

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
AND THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS**

**Seventy-Seventh Session  
March 23, 2013**

The joint meeting of the Senate Committee on Finance and the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means was called to order by Chair Debbie Smith at 9:09 a.m. on Saturday, March 23, 2013, in Room 4100 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4401 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.

**SENATE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Senator Debbie Smith, Chair  
Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Vice Chair  
Senator Moises (Mo) Denis  
Senator David R. Parks  
Senator Pete Goicoechea  
Senator Ben Kieckhefer  
Senator Michael Roberson

**ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Assemblywoman Maggie Carlton, Chair  
Assemblyman William C. Horne, Vice Chair  
Assemblyman Paul Aizley  
Assemblyman D. Paul Anderson  
Assemblyman David P. Bobzien  
Assemblyman Andy Eisen  
Assemblywoman Lucy Flores  
Assemblyman Tom Grady  
Assemblyman John Hambrick  
Assemblyman Crescent Hardy  
Assemblyman Pat Hickey  
Assemblyman Joseph M. Hogan  
Assemblywoman Marilyn Kirkpatrick  
Assemblyman Randy Kirner  
Assemblyman Michael Sprinkle

Senate Committee on Finance  
Assembly Committee on Ways and Means  
March 23, 2013  
Page 2

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Assemblyman Steven J. Brooks (Excused)

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Mark Krmpotic, Senate Fiscal Analyst  
Cindy Jones, Assembly Fiscal Analyst  
Michael Chapman, Senior Program Analyst  
Alex Haartz, Principal Deputy Fiscal Analyst  
Julie Waller, Senior Program Analyst  
Leslie Sexton, Committee Secretary

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

James W. Guthrie, Ph.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education  
Deborah Cunningham, Ph.D., Deputy Superintendent For Administrative and Fiscal Services, Department of Education  
Julia Teska, Office of Fiscal Accountability, Department of Education  
Pedro Martinez, Ph.D., Superintendent, Washoe County School District  
Richard Stokes, Superintendent, Carson City School District  
Pat Skorkowsky, Interim Superintendent, Clark County School District  
Ruben Murillo, President, Clark County Education Association  
Lisa Essary-Tejada, Teacher, Clark County School District  
Jeremy Christensen, Clark County Education Association  
Dotty Merrill, Ed.D., Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards  
Phillip Kaiser, At-Large Director, Washoe Education Association  
Laureen Andrews, Parent Leaders for Education  
Jessica Allen, Clark County Education Association  
Shawn Bolin, Clark County Education Association  
Erin Riddle, Clark County Education Association  
Carolyn Edwards, President, Clark County School District Board of Trustees  
Dawn Miller, Member-At-Large, Board of Managers, Nevada PTA  
Dolly Rowen, Clark County School District, Clark County Education Association  
Cindy K. Johnson, Executive Board, Clark County Education Association  
Linda Johnson

**Chair Smith:**

We will continue our discussion of the Distributive School Account (DSA), which we began at our meeting on March 1. We have received a written copy of a PowerPoint presentation ([Exhibit C](#)) from the Department of Education (NDOE) in summary of their budget request for this budget account (B/A).

EDUCATION

K-12 EDUCATION

NDE - Distributive School Account — Budget Page K-12 EDUCATION-17 (Volume I)  
Budget Account 101-2610

At our Committee meeting on March 1, we discussed class size. We have more questions on this subject and the research that has been done in other states. We would like more information on the development of our State Longitudinal Data System (SLDS).

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

We are striving to structure the SLDS appropriately. This will allow us to appraise the consequences of class size in a specific and technical way. We intend to eliminate the need to debate whether class size matters. We intend to give you specific data.

**Deborah Cunningham, Ph.D. (Deputy Superintendent For Administrative and Fiscal Services, Department of Education):**

We have not discussed how we will structure an assessment of class size. We have talked about the need to incorporate enough data elements to allow us to undertake significant research about many aspects that affect education readiness and proficiency. We want to gauge the effectiveness of workforce development and higher education. We are focusing on the infrastructure that will connect the higher education system and the workforce system. Subsequently, the plan will be to connect those to the early childhood system for a comprehensive data system. We intend to use independent researchers in this process and to develop research talent in the State institutions of higher education. I have consulted with another state for ideas on how to achieve this coordinated infrastructure for the kind of research we want to do. We are not ready to design a study, but we are

developing the infrastructure of the database that will make a thorough study possible.

**Chair Smith:**

As the system is currently planned, will we have the capacity to do the research you want to do?

**Dr. Cunningham:**

Yes.

**Dr. Guthrie:**

If this is an opportune time for the Legislature to direct the NDOE to prepare a plan for analysis and research about the consequences of class size using the SLDS and, if you would allow us approximately 2 years to do so, we will gladly prepare such a plan. Our data system will be a treasure trove for outside researchers. We can solicit economists and others from across the Country to participate with us.

**Dr. Cunningham:**

I recently attended the Association for Education Finance and Policy conference. I learned that there has been an explosion in research about higher education, how students access it, their success in it, and their pathways to it. This sudden emergence is a result of the development of new preschool through postsecondary education data systems. I will ensure that we involve independent researchers in the studies as they evolve from our SLDS.

**Assemblyman Bobzien:**

We welcome the analysis of data to assist us in making sound policy decisions. I would like to expand the discussion about the use of the SLDS in making decisions in other education policy issues.

This is an opportune time to discuss the regional professional development programs (RPDP). The real value of the SLDS is in the classroom with the teams of teachers who have been properly prepared to teach in that setting. The data should have a direct impact on how classrooms are managed in the future. The RPDPs will have to accelerate their focus on delivering a higher level of professional development.

