

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Seventy-Seventh Session
February 11, 2013**

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Joyce Woodhouse at 3:38 p.m. on Monday, February 11, 2013, in Room 2149 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Chair
Senator Aaron D. Ford, Vice Chair
Senator Ruben J. Kihuen
Senator Barbara K. Cegavske
Senator Donald G. Gustavson

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Pepper Sturm, Policy Analyst
Colleen Platt, Counsel
Sara Weaver, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Karen J. Starr, Assistant Administrator, Library and Development Services,
Division of State Library and Archives, Department of Administration
Lisa Foster, Nevada League of Cities and Municipalities
Alex Ortiz, Principal Financial Analyst, Department of Finance, Clark County
James Guthrie, Ph.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of
Education
Rorie Fitzpatrick, Deputy Superintendent for Instructional, Research and
Evaluative Services, Department of Education
Deborah Cunningham, Deputy Superintendent for Administrative and Fiscal
Services, Department of Education
Pat Skorkowsky, Deputy Superintendent, Clark County School District

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Brian Frazier, Director of Grants and Assessments, Douglas County School District

Kristen McNeill, Chief of Staff, Washoe County School District

Richard Stokes, Superintendent, Carson City School District

Angie Sullivan, Kindergarten Teacher, Clark County School District

Adam Berger, Special Education Teacher, Clark County School District

Chair Woodhouse:

We will open the hearing with Senate Bill (S.B.) 20.

SENATE BILL 20: Revises provisions governing the submission of certain publications to the State Publications Distribution Center. (BDR 33-305)

Karen J. Starr (Assistant Administrator, Library and Development Services, Division of State Library and Archives, Department of Administration):

Senate Bill 20 updates language that aligns the submission requirements for State and local government publications with the current electronic publishing environment. Section 1 requires the State Library and Archives Administrator to adopt regulations prescribing procedures for submitting electronic versions of publications to the State Publications Distribution Center (SPDC). The rationale for this bill is that consistent procedures are necessary to ensure ongoing preservation of electronic data as technology changes and to ensure efficient processing of data. Section 2 reduces the number of copies submitted to the SPDC. The bill requires an electronic copy be submitted and prescribes required procedures for submission of electronic versions of publications. This process will leverage the technological transition to electronic publishing we are experiencing and reduce costs by limiting the number of paper copies submitted. The bill requires an electronic copy be submitted to the SPDC and ensures preservation of the original copy at the SPDC.

Lisa Foster (Nevada League of Cities and Municipalities):

I represent the Nevada League of Cities and Municipalities, and we support S.B. 20. The bill will save money for cities and reduce the volume of paper in State offices.

Alex Ortiz (Principal Financial Analyst, Department of Finance, Clark County):

Clark County proposes an amendment to S.B. 20 ([Exhibit C](#)). The amendment includes the noted exception to the definition of "publication" for local records scheduled for retention and disposition pursuant to *Nevada Revised Statutes*

(NRS) 239.124 and 239.125 that are local government record retention statutes. This language is consistent with current law and provides the same exception for records scheduled for retention and disposition based on record retention approved by the State. The amendment adds section 3 to the bill which pertains to NRS 378.160, subsection 4, paragraph (e) for official State "and local" records scheduled for retention and disposition pursuant to NRS.

Chair Woodhouse:

I want to remind the Committee there is no fiscal note to S.B. 20. Is it correct that the State Library and Archives is in support of the proposed the amendment?

Ms. Starr:

That is correct.

SENATOR KIHUEN MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS AS AMENDED
S.B. 20.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

* * * * *

Chair Woodhouse:

We will now move to presentations on education programs concerning the status of kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12) education in Nevada.

James Guthrie, Ph.D. (Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education):

I characterize our K-12 schools as a success just about to blossom. There are good things starting to take place in Nevada. It is clear to me there is a commitment by Legislators to education. In addition, the Governor is fully committed to improving education. The new State Board of Education is also committed to improving education in Nevada. I have visited all 17 school districts in Nevada and have met all superintendents in these districts; I learned of success stories in all districts. We hope to respond to any questions that arise from our presentation, "Engaging Nevada to Improve Education" ([Exhibit D](#)).

Senator Ford:

May we go back to the slide titled "Overall Student Achievement is Improving"? My question is relevant to the standard used in the slide. Is the bar too low, too high, sufficient, or should we be raising the bar to ascertain whether our students will be successful following graduation from high school?

