

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

**Seventy-Fifth Session  
February 18, 2009**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Bonnie Parnell at 3:48 p.m. on Wednesday, February 18, 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

**GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:**

None

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Kristin Roberts, Committee Counsel  
Carol M. Stonefield, Committee Policy Analyst  
Danny Peltier, Committee Manager  
Scarlett Smith, Committee Secretary  
Cheryl McClellan, Committee Assistant

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Phyllis Dryden, Director, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education,  
Department of Education  
Jim Barbee, Consultant, Agriculture Education, Office of Career,  
Technical and Adult Education, Department of Education  
Janet Hay, former Curriculum Coordinator, Career and Technical  
Education, Washoe County School District, Reno, Nevada  
Lucy Flores, External Affairs and Development Specialist, University of  
Nevada, Las Vegas  
Ricci Rodriguez-Elkins, Executive Director, Entrepreneurial Technical and  
Engineering Charter High School, Sparks, Nevada  
Antoinette Cavanaugh, Superintendent, Elko County School District, Elko,  
Nevada

**Chair Parnell:**

[Roll called.] We have a quorum. The Grant Sawyer Building for videoconferencing was evacuated earlier in the day, yet I believe people have been allowed back into the building.

Today is the completion of all the effort we have put into looking at ways to increase our high school graduation rate. We will begin with a presentation on the impact of career and technical education on high school graduation presented by Phyllis Dryden.

**Phyllis Dryden, Director, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education,  
Department of Education:**

Jim Barbee is here presenting with me today; he will be reporting on the \$4 million we received and how that money was spent last year.

I will be giving you the most up-to-date data we have on Career and Technical Education (CTE). The data illustrates that CTE definitely has a positive impact on high school graduation. I will also give information on the CTE starship, the Tech Prep program. Last year 58,536 (47 percent) of our high school students enrolled in CTE programs.

**Chair Parnell:**

I want to point out the documents that you are referencing to the Committee members.

**Phyllis Dryden:**

You will have four briefs, which contain charts, and one set of spreadsheets which I will be going through to give you information. I will indicate when I come to those. The students that enrolled in these CTE programs now have added value in their lives because they will graduate with academic and technical skills and will be prepared to go into post secondary education, straight into a career, or both simultaneously. Additionally, CTE students have the advantage of earning up to 15 hours of college credit while in high school by enrolling in Tech Prep courses. Each Tech Prep course is worth a credit, and students can earn up to 15 credits. It costs only \$10 for the registration fee, and some colleges waive that registration fee. It is a good deal for the parents.

I will now go over the brief that is entitled, Lower Dropout Rates for Career and Technical Education Students in the 2006/2007 School Year ([Exhibit C](#)). This is the most available, up-to-date information we have. This brief illustrates that students who take CTE programs stay in school at a much higher rate compared to the overall high school population. Going to the bottom of the chart you can see that the dropout rate for CTE students was a low 1.5 percent, with the overall dropout rate for high school students at 4.8 percent.

**Chair Parnell:**

There is a problem with our microphones. We are going to see what is going on, and I call for a short recess.

We will now come back to order.

**Phyllis Dryden:**

At the bottom of the chart, consistently, across all race and ethnic groups, CTE students had a lower dropout rate than regular students; notably in the African American and Hispanic populations. Career and Technical Education students also graduate at a higher rate than students who do not enroll in CTE programs. Please see the brief entitled Career and Technical Education Students Graduate at Higher Rates ([Exhibit D](#)). This is based on 2006/2007 data. Our data from that year reflects that the graduation rate for CTE students is higher than for the overall student population. Looking at the chart, you can see that the graduation rate for CTE students is 71 percent as compared with 64.4 percent for total high school students.

Career and Technical Education programs also have a positive impact on high school proficiency scores. Please look at the brief entitled Performance of CTE Students on the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination ([Exhibit E](#)). This brief looks at the academic proficiency in each area of the Nevada high school proficiency examinations of high school juniors who were first-time examination takers by comparing juniors enrolled in CTE programs with all juniors that were tested. This is important because it is the first time; however, students are allowed to retake the test. We did not capture that data; we recorded only the first time. Results show that in all areas tested: reading, writing, and math, each race/ethnicity category of CTE juniors scored higher than all juniors tested. I think this data is remarkable: in reading, 96 percent of the CTE juniors were proficient as compared with 92 percent of all juniors tested; in writing, 92 percent of CTE juniors were proficient as compared with 88 percent of all juniors tested; in mathematics, 81 percent of the CTE juniors were proficient as compared with 72 percent of all juniors tested. These are all significant figures, especially since most students have problems with math. Each chart is broken down into each ethnic group.

Tech Prep is the CTE flagship; it provides dual credit for students enrolled in specific CTE courses that have been articulated with courses in Nevada's four community colleges. Tech Prep creates a seamless pathway for high school students to transition into post secondary programs, allowing CTE students to earn up to 15 college credits while in high school. It is a win-win situation for the students and colleges. It is a great pipeline for the colleges to obtain students; and it is a great way for students, especially those who are financially disadvantaged, to enroll in college, get started, and get transcribed with dual credit. They can earn either a post secondary or an occupational certificate. I would also like to add that CTE is the only team in the Department of Education that works directly with post secondary; we have a memorandum of understanding with the State Board of Education and the Board of Regents on Tech Prep. If you look at the final chart ([Exhibit F](#)), Tech Prep has grown by 20 percent from 24,430 students in the 2006/2007 school year to 30,497 in the 2007/2008 school year. In order for the students to receive dual credit, they must make an A or a B in their Tech Prep courses.

In conclusion, students in CTE tell us that they enjoy learning because abstract theory is applied to relevant, real-world experience. They work together on projects, building team skills, and problem-solving and decision-making skills. Each CTE program area has a corresponding Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO). Career and Technical Student Organizations foster relationships and teach us leadership, public speaking skills, ethics, and solid work habits. Career and Technical Student Organization students compete in rigorous statewide and national competitions, and they earn gold, silver, and

bronze medals. Many of these students can earn thousands of dollars in scholarships. Students in CTSO receive an added bonus; they are not only taught and mentored by their teachers and advisors, but also by the CTE Department of Education. We are one of the only offices in the Department of Education that work directly with the students.

[Spoke from prepared testimony ([Exhibit G](#)).]

**Chair Parnell:**

I would like the Committee members to look again at the Tech Prep sheet and highlight it. High school students have the opportunity to earn up to 15 college credits for successful completion of the Tech Prep courses taken. If a student receives an A or a B in these courses, for which community colleges have agreed that the high school curriculum is as rigorous as the college curriculum, they are able to use their credit for college also. From my previous experience as a Tech Prep coordinator, I believe we should all think about going into a very low-income high school to talk to a group of students and tell them if they receive an A or a B in the maximum number of Tech Prep courses, they can actually have a semester's worth of college under their belt. This means they have already paid for and taken care of a college semester. My experience was that students would look at me with awe, not ever having considered the slightest possibility that they would ever be able to attend college. It triggered the realization that they had the potential to be college students. I do not think any of us could underestimate the importance of what that program does. What I would like to see is a program like Tech Prep for all other kids.

