

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

**Seventy-Fifth Session  
February 25, 2009**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Bonnie Parnell at 3:49 p.m. on Wednesday, February 25, 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  
Scarlett Smith, Committee Secretary  
Sherwood Howard, Committee Assistant

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Tim Tetz, Executive Director, Office of Veterans' Services, Reno, Nevada  
Jane A. Nichols, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs,  
Nevada System of Higher Education, Reno, Nevada  
John Hefner, CSM (Retired), Enlisted Association of Nevada, Minden,  
Nevada  
Daniel J. Klaich, Executive Vice Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher  
Education, Reno, Nevada  
Keith Rheault, Ph.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of  
Education  
Jodi Stephens, Legislative Director, Office of the Governor

**Chair Parnell:**

[Roll called.] Welcome to the Assembly Committee on Education in Carson City. I am going to take the agenda out of order since the veteran gentlemen in the audience today may not want to sit through the presentation, so I am going to start with Assembly Bill 188. This is the bill by Assemblyman Lynn Stewart.

**Assembly Bill 188: Authorizes the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada to waive certain fees and tuition for a child, widow or widower of a person who was killed while serving in the Nevada National Guard. (BDR 34-915)**

**Assemblyman Lynn Stewart, Clark County Assembly District No. 22:**

I would like to acknowledge the gentlemen here today who are veterans, would they please stand and be acknowledged. We appreciate their being here to support this bill and for their service. We are here to introduce A.B. 188, at the request of the Enlisted Association of the United States, the Nevada Chapter. The intent of this bill is a tuition waiver program for surviving family members of National Guardsmen who die while in the service of their country. As you may know, up until recently, the National Guard has been an organization within the United States, but since the War on Terror, they have been deployed throughout the world. Many of our fine Nevada National Guardsmen have served in Iraq, Afghanistan, and throughout the world with great distinction. Surviving dependents of Nevada National Guardsmen who die while in active duty status

should receive tuition waivers to state schools. Their sacrifice significantly changes their lives and their ability to support their children and maintain their living standards. Granting tuition waivers will assist them throughout their careers and raising their families.

Currently, the Board of Regents grants tuition waivers to National Guardsmen. Assembly Bill 188 would extend waivers to surviving dependents of Guardsmen who are killed in action while on active duty. The bill would codify this procedure and extend the benefit to all surviving dependents of National Guardsmen who are killed in an active duty status, wherever they may be serving. Currently, the university system grants waivers for the surviving members of Guardsmen, but we want to codify this so it is in the *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS), which would solidify this. When Guardsmen are killed, whether male or female, their spouses and their children are at a great disadvantage. Oftentimes, the surviving spouse has to provide for the family, and this would give him a chance to better his education, better support his family, and get a better job. With that, I will turn it over to Tim Tetz, who is the Executive Director of the Office of Veterans' Services in the State of Nevada, and he will give a statement.

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you. Welcome, Tim.

**Tim Tetz, Executive Director, Office of Veterans' Services, Reno, Nevada:**

We rise here to support A.B. 188, along with the veterans behind me. As many of you know, I do not ask them to come up and flood you with pleas. I tell them I will be their voice. This is a great bill, not only because it is doing what is right for the family members of those who have been killed in action, but also because it is not changing anything that is currently being done. We are merely putting this into NRS. The veterans, every other year on off sessions, come together and brainstorm ideas on how to take care of veterans and things we need to fix within the NRS. This one has come up the last two times, and this bill was with us during the 2007 Session. This is one of the issues the veterans wished us to carry forward, and Assemblyman Stewart did that for us. We administratively looked into it and met with Jane Nichols from the university system; she informed us that this is already policy but having it in state law would help us out. She will testify later. If we can do right by providing educational benefits for those Nevadans such as police officers, firefighters, and others who are serving our state, we can do no better than to offer the families, widows/widowers, and children of our Nevada National Guardsmen who are killed a similar benefit. I ask that you support this bill and put this disparity behind us.

**Chair Parnell:**

I would publicly like to thank you since you have done such a great job since taking over the position. On behalf of the Committee, we thank all our veterans for your service and all that you continue to do; we really appreciate it. I assume there is no fiscal note because the practice is already occurring, so the cost would stay the same. Is that correct?

**Tim Tetz:**

That is correct. I ask Ms. Nichols to verify that.

**Jane A. Nichols, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education, Reno, Nevada:**

It is a pleasure to be with you today and to testify in support of A.B. 188. We have had a wonderful partnership with the Nevada National Guard for their active-duty members and for this category of widow/widowers and dependents. We have had a policy in place that covers their basic registration fee. What this bill adds on is the laboratory fee. We believe it is a very small cost, so we put no fiscal impact. We welcome the opportunity for it to be a waiver in NRS. We have to have the National Guard and the adjutant general working with us to verify these circumstances and to track them. As you can see in the bill, there is a period of time given for the dependents and spouses to be enrolled. We work very closely with the National Guard in order to track those individuals and to make sure when they come to us that we will have the record and can verify their eligibility. That is very important to us.

