to the students in the half-day program. This is due to the teachers having more time to differentiate instruction, meeting the needs of individual students more

effectively, and students having more time to fully understand concepts and develop skills in all content areas. I have seen a significantly higher percentage of students who exit with basic early literacy skills. It is very exciting to see that many of these children are reading by the end of full-day kindergarten.

There are important social benefits of full-day kindergarten as well. Students are experiencing more proficiency in areas of social and language skills and also our English Language Learners (ELL) are provided twice as much language practice.

Full-day students leave kindergarten knowing most letters, sounds, and many sight words; students can count and write numbers up to ten or twenty; students have more knowledge about concepts of print, foundational knowledge, and beginning reading. They also have the concept of addition. In summary, students are ready to jump right into the first-grade curriculum rather than spending months and months reviewing curriculum. Full-day kindergarten is especially beneficial to our community in that it helps students develop English language skills.

**Chair Parnell:**

That is not really relevant to where we are going. Maybe we can say that students who have the opportunity to be in full-day kindergarten lead to a greater chance of graduating, but I do not know that we need the details of the training. If you could keep it more on the student's chance of success in the future, I would appreciate it.

**LeNora Bredsguard-Brown, former Kindergarten and Special Education Teacher,  
Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

[Read from prepared testimony not submitted.] I am currently a project facilitator. In discussing the importance of full-day kindergarten on the graduation rate, there is a researcher named Keith Stanovich who talks about the Matthew effect; if students start becoming behind in the early years, they fall further and further behind without intervention. That is why we feel full-day kindergarten is so important. Although the curriculum is no different, the instructional approach that a full instructional day offers is very beneficial to students. Full-day programs have more time to devote to small group differentiated instruction, as well as substantial increases in time devoted to teacher directed activities, individual work, cooperative group work, and child initiated activities. The benefits of a full-day kindergarten program are readily seen when you talk with a parent or even students.

A parent of a full-day kindergarten student shares the following statement. As a parent, I have been able to see, first hand, the academic benefits that full-day

kindergarten has to offer. My son's reading and math knowledge and skills have consistently shown growth. I am glad that he is able to attend creative classes such as art, music, library, physical education, and computers. Teachers in full-day kindergartens spend more time with students individually and in small groups. They are able to explore key concepts in depth and have the flexibility to address individual student needs, and children have the opportunity to spend more time in learning centers and individual work. Full-day kindergarten also provides me, as a parent, more opportunities to get involved in my child's classroom, as well as to better communicate with teachers.

A full-day kindergarten student in the Clark County School District sums it up well when she says "I love to learn in my class. I am going to be a reader for first grade." Full-day kindergarten is not just for some students but for all students. It is not a luxury, it is a necessity.

**Chair Parnell:**

There are some Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) television people who want to speak. Welcome.

**Lee Solonche, Director, Educational Media Services, Las Vegas Public Broadcasting Service:**

I would like to talk about the education services we provide both in the south and statewide. It touches on what you talked about earlier in terms of relationships, relevance, and rigor. We provide a host of educational services. Among the few programs I will mention tonight is our Ready to Learn project that targets early childhood literacy and its importance as it relates to forming academic skills and providing the necessary lessons for literacy and academic skills that children will need throughout their academic life. We also, as it relates to relationships, have a very strong family component with this that integrates the family in the learning process to promote life-long learning.

In terms of relevance, I would like to talk about our unique position to play a role in providing technological assistance in making courses in curriculum relevant to students. Our Video on Demand video streaming service is widely popular with both students and teachers because it is a powerful technological tool that is easy to use, that allows for individualized and customized instruction with a variety of media and instructional resources. Over 1.5 million downloads and streams have already occurred through this service, showing it is indeed a user service.

Related to rigor, I would like to talk about a different front, the fact that we offer teacher-aligned professional development courses for teachers. Obviously the teacher is the gatekeeper in providing the academic materials and rigor to

the student. We need to make sure that we have highly qualified teachers in Nevada, relating to highly qualified status, but also the teachers need the skills that are necessary for teaching and interacting with young people. Our teacher-aligned professional development courses are highly rigorous courses that are certified by the United States Department of Education, and we have provided over 1,200 Nevada teachers with these courses, making us one of the largest course providers, postsecondary, for our teachers.

What I would like to leave you with is the fact that we are providing a broad range of academic services and programs that are dependent upon state, local, and national funds. Obviously Nevada has huge academic challenges, and anything that you can do to maintain and/or increase funding for education, especially K-12 is critical to this state.

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you and thank you for all the programs that you offer to students and staff.

**Tom Faxtel, General Manager, Educational Media Services, Las Vegas Public Broadcasting Service:**

The question today is how we can lower the dropout rate. I would suggest the way to do that is by providing a wide range of customizable options for teachers, parents, and students.