I would like to address something that was brought up to me at Monday's meeting. I want all Committee members to be aware that in this room, 3142, the button that indicates that you wish to speak does not work. If you have a comment or question, please physically signal to me.

**Assemblyman Denis:**

How do you coordinate between the high schools and the university system for all of this?

**Phyllis Dryden:**

There are four community colleges; each college incorporates the districts in its region and that is called a Tech Prep consortium. The districts work with the community college to agree on what courses they will articulate for Tech Prep. The teachers have to decide what courses in Tech Prep will articulate into a series of courses in a community college ending with a degree or certificate. They meet with the college and look at their competencies. The courses they develop for Tech Prep have to be equal to what they would get in

101 community college courses. All the competencies are there and are articulated, so the quality is there.

**Assemblyman Denis:**

Why is it not possible for us to do this with our other classes, like English and math, so when our kids have to go into the university system they do not have to retake classes? We should be able to do it on the basic courses.

**Phyllis Dryden:**

Career and Technical Education is an incubator in the sense that what we have used to be applied to academics.

**Assemblywoman Dondero Loop:**

Do we have feedback from the students in the form of charts showing why they believe this makes such a complete difference to them?

**Jim Barbee, Consultant, Agriculture Education, Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education, Department of Education:**

We do not have specific data related to that. From previous years, we have testimony from students who have come forward and talked about the impact of CTE on them, so we do have some things on file in the system. I also believe we had some students speak in the meeting on Monday. As the session progresses, the Committee will have an opportunity to work with some of these students; next week we have CTE students visiting the Legislature. I would encourage you to take the opportunity to ask them what kind of impact CTE has had on them.

**Assemblywoman Dondero Loop:**

I am a huge advocate for career and tech. I have physically been in every single high school and middle school in this state, and I can tell you that we need a "hook." If we do not have a "hook," we lose a certain population, whether orchestra is the hook or CTE is the hook, or anything in-between. I commend you for your work.

**Assemblyman Hardy:**

Do you have any statistics on the CTE students as to their remedial needs in college? Periodically we talk about remediation. Even a Millennium Scholar who goes to college may need remediation in either math or English. Do we have those statistics?

**Phyllis Dryden:**

We do not have those statistics. We have not done any studies, which I am aware of, specifically for CTE.

**Assemblyman Hardy:**

Could I conclude that we have no remediation needs in CTE?

**Phyllis Dryden:**

I would like to say that, but I do not think I can.

**Assemblyman Hardy:**

What is the cost for the 15 credits that they get?

**Phyllis Dryden:**

The cost is \$10 per credit; that is merely a registration fee. I believe one of our community colleges actually waives that \$10 fee, so it would be free.

**Assemblyman Hardy:**

What is the tuition for credit if you do not have CTE? Is it \$150? So I could say, in essence, that if you are a CTE student with 15 credits you get a scholarship worth almost \$2,000.

**Phyllis Dryden:**

Yes.

**Assemblyman Stewart:**

I know Rancho High School has a pilot training program where you can be certified as a pilot when you graduate. They also have an emergency medical technician (EMT) program and a forensic program. Are there other schools in other parts of the state that give occupational certificates that would provide training for a job?

**Phyllis Dryden:**

Absolutely. In all of our six program areas, in Health Sciences for example, we had programs in the districts for certified nursing assistants. We have programs in trades and industry and welding where a student can end up graduating with a national certification. Every program we have offers at least one course. The rural areas do not have as many, but all of our programs have courses that lead to a certificate.

**Jim Barbee:**

I would also point out that based on legislation from the 2005 Session, we identify students' certificates of completion on the graduation diploma, as well.

**Assemblyman Munford:**

How many of these CTE students, in comparison, do not go to college and prefer to use that certificate to go directly into the workforce?

**Phyllis Dryden:**

We do not have specific follow-up data on that at all. We do collect data on those completers who go to college. It is, however, in our performance indicators; I need to check that out.

**Assemblyman Munford:**

Most of the CTE schools are comprehensive schools in terms of curriculum. What extracurricular activities play into this? I do not know what you offer in terms of extracurricular activities. I know that a high school in Las Vegas called Southeast Career Tech has a sports program that participates on most levels. I know the newer ones that they are going to build in Clark County, from what I understand, are not going to offer sports programs. Do you have any information on that?

**Jim Barbee:**

I can address what kinds of intracurricular activities we have for CTE; yet I am not familiar with the sports element and what each school will have. I can say that each one of the Career and Technical Education programs has student organizations, and there are six of those programs. These programs include Future Farmers of America, Delta Epsilon Chi Association, Future Business Leaders of America, SkillsUSA, Health Occupations Students of America, and Family, Career and Community Leaders of America. This gives students an opportunity for competitions related to the specific training they are receiving in the classroom, as well as opportunities to develop leadership and speaking skills. Those are both inclusive, as part of the instruction of CTE, and also happen after school and outside of school with state leadership conferences. The answer to the CTE portion is yes, they do have intracurricular activities.

**Chair Parnell:**

When they first began, each student had a home, comprehensive school. They were in a region where they would go to Reno High School, but they were choosing to go to ACE High School, which is a charter school. I believe Regional Technical Institute was similar; if they wanted to be involved in sports or another activity of that kind, they could participate at their home school. They had a dual relationship, and I believe it is the same in Clark County. So these students do have the opportunity to be on an athletic team, which I think is important for a lot of kids.

**Assemblywoman Woodbury:**

Am I to understand that the reason for the lower dropout rate in CTE schools compared to the rest of the state is not because the type of student that tends to go to these schools is more self-initiated, but that they would have dropped out at the average rate of the state if not for this program?



**Jim Barbee:**

Specifically addressing the data, at the three sheets where you look at secondary education, CTE is approximately 50 percent of that population, and the CTE students are counted separately. But where you see the all students figure, they are also included in that average, so they are making an impact on the figures ([Exhibit D](#), [Exhibit E](#), [Exhibit F](#)). We believe that is because of the curriculum, which corresponds with their interests. That creates a want in the students to come back to school, to stay in school, and to follow through and graduate.

**Assemblywoman Woodbury:**

Are all students that want to go to these programs able to? Or are you filled to capacity, and there is a demand for more?

**Jim Barbee:**

I think it depends on the school, but for the most part these classes are definitely full, and students are seeking the opportunity to be involved in them.

**Assemblywoman Woodbury:**

You have seen a decrease in the overall dropout rate since instituting these programs?

**Phyllis Dryden:**

The dropout rate within our program has been decreasing. Career and Technical Education has been around a long time, and we try to foster new programs, such as Health Sciences. We know that among the students that go to our CTE programs the dropout rate decreases. We would love to have more.

**Assemblywoman Woodbury:**

I am impressed by the data.

**Assemblyman Denis:**

In these particular classes, are the class sizes different from the regular classes?

**Phyllis Dryden:**

It depends on the class; some of the classes are overcrowded, whereas other classes have a small number of students. It is also dependent on the school district and the space.

