

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

**Seventy-Fifth Session
February 4, 2009**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Bonnie Parnell at 3:46 p.m. on Wednesday, February 4, 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/. In addition, copies of the audio record may be purchased through the Legislative Counsel Bureau's Publications Office (email: publications@lcb.state.nv.us; telephone: 775-684-6835).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

Chair Parnell:

[Roll called.] I will be introducing the Committee to you, but first I will go over some of the more mundane issues we need to discuss. If you plan on testifying at any time today, or in the future, please make sure that you sign in on the attendance roster in the back of the room. If you plan on being here to keep up with things going on in the Education Committee, even if not testifying, you might sign in today; then the Committee will always get the agendas out to you. If you have materials to be distributed or plan on giving a presentation, make sure that you do have 20 copies, and if possible, it would be great to have them one day in advance for timely distribution.

I would like to start with the introduction of our staff members, beginning with the new staff.

Linda Utt is my personal attaché. This is our second year working together, but she started in the 2001 Session with Government Affairs. I was also on Government Affairs at that time, but Linda and I go back to when our oldest sons played baseball together at Carson High School and, before that, in Little League. It is nice to be from Carson because I know a lot of the staff in the building.

Our new Committee Manager, Danny Peltier, is a native Nevadan from Sparks, was Student Body President of Spanish Springs High School, and graduated last May from the University of Nevada, Reno, with a degree in Journalism and a minor in Political Science.

Committee Secretary Scarlett Smith grew up in Michigan and is the youngest staff member of this 2009 Legislative Session. She also has the distinction of having just graduated from high school in Australia, where she lived for two years. Besides working this session, she is applying to numerous colleges to attend this fall.

Committee Secretary Sharon McCallen has lived in Nevada for 20 years and has worked at the Nevada Department of Education. She is a perfect fit for this Committee. This is her third session with the Legislature.

Committee Assistant Cheryl McClellan has worked for the legislative branch of government almost her whole career, both in state legislatures and with congress. Her hobby is riding motorcycles, which is probably a good way to vent when leaving the building.

Continuing with this Committee, is Ms. Carol Stonefield. Carol is a Principal Research Analyst with the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB), Research Division.

This is her fourth session staffing the Assembly Committee on Education and the interim Legislative Committee on Education. She has a wealth of knowledge and is always at your disposal. If you have questions, she is there.

Kristin Roberts is returning as Committee Counsel for her third session. She also served as Counsel to the Legislative Committee on Education.

It is great to have you both back; you are really my right and left arms.

Some of you are probably missing the very tall, very bright, and wonderful Rachel Pilliod, who served two sessions as the Committee Manager. She is enrolled in medical school at the Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, Oregon. I have a hunch she might be watching, so hi, Rachel.

Our freshmen members are Marilyn Dondero Loop, April Mastroluca, Melissa Woodbury, and Richard McArthur. Welcome, all of you.

I have the pleasure of introducing Assemblyman Mo Denis, serving very appropriately as Vice Chair of this Committee. When he is not busy here, or dealing with all of his children, he also serves as the Nevada Parent Teacher Association (PTA) President. It is great to have another PTA President up here, as I am a former PTA President, as was Debbie Smith, the former Vice Chair of this Committee. Debbie is now chairing the Health and Human Services Committee.

Mr. Denis, if you would tell us a little about yourself and why you chose to be involved in education.

Assemblyman Denis:

I am a dad of five children, all of whom have gone to postsecondary schools. Three have graduated and two are still in college. My wife is also in college and will be graduating with a degree in elementary education in the fall, as well as doing her student teaching. She actually took a heavy load this year as the classes were only available at this time, so she will not miss me as much during this session because she is busy doing homework. Education is a passion of mine, and I appreciate the opportunity to share thoughts and to learn from others and those who come before us.

Assemblyman Hardy:

I believe in home schooling because my eight children taught me well. I have 13 grandchildren; some of them are almost in college. It is interesting to see different philosophies in education, so it is good to come here and learn the processes. It is good to serve with you, Madam Chair.

