

**MINUTES OF THE
JOINT MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Seventy-Sixth Session
February 23, 2011**

The Joint Assembly Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair David P. Bobzien at 3:35 p.m. on Wednesday, February 23, 2011, in Room 1214 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412 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).

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblyman David P. Bobzien, Chair
Assemblywoman Marilyn Dondero Loop, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Paul Aizley
Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson
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

SENATE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Moises (Mo) Denis, Chair
Senator Ruben J. Kihuen, Vice Chair
Senator Valerie Wiener
Senator Sheila Leslie
Senator Barbara K. Cegavske

Senator Don Gustavson
Senator Greg Brower

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Assemblywoman Olivia Diaz (excused)
Assemblywoman Lucy Flores (excused)

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mindy Martini, Committee Policy Analyst
Pepper Sturm, Senate Committee Policy Analyst
Kristin Roberts, Committee Counsel
Taylor Anderson, Committee Manager
Denise Geissinger, Senate Committee Manager
Janel Davis, Committee Secretary
Sandra Small, Senate Committee Secretary
Sherwood Howard, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Elaine Wynn, Co-chair, Education Reform Blue Ribbon Task Force
Daniel Klaich, Chancellor, System Administration Office, Nevada System
of Higher Education
Christopher Cross, Chairman, Cross & Joftus
Lynn Warne, President, Nevada State Education Association
Ray Bacon, Executive Director, Nevada Manufacturers Association
Daryl E. Drake, Member, Council for Excellence in Education
Andrea Hughs-Baird, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada
Alison Turner, President, Nevada Parent Teacher Association
Mary Beth Heavrin, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada

Chair Bobzien:

[Roll was called. Rules and protocol were stated.] Today, our presentation concerns education reform. In one of our opening meetings of the Assembly Committee on Education, we heard from the state Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Keith Rheault, concerning Nevada's performance on multiple education indicators. The results for the indicators, as referenced

through *Education Week's* "Quality Counts 2011" report are very disconcerting. [Continued to read prepared statement ([Exhibit C](#)).]

The findings from the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) are unacceptable. Even in this time of extensive budget reductions, we continue to have high goals for public education in this state: namely, that our children must receive a quality education from schools that have high, rigorous standards in place; that we have a corps of competent teachers; and that the structure of our state's public education system supports those ideals. It is time to support and improve education in our state. We have 437,000 reasons to get it right.

Senator Denis:

It is a pleasure meeting with you and your committee to hear about these activities and recommendations from the Education Reform Blue Ribbon Task Force. Also, it is beneficial to have joint meetings, and anytime we talk about education is important. I know the members of the Blue Ribbon Task Force have put much thought and effort into their deliberations for our Race to the Top application. We have benefited from those efforts, even if we did not get the money, but the group's activity led to significant statewide public education conversations. Although Nevada was not successful during this round of grants, the strong commitment to continuing the reform process by the Blue Ribbon Task Force leaders and members is commendable. We all look forward to hearing more from the Co-chairs.

Chair Bobzien:

[Introduced the Co-chairs of the Blue Ribbon Task Force.] Mrs. Wynn has served as Director of Wynn Resorts since the year 2000, overseeing a multitude of business operations and the company's charitable involvement. Prior to her current position, Mrs. Wynn served in a similar capacity as Director of Mirage Resorts from 1976 to 2000. [Continued to read from prepared statement, ([Exhibit C](#)).]

Elaine Wynn, Co-chair, Education Reform Blue Ribbon Task Force:

We are extremely grateful for the invitation to present the product of the Blue Ribbon Task Force, entitled *Nevada's Promise* ([Exhibit D](#)). Although a lofty title, it was purposefully meant to be so. Yesterday, Majority Leader of the United States Senate, our fellow Nevadan, Senator Harry Reid, addressed the Nevada Legislature. On the subject of education, he framed our presentation for today perfectly. He called attention to the dreadful status of education in Nevada, in a most articulate and comprehensive way. His estimation bears repeating, and I quote, "If we lag in education today, we are going to lose at everything tomorrow."

He explained that we had fallen too far behind to even qualify for Race to the Top funds. He discussed if we are to be competitive in any situation, we must prepare like athletes for a new season. I quote again, "But before any of this can happen, we have to recognize that our children's education is not about tenure and teachers' unions. It is not about budgets, or taxes, or profits. It is not about yesterday's alliances or adversaries. It is not about us at all; it is about our children, our students, and their future. Nevada is not a last place kind of place. We know this in our hearts. Together, we can make the world believe it too, but we are going to have to earn it."

I am most grateful that Senator Reid came the day before we appeared to set the stage for today's meeting. I thought it was important to revisit those remarks because this is exactly the sentiment that inspired the work of our Committee on Education and the creation of *Nevada's Promise*. You have received copies of the formal document ([Exhibit D](#)). Many of you have had individual conversations discussing some of the provisions of the plan. Several of you worked with us on the committee to create the plan, and we are very grateful for that.

There are several members of the committee here today that I would like to point out: Ray Bacon, Joyce Haldeman, Lynn Warne, and Heath Morrison. We engaged in very tough and amicable discussions, but we arrived at a very strong consensus. Because of the importance of this effort, we believe it is critical to submit this comprehensive amount of information as formal testimony, but we will attempt to summarize the key points as efficiently as possible.