**Jim Barbee:**

I think it largely depends on the school district; rural versus urban. Over 50 percent of the students at a secondary level are enrolled in CTE courses. That is a significant number of students who are taking the courses, and as we

have expanded CTE opportunities, we have seen an increase in enrollment. For example, the enrollment increase from last year was around 12 percent. I do not have the specific data for these facts, but the other data suggests that as many programs as we can offer, students are interested in enrolling in them.

**Assemblyman Denis:**

I was just wondering if class size was one of the factors in being able to have this type of data. We always talk about if we have smaller class sizes, students will do better. If that is true, that is another point.

**Assemblyman Kihuen:**

First of all, I want to praise you for the Tech Prep program. I work as an academic advisor for the College of Southern Nevada (CSN), so I get to see firsthand the students who take advantage of this program. Since these students graduate from high school with 15 college credits, they are almost sophomores in college when they arrive at CSN.

This program does not cover math, science, or English types of classes, correct? I understand that it is strictly technical classes.

**Phyllis Dryden:**

We have worked hard with CTE to develop standards and to make sure we integrate the academic standards. Every time we write those standards we beef up the academics for the quality. Right now we are working with our academic counterparts in the Department of Education, revising some of the standards that we wrote back in 2007. As we write new ones, we keep strengthening the academic piece, because it is crucial to continue strengthening the academic class to get the quality of our programs up. So CTE students are getting academics.

**Jim Barbee:**

Several of our programs also offer courses that are available for academic credit, for example, agriculture science courses. Students can choose to use that course as CTE credit or as a science graduation requirement credit, based on whether the teacher is highly qualified, which I believe 95 percent are. In addition, we are looking at expanding the academic credit to construction. They are considering a math credit in the construction curriculum. If the teacher is highly qualified, and they can identify the math content that is being taught, mathematics credit may be used.

**Assemblyman Kihuen:**

If the student decides not to stick with that career when he goes to college, he can use those credits as electives, correct?

**Jim Barbee:**  
Correct.

**Assemblyman Kihuen:**  
That is just one more reason to take advantage of the program.

**Chair Parnell:**  
If any of the members are interested in reading more about this, between the 2005 and 2007 Sessions I chaired the Subcommittee on the Effectiveness of Career and Technical High Schools. There is a Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) bulletin online which is Bulletin No. 07-4. During that interim we visited every CTE high school in the state and many classes at comprehensive high schools. There is a lot of information in that bulletin if you want additional reading.

**Jim Barbee:**  
One thing I would add to Phyllis's comments is that the data that is before you is very consistent. We have collected this data over the past five to ten years, and the results are consistent from year to year.

My comments revolve around the CTE funds that came out during Fiscal Year (FY) 2008; that was the \$4 million we got at the beginning of the last biennium. We did not get those funds during FY 2009 due obviously to budget cuts with the state. We wanted to report to you to give you an idea of how the funds were used at the local district level and across the state in terms of how the district utilized the funds. So I provided for you a packet of information ([Exhibit H](#)); the first sheet is based on object code and what kinds of expenditures were made, and the second sheet refers to the program improvement based on our program quality criteria and lifelong learning initiative. The criteria are listed below for how the expenditures directly related to standards and instruction and leadership and citizen development, which refer to our CTSO programs. Practical applications are items like mentoring, job shadowing, and actual applied occupational work experience that was done in the field. Professional personnel relates to getting teachers more professional development and training to better prepare them to present to their students.

Quality criteria 5, which is by far the largest expenditure of the funds, relates to facilities, equipment, and materials, which we have been upgrading, and we have been putting new, cutting-edge equipment into the classrooms for students to learn with. Quality criteria 6 relates to community business and industry involvement that relates back to legislation passed in 2005 which revolved around career and technical skills and advisory board committees. Career guidance is criteria 7, program promotion 8, program accountability and

planning 9, and criteria 10 is student-teacher class ratio which is a hard one to identify expenditures towards. I will now take questions.

**Assemblyman Munford:**

When I was visiting some of the CTE high schools, I noticed that the teachers there are very professional. I can recall many of them telling me they did not go through the regular academic courses of a certified teacher for the State of Nevada. Do you have problems recruiting teachers for these classes? It takes an especially skilled person, and that average person is not graduating from a regular academic school every year. I am sure you must have some problem.

**Jim Barbee:**

Yes, there is definitely a teacher shortage in CTE. Largely, there are two ways you can get certified to teach. There is the traditional way; one goes through high school and gets a four-year college degree, and then completes teacher education at the university or college system. There is also the business and industry license which requires five years of experience in the field that has been certified. After that teachers have to take an additional 12 units in methodology and teacher-training type courses and CTSO coaching and advising courses to prepare them for the educational aspect of it. They get the license based on their professional experience in that field.

**Chair Parnell:**

It turned out to be a great area for alternative licensure because we did have people that had been in business for 20-30 years and were ready to retire, but still wanted to continue to work and teach their skills.

On the state fund competitive grant, why is Carson City School District the only one that is not listed? Did they not apply?

**Jim Barbee:**

They did not put any applications in for the competitive funds during that year.

**Chair Parnell:**

I will look into that. Are there any additional comments or questions? Thank you for doing such a great job with this program. Every time we have brought it to the table it has been so well received.

**Janet Hay, former Curriculum Coordinator, Career and Technical Education, Washoe County School District, Reno, Nevada:**

I want to mirror some of the information you heard from a state perspective, to a district perspective. Washoe County has 12 comprehensive high schools. About 48 percent of those students participate in one or more of our CTE

courses. We are developing a CTE high school called the Academy for Arts, Careers, and Technology. Next year we will see our first freshman group, which we are currently getting started. Just to clarify, currently all of our students are just in regular classes. Our graduation rate for 2006/2007 was 76 percent. The proficiency testing for our juniors in 2007/2008 for Reading/Language Arts was 90 percent, and math was 81 percent. Our students do very well when they are connected to the CTE course ([Exhibit I](#)). We have a very large Tech Prep program in Washoe County; we have over 30 courses that are articulated. Last year we saw 603 juniors and seniors earn over 3,000 credits, which was an increase of 20 percent over the year before. Last year we also saw 369 students enroll in Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) in courses in which they earned their Tech Prep credit. If a student has Tech Prep credit and goes to TMCC and writes down his major as undeclared, he is not collected into our database; only the students enrolled in courses associated with the Tech Prep credit are collected. That was an 11 percent increase over the year before.

We do a follow-up on students about six months after graduation to see where they are, whether they are employed or continued their education, or whether they have entered the military. Some of this is collected by sharing social security numbers with the university system, yet most of it is collected by sending out letters and having our graduates fill out a survey. This is a flawed system because we often do not get them returned. We do find that they always comment on their Tech Prep credit. They use it as elective credit, they use it in private colleges, they use it in universities outside of Nevada, they use it in the military, and they also use it to get a leg up into apprenticeship programs. We have ten technical skills advisory committees consisting of business people, educators, and community college instructors. They really help us work our curriculum so that we have what students need to go to work when they complete an advanced level course. We see graduates who do that as well as attend a college. We have very strong Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSO). Are there any questions?

