

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

**Seventy-Ninth Session  
February 8, 2017**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chairman Tyrone Thompson at 3:15 p.m. on Wednesday, February 8, 2017, in Room 3142 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4401 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda ([Exhibit A](#)), the Attendance Roster ([Exhibit B](#)), and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at [www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/79th2017](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/79th2017).

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Assemblyman Tyrone Thompson, Chairman  
Assemblywoman Amber Joiner, Vice Chair  
Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson  
Assemblywoman Olivia Diaz  
Assemblyman Chris Edwards  
Assemblyman Edgar Flores  
Assemblyman Ozzie Fumo  
Assemblywoman Lisa Krasner  
Assemblyman William McCurdy II  
Assemblywoman Brittney Miller  
Assemblyman Keith Pickard  
Assemblywoman Heidi Swank  
Assemblywoman Jill Tolles  
Assemblywoman Melissa Woodbury

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

None

**GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:**

None



**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Amelie Welden, Committee Policy Analyst  
Karly O'Krent, Committee Counsel  
Divya Narala, Committee Manager  
Sharon McCallen, Committee Secretary  
Joan Waldock, Committee Secretary  
Trinity Thom, Committee Assistant

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Steve Canavero, Ph.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education  
Brett Barley, Deputy Superintendent for Student Achievement, Student Achievement Division, Department of Education  
Dena Durish, Deputy Superintendent for Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement, Department of Education  
Pat Hickey, Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada  
David W. Carter, Member, District No. 2, State Board of Education, Department of Education  
Bruce Soares, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada

**Chairman Thompson:**

[Roll was taken. Committee protocol and rules were explained.] Today we are going to consider the Assembly Committee on Education, Committee Policies; review the Assembly Committee on Education Committee Brief prepared by Amelie Welden, Committee Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau; and hear a presentation from the Nevada Department of Education regarding prekindergarten through Grade 12 education in Nevada.

I would like everyone to be familiar with the Committee and the staff through introductions. I will begin by introducing myself. I am Assemblyman Tyrone Thompson. I am a native of Nevada, and I am excited that I was born and raised in the city of North Las Vegas which is also the area I represent, and a growing community in Las Vegas. I am a proud product of the Clark County School District (CCSD) and graduated in 1985—go, Valley Vikings.

I was appointed to the State Assembly in 2013 where I served the last 40 days of that session and have been in the Assembly since. I consider it a blessing to chair this Committee. We have a very diverse Committee with a lot of experiences and insight. We are in good hands as we talk about education policy in our state.

My biggest hope, of course, is that we have the community participation. Much of my background is health, human, and community services—always making sure that the people in the community have a voice. We are going to have that opportunity since the time we meet is 3:15 p.m., and we are going to make every effort to begin on the dot.

I want to begin by giving special acknowledgment to two of our past chairs of the Assembly Committee on Education who will continue to serve this year. We have Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson from 2013 and Assemblywoman Melissa Woodbury from 2015.

A bit of history I would like to share is that Assemblywoman Woodbury's father, Commissioner Woodbury, and my dad, Otis Thompson—now deceased—played basketball together at Las Vegas High School.

We are going to begin by having our Committee members acknowledge themselves. We will start off with our Vice Chair, Assemblywoman Joiner.

**Assemblywoman Joiner:**

I represent Assembly District No. 24, which is the middle of Reno from the University to Virginia Lake. I am thrilled to be on this Committee again. I had the privilege of serving on it last session also. I, too, am the proud product of a public high school here in Nevada—go, Lancers—McQueen High School and also the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). I currently teach in higher education. Educating our young people is the most important thing we can do to ensure that they live up to their full potential, and we as a community are able to benefit from their talents.

From a workforce perspective, we need to be making sure we have the education available to those who will fit into the progressing workforce needs that we have.

**Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:**

I represent Assembly District No. 15 in Las Vegas. This is my fourth term and I am looking forward to getting back to business.

**Assemblywoman Swank:**

I represent Assembly District No. 16 which is right in the middle of Las Vegas. In my previous career, I was an anthropology professor at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). For almost 20 years, my research area was on education and literacy. This is my third session on this Committee, and I am looking forward to doing a lot of good for education in Nevada.

**Assemblywoman Diaz:**

I represent Assembly District No. 11, and this is my fourth session in the Assembly Committee on Education. I, too, am a native Nevadan. I graduated from a CCSD school—go, Rancho. I am also a proud product of UNLV—go, Rebels.

I continue to be an elementary school teacher, but I wanted to make sure the quality of education was there for every single student statewide, that there was equity in access, and the key that opens many doors to our children's futures is feasible. From my position in the trenches, I was not seeing that we were really achieving that mission as a state. I am excited

that we are on the right track, making progress, and continuing on this trajectory to make Nevada great.

**Assemblywoman Woodbury:**

I represent Assembly District No. 23 in Henderson. I also serve Boulder City, Laughlin, and Searchlight. This is my fifth term in the Legislature and my fifth time on the Assembly Committee on Education. I was born and raised in southern Nevada and taught elementary school for 22 years in the CCSD as well as in a CCSD high school. Education is very important to me. Go, Boulder City High School Eagles.

**Assemblyman Flores:**

I represent Assembly District No. 28 in northeast Las Vegas. I look forward to working under your leadership and with this experienced Committee. This is my second privileged opportunity to sit on this Committee. I am a huge proponent and advocate of mentorship, and I know our Chairman is as well. I have worked on mentorship programs for 15 years in one capacity or another, and I intend to continue. I look forward to working with all of you.

I will mention all of my schools. I attended Robert E. Lake Elementary School. I was supposed to be in Valley High School, but I may or may not have gotten a zone variance to play for a soccer team at Silverado High School. I did my undergraduate work at UNLV and attended the William S. Boyd School of Law there as well.

**Assemblywoman Krasner:**

I represent Assembly District No. 26, southwest Reno and Incline Village. It is my pleasure to be here today. I am looking forward to doing good things for the children of the state of Nevada because they are the future of our state.

**Assemblyman Pickard:**

I am a freshman representing Assembly District No. 22. I am honored to be a part of this Committee. I taught high school drafting and algebra in the public school system in Utah. I have real-world classroom experience but, frankly, I could not afford to continue, so I went into my area of education which was construction development. I am a proponent of higher education as well because in 2007, when construction stopped, I went to UNLV's William S. Boyd School of Law—go, Rebels. Mr. Chairman, congratulations on your appointment. I am thoroughly going to enjoy this.

**Assemblyman McCurdy II:**

I represent Assembly District No. 6 in the historic west Las Vegas area. It is truly an honor to be on the Assembly Committee on Education. My story is a bit different. I was actually a high school dropout. I went to Palo Verde High School, then to Las Vegas Adult Education High School, and received my high school diploma after working construction. I then went to the College of Southern Nevada, and I am now at UNLV. I am happy to be here and to continue to advocate for children across our state.

**Assemblywoman Tolles:**

I represent Assembly District No. 25. The main reason I am here is due to the first time I entered this building as a mom in 2011 to advocate for education for all of our students in the state. I am thrilled to be here as a mom, a citizen, and an educator in higher education myself. I taught at Truckee Meadows Community College for five years and at UNR for the past ten years.

**Assemblyman Fumo:**

I represent Assembly District No. 21. I am an attorney and have been practicing in Las Vegas for the past 20 years. I am a product of the school system in Las Vegas, having moved there in 1975. My children graduated from high school in Las Vegas, and my grandchildren are about to enter school in Las Vegas, so I am very excited to be on this Committee. As I mentioned to the Chair, the seventh grade in the Nevada school system was the best three years of my life.