**Dr. Cunningham:**

The SLDS will give us information about the return on investment. If we, as the public, invest in this, what is the payback? Will changing the investment result in a different payback? This will be an invaluable tool for a Legislature that must allocate precious resources and that wants to see a reasonable return on investment (ROI). In the field of education finance and research, the focus used to be how to raise and distribute money. Now the focus is on what money will buy. The yield from the SLDS will be our focus.

**Assemblyman Bobzien:**

Please comment on professional development in relation to the SLDS.

**Dr. Cunningham:**

We will not accomplish the common core, the new assessments or the educator evaluation without professional development. We need to know what characteristics of professional development will improve student achievement. Thinking of professional development as a "nice time away from the classroom" will not have a positive effect on classroom performance.

**Dr. Guthrie:**

It would be useful for Dr. Cunningham and me to meet with Legislators to show them, in concrete terms, the breadth of research possible with the SLDS. We have the possibility of using a regression discontinuity analysis. We will be able to show the differences between pre- and post-condition change, by holding other criteria constant. We can look deeper into what kinds of professional development make sense. The overwhelming research shows that the professional development approaches used now are useless. The training comes to teachers in ways they do not know how to execute. It is related to individual instructional strengths and weaknesses. We must link professional development with what teachers want and need to succeed. We pledge to do that.

**Chair Smith:**

I want to ensure that our Committee is familiar with the SLDS. I want us to be able to fund and support our education system better than we have previously.

**Assemblyman Eisen:**

Is it your intent to say that there is no point in doing professional development, or is it your intent to say that the way it is currently done is not useful?

**Dr. Guthrie:**

Nationwide analyses show that it is directed from the top. It does not correlate to what teachers say they need to improve their instruction. Frequently, central office administrators design the curriculum for professional development without responding to what teachers say they need. Our intent, in Nevada, is to design professional development services in an appropriate manner.

**Dr. Cunningham:**

Clear thinking on this subject is emerging. The closer it relates to the classroom and the activities in which teachers engage, the more effective it is and the more potential it has to have a positive impact on student achievement. Our specific tasks revolve around teaching the common core, English language arts and mathematics, differently than in the past. Educator evaluations focus on student achievement data rather than on personalities and personal preferences. As we focus more on classroom needs, we will see increased effectiveness.

**Chair Smith:**

We have class size mandates for Grades 1 through 3. Class sizes in Grades 4 through 12 are also vitally important to Legislators and to parents and teachers. In our discussions on class size, we should think about all class sizes. In the 2010 Special Legislative Session, we provided for the flexibility of moving class-size dollars from Grades 1 through 3 to Grades 4 through 12. What is that amount for the biennium?

**Julia Teska (Office of Fiscal Accountability, Department of Education):**

It is between \$90 million and \$100 million.

**Chair Smith:**

Do we have a bill coming to extend that flexibility?

**Ms. Teska:**

Yes.

**BILL DRAFT REQUEST S-1132:** Extends the temporary waiver from certain minimum expenditure requirements for textbooks for school districts and the temporary allowance for an increase in class sizes for grades 1-3. (Later introduced as [Senate Bill 481](#).)

**Chair Smith:**

There are two alternatives to move teaching positions into Grades 4 through 12. One is to extend class-size legislation. The other is to put more money into the DSA because that is how we fund class-size reduction (CSR). Is that correct?

**Ms. Teska:**

To reduce class sizes across-the-board, short of funding a categorical program with specific strings attached, we would alter the pupil-to-teacher (PTT) ratio that the DSA funds. We would alter it by a desired amount. When we consider class sizes in middle school and high school, the need is greater in core curriculum subjects than it is in physical education or elective courses.

**Dr. Guthrie:**

I prefer the term "pupil-to-professional ratio" over "pupil-to-teacher ratio."

There are three inalterable facts. First, Nevada has one of the least favorable pupil-to-professional ratios of any state. The national average is 1 professional for every 15 pupils in a system. Nevada has 1 professional for every 20 pupils in the system. Second, teacher salaries in Nevada, although they have fallen below the national average, are the 18th ranked in the nation. There is a trade-off. Third, I asked Richard Stokes to poll the superintendents of the 17 school districts in Nevada to determine if they would prefer CSR financing to come as a general form of aid through the DSA, or as specified categorical aid. They replied with the latter.

**Senator Kieckhefer:**

Please define "professional" as you use it when speaking of ratios.

**Dr. Guthrie:**

The National Center for Education Statistics defines professionals as, "those who hold a license and could be considered an instructor-of-record." That includes teachers, counselors, psychologists and administrators.

**Assemblywoman Kirkpatrick:**

What is Nevada's national ranking in per-pupil funding from the DSAs? It seems unfair to compare Nevada's student-to-teacher ratios to other states with different funding.

**Dr. Guthrie:**

The conventional calculation of per-pupil revenues for daily school operation puts Nevada at approximately \$8,000 per pupil, among the bottom five states. Those figures are not adjusted for cost-of-living or cost-of-doing-business indices.

**Assemblywoman Kirkpatrick:**

Nevada has different characteristics than other states. For example, we have a higher transient rate in our schools. We need to focus on issues that impact education in Nevada instead of comparing Nevada to other states.

**Dr. Guthrie:**

The Executive Budget is all about Nevada. It does not address national issues. We have a large number of students who are not proficient in English. This is not a new phenomenon. The Executive Budget contains an English-language learner (ELL) component. We recognize this as a challenge and we want to address it productively.

**Assemblywoman Kirkpatrick:**

There are no provisions to fund CSR and very little provision to fund ELL programs.

**Dr. Cunningham:**

There is no new money for CSR but there are sufficient funds to continue CSR.

**Chair Smith:**

I think it is appropriate to compare Nevada data to other states' data to see what is working and to help us make decisions for Nevada. However, if we are going to look at rankings, we must also look at the funding mechanisms in place in other states.