**Chair Parnell:**

Before I was involved in this program, if somebody had said articulated courses, I would not have understood. This is similar to Mr. Denis's question: How have you done such a great job bringing our high schools and our colleges together? The articulation happens, just as an example, when high school and computer aided design (CAD) teachers teach in your community college. They have to find the time to get together and go through the syllabus for the course and cross-reference every little detail to make sure the high school class is teaching all the skills students would have received at the college. That is articulation.

**Janet Hay:**

We put the agreement of learner outcomes in writing, so both the college teacher and the high school teacher are aware of the things the students need to learn from that course to earn credit.

**Chair Parnell:**

By having that agreement, everyone is comfortable that if the student gets an A or B in that course in high school, he would have learned as much as he would have if he had taken it in college. That is the beauty of that relationship, and it opens the door to the conversation between the high school and the college. There are weekends when the instructors get together and do that articulation. Please recall Mr. Denis's question: How can you do this when it seems like we cannot do it in other areas? It certainly does lend itself to a lot of potential with the merging of K-12 and higher education. Thank you.

Ms. Carol Stonefield will now go over some of the initiatives we have heard. I would then like to invite the Committee to give some ideas of what they would like to make sure we cover with high school graduation. Then we will be open to public comment. Are there any questions?

**Carol M. Stonefield, Committee Policy Analyst:**

The Chair asked me to review materials to give you some idea of what is going on around the country with regard to dropout rates and high school graduation. The ideas that are presented here are simply a summary of what is going on. As a member of the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) staff, I will neither advocate nor oppose any of these particular programs. I did provide for you a couple of documents from the National High School Center, which is part of a national network of content and regional comprehensive centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education. These centers draw their research from the American Institutes for Research which contracts with various organizations including WestEd; people in Nevada are familiar with staff from WestEd. There are two documents: one is *Towards Ensuring a Smooth Transition into High School* ([Exhibit J](#)) and one is *Preparing High School Students for Successful Transitions to Postsecondary Education and Employment* ([Exhibit K](#)). I selected these in part because they provide fairly good summaries, but also because at the end of each of these documents there is a reference section which includes extensive lists of citations, works the people who put these two documents together referred to when they were compiling the information. I know there are members on this Committee who would like to do their own research on some of these issues.

Take a look first at *Smooth Transition Into High School*, and if you turn to page 3, you will find a checklist of state-level approaches to supporting transitions

into high school ([Exhibit J](#)). The very first one is readiness indicators for high school coursework. If you remember from our discussion on *Quality Counts*, you will recall one of the items that was identified by the folks who do the *Quality Counts* report is that Nevada does not have college or work-readiness indicators that have been defined. This would suggest that in addition to those two, there should be some sort of indicators that middle school teachers can be aware of to prepare students for high school. There is also an annual report of the percentage of students who complete algebra and freshman English by the end of the freshman year. In researching this I found a presentation from a staff person from the Education Commission of the States (ECS). This was given to a committee of legislators in Alaska in October 2008. One of the things that she mentioned that is very important is to have sixth-graders on track to be prepared to enter the ninth grade. This report on the percentages of students who complete algebra and freshman English is another indicator of being on track to finish high school. There is a research analyst, Clifford Adelman, who works for the U.S. Department of Education, and he wrote a research paper around 1998 called *Answers in the Tool Box*. He studied a lot of information that has been reported and collected by the U.S. Department of Education over the years. He said that algebra is the single gateway course to post secondary success because it is a course that gets students started on a more rigorous mathematics curriculum.

Another indicator on this checklist is rigorous courses in the ninth grade. Since the Chair asked me to look into what other states are doing, I found research that concludes that a rigorous curriculum should be offered to all students. An example of this is a school district in the State of New York that began a process of de-tracking their middle school students and requiring accelerated math for all of their eighth-graders. They then began to follow those kids into high school, and eventually they were requiring a rigorous curriculum. Their conclusion was that the more you challenge these students, the more successful they are going to be. This gets back to the information that has been received by this Committee and others that sometimes students do not perform well in school because they are bored, and a challenging curriculum is one way to keep them engaged. There is research that suggests that a rigorous curriculum should be offered to all students.

Another item on this checklist is to communicate with families of middle school students about what it is that ninth-graders are expected to know. Higher education has taken a position for some time that college should be a subject that families begin to discuss with their children as early as sixth grade. People need to start thinking about getting prepared in middle school and high school for college. Assembly Bill No. 212 of the 74th Session requires the four-year academic plan to be developed with parents and the counselor. We heard



testimony the other day that some people are suggesting that an academic plan should be developed as early as sixth grade for the middle school years. The checklist also suggests that high schools work with their feeder middle schools to inform them of the progress of their students in high school. There should be more communication between the middle schools, not only in terms of what is expected of those middle school students in order to be prepared to go to high school, but the high schools in turn should communicate back to the middle schools as to the performance of their students.

Look at the second report entitled *Preparing High School Students for Successful Transitions* and turn to page 4. It has a section entitled "Take-aways at the State Level" ([Exhibit K](#)). I want to draw your attention to a couple of the suggestions. One suggestion is to align the high school curriculum graduation standards and assessments with the expectations of higher education and employers. This is not a new concept in Nevada; the Department of Education has a report entitled *Stars: Blueprint for High School Improvement* which has been funded in the past with a grant from the National Governors Association. Also, the Legislative Committee on Education last interim sponsored legislation on Senate Bill No. 239 of the 74th Session to establish the P-16 council. Both of these are vehicles that could be used for aligning high school curriculum with higher education in the form of college and workforce readiness. The second bullet is to hold high schools accountable for increasing the percentage of graduates who complete a rigorous curriculum. In the last interim the committee sponsored Senate Bill No. 184 of the 74th Session which requires a default curriculum. For those who are unfamiliar with the term default curriculum, Washoe and Clark Counties have both instituted a similar concept which means all students are automatically enrolled in a rigorous curriculum and can withdraw only with the consent of their parents and a representative of the school. So instead of students picking and choosing from a shopping list, they are placed automatically in a particular curriculum.

Other suggestions on page 5 include: aligning the elementary and secondary budget with higher education planning and budgets, providing feedback to high schools by creating a system for tracking students across the K-12 system and post secondary and into the workplace. The Nevada student information system for elementary and secondary education does have a unique student identifier. There has been discussion of aligning the student identifier used in higher education with that of the K-12 system. There are individuals here from the Department of Education who might be able to comment on the status of that discussion at this time. Another suggestion is to develop financial aid policies to encourage completion of high school and moving on to higher education. At this time, the State of Nevada does not support a needs-based financial aid program; the Millennium Scholarship is essentially a merit-based



scholarship. The institutions themselves use some of their institutional money for financial aid. On pages 6 and 7 of this issue brief ([Exhibit K](#)), table 1 identifies ways to earn additional credit or to enhance the successful transition.