Assemblyman Kihuen:

This is my second session and my second term serving on the Education Committee, and I am honored to be on the Committee once again. I serve on various educational boards when I am not in the Legislature. I also work in higher education as an academic advisor at the College of Southern Nevada. I come from a family of educators. My father is a teacher, my grandmother was a teacher, and my mother was a teacher in Mexico. My passion is education and I look forward to working with the freshmen, as well as all of you, as we discuss all of the issues important in our state.

Assemblywoman Woodbury:

I have lived in Nevada all my life and am a product of the Nevada school system, as are all my brothers and sisters and my parents. I have taught school in Nevada for the past 14 years in regular education and have been a special education teacher for children with autism. Education and giving all children the opportunity to meet their potential are my passions. I am very excited to be on this Committee.

Assemblywoman Mastroluca:

I am a product of the Clark County School District and have two children in the Clark County School District. My day job is working for the National Parent Teacher Association. I supervise two employees, and between the three of us, we cover more than two-thirds of the country helping parents learn how to engage and get involved in their children's education. I have been an employee of the National PTA for more than four years, was a volunteer through my local PTA, and was also on the State Board serving with Assemblyman Denis before he was an Assemblyman. This is something that is really important to me, and I want to see what we can do to try to improve education in Nevada because we have gotten to the point where we cannot do anything but get better.

Assemblyman McArthur:

I do not have a professional connection with education, although I am looking forward to working with this Committee. My only real connection is that I have been in Nevada for 28 years, and though I did not go to school here, my children went to school in Nevada. Now their children are attending school here, so I have been involved in the education system for a long time.

Assemblywoman Dondero Loop:

I have taught for 30 years in Clark County, so that means I have been going to school for over 50 years. I now work for a textbook publisher and am still going to school. I go all over the State of Nevada, and it is a wonderful experience to work with teachers. I love education, always wanted to be a teacher, have never been sorry that I have been a teacher, and will continue to be one. I am like Doc Hardy; the children that I taught and the children I raised taught me more than I could ever teach. They have made me the person I am today, and I thank them for that. I look forward to working with all of you in education.

Assemblyman Stewart:

It is a pleasure to work with Bonnie Parnell again. She is a great woman and cares a great deal about children.

I taught school for 34 years in Boulder City, Nevada. I did my part to improve education by retiring in 2004. One of my achievements was to help teach Melissa Woodbury, and in spite of that, she turned out well. I am proud of that. It is a pleasure to be back, and I enjoy working with this Committee very much.

Assemblyman Munford:

This is my third term in the Legislature. I taught school for 36 years in Nevada, plus two years in Montana. I have always enjoyed being a teacher and thought it was a very noble thing to do. When I was elected to the Legislature, it was a very easy transition to make because, as a teacher, I always felt I was serving young people. Now, as a legislator, I am serving adults. It definitely ties together. It is helping people who are trying to do the right thing and improve their lives. That is why I have always enjoyed being a teacher: because the greatest reward is when you see one of your former students and they come back and tell you something nice about being in your class. That is more of a reward than the salary we sometimes complain about. I enjoy being a legislator and being on this Committee, and I look forward to doing some good things for this session.

Assemblyman Bobzien:

I grew up in an education-oriented household. My mother just retired as a public high school teacher in Virginia, although she continues to teach at the community college level. I remember many nights wondering what my mother was doing with a stack of papers and why she was putting in so much time after hours. She taught me a lot about public service and trying to make a difference in the lives of young people.

Professionally, I spent ten years working at the University of Nevada, Reno; the last seven of which, I was the campus webmaster. I was very involved in technology issues and technology-related education. Since the University of Nevada, Reno is actually in District No. 24, I feel a lot of pride and ownership for that institution.

Currently, I serve on the Nevada Council to Establish Academic Standards, one of two legislative appointments I hold. This has been a fantastic experience for the past two years: understanding what we do with standards in the state, how that drives curriculum at the district level, and how that gets into the classroom. I am glad to be back, and this is the nicest Chair as far as committees go. She is incredibly fair and caring, and runs a great committee. Welcome to the new members.