We have one thing in our policy that you do not have in this bill that I might mention. It may not be necessary, but we have in our policy for it to cover spouses and financially dependent children of servicemen and women who are prisoners of war (P.O.W.) or declared missing in action (M.I.A.). That category can be interpreted to be covered in the language of this bill, but that is a category that we wish to continue and will continue regardless of the action of the Legislature, but you might want to consider adding that category.

**Assemblyman Denis:**

How many people really fall under this category? From reading the fiscal note, it appears that there are about two requests per year.

**Jane A. Nichols:**

Our policy was passed by the Board of Regents in 2003, and since then we have had fewer than 50 individuals take advantage of it. We are not talking about large numbers of people who will benefit from this policy, but at this point in time we know it is fewer than 50 since 2003.

**Assemblyman Denis:**

But that includes all the different categories.

**Jane A. Nichols:**

That includes the categories that we are talking about here, for the widow/widowers and for the dependents of those National Guardsmen who are killed in active duty.

**Assemblyman Stewart:**

In addition to the time limit, which is that they have to complete this within 10 years, they must maintain a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) since we want them to remain studious individuals.

**Chair Parnell:**

The way I am reading it, they have to begin to take advantage of it no later than 10 years, or by 28 years old. Is that correct?

**Assemblyman Stewart:**

That is correct.

**Assemblyman Kihuen:**

Does this also apply to the community colleges and the entire Nevada System of Higher Education?

**Assemblyman Stewart:**

Yes, that is our intent.

**Chair Parnell:**

Are there any more questions or comments from Committee members? Is there anyone else wishing to testify?

**John Hefner, CSM (Retired), Enlisted Association of Nevada, Minden, Nevada:**

[Read from submitted written testimony on A.B. 188 ([Exhibit C](#)). Also referred to data in handout ([Exhibit D](#)).]

**Chair Parnell:**

Thank you. Is there anyone else who would like to testify in support or opposition to A.B. 188? I do not see anyone, and I will therefore close the hearing on this bill. I will call for a motion.

ASSEMBLYMAN HARDY MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS  
ASSEMBLY BILL 188.

ASSEMBLYMAN DENIS SECONDED THE MOTION.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The amended language would include those missing in action and prisoners of war.

**Assemblyman Stewart:**

Thank you, members of the Committee, we appreciate this very much.

**Chair Parnell:**

I will now begin the presentation on college readiness and that transition from high school to higher education. As you will hear during this testimony, this was -one of the issues in the *Quality Counts 2009* report. We seem to be missing a definition for college readiness and have not had the discussion that is very needed in our state. This Committee has talked about the transition into middle school, the transition into high school, and this is the last leg of that discussion. Hopefully today we will have a good discussion about the transition from our high schools into our systems of higher education. With that, I will call Dr. Jane Nichols and Mr. Daniel Klaich to the table to give us the higher education perspective, and we will be hearing from Dr. Keith Rheault to give us the high school aspect of this.

**Daniel J. Klaich, Executive Vice Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher Education, Reno, Nevada:**

I am here to listen to Dr. Nichols and Crystal Abba. They are our main presenters today, and I am eager to listen to this last step and engage in discussion and questions that the Committee may have.

**Jane A. Nichols, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE), Reno, Nevada:**

College readiness in Nevada is something we have been talking about and trying to do something about for 20 years ([Exhibit E](#)). I have a sense that the stars may be coming into alignment, and I think this discussion today will be a very productive one. College readiness means clear expectations of student performance necessary for college readiness, agreed upon by high schools, colleges, and universities. So you have to have both at the table to agree on the definition of college readiness. But the research and the field itself, across the United States, has demonstrated that those same expectations of student performance are work readiness standards. Those have to be agreed upon by

the employers and the business communities in consent with K-12 and higher education. There is no real difference. Sometimes it is very difficult to persuade everyone of this fact, but this is the reality. The work and research that has been done, particularly by the American Diploma Project, is clear that the employers of your high school graduates have exactly the same expectations as colleges and universities have of those high school graduates. In fact, to be successful, it is what graduates have to know. Under college readiness, you need to have those two pieces.

The third piece is assessment methods in place to mark the progress of all graduates, such as: tests, portfolios, course completion, and other methods. When we talk about college readiness, we are not talking about a subset of the high school graduating class; we are talking about how a state defines college readiness, which is applied to all graduates of high school classes. The best way to think about that is that every student in Nevada who graduates from high school should have the opportunity to go to work and be successful, or to go to college and be successful. We do not want to pigeonhole them negatively in the sixth, seventh, or eighth grade because when they get to be 18, they will not have that choice. All students should be college ready and work ready when they finish high school.