Daniel Klaich, Chancellor, System Administration Office, Nevada System of Higher Education:

When Senator Denis indicated there were two distinguished people at the table, I was sure he was referring to Mrs. Wynn and Mr. Cross. Christopher Cross is no stranger to education in Nevada, having served with the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools since its inception until two years ago, and who was made available to our work through the generosity of Wynn Resorts. Chris was President of the Maryland State Board of Education from 1994 to 1997, and was a U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education. He is here today to answer all the hard questions that you might be forwarding to me.

We have divided this presentation into three categories: "The Challenge," "The Catalyst," and "The Solution." We are here representing education, but today we are not talking about money. No one is here asking for money. We are talking about education reforms that can be effected by utilizing current

resources in a more efficient and effective manner to better the education of our children throughout the state.

Elaine Wynn:

Slide 3 of [Exhibit D](#) deals with our state of education. The first statistic is the single most alarming, especially for me. In my role as the national chair of Communities In Schools, I am exposed to 26 other states, 3,400 schools, and over 1,300,000 children. I am extremely proud of the work that Communities In Schools do, but at the same time, I am extremely embarrassed to be coming from a state that has the worst record of graduating students. As I travel around the country, this has always been an issue and it must be addressed once and for all. There is a terrible achievement gap that exists, not only in our state, but elsewhere. This represents the true civil rights issue of the day. Equally discouraging is Nevada's postsecondary education enrollment rate of 39 percent, the second lowest in the country. We rank last in the nation for students graduating from college in four years, and although the trend is to graduate in six years, it is still a noble achievement to aspire to.

Next, is the state of the economy in Nevada. We are all painfully aware of the 14.5 percent unemployment rate statistic, which is the highest in the country. We rank last in the nation in jobs available for college graduates, but ironically rank third in employing high school dropouts. Unfortunately, this becomes a disincentive for students to complete high school. In 2009, Nevada's personal income fell more rapidly than any other state, and for the first time since 1920, the state's population is declining.

Education is the key to our economic future, but because of this crisis, we are paying rapt attention to it. If Nevada's high schools graduated all of their students ready for college, look at what could happen. Nevada could recoup nearly \$6.2 billion in lost lifetime earnings, and we would see changes in health care costs, community college remediation costs, and crime related savings.

In the next two slides, you can see an example of how education is the key to our economic future. We can demonstrate this by reducing the dropout rate to 50 percent in our two metropolitan areas.

If we were to examine what would happen in Las Vegas and in Reno, we would dramatically increase our yearly combined earnings and spending; there would be additional investments, new jobs, and new tax revenue; and a group of kids who would continue to pursue some type of postsecondary education, which is so critical in today's environment.

The slide that troubles me the most [referred to [Exhibit D](#)] contains the following quote: “A child born in Nevada has the least chance of success than a child born anywhere in the United States.” This is a horrific statement for anyone to make and acknowledge. A lot of this is detailed in various reports, particularly in the “Quality Counts 2011” report, but it discusses the quality of our parents with regard to low income, lack of education, high dropout rate, low kindergarten and preschool enrollment, and a host of other conditions which create this dreadful statement that must not be ignored.

Daniel Klaich:

How did we get here? About a year ago Governor Gibbons asked Mrs. Wynn and me to co-chair an Education Reform Blue Ribbon Task Force, and to oversee the Race to the Top application after the Legislature adjourned the 26th Special Session, making Nevada eligible for those funds with certain statutory amendments. We accepted the Governor’s invitation and brought together an incredible, energetic, apolitical group of education reformers to pursue the Race to the Top application. I would like to point out some work from Phase 1.

Other states had been pursuing Race to the Top for months and this team, together with the Department of Education, started working immediately on putting the application together. Nevada was not successful. We were eligible for \$175 million, which is indicated on slide 10 ([Exhibit D](#)). After the process was over, we found out there was a tremendous disadvantage in not being in round one of the competition. Virtually all of the 12 winning states had the benefit of being losers in round one, getting graded very hard and knowing how to improve their applications. Nevada was certainly behind. The scoring on slide 11 ([Exhibit D](#)) informed us about how to move this process forward. It told us where some major strengths and weaknesses were. They lauded the group and Mrs. Wynn and I sit here as representatives of the group proud of the strong vision for reform in Nevada that was expressed. We did not run away from the statistics found; we embraced them, indicated they were there, and we now pledge to do better for all Nevadans.

Nevada fell short in two critical areas: “Great Teachers and Leaders, and “Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics,” (STEM) which was a part of the application that was “all or nothing.” We received zero points on this.

What do we do? Mrs. Wynn has laid the foundation for Nevada and the imperatives of education in the state that we all talk about and appreciate.

We talked about Phase 1 of our work. Moreover, Phase 2 was to bring a reform agenda to this Legislature, and embrace the second half of our work.

In his opening comments, Chair Bobzien referred to the 437,000 students in Nevada schools. This became our byword which was 437,000 reasons to succeed, and not a single excuse to fail. Our basic principles that guide our work are these: every school will be led by an effective principal, every classroom will be led by an effective teacher, and every student will graduate. Equity was key in looking at every school, every classroom, and every student. We were not talking about affluent students. We were not talking about white students. We were not talking about some students in some school districts. Equity was a critical aspect and drove every consideration and discussion we had.

