

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

**Seventy-Sixth Session
March 4, 2011**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair David P. Bobzien at 12:44 p.m. on Friday, March 4, 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:

Assemblywoman Teresa Benitez-Thompson, Washoe County Assembly District No. 27
Assemblywoman Debbie Smith, Washoe County Assembly District No. 30

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mindy Martini, Committee Policy Analyst
Kristin Roberts, Committee Counsel
Taylor Anderson, Committee Manager
Janel Davis, Committee Secretary
Sherwood Howard, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Barbara Clark, Chair, Advisory Council on Parental Involvement
D'Lisa Crain, Administrator, Department of Family School Partnerships, Washoe County School District
Keith Rheault, Ph.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education
Nicole Rourke, Executive Director, Government Affairs, Community & Government Relations, Clark County School District
Craig Stevens, Director, Education Policy and Research, Nevada State Education Association
Dotty Merrill, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards
Lonnie Shields, Assistant Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Administrators
Kathleen A. Conaboy, representing K12 Inc.
Lesley Pittman, representing United Way of Southern Nevada
Tami Berg, VP Membership/Marketing, Federal Legislative Chair, Nevada Parent Teacher Association
Jan Gilbert, Northern Nevada Coordinator, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada
Marlene Lockard, representing Nevada Women's Lobby
Margaret M. Ferrara, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning, College of Education, University of Nevada, Reno
Denise Hedrick, Executive Director, Education Alliance of Washoe County
Andrew Kelly, Principal, Proctor R. Hug High School
Bart Mangino, Legislative Representative, Community and Government Relations, Clark County School District

Chair Bobzien:

[Welcome. Roll was called.] Today, we continue our task of hearing measures focused on education reform in Nevada. We have two measures for consideration. One of the measures addresses proficiency and how students obtain credits, and the other addresses the need for increased parental involvement in our children's education. [Rules and protocol were stated.]

I would like to open the hearing on Assembly Bill 224. I want to welcome Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson to our Committee to present this measure. She will be joined at the table by Assemblywoman Smith.

Assembly Bill 224: Revises provisions governing parental involvement in education. (BDR 34-859)

Assemblywoman Teresa Benitez-Thompson, Washoe County Assembly District No. 27:

I have a PowerPoint presentation ([Exhibit C](#)), and I will let you know where I am from slide to slide. In your Committee, this week's discussion has centered on educational reform and improvements. We know that the two most important factors to student success are qualified, skilled teachers and the involvement of a student's family. You heard legislation Wednesday on proposals to strengthen our ability to attract and retain the best teachers possible in the state. Assembly Bill 224 completes the picture by focusing on the second issue of family engagement.

Research is now telling us what common sense has already known: family engagement and parental involvement positively impact student achievement. In the simplest of terms, family matters. On slide 3 [referred to ([Exhibit C](#))], you will see a publication. In 2002, the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory published a new wave of evidence about the impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement. This publication reviewed 51 studies produced between 1993 and 2002 that examined the relationship between parental involvement, family engagement, and student achievement. The studies all met rigorous methodology requirements.

On slide 4, you will see the findings of this study. To quote the report, "Taken as a whole, these studies found a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement. This relationship holds across families of all economic, racial ethnic, and educational backgrounds, and students at all ages." Specifically the data from these 51 studies concluded that regardless of income or background, students with involved parents were more likely to graduate and go on to postsecondary education, attend school regularly, pass their classes and earn

credits, earn higher grades and test grades, and enroll in higher level programs. The teacher outreach to parents was related to strong and consistent gains in both mathematics and reading.

Slide 5 is going to tell you why this legislation is needed. First and foremost, the reason we need this legislation is because some schools in Nevada do not have the resources or the professional development opportunities to put the skills into educators' hands to properly engage families in a meaningful way that improves student achievement. Secondly, and probably one of the most lasting impressions on me and the reason we need to change the status quo with this legislation, is information that came from the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Keith Rheault. As a part of the post-student teaching survey conducted by Nevada's Colleges of Education, student teachers identified two areas where they felt unprepared for the classroom experience: working with parents and family members to increase their involvement in education, and discipline. Teachers are telling us they want better skill sets on how to engage families.

Slide 6 is entitled, "What is Family Engagement?" This has been the most commonly asked question when talking about this legislation. There are four different examples from all around the state of good family engagement. Clark County School District has five parent centers to help their parents monitor their children's grades and attendance. White Pine School District used data from parent surveys to create a more family-friendly model in engaging their parents. Churchill County and Washoe County are doing phenomenal things, and you will hear more about those activities from Washoe County later in the presentation. There is a book that has been condensed from a number of these studies entitled, *101 Real Ways to Engage Family*. Real family engagement is data-driven. It is about using research and the best practices to engage a family in a way that improves student achievement. This is more than just volunteerism. It is more than just getting the parents into the classroom. It is about meeting families where they are at, and giving families better skill sets to help their own children in their educational improvement.

Slide 7 ([Exhibit C](#)) talks specifically about what this piece of legislation does. I will run over the highlights. It establishes the Office of Parental Involvement and Family Engagement within the Nevada Department of Education (NDE). The bulk of the language comes out of section 3, prescribing what the Office of Parental Involvement and Family Engagement shall do. They are going to serve as a clearinghouse for data-driven practices proven to be effective in engaging families. There is a lot of great data and research available and the easier we make it for school districts to receive information and put in teachers' hands, the more likely they are to use it. This office will serve as a clearinghouse for

those purposes. Next, it is going to improve educator professional development in parental involvement and family engagement and build those skills that teachers are telling us they so desperately need. It is either going to develop guidelines for families to help their own children in student engagement or it is going to establish and evaluate measures to gauge the effectiveness of all of these efforts.

Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not share with you some “buzz” about this legislation, and the hard work a number of people in Nevada have been doing to try and get to the point of offering up this bill. Slide 8 contains a quote from the National Parent Teacher Association (PTA). [Also appears in [Exhibit D](#).] They state, “Decades of research proves that family engagement is the leading indicator to student success. That is why we commend Nevada’s introduction of this legislation to build capacity for engaging and empowering all families. There needs to be a conscious effort to engage families across the state—and across every state—if we are serious about implementing sustainable educational reform.” This last quote comes from two different people who work on a project with the National Family, School and Community Engagement Working Group. [Read quote from slide 9 of [Exhibit C](#). Also appears in [Exhibit D](#).]

I truly believe in this piece of legislation. I have learned a lot in my education research, know the importance of family engagement, and believe that this legislation will make a difference in Nevada.

Chair Bobzien:

Thank you. Mrs. Smith, did you want to follow up?

Assemblywoman Debbie Smith, Washoe County Assembly District No. 30:

As I sat here listening to Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson’s presentation, I got “stirred up” about this issue. I have worked on parental involvement for a very long time. I always say that I would not be here today had it not been for parental involvement at my child’s school. It is an issue that is so important to me. I was the first parent involvement coordinator in the Washoe County School District and have been studying this issue and working on this for a long time. I know the significance of parental involvement and family engagement in our schools.

