MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

6Seventy-Sixth Session
April 27, 2011

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair David P. Bobzien at 3:29 p.m. on Wednesday, April 27, 2011, 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/76th2011/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:

Assemblyman David P. Bobzien, Chair
Assemblywoman Marilyn Dondero Loop, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Paul Aizley
Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson
Assemblywoman Olivia Diaz
Assemblywoman Lucy Flores
Assemblyman Ira Hansen
Assemblyman Randy Kirner
Assemblywoman April Mastroluca
Assemblyman Richard McArthur
Assemblyman Harvey J. Munford
Assemblywoman Dina Neal
Assemblyman Lynn D. Stewart
Assemblywoman Melissa Woodbury

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mindy Martini, Committee Policy Analyst
Kristin Roberts, Committee Counsel
Taylor Anderson, Committee Manager
Sharon McCallen, Committee Secretary
Gianna Shirk, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Chris Minnich, Senior Membership Director, Council of Chief State School Officers
Keith Rheault, Ph.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education

Chair Bobzien:
[Roll was called. Committee protocol and rules were explained.]

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) Initiative is a state-led effort coordinated by the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to develop a CCSS in English language arts and mathematics for Grades K-12. The goal of the initiative is to provide a consistent framework for classroom instruction to prepare students for postsecondary education and the workforce. Forty-eight states, including Nevada, two territories, and the District of Columbia have been involved in developing the new standards. In Nevada, we adopted the standards on June 22, 2010.

I have scheduled this presentation because the common CCSS are central to any discussions concerning education today. The transition to using the new standards will impact professional development, teacher education programs in colleges and universities, curriculum alignment, and textbook adoption.

This legislative session, the Legislature is considering two measures that concern the CCSS Initiative, the first being Senate Bill 211, which would require the Legislative Committee on Education to conduct a study concerning implementation of the CCSS in Nevada's public schools.

Senate Bill 14, which our Committee heard jointly with the Senate Committee on Education on March 16, 2011, would require the State Board of Education/State Board for Career and Technical Education to develop a model curriculum for English language arts and mathematics based upon the CCSS.

Committee members will remember that this measure was filed on behalf of the Nevada Youth Legislature. It is also important to remember that we have two objects in play. We have the standards at the state level, and we have curriculum at the local level that is developed to deliver those standards.

I would like to welcome our guest presenter, Mr. Chris Minnich.

Chris Minnich, Senior Membership Director, Council of Chief State School Officers:

Our organization is the membership organization for the state superintendents of education. Dr. Rheault is here and he is one member of our organization. We do have all 50 states as members of the CCSSO, along with 8 territories.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak today, because I think there is a lot of misinformation out there about standards versus curriculum. You touched on that in your opening remarks. It is true that the Governors and Chief State School Officers had this idea well before the Race to the Top program or anything that had come from the federal government. In 2008, prior to the presidential election, we had a meeting with CCSSO and the NGA education advisors. What came from that was—why would states spend their own money to develop standards when we are all going for the same benchmark of college and career readiness? Can we get some agreement across the United States about what college and career readiness looks like? We undertook this project at that point.

The politics have gotten much more difficult as we have progressed. Early on it was a no brainer that states should work together to write standards. I will talk about that in my presentation.

Let us start by talking about what standards are and what they are not (Exhibit C). When we started this about three years ago, there were disparate standards across the states. Each state was expecting something different from every child that came out of the system. Some states were not preparing their students for a postsecondary pursuit or a living-wage career. We felt that the time was now to address that. While it may be difficult to get all students to these standards, it is a false dichotomy to try to present these as something aspirational. They are more difficult than what is going on in most states right now. That does not mean that we should not be setting those goals for our children.

Most state standards were set in the 1990s and early 2000. They are quite outdated. They were written in a time when the job market was different; the

requirements for technology were not as evident as they are in our society today, so it was time to revisit state standards.

Governors, especially, have been talking about global competition. When a student graduates from a high school in Nevada, he is not simply competing with his peers in the town he lives in, but rather he is competing with students across the nation and internationally. That was something that was very important in the discussion about why we needed a common set of standards across the United States. As I mentioned earlier, a high school degree is not enough for preparing most students for their next steps.