On slide 15 ([Exhibit D](#)), five core areas were discussed. We want to spend as much time as we can on the actual reform measures, so I will move quickly. We worked on adopting a common set of standards—work that is not new to this state—and we have been addressing in many different areas. Point number two involves data systems. The key point of everything that drove our work is that it was data-driven—not anecdotal-driven, not subjective, but hard, longitudinal data that we could track—and we could provide real-time input to principals, teachers, and parents for making decisions about how their children's education was going forward. Great teachers and principals are everything we were about.

There were some people who came to this project and thought it was about getting rid of bad teachers. We did not talk about bad teachers; we talked about the great teachers in Nevada. For those teachers who needed help, we wanted to be sure they had the opportunity to succeed. For those who did not embrace that opportunity, we wanted to be sure there was a mechanism to move them along through fair and effective, data-driven evaluations so that our students would not be the victims of either ineffective leadership in a school or in a classroom. Turning around low-achieving schools was a critical portion of our evaluation that we focused on, and finally, preparing students for careers in STEM that we fell short on, we are sorry to say.

What are our objectives? Mrs. Wynn referred to “stretch goals.” We did not try to make ourselves comfortable with this endeavor; some of us were accused of being foolish in what we were doing. But if we are foolish by embracing “stretch goals,” then I am comfortable with being a fool in this regard. We had set goals of increasing our graduation rate to 85 percent by 2014. This date was originally chosen to align with the grants from the Race to the Top, but we

did not change those dates. We committed to reducing the achievement gap between white students and students of color by 50 percent. We committed to increasing postsecondary enrollment rates by 50 percent. More importantly, we measure proficiency skills at fourth and eighth grade. These are critical points of measuring and increasing proficiency among our students.

Elaine Wynn:

I call this the “Spaghetti Bowl” slide ([Exhibit D](#)) and for those of you who do not live in Las Vegas and know what the Spaghetti Bowl is, it is a series of convoluted highways. We all manage to get where we want to go, but nobody gets to where they need to go based on this organizational chart. It is the thing that many of us in education in Nevada have been staring at, looking at, and puzzled by, seeing more of these squares added as the years have progressed.

I put on my “business hat” when we talk about the next slide on reform, which deals with governance. For those of you who have seen the film *Waiting for Superman*, and I urge those who have not to please view it, they make a very strong point that no matter what we all do, in the absence of an intelligent governance structure, nothing really matters. I am in total agreement with this statement, and our committee arrived at the same conclusion.

We are offering a new structure that came about by determining the essential criteria for successful governance, not only K-12 public education in Nevada, but for all kinds of organizations: private, for-profit, and nonprofit. When looking at slide 19, you can certainly study this graphic representation, but these are the elements of the criteria. We wanted to make sure that we have a single point of responsibility where ultimate responsibility for the management of the entire system occurs. It is impossible to hold anyone accountable for the progress of a system in its absence. This is the equivalent of having a chief executive officer; there needs to be functional alignment and a linear path of oversight and accountability that flows throughout the entire system so that it demonstrates the lines of accountability as well as the roles and responsibilities of people in the system. It needs to have simple, clear, and transparent objectives that create these efficiencies. Finally, it needs to use our academic standards and the data as a guide for decision making that can guide the things we do to improve our education.

There are several states currently that are moving toward this model, and many that have already achieved this. We got involved in extensive research and had a committee that was seriously involved in consideration of this, and when it was presented it to us as a whole, we all bought into this concept quite strongly. I know there are people who say some models demonstrate no impact

on successful student achievement, but conventional wisdom sometimes does prevail. In this case, conventional wisdom must be considered seriously because this is how successful companies run, this is the way communities and schools operate, and in some fashion, by meeting these four criteria, a system emerges that is much more impactful than the “Spaghetti Bowl” chart we have now, which is failing all of our students.

We are on the slide entitled, “Legislative Actions Required for Reform.” It discusses actions to restructure the K-12 public education governance with an appointed State Board of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction and to realign the various commissions and councils. The ultimate responsibility should rest with the Governor as the CEO of the state. The chief state school officer should be appointed and become a member of the Governor’s cabinet. There should be significant input from our legislative body. The Governor should appoint one member, the Governor should appoint the second from a slate submitted by the Senate Majority Leader, and the Governor should appoint the third from a slate submitted by Speaker of the Assembly. We will reduce the standing education-related councils and commissions. We have an extraordinary opportunity right now in our state. We have wonderful superintendents, but we have two new superintendents who have been hired to oversee our two major cities. They are innovative, seasoned, and they are visionaries. They need support from our state apparatus. We cannot continue to operate in this bifurcated manner. We are strongly suggesting that this be adopted.

Daniel Klaich:

The remainder of the legislative reforms are detailed for you on slides 20 and 21 ([Exhibit D](#)). Nevada needs more good people in our schools at every level and in every position. We embraced alternative routes to licensure for both teachers and principals. If there are good people that procedures keep away from our schools and classrooms, those obstacles should be eliminated and those teachers should serve and lead. Evaluation was a big part of this process and I am not the professional on K-12 education so please bear with me.