One way is dual enrollment, which includes Tech Prep. There was a question about whether English courses will automatically articulate. The difference between Tech Prep and any other general dual enrollment program is that the high schools have made these articulation agreements with the community colleges to accept certain courses. This is not necessarily the case across the state with different kinds of dual enrollment programs. We have a statute, *Nevada Revised Statute* (NRS) 389.160, that provides for dual credit, but it is left up to the boards of trustees of the school districts to identify the courses they are willing to accept from the colleges and the universities. They will then submit those to the superintendent of public instruction for his approval. One of the things you might consider as a Committee is that there is no uniformity across the state. Some school districts have indicated that they will accept only electives, whereas other school districts have made arrangements with a college or university to accept, for example, English 101 as 12th-grade English or mathematics. There is also no uniformity or standardization with regard to paying for these courses. I understand that some districts will use their Distributive School Account (DSA) money to pay the expenses, fees, and tuition for the students, and others expect the student and the family to pay the tuition and cover the expenses of books and other necessary materials.

Other examples include early college high schools and middle college high schools. There are a number of states that are experimenting with some interesting programs. North Carolina created the Learn and Earn program. Ohio's program called Seniors to Sophomores was established by an executive order of the governor. New Hampshire is experimenting with a pilot program to allow students to take their exams and actually complete high school at tenth grade. This program is promoted by the National Center on Education and the Economy. There is a report entitled *Tough Choices or Tough Times* with recommendations for different kinds of programs to make high school more relevant to students and to encourage early enrollment in college programs. We have spent a lot of time talking about Tech Prep and CTE, which are also listed there. Career Academies are another suggestion. These are similar to schools within a school; their academic and occupational curricula are centered on a particular career theme.

If you remember, Superintendent Rulfes mentioned the other day giving themes to some of the programs in high schools. This is another way you can enable students to focus their study in high school on something that is relevant to them that will keep them in school. The Legislative Committee on Education in

recent interims has looked at a number of things. Last session there was Assembly Bill No. 553 of the 74th Session that included money for career and academic planning. This would have set aside or provided funding to the school districts to purchase either the ACT or the SAT battery. Both of these vendors provide assessments into the eighth grade. The ACT has one called Explore which is a career interest inventory as well as a beginning assessment of the academic achievement of the student. In tenth grade there is Plan and, of course, the ACT exam in twelfth grade. The SAT has a similar set of assessments. However, that funding was not provided.

In the end, you may want to consider some options for legislation to come out of this Committee, including definitions for readiness, standardizing dual credit and early college opportunities, and formalizing conversation between higher education and K-12 with regard to curriculum. One way to formalize this conversation would be to direct the P-16 Council to convene a group of higher education representatives, K-12 instructors, and employers to identify expectations and make recommendations for regulation which would include transitions into the workforce, such as apprenticeships. Another possibility for programs may be to form joint high school and college faculty committees to align curriculum and make recommendations to the Academic Standards Council. There are some very comprehensive programs. South Carolina created one that will require the schools all the way down into the primary grades to emphasize career awareness with different sorts of age-appropriate activities. You may consider examining the student information system to see if the information systems in the school districts in place now are capable of collecting and sorting the longitudinal data that would be required to enhance some of these programs and if, in turn, the unique student identifier can be carried forth from the K-12 system into higher education.

I would also like to remind you of the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) statutes that Dr. Rheault identified the other day which seem to enable students to leave school earlier, even as early as age fourteen. In addition to that I would provide you with NRS 385.448, which is the statute that authorizes the student to take the general educational development (GED) exam as young as age seventeen. Last session, in 2007, the Legislature increased the compulsory school attendance age from seventeen to eighteen, but a student is still eligible to take the GED at age seventeen. If you were to raise the age to 18, it might encourage students to stay in school, especially considering that the GED will no longer be considered a high school completer under the new calculation that will be in force in a couple of years—the National Governors Association calculation for high school completers.

That is the summary of my comments. There is a lot of information out there, and I would be happy to assist anybody in obtaining any of the reports that are identified in these two documents [([Exhibit J](#)) and ([Exhibit K](#))]. If I may add, referring back to the Education Commission of the States (ECS) staff person's presentation to the legislators in Alaska, two of the actions from Nevada in 2007 were identified in this ECS presentation, including the small learning communities which was in A.B. No. 212 of the 74th Session and also the provisions from A.B. No. 212 regarding the academic plan, increasing parental involvement, the assignment of counselors and administrators, and adult mentors for ninth-grade credit. So Nevada is getting some credit.

**Chair Parnell:**

It is always important to point that out. Are there any questions or comments?

**Assemblyman Stewart:**

I think you did an excellent job of putting that together. On the coordination between high school and college, I think we should put the business community in there as well. Michael Skaggs of the Commission of Economic Development is an excellent source. I think in developing the curriculum at schools, we need to have curriculum, especially in CTE, which is needed and useful in our community. I think we need to bring the business aspect of it in more and have their input more.

**Assemblyman Munford:**

Did you say that in the future the GED will not be equivalent to or measured at the same level as a regular diploma? Is that going to be removed?

**Carol Stonefield:**

Dr. Rheault mentioned that in his presentation about the new high school completer calculation, which is different from the high school Leaver calculation that we have been using and are still using. As I understand it, the completers will be only those students who finish high school with a regular high school diploma or an advanced diploma. Yet students who are high school completers by virtue of taking the GED will not be counted in our graduation rate.

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you. Are there other questions for Ms. Stonefield? I would like you to look at another list in your stack of information ([Exhibit L](#)). Ms. Stonefield also went through and wrote down the multitude of comments that were made Monday in the public hearing on ways to increase Nevada's high school graduation rate. What we are going to do next is unusual. A committee does not normally create a bill during a regular meeting of a committee. Yet I knew I wanted to do something on high school graduation from this Committee, but I

sat down with staff one day and said that I am not the person who should be saying exactly what we need to have in this bill. I am not involved in the high school experience, which is why we should listen to the people who really know what helps students graduate and let them tell us. Everyone has that list ([Exhibit L](#)) and under item 1 it says Relevance, Rigor, and Relationships, and it notes other comments that were made. What I would like to do is ask all of you to share with the Committee what you definitely believe we should have in a bill that discusses high school graduation.

**Assemblywoman Mastroluca:**

Parental involvement is one of the most basic things we need to ensure. In education we need to open many pathways to get parents involved in their child's education especially at the middle and high school levels. That is a time in a student's life when they need us the most but push us away the hardest. One of the things I have looked at is the concept of student-led conferences, which I have spoken about in Committee before. Student-led conferences are similar to parent-teacher conferences; but the student and the parent have the conference with the teacher overseeing it. This way it is the student's responsibility to explain to the parent why he is getting the grade that he is getting, good or bad, show examples of his work, and discuss a plan to continue to improve his education over the course of that year or the next couple of years. That is something I would like to see in a bill to encourage students to finish high school.

**Chair Parnell:**

I also think it is important to note that in A.B. No. 212 we brought the parent into that academic plan. So the continuation of the student-led conference is very similar to that.