Dr. Guthrie:

That slide describes an achievement test and its corresponding scores over 2010-2012. This is a test we eventually want to eliminate because it is not aligned with the Common Core State Standards to which Nevada is moving. Therefore, it is one indicator by itself, but it is insufficient.

Senator Ford:

I am pleased to hear you acknowledge teachers are a priority for improving student performance. We understand that Clark County School District (CCSD) received an arbitration award stating CCSD is not required to give teachers a salary increase. Ostensibly, this is because CCSD needs additional teachers. We do not have the funding to hire additional teachers. Do you agree?

Dr. Guthrie:

I welcome a conversation during this Session about your concern. My objective is that teachers throughout Nevada be paid at a rate that makes teaching as competitive as those persons who have law or business degrees. I am unsure what the adequate funding would be to achieve my objective.

Rorie Fitzpatrick (Deputy Superintendent for Instructional, Research and Evaluative Services, Department of Education):

I will proceed with the next portion of [Exhibit D](#) titled "Applications for Students." My charge is to help contextualize the work done across the State with regard to the rigorous expectations, robust accountability systems and meaningful support endeavors for students, teachers and the larger systems context.

With regard to applications for students, we need to be clear across the State in respect to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). These standards encompass the content areas of mathematics and English language arts. We have other needs to ensure we are providing robust instruction in such areas as science, social studies, foreign language and arts content. We have increased the rigor for what we expect students to know and be able to do. Education is

the key to economic diversity and success, so we must ensure we are producing graduates who can succeed in a globally competitive twenty-first-century environment. The CCSS is not just a new set of content, it is a different way of thinking. This requires a paradigm shift in how students think about their thinking and how they learn about their learning; we do not want students who leave school able to merely provide rote facts and information. We need to produce students who can independently engage in problem solving using the tools available to them—knowing the tools today will not be the tools available to them tomorrow. For example, students are using tools today that did not exist 2 years ago. We need to prepare students to use the tools of the day. The CCSS sets us on that path.

To ensure students are assessed on that knowledge, we have a new assessment system coming forward through the State's engagement in the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium. This will test us in the challenging areas in the CCSS. There will probably be enhanced assessment items coming forward for additional content areas as they roll out. For instance, the next generation science standards have recently been released; it is our hope Nevada will move to adopt those standards.

An assessment summit was held in December 2012. During the summit, we reviewed what we were doing relative to assessing student performance in various areas and what could be done differently. Nationally, there is a movement to look toward end-of-course assessments and movement away from some archaic high-stakes exit exams. The summit dialog included these issues, and they should guide our future thinking about determining when we are producing students who are ready to compete in the twenty-first century. The matter is not purely one of reading, writing and arithmetic, but one of what the business community says is necessary for the twenty-first-century learner. We are working with career and technical education (CTE), and we are partnering with the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR) to define credentials of value. For instance, if a student has gone through a coursework series in culinary arts and has passed end-of-course assessments, we need to be able to affirm, upon graduation of high school, they can succeed in the culinary arts.

It is not enough to define expectations and determine whether those expectations have been met. The job of education is to ensure students meet defined expectations. We have developed expectations of the kinds of supports

that must exist for students to achieve these rigorous expectations. Several programs will be addressed during this Session. Through Governor Sandoval's leadership, we are seeking to expand full-day kindergarten throughout the State. One of our top priorities is to address learning discrepancies for our English Language Learners (ELL); there are almost 70,000 ELLs in the State, and they are underperforming with more than half being unable to read at required levels for basic proficiency. We know we need to do a better job with our ELLs. Full-day kindergarten and targeting the work of our ELL communities has implications for our early literacy efforts. We must do everything possible to have students reading at an early age, preferably by Grade 3. These initiatives complement and strengthen our ability to get students to read at satisfactory levels. Finally, there is intensified support for at-risk students; we have an accountability system in place to identify where we have vulnerable populations of students and where our efforts need to be focused.

Senator Kihuen:

Thank you for recognizing the importance of full-day kindergarten and ELLs. Do you have any analysis indicating the appropriate funding for investing in ELL and full-day kindergarten to make a significant impact on our education system in Nevada? The ELL, at least partially, influences our high school dropout rates. The ELL funding is one of the ways to achieve our investment.