Why is this important? The idea behind this is that we can be clear with kids about where they need to be when they leave their K-12 experience. Right now I am mentoring a student in the State of Virginia. He tells me he is doing terribly on the state tests, but colleges are accepting him, so is he not doing okay? I cannot explain to him that disconnect between the state assessments, the SAT assessments, or the ACT assessments, and the standards that the state has set. It is not clear to our students what is expected of them. We are hoping to change that by having common standards across the states.

We talked about the zip code issue—the expectations being different. I have been traveling a lot lately and I volunteered to get off an airplane the other day. I gave my seat up and they said they would put me on the next flight to my destination in Kentucky. Of course, as I am watching the plane take off, the gate agent tells me the airline had just booked the last seat that he was going to give to me so he could not get me to Kentucky that night. I decided to drive the ten hours it would take. I got as far as eastern Kentucky and wanted a McFlurry so I stopped at McDonalds about 9 p.m. that night. I was talking to a high school junior who was serving me and she said that I did not look like I was from around there. I told her I was not, that I was driving to Louisville where I was speaking about education the next day, and a discussion ensued about what was going on in her high school. She asked me to tell them that the kids over here can learn just as well as the kids in Louisville. It struck me that the kids even knew that the expectations were not the same for them in rural Kentucky as in the big cities in Kentucky. It was quite compelling to me at that point.

I share that story because across the United States, you will see there are still different expectations for different groups of kids in this country. That is tragic and should be unacceptable in our public schooling system.

In the introduction it was said that this is a state-led initiative—it is the only way to get states to adopt these standards. The federal government tried to write the standards in early 2000, to say that these were the national standards, and it did not work. No states adopted them. States are the ones that have the responsibility for education. It is their rightful responsibility to set these standards. That is why we had to start with our organization and the NGA to have the states lead this process.

I wanted to put it in writing because there is so much misinformation out there about what the federal government did in this process. The federal government did not provide any funding for the writing of these standards, or require their adoption in any way.

Standards themselves simply set a starting point; this is where we want our students to be. One of the bills that is in the Senate sounds like it would require a curriculum to be written based on these standards. That is a very good step in the right direction. I will talk later about being able to share resources across state lines now that you have the same standards—Utah, Nevada, and Arizona all have the same standards. There would be the opportunity to share resources in developing such a curriculum. It gets into some of the local control issues that we need to address.

We never said in this standard process that we want to tell teachers how to teach. We simply want to set the expectations and then let good teachers get students to these standards.

You see in the map on page 6 of (Exhibit C), we currently have 43 states that have adopted these standards. Minnesota adopted only the English language arts standards and not the mathematics standards. Washington is in the final stages but it takes legislative approval to adopt a set of standards, which is why it says provisionally adopted. For the six states that have not yet adopted—Texas, Alaska, Virginia, Nebraska, Montana, and North Dakota—we have good indications that three of those—Montana, Nebraska, and North Dakota—are headed in the direction of adoption. Texas may not adopt these initially in the first round, and Virginia is still talking about it.

How are these standards different than the current standards most states are transitioning away from? They have college and work expectations; they are focused and coherent. As we did this study of standards, in many states we found that things were being asked to be taught in multiple grades over and over again. One good example is fractions in mathematics. We found, in current state standards, that fractions were being taught anywhere between second and eighth grade and sometimes in all grades. Nobody was teaching

students to mastery, but rather just covering it so they could pass the test at the end of the year. We are trying to change that and create a focus to these standards where things are taught to mastery in certain grades; they then move forward and teach students more difficult topics.

In using standards from high-performing countries, we look to see what those countries are teaching in those grades. It does not necessarily mean the standards are getting the students to learn in those high-performing countries. I do want to be clear about that; setting high expectations is only the first step in this process. We need to provide the supports for teachers to get students to these standards.

We began with trying to write college- and career-readiness standards. What does it look like for English language arts and mathematics for students to be college and career ready when they leave their public or private education system? That is an important piece because in the summer of 2009 we published those college- and career-readiness standards. We felt that was the benchmark. Something this country had never committed to was college and career readiness. In the past it had been good enough to say these are the standards that will get our students as far as we can in a learning progression, rather than saying college and career readiness is the end goal for all students. At that point, the summer of 2009, we began writing the progressions that would lead up to college and career readiness and have since done so. Those standards were published on June 2, 2010 with heavy state involvement along the way. There were many states that commented on the standards, and we were able to incorporate much of the feedback we received directly into the standards. There were many revisions. There was a public comment period during which we received 10,000 public comments. Incidentally, most of the public comments were about local schools and not the standards themselves.