**Senator Kieckhefer:**

To summarize, Nevada has a shortage of professionals within our education system who are making above-average salaries. If we were to invest more money into our education system, it should be to hire more professionals to reduce the 1:20 ratio to 1:15. Overall, Nevada superintendents would like to receive guaranteed funding for that purpose. Is this an accurate summary of what you said?



**Dr. Guthrie:**

I would like Nevada to spend more money on education. I want it spent wisely. I do not see a plan, other than the Executive Budget, to do that. If we only reduce class size, that alone is not a wise use of funds. An effective teacher is more important than class size in any analysis of which I know. I am not opposed to smaller classes. I am in favor of effective teachers and appropriate rewards for them. This is the direction we should take.

We are working on a "ready to learn" package, which recognizes that "youngsters are plastic" and have the capacity to learn faster in the earlier grades. If we can expand kindergarten, ensure adequate reading skills by Grade 3 and address the needs of ELL students in the early grades, we create better chances for student success in later grades. That is our current plan. In the longer term, we should have additional plans to enable us to concentrate on the recruitment of able teachers whom we properly train and appropriately reward. We will see a greater ROI than anything we can talk about.

**Chair Smith:**

In defense of this Committee, we are not advocating hiring bad teachers. We want good teachers and I want more of them for smaller class size. We continue to invest our precious tax dollars for professional development. We rely on the NDOE, under the leadership of the superintendent for public instruction, and the school districts to appropriately manage that professional development. The next step is to invest in smaller class sizes to make use of the professional development in which we have invested.

**Assemblyman Eisen:**

The NDOE's Priority and Performance Based Budget shows two performance measures. The first is high school graduation rates. The second is expenditures per pupil. The latter is not a measure of performance. There is an optimal expenditure rate, which may vary by geography and which we have not yet identified. This is analogous to trying to determine if you are adequately watering a plant by measuring how much water you use and not by examining the soil. If we are to use the per-pupil expenditure as a performance measure, we should first establish what the target should be. Why was this chosen as a performance measure and what should be the target?

**Dr. Guthrie:**

Dollars-per-pupil is a measure of input, not success. We should never have a goal stated in dollars spent. We should measure outcome, or the ROI. What you refer to should more accurately be defined as the ROI.

**Ms. Teska:**

We are in the process of data conversion so there is not as much performance data available to us at this time. We are trying to show what we spend in comparison to the national average, and what we get for that expenditure compared to national averages for those comparable items. It is as close as we can come to an efficiency measure in educational terms. It would be more effective to first define specific funding goals. That data is not available.

**Assemblyman Eisen:**

It would be infinitely more effective to have those comparisons because the present form says nothing about our accomplishments. We can use a variety of performance measures that would be more accurate.

**Dr. Cunningham:**

The Executive Budget provides education funding for CSR in Grades 1 through 3 of approximately \$158 million in fiscal year (FY) 2013-2014 and about \$161 million for FY 2014-2015.

**Chair Smith:**

I have several questions for school district representatives regarding the availability of teachers, and the effects of providing flexibility in reducing class sizes. What is the capacity for reducing class sizes?

**Pedro Martinez, Ph.D. (Superintendent, Washoe County School District):**

We have experienced some of the largest budget cuts in education the Washoe County School District (WCSD) has ever seen. This occurred when Nevada was already at the bottom of the list in terms of education funding. An appropriate analogy would be that other states were cut from a seven-course meal to a five-course meal while Nevada started out with a cheeseburger, fries and diet cola and we were reduced from that.

Over the last 3 to 4 years, we have had to transfer CSR flexibility dollars to offset budget cuts and fund CSRs in Grades 4 through 12. When I worked with

Clark County Superintendent of Schools Dwight D. Jones, the Clark County School District (CCSD) had already been increasing class size in many schools by holding back some of their allocations. For example, if a high school's enrollment required 100 teachers, it was funded for 97 teachers. The same happened in the elementary schools. We changed that practice by fully funding the needs of teachers in the high schools and middle schools. We funded the elementary schools at 98 percent of their teacher staffing needs. Subsequently, due to the compounding effects of arbitrations, the District had to reduce the 98 percent to 93 percent. Overall, 18,000 positions were reduced to approximately 17,000. Clark County had just about \$19 million in reserves, out of a budget of about \$2 billion, from which to draw. In Washoe County, thanks to conservative management of finances, we had enough reserves to carry us to today. If we continue to use our reserves in this manner, they will be depleted in 2 years. Out of an approximate \$400 million General Fund budget, we are using about \$20 million each year from our reserves. That has kept our class sizes smaller than classes in Clark County where there may be 35 students in a classroom. Districts are doing the best they can with the resources they have.

I support efforts to ensure an academic ROI in education. If we do not keep class sizes below 30 students, and if we do not fund all-day kindergarten, we diminish the investments we make in Grades 1 through 3 because we will continue to play catch up. We have the capacity to hire more teachers. We have excellent human resources departments. Nevada has much to offer new residents. People have choices in where they want to work. We must make a strong statement to potential new hires that Nevada is willing to invest more in education to be competitive with other states that have been investing in education for a long time.

**Chair Smith:**

We need to clarify the fact that even if the Executive Budget does not cut funding to education, districts will be forced to cut their budgets due to decreased local revenue.

**Dr. Martinez:**

If no new funding is found, our reserves will be depleted in 2 years and class sizes in Washoe County will be up to the same levels as they are in Clark County.

**Chair Smith:**

What do you expect your budget cut will be?

**Dr. Martinez:**

Our deficit is currently running at around \$32 million this fiscal year.

**Chair Smith:**

The perspective of the public is that, since the State can maintain your General Fund support, everything is fine.

**Assemblyman Aizley:**

Are there enough available classrooms to support CSR? Placing two teachers in a classroom with 30 students is not CSR.

