

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

**Seventy-Sixth Session  
April 18, 2011**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair David P. Bobzien at 3:23 p.m. on Monday, April 18, 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/](http://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](mailto: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:**

Senator Moises (Mo) Denis, Senatorial District No. 2

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

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

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Eva Melendrez, Parent Services Coordinator, Community and Government Relations, Clark County School District  
Alison Turner, President, Nevada Parent Teacher Association  
Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents  
Craig Stevens, Director, Education Policy and Research, Nevada State Education Association  
Keith Rheault, Ph.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education

**Chair Bobzien:**

Welcome. [Roll was called. Rules and protocol were stated.] We are going to take things a little out of order and have our Chair from the Senate Committee on Education, Mo Denis, present Senate Bill 229.

**Senate Bill 229:** Revises provisions governing the policy adopted by the State Board of Education to encourage parental and family involvement in supporting the education of their children. (BDR 34-475)

**Senator Moises (Mo) Denis, Senatorial District No. 2:**

As a child growing up I remember going to school and seeing meetings with a lot of parents. In my mind I thought parents were supposed to go to school and be involved with children. My daughter started kindergarten 20 years ago. Her school had a meeting for parents, so I went and became a volunteer. I became involved with the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and served on the board at my children's elementary schools as the PTA president. During this process I learned how important parental involvement was. I did not see all the parents at school, especially fathers. After I served as PTA president for two years, my wife decided that she was going to run for PTA president. My kids' reaction was, "A woman can be a PTA president?" The majority of involved parents in PTA are women. I made it my life goal to get parents involved in bettering education.

The PTA created National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. I have provided a History of Parental Involvement Legislation in Nevada sheet ([Exhibit C](#)) for the Committee. Following that is a copy of the National Standards, Goals, and Indicators for Family-School Partnerships ([Exhibit D](#)) from the PTA. A study was conducted, and the PTA found that the No. 1 factor in student success is parental involvement. Before I was a legislator I advocated for parental involvement. In her first session in 2001, Assemblywoman Smith introduced Assembly Bill 201 of the 71st Session, which asked school districts to adopt policies that encouraged parental involvement. We ended up with the National Standards for Family-School Partnerships that the national PTA and many other groups had done research on. Today, those standards have been updated. We think it is important to give everybody an opportunity to relook at this issue.

Senate Bill 229 updates those standards. The first one is to promote an atmosphere for parents and families to visit the school that their children attend so they are welcomed, valued, and connected to the staff of the school, other parents and families, and to the education of their children. [Continued to read from ([Exhibit D](#)).]

Using those standards as a basis, this bill allows the State Board of Education/State Board for Career and Technical Education to create policies while allowing school districts to update their policies on parental involvement. Anytime I talk about this issue, it is said that parental involvement is very important. Perhaps the parents today are different than the parents of the past. There are different challenges today, and I hope, as we have these standards in place, it will allow us to help parents in the way that they need to be. This will help our kids succeed.

**Chair Bobzien:**

Are there any questions?

**Assemblyman Hansen:**

There was a similar bill introduced in previous sessions. I looked up the Advisory Council on Parental Involvement, which began in 2001 with Assemblywoman Debbie Smith's bill, and it is still in the books. From the duties on the website of the Nevada Department of Education, the Advisory Council is supposed to "Review the information relating to communication with and participation of parents . . . Review any effective practices carried out in individual school districts to increase parental involvement . . . Review any effective practices carried out in other states to increase parental involvement . . . Identify methods to communicate effectively and provide outreach to

parents and legal guardians of pupils . . .” It goes right on down the list of all the stuff that is in your bill now.

The key is to honor the standards before July 1 of each year. The Council was supposed to submit a report to the Assembly Committee on Education describing the activities. I have requested all these reports from the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB), and they do not exist. While your bill is undoubtedly good, it seems redundant. We have this in law, but nobody enforces the existing law to do the very things the bill is addressing. I support that education is important, but I wonder who holds all these people accountable to ensure this is done.