We are at the point where we have 43 states accepting these standards and we think that is a real plus for the country.

What do we define as college and career readiness? What level are we shooting for? It is preparing students for success in careers that provide livable salaries above the poverty line. We use the family of four; we also used the Bureau of Labor Statistics in terms of the jobs that would provide for a family. In college readiness, there was much more data from the college entrance exams along with faculty surveys. It may surprise you to hear, but the faculty is not exactly consistent with what they are expecting freshmen to do in higher education. We are working with higher education to attempt to refine that line. These standards were the best first shot at that, but we may need to upgrade them at some point in the future.

At a high level, some of the important points around English language arts are that currently, in most states, we do not have enough focus on informational text. Students are being asked to read literature—which is a good thing—but we are asking students to read texts also in these standards. That is much more about what they would use in college and/or a career. It is a good change. It is in addition to what they are already doing. We also asked that teaching students to read not only be the responsibility of the English teacher in high school; the social studies teacher, the science teacher, and other teachers must focus on the students' comprehensive abilities, especially at the high school level. We have called that out in the standards. That is a big change for the country.

In mathematics, we have gone with the basics in early grades. We think, in most state standards, there is too much in the early grades that does not focus on getting students to a basic level of mastery and then allowing students to transition into higher math as they go further in their education.

Assemblyman Aizley:
What is "Inclusion of habits of mind" (Exhibit C)?

Chris Minnich:
Those are things that teachers are already teaching students, like their ability to problem solve; their ability to provide more than one solution to a problem; to actually fail, and figure out why they failed at a mathematics problem. It is not about the procedural fluency of mathematics which is also in the standards, but it is actually about the type of behaviors the student has to do in mathematics to go further in his mathematical career.

Assemblyman Aizley:
That would help the teachers too.

Chair Bobzien:
We will hold future questions until we are finished with the presentation.

Chris Minnich:
State-by-state, the process for adoption varies. The State of Washington is one of the few states the legislature actually has to approve the standards itself. In most states it is the state board or a state superintendent that can adopt the standards.

As states adopted the standards, there was an opportunity for them to add to the standards if they felt we missed something. Hardly any states have added to the standards. The only two are the States of California and Massachusetts.

Those two states felt that more precision in the mathematics area was needed so they added a couple of additional standards in that area.

In terms of the challenges of implementation, the standards themselves do not solve the achievement gap that we have especially among our students of poverty. These are the concerns that are most frequently cited when we talk to our state deputy superintendents. We did a survey of those folks. One concern was high-quality professional development—making sure that we can provide teachers with the understanding of the standards so they can teach them. That is a critical piece of this implementation.

It is true that materials aligned to the CCSS may affect textbook adoption and implementation. There are some things that will move around between grades, not necessarily requiring new textbooks, but shifting textbooks from one grade to another. We have asked some things to be done earlier in the curriculum.

Finally, adequate yearly progress (AYP) is something the federal government is talking about changing, but we all know that many more schools are falling under failing status in this country under federal reporting. The U.S. Secretary of Education testified in front of the U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce the other day and purported that 83 percent of schools will be failing within the next two years if we do not do anything about changing the federal law. That is one of the activities we are working on in trying to get to a smarter accountability system. States also have accountability systems. The state accountability systems tend to be more based in the reality of what is going on in the school system. We are advocating at the federal level for flexibility for states to set their accountability systems. That is something I think you would endorse.

The NGA and our organization are committed to implementing these standards in a high-quality way. There are certain activities that need to happen, but one of them is cross-state sharing. One of the main pieces is there should be no reason for every state to have to develop its own materials. There should be sharing across states. We are hoping to facilitate that process. We are working with a group of about 35 states to have these conversations about implementing the CCSS. Making sense of the activity around implementation and doing presentations like this, we can actually get the information out about the standards so that the facts drive this conversation rather than any other pieces of the conversation.