There are two reports that have come out that have made us think about college readiness. One is *Education Week's Quality Counts 2009* report, which I believe Superintendent Rheault will talk about more in-depth. I want to emphasize the college readiness portion.

There are four parts of this that the *Quality Count Report* addresses:

1. Twenty states in the United States define college readiness; Nevada does not.
2. Course alignment of high school diplomas with higher education expectations. We are set to get there in 2011 with increased high school standards, but those standards have not been set yet by the Board of Education.
3. High school assessment aligned with higher education; 11 states have this, and Nevada does not.
4. Postsecondary decisions using high school assessments; nine states do, but Nevada does not.

When the American Diploma Project started, Nevada was one of the five states that helped launch it. We spent a great deal of time and energy putting all of these pieces in place and incorporating them in a plan, yet it did not happen. We have begun this work before, and we can do this. The next report is called *Closing the Expectations Gap 2009*.

**Chair Parnell:**

May I stop you? We have quite a bit of interest from the Committee.

**Assemblyman Denis:**

Regarding the fourth part, postsecondary decisions use high school assessments, can you explain what that is?

**Jane A. Nichols:**

This can take many different forms, in many states. The idea is to have high school tests or assessments, such as the proficiency test, that are used for graduation, for placement, or for continuing in high school. Higher education uses that same test and those scores so that the student knows early on if he is going to be ready for college and how to be ready for college. We have tried very hard in higher education to support the use of the test in high school in Nevada. For example, under the American Diploma Project about ten years ago, we looked at using the proficiency exam to help placement in remedial and had a plan to do it. That is the idea. If we took the proficiency exam, used different scores on it to predict placement in a remedial program, then the student would know early on where he stands, and we would already have his placement. We would not have to do any extra placement tests.

**Assemblyman Denis:**

Where are we on that process?

**Jane A. Nichols:**

It has gone nowhere.

**Assemblyman Denis:**

Why?

**Jane A. Nichols:**

We dropped out of the American Diploma Project, and you see that one of my recommendations is that we rejoin, because joining that project is a commitment on the part of the Legislature, the Governor, the Department of Education, and Higher Education to try to do these things.



**Assemblyman Denis:**

So the delay is because we have not all come to an agreement to do that?

**Jane A. Nichols:**

That is correct.

**Chair Parnell:**

The postsecondary decision assessment would be more like the ACT or one of the career vocational assessment tests that a lot of the high schools are doing. Is that correct?

**Jane A. Nichols:**

Parts three and four are closely aligned. Part three says that whatever assessment a school system uses in high school is set with these college readiness expectations, which means that we have had a voice in that. Part four says that since you give tests, colleges and universities are going to use them for admission, for placement, and for those kinds of decisions.

**Chair Parnell:**

Yet, we have never had the dialogue that creates the bridge from one to another.

**Jane A. Nichols:**

It takes a lot of work and staff to put this together; a lot of people need to reach an agreement. I do not want to imply that this is simple. We have never been able to sustain that conversation with all of the parties at the table.

**Chair Parnell:**

I have another question on the second part, the course alignment of the high school diploma. We have the Academic Standards Council. We may want to assess taking a couple of people from the Academic Standards Council and a couple of people from higher education who can begin the work of that alignment. We have the people in place; we just have not said that this is a requirement in the next two years. Are we now at the stage where we need that direction?

**Jane A. Nichols:**

Nevada has had the pieces in place for a long time to make this happen. I am going to come back to each point in my presentation and expand upon them, so that may answer some of your questions.

**Chair Parnell:**

I will let you continue through your presentation.

**Jane A. Nichols:**

The other report I want to bring to your attention is *Closing the Expectations Gap 2009*, which is produced by Achieve and the American Diploma Project. Achieve is an organization of business people that came together and have been very active in trying to raise standards in high school. The report indicates that there are four key policies to ensure college ready and career ready high school graduates. Standards are in place in 45 states; graduation requirements are in place in 29 states; assessment is in 33 states; and the P-20 data system is in place in 50 states. The only one that we are close to meeting their standard is the data system. We have been working very hard with the Department of Education. We have applied for grants, and we think we are going to see that come to pass.

I want to point out that one of the most obvious benchmarks is ACT college readiness benchmarks. College readiness benchmarks in many ways are work readiness benchmarks as well. The ACT benchmark scores are set nationally. For English it is a score of 18, for math 22, for reading 21, and for science 24. These scores reflect a student's probable readiness for college level work and credit bearing courses based on national data. They predict that a student can pass a college course with a C grade. At the last Board of Regents meeting, we established those standards for university placement of students who take the ACT. Those are the test scores that we are using to say if a student is below the set benchmark, he may need to do some catch-up work to be ready for college level studies.