Currently there is a binary system of evaluation; you are either satisfactory or unsatisfactory. This is not how life works; most decisions are not that clear cut. The pressure on that kind of binary system is extraordinary. I do not want to have someone look at me and say, “Whoa, Dan, you are kind of no good.” I could give you some hints about getting better if I had a few more choices. We need an evaluation system that offers more choices and provides better data-driven input for success.

These evaluations should be based on progress. We debated a lot about what percentages should apply, and ultimately those will be decisions we are all asked to make. We provided for the Teachers and Leaders Council of Nevada that would be empowered to work with the various stakeholders to “flesh out the bones” we are talking about today. Teachers should be involved in the evaluation of their principals, just as principals are involved in the evaluation of their teachers. We think it is critical to have effective, equitable resource allocation. We have to have data-driven decisions with respect to tenure and termination. We believe that charter schools should play a greater role in the state and that is indicated at the bottom of slide 21. Never wanting to miss an opportunity to express our opinions strongly, we put down what we thought were critical things that could be done outside of the legislative process to improve our K-12 education.

Chair Bobzien appropriately began this discussion with an extensive introduction of my good friend, Mrs. Wynn. From that introduction, it is clear why she is sitting here today and why we were so lucky to have her co-chair the Blue Ribbon Task Force. She brings a lifetime of selfless service to education together with an equal lifetime of business success. Those are the kinds of things that drove *Nevada's Promise*, and what we needed to make this successful, which was a hard-headed, no-nonsense approach for very human and real problems and solutions.

In closing, there is nothing we can do that will improve higher education in Nevada more than to improve the quality of students moving through our pipeline in K-12 education. That is why we talk about our partners in K-12 education, and it is not a byword or a cliché; it is an absolute critical element of everything we do. Secondly, I am one of those 437,000 reasons (a few generations removed) that this Committee is fighting for. I am a product of your public schools as is my wife and my children, and as of last fall, my first granddaughter. I am fighting for every one of those students for our future, and I know you are too. I thank you for being here and for your attention. I cannot encourage you enough to look at these reforms and help us change Nevada schools and change the direction of Nevada education for the betterment of our children.

Elaine Wynn:

I hate talking about statistics. I hate reading from papers because passion does not come through. My colleague just had the opportunity to give his passion in closing and I would like to add mine as well.

I have lived in Nevada for over 40 years, and I am not exactly certain how education become an avocation for me and a passion, but it did and it has, and it has been the one thing that I would care most about in leaving a legacy. I do not know how many years I have left, but before I go to heaven, or wherever else it is intended for me to go, there is something that must occur in our state that is a symbol of success and achievement for all the collective work that all of us have been doing for so many years. Senator Cegavske and I have butted our heads on many occasions but mainly worked together for the same cause and purpose. The committee understood that this was a total buy-in, nobody got out of this, and nobody got a "pass" at this. We are here to tell you, as citizens of the state, we want to give you courage. We are prepared to get up and do the media work, we are prepared to support you, we are prepared to be your foot soldiers in making all of these difficult decisions that we are asking you to make.

We did not come here to drop off another fancy piece of work that you are going to "put on the shelf to get stale and die." This thing has the legs of all the children and all of the people that live here that care so much about this topic. We pledge ongoing support throughout this 76th Legislative Session. If you are at all concerned about having somebody come to the forefront and give you this courage, like the lion in the *Wizard of Oz*, we will be there for you, and that is the commitment we wanted to make today. We are very grateful that you gave us this face and this credibility by inviting us to present to the Committee on Education in a joint fashion.

Chair Bobzien:

Mrs. Wynn, in regard to your comments about the legacy, there are a number of people here, if not everyone, who support that approach very much. All of us consider the work we are doing on education to be sacred and of the highest importance in terms of what we do as legislators. Thank you for your commitment and effort. This is not a document to be put on the shelf, and in the coming days, we will see a number of reform ideas coming forward in bill form to address the work you have done.

I also want to express support for a number of the reforms that are already happening and underway. You and I have had conversations about the core standards, and it was my privilege to review those on the Standards Council, send them forward, and advocate for them. The reform train is already moving and we are very appreciative of your help and support. I am sure there are a number of questions from the Committee and I am also appreciative of the representatives of your company that took the time to brief a number of our members individually about the reform package.

Assemblywoman Neal:

I have two questions. Can you provide a specific example of how the development of a rigorous evaluation rubric will impact student achievement and create equity? You are talking about equity for African-American, Native-American, and Hispanic students. I want a specific example of that and I want to understand what is in the rubric.

What is the strategic plan that you propose in order to bridge the gap in curriculum for students when teachers oppose the challenge of trying to bring up a child who may be a year or two years behind in their curriculum? I did not see this addressed in *Nevada's Promise*.

Christopher Cross, Chairman, Cross & Joftus:

There are several aspects to this. One is the use of data to improve the question of how teachers know the progress of students and factoring that into a system of evaluation and improvement. The Chancellor stated it very well: when you have a binary system it does not assume an opportunity for improvement and professional development. It is part of a package. It is not a question of measurement; it is a question of how the system is used, what the other components are, and the implementation of it.

Secondly, on the question of a strategic plan for curriculum, the responsibility of the Blue Ribbon Task Force was not to get at that level of detail. It was focused more at the policy level. You are absolutely right; there is a lot that needs to be done. We know the data around reading and math and other subjects, but this was not something the Blue Ribbon Task Force had either the expertise or the time to get into and make those recommendations. That is the responsibility of the state superintendent, the locals, and the board.