Chair Parnell:

Thank you for that. The other day I told someone that I try to be stern, but it is just not part of me. That does lead me in to one quick comment that I wrote in the letters I sent to you about a month ago. I really do pride myself as Chair, and I take pride in the Committee for always being fair, open, and respectful to everyone. That also includes the colleagues I share this Committee with and anyone choosing to come to that testifying table before you. You may not always agree with them, you may think they are off-base, but we have to remember, as many of us were social studies teachers, that it is their God given right to speak their mind and share their values. They can expect us to be respectful, to listen, and to consider what they have to tell us.

We try to have incentives to keep you attending the committee meetings as we have great and sobering challenges ahead of us. I have had a difficult time trying to calculate how we will operate this Committee this session. We are all consumed with the budget and cuts to precious education programs. We worry about the impact on our teachers with potential salary reductions as well as implications of additional cuts that may be made. What we as committee members need to focus on is that this is a policy committee. We do not have control over any of those other great concerns. What becomes our imperative task is to come here twice a week and realize that we can still impact our educational system. We can still find ways to improve our public education system even considering the circumstances we are working with. That is what we must do this session. We must continue to strive to improve the chances of every child attending any public school in this state.

This committee supported Assembly Bill No. 212 of the 74th Session, which began to look at reforming our high schools. That bill has done great things and

had no fiscal note. We need to do that and more things like it during this session. That is my charge to you.

We need to approve our Standing Rules. They are pretty much the same as what you have seen. You have a copy at your desk ([Exhibit C](#)). I would like to point out that we do need a quorum of this Committee, which is a majority of its members. The first page of the quorum rules ties in with number 17 on the last page regarding reporting to the Committee promptly at 3:45 p.m. You will need to create a quorum, especially once we start working on bills before us. Under "Quorum, Voting, Motions, and Final Action" on page 1, you might also note number 4: Committee introduction of bills and resolutions which are not prefiled requires a concurrence of a majority of the entire Committee. Previous to this session, that was a two-thirds vote; it is now a majority vote. That is in accordance with our new Assembly Standing Rules.

On the last page, I would like to make another note. Most of the standing committees that you serve on do not have subcommittees. This session, we may be creating some subcommittees so we can really delve into particular issues more intimately than we could just by depending on committee time.

Unless there are any questions, I would entertain a motion to approve.

ASSEMBLYMAN HARDY MOVED TO DO PASS.

ASSEMBLYMAN DENIS SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chair Parnell:

Ms. Stonefield will give a committee brief that will be especially helpful for all of the new members to see what jurisdiction this Committee does have. She will then go into an overview of the report *Quality Counts 2009: Portrait of a Population* that I sent to you when I sent out my letter of welcome. You have been given a second copy of that report as well as the committee brief before you.

Carol Stonefield, Committee Policy Analyst:

The committee brief is a tradition in the Nevada Legislature for the purpose of providing you with a summary of the kinds of issues you are likely to deal with and what this Committee has looked at in the past, as well as a very brief list of available resources ([Exhibit D](#)).

I will draw your attention to jurisdiction of the Committee. In the past, the issues have related to the schools and school districts, educational personnel, pupils, the state system of higher education, and the Department of Education. There are bills that have a fiscal impact, and they will be concurrently referred to this Committee and the Committee on Ways and Means. Typically, the bills that are concurrently referred will come to the policy committee first. This Committee will act on a bill in whatever manner it chooses, and if it does indeed report the bill out, the bill would then be referred to the Committee on Ways and Means.

Roman numeral II ([Exhibit D](#)) is a brief summary of the 2007 Session. This Committee considered 62 measures; 55 of them were reported out of the Committee; 34 of them were eventually reported to the Governor; and none of the bills that came from this Committee were vetoed by the Governor.

The Chair mentioned Assembly Bill No. 212 of the 74th Session that had to do with high school, and that seemed to have been one of the major concerns of this Committee last time. Some of the actions this Committee took were to establish a four-year academic plan for ninth graders, establish small learning communities within high schools for ninth graders, raise the compulsory school attendance age from 17 to 18 years, require a default curriculum with opt-out provisions, and authorize the promotion of students from eighth grade to ninth grade on probation.