I was asked to point out a few things about where we are and what we have been doing in terms of our progress to date. The Board of Regents has set eligibility standards for the Millennium Scholarship as the Legislature indicated it could to include particular required courses. This spring is the first year a student has to complete these courses to be eligible for the Millennium. We have been working hard with the school districts to get the word out to parents and to students. Those eligibility standards are: four years of English, four years of math (including algebra 2), three years of natural science, and three years of social science and history. The GPA for the Millennium Scholarship is not calculated on those courses; it is calculated overall. Yet, they have to complete those courses and make the GPA, either weighted or unweighted, in order to receive the Millennium Scholarship. We did that because we do not want to discourage students from taking advanced placement (AP) courses and from taking honors courses, so you included all the courses in the eligibility for GPA.

We also have done something very exciting. For the first time this spring, we have added the ability of a student in Nevada to be automatically admitted to

either university if he receives Nevada's Advanced Diploma. The Advanced Diploma was established by the Board of Education. It has been put in place by the school districts. It requires a 3.25 overall GPA, weighted or unweighted, and 18 required courses, including four years each of English and math, which we think are the critical paths for college-readiness. For families, we wanted to say that if a student wants to be ready for college, he should complete the Advanced Diploma since we will automatically admit him to all of our institutions and universities. Clark and Washoe County School Districts have implemented the college/work readiness curriculum as the default curriculum; that means the student is in that curriculum unless the parent allows the student not to take that curriculum. That is a huge step forward.

In terms of assessments, we have revised our remedial course placement scores on ACT to mark the benchmarks, which will be effective for fall 2010. We are using that to distribute to the high schools to alert students when they take the ACT, usually in their junior year, that if they do not score at that level, they will need to take more advanced courses, and they will need to increase their scores on that test.

There has been a wonderful project going on in Clark County with our three southern institutions; this is one example of the work our faculty is doing. On the math side, the faculty members are getting a definition of skills by the Clark County School District, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), the College of Southern Nevada, and Nevada State College, where they are giving an early test developed by the high school faculty and the college faculty to let the students know if they are ready for college. Regarding the P-20 data system, as I mentioned, we have been working closely with Keith Rheault and his staff, we applied for grant funding twice. We are hoping that there is money in the upcoming federal reinvestment act, and we are ready to go when funding is available to complete the P-20 data systems. We have also signed an agreement with the department training and rehabilitation to be able to share data to look at where our graduates and our dropouts go when they leave our institution, so we will be able to track students into the workplace. On the longitudinal data, you should not have any concern about individual student data since all student identification is protected, and this information is for purposes of accurate reporting on where students go.

We also distributed a brochure, "The College Journey" ([Exhibit F](#)), to ensure that students consider the possibility of college. For four years we have published this brochure for all families in Nevada and students. Regent Thalia Dondero has helped us raise money for that, and we are very pleased that we have been able to get that brochure out to all students and their families. It recommends courses and tests for all students. We think it has been effective

but we need to keep working on recruiting new students. Also, our community colleges have stepped up considerably their offering of college courses in the junior and senior years of high school. We have seen an increase in the numbers of those courses that are offered, and in the number of students who successfully complete these courses. Our data show that if students complete college courses in their junior and senior year in high school, regardless of all other factors, they are more likely to attend college.

Finally, on the vocational/technical front, we continue to have a very strong partnership with all of the high school programs where a student can complete his program in high school and finish up his associate's degree in one year at our community college. That is a very successful program. We cannot talk only about merit-based scholarships and the Millennium requirements or admission requirements to the university. College readiness forces us and K-12 to look at expectations for all students and what we can guarantee they will have in terms of skills and abilities when they graduate from high school. That requires alignment of performance standards and curriculum content.

I recommend to you the following:

Under the P-16 Council there should be a mandate that they look at methods to ensure high school standards graduation requirements and assessments are aligned with college and workforce readiness expectations. Dr. Rheault is going to talk to you about the fact that we took that proposal to them, and they were not able to do that at that time. It does require the definition of college and workforce readiness.

I ask your support in getting Nevada to rejoin the American Diploma Project, where this good work on college readiness is occurring.

Also, for many years, you have heard about a call for all of our high school students to be taking the ACT, PSAT, or SAT in high school, because by doing that we are enabled to grab them and get them ready for college.

**Chair Parnell:**

I have a question based on the last bullet. How I see it is that you are the university and you have all these applications. When you get a student's application, which includes extracurricular activities, community service participation, and GPA, what does that picture look like? If the System of Higher Education is saying that we need to consider the ACT, the PSAT, or the SAT test for Nevada high school students, is it time to have the conversation about whether it would be a better tool for our high schools to be using one of these, rather than the high school proficiency exam?