What has happened to public television over the years is we have moved out of the single box of broadcast television to become a multi-media distribution provider of educational content. Mr. Solonche shared with you the early childhood outreach activities in our on-line teacher courses and I would like to tell you about the results of our day-time television programming. It turns out that if you do measurements in Las Vegas of viewing Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) programming in the day time in Hispanic households, we always beat Telemundo and frequently beat Univision, an English language program. That is because the parents say that they have moved to our country and they want their children to succeed, therefore, they watch English language programming to give their children the skills they need in school.

When we look at what has happened with PBS middle school programs, such as Cyber Chase or Sid the Science Guy, that are teaching math, engineering and science concepts, those programs have developed rich inter-active websites. Those sites are generating over six million child visits a year, and the average child spends an hour doing math and science course activities on those websites. This is far better than some of the interactive game activities that

teach violence and disrespect of their peers. These programs teach measurable skills.

PBS has just rolled out a new service called PBS Play that tracks educational services of children who play games on the Internet using PBS characters. It looks at their academic skills and creates a report card for the parent or the teacher so they can see where their children are doing well or doing poorly and can have a structured intervention to help the child with those skill sets in which they are weak, so they can achieve and not be dropouts.

This year, our virtual high school will have over 5,000 students enrolled. You have heard people talk about what happens if the student falls behind or what happens if we have block scheduling; I hope we continue the expense of block scheduling, but if we do not, the distance education high school is an opportunity. Sadly, in Nevada, the way we have structured this program does not provide equitable access to all of the school children in the state. It allows those in a school district like Clark County an easier access to those courses and those intervention opportunities than we find elsewhere.

We also buy statewide rights for programs like General Education Development (GED) produced by the United States Department of Education. We make that available, at cost, to every school district in the state, because they sell only a statewide license. Because so many educational media products are statewide in nature, states like Utah and Arizona provide significant funding for a quasi-state agency that in Utah is a separate state agency, and in Arizona is attached to the university system. They are operated by the public television stations. They provide customizable tools, either teacher align or the other services, to allow schools to be more effective, to provide equity, and to give kids an alternative chance.

My testimony today has tried to share with you the idea that there is no silver bullet. People trip up on their road to graduation over many obstacles. Children and parents and communities can succeed if we give children alternate paths to success. Educational technology is one of those paths.

In Nevada, according to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, we rank 49th of the 50 states in terms of funding for educational technology through public television. I would suggest that by removing some of the paths that teachers, parents, and students can have to achieve, we will have made their road to graduation more difficult.

**Chair Parnell:**

I have to open this meeting to public comment. I do not see anyone coming up.

The state initiatives that Ms. Stonefield was going to present will be part of our discussion on Wednesday.

I want to end with something Andy Kelly sent in his email. I think it is very thought provoking: "We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know how, more than we need. In order to do this, whether we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we have not done it so far."

Are there any comments from Committee members? I do not see any. The meeting is adjourned [6:58 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Sharon McCallen  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Assemblywoman Bonnie Parnell, Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## EXHIBITS

Committee Name: Committee on Education

Date: February 16, 2009

Time of Meeting: 3:45 p.m.

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster
	C	Janis McCreary, Principal, Academy of Arts and Careers Technology, Reno, Nevada	Education Accountability Brief.
	D	Carolyn Edwards, Legislative Chair Person, Nevada Association of School Boards, Clark County, Las Vegas, Nevada	Graduation Testimony
	E	Deanna Wright, Trustee for District A, Clark County School District, Las Vegas, Nevada	Read from Prepared Text
	F	Chanda Cook, Director of Community Initiatives, Nevada Public Education Foundation, Las Vegas, Nevada	Ready for Life
	G	Donna Hoffman Anspach, representing Nevadans for Quality Education, Las Vegas, Nevada	Handout Nevadans for Quality Education
	H	Theo Meek, representing Student Advisory Board from Wooster High School, Reno, Nevada	Read from Prepared Text
	I	Oscar Aguilar, Student, Sparks High School, Sparks, Nevada	Read from Prepared Text
	J	Carissa Mangubat, Student Body President, Reed High School, Reno, Nevada	Read from Prepared Text
	K	Garrett Menghini, Senior, Damonte Ranch High School, Reno, Nevada	Read from Prepared Text
	L	Gregory Wright, Student, Coronado High School, Las Vegas, Nevada	Read from Prepared Text
	M	Louise Helton, Director,	Handed out Materials

		Communities in Schools of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada	from Communities in Schools
	N	Jessica Bretzlaff, Executive Director, Communities in Schools of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada	Handed out paper on The Fellows Academy
	O	Patricia Carroll, representing Andrew Kelly, Principal, Hug High School, Reno, Nevada	Handed out letter from Andrew Kelly