**Assemblywoman Miller:**

I represent Assembly District No. 5 which is the Summerlin Lakes area. I am a proud Clark County schoolteacher, currently teaching middle school. I am one of those rare people who began teaching as a second or third career, so I have a very balanced and unique professional background in education. I am here because I truly believe that public education is one of the things that make this nation unique. It provides access and service for every child in this country. It is what sets us apart from many other nations.

I come from a state that credits Henry Ford for the middle class, but I would like to credit public school education for the middle class. It is the access for many of us to reach our potential, to develop socially and academically, and to grow into citizens who can contribute back to society. I am here because I want to share and reflect the hard work that educators and students are doing every day and to ensure that we, as a state, are providing the best resources to meet the challenges, contributions, and efforts of our educators and our students.

**Assemblyman Edwards:**

I represent Assembly District No. 19 which contains many areas from Mesquite to Boulder City. I was on the Assembly Committee on Education last session. I think we made some great progress then, and I am looking forward to making some great progress now. Between the two sessions, I became an adjunct professor and have seen good and not so good come out of the public school system. I would like to help find solutions to the problems we have so that everyone comes out with a great education with a great life ahead of them.

I look forward to working with everybody. My high school mascot in New York was the Crusaders, the University of Notre Dame is the Fighting Irish, and the George Washington University is the Colonials.

**Chairman Thompson:**

I am going to talk about the glue that is going to keep us strong. I would like to introduce our Committee staff. I will begin with our Assembly Committee on Education legal counsel,

Karly O'Krent. Karly graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Law and has worked with the Legal Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) for more than four years. This is her second session working with the Assembly Committee on Education. Last interim, she served as legal counsel for two interim committees—the Legislative Committee on Education and the Advisory Committee to develop a plan to reorganize the CCSD. Karly has her master's degree in early childhood education and has worked as a junior kindergarten teacher in rural Hawaii for three years. We want to welcome you here.

Next, I will introduce our Committee policy analyst, Amelie Welden, who grew up in Nevada and now lives most of the time in Oregon. Somehow, she cannot stop herself from coming back to her home state for legislative sessions. This is her fourth session working for the Research Division of the LCB. She previously staffed the Assembly Committee on Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Mining. Amelie has degrees in economics, advertising, and creative writing and has worked in everything from communications to policy analysis to postsecondary education.

We have our committee manager, Divya Narala. Divya is serving in her first session as committee manager and her second session as a personal attaché to me, and I am so grateful she is here working this double role. Divya received her Bachelor of Science degree from UNR in 2011. Soon after graduation, she moved to Las Vegas to participate in an AmeriCorps VISTA Program at Clark County Department of Social Service where she worked primarily on homeless services programs. Divya fell in love with the work and the community in southern Nevada and decided to continue working in the same sector. She is an avid traveler who loves to go on solo backpacking trips. Since last session, she has traveled to five countries and lived in India for most of 2016.

Next, I would like to introduce Sharon McCallen, our committee secretary. This is Sharon's sixth consecutive legislative session, and she also worked the 63rd Session in 1985. She retired in 2004 after 20 years with the Department of Education and has held a series of fun and interesting jobs in her life: 13 years in cosmetics, a field services captain's secretary for the Los Angeles Police Department, and a job with Continental Airlines that allowed her to enjoy lots of really inexpensive traveling.

Finally, I would like to introduce Trinity Thom who will be serving as our committee assistant for the session. Trinity is a native Nevadan currently attending UNR and working toward a bachelor's degree in political science. This is her second session with the Assembly Committee on Education, and she is a big part of making each of our Committee meetings run smoothly.

Even though she said, "Don't do it," I want to introduce Joan Waldock. She could occasionally be helping us out. In addition, we have Stephen Hatch who will be taking care of all of our information technology.

We will begin our Committee business today by considering our Assembly Committee on Education Committee Policies ([Exhibit C](#)). As you will see, the proposed policies

are on exhibit in the Nevada Electronic Legislative Information System (NELIS). As a reminder, we will be using NELIS in an effort to go paperless as much as possible. On your agendas, you can see that we request 20 paper copies of exhibits from people who appear before the Committee. These copies are meant for distribution to the audience. If Committee members would like paper copies of exhibits, please print the documents and bring them to the Committee meeting. We will make sure they are available on NELIS in advance of each meeting.

As you know, our Committee work is governed by the Assembly Standing Rules that we adopted on the first day of session. The proposed policies in front of you add more detail for meetings of this Committee. I will not go through each one, but one of the most important points I would like to mention is that we are asking for exhibits and proposed amendments to be submitted electronically by noon on the business day before the meeting. This will give Committee staff time to process and post the documents to NELIS. I also want to say, with regard to amendments, that when we begin listening to bills, people are going to want amendments. We would like for you to go to the bill's sponsor, talk it through, and come to the Committee meeting with a prepared amendment. I hope that we can have that camaraderie where everyone can work together and have the amendments ready to go.

I would also like to point out Nos. 3 and 6 on the list which have to do with creating an atmosphere of respect, courtesy, and professionalism in the Committee room. I am going to mention that every time because we want the public to be a part of this. We know that education is important to all of us, and sometimes our emotions can run high, but we want to keep that level of professionalism and respect.

Policy No. 4 asks that Committee members arrive to meetings on time. Let me know in advance if you cannot make it because I know you are going to be working on your own bills.

We are also asking in policy No. 7 that the dais be restricted to legislators and staff for privacy purposes. At this time, I would like to accept a motion to adopt the proposed Committee Policies.

ASSEMBLYMAN McCURDY II MOVED TO ADOPT ASSEMBLY  
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION COMMITTEE POLICIES.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DIAZ SECONDED THE MOTION.

**Chairman Thompson:**

Is there any discussion on the motion? [There was none.]

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Chairman Thompson:**

People who wish to speak before the Committee today, or in the future, please sign in at the table in front of the door and also leave a business card for the committee secretary. State your name clearly for the record before testifying. Every time that you go back and forth with one of the Committee members, please repeat your name as that would help the committee secretaries when they are recording the meeting.

Next on our agenda, we have a presentation of the Assembly Committee on Education Committee Brief from our policy analyst, Amelie Welden. This document is available on NELIS.

**Amelie Welden, Committee Policy Analyst:**

As staff of the LCB, I am nonpartisan. We do not advocate for or against any measures. I am basically here to provide staff support to the Committee, and perform any research that the Committee requests through the Chairman. Our office also does research requests from individual legislators, and those are always confidential.

This brief is on NELIS ([Exhibit D](#)), so if you will go to the first page, I know you are all aware of the important committee deadline for getting bills out of the policy committees on April 14. That is when all Assembly bills need to be out of Assembly policy committees. On May 19, all Senate bills need to come out of the Assembly policy committees. Those deadlines do not apply to exempt bills.

On page 2, ([Exhibit D](#)) you will see a little about this Committee's jurisdiction. Most policy bills that deal with education will come to this Committee, or at least have come to this Committee in the past. That includes prekindergarten through Grade 12 and higher education as well. Any bills regarding funding for education or other financial matters will likely go to the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means instead. Some bills may be referred concurrently between the two committees.

Last session, this Committee heard 77 bills, 63 of which were voted out of Committee and 54 were signed into law. That 77 number is about 33 percent higher than historic levels; about 33 percent more than was heard in 2013. We do not yet know whether we are going to be at the activity levels of past years.

There is a summary of significant education legislation that was passed in the last session. You can look that over at your leisure.