Ms. Fitzpatrick:

I do not believe we have a good sense of what funding is needed. Engaging in this initiative and understanding it is a pilot program with a focused set of analyses are instructive because we are learning what works and what does not work. We have an opportunity to learn what is required to implement this program well. We have pockets of excellence in some Nevada schools already helping our ELL students. The vision is to review and understand the needs, and to review the research to identify the correct solutions and to determine the costs. In some cases, we may be able to create a per-student analysis, and, in some cases, it may be more complicated. An aggregate per-pupil-funding amount may be difficult because of student variables. The Governor's program is target driven at the local level to analyze the needs, and to provide and apply specialized sets of supports at the local level. We need to have robust measures in place, not only concerning the student achievement portion, but also with resource spending. We do not know the funding answer today, but we anticipate knowing the answer to the question soon.

Senator Kihuen:

The fact we are having this conversation is important. I have talked about the importance of ELL being a priority because of the changes in demographics in the State. We have to embrace those changes. It is important to continue this conversation.

Ms. Fitzpatrick:

Regarding the Nevada educator performance framework for evaluation of teachers and administrators, we will specifically focus during the first years of validation to ensure teachers and administrators address an ELL population. We are paying attention to the needs of ELL students to include instructional strategies and cultural competencies. It is important to think about these things systemically. It is important we are providing support for students through the program, and we are bolstering and nurturing educator capacity to meet the needs of various target audiences including ELLs.

Senator Cegavske:

I will summarize some of the issues I have had for years. First, we do not analyze our eighth-grade dropout rate; we do not keep those statistics and that is essential, especially for our second-language learners. We are losing students that do not go on to high school for a variety of reasons. In addition, nationally we do not analyze the dropout rate. We are not addressing the eighth-grade dropout rate. Former prison inmates were reported to have fifth-grade school achievement levels and that they dropped out of school in eighth grade. We need to determine what events transpire between elementary and middle school that lead to the high eighth-grade dropout rate; however, we do not address or discuss this issue, and that concerns me.

Second, we have short- and long-term substitute teachers. The qualifications of substitute teachers are not adequate. When the discussion concerns mandating or wanting more kindergarten classes, how can we make that request when space is unavailable? How can we have additional kindergarten classes when we do not have an adequate number of prepared kindergarten teachers? Nationally, there is a shortage of qualified ELL teachers for prekindergarten, and the same is true for Nevada.

Third, we do not have records of how many substitute teachers we have or how long they have been in the classroom. Every day a child goes without an

educator is a loss for the child and for society. Those are the key things on which we need to concentrate and resolve.

In addition, it takes an inordinate amount of time to make any changes in education. For instance, when we know a program is not working, we continue to fund the program. We need a mechanism to dissolve ineffective programs. We have funding, but we need to prioritize programs to which that funding is directed.

Dr. Guthrie:

On the matter of eighth-grade dropouts, there is no analytic framework to analyze why students drop out. We need to adopt an analytic mentality.

We need to do something about the substitute problem. My best estimate is that we are spending \$35 million to \$50 million on substitutes each year in Nevada. Some states have introduced incentives to reduce the absenteeism among teachers because we want teachers in the classroom. We are pledging to find ineffective programs so the funding for those programs can be redirected.

Ms. Fitzpatrick:

I will now continue with the presentation [Exhibit D](#). The next two slides, "Specialized Programs" and "National Perspective for Students Academic Rigor, Accountability, Support" refer to the framework we need in regard to operationalized special programs. The framework sets the construct for how Nevada fits with the national perspective.

Some of the work being undertaken in regard to educators includes a consistent set of operational understandings of what teachers and administrators should know and be able to do, and an aligned accountability and support system across the State. Districts have engaged in operations to address this issue and Nevada has joined a national dialog with regard to concerns of the evaluations and supports provided for teachers and administrators. In the last Session, legislation was passed to create the Teachers and Leaders Council (TLC). The TLC has created administrator and teacher evaluation and support models. This is the first time we will have uniform understandings about what educators should be held accountable for, how to handle the information and how to target supports for them to achieve positive outcomes. This data system should provide us with the information to determine why we have the resulting

outcomes and what, if anything, should be done about the outcomes. The evaluation is the “here’s what” and the supports are the “so what.” If we know how teachers and administrators are doing, we should leverage the information to target and improve results. I appreciate and agree with Senator Cegavske regarding the concerns she has with long-term substitute teachers; that is a problematic and systemic problem with regard to our human-capital management. The goal of the Department of Education (DOE) is to think more broadly and provide greater leadership with regard to a human-capital-management system. We have a flat system of teacher and administrator licensing in Nevada; upon graduation of college, and completion of the requisite courses and tests, a teacher or administrator license can be obtained. Education is one of the areas in which we do not reward people for their skill set over time. Historically, educators have been rewarded for participating in professional development and for years spent in education. Research is clear that experience makes a difference. In the last Session, the Legislature created pay-for-performance frameworks. The work of the TLC provides the foundational platform to use information to make valid and reliable decisions for systems such as pay-for-performance. In the same way we held the 2012 assessment summit, which brought together key stakeholders from across a wide continuum of perspectives, DOE is interested in bringing together such a conference for human-capital management to review the licensure process to be more supportive of career perspectives we think are important.