Many implementation efforts are shown on page 14 of (Exhibit C), The two higher education organizations—American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) and State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO)—

are both important organizations in the higher education community. We are spending a lot of time with them making sure that as we build assessments around these standards that whatever we build at the high school level will be able to transition to college so that students will not have to retake another assessment after their high school career—colleges will accept some of these assessments that we are hoping to align to the CCSS.

These standards require teachers to do more. Some teachers will be teaching slightly different content in their grade than they currently do. Other teachers will be asked to take teaching further in students' depth of knowledge—not just a surface level of doing some of the mathematics problems, but understanding how to do those problems. We are asking for a different level of understanding. In most states we are seeing an implementation timeline of 2013-2014 or 2014-2015. On page 15 of the presentation the dates are more aggressive (Exhibit C). Many states are spending the time to think about how they are going to train their teachers and develop a model curriculum.

The website for the standards is <corestandards.org>. There are endorsements as well as the standards themselves if you are interested in reading them. I recommend picking a grade you are particularly interested in as opposed to reading them all.

Assembly Anderson:
The question I have is regarding the English language arts core standards. You were talking about getting students ready for college and one of the concerns I have is that students do not get enough writing in college, let alone high school. Is writing going to have a role in English language arts?

Chris Minnich:
Yes. We are asking students to do things with writing rather than simply writing about what they are thinking. That is what currently happens in most high schools—reflective writing—how do you feel about that and describe that. In my work, I am not often asked how I feel about something. It is usually an argument I have to make. While it is important to the writing process, especially in the early grades, to be able to describe something, we feel the college and career goals needs to be argumentative writing. We included that very clearly. To your point, we think that it should be the center of most high school education. Part of this is making sure we teach reading well in the early grades so writing about what you read can happen at the higher grades.

Assemblyman Anderson:
For the record, I do agree that argumentative writing is a lot better.

Assemblyman Stewart:
I agree with the CCSS, but I have a problem with the assessment part. Right now, Nevada supposedly has one of the lowest graduation rates in the United States. However, we have four proficiency tests or exit examinations. Seven of the ten top states with graduation rates do not have an exit exam. If we are going to have common standards, are we going to have a common evaluation so that people do not say we are even lower because the standards have been raised? Are we still going to have these seven states with no exit exams while we have four tests and we are still going to be lower? I would like to know where we really are on a level field with the other states. Are we going to have a common evaluation so we can tell if we are as bad as people say we are?

Chris Minnich:
You hit right on one of the major issues: if we do not get together and give either the same assessment or assessments that we can use state-to-state, comparing will be very difficult to do. I would encourage you to think about what Nevada is doing in terms of graduation; there should be work to get more students to graduate within your state no matter what. That is a trend that we can track within each state no matter what. The only test that is given across the United States is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). In that assessment, states are ranked. The requirements for graduation across the United States are very different. In terms of common assessments, there are two groups that are developing assessments—about 25 states in each group—and Nevada is in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, which is the one that is providing an end-of-year assessment that would be shared across 25 states. We are working to get the two consortiums to deliver an assessment or at least share some test items, so we could report a fair metric from state-to-state.

Assemblyman Stewart:
We will be one of these 25 states, and our assessment will be the same?

Chris Minnich:
That is the end goal, but that is not part of the standards conversation; that is part of an assessment conversation. I am making that separation deliberately because the assessment conversation will be much more difficult than the standards conversation.

Assemblyman Kirner:
Where do you see your future going in terms of expanding this into the sciences or other areas?

Chris Minnich:
It is politically much more difficult when you get into science. You have to deal with issues such as global warming and creationism, quite frankly. They are in most state standards one way or another. Getting states to agree on that would be more difficult. We want to get all the way through assessments in English language arts and mathematics before we move to science and social studies.

Assemblyman Kirner:
One of the things we have heard about and one of the things we know in Nevada is that there are a lot of jobs that do not require a college education. How do the CCSS affect those youth that say they do not want a college education—they want to be the world's best electronics . . . —and that may not require a college education.