First, let me say, it is not fundraising; it is not about raising money. It is about a whole host of other things. There are standards for parental involvement which involves another bill coming into play to update the standards. It is meaningful to our kids and to our schools. The one thing I know for sure from being a part of this Legislature is that if we value it, and we measure it, then we

pay for it. We do that through our budgeting process and through the policies we set. Everywhere you go, you hear about parental involvement and its relation to education. It is talked about constantly in professional publications and training.

Teachers do not have enough parental involvement training in their teacher education programs; it is getting better, but we have yet to do what we really need to do in this state. Some time ago, we adopted the national standards for parental involvement and we have required a parental involvement policy at the state level and each of the districts, but it worries me that those are things that are put in a binder and put on a bookshelf and not a lot happens because we do not value it enough to measure it or fund it.

This bill takes Nevada in a direction where we can start doing more, particularly in helping the rural school districts. Some of the smaller districts do not have the capacity to enhance their parental involvement activities. You will remember the bill we presented a couple of days ago with education reform. The new teacher evaluation process will have a parental involvement component. That is really big, and so, if we do that, then we need to do this to make sure we are providing the resources that we need in this state. You will hear from D'Lisa Crain who is, without question, the leading expert in Nevada, if not in our region, in parental involvement. She is recognized at national meetings and is an expert on this issue. She will have a lot to offer. I encourage you to take this seriously. We had a position for a parent involvement coordinator at the state level back in the 2007 Legislative Session, and it was taken out in the first round of budget cuts. We did fund it at one time, but we did not put the "meat" behind it that is in this bill that lays out what the requirements are and some of the district-level reporting.

I thank you for your consideration of this bill. It is a huge step for parents and families in Nevada and acknowledges a valuable component. I always say that if we can solve this problem, we would solve a lot of our problems in the education world. If we could get more parents engaged in a meaningful way, we would not have a lot of the problems that exist in our education environment. I urge you to take that into consideration.

Chair Bobzien:

Very well put. Do we have questions from the Committee for the panelists?

Assemblyman Hansen:

What happened to the Advisory Council on Parental Involvement? When did it start and what was the impact? What happened to the original idea?

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

That is a great question. We happen to have the Chair of the Advisory Council with us today. I would like to invite Barbara Clark to talk about what the Advisory Council has been doing and then Mrs. Smith can give some history because they both have been active and successful.

Assemblywoman Smith:

The Advisory Council has been busy and they have been working. One of the problems we had is when we lost the connection with the position at the state level, there was no connection to the NDE and to the state and the things they could be doing. It is important to have connection with the NDE, and I am assuming that one of things that Barbara will talk about is the Parent Involvement Summits we have done.

Barbara Clark, Chair, Advisory Council on Parental Involvement:

We have had about seven meetings over the last two years. Unfortunately, we did not receive any funds to hold meetings and we are a statewide committee that has members from across the state. We have been able to do some meetings via teleconferencing and through the gracious funding of the Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC), and Denise Hedrick is here to testify representing the Nevada State Parent Involvement & Resource Center (PIRC). They have provided money for several of the meetings in which we have been able to fly the participants in order to get together in the same room. It has been difficult without any resources to be able to do anything. We have gone through, as mandated by law, and looked at what was currently happening in Nevada as far as parental involvement. One of the experts in the area, based in Henderson, helped us brainstorm and look at ways in which we want to progress and what our goals are going to be. We are working on it slowly, but surely; however, it is difficult without funding.

I happen to serve as the chair on the steering committee for the "Connect the Dots—Parent Involvement & Student Achievement" summit. We have had three so far. Assemblywoman Mastroluca and Speaker pro Tempore Smith also serve on the committee. We have slowly built the summit over the years. We have it every two years, in the North and then the South. It started out at about 100 and the last time we had over 500 attendees. The next meeting is scheduled in Clark County in 2012. We have had an enthusiastic response from across the state from educators, administrators, counselors, parents, anybody that is associated with the schools, in trying to find out how they can engage parents effectively and add that component to their work. Again, what this bill does so wonderfully is provide that support. It is very difficult for the rural areas, as well as the urban school districts, to have the resources and dedicate the time to be able to come up with the

resources with which we can equate family engagement to student achievement. All of us want our children to walk across the graduation platform at the end of the year and this is one of the components we are not addressing.

Chair Bobzien:

Thank you, Ms. Clark. D'Lisa, before we go to you because I know you would like to make comments, Ms. Neal, do you have a question?

Assemblywoman Neal:

I have a question. I am glad you brought up the challenges of collaboration. I think it is a great bill, let me say that, but I am wondering if there is any kind of flexibility or whether or not it was discussed on how you will collaborate with the Southern Nevada Regional Housing Authority?

I ask this because you talk about student achievement and parental involvement, and those particular families that have been in government or federal housing, generationally, have systemic low achievement from the adult all the way down to the child. Will that be a part of the future collaboration or a "clearinghouse" that will be created?

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

Thank you for that question. Research is telling us that family engagement affects student achievement across all ethnic backgrounds and seems to be a bridge across socioeconomic barriers. One study by Kenneth B. Clark & Associates stood out to me in particular. Through his research, he found students with some of the highest levels of achievement came from backgrounds that you would not necessarily associate with achievement. He accounts that 51.3 percent of the mothers of the high achievers possessed no more than a high school education themselves. Many of these children came from single-parent households; 43 percent of the high achievers were Hispanic, 21.8 percent were African-American.

So, this is telling us that when we effectively engage families, it is a bridge into those communities that data tells us are traditionally not fairing very well. That is why it is important to make this effort systemic, get it based in the NDE in order to reach out and support these efforts that, right now, are piecemeal throughout the state.

**D'Lisa Crain, Administrator, Department of Family School Partnerships,
Washoe County School District:**

When it comes to outreach, our schools need better ideas and more effective practices about how to partner with community-based organizations, so parents

can feel comfortable coming into our schools. We have some schools that when they host an academically-related family learning night, they have 80 to 200 families in the room. They have done a very effective job of making parents feel welcome and comfortable in the school, and they have done the necessary outreach to build those bridges. On the other hand, there are some schools that try the exact same family learning night, but only have two or three families come. These schools have not built those bridges and, until they do that outreach, cannot provide the families with the knowledge and support they need in order to support their children.

When it comes to community-based partners and other governmental agencies, we need to reach out to parents first. We have to build relationships, make them feel comfortable in our schools, and welcome them in. Through the Office of Parental Involvement and through effective practices, we hope to achieve this.

Assemblyman Kirner:

When you were testifying, you talked about resources. I clearly accept the concept that parents are critical to a child's success, but I am not clear as to what resources are required.

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

To clarify, you mean the resources to impact student achievement?