**Dr. Martinez:**

We do have areas of significant overcrowding in Nevada. Enrollment is increasing again in the CCSD and the WCSD. The WCSD is pursuing a capital improvement project to maintain existing buildings. The temporary solutions include portable classrooms and adjusting school schedules. If the choice is a classroom of 37 children, or a classroom of less than 30 children in a portable classroom, I choose to have more portable classrooms. I must ensure that we support our teachers. We have large numbers of children who enter the public school system below their age-appropriate grade level. Many have no academic vocabulary and have never read a book. We have large numbers of twelfth graders who are at-risk. I must do whatever is necessary to ensure that all students are successful.

**Senator Kieckhefer:**

When we hire teachers, do we focus on recruiting experienced teachers from out-of-State or do we merely chose from the pool of applicants? What criteria are used in the application process?

**Dr. Martinez:**

Several things have evolved in the last few years. In Clark County, they instituted a Teacher Perceiver Interview process which screens candidates. If the right vision is set for the State, we would have no difficulty attracting talented teachers. The WCSD has adopted the screening criteria used by Teach For America. The time to focus on recruitment is now. This is what the CCSD and the WCSD are doing. We need to focus on professional development and the support of new hires so they can get started properly.

**Assemblywoman Flores:**

We all understand the need for CSR. In the 2008-2009 school year, approximately 40 percent of Nevada students were from families considered low-income. They need more attention in the early grades. Many of these children cannot speak English.

**Dr. Martinez:**

Nevada faces many challenges. Over two-thirds of the children in Clark County live in poverty. Over 50 percent of the children in Washoe County live in poverty. The rates have been increasing by double digits every year. In many communities in Nevada, poverty has been cyclical, over multiple generations. There are challenges in the home. Less than 50 percent of children coming into kindergarten in the WCSD do so at the kindergarten level of ability. We are always playing catch-up. There are approximately 70,000 children in Nevada who are ELLs. They are active in the system. There are also children leaving the system who do so below their academic grade level who are also not yet proficient in English. This is a double burden for them.

Nevada children have large achievement gaps. Our ELL students graduate at a rate in the low double digits. This includes active learners and those who exit the system. The majority of students in alternative schools are former ELL students. With a graduation rate for all children in the high 60th percentile, graduation rates for children in poverty are under 50 percent. We have work to do.

We have lacked early childhood education programs. Nevada has yet to follow the lead of other states in providing all-day kindergarten because there has been significant opposition to funding it. A new educational industry has arisen in home-based all-day kindergarten. The wealthy are employing consultants to prepare their children at an early age to ensure their admittance to Harvard, et al. They are spending an average of \$30,000 per child to do this to ensure an educational advantage. Teachers from our most successful high-poverty schools report that every minute counts. The children there are so far behind and need so many more resources and academic interventions that if we do not invest in those early years, by the time they reach Grade 3, their success is even more difficult.

**Chair Smith:**

I appreciate your comments about what people who have money invest in. We do not see private schools bragging about large class sizes.

**Senator Denis:**

Why did the WCSD not request the CSR waiver that was available? Have you requested them in the past?

**Mr. Martinez:**

The WCSD is one of the leading Nevada counties in the rate of student at-grade proficiency due to the funding we have put into the early grades. We have the highest rate of participation in tuition-based programs of any county in the State. We charge parents for full-day kindergarten. We decided not to transfer a large amount of resources from Grades 1 through 3 to Grades 4 through 12. We are using reserves to maintain the other grade levels. This is not a sustainable solution for CSR.

We decided to only increase class size in Grades 1 through 3 by two students to offset some budget cuts.

**Chair Smith:**

Different school districts make different decisions. For example, the CCSD funds physical education teachers and the WCSD does not. They use resources in different ways.

**Richard Stokes (Superintendent, Carson City School District):**

In rural Nevada, enrollment has declined in the last 5 years. The result is a loss in revenue. In Carson City, we have used our reserves to make the existing programs last as long as possible. We are trying to avoid a shortfall of approximately \$5.5 million. We spend approximately 85 percent of our budget on staff salaries. Consequently, when budget cuts are necessary, we look there first for savings. In Carson City, Elko, Lyon and Douglas Counties we have a large pool of qualified substitute teachers from which we can hire as permanent positions as teachers retire or receive Race to the Top grant positions. We have the chance to see them on the job when they teach as substitutes. We see a shortage of teachers who have endorsements to teach math, science, special education and ELLs.

The U.S. Department of Justice audited our English as a second language (ESL) program. We thought it was a top-notch program. Through the audit process, we learned what was lacking from our program. We now give preference to all applicants for teaching positions who have the Teaching English as a Second Language endorsement. When we cannot find such individuals, we train

them ourselves by calling on the skills of local experts, and teachers at the University of Nevada, Reno and Western Nevada College. We also provide tuition reimbursement for applicants who take the certified courses. We will not see significant improvement in high school graduation rates in Nevada until we meet the needs of ELLs.

In Carson City and other rural areas, we have sufficient classroom space due to the decrease in student enrollment. If full-day kindergarten is approved by this Legislature, there should also be funding for portable classrooms to meet the needs of local schools.

**Chair Smith:**

Would you provide us with information on each district's projections for budget cuts associated with the Executive Budget?

**Mr. Stokes:**

We will provide that to your Staff.

**Pat Skorkowsky (Interim Superintendent, Clark County School District):**

The CCSD prepares budgets with an assumption of a ratio of 38:1 PTT in the secondary schools, Grades 6 through 12. We budget at a ratio of 34:1 in elementary schools, and further reductions for Grades 1 through 3 according to CSR. We follow federal and State guidelines in special education classes. The number of special education students is increasing significantly in our self-contained classrooms.

We have tapped into our reserves. We have had to increase class size and decrease the percentage at which we staff our schools. In spite of decreasing our reserves from 2 percent to 1 percent, we are still not able to keep our class sizes low.