The slide titled “National Perspective: Educator Rigor, Accountability, Support” is illustrative of how Nevada is in line with national efforts in this arena and with the development of our system. We must take the time to ensure the TLC-created system is valid, reliable and fair, and performs as expected. Many states have implemented systems in haste before validating their systems.

Deborah Cunningham (Deputy Superintendent for Administrative and Fiscal Services, Department of Education):

I will conclude the presentation with the slide of [Exhibit D](#) titled “The Action Levers: Applications for School, District, and State Systems.” As we expect more from our students and educators, we need to expect more from our systems and State education system. Our work in this area can be categorized as providing content, ensuring quality measurement and providing targeted support. We are in the process of developing the “Nevada School Performance Framework” in partnership with school districts. Along with 40 other states, Nevada is moving away from the No Child Left Behind Act accountability

system and developing our own tailored accountability system. We are continuing to enhance our kindergarten through Grade 12 (K-12) state longitudinal data system and expand the K-12 system to preschool through Grade 20 (P-20) to link with data systems of higher education and DETR. We are exploring, through the Charter School Authority, ways DOE can partner with the Authority to increase the number of quality charter schools. We are also exploring the integration of technology and blended-learning programs. We are reviewing our policies, procedures and practices to ensure they are the best. We must have management integrity in DOE and administrative systems; we are engaged in an organizational alignment around our mission and vision to ensure all our resources are contributing to this endeavor. This year, there is a partnership with the Governor, DOE and the State Board of Education (SBE). We realize we are creating a model that benefits education. The SBE is interested in exploring topics each month that support the legislative process. We hope to increase the focus on education reform and engage the State to systematically improve the results for students.

Our national perspective is to have systems to support national rigor, provide accountability and provide support. There is a national concern to inform learning, from early childhood to entry into the workforce, and Nevada is one of the states developing a P-20 data system to track success from early childhood to career. We also have received a second federal grant to connect our data system to higher education and DETR. The U.S. Department of Education monitored our implementation of the grant, and they had praise for our preschool through Grade 16 council.

There is national interest in reviewing how to expand quality charter schools and determining how state education agencies can support, oversee and manage the process.

Senator Kihuen:

Where is parental involvement in your program? Parents are just as responsible as teachers and administrators with regard to education. The more we engage parents, the more successful we will be as a state.

Ms. Fitzpatrick:

Research shows that family engagement has a positive impact on the performance of students. The Nevada educator performance framework; i.e., the teacher and administrator evaluation model, and the school

performance framework incorporate strategies for family engagement. The framework holds and supports schools and educators accountable for family engagement. The system is not yet ripe enough to weight family engagement in the matrices. At this time, we do not have valid and reliable metrics or tools in place to collect those data without bias for second language learners and those in poverty. Over time, these data will be collected by valid and reliable means. We do not want to create unfairness by disproportionately weighting the data because we do not have the correct data collection tools in place.

Senator Kihuen:

Those in lower socioeconomic groups are a concern of mine and are something on which we need to continue to work.

Senator Ford:

I appreciate this conversation, but I think it is incomplete. We talk about teacher accountability, and we acknowledge it is important. However, funding was not part of your presentation. Why was the need for funding not part of your presentation?

Dr. Guthrie:

The Governor's budget, over the biennium, includes \$400 million above funding in the previous budget. That is good, but is it enough? I do not know, but it is certainly a beginning.

Senator Ford:

Does that mean that additional funding is not needed?

Dr. Guthrie:

I do not know about need, but will take your word about funding needs. Throughout the State, however, we have not been spending wisely.

Chair Woodhouse:

The education funding will be a major topic during this Session.

Pat Skorkowsky (Deputy Superintendent, Clark County School District):

I want to address the successes we have in the CCSD, the challenges we are facing, and talk specifically about prekindergarten and kindergarten and why these programs are a positive to students. When CCSD is separated from the remainder of the State, we are matching the growth in the State. We are

ensuring that every student in every classroom, without exception or excuses, is reaching the goal of “ready by exit” as set forth by the superintendent. Our presentation today, “Education Matters” ([Exhibit E](#)), shows increases in student achievement.