Assemblywoman Neal:

I thank you for that answer. I am still trying to figure out what factors in the rubric directly affect student achievement and equity. Can you give me examples of what is in the rubric that brings student achievement up?

Christopher Cross:

It is all based on a notion of growth and whether or not a student has grown by exposure to that teaching in a year and over the course of school. Remember, as we talk about this, there is a Teachers and Leaders Council that is suggested here. The Teachers and Leaders Council is intended to have people leading the schools and the school districts sit down and answer those tough questions. Again, this was not something that the Blue Ribbon Task Force could do in

detail. There had to be a mandate to do something in that regard, and the details of it would flow from the expertise of those who were involved.

Chair Bobzien:

In the upcoming days, we are going to be hearing a lot about the Teachers and Leaders Council. I want to take a moment to express support for Assemblywoman Debbie Smith, who recently convened a working group of a number of constituents around this idea. A lot of those issues that you bring up, putting those into operation and understanding what those look like in practice is definitely a top question. That is a discussion that will continue in the weeks to come.

Assemblyman Anderson:

I would like to recognize my colleague from Assembly District 7, saying thank you for a lot of hard work. This report looks great and has a lot of great ideas. All of us realize that this cannot simply be a spending thing and we do have to do some reforms as well. I always use the example of U.S. Marine Corps: they get the least amount of money in the defense budget per branch, but they still manage to be known as an elite branch. There is a lot that we have to look at.

My specific question is regarding legislative oversight in the governance model. Can you give us a few thoughts on that? This may be a better question for my colleague from Senate District 8, but I will leave it up to the Chancellor and you, Mrs. Wynn, to decide who would be the best person to answer this question.

Elaine Wynn:

The Legislature signs checks. That is about all the Legislature does in terms of education policy. This way, you get to oversee and recommend personnel, to advocate they become part of the State Board of Education. There is accountability and that is the single most important thing, who can you point a finger at something that needs to be explained, at policies that need to be determined, at wishes that need to be conveyed, at visions that need to unfold. Right now, the Legislature gets reports and either makes a decision about how much money to give or not give. There is not much involvement in governance. Chris, can you elaborate on this?

Christopher Cross:

If you go back to slide 18 ([Exhibit D](#)), the Legislative Bureau of Educational Accountability and Program Evaluation would still have the continued role they have in Nevada, and the Legislative Committee on Education would have the recommendation for candidates for the State Board. I do not think there is any less of a role than there is now. In fact, I would argue by having the Legislature

play a role in the creation of the State Board, it would have much more direct responsibility and accountability.

Chair Bobzien:

Thank you for that overview. Any additional questions from the Committee?

Assemblyman Munford:

I would like to go back to the first slide about Nevada producing or graduating some of the worst kids in the nation. It is saying we do not have a chance to succeed or be productive. I saw that slide, and I thought about myself, personally, as a teacher. I taught for a long time and I think Clark County has produced some pretty good people in my tenure of teaching. I always felt that achievement and performance of students being able to succeed and being productive always started with the individual building, the school itself. It is then left up to the administration, and the teachers: and how they did their job and how committed they really were.

I left the school district in 2005. I taught many decades during which many transitions and changes took place. I started teaching in 1966, so I know—and I am no expert in solving these problems—I have run into some of my former students and they seem to have done quite well and succeeded. That statement, “A child born in Nevada has the least chance of success than a child born anywhere . . .” makes me feel like it is a personal attack on me as a teacher all my years, like I did not produce anyone, or all my teaching years were insignificant or irrelevant.

Teachers work hard, are serious, and truly care. I worked for 15 different principals, and most of them were okay. The statement mentioned above is tough. No one really has the answers, but we as former teachers have our own intake and our own philosophies about education and what we experience in a classroom on a day-to-day basis. We do not have the answers, but we do know what is going on. I am not in any way saying that the Blue Ribbon Panel has not done their research, but sometimes teachers should be given the opportunity for some extensive input as well. I do not think there were any teachers on that panel from K-12. Were there?

Elaine Wynn:

Indeed there was. Lynn Warne represented the teachers.

Assemblyman Munford:

I see her sitting back there. Thank you.

Elaine Wynn:

It is a wonderful observation because he is feeling guilty.

Assemblyman Munford:

I do.

Elaine Wynn:

All of us bear some responsibility for acknowledging this statement, but you were most fortunate to have been able to teach in a different time and place in our country.

Assemblyman Munford:

I taught up until 2005.

Elaine Wynn:

So, you were able to see the transition. This statement is meant in no way for anyone to be defensive. This is an acknowledgement that there are more complications involved in educating our children today. Part of what I do now, in my role in Communities In Schools, is acknowledge that teachers cannot be everything to children. We have so many unmet needs in our communities especially because of the economy. If a child comes to school needing glasses and has no glasses, needing health care and has no health care, or needing the basics (food, clothing, et cetera), that child starts out disadvantaged. I do not care how wonderful a teacher you are; your assignment and your task is so much more difficult.