**Senator Denis:**

One of the challenges that we have had is not having a parental involvement coordinator. We had it funded at one point, but with all of the recent budget cuts, it is no longer. Ultimately the bill is set up through the State Board of Education. While a lot of these standards are the same, they are updated for the current situations. It gives us another chance to look at it again and see where we are. We have to be the ones monitoring, especially if we are not getting reports. It is important to update standards and relook at this issue periodically as we move forward.

**Assemblyman Kirner:**

Do you know if there were additional recommendations that came out of the Education Reform Blue Ribbon Task Force’s *Nevada’s Promise* and Race to the Top application that should be incorporated in the bill but are not?

**Senator Denis:**

Ms. Turner was on the Blue Ribbon Task Force and could answer that question better than me.

**Chair Bobzien:**

Are there any other questions? [There were none.]

**Eva Melendrez, Parent Services Coordinator, Community and Government Relations, Clark County School District:**

I am here on behalf of the Clark County School District in support of the updated language in S.B. 229. We work very closely with the Nevada PTA, as well as partner with other organizations that provide services to families. We recognize that family engagement is critical to the academic success of all students. Now, more than ever, we need to continue to reach out to families and provide them with resources needed for the success of their children. We will continue to partner with the Nevada PTA, as well as other organizations to

ensure that our schools are welcoming parents. We are doing the best we can to engage our families and provide those resources.

**Alison Turner, President, Nevada Parent Teacher Association:**

We are delighted to see S.B. 229 come forward, which will update the original six standards for parental involvement in statute to the revised National Standards for Family-School Partnerships. Our hope is that this will bring the single greatest predictor of successful student outcomes—effective family engagement—to every school and family across Nevada. [Continued to read from ([Exhibit E](#)).]

I have provided members with additional information ([Exhibit F](#)) that includes an overview of the standards with research findings supporting the revisions and an expanded overview of the standards with goals and action steps. This addresses some of the concern about metrics. [Continued to read from ([Exhibit E](#)).]

**Assemblyman Kirner:**

The goal is to enhance family-school partnerships. The purpose of that goal is to advance our children's education. What do you think gets in the way of having parents involved with schools?

In my district, there are many schools that have high parental involvement. There are other schools that have almost none. What stands in the way for these parents?

**Alison Turner:**

These are key questions that are addressed by the revisions proposed in the bill. Standard 1 specifically says, "Welcoming All Families into the School Community." I have been a parent in Nevada public schools for over 13 years. From personal experience, I can tell you that some schools have a climate that is very open to parents being involved and engaged. Those schools' parents are viewed as partners in educating their own children, and when possible, bringing other children up to "speed." There are other schools where parents are truly, actively discouraged from entering the school building.

Advocacy is sometimes a "bad" word in the PTA world. When we help to train parents to be better advocates for their children, we are not suggesting that they go in to make trouble. This is how I try to explain it to teachers, administrators, and parents who have fears in this area: When a child is sick, a parent does not drop him off at the doctors' office, and say, "I hope everything goes great. I will pick you up in a couple of hours. Make sure you tell the doctor everything." A parent is his child's medical advocate.

We understand that the parent knows his child better than anybody else. Parents are there to make sure their child accurately reports symptoms, makes sure they understand what the diagnoses and treatment plan are, what the prescriptions are, and to go in and be the child's medical advocate. Does the parent go in and tell the nurse how to do her job? No, that is not advocating. The same is true for parents in a school setting. When we do this training with parents, we are very careful to make sure they understand what their rights and responsibilities are. We need to make sure parents do not think they just drop off their kids and pick them up six hours later, and lo and behold, they are educated! Parents need to help their children to communicate better with the teacher. They are still kids in middle school and high school. As a parent of a 14-year-old and an 18-year-old, they are not quite done. Does that help answer your question?

**Assemblyman Kirner:**

What concerns me is that I know there are schools where parents are really involved and schools where parents are not at all involved. I want to know why parents are not involved, and what it is we should be doing.

**Assemblywoman Dondero Loop:**

The question is simply asking why parents would be involved in some neighborhoods and not in others. As a parent, teacher, and a daughter of a past PTA president, the reason why some parents are involved and some are not is working parents.