Assemblyman Kirner:

Yes. If we are going to make this bill work, it appears to me that we will have to come up with some resources. I do not know if those resources include people and money, money, or just people.

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

You are absolutely right. The most important thing this bill does, by establishing the Office of Parental Involvement and Family Engagement, is put a staff person within the NDE who will dedicate their full-time work to this effort. We ask our educators to do so much, but if we can make it one person's responsibility within the NDE to do all the work and go through all the data and practices, then disseminate the information down, they can be a resource and support system to the school districts. We are hoping to see all of this happen.

D'Lisa Crain:

It has been difficult in our district to be able to share across other districts. I will give you one example. Carson City hired a parent liaison, and we have 50 parent liaisons in our district. That person wanted guidance and support on what the job was and what the most effective things to be done were.

This individual contacted our district and was able to meet with some of our parent liaisons who have been doing this job for a long time. Because Carson City has established relationships, she knew where to find us.

We need a central office where people can connect with others across the state where information can flow in and out. I do not think this is a tremendous amount of resource. We are asking for one staff person at the office; some funding will be needed so that the Advisory Council on Parental Involvement can be in the same room to make decisions. A little funding goes a long way in family engagement.

Barbara Clark:

This bill establishes the framework for family engagement throughout the state. It provides the ability for the Office of Parental Involvement to establish metrics for family engagement that can be handed off to the districts and used as an evaluation piece. When the districts look at their District Improvement Plans and schools at their site School Improvement Plans, the metrics are already there so they do not have to "reinvent the wheel." It allows them to look within their school sites as to whether or not they are accomplishing that.

This bill also looks at the fact that we need training for teachers to understand family engagement. Other than money, there are a lot of components within this bill that will establish the framework and allow us to make this succeed in the State of Nevada.

Chair Bobzien:

Thank you. At this point, we do not have a fiscal note for this bill, but we may hear from Dr. Rheault with a preview of that in order to get more clarification.

Assemblyman Kirner:

The state is often criticized for creating a new program; I do not want this program to be criticized. Parents do make a difference. Within this bill, are there performance measurements or a responsibility to report back to Dr. Rheault, or whomever, in terms of success?

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

There absolutely is. Section 3, subsection 1, paragraph (k) in the bill talks about the Advisory Council. In paragraph (k), subparagraphs (1) and (2), it talks about the "SIPS and DIPS." Here, you will see the site School Improvement Plan and the District Improvement Plan. In section 3, it discusses the Office of Parental Involvement we are creating, which has to work with the Advisory Council and report back their efforts, successes, and challenges.

Like Assemblywoman Smith testified, we know we do not want to start a program in vain; if we really believe this is going to work, we are going to fund it and measure it. We are going to look at those measurements and be critical and objective about them and see what is working and what is not. I spoke with a number of the districts and people in the educational community about believing if there was merit in the bill or not. The last thing I want to do is bring forth a bill that is going to ask you to do something that you feel you are not going to benefit from. All the feedback I have had is that they do feel this bill is beneficial.

Chair Bobzien:

That is an excellent point. Thank you, Mr. Kirner, for bringing that up; it is something important that we have to stay focused on.

Assemblyman Stewart:

I am always concerned about fiscal notes. I was wondering if there was some way we could have an electronic reporting system where we would not have to have the increase in staff. This is a critical area. In Clark County, I have been to schools that have a monthly parent night with English and computer classes. It is very much needed.

First, have you thought about a website where we could all report things and exchange information online rather than having another person hired to carry these duties out? Secondly, do we have any states that have done similar things that we could follow up on?

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

We do have a function in this bill to require reporting to the website. That is in section 3, subsection 3. It is important that we provide the NDE with a staff person to carry it through. Otherwise, I feel like it would be a burden because they do not have the resources to do so right now. We are hearing from all levels that educators are being asked to do more with less. Once again, we believe this and value it, so we should fund it.

We do have other states that have done similar things. The state of Kentucky put together a plan: *The Missing Piece of the Proficiency Puzzle* ([Exhibit E](#)) and all reports back so far are that the program is making an impact in Kentucky. They have an amazing number of metrics in their plan.

D’Lisa Crain:

Kentucky is one example. When I was the Nevada State PIRC director, through a federal grant, they brought state departments of education and the PIRCs together to work. The majority of the states had staff people that worked

solely on this issue across a number of federal programs to help their schools effectively engage parents, and Nevada was one of the states that was lacking a full-time person dedicated to that job.

Assemblyman Stewart:

Could you give us a one-page summary of which states have had success?

D’Lisa Crain:

I would have to do some research on that, but we could compile that and bring it the Committee.

Chair Bobzien:

Ms. Crain, whatever research you find, if you could share it with our staff, that would be great.

D’Lisa Crain:

Absolutely.

Chair Bobzien:

I wanted to take a minute to recognize Mrs. Benitez-Thompson’s husband, Jeff Thompson, who is in the room. No pressure. Thank you, Mr. Thompson, for being an involved parent.

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

Thank you.

Assemblywoman Neal:

I wanted to ask Barbara Clark a question. Since you have been a part of the Advisory Council before, and there was no funding, what components or best practices did you bring to deal with the minority groups, especially Hispanic parents and African-American parents? There is sometimes a language barrier where the child speaks for the parent and the parent feels shy and is not able to communicate their concerns as strongly as they would like. What are you bringing from your experience to this new “combination” council?

Barbara Clark:

Hard-to-reach parents are key. There are a number of resources and programs that are currently being enacted across the state in accessing hard-to-reach parents; until we do so, they are very important in making sure that their student succeeds—as you indicated—and there are a wide variety of barriers in doing that. I will let D’Lisa expand on this because she will be able to discuss the exact types of programs that we have going on across the state. We need

to share those with the other districts and find ways in which we can incorporate them across the board.

D’Lisa Crain:

One of the big initiatives in our school district this year is to reach out and engage parents using our Infinite Campus Parent Portal. Last year, we looked at data of who logged into our parent portal. We found that 75 percent of our parents with limited English language proficiency, and 77 percent of our free and reduced lunch parents were not logged in. We know the reasons why. It is not their fault. Many of the parents have never used computers or do not have internet access at home. If you have never used a computer before and receive the letter from the school that says you need to log into this database of your child’s information, you might not understand what that looks like or understand the power that gives you as a parent to monitor your child’s progress.

Since we opened the parent portal over the last several months, our district has been reaching out to parents and inviting them to our computer lab to show them how to log in, how to set it up, how to see their child’s data, and what it means. The stories that come from this outreach are unbelievable. Parents are shocked at their child’s attendance data, which is much of our problem in high school. I talked to a mother who said, “I drop him off at the front door everyday. What do you mean he is not attending school?”