There is a broad range of things we call integrated student services, which is the work of Communities In Schools. The communities bring together the benefit of all the agencies that exist in a community to help address some of those social problems so that teachers and principals are free to do their job, which is to teach and to be administrators.

All of us bear responsibility for succeeding in this environment. It is not this "It takes a village to raise a child" notion; it is simply in these complicated times families are no longer the singular beginning and end-all of what a child experiences. We need to be sensitive to a multiplicity of needs. To start with a very basic structure of pedagogy and governance, and how the state sets it up to give instruction should be the critical first step. Then we can surround the schools with all of this other support to try and make a "whole child whole" and be the beneficiary of all the wonderful work that the talented educators of Nevada do. This is in no way meant to indict anyone's effort or to cast aspersions on the success of your efforts. It is to bemoan the ones that we are

losing, the generations that are lost, the thousands of children everyday that are dropping out of school in America.

Assemblyman Munford:

To determine the quality of a teacher, do you feel that they should be evaluated on the test scores of a student?

Elaine Wynn:

Not solely. If I were a teacher I would not want to be judged solely on my kids' test scores by a principal that visits my classroom maybe once every six to eight weeks. What I would like to see and know, as a teacher, is how does the child test at the beginning of the school year? And then, how does this child improve by the end of the school year?

It is like the hotel I run. We have "x" amount of rooms to fill, and we test our staff by how many rooms they fill on how many days of the year. There are graphics that must be in place and measures that do make sense, but intelligent people can come together and figure out the combination of measures that are fair, equitable, and appropriate. With the use of data, which is a critical piece of our reform, we have instant knowledge at our fingertips about how students are performing in their various subjects, on a given week, or on a given day. What lessons did they learn and not master? With that significant input, a teacher can revise their teaching plans and perhaps make miracles occur.

Christopher Cross:

I might add one point. The "Chance for Success" index, from the "Quality Counts 2011" report has approximately 12 components. It reflects everything from family income to parent education, parental employment, linguistic integration, kindergarten enrollment, reading and math scores, postsecondary education, adult attainment and income, and employment.

This is not solely a reflection of teaching in the schools, that is a part of it, but it is a much more sophisticated and complex issue than just that. As Mrs. Wynn has said, we all bear responsibility for it. The chart is available online at < www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2010/17sos.h29.chance.pdf > .

Assemblyman Munford:

I agree with you.

Chair Bobzien:

Thank you. We have some questions from other members.

Assemblywoman Mastroluca:

First, I want to thank you for the work you have done. I have seen the report a few times and I always see something new out of it, and I appreciate it. I most appreciate the fact that it is not a report about everything wrong in Nevada with the idea somebody needs to fix it; it is a report about the places we need to improve and the steps on how to get there. That goes a long way toward improving. As a product of Nevada education, I did not do badly; I supported my family and can hold down a job and hopefully have some positive impact on society. That just means it is a little bit harder to get where we need to be, coming from Nevada, but it does not mean we cannot do it.

I know there was a piece in the presentation that outlined a time line, but the pieces you highlighted today, do they need to go in a certain order or would they be prioritized?

Elaine Wynn:

We call it tough, bold, and innovative. This means, "Go for all of it." Why withhold any of it? It is an integrated system; if it makes sense, it should all be embraced to the extent that it can be. This is the plan.

Christopher Cross:

I also observed is that it is simple to pick off the easy points and leave the tough ones, and that means that you never get the impact of everything that has been recommended.

Senator Cegavske:

I just wanted to thank you. It was a pleasure not only to serve with you on the Academic Standards Council, but with the Assembly Chair as well. We did differ on things, but I love that we had those discussions, because that is what this is about today. I was wondering if we could have those people in the audience stand who were on the Blue Ribbon Task Force. When I think of Mrs. Wynn getting Lynn and me in the same room for how many weeks and days at a time, that was pretty good. All of you contributed so much, but Mrs. Wynn and Chancellor Klaich, I wanted to thank you both personally for your leadership, your thoughtfulness, and the incredible staff you have.

Realizing all the work that went into this and all of the opinions we had—there was no lack of opinions on either side—but I am really proud of what you have done and where we are going and where I hope we go. Nevada is at a threshold right now. When people would ask for bills, I would ask if it had a fiscal note and if not, I would consider putting it in. Policy in Nevada is huge, and we have the chance and the opportunity to really make a difference with

our education system. I would also like to acknowledge Christopher Cross, who was very helpful in the Academic Standards Council for years, part of the nationally recognized Education Commission of the States (ECS), and other educational forums that had you come and speak. I do not know if everybody knows your expertise, but we really do appreciate you and that is thanks to Mrs. Wynn.

Chair Bobzien:

Thank you. We all share the appreciation for everyone appreciated. [Laughter.]

Assemblywoman Dondero Loop:

I would be remiss if I did not thank both of you and Chris Cross. My life now and previous to this position, has been touched by Chancellor Klaich and Mrs. Wynn. To my teaching colleagues, and as a veteran teacher, I also want to comment on how important it is that we understand this is a puzzle. If all the pieces in any puzzle—I do not care if it is a cake you are making, or a puzzle you are doing, or teaching students—are not there, it does not get finished. This project is an agenda for our future and we should be proud of what we have done in the past, but we should always look to the future to make things better for our education system and our children.