Chris Minnich:
I said college and career every time I talked about them. That is really important to us because we are seeing this convergence about what type of job would be available to these students if they do not go to college. There may be a program in there, like a two-year training program that would transition them into an electrician's job or something that could meaningfully provide for a family. That is the convergence we are seeing. We are actually making the claim for the first time that the standards that we are setting now would set students up, either to be successful in college or to have a high-quality job. It may not be everything they need; they may need some sort of postsecondary training around specifics, especially if they are going into a trade. At the same time, we are saying that this level of mathematics should be required even for students that are not going to college.

Chair Bobzien:
It is the Chair's prerogative to editorialize a little bit. This notion of kids going to college and not going to college becomes less and less important because the technology jobs, the vocational-class jobs, are going to require education beyond K-12—whether that is in a community college setting or a certificate setting. Whatever the technical layers are that are built upon the K-12 foundation; students will require this concept of college readiness, regardless of whether or not they are going to pursue a four-year degree. It is my sense that the CCSS philosophy is aligned with that notion.

Chris Minnich:
That is correct.

Chair Bobzien:
I cannot work on my Subaru. I have to take it to the garage and it is not just a matter of turning the wrench; they have to plug it in and read the sensors.

Chris Minnich:
It is about giving kids options. We want to educate every student to this level so that he has choices when he leaves.

Assemblywoman Neal:
I want you to clarify two points in the presentation. You said that the standards are internationally benchmarked, so in what areas and to which countries? The second question is on the systems thinking. Could you get deeper into that?

Chris Minnich:
On the international benchmarking, we use the top 25 countries on the Program for International Student Achievement (PISA) test and looked at consensus among those standards. Then we dug deeper into the top ten. Among the top countries are Finland, China (only Shanghai), Brazil, and England. We ranked about 16th on that test out of 33 countries that took it. We used those results and then looked at their standards. I cannot stress enough the biggest part of this is not the standards themselves, because Finland has some standards that are comparable to the CCSS, but it does a great job of teaching those standards. Students are not left out, or left behind, or passed over through this process. One of the biggest problems we have in American education is that we move kids on without knowing if they actually know the subject matter. If they do not pass the test, we still put them in the next grade. In other countries they do not do that quite as much as we do. There are bigger issues than simply internationally benchmarking our standards to other countries.

In terms of systems thinking, this is the other thing we are trying to bring to the table. This is different than most education reform in the past which has been, "Let us do this program for three years and see if it improves student achievement." We are really hoping that the standards themselves will be the center of all education reform in terms of getting students to these standards. If you are doing a teacher evaluation system, those teachers would be evaluated on how they are teaching to these common standards and getting students to these standards. We do need some level of "bar" for our students and that is why we are doing this.

Assemblywoman Dondero Loop:
Tell me how this will impact students with disabilities and English language learner (ELL) students.

Chris Minnich:
That is one of the big challenges we have in this country already. With our current standards in states, ELL and special education students are generally either over classified—they are pulled out of mainstream classes so they are not actually taught to the same standards as every other student—or they are simply passed through grades without getting to the state standards at each grade level.

I keep going back to this clarity of expectation that the special education students should also be held as much as possible to these standards. I would argue that the CCSS is pretty clear about what we want all students to be able to do. That means "all" students. We do need to have a conversation about students that simply cannot do that; severe cognitive disability represents about 1 percent of students. That conversation needs to take place. We have erred on the wrong side of that discussion in expecting less out of students rather than expecting more.

Assemblyman Stewart:
I would like you to follow up on Ms. Dondero Loop's question, on the other end of the spectrum, the advanced students—the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) programs that challenge the gifted: I have read recently that what other countries value about our educational system is the creativity we develop. We have students who are versed in debating and challenging; other countries' education systems adhere more to standards while our kids can think out of the box. That is why we have the Bill Gateses and people like that; that is why we win a lot of Nobel Prizes and things like that that other countries do not because we develop this system of creativity and students who can think for themselves. I hope that is not stymied by this plan. Can you comment on those two things please?

Chris Minnich:
I am headed to China with ten superintendents this weekend. It is an official delegation and the one question the Chinese have asked us is how do you teach creativity? We are kind of caught off-guard on that, because we just let our kids cause problems and they get creative—recess. I completely agree with your statement that other countries have challenges in that area. Personally, I think part of it is cultural. Other countries are very much about, you go to class, you respect your teacher, you learn, and you do not think about anything other than what you are told to think about. Part of it is cultural, but part of it is also that our education system has let many flowers bloom. That is generally what happens in our education system. I am not worried about creativity being pushed out of the system by these standards. The focus on academics allows for creativity to flourish.