Fifty-five percent of the students in the CCSD are on the free- and reduced-lunch programs. There are 94,855 students eligible for the ELL programs, with 52,945 of them currently being served by those programs. According to our contract, we provide art, music, physical education and library services. There is an alarming trend of schools asking to be excused from having teachers in those areas so that they can further reduce class sizes. We have one of the most outstanding fine arts programs of any district in the Nation in our elementary and secondary schools.

In my first year of teaching, I had 40 students in Grade 1. When CSR was instituted, my class was reduced to a 25:1 ratio. Subsequently, I was assigned to a team-teaching situation with a 16:1 ratio. In my last year of teaching, I also had a 16:1 ratio because it was in a new school. I guarantee that the level of education that I was able to provide in a 16:1 class size classroom was significantly different than in the 40:1 class size classroom. My attention to individual students and my ability to develop relationships with students was different. Achievement levels of the students increased significantly in the 16:1 classroom.

With more special education, ELL and ESL students, in spite of smaller class sizes, teachers are still struggling to meet individual student needs. We must reduce class sizes for all of our teachers. They are increasingly expected to do more and more with less and less.

The CCSD is recruiting aggressively to attract the best teachers and pair them with the excellent teachers we have in our classrooms. We are using social media and the traditional forms of recruiting in newspapers and at colleges and universities.

We use portable classrooms and we will have to use more of them in the future. We project an additional 1,500 students new to the CCSD for the 2013-2014 school year. We moved three schools to a year-round calendar. Teachers would rather have smaller classes to meet the needs of all of their students.

We have significant challenges. We are ready to face them to ensure success for every student in every classroom, without exception and without excuses.

**Senator Kieckhefer:**

Are you having the same local-funding problem that exists in Washoe County? Is the local share, according to The Nevada Plan, also declining?

**Mr. Skorkowsky:**

The potential for cuts exists. Our growth may counterbalance that to some degree. Putting more students into buildings is always a challenge.

**Senator Denis:**

The CCSD has always had a waiver for class size. Can you comment on that?



**Mr. Skorkowsky:**

That is correct. It results from the elimination of team teaching. We need more classroom space. Instituting the PTTs recommended by law is a challenge.

**Assemblyman Hambrick:**

With the projected increase of 1,500 students, how will the total enrollment compare to the highest enrollment prior to the economic downturn?

**Mr. Skorkowsky:**

We now have the highest enrollment, 311,286, we have ever had. Usually we see a decrease midyear. This year we have seen an increase.

**Chair Smith:**

We will take public comment in the order in which people signed in.

**Ruben Murillo (President, Clark County Education Association):**

Cuts in the DSA have affected Clark County more severely than any other area because of our high population. Class sizes have increased. The ELL services are reduced. We have a high number of homeless students and children living in poverty. We have urban and rural schools in the CCSD.

The Nevada Plan is inherently unfair. The CCSD does not get as much back as county residents contribute.

The challenges to educators include reduced salaries and benefits, inadequate professional development, lack of textbooks and other resources, increased class sizes, out-of-pocket expenditures for basic and supplemental classroom supplies and teachers being blamed for the inadequacies of public education. We are asked to do more with less.

We are in a public education funding drought. Recruitment and training of teachers to provide for a quality educational experience for our children is difficult. This cannot be reversed with more inadequate funding.

**Lisa Essary-Tejada (Teacher, Clark County School District):**

I teach Grade 3 at Priest Elementary School. I have been teaching for 17 years. I teach at a school with a high rate of transiency. I have many ELL students in my classroom along with non-ELL students. This dynamic requires differentiated

instruction that targets individual student needs. While I am a teacher, I am also a parent. My daughter has never struggled in school. She is now having trouble in middle school as a result of having 40 or more students in each of her classes. For the teacher, learning becomes secondary to crowd control. Students will not be able to pass proficiency exams to be ready for graduation if we do not give them the tools they need to succeed. They need our attention. I am asking my representatives, Assemblywoman Dina Neal and Senator Kelvin D. Atkinson, to work hard to secure adequate school funding for CSR. It is time for "big business" to invest in the State that hosts them as they thrive and prosper. No one should have a free ride. Teachers should not have to pay for what our students need by salary reductions, freezes or cuts in their benefits. Our State's future is at stake.

**Jeremy Christensen (Clark County Education Association):**

I teach college-level math at Arbor View High School in Las Vegas. I have been teaching for 17 years. My class sizes have varied from 18 in another state to 43 in Nevada. Now, more than ever, teaching requires establishing relationships with students that motivate them. This is difficult to accomplish with 40 students. Every student has a portable entertainment system in his or her pocket. Not only do we have to teach our subject matter, we have to monitor the use of those devices. They can watch movies, play video games, contact friends and shop while we are trying to teach them algebra, geometry, English and science. Students' inability to receive individual attention is tantamount to child abuse. It is time to make businesses pay their fair share. To my knowledge, only three states do not charge businesses some kind of tax for education: Wyoming, South Dakota and Nevada. That needs to change. Over the last 5 years, teachers have not seen any cost-of-living increases. I am 42 years old. I was supposed to receive the last increase of my life in 2013. That was taken away last month. I will teach at least another 20 years and will not see another raise. That does not make sense. My son, who can compute square roots in Grade 4, has 30 students in his class. It is difficult for him to concentrate and 30 students is a distraction for him. The students, parents and teachers need your help now.

**Dotty Merrill, Ed.D. (Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards):**

I will read my written statement ([Exhibit D](#)) in support of education funding and reduced class size.

**Phillip Kaiser (At-Large Director, Washoe Education Association):**

I teach at McQueen High School in Reno. I have supplied the Committee with a brief one-page measure of educational comparison from *Education Week's Quality Counts 2013* ([Exhibit E](#)). It compares Nevada to other states in several categories. We have seen improvement in achievement measures from 2011 standings. Our teachers and their high-achieving students are working hard in the areas listed on the bottom half of the one page of [Exhibit E](#).