Seeing this data now empowers the parent to have a conversation with the school and to create a connection so that child cannot just walk off the campus. It gives parents information about whether or not their child has missing assignments. These are the things that are high socioeconomic: parents who have computers at home and parents who have been to college. They just know how to do these things. There is not as much technical support, but many of our parents need that extra support. As schools, we have to look at our efforts and we need to focus on effective things like this instead of a back-to-school night where everybody runs around from one seven-minute session to the next seven-minute session, et cetera, and does not really receive the help they need to support their children.

Chair Bobzien:

Are there any additional questions?

Assemblyman Hansen:

Ms. Crain, did you say you work for the Department of Parent Family Outreach for Washoe County right now?

D’Lisa Crain:

I do. I am the administrator for the Department of Family School Partnerships.

Assemblyman Hansen:

It sounds like we are getting another agency on top of what you are already doing. You said you have 50 parent council involvement people—I may be quoting you wrong on that—but I also looked at the statutes for the Advisory Council, which is supposed to report every year to the Legislature on the effectiveness of the programs that we already have in place. Are we repeating what we already did in 2007 without reevaluating what we have set up to do? Is this redundant to you?

Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson:

Thank you for the question. Right now, under the status quo, there are many efforts, and there have been many past attempts to try and get a coordinated effort. As Assemblywoman Smith testified, there was a position put in place last session to try and coordinate some of these efforts and the funding fell through. A lot of this is about getting the resources in one place and having this office serve as a hub for all of those pieces that are out there that may or may not be collaborating with each other. Specifically, what this bill does is offer all these efforts, so let us start measuring them. Are these measures working? Do these measures have an impact or not? Let us get that data and see what type of impact this is having. The national research is telling us that it is working on student achievement, but there is no way to assess that without this office in the state.

Barbara Clark:

If I may add, we have 17 school districts, and I believe only two or three have a position that helps with family engagement. Most of the remaining school districts are rural and do not have the resources to set up that type of department or have personnel. Even with the statewide Advisory Council, it is very difficult; the department staff is overwhelmed and does not have the time or resources dedicated to help us provide the research. We were all there on a volunteer basis without any funding for meetings. It does start to be a comprehensive movement that needs to be a top priority with the resources so that it can feed down through the rest of the state all the way to the school sites.

D’Lisa Crain:

Let me just clarify. When I spoke about the Nevada State Parent Information & Resource Center (PIRC), and Denise Hedrick is the executive director of the nonprofit organization that houses it, it is funded with a federal grant that focuses specifically on Title I schools in Nevada. There are

three staff people to serve over 160 Title I schools in our state. I was the former director for that, and I know that it does not reach a lot of schools. In Washoe County, we have schools that have 65 percent of our students on free and reduced lunch, and they do not receive any federal resources. My current position is with Washoe County School District. The Nevada State PIRC still exists, but it focuses on a limited number of schools.

Assemblyman Hansen:

Thank you both.

Chair Bobzien:

Excellent discussion. Do we have additional questions for these panelists? Thank you for bringing your perspectives and helping us with these ideas. I would like to call up Dr. Rheault, as well as Nicole Rourke. They are speaking in favor of A. B. 224.

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

I am here representing the Department of Education in full support of the bill requirements. The one thing I will be honest about is unless we get some support—I will be submitting this through a fiscal note—we probably could not carry out this bill. That has been the problem with the current status of the information. I think section 2 lays out a good game plan as to what needs to be done in the State of Nevada to work in cooperation with all the school districts in providing successful practices in getting parents involved. It has been clear over the years that I have worked with the Department of Education, if we do not have a dedicated staff person to coordinate and work with the districts, and to try to find funding, it does not get done.

The Legislative Council Bureau has given me until Tuesday to submit a fiscal note and I will have that for the Committee. What I am looking at is to start with a coordinator or director as it is titled in the bill. In the 2007 Legislative Session, we asked for \$10,000 to support the Advisory Council mainly to get the members to the meetings. They are all volunteers that I appointed. They are all dedicated, but if they are all over the state, and you cannot even get them face-to-face for one meeting per year, it makes it difficult for an advisory group. It was a program that did not receive any funding; it was an added assignment to my deputy superintendent when no funding was provided. She recently retired, so it would be a good start if I put this through and we get it reorganized.

The only concern I have with the bill is in section 13 that deals with the Commission on Professional Standards in Education looking at coursework.

This needs more specificity. For example, the Commission gets a number of requests for more special education coursework. When you pass the literacy requirements for high school students, they want to add an economics section to the teacher license. Section 13 could be cleaned up or clarified. Does this mean you want coursework on parental involvement that all teachers in the state must take? Can it be added to new licenses we issue? Do you even want it attached to a license as a requirement? When I read "coursework," it usually implies that it is going to be required, that it shows up on a transcript somewhere.

The bill's intent is to provide training and instruction to teachers in the classroom on how to do this more effectively, which does not necessarily mean you have to pay for a university course. I do not know if there is any appetite to clarify what that section could mean. It is clear that they want the Regional Professional Development Programs to work on the training. I think we can clarify what is expected for teachers throughout the state, but not necessarily prescribe regulation for a license requirement.

Chair Bobzien:

Thank you for your comments. If you can get with the bill sponsor to address that issue, that would be great. We also have a letter submitted by Mr. Hanlon ([Exhibit F](#)), so we have the regional professional development perspective on this legislation as well.

Nicole Rourke, Executive Director, Government Affairs, Community & Government Relations, Clark County School District:

First, we would like to say thank you to Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson for all of her efforts to bring parental involvement to the forefront, along with Assemblywoman Smith and her collaboration with us as this bill evolved from a bill draft into a bill.

We fully support family engagement in schools and continuously strive to create frequent opportunities for two-way communication, involve parents in school activities and on school and district-wide committees, and provide information on how they can support their student's academic achievement.

Currently, we report parent involvement programs and activities in our District Improvement Plan (DIP), conduct parent surveys, and include numerous family engagement efforts in our individual School Improvement Plans (SIP). We fully support this bill; we just ask for clarification on the reporting requirements. If that is a decision by the Office of Parental Involvement, we ask for an opportunity to provide input on that measure.

Chair Bobzien:

Great, and the bill sponsor is nodding her head "Yes." Any questions from the Committee?

Assemblyman Stewart:

Do you anticipate one full-time position to fill this responsibility? Is that correct?

Keith Rheault:

Yes. If we had one full-time position, we can carry out all of the requirements of section 2. That is what my fiscal note will have. I looked back at a previous request at grade level and the cost of the position will probably be about \$85,000 to \$100,000 by the time operating expenses are put in. I know this Committee does not deal with that, but I wanted to give you an idea.

Assemblyman Stewart:

Clark County is basically doing all of this right now? Is that correct?

Nicole Rourke:

We currently have a Districtwide Parent Engagement Forum. This is a type of advisory council that could be utilized. We also do numerous activities with our parents and students to bring families together. We currently report on the DIP, as well as certain SIP activities.

Chair Bobzien:

Dr. Rheault, we look forward to the fiscal note. This is a classic example of this Committee hearing the policy and it will likely be passed over to the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means for the money issue of the bill. Any other questions?