On page 4, ([Exhibit D](#)), there is a bill draft request (BDR) list that is very comprehensive. Every BDR related to education is included on this BDR list. It does not mean that all of the 101 BDRs, should they become bills, will come to this Committee. This list was updated on Monday, February 6, 2017, so it is not completely current. So far, there are 101 BDRs that are related to education in some way.



On the left of the Requester and Summary tables, the BDRs that have already been turned into bills are shaded in gray and have gone to policy committees that are not education committees. The ones in green are those that have been referred to this Committee. Those in blue are bills that have been referred to the Senate Committee on Education. Since this list was published, two additional bills have been referred to the Assembly Committee on Education.

On page 11, ([Exhibit D](#)), the Review of Trending Education Topics includes two interim studies that were related to education, and you heard a bit about them in Karly O'Krent's introduction because she staffed both of these committees. The Legislative Committee on Education meets each interim to discuss education issues and recommend legislation as well as other matters. During the last interim, we also had the Advisory Committee develop a plan to reorganize the CCSD. Reports from both of those committees will be available at the link you will have very soon, if not already.

The elementary, secondary, and higher education sections provide context to larger discussions that are taking place across the country. They may be useful to you as a reference for what we do in this Committee.

On page 13, ([Exhibit D](#)), you will see a list of reports that may be relevant to the work you do such as elementary and secondary reports as well as higher education reports which primarily come from the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). These are all public reports that are available, and if you see reports that you would like to have or know more about, I can provide them to you.

On page 15, ([Exhibit D](#)), we have relevant publications from the LCB. The largest publication the Research Division provides is the Education Data Book. This is a comprehensive publication containing statistics on students, teachers, demographics, and higher education. It is updated every two years, and the 2017 report is due in March, if not earlier. I will make sure you are all aware of when that report is released. We also have the Policy and Program reports, research briefs, issue papers, and fact sheets available online. If you would like a paper copy, again, please let me know.

The Audit Division of the LCB audits the public agencies. A report that came out last month is the use of class size reduction funds by school districts. That, too, is available online.

Finally, the Fiscal Analysis Division of the LCB puts together the Nevada Plan for School Finance publication. That explains how funding works for elementary and secondary education. Next, you will see a list of different education entities in Nevada for kindergarten to Grade 12, higher education, as well as education overall.

Perhaps the most useful resource of the Committee Brief starts on page 18 ([Exhibit D](#)). I believe this Committee holds the honor of the most acronyms in a committee brief.

Last, there is a list of key education contacts in the state for your reference.

**Chairman Thompson:**

Are there any questions from the Committee? [There was none.] At this time, I would like the Department of Education to come forward with their presentation.

**Steve Canavero, Ph.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education:**

It is a pleasure to be here and to see familiar faces and new faces in the Assembly Committee on Education. We look forward to working with you throughout the legislative session. I have a big task today to provide you with a quick overview, but then acquaint you with a few of the critical investments that were made in the 2015 Session.

With me today are two of the three deputy superintendents I have at the Department to help support our students, our state, and me. Deputy Superintendent for Student Achievement, Student Achievement Division, Brett Barley oversees programs, investments, and policies related to student achievement across the state. Deputy Superintendent for Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement, Dena Durish, is joining us from Las Vegas via teleconference. Deputy Durish oversees the adults in the system. She works with educators, educator effectiveness, and parent and family engagement. My third deputy is Deputy Superintendent for Business and Support Services, Business and Support Services Division, Roger Rahming, who oversees the money.

We have approximately 470,000 pupils enrolled in K-12 education across our state. We are a "majority minority" state, which means that 42 percent of our students are Hispanic, 10-plus percent of our students are African American, and 34 percent of our students are Caucasian. It is a student composition that has dramatically changed over the course of 30 years. In addition to the ethnicities, we have a number of what are affectionately called "special populations." Approximately 55,000, almost 12 percent of our children across the state, qualify for special education services. They have individualized education plans (IEPs). Almost half of our students across the state qualify for free and reduced-price lunch (FRL). We use FRL status as a proxy for poverty. Approximately 78,000—17 percent—are English learners. We are a state with one of the highest percentage of English learners behind Texas, Florida, and California.

The quest is to understand the governance of K-12 education. The State Board of Education and I, as the executive for the Department of Education, work with 17 local school districts and the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA), that is a statewide entity that sponsors high-quality charter schools across the state. It is coterminous with the boundaries of our state which is different from our school districts whose perimeters are coterminous with the counties in which they are located. The State Board of Education and K-12 governance at the state level underwent some dramatic changes since 2011. It is now a hybrid board with four elected members from the congressional districts across the state and three appointed; one directly appointed by the Governor, one appointed through a recommendation from the majority, and one member appointed from a recommendation from the Speaker. There are seven voting members, and there are four non-voting members who include a representative from the Board of Regents at NSHE, a trustee from the Nevada Association of School Boards, a superintendent as a representative from the

Nevada Association of School Superintendents, and a student representative, Samantha Molisee. It is great to have a student represented on our Board.

Another question is where we take our direction in terms of the Department. The Department works in concert with the State Board of Education. Although the State Board has not taken action on this, I believe they fundamentally operate with two key principles or beliefs in mind. The first belief is that every child in Nevada is as capable as any child anywhere in this nation, perhaps this world. We know our children can compete with students in New York, Massachusetts, Florida, Louisiana, Tennessee, and New Mexico. We have students who are entirely capable of achieving high levels without any excuses.

The second belief is that every child in our state deserves the opportunities in life that stem from a quality education. You may hear us talk about opportunity gaps as opposed to achievement gaps. We have been having that conversation over the past year and a half in reframing academic achievement in light of future economic prosperity for our children. When we talk about opportunity gaps, we are not just talking about the preparation; we are also talking about the ability of our children to seize the opportunities in their future. If you agree to this belief system, then we can animate our policies and procedures from there.

Over the past six to eight months, we have taken advantage of a rare opportunity for a State Superintendent to be at the confluence of a number of factors. The first is to have a state that possesses a very clear vision for improving education. The Governor, the Legislature, and members of our school system share the fundamental belief that we can and must improve our educational processes.

That vision aligns with a new federal framework, a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—also known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The reauthorization in January 2016 replaces the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. It gives us an opportunity to paint a clear picture for the state as it moves forward. The State Board of Education planted the first flag when it adopted a five-year strategic plan that states that Nevada will be the fastest-improving state in the nation.

We already know where we rank with the achievement data, and we will be happy to meet and discuss any questions you may have. There are many rays of hope within that data when you look at it, and they are why we believe we can be the fastest improving state in the nation. I will give you two examples. First, Nevada was ranked fourth in the nation for the most improved graduation rates. Second, Nevada was singled out as one of four states to receive commendation from the National Assessment on Educational Progress (NAEP) that has been administered since the 1970s. Nevada is one of four states narrowing the gap between our proficiency level and the average proficiency level across the nation in eighth grade science. These achievements lead us to believe that we can be the fastest improving state in the nation on not only Nevada measures, but national measures like the Smarter-Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC), and the ACT in high school.

The PowerPoint presentation you have before you, page 2, ([Exhibit E](#)), effectively shows you the problem that we are wrestling with at the Department, at the State Board, and with our district partners as we move forward. This really highlights the equity challenge that we have in preparing all of our children to seize opportunities in life. This tracks 100 students, selected proportionately by demographics and measured in terms of proficiency, through primary, secondary, and postsecondary education, including college graduation. There are a few key takeaways from this page; the first of which is the line just before students exit eleventh grade. Eighteen students scored a 22 or higher on the ACT which is the national and state benchmark for being prepared to engage in credit-bearing coursework in college. That is 68 percent of our eleventh grade students seeking postsecondary education. When we run the assessment for ACT, there is an opportunity for students to participate in a survey and those who participated told us that they were going to go to college—yet 18 students were prepared, and disproportionately prepared, if you look at the preparation based upon ethnicity and race. We have a tremendous amount of work to do as a state, but we have a tremendous number of tools and resources and a commitment from the State Board of Education enshrined in a document to become the fastest-improving state. Every state has to submit a plan that the federal government will approve. We began that process by saying that the federal plan would serve Nevada's priorities. I am here today to tell you that plan starts with Nevada's priorities, and we are articulating how that federal policy framework will serve our priorities rather than the other way around.