The rankings on the top of the page show Nevada's ranking in six areas, when compared to all 50 states, plus the District of Columbia. Nevada rates 51st in overall chance of success for students. Nevada ranks 51st in preschool enrollment. Nevada places 50th in the number of students who have gone on to post-high school education. Nevada places 50th in the number of children with one parent holding a 2- or 4-year college degree. Nevada places 49th in the number of children with parents who speak fluent English. When adjusted for cost-of-living and other factors, Nevada places 50th in per-pupil expenditures.

When legislators debate how much money to give to the various districts, please keep in mind that, overall, we do not, and have not, funded education adequately. Dividing the budget pie differently will only pit north versus south and urban versus rural, music versus math. This is not a winning strategy. We need to bake a bigger pie. We need to find the resources for the ELL, special education and CSR. No parent comes away from a school open-house night grateful for large class sizes.

Teachers must differentiate instructions depending on the abilities of various students. As class size increases, special needs increase and opportunities for building relationships decrease. Building relationships with students is crucial to student success.

**Laureen Andrews (Parent Leaders for Education):**

I have submitted a written statement ([Exhibit F](#)) in support of adequately funding and enforcing CSR.

**Assemblyman Eisen:**

How different is the experience of a teacher in a 1:20 ratio versus a 2:40 ratio?

**Ms. Andrews:**

I have never been in a team-teaching classroom. With a class size of 30 third-grade students, it is like doubling a class of 24 students in terms of the individual attention necessary. I can accomplish differentiation with 24 students in three reading groups, three spelling groups and three math groups. Larger numbers of students, with either one or two teachers, adversely affect the quality of teaching.

**Dr. Guthrie:**

Before I came to this position 1 year ago, the Legislature had been making substantial strides toward a comprehensive accountability system for Nevada's public schools. This was an inducement for me to accept my position because I could see the groundwork had been laid for an accountability system with several components.

First, it includes the SLDS. By combining data about inputs, student characteristics, teacher characteristics and outcomes, we will have the capacity for a continuous improvement system and make midcourse corrections possible.

Second, it uses fair and comprehensive data to arrive at a rating system for each public conventional school and charter school in the State. The public and elected officials will see the first evidence of this in June when we publish the first results from the Nevada school performance framework. We will give most of the schools a one- to five-star rating, as agreed to by the Legislature. A local school district has the ability to add more measurement criteria for performance. I have been advised that the CCSD will participate in this program rather than operating independently with their own rating system. The authentic issuance of these star ratings will occur in late September or early October. Schools that receive one or two stars will be required to institute improvement plans. We still will not have a perfect system. Over time, we will have to fine-tune it and make necessary adjustments.

Third, we will focus on educator accountability with a 2-year pilot program to assess individual classroom teachers and school principals. We chose a 2-year time frame because no state has implemented an effective program for this purpose. It is fraught with technical challenges. Mistakes could be costly. Our intent is to create a fair, comprehensive and useful method of assessment that provides feedback to individual teachers to identify strengths and weaknesses. Professional development should be directed to the needs of individual teachers. The intent is not to punish. The intent is to help. My hope is that we can stretch the

effectiveness of those teachers, who are unusually talented, over larger numbers of students and other teachers. At present, we do not have a sufficient State assessment system. We do not measure all subjects. We do not measure all grades. The high school proficiency exam is outdated and insufficient. The State Board of Education, last week, agreed that a next-generation testing system is needed. Assemblywoman Flores and Assemblyman Kirner have sponsored legislation that will further the goal of a better assessment system.

We still have not begun to link financial resources to effective programs. In education, there seems to be the view that everything we presently do is good and if you ask us to do something else good you must give us money to do that. This is faulty thinking. With new accountability systems we can better judge the programs that are worthy of continued funding, those that are not and those that are worthy of new funding.

My point is that we have established the fundamentals of an accountability system. The system may not yet do exactly what we want it to do, but it represents mammoth progress. Its comprehensive nature, and the careful way in which it is being constructed, matches any state in the Nation. I am proud to be a part of it.

**Assemblyman Bobzien:**

The report for FY 2010-2011 for the Early Childhood Education program was submitted in August 2011. When can we expect the FY 2011-2012 report for that program? Policy makers need that data in this Legislative Session.

**Ms. Teska:**

A consultant prepares that report and is now reviewing the final draft. I expect a transmittable copy shortly.

**Chair Smith:**

Why is that report so late in coming?

**Dr. Guthrie:**

I will get that answer for you.

**Chair Smith:**

I see no questions on the Adult High School Program. Bill Draft Request S-1132 will provide flexibility on funding for textbooks and CSR. Are there any questions on the DSA?

**Senator Kieckhefer:**

If we provide a waiver on textbook funding, do you anticipate that most of the districts will apply for it? How does that fit with the goal of bringing the State up to common-core standards?

**Ms. Teska:**

The districts would not have to apply for the waiver under the bill. It is granting them relief from the statutory requirement that spending on those items meet the formula minimums for each district. This proposal is the result of my questioning of districts about the consequences of not allowing them flexibility. They responded that the lack of flexibility would have an impact on staffing and class size.

**Dr. Guthrie:**

There is insufficient time in this Legislative Session to discuss textbook policy. We can work with legislators and the Governor in the interim to rethink the entire textbook policy in Nevada. Books will always exist. We should keep in mind that we live in a digital era and we need to think about textbooks in a new way. An interim appraisal of the system is in order.

**Senator Kieckhefer:**

The pool of money could be used to purchase digital licenses. As we expect more, teach the common-core standards, and implement new strategies, this money may be necessary to purchase equipment and technology or books.

**Dr. Cunningham:**

Our programs are in transition as we move to the common-core standards. Flexibility with textbooks is acceptable because we have not fully put the common-core materials into place.

**Assemblyman Bobzien:**

We need to start now to plan for the next budget cycle because this issue will need long-range plans. We need to consider technology investments, technology support

and professional development so that teachers can incorporate different kinds of media into how they deliver the common-core standards.