Craig Stevens, Director, Education Policy and Research, Nevada State Education Association:

This is a very important bill to the Nevada State Education Association. We fully support parental involvement and the ideas in this bill. When it comes to the Regional Professional Development Programs, one thing we ask is to provide resources so our educators are given the necessary instruction and the best practices in order to implement what is going on in this bill.

Dotty Merrill, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards:

Our annual conference in November 2010 involved 107 school board members and 17 superintendents. We heard information from Dr. Steve Constantino, who is one of the leading proponents of family engagement and parental involvement. He shared with us that there is little doubt that high performing

and effective schools have committed leadership and staff, and strong curriculum and instruction. But there is no “silver bullet,” no single thing that a school can do. However, there are multiple things schools can do to become more effective and high performing.

As one reviews the research, there is a common theme on every list. That is high levels of family involvement and family engagement. We support the concepts in this bill and appreciate Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson bringing it forward. We also appreciate having the opportunity to look at the bill draft prior to the time it became an actual bill.

We have one concern with section 3 in the bill that we have discussed with Assemblywoman Benitez-Thompson. We believe that the Office of Parental Involvement and Family Engagement should work in partnership with the Advisory Council on Parental Involvement to do all of the responsibilities included in section 3. We have talked to her about our proposal to accomplish that.

Lonnie Shields, Assistant Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Administrators:

We support this important bill. I would echo what Craig Stevens told you about the Regional Professional Development Programs. If I remember correctly, their budget was cut 41 percent last session. We are asking for additional support in training in the area of the new evaluation processes. I would like to make it clear that we should do it all. Also, one of the most important components that Dotty Merrill was speaking to is the ability of the school principal to communicate with the parent, to then help that parent communicate with the teacher. This bill could help bring that about.

Kathleen A. Conaboy, representing K12 Inc.:

I am here in full support of A.B. 224. We applaud the Assemblywoman's efforts in bringing the bill forward. I would like to ask that there be a consideration given to participation by the charter schools that are State Board sponsored. We are not entirely part of a district. I am looking at section 3 where it talks about programs implemented by school districts and public schools—and while charter schools are public schools, and by implication, we are included there—I would like to clarify that charter schools are State Board sponsored in a slightly different category.

We would like to be involved. In particular, our Education Management Organization (EMO), K12 Inc., is very much dependent on family engagement because we are a distance education model. We have a lot of experience we

could bring to the conversation especially when people are developing a list of best practices.

Lesley Pittman, representing United Way of Southern Nevada:

On behalf of the United Way of Southern Nevada, I am here in support of A.B. 224. I am also in support of any efforts you may consider this legislative session to encourage family engagement in their students' education because through financial support from AT&T and the Harvard Family Research Project, the United Way of Southern Nevada and its Women's Leadership Council partnered with Clark County School District to increase southern Nevada's high school graduation rate by opening five family engagement resource centers. In fact, many members of this Committee toured the Ed W. Clark High School family engagement resource center during the Interim.

Family engagement resource centers are designed to encourage on-time graduation by providing necessary resources and tools to families in need. Their main focus is fostering consistent, meaningful communication with parents about graduation requirements; creating a positive home-school connection for family through activities; offering career guidance; and offering support to ensure that students maintain a 90 percent attendance rate and a 2.0 grade point average. We are serving more than 46,000 students and families. The schools are Sunrise Mountain High School, Clark High School, Eldorado High School, Silverado High School, and Western High School.

In addition, parents can access support services including child care, translation services, as well as the parent portal link tool that allows parents to check the progress of their child's academic records and proactively track their attendance. If this legislation is successful in passing, we would be more than happy to work with the Office of Parental Involvement and Family Engagement to demonstrate and share the information that we have been able to secure through our models.

Tami Berg, VP Membership/Marketing, Federal Legislative Chair, Nevada Parent Teacher Association:

I am a parent of elementary and middle school children in the Washoe County School District. Again, thanks to Assemblywomen Smith and Benitez-Thompson for presenting this because this is important legislation.

Research goes back to the effects of parental involvement on graduation rates and attendance, but the biggest thing we need to understand is that parental involvement is wide-ranging. It goes from a positive attitude about school from the parents' standpoint, to passing that down to the child, to helping with homework, to reading to a child, to attending parent-teacher conferences, to

helping out in a classroom. As Assemblywoman Smith discussed, this is not about fundraising. This is about actively involving a parent in the child's education so that they work their way towards high school graduation, which is at the bottom statistically, and needs to be at the top.

The Nevada Parent Teacher Association (PTA) believes that this bill will allow the school districts to engage parents effectively across the state, not just the three districts (Washoe County, Lyon County, and Clark County) that have parental involvement centers. That is exactly what needs to happen. We need to build relationships with parents, letting them know they are welcome in schools whether at or beyond the elementary level.

On a personal note, having a child in middle school, I have had the trauma of having a seventh grader and a "brand-new" 13-year old. There are issues of not feeling welcome as a parent; however, I am very much welcome in the school, and I know it because I have had conversations with the principal, but there is still no active engagement like there is at the elementary level. Even coming from a standpoint of being an involved parent, I am not highly involved at the middle school level because it simply is not there. I cannot say it is not welcome, but it is a struggle. In order to get here to testify today, I had to rely on another parent to get my kids home from school. We definitely need to engage the parents better than we are doing now, so I hope we can pass this bill.

Chair Bobzien:

Thank you for pointing out that participating in the legislative process is the ultimate parental involvement. Do we have any questions from the Committee for the panel?

Assemblyman Hansen:

Obviously, everybody that has testified is 100 percent in favor of parental involvement. The fact is, as I understand it, parental involvement—after the teacher—is the most critical factor, and we are trying to get more family engagement and expand two-way communication, which is what this bill is designed to do.

The bigger question in my mind is everybody seems to be in favor of expanding parental involvement up to the point of financial decisions. What is your opinion when it comes to the voucher idea, as the Governor suggested, in expanding parental involvement in the financial decisions for each of their kids?

Tami Berg:

The Nevada PTA is against those vouchers the Governor has presented, for a couple of reasons.

Chair Bobzien:

I am going to interject and say this is not connected to the bill and we do not need to have this conversation right now. Mr. Hansen, we are going to stay on the specifics of this bill.

Assemblyman Hansen:

Fair enough. Thank you.

Jan Gilbert, Northern Nevada Coordinator, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada:

We support this bill wholeheartedly, but our support also extends to using this bill for our Nevada Racial Equity Report Card because we feel it is going to impact communities of color at a higher rate. It would be wonderful for those communities to have this bill passed.

Marlene Lockard, representing Nevada Women's Lobby:

It is at this point of the hour that I say, "Me too." The Women's Lobby obviously very much supports this legislation.