**Jane A. Nichols:**

The tests are different. They do not differ greatly, yet there are necessary aspects to each. You can add certain factors to the proficiency exam, and you can come close to testing what the ACT tests since it is a course-based test. They do serve different purposes as long as the proficiency examination is required for high school graduation and the score is set relatively low. I think it serves a purpose that you might not want to abandon. Most states keep both kinds of tests; the reason I advocate the ACT/SAT in addition to the proficiency test is the ACT/SAT does two things: it gives a student a sense of where he stands nationally and what his achievements are, and it also enables him to clearly identify where he is weak. It gives him a look at what subjects he is excelling in and what subjects need extra work. It serves a very different purpose. For us, the most important thing is when students take the ACT or the SAT, it gets them ready to think about getting ready to go to college. We have surveyed high school students, and 85 percent of all high school juniors think they are going to college, but they have not taken those tests, and they do not understand what it takes. I am not here advocating that one replace the other at this point; I think it is a conversation that needs to occur and it is worth looking at.

**Chair Parnell:**

We also have to look at the cost. The amount this state spends on tests is rather shocking, which is the reason I think if there is a better tool, certainly this might be a time to have that conversation. To go along with that, I still believe we need to have the conversation about what you are looking for in a student as a whole.

**Jane A. Nichols:**

The community colleges have open admission, and any high school graduate can walk into a community college. Nevada State College requires a 2.0 GPA, and any graduate of high school can walk into Nevada State College. At the universities we have multi-layered admission criteria. Applicants can get in on their test scores, yet they are more likely to get in based on the courses they took and their GPAs. They can also come in on the Advanced Diploma. We have increased the size of our category for students who may not have those other three but have obviously demonstrated leadership skills, have extracurricular activities, may have had circumstances in life that they could not do the other three but show the promise of doing well at university. Both universities take the admissions very seriously in trying to open the door to everyone who can be successful.

**Chair Parnell:**

The other reason I bring that up is I think we need to have a serious conversation between our high school administrators and university system of

higher education regarding that. We have come to focus so much on singular issues, such as graduating, but we have not been practical and realistic about what you are looking for and who you find to be the best college student.

**Jane A. Nichols:**

We find if we can, together with middle schools and high schools, get the students on a college track in their school years, we are much more likely to be successful. The concept of college and work readiness is coming down to that early level. When the conversation is that way, we are much more likely to get more educated Nevadans.

**Assemblyman Munford:**

If an applicant does not qualify to get into UNLV or University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), are the standards and requirements to walk through the doorway of community colleges similar? Can he walk into a community college without an adequate score on the ACT? When he gets there, and he does not have that assessment, is there a test he has to take once he enrolls? Do you require applicants to take something after they are already admitted into the program?

**Jane A. Nichols:**

Any student who is a graduate of a Nevada high school, a GED, or an adult can go to a community college. When they arrive, the community college will give them a placement test to assess their skills to see whether they will be able to walk into college level work and be successful or if they are going to need some remediation. We bring a report to you on remedial education. What is wonderful about the community college is that for all students in Nevada who walk into the community college, the support has been in place to ensure they will be successful. There are counselors, extra courses, extra tutoring, and extra help for all students to be successful at the community college. We have a very aggressive transfer policy for the student to be able to go to community college. When a student is turned down at UNR or UNLV for admission, he is sent a letter that states if he attends community college and is successful, he is automatically admitted. That letter also goes to the community college and they recruit him and reach out to get him to come. Many students choose to take that pathway.

**Assemblyman Munford:**

Every course that a student takes at the community college level is transferrable?

**Jane A. Nichols:**

Absolutely, it is exactly the same. We have the same courses at the community colleges that we do at the universities.

**Chair Parnell:**

I think we have to thank former Assemblywoman Chris Giunchigliani for getting that done.

Last session with Assembly Bill No. 212 of the 74th Session, we created the ninth grade academic plan. Do you know if this information is being given to families, students, and counselors to discuss these options and the Advanced Diploma with our incoming ninth graders?

**Jane A. Nichols:**

We distribute it to all the superintendents in Nevada, and they distribute it to the schools and the counselors. It is our feedback and understanding that they all have this.

**Chair Parnell:**

If we have to stipulate that is part of the information given in conjunction with the creation of that academic plan, I think that would be incredibly important.

**Keith Rheault, Ph.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education:**

We have worked closely with all of the universities. All of the information is out there, and the Advanced Diploma requirements are also pushed. Earlier in the graduation discussion there were some figures I provided; 30 percent of high school students who received a diploma received an Advanced Diploma.

**Chair Parnell:**

Are there any further questions to Dr. Nichols? I will hand it over to you, Dr. Rheault, welcome.