Chair Bobzien:

Thank you all for spending some time with us. We have a number of members from the audience who wish to provide additional comments. I do want to be respectful to the Senate Committee who does have a bill hearing today. What I would like to do is call up those people who were members of the Blue Ribbon Task Force first. Dr. Morrison is in the audience; perhaps he might want to say a few words or join us. I would like to have Ms. Warne and Mr. Bacon come up first since you were members.

Lynn Warne, President, Nevada State Education Association:

I was a proud member of the Blue Ribbon Task Force and it was an incredible effort. It was very collaborative and cooperative and I am proud of the document we put out. We are looking forward to progressing with the reforms contained within *Nevada's Promise*. In the upcoming days, we will see legislation to move those forward such as the Teachers and Leaders Council that will take up the subject of the evaluation instrument that you were asking about.

I would not be in my role if I did not take this opportunity to talk about funding. This whole effort began with our application for Race to the Top funds, which would have brought \$178 million to the State of Nevada to move forward with

this reform agenda. Reform and revenue go hand in hand. Unfortunately, we were not approved in that application effort, but as Chancellor Klaich said, we are not here asking for money; we believe that there is money within our current resources to move this reform agenda forward. Unfortunately, the Governor has proposed some very steep cuts to the education budgets. However, there is a fund that has been set aside through the initiative petition process, the room tax money; the money in that supplemental fund for K-12 education almost matches exactly what we would have received from the federal government. I would encourage you as we move forward in this Legislative session to consider that supplemental school fund source of revenue for moving this reform agenda forward as we saw presented in the *Nevada's Promise* document.

Chair Bobzien:

I would like to pose a question to both of you. I think the power of this document really rests on the fact that, in the end, there were certainly some elements to it that not everyone agreed with and that is a sign of a healthy debate that was conducted. It sets a wonderful course forward for further discussions certainly in this legislative session. Could you comment on those items where you have some trepidation or flag some concerns for us? Ray, when it is your turn, I would like to hear your opinion on that as well.

Lynne Warne:

Thank you for that opportunity. As we moved forward through the process of putting together our application for Race to the Top, there were many provisions that initially gave us some angst. In visiting with our members around the state, we were able to lay some of those fears aside because there was trust with the people that were involved in the process. As part of the Race to the Top application, the local presidents, associations, and districts in the State of Nevada had to sign off on a memorandum of understanding. All but two presidents in all of the 17 school districts did because many provisions of this are subject to collective bargaining. We are supportive of the effort, and I say that truly with my membership behind me. I look forward to the debate and conversation as we see the bills move forth through the Legislature and we support what is contained in *Nevada's Promise*.

Ray Bacon, Executive Director, Nevada Manufacturers Association:

I agree with Lynn in general. Right now, we are talking about measuring teacher effectiveness, which truly needs to be done. An ineffective teacher is not a bad person. They are ineffective because maybe they are in the wrong grade or should not be in teaching. It does not matter why, but they could affect the whole school. Today, the only thing we have for measurement of

teacher effectiveness in our high schools is the Nevada High School Proficiency Exam (NHSPE), which is fine for measuring freshman and even sophomore math and English teachers, but it does not work for anybody else.

As we move forward, there are other pieces that are going to have to take place—administrative issues, not legislative issues—to get to the point where we have some level of end-of-course testing. When we get there, we will have something that truly gives us that equity. There are other options out there, where we can actually do some things. You have heard my pitch on the math and science teachers; there are not enough math and science teachers, and we have to fix those things internally. Those are not in the document per se, but they need to be.

This is step one for a lot of work, but we need a functional structure and then we can start working on the details. There is not wonderful equity around this state. The Nevada plan does a wonderful job of providing equity between the districts. Once you get inside the districts, we are not where we want to be and this must be fixed. *Nevada's Promise* gives us the tools we need to start fixing that and it is absolutely essential.

Chair Bobzien:

Do we have any questions from the Committee? [There were none.]

Daryl E. Drake, Member, Council for Excellence in Education:

I am excited to be here this afternoon. I have heard Chancellor Klaich and Mrs. Wynn make presentations in the past. At one point, I heard a 40-minute teleconferenced dissertation by Mrs. Wynn to the Nevada Vision Stakeholder Group, and I could tell this was something incredible that was coming to us.

I am very fortunate to be affiliated with a group of businesspeople in Washoe County, and I would be remiss if I did not address you today and tell you that *Nevada's Promise* is a report that will not “sit on the shelf.” There is a group of businesspeople that understands the importance of this. Chancellor Klaich mentioned the presentation today was not about dollars; it was about reform. We believe that *Nevada's Promise* is going to set the scene for a transformation in Nevada schools. People in the public have heard this message and we are not going to let it rest.

I did present a letter ([Exhibit E](#)) to you of my own personal thoughts on many of the points that are in *Nevada's Promise*. Thank you.

Andrea Hughs-Baird, Private Citizen, Reno, Nevada:

I am a parent of three elementary school children. I volunteer six hours every week in my kids' classrooms. I am in a leadership position in three parent organizations, and I am a member of Parent Leaders for Education. [Continued to read prepared testimony ([Exhibit F](#)).]

Chair Bobzien:

Thank you, Andrea, for being here. I know you are putting in a lot of time trying to get involved and stay involved in this legislative process. I, for one, am very encouraged by the parent involvement we have particularly from Washoe County, and these efforts, and encourage you to keep at it. Any other questions from the Committee? I have no one else signed in to speak.