Margaret M. Ferrara, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning, College of Education, University of Nevada, Reno:

I am in the College of Education at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). In 2004, I was a brand-new chair to a brand-new department. My first month, I had visits from three women. One was Barbara Clark, one was Debbie Smith, and the third was Lisa Lightfoot. They said to me, "Dr. Ferrara, we want you to do something about parental involvement." I said, "Not a problem, that is my research." This was the beginning. What has happened in the College of Education is a beautiful story. There is no money, but there is a belief that our families are important.

We have to start with our preservice teachers because if we start when they are already teachers, we have lost four years. At the College of Education, through the beliefs of our own staff, we start with having our preservice teachers hear from parents and hear from presenters in the school district. You heard before that there was this idea of "connecting the dots;" the school district has not only done that for their teachers, they have invited our interns. This is extremely important because teachers and preservice teachers learn simultaneously.

Since I am a researcher, I am going to give you some statistics. In 2010, we conducted a survey of our graduating class of new teachers. That graduating class numbered 110 students; 77 were undergraduates, overwhelmingly female, with 53 respondents entering elementary education and 24 becoming special education teachers. Ninety-two percent said they were well prepared to engage families; twenty-six percent indicated they felt that family engagement learning opportunities were excellent, and the balance told us we needed to work harder.

Teachers want us to continue our training of family engagement and communication with families; 90 percent wanted more training in fostering positive relationships; 69 percent asked for more strategies for reaching at-risk and low-income families. From this, we know our preservice teachers are "hungry." We are willing to continue to do what we are doing. We know that a one-shot deal is not going to make it. Parents are now becoming the presenters in our own programs because it is the voices of the parents that help our preservice teachers say, "Yes, we are partners." We are trying to help our preservice teachers know that family engagement is no longer solely being involved in booster clubs, going on field trips, or serving as room mothers. The need is most imperative at the secondary level where we see a falloff in parental involvement. We need to celebrate this bill and work together as partners.

Chair Bobzien:

I appreciate having UNR faculty expertise and perspectives as part of the legislative process.

Denise Hedrick, Executive Director, Education Alliance of Washoe County:

I am here today serving in my capacity as the director of the Nevada State Parent Information & Resource Center (PIRC). The Education Alliance of Washoe County was awarded the grant for the Nevada State PIRC, a statewide grant that impacts every county. About five years ago, we were racing toward the end of that five-year grant, which will close in October of 2011. The Nevada State PIRC, as Barbara Clark indicated, has provided some support to the Advisory Council, particularly to the parent involvement summit, which you will see listed in A.B. 224 as a continued support for that effort. From that summit, key goals were identified, which were a consensus of the groups.

In addition, summit training was provided in best practices for some of the counties and administrators. Through that process, we learned there are the "haves" and the "have-nots" in family engagement in our state. The districts lucky enough to have a parent involvement coordinator are able to provide support to their schools that other districts can only dream of. Administrators

and principals are “hungry” to get those tools to help their staff help their families.

This bill will provide a leadership or a “thread” that will tie all these efforts together to provide a framework of support for family engagement. The support the Nevada State PIRC has given our state leverage to move ahead. There is no guarantee that the Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) grant will be reauthorized or that Nevada will have access to those additional funds. If Nevada is not given a PIRC grant, my understanding is that Secretary Duncan wants to increase funding for parental involvement to the states by 2 percent. What would happen with that state-level support is that Nevada would be very well positioned to hit the ground running and provide additional support to our districts to strengthen our families and build the schools and the families’ capacity to support student achievement. With that, the Nevada State PIRC would be in support of this bill draft.

Chair Bobzien:

Thank you. Do we have questions? Is there anyone else who would like to testify in favor of this bill? Is there anybody out there opposed to parental involvement? [Laughter.] It looks like we lost our audience in Las Vegas. [Closed hearing on A.B. 224.] I will be turning the meeting over to my Vice Chair.

Vice Chair Dondero Loop:

Thank you for visiting us on the other side, Assemblyman Bobzien. We will now open the hearing on Assembly Bill 233.

Assembly Bill 233: Revises provisions governing the circumstances under which a pupil may receive credit for a course of study without attending the course. (BDR 34-144)

Assemblyman David P. Bobzien, Washoe County Assembly District No. 24:

Thank you for the opportunity to present Assembly Bill 233 for the Committee’s consideration. This measure concerns the way a student may receive credit for a course. For those of you who were able to join us for our tour of Washoe County schools earlier this week, you saw the amazing work in action making a big difference at Proctor R. Hug High School. I am proud of the fact that Hug High School is in the district I represent and I am proud to have Andrew Kelly here today, who is the principal there. He will give you some background on this program. ([Exhibit G](#))

Andy was formerly a principal in Oregon. In 2002, Oregon implemented a policy that districts may award credit based on proficiency. The primary

purposes of the program were outlined as follows: to offer flexibility to districts and schools as they meet each student's diverse needs, interests and level, and rate of learning, and to create additional options based on Oregon's high standards and board accountability system. As Andy explained to me earlier this week, it comes down to this concept: when you go to the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to take your driver's license test, how many of you failed because you could not parallel park? Does it really make sense, if that is the one thing you have to master, to go all the way back through to demonstrate again everything except parallel parking, when really all you need to demonstrate is parallel parking?

When it comes to education and education ideas during this session, it is time for us to think differently and try new things. We keep hearing that we have 437,000 reasons to get this right in the State of Nevada. This bill is an option that this Legislature should look at and one that the principal of Hug High School feels confident will work well with his students and his populations.

As a member of the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools, we have moved forward with standards in this state, and most recently, as part of *Nevada's Promise* and the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Education Reform, are adopting the core standards. It is powerful that we are going to be more focused on standards and the mastery of those standards at a high level to make sure our students know their stuff when they graduate, and have the skills to go into the workforce or go onto college. This particular program and approach is one option for that.

Through this program, students may demonstrate proficiency inside the classroom, outside the classroom, through documentation of prior learning, by examination, or any combination thereof. The description of the primary differences between a proficiency-based credit program and a traditional program are as follows. In a proficiency-based system, all students can achieve high standards; failure is not an option. In a traditional system of seat time, some students will excel, some will do average work, and some will fail. In a proficiency-based system, students are active in their education program.

Students know proficiency must be achieved to move forward. Those of us who went on the Clark County School District tour saw, at a lower grade level, that system in place with young students who understood where they had to go with their learning. They understood what the expectations were and, as a result, were motivated to learn and did so. In a traditional setting, students do not always know what successful learning is. In a proficiency-based system, teachers continue to provide traditional skills such as motivating students,

making assignments, and leading class discussion; however, in a proficiency-based system, teachers also become content experts, mentors, resources, and skilled assessment practitioners.

I would like to turn this over to Mr. Kelly to describe more of this program and what it looks like. I will say that the purpose of this bill is enabling; this is permissive. It is important that we set some high standards, if this program were to be adopted in our schools, for how this goes forward, and that is exactly what this bill does.