There were increases in student achievement for Grades 3 through 8 in mathematics and English language arts. On the National Assessment of Educational Progress, CCSD had the third largest positive growth for Grade 8 reading and the seventh largest positive change for Grade 8 mathematics, so we are on the rise. While we see some limited successes, we are continuing with our focus on students and classrooms. We have challenges, specifically in class-size reduction. Kindergarten class-size reductions were never considered in the past. We staff at 52:1 for kindergarten students—26 students in the morning and 26 in the afternoon. One of the challenges we face is determining how we staff kindergarten appropriately. We must ensure the class sizes are correct or the result may be a challenge in staffing because we have to draw from other grade levels within the school to ensure success for kindergarten students. Occasionally, we experience kindergarten class sizes pushed upwards of 35 students. Conversely, in some schools, we experience kindergarten class sizes of 18 to 19 for half-day sessions. With the half- and full-day kindergarten classes, we try to keep the class sizes at 26 to 30 per class, but not all classes look the same across the district or in districts throughout the State.

At this time, approximately 40,000 CCSD elementary students are entering at the lowest level of English language proficiency. We have approximately 14,000 secondary school students who are not proficient in English. One of the biggest challenges we face are the early years of kindergarten and Grade 1 where we have approximately 7,500 students entering at the lowest level of English language proficiency. These numbers do not include the students who are somewhat proficient or have limited English proficiency. For class sizes of 25 to 30, there will be a number of students who have no English skills whatsoever, and we are already behind in our achievement levels.

Statistics do matter. We have to provide additional licensed staff for many different things such as school counselors and instructional coaches. Fine arts at the elementary school, which is one of our contractual requirements, and our special education student population with identified disabilities have class sizes that range from 4 to 12 students. We must ensure all their individual needs are met.

The rigor in the CCSS is a difficult challenge for every teacher in every school across the nation. We also are required to offer differentiated instruction. These are programs that focus on tier one grade-level instruction. We also provide tier two and tier three support to students who are either non-proficient or are struggling because of identified disabilities or have language barriers. We have to increase the support for our ELLs because these students are held to the same standards as every other student. With elementary specialists, specifically under our contract, we are expected to provide preparatory relief to those teachers, so this is yet another challenge we face pertaining to class size. Increasing the number and depth of CCSS that students must master to be considered for promotion to the next level is also a challenge. We must look at our class sizes of over 40 students; administering the rigorous CCSS content, and the inability of teachers to differentiate effectively at the middle and high school levels are challenges. We must make difficult choices when we review our student-to-teacher ratios. Often we have had to eliminate fine arts or elective programs to lower the class-size ratios in the core-content areas to ensure success of students. With that comes the challenge of remediation courses because individualized attention can ensure success of students. We want to ensure that elective courses are not places where students are housed for 52 minute periods—we want them to be rigorous.

Early childhood matters and prekindergarten matters most. We have some State-funded programs that are experiencing success. These are in our schools where students have limited English proficiency. The programs accommodate 16 students in the morning and 16 in the afternoon; these programs provide a positive social environment for the students so they are “ready by entry” to ensure the early language development along with appropriate behavior in the school setting. Within these programs, there is a parent education component so that parents can consider how they can help their child learn English and how parents can learn English in the process. We have 86 Title I prekindergarten programs in CCSD for areas with the highest level of poverty. We want to ensure the “ready by entry” concept is there because every student should have those skills when entering kindergarten. Most of our programs have already completed National Association of Education of Young Children accreditation. These accredited programs meet rigorous standards set by national organizations to ensure the programs are designed for effectiveness. Our prekindergarten enrollment is approximately 4,300 students. The Gibson Report compared major urban school districts to CCSD. The major urban school

districts' enrollment for early childhood enrollment ranged from 27 percent to 68 percent while CCSD enrollment was 9 percent.

In our State-funded kindergarten programs, we have over 12,000 students enrolled. We have tuition-based kindergarten programs in CCSD with 2,453 students. The remainder of our kindergarten students are in half-day programs, and this concerns us the most in CCSD—they receive only 2 hours and 30 minutes of instruction per day, 180 days per year. We need full-day kindergarten especially with the implementation of CCSS. Students are not entering school ready, and we need to ensure they do. They often do not have the social skills to function in the environment. Many of our students do not have the vocabulary necessary to be successful in kindergarten; this is particularly critical for our ELL students. Skills, such as reading independently, should be mastered by the end of the kindergarten year. Students should not only be able to listen but comprehend and be able to answer high-level questions for the reading material used. Mathematics require kindergarten students count forward from a given number to 100. By the end of kindergarten, students should be able to master basic addition and subtraction. In addition, kindergarten students must be able to compare two objects with measurable attribute and identify two- and three-dimensional shapes. Proficiency in sentence structure and spelling are required in the CCSS for success of kindergarten students.