**Keith Rheault:**

I want to thank Dr. Nichols for putting together the PowerPoint so we could avoid covering the same things. I provided you with a handout that I will follow through called the "College and Workforce Readiness: Transition from High School to Higher Education and the Workplace" ([Exhibit G](#)). I want to start out by taking you through the *Quality Counts 2009* report, which is the most common report that comes out each year that compares states on a number of issues. The first page is a chart which shows five categories under college readiness. Nevada has received a rating, D+ , and has been identified to have not completed any of the five categories. I did not include the rest of the chart; there are actually 14 total categories under college readiness. We did meet two of the five categories under Pre-K and kindergarten. We do not have a state-defined college readiness definition, yet I know the Senate is looking at a possible bill draft regarding that. Under the workforce category, we met three

out of the four criteria. This category is related to Career and Technical Endorsement that we have authority to give on our high school diplomas, which is all the work the Legislature has done over the last couple of years. The only thing we are missing is the workforce readiness definition, which was mentioned by Dr. Nichols. If you take a look at that and the criteria they rate us on, it follows in line what Dr. Nichols had in her presentation.

Following this chart, I thought it would be good to address the question they ask, which starts on page 3 of this report. They are looking for the question and the definition in order for a state to meet the requirement. In the handout ([Exhibit G](#)), I included *Quality Counts* college readiness questions and definitions. Regarding the first question, the first step in improving is establishing a definition. Once we establish the definition, then we can start going step-by-step to align the courses, then the assessment, then the placement exams so we know how to get our students remediated. Regarding the second question ([Exhibit G](#)), we do not get credit for that even though the 2007 Legislature required ninth graders, beginning last school year, to take four years of English, three years of math (up to algebra II), and three sciences (two of them have to be lab sciences). Starting last year with ninth graders, they have to take those courses throughout their high school career, and they will be the first class that will have to meet those requirements in 2011. The definition says that you do not receive credit unless it was the graduating class this year. So we are getting closer to that. We probably still would not get credit because our standard diploma does not match those courses yet. As we move closer to the requirements, it would be my intent to bring it forward to the state board that they consider looking at the courses students have to take anyway as the standard diploma somewhere before 2011, but it probably would not apply to that class. I think you heard that Washoe and Clark Counties are requiring those courses already, but all of the other 15 districts are just trying to build the courses as they go. We want to make sure we work out any bugs in providing all the course work, particularly for rural school district students.

On page 4, the second question ([Exhibit G](#)), we do not use any of our statewide high school assessments for decisions related to admissions. The high school proficiency exam we use is really designed for a different purpose than for college-readiness. There are a number of ways we could look at it. California, for example, has a high school proficiency test, but they plan to address college readiness by adding a section to the high school test that states, "If you want to attend a university or college in California, complete the next questions." They have a separate section so that students can use it for placement. That is one possibility; other states are trying to get approval to use ACT or SAT or certain criteria on those. There are a number of ways you could come up with this.



The next question we also answered no because the state's higher education system does not have a placement exam used on a statewide basis in its colleges and universities since it varies between the community colleges, and there is no statewide entrance placement exam. Community colleges have one placement, and the universities have a broader range where they will take ACT scores so it does not define what it is. Those are things we can look at, and steps we can take, after we identify what the definition is. The final item on my handout is regarding P-16 college and workforce readiness. We work closely to present to the P-16 Council how we thought we could get from where we are currently, which is nowhere regarding college-readiness, to get to where we need to be by following a specific plan. It was not adopted at this point; it was actually a requirement under the P-16 Council, but I am at the point where it needs to be done. It may take a bill draft to get a college readiness definition. Once we get the definition, we then need to look at whether or not the courses we require get to that standard. Once we get to the courses, then we need to look at whether our high school assessment test actually measures what we need to do for college-readiness. Also, we need to look at the placement tests so everything is in line. It is not going to happen overnight, but it can be done and it should be done.

**Chair Parnell:**

If we were to mandate the State Board of Education to work with the Nevada System of Higher Education, which could easily be done before next session, you could report back to us, and we could implement the findings at the end of that school year, 2011-2012.

**Keith Rheault:**

That would be my goal. I would hope by early 2011, these steps could have been identified. I hope that once we know what the definition is, then we can work to increase the standard diploma. If that is what it takes to get recognition, we will require the right courses to be successful.

**Chair Parnell:**

We have the default curriculum which was passed last session. That is a starting point.

**Keith Rheault:**

On a couple of other definitions, they do not like the default curriculum. They say if there is a loophole, they do not give you full credit. That is something we can discuss later. I think you probably need a default for circumstances.

**Chair Parnell:**

You mentioned earlier that California uses a high school proficiency exam that has a separate component relating to college placement. Could the company that we contract with create that kind of exam?

**Keith Rheault:**

That would be one way to do it. For example, we have contracted with the company to develop all of the test questions based on our standards. If they knew what the college entrance standards were at the college level, they could design the tests.

**Chair Parnell:**

There is certainly a lot to think about. As a Committee, we do not need to think *Quality Counts* is what is important; we need to remember that what is important is that we do it for our high school students who want to have a successful higher education experience. It certainly is a way to find out what we are lacking, and that we do need to get on top of it and make sure it is being done so students can benefit from it.