Under existing law, a student may receive credit for a course without attending class if the student passes a prescribed examination. By regulation, this bill requires that the State Board of Education and State Board for Career and Technical Education prescribe alternative proof of proficiency in a subject area without attending class. Alternative proof would include a portfolio of equivalent work performed outside the classroom, documentation of previous educational activities or experiences, or any combination of these. The act becomes effective on July 1, 2011, and the State Board would be required to adopt the regulations on or before December 31, 2011. Again, this is permissive.

We will be hearing concerns from Clark County School District that we make this explicitly clear. This is obviously a shift in how we do the enterprise of education in Nevada, and we want to leave this up to the districts, to the schools, and to the principals as to how best to apply this to our student population. With that, I would like to turn this over to Principal Kelly.

Andrew Kelly, Principal, Proctor R. Hug High School:

I am the president-elect for the state Secondary School Principals' Association. Most importantly, perhaps, I am the father of five children who attend public schools in Washoe County School District. I would like to start my testimony with an illustration of my two sons, Ezekial and Josiah, who are seven- and eight-years old.

Both embarked on the exercise of swim lessons last summer. Both greatly aspired to move up from "guppies" and become "sea minnows." After three weeks of classes, two trips a day to the pool, Ezekial passed with flying colors, became a "sea minnow," and was awarded his certificate. On the other hand, Josiah did not master three key concepts that were essential for a "guppy" to become a "sea minnow." Because Josiah had a father who would advocate for him, I went to the teacher and said, "Is it really necessary that he retake the entire 'guppy' session, or would it be possible for us to work on the three specific skills that he cannot do yet, let him come back, test again, and receive

his certificate?" He has not yet received his certificate; we are still working on those three skills.

The point of this legislation is to give districts and schools flexibility meeting the needs of their students. It is about ensuring equity for all kids, ensuring that all kids have the flexibility to earn credits, and are not "left at the whim" of parents who either know how to play the game of school, or have the fiscal resources to fund other methods. There are two specific examples I would like to share that I saw play out in my high school in Portland, Oregon. First was the example of algebra. Algebra is a gateway course that prevents or allows students to enter college. It is essential that students pass algebra to master Nevada's High School Proficiency Exam. Currently, in my school I see a student fail an algebra course, then we give algebra to the student one more time, a little harder. They are now reenrolled in that course. There may be some remediation, but because they did not earn that specific credit, they must either pay to take a test to earn the credit, or go through the entire course again. This is an incredibly expensive venture that requires remediation and a full application of a course that the student met most of the requisites for already.

When students failed algebra in the Portland example, the principal had the autonomy to ask the teacher specifically what part of the state content standards could the student not meet? Once we were able to identify those content standards, we developed a specific plan to remediate those specific skills for that student. That happened in an enrichment class and in after-school tutoring. It happened in an intensive way in order to get the student over the threshold.

The student enrolled and started in Algebra II. We quickly remediated, and as soon as the student could demonstrate proficiency in those three content areas where they were previously deficient, the principal had the flexibility to award credit. There was no need to enroll that student in another class, nor was there the need for a make-up course—it just made sense. We were able to reduce our remediation costs in that school by 30 percent in the span of two years.

When students make the transition from middle school to high school, they enroll in freshman English I. In Washoe County School District, students are required to take four full years of English language and pass each section. Sometimes, a student might fail their first semester of English I. They go on and pass their second semester, their entire sophomore year, they pass their entire junior and senior year; then we do an audit of their transcript and see that the student is missing an English I credit.

Right now, we handle that by having the student retake English I. At some point, in a logical system, one could make the argument that if the student has passed English II, English III, and English IV, they have demonstrated, through those courses, the requisite knowledge of English I, and that they may have failed due to a family tragedy causing them to miss time from school, et cetera.

Again, in Oregon, we had the autonomy to work directly with that student on an individual basis and figure out why they did not pass the class, allow them an opportunity to demonstrate mastery for the core content standards that were tested and assessed in English I, and give them the credit. As a high school principal, as a father, and as a taxpayer in the State of Nevada, I believe that the current fiscal situation we are in right now, along with our goal as a state to increase the graduation rate for all kids and to ensure that all of our kids have a pathway to finish high school and move on to college or postsecondary education, means this bill makes good sense. I cannot think of any reason or barrier so significant that would prevent this from going into place.

In supporting this bill, it is not a mandate, but autonomy. If this is an added option for schools and districts, it is simply providing autonomy in a difficult time to implement a best practice strategy that is in action many places across our nation. It also allows principals to operate in the best interests of their students to support their credit acquisition and graduate from high school.

Vice Chair Dondero Loop:

As a former swimming teacher, school teacher, and parent, I applaud you for being involved as a parent and combining this bill with the last bill. We visited your school last Monday and it is evident that wonderful things are going on at Hug High School.

Assemblyman Bobzien:

If I could add some additional comments, there are a number of benefits to this approach, as we heard from the principal. Certainly, the maximum effective use of scarce resources is absolutely a part of this proposal. We spend a lot of time in this state working on standards, making sure they are rigorous. I cannot tell you how many times I have pored over those documents, made sure they are achievable, rigorous, and going to prepare our students for the future. Of course, those standards then flow down to the districts to come up with curricula to master those standards.

There has always been this sense on the part of the Council that we do not really know how the standards play out in the classroom. This approach, as an option, helps address that very question. Putting the standards at the forefront, making sure the mastery of those standards is the goal for preparing our

children for the next step, is such a valuable goal and a key component to this legislation.

Vice Chair Dondero Loop:

I would add that it is important that we make sure that kids do not fail, that they do succeed, and they do not fail when there is no reason for them to fail. We sometimes set them up for that with unknown consequences. Are there any questions from the Committee?

Assemblyman Hansen:

We heard testimony from Chancellor Klaich a couple weeks ago about kids that get high school diplomas, go on to Nevada's Higher Education System, and 40 percent of them require remediation. We want to increase the graduation rate, we want to increase the mastery of core principles, and we want to expand rigorous standards and make sure that kids do not fail. But it seems like this has almost given way to lowering the standards by allowing them to graduate when there is already a 40 percent remediation; and those are the kids that actually go to college, not the ones that go into the workforce. I want to make sure we are not doing something to simply increase the graduation rate without doing something that expands the kids' academic achievements.

Andrew Kelly:

Assemblyman Hansen, I do not know much about your schooling experience.

Assemblyman Hansen:

I am a high school graduate.

Andrew Kelly:

I would ask you then, were there any classes you passed in high school that you felt like you did not demonstrate a high level of confidence, but earned a grade in?

Assemblyman Hansen:

Yes.

Andrew Kelly:

Your response actually speaks in support of this bill in that the State of Nevada has limited ways that we check for understanding with students. Mastery- or proficiency-based learning is the best way to do that. It says that we are going to give kids credit not based on sitting in a classroom or doing homework; both of those are important, but neither of those things absolutely demonstrates what a child knows and is able to do. What shows us the child is proficient is the way a student puts knowledge forward. It could be as Chair Bobzien

indicated, in the form of a portfolio, where a student demonstrates exemplary work.