Regarding gifted and talented, there is nothing in these standards that say students cannot go further than these standards and should be expected to go further if they can. We have addressed it very specifically in mathematics. If students expect to go into a technology, engineering, or a mathematics career, we want them to take more than what we have set in these standards and we wrote out some of the things that would be necessary for that.

Assemblyman Stewart:
Thank you and let us keep watering the flowers.

Assemblyman Aizley:
Now we have standards across the country and we talk about assessment. I have never really understood assessment. How are you going to compare the scores the kids get if you give a standard test based on the standards?

Chris Minnich:
There are a lot of statistical ways to do it, but the better way to do it is to give similar or the same questions to kids across states. Nevada has joined with 25 other states to develop an assessment that would be given in parallel across those 25 states. It is not simply that every state would develop its own assessment to these standards; that is key to this point, because currently measurement can be made to say anything you want in terms of these state assessments. Every state has its own assessment. There is some question about which ones are the most valid—which ones are the hardest, and which has the highest passing score. All that has to be worked out in this process.

I have really tried to stick to the standards today because I think the standards are the first step, but it is not enough. We need to talk about assessment, curriculum, and we need to talk about professional development as part of this process.

Assemblyman Aizley:
In high school where there are several sections of one course, and there are high school standards, you find that not each teacher teaches the same amount of material in the course. If you ask a student a question about something he has never been taught, the student is clearly at a disadvantage. I have even seen that here in Nevada.

Chris Minnich:
I will just make one comment about that and that is exactly the problem we are trying to address. I am not sure even with the CCSS we will have teachers teaching the exact same thing. I would actually argue that we probably should not have teachers teaching the same thing because there are different ways to

get students to understand the same concept. There may be different ways of teaching the exact same concept that would get students to a level of understanding then be able to demonstrate that understanding on an assessment. I have a lot of confidence in the teachers in this county; and if we can be clear about the standards and the assessments, they will find a way to get the students to understand.

Assemblywoman Dondero Loop:
What makes this process different from other efforts that have been made before this to create these standards?

Chris Minnich:
President Clinton started Goals 2000: Education America Act which was an effort to actually write the standards at the federal government level and ask states to adopt them. They put money on the table for states to adopt the standards. There was a resounding, "No." Our states did not necessarily want to go in the direction of the federal government setting educational standards and I think we were right about that.

Two things came together at the same time. We were just entering the economic crisis and states were spending a lot of money setting educational standards. In the State of Oregon where I spent my educational career, we spent in the neighborhood of $3 million a year setting educational standards—simply setting them. That was a piece states could no longer say was a good expenditure. That is something, in Oregon, they have been able to repurpose into teacher training which is helpful.

The other piece that happened was that a lot of these international results were showing our students falling further and further behind. It is not that our performance is changing, it is the rest of the world that is changing. They are all passing us; we are not falling back. Our education system is still holding onto some of the practices of the past. As leaders, you have the opportunity to change that and embrace this type of higher expectation and provide the support to get students there. Those would be the differences I see.

Assemblyman Anderson:
I am reading the press release from when our State Board of Education adopted the CCSS in June 2010 and I am reading that it will allow us to align future textbooks, digital media, et cetera. Does this make us less competitive as a smaller state since we do not have a huge market and do not have as much of an influence? Does this help us have more input in what textbooks are published?

Chris Minnich:
Before the CCSS with 50 different state standards, textbooks were generally written for California, Florida, New York, and Texas. Now that 43 states have the same standards, there should be no reason why the publishers do not do that. The Pearson people are here today and I know they are adjusting their curriculum and textbooks to the CCSS. I have heard that from other publishers as well, and the biggest thing I will tell you is California has adopted these standards. We spent a lot of time getting California to adopt these standards. California provides the buying power that we need for that to change.

Chair Bobzien:
This Legislature is considering a number of reform measures based on what we have called *Nevada's Promise,* which was our own state's experience applying for Race to the Top funds. The CCSS were in the background through all of this:

- The subsequent response we received back from the Race to the Top review.
- The group that put together the initial Race to the Top application.
- The work the group continued to develop this expansive reform agenda that touches on everything from alternative routes to licensure, to teacher evaluation, to K-12 governance.