There were also a number of new or expanded programs that were enacted by the 2007 Legislature, but not all of them were implemented due to the budget reduction. These included teacher performance pay, expansion of full-day kindergarten, increases to Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, and empowerment schools.

Roman numeral III ([Exhibit D](#)) is on page 3. This is a section on reports. Education bills often require that whoever is to implement the program or whoever receives the money (or both) must make a report to the interim Legislative Committee on Education or some other entity.

I would like to draw your attention to Appendix D on page 12 of this brief. There are four or five pages of reports that are mandated in the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS). All of those reports are available to you, and I would be happy to assist you in getting a copy.

The ones that I have highlighted for you are: the Annual Report from the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the State Board of Education's State Improvement Plan, the Needs Assessment from the Commission on Educational

Technology, a report on the Results of the Criterion Reference Tests from the Council to Establish Academic Standards, and the Regional Professional Development Programs (RPDPs) from the school districts. They have to evaluate their training programs.

The P-16 Advisory Council was established in the 2007 Session, and it has a report on its activities and recommendations. Occasionally, the Legislature will fund a particular study that you can find in session laws, but it is not a permanent report required annually or biennially. The Curriculum Alignment Study is an example of that. The Legislature, last session, provided some funding to hire a consultant to conduct an alignment study to look at actual curriculum and how it aligns with academic standards at grade level. The study was presented to the Legislative Committee on Education during the interim, and if you are interested in a copy of that report, I will be happy to get it for you.

There are also some higher education reports and the report from the Legislative Committee on Education, LCB Bulletin No. 09-12. It is online on the Research Division's website, and I can get a hard copy of that for you as well.

In 2009, significant issues coming to the Committee are likely to be funding and charter school authorization. During the last biennium, there were issues with authorization in some of the large school districts that have established moratoriums, indicating that they do not intend to sponsor any more charter schools in the near future. The State Board of Education had concerns about sponsoring charter schools, so the Legislative Committee on Education recommended Bill Draft Request 34-297, which would establish an independent Charter School Institute. On the list of BDRs are a couple of other bills that relate to charter schools as well.

The interim Committee also considers school and campus safety. It received a report from the Attorney General summarizing, for the interim Committee, the National Association of Attorneys General Task Force on School and Campus Safety Report. The interim Committee recommended BDR 34-303, which relates to bullying.

Middle school was another issue of concern to the interim Committee. In BDR 34-302, the interim Committee recommended that, should there be funding available to the Commission on Educational Excellence and directed to grades 7-12, it should be given priority to those grant applications that would establish summer school programs and other programs to assist eighth graders to meet the requirements to enroll in ninth grade. The law provided that students who did not get the credits could not progress from eighth grade to

ninth grade, and then in the 2007 Session, it was changed to allow them to be promoted on probation. There was concern among the interim Committee members that it would be difficult for students to do both ninth grade work and the remediation for eighth grade work. That was the motivation for that BDR.

Finally, under potential federal issues, there is the reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Sources indicate that reauthorization is not likely to happen until late 2009 or, in fact, 2010. Congress did pass, in the last session, the Higher Education Opportunity Act. It has some provisions, including maintenance of effort and other issues, that may be of concern at some point, if not for this Committee, perhaps for the Ways and Means and Senate Finance Committees.

The rest of this brief contains appendices. Appendix A is the 120-day session calendar; Appendix B is a list of Nevada and national websites; Appendix C is a glossary of education acronyms; Appendix D is a list of reports; and Appendix E is a brief listing of key contacts in education in Nevada.

That concludes the committee brief. Unless there are any questions, I will move into a summary of Quality Counts.

Chair Parnell:

We not only have new members on this Committee, but members who did not serve on the Legislative Committee on Education (LCE), so perhaps on Monday we can bring the LCE brief for them. Primarily because we are going to be seeing so many bills that came out of the brief, members will have the background they would not otherwise have.