For example, imagine a single mother with three kids who, every day, gets those kids to school, goes to work, feeds the kids, and has the oldest kid watch the rest while she goes to another job at night. I was fortunate to work in a school with my kids. I was off when my kids were off and on when my kids were on. Some parents have a hard time being equipped, and some parents of high economic status still are not equipped to be a parent. When you have people involved, you have different kinds of parents. Some families have a mother who works at home or is a stay-at-home mom, which would make it easier for her to be more involved.

The answer is to help parents be better parents and do what they can do with the amount of time they are allotted. There are parents with language barriers who may be afraid to come to school. Although a foreign concept to many, parents who do not speak our language are afraid to expose themselves in that situation. As educators, legislators, and as people who want parents involved,

we need to open the door and help parents be better equipped at school and at home. In my mind, the answer is parents simply have to work.

**Assemblyman Anderson:**

Coming from a political science perspective, you see studies in various countries where levels of economic activity go up and the amount of wealth goes up. The larger a middle class, the more the education levels go up. In addition, Las Vegas has a unique culture. It does not explain all of the state, but Las Vegas is a 24-hour town where parents could be sleeping while their kids are at school. There is a transient nature, there are language barriers, and we live in a culture where you can make \$60,000 parking cars.

**Assemblyman Hansen:**

The Advisory Council on Parental Involvement clearly states, under Advisory Council duties: "Identify methods to communicate effectively and provide outreach to parents or legal guardians of pupils who have limited time to become involved in the education of their children," for various reasons, including without limitation work schedules, single parent homes, and other family obligations. Language-wise, it also states, "Identify methods to communicate effectively with and provide outreach to parents and legal guardians of pupils who are limited English proficient." This was already said four or five years ago. We are supposed to be going forward with all of this, but nothing is being implemented.

**Assemblywoman Mastroluca:**

Mr. Hansen, you bring up some very good points. As someone who sits on the Advisory Council, I share your frustration. Part of it comes from the fact that when the Council was created, it was created with absolutely no funding. The challenge of getting people from all over the state to meet has been an issue. The challenge of not having clear direction when the Council was created as to what we could actually accomplish was an issue. I believe that what Senator Denis is trying to do is take it to the next level. As you will see, it does not cost any money, but at least it has some set goals and a more clear direction.

**Alison Turner:**

I understand Mr. Hansen's frustration and concur completely with Assemblywoman Mastroluca's comments. There have been reports submitted; I am not sure why the LCB has not been able to locate them, and I would be delighted to provide copies to the Committee.

This bill updates statutes based on the research of standards for family-school partnerships. This is the most effective version of them. There are a lot of

families that are holding down two and three jobs to make sure their children are fed, clothed, and housed. These activities and behaviors relate to parental involvement and family engagement. It is our job to help provide these parents with next steps.

We have information on things that can fit into those parents' lives. Certainly checking grades is a good way to stay involved; however, most of that is done electronically now. One of the big barriers is that a lot of our families do not have computers and high-speed Internet access at home. Some of that information is available by phone, but you better have a good "cheat sheet" if you are going to access it that way. There are school districts that have chosen to make computers and staff available to help parents with those things, and there are school districts that have chosen not to. That is why we believe it is important to revise the standards so that they are current with the best that the research has to offer. In addition to that, we must make sure that we are making every effort to establish best practices in this area. The funding challenge has been significant. There is no fiscal note attached to the bill that established the Council.

**Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents:**

We are in support of this bill. I would also like to add that the Nevada Association of School Boards and the Washoe County School District are in support of S.B. 229. We would like to thank Senator Denis for bringing this bill forward.

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

We support S.B. 229 and appreciate the maker of the bill for bringing it forward. Parental involvement is a big deal, and it is something that if we continue to improve, our schools will continue to improve. The Nevada State Education Association is in full support in making sure that parents become partners in the classroom.

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

The Department of Education fully supports S.B. 229. By updating the standards, it will bring new life and cause us to work with the school districts, as well as charter schools, to make sure policies are updated and revitalize implementation.