Could you give us your thoughts, from the national perspective, as we are looking ahead to Congress having begun education reauthorization—the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001—what Secretary Duncan's vision is for where things are moving? Where does the CCSS fit into all of that? What as a state should we be aware of as we move forward?

Chris Minnich:
It is a hard time to raise expectations. Every state that I have spoken to has financial challenges. Raising expectations at this time is harder than any other time. What Secretary Duncan has laid on the table is focusing on four main areas:

- Teachers and leaders— teacher evaluation.
- The area of data systems—being able to pass data from K-12 to higher education and if students move, being able to transition that data.
- Turning around the lowest-performing schools.
- Standards and assessments.

Those are the four areas the reauthorization will generally be written around if we can get agreement in Congress to do that.

In terms of where the CCSS fit into that, they hopefully set the benchmark for all that other work. This is where we are trying to get our students. For all the

reform work we do around that—whether it is training teachers or changing the leadership in schools, or trying to turn around the lowest-performing schools—the common core should be the goal for us. If we start getting students to these standards, we will see a change in this country. I would add that Secretary Duncan often tells the story that he has the list of the lowest-performing schools in this country from ten years ago. He got the list in 2010 again and 85 percent of the schools are the same. In ten years we have only been able to make a dent in 15 percent of our lowest-performing schools across the country. That is tragic. The focus on low-performing schools needs to change. Those places need a new culture; they need support or our kids need other options.

Chair Bobzien:
Do we have additional questions? [There were none.] Do we have any members of the public that wish to give comments?

Keith Rheault, Ph.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education:
I would like to tell you what we are doing in Nevada to get down to more specifics. If you go to our department website at <doe.nv.gov> under "Hot Topics," you can go to "Nevada Common Core State Standards" where it talks about the standards, by grade and subject. There is something for parents, administrators, and teachers. It is still in the preliminary stage but we have a transition plan that will implement both English language arts and mathematics. We have been developing standards since 1997 and routinely revise them, and districts have been given a year to implement the changes in their curriculum.

This one is a little different. We have never adopted two subjects in one year. You will see in our transition plan that we are phasing in the CCSS. We are starting with English language arts. Next year, in Grades K-8 in math, we are going to start a little slower. By 2013, all the English language arts will be implemented. Math in Grades K-12 will be slowly implemented. You have to give students an opportunity to learn and change the curriculum. To alleviate some of the teacher training, we are working desperately on establishing the plan with our Regional Professional Development Programs. We do have a transition plan. Down the road if you run out of bills for the session and need additional information, I would offer some of my staff to give you the specifics of the transition plan: how we are going to get the teachers trained and how we are going to work with the districts.

I can tell you we have never run into such enthusiasm from the teachers themselves. We have actually had to slow them down. They wanted to know why we were waiting, why not just implement it all?
Mr. Aizley brought up that the assessments have to match the standards you are teaching. If you are teaching standards and testing on something different, that is not going to help anybody. They have to match. The national assessment group we have signed onto, the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium, is performing field-testing in 2014 with full implementation by 2015. It is nothing that just happens overnight and that would cause us to have a test ready next year. It is a slow process in developing it, but we hope to utilize those efforts.

The reason I was so enthusiastic in supporting the CCSS is that I could see the benefits down the road, both financially—textbooks being less expensive with 40 other states buying them—and that we take curriculum that is developed in other states and share among states. Hopefully there will be sites set up for best practices and teaching the CCSS so teachers can just logon and watch videos and see how other teachers are doing it—all because they are the same common standards.

The Consortium we signed on with was given about $75 million or $80 million to develop the test. In the past we have had to do that on our own, internally, for our criterion-referenced tests, and I see savings later by utilizing the Consortium test that can be updated with the Consortium and not one state paying for the entire test.

Chair Bobzien:
As a member of the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools, that cost savings potential has always been a key point of this. Certainly, the attractiveness of having aggressive standards that have been worked out among a number of states has always been attractive, but a side benefit of some very real down-the-road savings in terms of what we do in education is definitely a part of it.