Ray Bacon:

Here is your copy of *Waiting for Superman*. [Handed Chair Bobzien a DVD.]

Chair Bobzien:

Thank you. Is there anyone in Las Vegas? Did you sign in, Alison?

Alison Turner, President, Nevada Parent Teacher Association:

I apologize. I have been multitasking.

Chair Bobzien:

Senator Cegavske wants to know if you stood up when she asked for the members of the Task Force to stand.

Alison Turner:

I did. I have witnesses here that can vouch for me.

Chair Bobzien:

I will trust you. Thank you, identify yourself for the record.

Alison Turner:

I was an honored participant in the Blue Ribbon Task Force for Education Reform. I certainly appreciate the leadership that Mrs. Wynn and Chancellor Klaich displayed during a long and fairly arduous process.

The comment I would like to make probably echoes some of the questions that came from some of the Committee members. Like others, I was not necessarily comfortable with language that indicated we were failing all of the children of Nevada. I agree that there is a tremendous amount of work to be done. At the same time, this reform process, while very necessary, needs to be a thoughtful

and carefully staged one in this way: I believe that there are some things that are going remarkably well here in the state of Nevada. We need to be sure that we are identifying our successful programs and replicating them as rapidly as possible. I would suggest there is another segment of programs that are not living up to our expectations and need to be adjusted in some form or fashion.

I could not agree more that there is yet a third “pile” of programs and practices not working and are not going to work, and these need to be removed immediately and replaced with something that has the true opportunity to work. Having been a parent in Nevada public schools for 13 years now, I have seen the good, the bad, and the ugly; there are things that are working very well and I urge all of you—as you take a look at what is going to be a long and painful task—to remember to hang onto the things that are working now and make sure we are replicating those immediately. We do not need to wait to do that; let us take what is working and continue to build upon that. Having said that, as both the Chancellor and Mrs. Wynn indicated, not all of the decisions that are in the report were a matter of consensus, but we certainly had lively discussions and shared many different viewpoints in order to reach the document that was presented. I look forward to working with all of you as we continue our efforts to make the schools in the State of Nevada the best that they possibly can be.

Chair Bobzien:

Do we have any questions from the Committee? Is there anyone else in Las Vegas?

Mary Beth Heavrin, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:

I came as an observer, but after I heard the presentation, I felt compelled to speak. I am a teacher in Clark County School District. I teach one section of math and five sections of science at the middle school level. I want to say four quick comments.

Perhaps it was addressed and I missed this part, but I was disappointed that per-pupil funding was not mentioned. As I understand it, in Nevada, we are one of the lowest in the country as far as per-pupil spending and thus it is like comparing “apples-and-oranges” to other states and their results. I belong to the League of Women Voters and we have what you would call a consensus agreement model: when you form a committee—soon we are going to have a committee on the importance of federal policy—it is done by consensus. All people are asked to participate and then a consensus document is the outcome. This was not done by a consensus model, which disappointed me greatly. It also disappointed me that we only had one or two teachers on the committee.

My third point would be concerning the growth model. The growth model suggests that all teachers are given the same caliber of student. That is not the case. When teachers are given students, they are not given what they would like; they are given a random sampling. Some teachers have very many low students in their classes. Compared to other teachers, they are not going to be judged as successful as someone who may have a class of accelerated students.

Outside my classroom door I have a sign that says, "Teachers open the door, but you must enter." This sends a great message that students and their families have to be part of this. We have truancy laws in the State of Nevada, but where are the sanctions? We need to determine how to take care of those students that are constantly truant, when maybe a parent excuses them, but there are too many absences. I do appreciate the time that the committee spent in doing this presentation because in a former life, I did serve on a school board in a different state when my children were young. I know the effort it that takes in trying to get all of these people together at one time in order to come up with suggestions and goals.

Chair Bobzien:

Thank you for your perspectives. To address a couple of the comments on the per-pupil funding issue, the presenters began their testimony by stating that this was independent of the question of funding. Certainly funding is a huge part and that discussion will definitely go forward in the session. As for the consensus agreement, we have a hard enough time with two-thirds during the Legislature.

Most importantly, your comment about the growth model and understanding the disparate resources that are brought to bear in any given classroom or student situation, where we going with this in the Teachers and Leaders Council, is bringing teachers to the table to talk about what is the best structure for evaluating, and what is the best way to go forward with the longitudinal data system to account for all that variability.

I want to thank you for joining us and encourage you to stay involved in this process and we hope to see you again. Are there questions from the Committee? [There were none.] If there is no further business before the Committee, we are adjourned [at 5:05 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Janel Davis
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblyman David P. Bobzien, Chair

DATE: _____

Senator Moises (Mo) Denis, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Committee Name: Assembly Committee on Education/Senate Committee on Education

Date: February 23, 2011

Time of Meeting: 3:35 p.m.

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster
	C	Chair Bobzien	Opening and Closing Remarks
	D	Elaine Wynn and Daniel Klaich	<i>Nevada's Promise</i>
	E	Daryl E. Drake	Public Testimony, letter on Nevada's Promise
	F	Andrea Hughs-Baird	Prepared Statement