Carol Stonefield:

With your letter from the Chair, you should all have received the Nevada highlights section of *Quality Counts 2009: Portrait of a Population* ([Exhibit E](#)). The Chair has asked me to point out some of the issues in this report as a preface to a discussion and comments on the status of education in Nevada. Quality Counts is an annual report from the Editorial Projects in Education, which is the research center of *Education Week*, a weekly national newspaper that reports on elementary and secondary issues and occasionally on higher education issues. It is also a report on state level efforts to improve elementary and secondary education. That is an important concept to keep in mind because it does not include programs that are effective and innovative, but that are implemented at a local school district level. [Read excerpts from report ([Exhibit E](#)).]

Chair Parnell:

Are there any questions?

Assemblyman Denis:

I am wondering if we have great inflation going on in this report.

Carol Stonefield:

I did call the research center of *Education Week* to see if they could give me the citations for college readiness for the 20 states that supposedly have definitions and was told that they do not have them. There is an annual survey that is administered to the states, and those states reported that they had definitions, but Quality Counts people did not have them in their possession. It may be inflated.

Chair Parnell:

The reason I asked Ms. Stonefield to present this to you is, as this is the policy committee for education, I am sure you are all as troubled as I am when I look at these scores. I am looking at page 2 ([Exhibit E](#)), and I am thinking, where do we really need to start as a Committee? If we could improve something in our education system, what might it be? I hear so many people distressed about our high school graduation rate; just seeing that number implies so much that I do not think is always accurate. The automatic response is, what in the world are our teachers doing? I even have to stop and pause and ask what is going on? Why are our numbers so low? We are fiftieth; the only area that has worse numbers than Nevada for high school graduation right now is the District of Columbia. That is sobering.

One thing this Committee could do is look at where we are the worst and think of what we could do to begin to impact these numbers. What do our high schools need; what do our students need; what do we have to do differently in our middle schools; where does it start? The National Governors Association is now formulating a common graduation data formula that we will all be under.

What I will be doing is having different groups come and do presentations. Washoe County has a blueprint on high school graduation. We will hear from the Department of Education on their efforts to address these low high school graduation numbers. On February 16, 2009, I want to have students, teachers, high school counselors, deans, and others come to this Committee to share with us their recommendations for legislation which would eventually begin to turn these numbers around. What I would like to ask the Committee to do is go through this document, identify an area that you are concerned with, and share with me things you would like to work on. Then use this as a source for making some credible, long-term movement so we can be proud of the numbers of

Nevada's graduates from high schools. That is one piece of a very big puzzle. We have to start with one of the toughest. That is one of the policy areas I am particularly interested in.

Are there any questions or comments?

There will be an Education Committee bill introduction on increasing the high school graduation rate. We also have a Committee bill that we are working on that, again, addresses secondary schools but emphasizes our middle schools, expanding what we did last session Assembly Bill No. 212 of the 74th Legislative Session. We have so many people concerned about losing kids in the middle school years. That is where the initial thought process for dropping out begins. It is an area that is long overdue to be assessed and in need of some reform.

If you know students who have had a difficult time or have dropped out, it is one of my favorite things to have students come and share their experiences and concerns about their schools and tell us how we can fix them. I plan to continue to do that as Chair of this Committee.

We have set up every meeting of this Committee to be videoconferenced. The meeting on February 16, 2009, will be as well. We would like to have a lot of students, teachers, and people from southern Nevada come to that meeting.

Do we have any Committee members or people from the public who would like to comment this afternoon?

No one. The next meeting will be Monday, February 9th at 3:45 p.m.

[The meeting was adjourned at 4:39 p.m.]

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Sharon McCallen
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Bonnie Parnell, Chair
DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Committee Name: Committee on Education

Date: February 4, 2009

Time of Meeting: 3:46 p.m.

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A	Committee on Education	Agenda
	B	Committee on Education	Attendance Roster
	C	Committee on Education	Standing Rules
	D	Carol Stonefield, Committee Policy Analyst	Committee Brief
	E	Carol Stonefield, Committee Policy Analyst	Quality Counts 2009: Portrait of a Population