**Keith Rheault:**

Right now I could not tell a tenth grader what they are short of; we need to know the standards so we can backtrack and have some sort of test that defines the standards.

**Chair Parnell:**

In 2005 we passed the first extensive Career and Technical Education (CTE) bill and we created the CTE advisory council. It seems like that would fit here, since it had all the people we needed at the table. It had business people, high school people, community college and university people really trying to determine what this looks like. You might want to use that as a model because all the counties have had great success with their CTE advisory councils.

**Keith Rheault:**

Most of the time when college readiness is being discussed it is regarding English, writing, reading, and math. They do not go into college readiness for social studies or science although a few are starting to go that way. That would be the intent, at least to define the English and math standards for the state.

**Chair Parnell:**

Are there any questions or comments from Committee members? I appreciate both of you addressing this, and I think we will see this in legislation. Thank you for being here.

I will now open the hearing on Assembly Bill 96 and welcome Jodi Stephens on behalf of the Governor's Office.

**Assembly Bill 96:** Clarifies eligibility for and the administration of Millennium Scholarships for students who are enrolled in more than one eligible institution. (BDR 34-441)

**Jodi Stephens, Legislative Director, Office of the Governor:**

[Spoke from written testimony ([Exhibit H](#)) and referred to data sheet ([Exhibit I](#)).]

Also, I had a discussion before the hearing with Dr. Nichols as to their proposed amendments. I want to let the Committee know that the Governor is comfortable with amendment 1, the deletion of that language. It would amend subsection 3 of section 2 of the bill.

**Chair Parnell:**

The Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) is suggesting a change in language in section 1, some in section 2 and section 3. Are you saying the Governor's Office is okay with 1 and 3?

**Jodi Stephens:**

The Governor's Office would not presume to speak for the Nevada System of Higher Education, so I would like to ask Ms. Nichols to come forward.

**Jane A. Nichols:**

I am afraid we created confusion with the sections we are amending. We are here to support the bill, and the same parent and student might have been part of the catalyst for changing our policy. We did, at the Board of Regents, change our own policy to allow for co-enrollment. We are very comfortable with this. It is somewhat changed in that currently we have followed the Pell Grant model for students to be able to enroll in two institutions and still receive Pell Grants. We have to designate a home institution, and the home institution then tracks the student and keeps up with his receipt of the Pell Grant. With the Millennium Scholarship, we have a policy that gives more latitude to the home institution to decide if the student can co-enroll depending on his need to take courses at another institution for a degree. This change would make the co-enrollment automatic, and we are not here today to object to that. We encourage students to enroll full-time in one institution so that they are able to take advantage of all of the services of that one institution. Yet, we also understand there are circumstances in which students may need to go to Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) even though they are primarily enrolled in University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), for example.

We are not objecting to this bill; we are asking for the amendment that has been referred to by the Governor's Office, which is the amendment that would eliminate the section for the combined grade point average (GPA). The Millennium Scholarship requires that a student maintain a certain GPA to maintain eligibility. It also requires that he is successfully making progress towards a degree in a degree program. One institution is responsible for making sure he is enrolled in a degree program. The way we have implemented this is if the student enrolls in two institutions, he has to maintain the required GPA at both institutions. This is for two reasons. One is that the way we handle disbursements makes it very difficult to do a combined GPA, and we do not do that for any other scholarship program. We do not have the ability to do a joint GPA. Also, the accreditation standards for our institutions require that students have the GPA at that institution to maintain continuation and meet academic standards. If the student is enrolled in separate institutions, each institution has its own requirements for continuation, and those requirements are accreditation requirements. We do not think it is wise policy, nor possible, to have a combined GPA under the Millennium Scholarship. We would like to see that part stricken from the bill, and I believe you are willing to support that ([Exhibit J](#) and [Exhibit K](#)).

**Jodi Stephens:**

Yes.

**Chair Parnell:**

It looks like the bill is about two things. I think everyone is comfortable with the co-enrollment and making sure that if a student is taking six credits at TMCC and six credits at UNR, because UNR is the four-year degree granting school, it would take precedence. This means that the GPA of the student's classes at UNR would be looked at first on its own, not be combined with the student's GPA at TMCC. Yet, I think we are still a little confused about the language regarding the GPA.

**Assemblyman Bobzien:**

I understand the technical challenges of trying to combine the two and do the data tracking. Nonetheless, these two criteria (2.6 GPA for the first year and 2.75 for the second year) are figures and numbers that are on the minds of people that I represent in my district. To take that out and not have any sort of a plan for tracking makes me very nervous. I understand that the board has some authority to make regulations for determining academic progress, but I wonder if we can put something in here to deal with this. I am supportive of the concept and recognize that we have the situation in which students are in both institutions. Yet, because there are many people very focused on this program, I would hate to see us meddle with this.