**Chair Smith:**

Over the past decade, we have had hearings about the lack of textbooks. Consequently, we passed legislation to set aside money for textbooks. Then we ended up with more money than anticipated. The recession came and we removed those funds. It has been a series of pendulum swings. The Education Subcommittee of the Legislative Commission can study the textbook and digital issues together during the interim, without forgetting the funding necessary to implement needed reform. We need a plan that meets our needs in this digital environment and we need a plan to pay for it. Otherwise, we will be back in 2015, having the same discussion with constituents clamoring that their children do not have textbooks and teachers will be forced to teach without the proper tools. Many will remember that we had a lottery bill designed for the sole purpose of raising funds for textbooks. The public came to us in great numbers to testify about the lack of textbooks.

Seeing no further questions, we will return to public comment.

**Jessica Allen (Clark County Education Association):**

I have been a Grade 4 teacher at Hickey Elementary School in Las Vegas for 2 years. I have 30 students in my class this year. I was a student in the CCSD in Grades 7 through 12. It is sad that we are still talking about CSR. The effectiveness of a teacher does not matter when a teacher is trying to manage 30 to 40 students, trying to get them to calm down and focus on the teacher. The first thing an education student learns in college is that to be an effective teacher you need strong classroom management. This is difficult to achieve with a large class. I witnessed fellow students in the CCSD drop out because they did not get the individual attention they needed and they believed that teachers did not care. Regarding professional development, we have lots of effective teachers in Nevada; we need to concentrate on CSR. We have used the excuse of the lack of money. We should look at the room tax rate and have the casinos begin to invest in education. They hire our high school graduates. If those employers want an educated workforce, they need to invest in CSR. I am an effective teacher, yet, with the introduction of the common-core standards, I have felt inadequate because I do not have the time to relate personally to the students in my classroom.

**Shawn Bolin (Clark County Education Association):**

I teach Grade 5. This is my ninth year as a teacher in the CCSD. I am somewhat offended to hear that, at one time, the CCSD would hire anyone. In my first year, I taught in a portable classroom at an at-risk school. I was optimistic. Nine years later, I have a class of 36 to 37 students in a range of academic achievement. Some of them are still at Grade 3 level. One of my students tested at a Grade 12 and 9 months in a reading assessment.

At my school, there are empty classrooms. At the beginning of the school year, I had 28 students, which was manageable and I felt effective. We lost a Grade 5 teacher and my class size increased. We need more funding. Sometimes the issue is effective and appropriate spending of the money we have. I have seen mismanagement when administrators fill positions based on personal relationships rather than qualifications and experience. For the good of everyone, it would seem more beneficial to keep the empty classroom filled and class sizes lower. Other school personnel have time to assist in the classrooms.

I am sometimes discouraged that my personnel evaluations come from an administrator who has never taught at Grade 5 level. I have more classroom experience than some of the administrators who have evaluated me.

Professional development is a good idea. It needs to be geared to the needs of the particular school. Some of the professional development curricula are presented just because there has been time allotted for it. Sometimes it does not relate to classroom needs. I support the idea of accountability. However, it is unfair to compare teachers in affluent neighborhoods to teachers in at-risk neighborhoods.

**Erin Riddle (Clark County Education Association):**

I teach prekindergarten (pre-k) in a school classified under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. In my school, 94 percent of the students are ELL and 100 percent of the students are on a free- or reduced-cost lunch program. We recently learned that we are losing one of our pre-k positions. We are full to capacity at 108 children. Preparing these children for kindergarten will be more difficult next year. Upon entry to our program, many of these children do not know how to hold a crayon or use scissors. If we are unable to properly prepare them for kindergarten, the kindergarten teachers' jobs, to prepare children for Grade 1, will become progressively more difficult.



Senate Committee on Finance  
Assembly Committee on Ways and Means  
March 23, 2013  
Page 25

I expect my representatives to work hard in Carson City to improve school funding. Many teachers recently took pay cuts. They should not have to pay for CSR.

**Carolyn Edwards (President, Clark County School District Board of Trustees):**

Our class size ratios are 34:1 in Grades 4 and 5, and 38:1 in Grades 6 through 12. Those ratios can increase throughout the year as new students come into the district. We are trying everything we can to reduce class sizes. We need to examine the funding formulae carefully to achieve equity.

**Assemblywoman Flores:**

We know we do not adequately fund education in Nevada. Sometimes we hear from teachers that there is mismanagement of resources. What do you hear on a district level about how resources are used?

**Ms. Edwards:**

We expect to continue our focus on proper management of resources. The Gibson Consulting Group conducted an efficiency and effectiveness study. We are implementing several of their recommendations. In the last round of budget cuts, we reduced central office staff by 20 percent. We are still operating at that level. Nevada has the lowest administrator-to-student ratio of any state in the Nation. This data is contained in the *Nevada Students Report* delivered by the Nevada Association of School Boards last week.

**Chair Smith:**

Are there any team-teaching classrooms in Clark County?

**Ms. Edwards:**

There are none. We have added portable classrooms. We have moved the older grades into the portables to accommodate CSR in the lower grades.

**Dawn Miller (Member-At-Large, Board of Managers, Nevada PTA):**

I teach music in the WCSD. Please do not achieve CSR at the expense of other programs. The vocations and fine arts programs are important parts of the educational atmosphere. In the arts, students find a place to belong. This leads to higher graduation rates. Music at the elementary level helps the ELL student with the cognitive ability to learn English. Music teaches the rhythm of language and builds word association. Differentiated instruction is a part of my daily lesson.

I am the mother of two sons who were fortunate to attend all-day kindergarten. The oldest son is a freshman at Virginia City High School. He is taking several honors classes. His work ethic and his love of school are directly related to the attention he received from his kindergarten teacher. My younger son is doing well in middle school. I credit his success to his teacher and his need to beat his big brother at everything.