The 2012 Discovery Education Assessment allowed CCSD to compare itself to the national norm standards. In reading, kindergarten and Grade 1 students ranked 30 and 22 points lower, respectively, than the national norm. In mathematics, kindergarten students and Grade 1 students ranked 25 points and 32 points lower, respectively, than the national norm. Our students are not required to have the comprehensive kindergarten experience. We know we must ensure our students are “ready by exit” through early childhood and kindergarten experiences.

We are focused on ensuring the success of our students, but we are all, across the State, facing uphill challenges.

Senator Cegavske:

Concerning testing, what are the most important tests, and at what age should those tests be administered?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Assessments should be given at any level. There are different types of assessments. One of the challenges we face is developing formative assessments that tell us where a given student is at any given time and be able to inform the instruction to move the student to the proficiency level by the end of the school year. We believe assessments should take place during K-12 to ensure teachers are using the information about these students in the classroom. We are not teaching curriculum anymore—we are teaching students. We are mindful of individual students in the classroom and their needs to ensure successful students. When we compare students, CCSD is the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium where we are reviewing ways to compare apples to apples in a way we have not done in the past. There are specific recommendations coming forward to review Grades 3 through 8 students to ensure every student is proficient in reading by the end of Grade 3. In doing so, students can master the transition that the deputy superintendent spoke about in her presentation, [Exhibit D](#), and evolve from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” I am unsure if we have the capability to measure across the board to include kindergarten and Grades 1 and 2, but there should be measuring points along the way by administering criterion-referenced tests. We need to use formative assessments to ensure every K-12 student is given the instruction needed at their appropriate level.

Senator Cegavske:

I think students should be assessed when they enter school, in the middle of the school year and at the end of the school year. One of the things we do, specifically for students with special needs, is give them portfolio testing and Individual Educational Plans. These give us the opportunity to measure each child. We all know every child is different and has different needs. I am concerned we are only measuring students Grade 3 through Grade 8. Regardless of the grade the student is in, students should be evaluated and have a portfolio assessment to gauge performance on a regular basis.

Senator Ford:

Can you redistribute funds to accomplish the goals as outlined in [Exhibit D](#)? Do you need additional funds?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

We are in the process with our return on investment concept and our open-book system. We are reviewing the current way we are spending funds to ensure the funds are giving us return on investment pertaining to student achievement.

We are evaluating funding in two ways. First, we are reviewing the transparency of the system to ensure that the public knows how we are spending funds. Second, we are reviewing the achievement that can be attributed to funds spent. Early childhood education and full-day kindergarten funding cannot be spread across other programs.

We are facing challenges with Title I funds because of sequestration; sequestration includes across-the-board cuts of 5.9 percent in Titles I, II and III. We are not able to make up the deficiencies in our general budget through Title funds to provide these programs for our schools. We may have to reduce the number of programs provided through our Title funds because of sequestration.

We need additional funding for more classroom teachers. Class sizes are important in education. The Teachers and Leaders Council is devising a means to evaluate teacher and administrator effectiveness in the classroom which will be helpful. Lowering our class sizes would make a difference and provide the extra support needed for ELL and special education students.

Senator Cegavske:

The testimony has brought several questions to my mind. What I have read, particularly regarding CCSD, is that there is inadequate space for kindergarten. Another concern is ensuring we have qualified teachers who can teach preschool and kindergarten. In addition, an issue is that the larger districts have flexibility, not only in elementary schools, but also all larger school districts have flexibility with class-size-reduction funds and can move those funds where there is the need.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Space allocations are being reviewed for school programs. Concerning teachers, we will soon be launching a major teacher recruitment campaign. We know we must have the best quality teachers. With the new evaluation system, we will be able to monitor effectively teacher performance. We can provide more specifics to address all your concerns and will do so in the future.