**Assemblywoman Dondero Loop:**

I feel very strongly that middle school is a huge piece that we are not attending to properly. I think we need to move down and accelerate the fifth and sixth-grade group and concentrate on them. In some areas it might be sixth and seventh grade. In Washoe they have some K-6 schools, whereas in Clark County our middle schools are sixth through eighth grade. That middle school time to me, as a parent of three very different children, is a make-or-break time. I think it is a small percentage that go through it and do not struggle. One of the things that happens is that elementary school teachers tend to nurture, help, provide for, love, and care for these students. Then they go to middle school and they are treated much differently and much harsher. It would not be any different for any of us when the rules are suddenly changed; it is hard to swing around. I do not think it matters whether we look at math, English, CTE, or whatever curriculum area we are looking at. I think we need to

transition that differently and grasp those students there. As a person who, in my day job, is now working in secondary curriculum and seeing that piece of it, I still feel the same way. I feel that way in three different areas: a parent, a teacher, and a business person. I also think that we need teamwork. We talk about the teacher and the parent and the student, but we systematically keep ourselves outside the circle. I feel very strongly that we all need to be on the same page and know that we are all looking for the same thing and not fighting with each other. We need to know that we are working for the betterment of education and for the student.

**Assemblyman Hardy:**

I am for apple pie, the flag, and whatever else is good for the family. But realistically, in terms of what do we do for the bill, one of the things I mentioned when Mr. Rheault was speaking is that we should redefine graduation. We can go from 60 percent to 80 percent if we just redefine graduation and admit that there are some people who graduate, but we are not counting them. If you want to increase the graduation rate, you could redefine what graduation is. That is a simple approach. If I were to say why somebody stays in school, to use the professional educator in our group, as students we want to enjoy something in school. If we do not enjoy something in school, we are not going to engage. So what is it that we want to enjoy? I looked back at my drafting, my metal shop, and my wood shop days. I did not go to a CTE school, yet I did have a CTE in the school I attended. Sometimes I think we segregate the concept of CTE from the coursework, when in the old days CTE was integrated into a regular high school. I think we realistically have to look at the CTE and think outside of the proverbial box and include that back into the box that we call a regular school. Let us allow a student to enjoy his or her education.

I enjoyed home economics, although I never took it. Since my friends took it, I got to enjoy what they made. Whatever happened to the concept of home economics? In this Committee we have talked about the financial aspects of it; teaching people how to be concerned about finances. The home economics concept would have been the equivalent of wood shop. I do not want to appear like I am saying you cannot be of one gender and take the other class. The bottom line is that we used to enjoy school, and people who are involved in CTE enjoy school. So why are we segregating that out when we need to integrate it? If we recognize that there is a recycling portfolio, and we want recycling to ramp up to 25 percent, and we recognize that has never happened, we make a law about it. We could ramp up CTE, for instance, to say that while you cannot do it all at once, we would like an increase of 6,000 students in CTE. We should provide a schedule that we expect a school district in a county greater than 400,000 to implement CTE in a ramp-up way.

**Chair Parnell:**

I think it is important for everyone to understand that there are a number of CTE courses in our comprehensive schools. I know Carson Middle School still has the traditional home economics, so that is still in existence, but you bring up a very good point, which is that we cannot always be thinking about the stand alone. It is that one auto shop class at Carson High School that might keep the traditional Carson High student going to school everyday. It serves a very important purpose at all of our schools.

**Assemblyman Munford:**

I agree with my colleague very much. In teaching for many years I saw that gradual shift from CTE to more emphasis on academic classes. My primary focus would be related to career, and it is to get the student thinking about how valuable and important education really is. As a teacher you need to be able to detect and determine those students that seem to be turned off. If we can identify them in middle school, we would be able to take action sooner. Middle school is one of the biggest areas where students begin to get that attitude since we drilled so much into their head in elementary school. But in middle school, things begin to compete in their minds and they are exposed to distractions. Maybe we should have more counselors in middle school to identify those students that are losing interest, or those that seem not to be taking school seriously. What I discovered was when there were several kids sitting in the corner of a class, they felt like they were not part of the class. Every teacher has to make every student realize his self-worth. That is one of the primary ingredients of a good teacher, to be able to identify that and detect that student and work very hard to retain that student. I think that is one of the most important things; to make students feel like they belong. Any way we can to emphasize that is important.

**Assemblyman Bobzien:**

One of the things I would like to see us probe and maybe even work with some of the school district folks on is to establish a freshman seminar to assist with study skills and social issues. I was thinking back to Monday and to one of the comments from a CTE student that the aspect of CTE that got him more involved and gave him a better learning environment than what he had previously was the individualized attention. It strikes me that there are two things we are missing right now. The first one is individual attention that is agnostic of the given subject area that helps a student figure out his own individualized learning style and gives him the skills to actually master the course material and make it his own and derive some reward from being able to succeed in school. The second aspect is the nagging concern that I have about what we are doing with technology and technology literacy in the classroom. Certainly there have been the students that would help their parents set the

VCR clock, but I think we are light-years ahead of that at this point. We always hear from teachers who are concerned about the students who know so much about technology that the teachers cannot catch up, but the reality is that they are learning technology in a vacuum, and they have no context for how to actually put it to good use.

I know that we are rewriting the technology standards right now, and I realize that those are across all the different subject areas. In a lot of schools there is at least one teacher who is considered the tech person, and if there is some way to provide reward or acknowledgement for that person's skills in being able to be the guide for the students as to how to use technology effectively in the learning environment and enterprise, that would be beneficial for both the student and the teacher. Everything is changing so quickly, and the students are going to learn it regardless. If they go elsewhere and they are learning technology outside of the classroom environment, the connection is never made for them that they can use technology effectively to become better learners. That is more of just a concept, and if we can find some specifics on how to put that into operational benefit, that would be fantastic.

**Assemblyman Stewart:**

One area I would like to emphasize is on relationships. These kids that come out of middle school and transition into high school are introduced to the concept of the Link Crew, which has successfully been tried in Clark County. A Link Crew is a group of upperclassmen who work to welcome freshmen. In addition to that, an upperclassman is assigned to a freshman for the first semester or the first year to mentor him and act as a big brother or sister to him. I think we have to be careful in writing this bill so we do not put any additional burdens on the schools in the form of requirements that will take more time to write reports. I think we have to make it teacher/administrator friendly.

**Chair Parnell:**

Carson High School has the Link program as well, and it is just an incredible program.

**Assemblywoman Dondero Loop:**

In reference to the Link program, there are several junior highs and middle schools in Clark County, and I am sure in Washoe County as well, that are doing camps. These camps last for a day. The middle school students go to the school before school begins, and they show new students how to eat lunch, how to pass in a class, how to open their lockers, and other things that the younger students would panic over. Those are really successful programs that start new students off on the right foot.

**Assemblyman Kihuen:**

I think the point that I wanted to make was already made by Assemblywoman Mastroluca which was the importance of parental involvement. I think it is supremely important to get the parents involved with their child's education. I cannot emphasize enough how important the parents are in their child's success in education. All the way from kindergarten to college, I think it is important.

**Assemblywoman Woodbury:**

The issue of relationships really jumps out at me. I have spent many years teaching the lower grades, and all the time I see that the preparedness of students is dependent on their cultural or environmental background and the amount of language they are getting at home. Some of them are already behind by the time they get to kindergarten; they truly do not have the skills they need to succeed in kindergarten. While we cannot do a lot of legislation regarding families, like my colleague said, we need to get these parents involved, focusing on those who would not naturally be involved, because some are going to be there anyway. While we are getting them involved, we teach them what they need to be doing at home to prepare their other children for school. While we are concerned with teacher/student relationships and making sure students have at least one significant relationship in school, we are coming up with great ideas and programs, but we have such a short supply of teachers. We are overburdening the teachers with constant professional development and implementation of new programs. They are doing as much as they can, but they are leaving the profession because they are overworked and underpaid. We need to fill these positions and make it palatable for good, qualified teachers to stay or these programs are going to have minimal effect.