**Chair Bobzien:**

Are there any questions? [There were none.]



**Senator Denis:**

When I became the PTA president at the local school, they told me that parents did not want to be involved. I went to the PTA meeting and five parents showed up. I thought maybe it was because the meetings were after school. If we held the meetings at a time when the parents were available there may be a change. They proceeded to change that. At the time, the school was about 40 percent Latino. If we communicate in a way that all the parents can understand, it would be better. I changed the time and the way we did the flyers in order to accommodate everyone, and for two years, I never had less than 150 parents show up to a meeting. Even with the challenges of working two or three jobs, parents want to be involved if we give them the opportunity. These standards will help us and give us the opportunity to try to communicate to parents in a way that they can be involved.

**Chair Bobzien:**

Thank you. I will now close the hearing on S.B. 229. I will open the hearing on Senate Bill 35. I would like to welcome Dr. Keith Rheault to present the bill.

**Senate Bill 35:** Revises provisions governing the automated system of accountability information for Nevada and the reporting of test scores by charter schools. (BDR 34-440)

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

Senate Bill 35 was requested by the Department of Education, and we fully support it. During the interim I usually check with staff to see if there are things we can clean up in statute. This bill does two things. Section 1 eliminates the need to report paraprofessionals in the student accountability system. The Legislature required that we have the capacity in our accountability system to identify teachers who are individually assigned pupils. We can do that because they are licensed and in the system. We have not been able to identify paraprofessionals assigned to individual students.

If you look at the definition of paraprofessionals in statute, found in *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 391.008, it says they can be assigned as one-on-one tutors to individuals, but most are hired in these areas:

- Assist with management of a classroom—not just individual pupils.
- Assist in a computer lab with a group of students.
- Conduct parental involvement activities.
- Work in a library or media services.

When you read the requirements it does not apply. We have not been able to come up with a way to collect paraprofessional information. While we were looking at cleaning up the statutes that is one area that we thought could be cleaned up since we cannot provide that within our system.

The second area was identified in sections 2 and 3. This has to do with the requirement that school districts and charter schools are required to provide a report to the state regarding the achievement and attendance or participation of students in the required criterion-referenced tests and the high school proficiency exam. These sections clarify that the required reports by charter schools, in addition to being provided to the state, need to be provided through their sponsors to the state.

In the interim, we had a couple of sponsors that had not seen the achievement results of the charter schools they sponsored. This section of the bill would require that those reports be provided. It is going to be the same report required by the state. It will require that they share the information with their sponsor which is ultimately responsible for renewing their charter.

**Assemblyman Hansen:**

In section 2, there is a piece that says, “. . . through the sponsor of the charter school . . . .” What is the purpose of that? Are there current governing bodies not supplying sufficient information? If so, are they going to the sponsors?

**Keith Rheault:**

The current law says that you submit the report to the state, and charter schools provide the reports on student achievement to the state. We got a couple of questions from the sponsors—the school districts—that had not seen the achievement results of the charter schools.

**Chair Bobzien:**

Is there anyone else in support of S.B. 35?

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

The Nevada State Education Association fully supports S.B. 35. This technical change to the law was of concern to many of our education support professionals. Until our data systems can catch up with the NRS statute, S.B. 35 helps clarify some of the confusing language that has come with our state ramping up the accountability measures these last few years.

**Chair Bobzien:**

Are there any questions? [There were none.] I will close the hearing on S.B. 35.

The meeting is adjourned [at 4:08 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Janel Davis  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Assemblyman David P. Bobzien, Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

**EXHIBITS**

**Committee Name:** Committee on Education

**Date:** April 18, 2011

**Time of Meeting:** 3:23 p.m.

<b>Bill</b>	<b>Exhibit</b>	<b>Witness / Agency</b>	<b>Description</b>
	A		Agenda
	B		Attendance Roster
S.B. 229	C	Senator Denis	History of Parental Involvement
S.B. 229	D	Senator Denis	National Standards for Family-School Partnerships
S.B. 229	E	Alison Turner	Written Testimony
S.B. 229	F	Alison Turner	National Standards for Family-School Partnerships