**Jane A. Nichols:**

I may have given a false impression. We are not suggesting in any way abandoning the GPA requirements. The only issue here is we have calculated the GPA for each institution the student attends, for each semester, as required under the legislation. That is the continuation criteria set by the Legislature. If a student enrolls for six credits at TMCC, his calculated GPA has to meet the standard. If he is enrolled at UNR, his calculated GPA has to meet this standard. We would not in any way change anything of the legislative intent on the level of performance of the student. We are simply suggesting that we do not have the capacity to combine those two courses and grades into one GPA, which has no institutional home and will not be reflected on a transcript, and make that the standard for keeping the Millennium Scholarship.

**Assemblyman Bobzien:**

Here we are still without an adequate data system across all the institutions, and it is now 2009. I know I have been talking about this for over 12 years, so it is very frustrating.

What triggered the concern was the indication of intent. On page 2 of [Exhibit K](#), showing the NSHE's proposed amendments under "intent" it says, "The NSHE Board of Regents, in developing the procedures and guidelines authorized by the bill, will address the matter of grade point average as appropriate."

**Jane A. Nichols:**

That is misleading; I apologize. The Board of Regents can do nothing within the context of the legislation that you have given us. We are not going to change anything other than what you see here and what is in this bill. What you intend is as you decide what to do about this.

**Assemblyman Bobzien:**

I did not see that it was an attempt to change the actual GPA requirements; again it is the issue of the combined GPA, which is really not a meaningful number. Nonetheless, since all the other students that are at one institution very much are held to these GPAs, I would hate to set up a situation whereby we have other students who are able to skate by because they picked up extra credit at TMCC. That is my main concern.

**Jane A. Nichols:**

That is very true. We are in the middle of the NSHE iNtegrate Project, which is bringing together new information systems for our institutions, and we are making great progress. We anticipate having it online in two years. We have

been working very hard for the last two years to get that data system in all of the institutions in place. Thank you for your support on that.

**Assemblyman Stewart:**

I suggest you contact the Controller as you try to integrate these programs with the XBRL program.

**Chair Parnell:**

Are there any further questions or comments from the Committee? I would like to summarize to make sure you are both on the same page. In A.B. 96, we would delete "if a student is enrolled in more than one eligible institution, the student must maintain a combined grade point average that meets the requirements of this subsection." The only other part of the amendment that has been offered by the Nevada System of Higher Education is that the act would become effective July 1, 2010, instead of 2009. Is that correct?

**Jane A. Nichols:**

That is correct. For purposes of getting all the pieces in place, we have asked for that. I have now talked to the Governor's Office, and the data is not a crucial thing for us. If it is important to the Governor that this be implemented in 2009, we certainly can do that.

**Jodi Stephens:**

The Governor would like to see the 2009 graduates captured under this program, so we would like to keep the date at July 1, 2009.

**Chair Parnell:**

The second semester for our two universities and our colleges, for this year's students, will be prior to July 1, 2009. Does that pose a problem? I do not know if the Governor would get what he is hoping for even if the date were July 1, 2009.

**Jodi Stephens:**

We do understand that. But for the second semester, we understand that we could probably have a better system in place by then.

**Chair Parnell:**

Ms. Nichols, are you okay with that?

**Jane A. Nichols:**

We are okay with the implementation date of July 1, 2009.

**Chair Parnell:**

It does not have to be a full year longer; we could even do October 1, 2009.

**Jane A. Nichols:**

I think the idea of the Governor's Office is that he would like the 2009 high school graduates to have this in place when they start at our institutions. We think there will be very few cases of students who would not fall under our recently enacted policy. However, for those who might be better benefitted, we can work with this.

**Chair Parnell:**

That is terrific. Are there any questions or comments from Committee members? Thank you both. Is there anyone here to testify in support of or opposition to A.B. 96? The hearing on A.B. 96 is now closed. Is there any additional public comment? [There was none.] Is there any further business from the Committee? [There was none.]

[Meeting adjourned at 5:09 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 25, 2009

**Time of Meeting:** 3:49 p.m.

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance roster
A.B. 188	C	John Hefner	Testimony on A.B. 188
A.B. 188	D	John Hefner	Article titled: "Tuition Waivers—Veterans and National Guardsmen Dependents—Private Institutions"
A.B. 96	E	Jane A. Nichols	"College and Work Readiness, Nevada High School Graduates"
A.B. 96	F	Jane A. Nichols	"The College Journey" Brochure
A.B. 96	G	Keith Rheault	"College and Workforce Readiness: The transition from High School to Higher Education and the Workplace"
A.B. 96	H	Jodi Stephens	Testimony on A.B. 96
A.B. 96	I	Jodi Stephens	"Governor Guinn Millennium Scholarship Data Sheet"
A.B. 96	J	Jane A. Nichols	Proposed Legislation
A.B. 96	K	Jane A. Nichols	Summary of A.B. 96