I am the State legislative chair for the Nevada PTA. We have passed many resolutions supporting full-day kindergarten, CSR and early childhood education.

**Dolly Rowen (Clark County School District, Clark County Education Association):**

We have one of the highest central-office-to-pupil ratios. They make decisions for us. We have class sizes in excess of 40 students. The per-pupil payment is \$8,000. The CCSD contributes 88 percent of the State's revenue and only 66 percent comes back to us. Regarding class size and teacher effectiveness, we are not meeting the need of ELL students, special needs students or the at-risk-behavior students from low-income neighborhoods. We need full-day kindergarten to prepare children for Grade 1. I suggest that we also have full-day pre-k, even if it is for 2 half-days per week at every site, to prepare them for kindergarten.

I teach at a Title I school. We have an able administrator. We allocate our funds as best we can. We cut back on music, the arts and physical education to have manageable class sizes. We are left with doubled classes in those areas and the focus becomes crowd control.

Our teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach the curriculum. We do not have enough professional training to adequately address serious behaviors.

I teach autistic children ages 3 to 5 years. In that age group, in Nevada, autism is being identified at the average rate of 15 children per month. We are short of space. We are now using substitute teachers to meet that need. The solution is funding to hire more teachers.

In my evaluations, I have been told to stop teaching because my "students make too many gains." I am not willing to do that to make it easier for the next grade level. My students need these programs to have a chance at life. We need to support that.

**Cindy K. Johnson (Executive Board, Clark County Education Association):**

I am a music specialist at May Elementary School in northwest Las Vegas. I have been an educator for 33 years. We have kindergarten classes with 35:1 student-to-teacher ratios and no teacher's aides. The budget for the literacy hub, the library, was zero, this year. We have a serious lack of supplies. We had to ask each student to bring one ream of paper this year.

This week, I was at a faculty meeting. We were told that, next year, our school would be staffed at 95 percent of last year's level. This is a 2 percent increase over the current year. We were also told that we would be losing two staff members because class sizes would increase by two students per grade level. At first, I found this difficult to believe because, last month, an arbitration decision resulted in teachers losing thousands of dollars they had earned in step increases and advanced degrees. The district claimed it needed to fund more teaching positions to reduce class sizes, and they needed to do this on the backs of hard-working teachers. Now, on top of that, they plan to increase class sizes.

Teachers beg for basic supplies in overcrowded classrooms. Libraries are falling into disrepair. You must do better. Schools can no longer do more with less. Educators' pockets are empty. We can no longer make up the difference. You must support our students and their dedicated teachers. Class size, basic supplies and respecting education professionals matter. We are doing our part. We cannot do it alone.

**Linda Johnson:**

I am a parent of four children, a taxpayer, a voter, a PTA member and an involved and engaged member of the Las Vegas community since 1995. My three oldest children graduated from Bonanza High School with honors diplomas. My youngest child is a freshman there and is on the honor roll.

Smaller class sizes matter. Effective teachers in the classroom, an effective administrator who leads the staff at every school, content-specific professional development, investment in early education, adequate textbooks and technology and other resources in the classroom, safe student transportation, nutritious meals for students, a secure, healthy and bully-free school environment, the opportunity for career and technical education in the high schools, support of ELL and gifted and special education students, arts, sports and libraries, communities and businesses that value and support education, and welcoming informed and engaged

parents into the schools: these all matter. They work together for student success. When we do not adequately fund education, we must sacrifice any number of these. This path will never lead to success. The skills of even the most incredible teacher cannot be properly used with 35 to 45 students who have varying abilities. If a child has not eaten, or is ill, that child cannot concentrate. It does not matter about the class size or who the teacher is. If a student is bullied and afraid to go to school, success is difficult. There is no magic pill to solve all of our education problems. Please adequately fund education so that every child in Nevada, urban or rural, has a chance at a good education. I hope you will hold yourselves accountable and responsible. I hope that our communities and school districts will do the same. We expect this of you. As parents, we will do our part to know what you and our educators are doing and learn to advocate for our children. We will also hold ourselves accountable.

**Chair Smith:**

You have ably reminded us of the many policy and financial components that comprise a quality education. I heard a colleague say that the discussion of divvying up the educational funding pie is reminiscent of the struggles and economic choices in the movie entitled *The Hunger Games*.

We have received written statements from Richard Tellier ([Exhibit G](#)) and ([Exhibit H](#)), Jordan Pelley ([Exhibit I](#)), Autumn Tampa ([Exhibit J](#)), Nancy Sutter ([Exhibit K](#)) and Gina Eilers ([Exhibit L](#)). These statements will become part of the record of this meeting.

Senate Committee on Finance  
Assembly Committee on Ways and Means  
March 23, 2013  
Page 29

Seeing no further questions from the Committee and no further public comment,  
this meeting is adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

---

Leslie Sexton,  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

---

Senator Debbie Smith, Chair

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

---

Assemblywoman Maggie Carlton, Chair

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

<b><u>EXHIBITS</u></b>				
<b>Bill</b>	<b>Exhibit</b>		<b>Witness / Agency</b>	<b>Description</b>
	A	1		Agenda
	B	19		Attendance Roster
	C	20	James W. Guthrie, Ph.D.	The K-12 Education Budget
	D	3	Dotty Merrill	Written Testimony
	E	1	Phillip Kaiser	Selected Measures of Educational Comparison
	F	2	Laureen Andrews	Written Testimony
	G	4	Richard Tellier	Written Testimony
	H	2	Richard Tellier	2011 Barrick Mining Fact Sheet
	I	1	Jordan Pelley	Written Testimony
	J	1	Autumn Tampa	Written Testimony
	K	2	Nancy Sutter	Written Testimony
	L	1	Gina Eilers	Written Testimony