I would suggest the opposite of your hypothesis is true; if schools had the flexibility to do this, personally, as a principal, I would be nervous that I would ever award credit to a student who was not prepared to go on to the next level because that is my moral obligation as a principal. Nevada's current remediation rate speaks to a disconnect between higher education and K-12 education. As we get more clear about what national core standards are and how those link to higher education, and as we build in mechanisms, as you heard earlier this week, on teacher and principal accountability for delivering a product, I think it actually positions in a most positive fashion.

Assemblyman Hansen:

I like the idea, do not get me wrong. What I am suggesting is people have been getting diplomas that indicate they have earned and learned the basic skills; if 40 percent of the more advanced are not prepared to go to college, clearly that has not been the case. I want to make sure that is the direction we are going.

Vice Chair Dondero Loop:

Mr. Chair, did you have a comment?

Assemblyman Bobzien:

Yes. I absolutely appreciate that concern and certainly as someone with long-term knowledge of the remediation system at UNR, I share the same goal of wanting to reduce the load on the universities.

My understanding from the policy perspective is that the common course standards, the Blue Ribbon Task Force, and *Nevada's Promise*, are all standards we need to strive for: seamless integration with what is happening with the university system. The idea is, if you have mastered those standards, you are not going to need remediation once you get to the university system. This is certainly not going to happen overnight, but it is the shared goal, to want our students who graduate to understand the skills and be ready to go to university without remediation.

Assemblyman Hansen:

I am on board, Chair, thank you.

Assemblyman Aizley:

I have questions for both of you. Did you ever parallel park the car?

Assemblyman Bobzien:

I am trying to remember if I passed my driver's test the first time, but I do know I was okay with parallel parking. I had a rather large vehicle, so I had to learn how to parallel park.

Assemblyman Aizley:

I had to parallel park on a hill with a manual transmission. I am in favor of the bill. Mr. Kelly, are you involved with the actual wording in this legislation? I am not sure if it satisfies me that the student will have adequate knowledge of the basics. I would accept that recommendation if you feel that it did.

In my 50 years of teaching, I have given a student a full "A" passing grade and that student never came to class except to take an exam. I did not do it on my own—the department chair approved it—the process was in place, and there was a reason this student could not take my course and another course at the same time. I like the idea of getting the kids to move forward, but I have had kids in my calculus class that did not know what 8 times 7 was, and that is my concern.

Andrew Kelly:

I did not have a hand in the exact crafting of the words in the bill. What I tried to do was provide background on my experience in the state of Oregon to support people crafting that language. I would echo your concern and also say that our state has and will continue to grow in its capacity to assess the basic knowledge that children have and have to demonstrate through high school proficiency exams, which are exit criteria for graduation. I would hope that we would never undermine that in any way, and this would simply be an extension and another option for kids who, for whatever reason, were not initially successful, needed extra time, et cetera.

Assemblyman Aizley:

Mr. Bobzien, do you think the process is here to protect against the student getting the credit and not having the knowledge? That is my concern.

Assemblyman Bobzien:

The purpose of the bill is to direct the State Board through the process to make sure that we have a strong framework for putting this in place. I absolutely share your concern.

Vice Chair Dondero Loop:

Any other questions or comments from the Committee? [There were none.]

Lonnie Shields, Assistant Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Administrators:

I come to the table in support of this bill. One of the most exiting parts of this bill makes me think back to my years as a principal where I would have been able to call a student in to my office and say, "You know young man, you did not quite make it; here are the two things we have to work on so you do make it, rather than all of it again. Once we have mastered those two things, I can move you on to graduation." It is a unique idea we should try.

Bart Mangino, Legislative Representative, Community and Government Relations, Clark County School District:

First, we would like to thank the bill sponsor and his efforts in recognizing the need for expanding students' opportunity to achieve. Given the testimony of Assemblyman Bobzien and Mr. Kelly, we believe that we can offer our support for A.B. 233, particularly in acknowledging the importance of the individual school districts in crafting policy and programs to meet the identified needs of their students. We support the offering of the additional options for students and schools with regard to alternative forms of assessment and recognizing their achievement.

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

I am in support of the bill. The key is that we have already implemented parts of the bill. When you adopted this in 2007, you required the State Board to allow examinations without taking classes. The regulations are the key piece in making sure that it is not easier to get a credit in Elko than it is in Reno or Las Vegas. If this looks like it is an easy way out, it will do no one any good, including the student.

The one thing already allowed in the examinations is that it has to be based on the specific state standards that were adopted in each of the courses. We only listed the courses that were eligible—that standards had been adopted statewide—under the testing program. The second thing we did was that if a district chose to offer alternative programs that allowed testing of the student without attending class, we required that they establish a committee of teachers and administrators within the district to provide a standard for the test for any of the classes they were going to issue or allow a student to test out of. There was district-wide as well as a statewide standard. We set the minimum passing score at 70 statewide so that you could not pass the course on a test at 60 in Clark County and 70 in Washoe County.

I would say the same thing should be done in this bill. At a minimum, this alternative way of testing-out, possibly with no physical test, would have to be

equivalent to the standards. There will be documentation; it will take work to do that. It is a lot easier to approve a test than it is a portfolio of what is good enough to be equivalent. It can be done and would address some of the issues for students who need it.

Vice Chair Dondero Loop:

Thank you to all of you for your support. Any questions?

Jan Gilbert, Northern Nevada Coordinator, Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada:

We are very pleased to support A.B. 233. We feel that it will be a criterion for our Racial Equity Report Card. Young people face a lot of obstacles; many are working in jobs, going to school, and living their life. If we can help them graduate, we are doing the best thing possible. This seems to be a bill that uses common sense and will help the students overcome some obstacles.

Vice Chair Dondero Loop:

Anyone else in support of A.B. 233? [There was no one.] Anyone opposing or neutral? [There was no one.] I will close the hearing on A.B. 233. We will allow Chair Bobzien to return. [Assemblyman Bobzien reassumed the Chair.]

Chair Bobzien:

Any further comment? [There was none.] Meeting is adjourned [at 2:29 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Janel Davis
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblyman David P. Bobzien, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Committee Name: Committee on Education

Date: March 4, 2011

Time of Meeting: 12:44 p.m.

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster
A.B. 224	C	Assemblywoman Benitez- Thompson	PowerPoint Presentation: Office of Parental Involvement and Family Engagement
A.B. 224	D	Assemblywoman Benitez- Thompson	"What they are saying nationally about A.B. 224..."
A.B. 224	E	Assemblywoman Benitez- Thompson	The Missing Piece of the Proficiency Puzzle
A.B. 224	F	Bill Hanlon	Letter
A.B. 233	G	David P. Bobzien	Memorandum