What I call the "skittle chart" on page 3 ([Exhibit E](#)), represents all federal general policy and investments that we have from 2013 and 2015. This chart helps us think about how to continue to clearly craft the use of these resources to improve our statewide educational system.

**Brett Barley, Deputy Superintendent for Student Achievement, Student Achievement Division, Department of Education:**

The Zoom schools program on page 4 ([Exhibit E](#)), is a whole school language and academic support program focused on English learners first passed in 2013 through Senate Bill 504 of the 77th Session. It was then expanded in 2015 through Senate Bill 405 of the 78th Session. When the Legislature originally passed this in 2013, they looked at the changing Nevada demographics, recognized that one-sixth of our student population was English language learners (ELL) and realized if we were going to be successful as a state, we had to have a successful student population. They also looked at the performance indicators and saw pernicious achievement gaps between our ELL students and other student demographics. They looked at the graduation rate for those students and saw that, even now as that graduation rate ticks up, only one-third of our ELL students graduated from high school in Nevada.

They then looked at the economic impact data. They looked at the future Nevada economy that was beginning to emerge and the skill sets that were required to be successful in that economy, and they knew we had to prepare our English learners to be ready to succeed in that economy.

A number of evidence-based services that schools could use to begin addressing the needs of our ELL students were listed in S.B. 405 of the 78th Session and S.B. 504 of the 77th Session. You can see them in their entirety on page 4 ([Exhibit E](#)). There are approved services for elementary schools, secondary schools, and Zoom schools located in Clark and Washoe Counties. There are similarly approved Zoom programs and services existing in other schools and districts throughout the state.

I would like to draw your attention to the bottom, right corner box of page 4 ([Exhibit E](#)), indicating that up to 2 percent of the Zoom funds may be used for professional development, recruitment and retention incentives, and family engagement, in addition to literacy, early education, and reading center services that exist in the schools and the programs.

If we look at page 5 ([Exhibit E](#)), it is important to note that the Zoom schools program does not necessarily equate to a one-to-one dollar-to-student English learner formula. In Clark and Washoe Counties, the programs are school based, and by nature, those programs are serving students who are not English learners based on educational best practices. We know that the best type of education for English learners is to immerse them with native English-speaking peers. If you have a reading center at an elementary school, it will not only have English learners in it, other students at the school will be participating in the program as well.

Another point I would like to make especially clear to the Committee is that the Zoom schools in Washoe and Clark Counties are identified based on two criteria. The first, obviously, is that they serve high-density English learner populations, and the second is that they are also low-performing schools. Zoom is an additional service added onto a school with those criteria. Those are the indicators leading a school district to select a school site.

Over the past two bienniums, the Department of Education has played a role in the Zoom schools program. We oversee the grants given to the school districts and charter schools. They submit a plan, apply for funds, and then are reimbursed for allowable expenditures. The Department provides guidance and support on the implementation of the Zoom schools program. We gather information and try to facilitate reports to all of you so we can continuously improve the programs. We also provide that information to the State Board of Education which has some regulatory authority over the programs. There is another group called the English Mastery Council (EMC) that provides feedback to, again, continually improve services to English learners which is then incorporated into the Zoom schools program.

If you look at page 5 ([Exhibit E](#)), you can see how the spending has evolved over the past two bienniums with \$50 million spent in 2013-2015 and \$100 million spent in 2015-2017. You can also see how that was broken down across the school districts with a small amount set aside for the EMC and evaluation.

The Governor's budget invests an additional \$42 million into the Zoom schools program and that is reflected in some of the materials that have been provided to you.

You can see on the bottom of page 5 ([Exhibit E](#)), the services for English learners through the Zoom schools program have more than doubled over the past two bienniums.

The good news to report in proficiency and growth [page 6, ([Exhibit E](#))], is that the program is working. We have what we call the Zoom schools and then the Next Zoom schools. Those are schools that share similar student demographics, and in this instance, serve as an appropriate control group to compare the impact of the program. As we look at kindergarten scores, we are seeing that the cohort of students in the lowest performing schools with the highest concentration of English learners and with Zoom programs are now outperforming English learners in similar schools that we would call the Next Zoom schools. In almost every grade from first through fifth, you can see the blue bar is outperforming the green bar, and those would be the Zoom schools compared to the similar Next Zoom schools control group.

Some policy recommendations have been developed for the Zoom schools program [page 7, ([Exhibit E](#))], which is one of the programs that was included in the external evaluation. The two major recommendations we want to bring to the Committee's attention from the external evaluator involve common measurement and data systems. Their first recommendation is to have a process in place by which to compare progress at school sites across the country. They pointed to the Read by Grade 3 Program which is adopted as a statewide assessment—specifically interim assessments—to better facilitate best-practice sharing and identification of additional needs and services so we can have a similar measurement against programs. Their second recommendation was to continue funding.

That is represented in the Governor's budget with the additional \$142 million.

From the Department's vantage as we have been speaking with districts, we have noticed a need for eligible expenses to be expanded to include recruitment and retention similar to Victory schools, and the expanded funding of English learner and long-term English learner services in middle schools and high schools. Most, not all, of the Zoom schools that exist today are concentrated at the elementary school level, and we do not have a clear vision into what types of services would really move the needle we want to see in middle school and high school.

**Chairman Thompson:**

I would like to pause and ask if there are any questions from the Committee.

**Assemblywoman Woodbury:**

I got a little lost when you were explaining what the Next Zoom school is.

**Brett Barley:**

It is a term of art used to describe a school that shares similar student demographics and low performance with a school that has been designated a Zoom school by the district. To the best of our ability, it is a similarly situated school that could be used as a control group to measure the programs that are taking place within a Zoom school.

**Assemblywoman Woodbury:**

In other words, those schools are not having any intervention whatsoever but have a similar population.

**Brett Barley:**

That is correct. As the program is expanded, we would expect that schools like the Next Zoom schools would be the future Zoom schools in the cohort.

**Chairman Thompson:**

I have a follow-up to that. If we look at the red bar that are the non-Zoom elementary schools [page 6, ([Exhibit E](#))], it looks like the red bars are surpassing our statewide Zoom. Is that correct? Try to distinguish between the three bars. You are talking about the statewide, the Next Zoom, and now the non-Zoom schools.

**Brett Barley:**

Yes. The non-Zoom would be your average Nevada elementary school.

**Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:**

Are the non-Zoom schools Zoom-school-eligible schools with the same populations as the Zoom schools, or are they non-eligible Zoom schools? Do you have any data to show year-over-year trends for the Zoom schools, and where they were before the monies were invested?

**Brett Barley:**

Yes, we can provide you that data on the year-over-year information. That is in the Zoom report that was just published a couple of days ago. Your initial question was regarding the non-Zoom schools, and though this may not be a complete answer, it depends on how quickly the program expands with money available. It is a sliding scale of low-performance and English learner saturation in the school site building. Districts will look at both of those measures as they determine which schools to bring into the program.

**Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:**

That is not what I was getting at. Obviously, Zoom school populations have different challenges than say, a school in Incline Village might have. Are these non-Zoom school control groups looping into every other elementary school in the state? Does that make sense?

**Brett Barley:**

Yes, it does, and the answer is yes, they do. It would be every other school in the state.

**Assemblyman Pickard:**

How are these non-Zoom schools performing so much better? If I understand correctly, you are saying all of the schools, including those that do not struggle with ELL and other challenges, will naturally report higher. Is that correct?

**Brett Barley:**

That is correct.

**Assemblyman Flores:**

One of the conversations we often have with Zoom in English proficiency is that English proficiency means being a little more proficient in science and mathematics. Because of the language disconnect, the terminology typically means you are not going to perform well in every subject area. I am interested in seeing the data of individuals as they are becoming more proficient in English. We are seeing that they are becoming better in mathematics and science as a consequence, and we can show that correlation. I do not know if you have that data, but I am interested in seeing some of it.

**Brett Barley:**

We are happy to look into that, and I think your intuition is correct.

**Assemblyman McCurdy II:**

I represent Assembly District No. 6 in southern Nevada, the historic West Las Vegas area which has a high density of students who may have English spoken in the home, or they may be the first English speakers. However, we also have a population of students whose parents may speak English, but the students are not speaking adequate English in the classroom, which may cause them difficulties with comprehension. Is there a way to see if that opportunity is expanded?

**Steve Canavero:**

You may be advancing us to the Victory program further in the presentation where the state investments ameliorate the effects of poverty. You may see some of the answers as we go through the presentation. If not, please ask the question again at the end.

**Chairman Thompson:**

It is possibly centered on literacy. A child who is raised speaking English may not have mastered the English language and does not speak as fluently even though it is his native language.

**Steve Canavero:**

Yes, thank you for the clarification. When we begin to talk about things, we tend to lose sight of the sort of ecosystem of support for students. In addition, we have a high-quality prekindergarten development grant for children in communities of poverty. Clark County School District and communities within Clark County are identified as qualified for development grants. Full-day kindergarten expansion and the literacy Read by Grade 3 program, regardless of where students enter or their language abilities, provide clear supports to ensure the student is ready and literate by the end of third grade.

**Assemblywoman Diaz:**

I want to make sure that my colleagues did not lose sight of the fact that regardless of whether you are an ELL student or not, if you are zoned for a Zoom school, you get the



services. It is not that if you are not ELL, you do not get to come to pre-K or do not get the benefits of the class size reduction, or if you are struggling with reading, you do not get the help. The professional development for the teachers only helps bring up the teaching craft for all of the children who are present in the schools. I want to make sure that, yes, while the qualifiers to become a Zoom school are high ELL and low achievement, all of the children from that community's school benefit.

**Brett Barley:**

The Victory schools program is a whole school intervention program similar to the Zoom schools program. It arose from the 2015 Legislative Session, so as we think about the programs that are more mature than others, the Zoom school programs have a two-year head start on the Victory schools program. The Department identified eligible Victory schools as the lowest performing schools receiving one of the two lowest star ratings in the state; a one-star or two-star being in the highest poverty zip codes in the state as determined by the federal poverty level. There are currently 35 schools that are Victory schools in five different districts in the state: Clark, Elko, Humboldt, Nye, and Washoe Counties [page 8, ([Exhibit E](#))].

There are three key goals to the Victory schools program aligned with the first three goals that the State Board of Education has adopted: (1) read by Grade 3; (2) be prepared to engage in rigorous academic coursework when entering high school; and (3) graduate from high school and college career ready.

The Victory schools program is an interesting one because the school site and the community developed a school plan that takes into consideration achievement data from the school site, district, and state, as well as a needs assessment that the school will conduct in partnership with their district. They will gather input on the needs assessment from the community, then coordinate to determine available funding for the school and align strategies based on that needs assessment and community input.

The Department of Education has a role here as does the State Board of Education. The Department designates the Victory schools. It will contract with an independent evaluator to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and services at the school site; it will review the school plan for compliance and approving revisions; and it will monitor the implementation of the Victory School Program.

The State Board determines a list of recruitment and retention incentives that are available to schools and districts. The State Board can also require a Victory school to change its plan or to take corrective action if pupil achievement does not follow based on the school site plan.

Districts are responsible for conducting the needs assessment, writing the performance plan, leveraging funding, and submitting the Victory report, so we can continuously improve the program.

The Victory Schools Overview [page 9, ([Exhibit E](#))] shows where these schools are. It is interesting as we have some significant role participation, as well as Native American Victory schools, throughout the state. You can see 26 urban Victory schools in Washoe and Clark Counties, 4 rural Victory schools, and 5 Victory schools serving our Native American students. The funding allocation for Victory schools in the last biennium was \$50 million with the proposed budget for Victory schools in this coming biennium at \$80 million—\$30 million more over the biennium. If we were to look at the cost per student in the Victory School Program in the first year it was implemented, it was \$1,137.45. The next year it was \$1,137.29 so, we saved \$0.16.

Going through some of the strategies and interventions at the site [page 10, ([Exhibit E](#))], the big difference you need to know between sections 8 and 9 is that section 8 is "shall." The Victory schools shall use their money on evidence-based strategies like those found in section 8. Section 9 is "may." Victory schools may use money on strategies like those found in section 9. As we looked into the implementation of the Victory schools program, we thought it was interesting that professional development for teachers was the most frequently used strategy from section 8, and wrap-around services was the second most frequently used strategy as seen in section 9.

We have seen many interesting partnerships arise out of the Victory schools program. A number of districts and schools have partnered with nonprofits to provide wrap-around services; they have hired social workers, counselors, and psychologists, as well as behavior strategists. Most schools report that they have used the money they received from the program to hire additional personnel, provide professional development, purchase additional materials for students, upgrade technology, provide courses they otherwise had not, and implement other programs to improve student achievement.

The Victory school program recommendations [page 11, ([Exhibit E](#))] take us to the external evaluator as well as some best practices that the Department has gleaned through stakeholder engagement and conversations with school districts.

The first recommendation is similar to what we saw with the Zoom schools program: common measurement, assessments, evaluation, metrics, and data systems—especially around interim assessments. We want to be able to compare with the external evaluator to see how certain Victory schools are doing relative to each other. We want to know where we are seeing the most success, and how we can replicate that success in other places. The external evaluator also recommended oversight of the professional development activities to ensure that they are evidence-based. We did not have enough information on those activities to make sure that they were high-quality, evidence-based practices, so a bit more transparency into what those dollars are being used for on the professional development side was recommended. Finally, the external evaluator recommended continued funding that, again, you will see in the Governor's budget.

Through our conversations with districts over the past two years, one of the recommendations the Department found was that school selection would best be done in

consultation with school districts. Rather than moving straight down the list of poverty, it would be better for us to have conversations with school districts to ask if a particular school selection makes sense, do they have another program slated for this school, or should we instead go to school No. 2 on the list.

**Assemblyman Edwards:**

How much more time before we are able to get solid information about the successes within the Victory schools? You said it has only been a couple of years since they began.

**Brett Barley:**

The short answer to your question is that the data is going to get better every year, and it is going to get better this year when we have a new school performance framework out. We will be able to calculate star ratings and to calculate student growth again. We will certainly be able to see how much student-learning gains were made over the past two years when we have data to report in September 2017.

**Assemblyman Edwards:**

Let me rephrase that. Before somebody tries to say that it is not working, how much time do you need to demonstrate whether or not it will work?