**Chair Parnell:**

I cannot say thank you enough to all the people that came out. I think we had over 200 people at our Monday meeting. There were such wonderful comments. It just amazed me that from all the people we heard from, it came down to connection, the concept of relationship, and relevance. They needed to be able to go to school, know that someone was there that knew who they were, and that there was something there at that school that they wanted to do. It was stunning to me; after hearing all that testimony and different people from the teacher end, the student end, the dropout end, it really came down to that. I think we now know that is what we need to get to, and we will try to model language much like A.B. No. 212 of the 74th Session, which did not have a fiscal note, and it did give local control to school districts to develop their own policies, such as a Link Crew program or whatever transitional program they were using. I think we also now know that in particular we need to pay attention to that incoming middle and high school student, and we need to have remediation, intervention, and connection ready for those students.



Mrs. Roberts will put all of this together. I will now open up for final public comment.

**Lucy Flores, External Affairs and Development Specialist, University of Nevada, Las Vegas:**

After sitting through Monday's extensive public comment, I felt compelled to comment on my own experience as a high school dropout from the Clark County School District. I just wanted to comment on many of the points that were repeatedly brought up on Monday and give you the perspective of an actual dropout. I will start out with a term that was used on Monday which was re-engagement. I am going to say that mine is not a perspective of re-engagement necessarily, but more of a perspective of being very lucky since I was one of those students who fell through one of the large cracks that exist in our K-12 system. The reason I say I was very lucky is, from a very young age, I was deeply involved in the juvenile justice system. I was on juvenile parole by the time I was 15, and I am now completely rehabilitated. When I was 17, I decided that school was not for me. It was not necessarily a decision, but it was just the way things worked out because that is the type of environment I grew up in.

I grew up about five blocks from the Community College of Southern Nevada on the Cheyenne campus, but I did not know what that building was until I was 17 years old. I knew that it was some kind of government building, but I never really had an idea of what went on there. I went through the alternative education system. I went to Horizon High School, and then ended up at Rancho High School, and never once through my time in school did someone talk to me about the possibility of college. Among the things that were pointed out on Monday was the need for counselors. When I look back on my experience, it was two counselors who asked me what was going on. One was in my elementary school, and the other counselor was in the alternative education, Horizon High School. I finally decided that it was time for me to get my GED, and go to college. I completed my undergraduate education at the University of Southern California and am currently attending law school at the William S. Boyd School of Law. When I finally decided that was actually something tangible for me and that is something I could do, those two counselors were my inspiration. Those were the people that actually took the time to care. There have been Assembly members in the Committee that have stressed the need for counselors.

In addition, obviously the parental involvement is absolutely necessary. Yet, when you come from my type of background, which is a low-income background, it becomes more difficult. I was raised by a single dad, my mom left when I was nine years old, and my dad worked literally day and night to

keep our family fed and housed. It was not that he did not want to be involved in my education; he just could not. There are a lot of students that are in that type of situation. When you do not have that support at home, you need to get it somewhere else. Unfortunately for me, I did not have that support anywhere else. That is when I turned to whatever was around, which was my gang member friends. These kids were going through the same type of things that I was, and we all got together because that was our form of support system—a very perverted form of a support system. The parental involvement is difficult to legislate. You cannot force parents to be involved or force parents to care. There certainly are methods that exist for increasing parental involvement, but if we cannot necessarily legislate it, then counselors are the next best option.

Just a few other things to note: it really is an issue about mentors, role models, and creating a culture. I was in Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) throughout my elementary school years. When I transitioned over to junior high, I purposely failed every single one of my advanced placement tests because, in my mind, I wanted to be with the cool kids. No one said anything; I do not think anybody really cared or noticed. That was essentially the start of my falling through those cracks. At the same time, it is not that my father did not want me to be successful, he did; but unfortunately, he did not have a way to facilitate it. He is very proud of me obviously, but he does not understand what I do because he just does not have the capacity to understand. All he knows is that his daughter is in law school.

There is a way for policy to get involved with culture, especially with our low-income students who do not have this encouragement at home and do not grow up knowing that graduating from high school and going on to higher education is normal. I know, because it certainly was not normal for me. Obviously now, it is normal to all my nieces and nephews. My four-year-old niece now knows the difference between an undergraduate and a graduate degree because I make sure that she knows that. Certainly there are ways to create policy that address these issues with the kids that want to succeed but just do not know how. They are not lost causes, and they are not juvenile delinquents, they are kids.

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you and congratulations on your achievement. So basically what you are saying is that we need peer mentors at the entry levels into middle school and high school. Maybe we need a lower ratio of counselors to students, but really a convergence upon those classes to make sure that all of those students know that there is someone there watching over them who has a sense of who they are and who they want to become.

**Lucy Flores:**

Absolutely. We need to give those students support. It is not about their not wanting to do better, and it is not about not knowing that what they are doing is wrong, but it is about their not being exposed to something other than what they experience on a daily basis. My problems started as I began having family issues when my mother left when I was nine years old. That is when that one elementary counselor attempted to help me, but then I left. I went to junior high, and I left her.

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you. Are there any questions or comments?

**Assemblyman Kihuen:**

I just want to say to Lucy how proud I am of you. Most of the Committee members do not know this, but you and I went to high school together back in 1997/1998. For those of you who do not know Lucy, you should get to know her. I think she has a very bright future here in the State of Nevada. She comes from a very humble background, like myself, but she is very driven. Lucy, to see you here very articulately testifying at the State Legislature makes me very proud of you. Keep up the good work since you have a long way to go.

**Lucy Flores:**

Thank you.

**Assemblyman Munford:**

You said you have a history of juvenile delinquency, and when you returned back to the high school you were ignored, is that right? It seemed like there was no one you could reach out to?

**Lucy Flores:**

I give most of the credit for turning myself around at around the age of 16 to my juvenile parole officer. She was one of the people that took the time to care and look at my situation. She did not look at me as just another person going through the system. She understood what was going on with my family and the fact that I was not a juvenile delinquent; I was just a juvenile with some issues.

**Assemblyman Munford:**

Also, you can apply your experience to a student who goes to an alternative education school. When a student returns from one of those alternative programs, what are his chances of dropping out compared with being given an opportunity to integrate and fuse themselves back into the school? Are such students accepted; how are they received? I would wager that typically a child

in that situation might end up dropping out since it is difficult to become a part of the entire process again. There should be emphasis put on that in the schools.