Senator Cegavske:

My biggest concern regarding early childhood teachers are those who are qualified with specific skills to teach the subject matter. This must be taken into account when we are discussing expanding preschool and kindergarten. We have a shortage of qualified teachers both here in Nevada and nationally. If we are not growing teachers nationally, how are we going to recruit teachers for Nevada? Why are we not growing our own teachers in Nevada? We need to be growing our own teachers in Nevada and not necessarily recruiting from other areas of the Country.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I have been speaking to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas about ramping up their program. We are also discussing alternative licensure routes for our teachers. We are expanding our certification programs through United Way and seeking collaboration with other funded programs to ensure the level of rigor is there for the classroom and for the teacher. It is a challenge, but we are hopeful that we can work with these programs at colleges and universities with whom we already have relationships.

Brian Frazier (Director of Grants and Assessments, Douglas County School District):

I will present my written statement on behalf of the Douglas County School District ([Exhibit F](#)).

Senator Cegavske:

I would like to see the T-shirt and "Graduation Begins in Kindergarten" booklet you mentioned in your written statement.

Kristen McNeill (Chief of Staff, Washoe County School District):

I am here to present the "Agenda for the Washoe County School District" ([Exhibit G](#)). We want to ensure that all our unique students have access to the highest quality for education; therefore, the agenda for the Washoe County School District (WCSD) is strategic. We want to ensure students reach their potential in their college and career readiness. Our strategic partner, Education Alliance, produced a document for our students and their parents detailing what is needed to prepare for colleges, apprenticeship programs, technical schools and highly skilled careers. Last month, we launched our first generation of WCSD performance framework in which each school is rated on a star system

of five to one stars. This framework mirrors the State's model, but in WCSD we also take into account subpopulations, and we added science to our model.

We have challenges and are transparent about those challenges. We have student achievement gaps that must be addressed, so we have plans to address the needs of our Individual Education Programs (IEP), free and reduced lunch and ELL student populations. We have 43 percent of our students in the free and reduced lunch program, 16 percent are ELLs and 13 percent are special education students.

A typical classroom has an average of 46 students. Of that 46 students, 9 children live in poverty; 3 children could have IEPs; 2 who may be gifted and talented; and 12 other students for which the teacher must address their individual needs. Within the classroom, teachers must learn the CCSS, the new assessment systems, and the new State laws concerning teacher and principal evaluation and learning.

In WCSD, we have developed an action plan to address all grade levels. Our most intensive efforts are focused on graduation. At the beginning of the school year, WCSD had 4,300 students in Grade 12 for the class of 2013. Of those students, we had 2,500 on track for graduation; however, we had 1,800 that were not on track for graduation for a variety of reasons. In December 2012, we moved 215 of the 1,800 students to be on track for graduation. We achieved that through our graduation initiative in which each student was placed in a specific individualized program. We have 1,500 students on track for honors or advanced diplomas, 1,000 of which were tested using the ACCUPLACER, ACT or SAT. Now WCSD has over 400 students eligible to receive remedial classes—368 students have enrolled in these remedial classes.

Another WCSD intervention initiative is targeted for Grades 3 through 8 using a blend of federal funding. We provide additional support for non-proficient students and are serving over 8,000 students in those programs.

Each WCSD high school will have comprehensive signature academy programs. We have implemented Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) academies across the district: Research and Development Academy at North Valley High School; the Sustainable Resources Academy at Wooster High School; STEM Academy at Galena High School; Health Sciences Academy and Health Occupation Preparatory Education Academy; Global Studies Academy at

McQueen High School; International Baccalaureate (IB) Program at Wooster High School; Success Through Applied Relevant Studies Career & Technical Academy at Reed High School; Academy of Arts, Careers and Technology High School; and Performing Arts Center at Damonte Ranch High School.

To have these programs, we need community and financial support. We are working with each one of our collaborative institutions to develop articulated agreements within each high school. We have also received grant funding for academy development.

Our goal is to develop a continuum that includes the traditional classroom to the virtual classroom. Students could attend traditional school and virtual classes.

We also need to address Grade 8 drop-out rates. Our high school students have shown they will attend school Grades 9, 10, 11 and 12, but where we start to see problems is in middle school. It is imperative we have all students on track. We would like to expand programs such as STEM, IB, pre-advanced placement, and gifted and talented programs in all middle schools.

In our elementary schools, CCSS is being implemented, and teachers are being trained on the implementation. We want to focus on intervention supports for teachers in the classroom.

There has been discussion today regarding child and family services, and early childhood education. In WCSD, of the Nevada prekindergarten funding we receive, we set aside \$1 million each year to ensure funding for our 17 prekindergarten programs. We also have full-day kindergarten programs; we receive State funding for these programs, but we have also begun offering a standardized tuition-based kindergarten program. We are able to offer full-day curriculum for kindergarten students in all but four sites. These four sites do not have the capacity to offer kindergarten.