**Steve Canavero:**

For the benefit of the Committee, Zoom schools did not exist until 2013. When we are talking about the longevity or maturity of these programs in relation to our budget process, by the time we are able to execute on that budget and distribute service dollars to children, it can be October or December of that biennium. In 2013, even though we had passed Zoom, it was about a year and a half old at the end of the biennium. Victory was established in 2015 and is now right where we were with Zoom in that time period. Our districts and the state have gotten better at using interim assessments to measure. As you see with the policy recommendations [page 11, ([Exhibit E](#))], consistent interims would render an earlier, consistent programming evaluation. We have data. In some cases, it is on different yardsticks, but we do have data on the Zoom programming in place. This is the first full year of implementation, given that last year is when we received the budget and started up the program. We have a full year of implementation in the second year of the biennium, so we are really in the first year of full operation. We just had a Victory report, and we will continue to send you those reports. As well, we will update you through the session as data become available at the end of the assessments for students in the Victory schools.

Looking forward at this time next biennium, we will be able to have a more robust data set as we have for Zoom right now. The information we are receiving and the indicators we are looking at validate that the Victory program is successful enough for the Governor to recommend an additional \$30 million in spending.

**Assemblywoman Swank:**

I taught research methodologies for a very long time, and I could say that there is really no magic number as to when. It is a very common question if you are out there gathering data.

When do we know if we have enough? As I told my graduate students, you know you have enough when you can look back at the data you have and know what data will be coming in, but there is no magic number that says two years or five years will do it. When we begin to see patterns, know what to expect, and then to see those expectations fulfilled, that is when we know we have enough data. It is impossible to state a given time with certainty at this point.

**Steve Canavero:**

We will transition to Nevada's plan for equitable access to excellent educators [page 12, ([Exhibit E](#))]. However, I will refer to what I call the "skittle chart" [page 3, ([Exhibit E](#))]. If we were to align the different programs and investments that we have with the equitable distribution of teachers, we would have highlighted both Victory schools here. The holistic view shows how we are supporting the equitable distribution of teachers or addressing the critical teacher shortage with the New Teacher Incentives, the Turnaround Schools Initiative, the Teach Nevada Scholarships, the Great Teaching and Leading Fund, and our federal Titles I, II, III, as well as Zoom.

**Dena Durish, Deputy Superintendent for Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement, Department of Education:**

The work in my Division is primarily focused around the educators in our system. When we look at teachers, school leaders and other educators, our focus on the federal law is Equitable Access to Excellent Educators. The data that I am going to share with you is related specifically to classroom teachers [page 12, ([Exhibit E](#))]. In 2014, the previous administration, under U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, required all states to conduct a study on the amount of access that all students have. The Equitable Access is when low-income families, students of color, English language learners, and students with special needs are served by excellent educators—at least equal to those who educate other students. What we first found is that we have some data collection challenges. What you see in parentheses on page 12, ([Exhibit E](#)) are the words "experienced," "fully-state certified," and "effective." We have never, as a state, collected those three data points in a reliable data tracking system. That was our first challenge. Once we were able to ask districts to do some self-reporting, we were able to calculate gaps. We brought together stakeholders and identified some root causes. We are currently working under this existing plan due to the ESSA. Under the new federal ESSA, we will be resubmitting and revisiting our new data. You are looking at recent data.

It is our responsibility as a state to see where students are not being equitably served by the same experience level, certification level, and/or effectiveness of their educators as are their peers in other communities.

When we think about the equity gaps [page 13, ([Exhibit E](#))] and what is causing them, we cannot jump to a solution until we know why we have the problem. Statewide stakeholder groups identified five areas. One is that we have a pipeline shortage. Two is that we have traditional routes to teacher education as well as alternative routes, neither of which is preparing enough teachers to meet our vacancy demands on an annual basis. Those who are

being prepared are not prepared in the context of what today's classroom students need. When we think about an opportunity gap, we also think about recruitment and hiring practices at the district level to perhaps include differentiated pay and other incentives such as those at Victory and Zoom schools. Those were not fully in place when the root causes were identified. Inadequate resources are identified as well. Those cover things from programs to professional development opportunities and also school leadership—whether or not teachers felt there were effective school leaders.

Once the equity gaps were identified, it was determined that we needed to focus as a state priority on attracting, preparing, developing, supporting, and retaining all of those areas. It is across the whole continuum. Going to another "skittles chart" [page 14, ([Exhibit E](#))] referring to opportunity—when we submitted our report to the federal government in 2015, we had just begun to pass some of these initiatives, so we were able to share with the U.S. Department of Education that we were already addressing some of these equity gaps. We are excited as a Department that the Governor's budget includes continued support for these areas that you see highlighted in green. Each of these areas, in some way, supports or addresses those equity gaps that were identified. They go to one or more of the root causes and provide solutions by enhancing the preparation, the recruitment, the retention, the development, and the support or leadership of educators in our schools.

We have already seen progress, so although data heavy, I will direct your attention to the middle section of page 15 ([Exhibit E](#)), which reflects December 2015. As I mentioned previously, we had never collected staffing data at the state level. The only thing the Department of Education did was to see if teachers were teaching a certain class and if they had the appropriate license. What was never visited was how many of those classrooms were never filled with educators to begin with. It was disheartening to see the self-reporting by districts in December, halfway through the school year. We still had 817 vacancies last year. When you multiply that by the number of students who are impacted, it is astronomical.

If you look down that column on page 15 ([Exhibit E](#)), we found, when we talk about equity gaps, that when we look at our Victory and Zoom schools, focus and priority schools are those identified through the previous NCLB Act and did not meet achievement targets with certain subgroups of student populations. Again, those are schools where we should be targeting our most effective educators, and we can see on this page that there is a significantly larger vacancy rate than the statewide average in those schools. Continuing down that column is the direct opposite correlation percentage-wise. Our one-star schools are those identified as our lowest-performing schools in the state and clearly, they have the highest vacancies. Our five-star schools are those identified as our highest-performing schools, and you can see they have a significantly lower vacancy rate.

The three data columns to the left [page 15, ([Exhibit E](#))] show a similar data capture in November 2016, and the two columns on the far right show the numerical and percentage differences. The great news is that we are making strides in all of these areas. We can see, though, that we still have severe inequities in ensuring that all of our students have access to highly effective, qualified, and experienced educators in their classrooms.

We had an external evaluation on Zoom and Victory school programs [page 16, ([Exhibit E](#))]. The Great Teaching and Leading Fund, which was one of the green circles on page 14 ([Exhibit E](#)), also had an external evaluation. The scholarships and incentives and some of the other programs were not a part of the legislative package receiving an external evaluation, but of the programs that did, you see some similarities in looking at a closer analysis for professional development. You heard the term "evidence-based." It means that we are providing professional development that is not a duplication of other services. It is a systemic professional development offering where it is needed, utilizing state funds in the best manner, versus other opportunities that exist at the local level.

We have submitted several bills. Assembly Bill 77 is directly related to educators, primarily around licensure and addressing vacancy issues through reciprocity agreements and high-quality modernization of the requirements for educators. There is also bill draft request 34-329 that, I believe, came out yesterday as Senate Bill 104. Our intent is to expand programs such as the Teach Nevada Scholarships, from \$5 million over the biennium to \$6 million and include our special education teachers in that. A recent report came out that addressed how a significant number of CCSD's vacancies are in special education teachers. We are looking for where those root causes are and hoping to support that. You also heard about the recruitment and retention shift of money and opportunities and being able to increase those opportunities at the Zoom schools.