Assemblywoman Neal:
I see you have the "Family and Community" link on the website, which is good, but how are you advertising that link? Are you doing any kind of community meetings to bring people into this so that they have time to understand the complexity of this?

Keith Rheault:
We are just in the early stages and maybe our website is ahead of where we are in providing all the information to the public and the teachers. Many of the

teachers are aware, but that is our first phase this year. We are using the rest of this year and the summer to get the information out. It will be more of an informational campaign this summer. We hope to meet with the Nevada Parent Teacher Association. We hope the teachers will be able to provide the information to their students when they start next fall that we will be using a new common core. We hope to work on the grassroots level to get the information out. From the state level, we can provide common information and packets of informational material that could be shared with parents, the community, and school leaders. We are going to have to count on them to get that information out to everyone so they can be aware that education is changing in Nevada. We still have a lot of work to do there. The first phase this spring was informational.

Assemblyman Stewart:
I applaud your efforts in getting us involved with these other states. Can you comment on my question about the assessment at the end—are we working toward a common assessment and are we going to be able to do away with our assessments and go with the common core assessment? Is that part of the work order?

Keith Rheault:
I hope eventually, when these tests are developed in K-8 and high school, that we can replace our current assessments instead of us spending money, at least with mathematics and English language arts. We are still required to test in science so we will have to continue that. It will level the playing field. We will be able to see how well our students are doing compared with other states.

The problem is that it will not address our graduation requirement. If our students are doing as well as another state, but our graduation rate is 10 percent lower because we require more credits or the passing of the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination to get a diploma and the other state does not, you could not make those comparisons; the other state may be artificially inflating their graduation rate because they do not have the same requirement. We will still be able to make those comparisons, but it will still not level the playing field overall. Some states require 18 credits; ours is 22 1/2. All of those will remain even though we have common standards in English and mathematics.

Assemblyman Stewart:
Could we get to the point where we do have a completely level playing field on the assessment where the common core assessment would take the place of the proficiency test? Would that require new efforts by the Legislature, or by the State Board of Education? Who would that require?

Keith Rheault:
Currently, the authority rests with the State Board of Education. They would be able to adopt the common core assessment that is being developed. They would then set the cut scores. That is another issue with complexities. They would not set a cut score at the national level—they might give recommendations what the cut score for a proficient student would be, but each state would still have the authority to set its own cut scores. I do not think some states would buy into the process if somebody told them what the proficiency level of their students needed to be. That is still going to be a problem to be addressed in the future, not only in Nevada, but in all the participating states.

Assemblyman Stewart:
Do you have a ballpark figure of when you think the CCSS will be completely set and implemented?

Keith Rheault:
The first full year of implementation through the state for English language arts will be in 2012. The full mathematics standards will not be completed until 2014 at the high school level. That will coincide with the tests being available in 2015 to use to see how we are doing with the implementation.

Chair Bobzien:
Are there additional questions? [There were none.] Are there any additional comments? [There were none.] Are there any public comments?

Assemblyman Stewart:
I would like to invite all of you to go down to the second floor in the big atrium on the north side. In 1989 U.S. Chief Justice Warren Burger chaired the Commission on the Bicentennial of the *United States Constitution*. Part of that was an education program called We the People. I, as a teacher, participated in the high school part of it. The demonstration downstairs is the elementary part of it. In it, elementary classrooms select a problem in the community. For example, one class decided it needed a traffic light for safety near its school. They researched how they would go about this and contacted the planning commission, the county commission, et cetera, and they wrote this up. It became their problem and they reached a solution. There are about eight different classes that are participating in this demonstration downstairs. They have selected a community problem, followed it through, and reached a solution. Some of these are on bullying, green energy, and various topics like those. I invite you to go down there and evaluate how you think they have done. There are evaluation criteria along with an evaluation form.

Chair Bobzien:
Is there any additional business to come before the Committee? [There was none.]

The meeting is adjourned [at 4:35 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

_____
Sharon McCallen
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

_____
Assemblyman David P. Bobzien, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Committee Name: Committee on Education

Date: April 27, 2011 **Time of Meeting: 3:29 p.m.**

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster
	C	Chris Minnich	PowerPoint Presentation—Common Core State Standards Initiative