We have in excess of 62,000 students in WCSD. Over 2,300 are Children in Transition (homeless). We have Family Resource Centers in five locations.

This is the first generation of the WCSD performance framework and it will be refined to incorporate issues as they arise.

Richard Stokes (Superintendent, Carson City School District):

I appreciate the opportunity to have a conversation about education. Carson City School District has four full-day kindergarten sessions at one of our most needy schools. In one of our Title I schools, of those students who participated in full-day kindergarten, 90 percent advanced at grade level to Grade 1; of the other students at the same school who only participated in half-day kindergarten, only 50 percent were at grade level entering Grade 1. We are taking steps now to put additional full-day kindergarten sessions in place. We are assigning teachers to teach full-day kindergarten for the next year as an example of the steps we are taking to implement full-day kindergarten in our school district.

Regarding class size reduction, we kept the ratio in our kindergartens of approximately 25 students to one teacher. Over time, we have always aimed at Grades 1, 2 and 3 according to the statutory student-to-teacher ratios. Unfortunately, as resources have diminished we have not been able to continue this goal. We have added students in primary grades resulting in ratios of 22 students to one teacher in Grades 1, 2 and 3. We have a \$5.5 million deficit for fiscal year 2013-2014 and, as a result, we are planning on a reduction of approximately 30 staff members. There was a question raised earlier in this Committee meeting as to whether there is enough education funding; I would answer that question by stating we do not have adequate funding.

Carson City School District has 7,500 students. However, we have some of the same demographics as some urban areas even though we are a relatively small school district. Approximately 40 percent of our students are of Hispanic ethnicity; 17 percent are ELL students, which is slightly higher than the State's average. Therefore, we have some of the same challenges in our district as those in large urban districts.

In 2010, we were audited by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) specifically to review our English as a Second Language (ESL) program. At the time, we thought we were managing the program well. However, the DOJ made a number of findings that required us to modify and alter aspects of the program. It was through this process we were able to improve our ESL program. Although we did not have the funding to hire additional ESL teachers, we trained the teachers we had as Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). We incentivized that program so we were able to entice teachers to take classes for certification in TESOL.

We have good things happening in our district. For example, we are representing Nevada in the Race to the Top (RTTT) grant program efforts; we were fortunate to have received a \$10 million grant.

We are taking a learner-centered approach used in elementary schools and applying it in our secondary schools. We are prepared to roll out this new approach in the next school year.

We are also working to implement a one-to-one mobile device pilot; we will be rolling that out to 600 students this year. Within 3 years, we hope to have a mobile device in the hands of all of our students. We will be shifting funding of standard print textbooks to funding mobile devices. We hope, following teacher training, to allow students to use those devices to assist in their education.

Senator Ford:

I want to congratulate you on receiving the RTTT grant. It is an honor for the district and for Nevada.

Angie Sullivan (Kindergarten Teacher, Clark County School District):

I am very interested in education and the effect in my classroom. I am on the front line of students beginning their public school adventure. I have 31 students in the morning and 33 students in the afternoon. My students are at risk; they are in various states of poverty, many are homeless, and a number are ELLs. Additional funding is needed.

Adam Berger (Special Education Teacher, Clark County School District):

Class size clearly makes a positive difference in a child's education. Children who are in small classes in kindergarten test at least 1 month ahead of their peers in academic subjects—a trend that continues to increase each year. By Grade 3, these children are more than one-half year ahead of those children who have not had the same opportunity. The benefits of kindergarten for minority students and students in inner-city schools are three times greater than those who have not attended kindergarten. Fewer students are being held back and there are fewer disciplinary problems of those who have experienced small class sizes. Students who are in small classes in kindergarten through Grade 3 are significantly more likely to graduate from high school, go to college, become homeowners and possess IRS section 401(k) accounts.

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Senator Woodhouse:

The Committee meeting is now adjourned at 5:58 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Sara Weaver,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Chair

DATE: _____

<u>EXHIBITS</u>				
Bill	Exhibit		Witness / Agency	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	5		Attendance Roster
S.B. 20	C	2	Alex Ortiz	Proposed amendment to S.B. 20
	D	16	James Guthrie, Deborah Cunningham, Rorie Fitzpatrick	Engaging Nevada to Improve Education, The State of P-12 Education
	E	26	Pat Skorkowsky	Education Matters
	F	1	Brian Frazier	Written Statement
	G	7	Kristen McNeill	Agenda for the Washoe County School District