The last page [page 17, ([Exhibit E](#))], reflects that previously these were sort of state funds. Some of the conversations we have been having regarding statewide priorities are around what is called Title IIA and that is the federal money of approximately \$11.5 million statewide, allocated to recruit, retain, promote, develop, and support educators. Through our sequel to work groups, we found a big overlap in areas where the stakeholders felt that the Department should be utilizing our portion of those funds, as well as that the districts should be utilizing this aligned focus on professional development and targeted areas.

You can see that there are other areas where there is some separation, systemically, and again, what would be best done at the local levels. We are excited to share all of those different strategies and initiatives that we are utilizing to ensure that all of our students have access to high-quality teachers.

**Steve Canavero:**

I would like to talk about three themes [page 18, ([Exhibit E](#))] that have really emerged over the course of the past year and a half and expressly in the last six to eight months as we have engaged in stakeholder work to build our federal plan to serve Nevada's priorities.

The first theme is the reiteration of the fastest-improving state in the nation. We believe that is the right goal for us as a state, and we know we can accomplish it because we have the ingredients to make it work.



Additionally, we have to be honest about our data. We are getting better and better as a state and as a community to opening up the data and really looking at it and being honest about both the plus and the minus columns, and where we have to get smart.

The other theme is around "stay the course." As you have learned from the overview of this brief, the mature investments from 2013 are really just taking root. Much of this work is brand new. We believe we are on the right course; we just need to maintain this course. When you look at the Governor's budget, I believe he agrees and continues to expand investments. Something we did not touch on, but is important to note, is the state's direction toward a weighted student funding formula. Both Zoom and Victory are two of the four categories of students for which additional investments are desired by the state, as well as including special education; poverty which we talked about in Victory; ELL, which we talked about in Zoom; and Gifted and Talented Education (GATE).

We at the Department are at a point where we are very clear about our investments and our strategies. We believe these three areas will be critical for the Department to go deep into rather than spreading our dollars—the percentage we are able to retain—on the federal side, but we can also mimic this with the state funds in three key areas. The first is school leader development. A significant investment from the state and our federal dollars, and any cobbling together we can with the state funds, should expressly go to the development of school leaders. The second is data-driven decision-making. We have a number of areas to explore and to provide clarity about where we make our investments and if those investments are working, or if they are not working and why. The third is supporting our lowest-performing schools. You will see much of this expressed in policy when we come back for Assembly Bill 7, our bill that is responsive to this new plan that will be submitted to the feds in April. We think these are the right three areas.

**Assemblywoman Miller:**

I am looking at the numbers regarding the teacher vacancy positions. I understand that there would be different dynamics between the rural school districts and Clark and Washoe Counties, but with these vacancies and these numbers, do you have the data on how many of these positions were filled or appeared to be filled by other than high-quality teachers, nonlicensed teachers, and the result of increased class sizes? Increased class sizes and filling positions with substitute teachers would certainly lower these vacancies as they appear. Do we have the numbers on that?

**Dena Durish:**

Yes, we have some of those numbers. Again, part of this is related to the fact that we have not previously tracked a lot of the staffing data. This has not been an area of focus for the Department. We did provide an in-depth presentation to our State Board of Education. The numbers you saw on page 15 ([Exhibit E](#)), are self-reported by the districts. We utilized their information and one of the things we did ask when we collected the data, was total staffing by school. For example, last year elementary school X had 20 full-time equivalent (FTE) staffing. Maybe this year it was reduced to 18. There is a full distribution of those

numbers. I am happy to share them with the Committee, as well as a support document from one of our State Board meetings as well.

As for what strategies each district utilized to get to those numbers, we would ask that you follow up directly with those school districts as to why they made the decisions they did.

**Assemblyman Flores:**

I am looking at page 13 ([Exhibit E](#)), and I appreciate how it breaks down to the roots of the causes that identify why our teachers are not exactly where we need them to be, and there are many reasons for that as we can see. Some of our schools on the east side and in North Las Vegas do not have the teachers we need. I have taken the opportunity to sit down with teachers and administrators; individuals who have no interest in talking about politics and what I am doing. They are just talking about their schools and wanting their schools to perform better. At times they talk about all of the things mentioned here, but sometimes the conversation would turn to "bad apples" who might be great on the administrative side, or something else in education, but not as teachers. They kept telling me that it is very difficult to get rid of someone who is not a good teacher, and that sometimes it is easier to just try to push them out of the school than it is to fire them because firing is a huge obstacle. That does not sound right; it does not make sense. I would like further information on this issue. I have even heard of administrators trying to push unqualified teachers out by giving them a good evaluation just so another school would hire them. If it is happening in our schools, I need to understand why. I would appreciate any feedback regarding this.

**Steve Canavero:**

There are unique agreements that are bargained collectively in each of our school districts. You might want to ask that question of our local school districts to understand the provisions within their contracts that they have agreed to and that govern such things as due process, matters related to acceleration on a salary schedule, or, ultimate dismissal from the building. There have been a number of changes to policy, beginning in 2011 until today. We are at a point to understand effectiveness. The state has gone to the Nevada Educator Performance Framework. I do not want to suggest that it is a way to dismiss a teacher. It is actually a way to measure effectiveness of teachers and to provide clear support for students. There are also provisions in the law which clarify that if you are ineffective for a certain number of years, you would lose certain protections otherwise available to a teacher who is nonprobationary. We would be happy to sit with you independently and share more of that information if that is of interest.

**Assemblyman Flores:**

I imagine other members of this Committee are going to want to have that conversation as well. You could sit down with all of us and break down the question of how long it takes to remove an unqualified teacher and why it is so difficult. We need to understand that. This Committee has an obligation to understand that.

I want to talk about the federal dollars that you mentioned that we are going after. We are having this conversation in other committees about the fact that we are not taking advantage



of all federal dollars available. You may not have the answer at this moment, but if you could provide me with this information, I need to understand. What are we doing about getting those federal dollars? Do we have a specific set of individuals in your Department or another department that applies for this money? How much time and resources are we providing to these individuals to go after these dollars? As a state, it seems that we leave a lot of money on the table.

**Steve Canavero:**

There are three avenues regarding federal dollars. The first is formula-based allocations. You distribute your numbers; you then get your allocation from the feds. All of our title programs are predictable streams based upon the characteristics of the students you serve as well as your state's characteristics. The one caveat is Title IIA which is undergoing a change at the federal level, and the way they allocate those funds. Nevada would be a beneficiary of those changes that are responsive to poverty within a state. The higher poverty states receive additional allocations. Over subsequent years, we will continue to receive slightly additional monies in our Title IIA allocation. On the formulaic side, if you have your data and your compliance, and there is no reason not to send you the money, you receive those dollars. I can represent to the Committee today that we seize those dollars.

The second is federal competitive dollars. We go after these competitive dollars, much to the tremendous credit of the deputy superintendents and their teams. They work nights and weekends to bring resources to our state, given the express problems that we have to solve with those dollars. We have been successful in some, and we have not been successful in others. The state does have a grants unit that helps us apply and compete. There is a team that parachutes in, huddles around, and helps draft the response and prepare the budget. They helped us on the successful prekindergarten development grant of \$16 million over three and a half years. You will see that the Governor's recommended budget includes the state's share of the expansion of the pre-K. We won that award. We also won the charter school's program grant; another grant that is north of \$12 million over four years to support the dissemination of best practices and the planning for high-quality charter schools to grow.

We were not successful on a recent grant. We had a lot of help, and it took a lot of time to get it done. It was for teachers and systems of professional development. We were not successful there, but we continue to seek out opportunities and literally burn the midnight oil to put forward our best effort.