**Lucy Flores:**

I absolutely agree. That would be a really great idea for this Committee or the Legislature as a whole to look at in terms of how effective alternative education schools are. For me, personally speaking, I went to the Horizon that was right next to Vo-Tech. The Horizon students were considered the rejects, so I would ditch school and hang out at Vo-Tech and pretend I was a student there. That is where I felt most at home; I did not feel at home at the reject school; I felt at home with the regular kids. It was not until I left to attend Rancho High School that I began to feel more engaged within the school system. The only reason the high school counselor at Horizon paid any extra attention to me was because, fortunately for me, the GATE classification stayed with me throughout my high school career. That saved me in the long run. I did not end up graduating since I dropped out, but I got a GED. When I was finally ready, and I looked back at those inspirations for verification of my capability, it was because that one high school counselor paid attention to me and told me that I was intelligent and should not be where I was. I think of all of those children who were not earmarked; I was essentially earmarked by this GATE classification. We have thousands upon thousands of students who are not. So, if a GATE student was able to fall through the cracks, then we are losing plenty of other students as well.

**Assemblywoman Dondero Loop:**

As a mother, I just want to tell you that there are lots of Lucy's out there. So as educators, we cannot give up because children are troubled, I think we all need to remember that it has nothing to do with their IQs. There are a multitude of reasons why a student could be getting into trouble, but we cannot just give up. Thank you for your story.

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you and good luck to your finishing law school.

**Lucy Flores:**

I actually have to run off right now to my last lecture.

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you again. Now Ricci Rodriguez-Elkins is the last person we have down to testify.

**Ricci Rodriguez-Elkins, Executive Director, Entrepreneurial Technical and Engineering Charter High School, Sparks, Nevada:**

That was very inspirational; we do not come from dissimilar backgrounds. I am here today to let you know about our brand new charter school which we have been working on for four years. It is going to be opened in the fall of 2009. Entrepreneurial Technical and Engineering Charter High School (ETECHS) is a project-based career and technical school focused on the math and science professions. So students like Lucy and me, who have the capacity and desire to achieve great things with their lives, can become doctors, nurses, scientists, and engineers. These students have the opportunity to come to a small school, focused on rigor and relationship. The school was founded by various people from the university, including deans and vice provosts as well as professors and business people in the community. We also have a business advisory council. We were just given the clear from the Nevada Department of Education, and we are going to the State Board in March for our formal approval. We have been working on this school for four years, and it certainly mirrors a lot of the goals and aspirations that you have been speaking about for public education.

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you. Is there anyone else wishing to speak during public comment?

**Antoinette Cavanaugh, Superintendent, Elko County School District, Elko, Nevada:**

One of the things I am sure you are very aware of, for those of you who are old-school, we do have comprehensive educational programs in high schools in Elko County. In every one of our high schools we have CTE programs infused into our programs for our students. Typically, those CTE classes that we provide in our comprehensive high schools are specific to the area that the high schools serve. As you well know, Elko County School District comprises over 17,127 square miles. Therefore, some of our schools could be as far as 200 miles apart. As a result, our CTE programs are very specifically designed. I want to thank you, as it was my pleasure to be here in 2007 and be able to testify to the effective alignment of CTE classes in meeting the standards of education and the value they bring to our students. Approximately, between 74 percent and 78 percent of the students who graduate from Elko County high schools graduate with at least one CTE class. So it is a very critical part of our comprehensive high school program.

I would like to address two things that are important for you to remember. In the additional funding that was provided during the last legislative session, Elko County received just over a quarter of a million dollars in additional funding through the student competitive grant program. With that funding, not only were the programs enhanced for our students, but I think a very important

component that has not been touched on much in any of the testimony here is the partnership that has been built with agencies outside the educational arena. As a simple example, through some of the funding that has been provided, there was a partnership that took place between the Shoshone-Paiute Tribe on the Duck Valley Indian Reservation in purchasing a horticulture greenhouse. Some of the money that was received through the state competitive funding helped to subsidize that, to make that project a reality. That was a partnership that may not have occurred had that additional funding not come through. Owyhee combined schools, which has a comprehensive high school, also has a lab farm which is one of two in the State of Nevada. In this lab farm, students actually raise hay crops. With some of the funding, we were able to purchase a tractor which was sorely needed for that project.

In addition, we have been able to evolve and grow our own nursing health careers program, and as a result, we have been able to develop partnerships with the local hospital and other private doctors in our community. As you know, finding nurses and health practitioners for the rural communities of Nevada is a very arduous task. It is helpful to have CTE funding to support programs that are rigorous, relevant, and applicable to the needs of our communities. Hopefully, we will address the future needs of Nevada. As you know, with the tough economic times we are facing, partnering with private practice and a multitude of other agencies is critical. Career and Technical Education is one of those areas where we can build those relationships. The second point I would like to focus on is one of the proponents of the Nevada Public Education Foundation, which is the support of Ready for Life. One of the points made in the Ready for Life mantra is that students need to be engaged before they are 25 in order to become productive citizens of society. Career and Technical Education directly engages those students and shows them what is possible once they leave high school in the area of careers. Thank you for your continued support. I appreciate what you have done for those programs that serve our students well in Elko County, and I look forward to our continued partnership in the future.

**Assemblyman Hardy:**

What is the graduation rate with CTE in the comprehensive high school in Elko County?

**Antoinette Cavanaugh:**

I can email you the facts, but I can tell you definitively that of our students that graduate, 74 percent to 78 percent have taken at least one CTE course in their high school careers. I do not want to just spout something out, I want to be accurate.

**Chair Parnell:**

So you will get him that specific information?

**Antoinette Cavanaugh:**

Yes, I will.

**Chair Parnell:**

It is nice to know that both the 2005 and 2007 legislation that was designed to expand the comprehensive high schools really did happen. It is always nice to know two or three years later that it worked.

**Antoinette Cavanaugh:**

It did, and I believe you have not only served Nevada's children well, but you have also served the community well since it allowed us to leverage those relationships with non-education entities. As a result, we get a bigger bang for our buck.

**Chair Parnell:**

It is a great opportunity for public/private partnerships. That is what you did with it when you were encouraged to do so after the 2005 legislation. Is there any additional public comment? I do not see any.

[Meeting adjourned at 5:46 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Scarlett Smith  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Assemblywoman Bonnie Parnell, Chair

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

## EXHIBITS

**Committee Name:** Committee on Education

**Date:** February 18, 2009

**Time of Meeting:** 3:48 p.m.

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster
	C	Phyllis Dryden	Lower Dropout Rates for Career and Technical Education Students in the 2006-2007 School Year
	D	Phyllis Dryden	Career and Technical Education Students Graduate at Higher Rates
	E	Phyllis Dryden	Performance of CTE Students on the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination in Spring 2008
	F	Phyllis Dryden	Nevada CTE Students Prepare for Postsecondary Education and Careers
	G	Phyllis Dryden	Prepared Text
	H	Jim Barbee	CTE State Fund Allocation/Competitive Grant FY 08
	I	Janet Hay	WCSD CTE Impact on High School Graduation Rates
	J	Carol Stonefield	<i>Towards Ensuring a Smooth Transition Into High School</i>
	K	Carol Stonefield	<i>Preparing High School Students for Successful Transitions to Postsecondary Education and Employment</i>
	L	Chair Parnell (written by Carol Stonefield)	Relevance, Rigor, and Relationships