The third is non-federal competitive opportunities. We were recently awarded a grant, as one of ten states in a highly competitive program that was funded by J.P. Morgan Chase & Company for the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), called the New Skills for Youth Initiative. You will likely hear more about the purpose behind the grant in providing high-quality career pathways for students in high school and throughout their K-12 experience. We take as many swings at the ball as we can. Sometimes we hit it. With one we were not successful, so we are trying again. Just last week, Dena Durish reached out with another opportunity that fills a similar need in the originally unsuccessful application.

**Assemblyman Pickard:**

I am concerned while looking at page 13 ([Exhibit E](#)). In the first item, when we talk about the pipelines, and then on page 12 ([Exhibit E](#)), we talk about excellent educators being experienced, fully state certified, and effective; we are trying to fill a pipeline that is falling short. In my own experience, I would not have fit that category. I was not state certified at the time I was hired in the Jordan School District in Utah. I had professional experience to bring to the table, and I could teach the students what they needed to know in order to leave high school and be hired immediately. I seemed to be effective. Most of my students who took the advanced class went on to get jobs and were successful. I am wondering if Deputy Superintendent Durish could take a moment to talk about what the alternative routes to licensure are. What are the things we can do outside the normal pathway to fill these vacancies?

**Dena Durish:**

In my prior life, I was the alternative routes to licensure coordinator for CCSD for seven years. I have a long history with these programs. As Superintendent Canavero mentioned, our evaluation system and our professional growth system reform began in 2011. That was also when many of these conversations started. There was a bill passed to open up these pathways and remove some of the barriers to provide some additional alternative routes. We have gone from a small number of what used to be 11 providers and educator preparation programs to 33 different options through which a teacher can become licensed and certified in the state. Some of those options are very recent, and the numbers have not yet matriculated into results of retention and effectiveness. We will certainly be tracking those. In addition to that, we have different types of licenses in [A.B. 77](#). In addition to a traditional license that you referred to, we have an alternative route which allows folks to come in from a previous career. You must have held a bachelor's degree previously, received some initial training, and then do the remainder of your coursework while you are teaching. However, we also have what is called a business and industry license that does not require a master's degree, but requires either a professional certification in the area in which you will be teaching, or a demonstrated professional work history. We have a very long list that matches up with our career and technical education pathways. In fact, you will probably also hear the results of a licensure study that was approved during the last session. One of those results was to more closely align our teacher pathways for licensure in order to ensure that our students going through those pathways have licensed teachers. A third option is what is called a special qualification license. That is an additional opportunity for areas such as mathematics, science, and for those who have degrees or other certifications in that area. We have made great strides and we are still looking for many different opportunities. With the passage of the federal law, ESSA, our Governor passed an emergency regulation last February to allow us to offer provisional licenses to get teachers into the classroom while they are earning some of those credits. Our Commission on Professional Standards continued that, and in [A.B. 77](#), you will see some initial language that would put some of those changes into statute rather than only into regulations. We are always looking for different routes to address your concern.

**Assemblywoman Krasner:**

I am looking at page 10 ([Exhibit E](#)), and I see several categories listed, but I do not see a category for books and other learning materials. Could you comment on that? In addition, do you have some data on the funding for books and other learning materials in Victory schools as well as traditional schools? Possibly you could come back at a later date and provide that data for our public schools in the state to this Committee.

**Brett Barley:**

Yes, I would be happy to.

**Assemblyman Edwards:**

I agree with my colleague, Mr. Flores, about what I hear on the campaign trail. There are teachers who are not performing, but they continue to teach. The parents are frustrated by the fact that they do not understand why the school system cannot either get the teachers better trained or move them out. The students are not getting served. I hear this from parents, other teachers, and students as well. Is there anything that we, the Legislature, can do in order to streamline the process, truncate it, or offer better alternatives so that the students do not have the problem with underperforming teachers? I do not know if you have the best practices now or if we should bring it up at a later date, but I think it is extremely important, and I want to be part of the solution.

**Steve Canavero:**

We would be happy to meet with you and perhaps come back before the Committee with the districts to discuss the challenge and to propose some solutions.

**Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:**

A corollary to Assemblymen Flores' and Edwards' concern, could you discuss the steps that you have recently taken toward implementation of the Nevada Educator Performance Framework? The Committee could benefit from some discussion regarding what was done in 2011, 2013, and 2015.

**Steve Canavero:**

Deputy Superintendent Durish just followed up with our districts. About half of our districts have filled out the reporting framework where, for the first time, we will see the implementation of the Nevada Educator Performance Framework which was passed in 2011, revised in 2013, and revised again in 2015. The State Board, the Teacher and Leader's Council, and Deputy Durish have been working nonstop in seeing to its implementation. I am happy to report that we will have some data on the educational practice side; then on the student achievement side, which is 20 percent. Half of that share is state data, and the other half is the school district data. The share then goes to 40 percent in the subsequent year. Again, half is state, half is district. We will have the student performance side by the end of session that will provide you with updates to the implementation of that law.

**Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson:**

Thank you for all of your work in getting that program up and going. I know we have given you a lot to deal with.

**Assemblywoman Miller:**

In going back to the alternate routes, I am now hearing that people can actually do alternate routes to licensure that are as short as four weeks. I know that some are doing this online as alternate routes without experience or exposure in the classroom. I have seen this especially in special education; impacting those students who are most vulnerable, and yet federally protected, while people are going through fast-tracked programs. I would like to know if it is true that we have individuals in classrooms under those circumstances. When we talk about teacher effectiveness, it is always that they are not trained enough; they need more professional development; they need more, more, more. Then it is "let us get it done" just as quickly as possible to get someone in the classroom. Could you speak to that?

**Dena Durish:**

Again, this is an area of passion for me. It is important to note that I appreciate the question because this has been a challenge for me, a quantity-versus-quality balance. In reference to special education, it is not as if there is a surfeit of fully licensed and qualified candidates waiting to go into those classrooms. In addition to those candidates, we are hiring those who have gone through a shortened alternative route program. Unfortunately, sometimes the option is a substitute teacher or one who has gone through this alternate route program. The requirements for a substitute teacher are not even a bachelor's degree; it is 60 credits of an associate's degree. The alternative then becomes people who have completed some training, are going through a program, and progressing in their knowledge of skills, content, acquisition, and, hopefully being mentored at their school, as well as through their preparation program provider. It is a tough choice.

The programs are all approved through the Commission on Professional Standards, so I can share with you more of the criteria that are outlined for those programs. They each have different options and timelines. What I can also share with you is that as a result of a lot of hard work in our department, we will begin next year to track program evaluation. There will be some conversations regarding the retention rate of educators who finish these programs as well as their effectiveness and the support they receive. To your point, as we expand these programs, we need to make sure that we retain and support the programs that are the most effective.

**Chairman Thompson:**

We want to thank the Department of Education, Superintendent Canavero, and Deputy Superintendents Barley and Durish. At this time, we will go to public comment.

**Pat Hickey, Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada:**

I am really proud to see this Committee; what a group of impassioned persons. I am here to say that we are just one of many players who, like you, care about the future outcomes for all of our students. I am proud to be associated with the public charter schools. I emphasize

public charter schools make us partners, not competitors. I hope we find ways together to make progress in improving the system.

**David W. Carter, Member, District No. 2, State Board of Education, Department of Education:**

I would like to introduce myself to the members of the Committee. I am the newest elected member of the State Board of Education. I represent District No. 2 which corresponds to Congressional District No. 2. I will be attending many of the education meetings and hoping to give some input that will be beneficial to you.

**Bruce Soares, Private Citizen, Las Vegas, Nevada:**

I am a concerned citizen and have several items on my mind that you may be able to address. One is the low achievement rate of African-American students in Clark County. Are there any plans to increase the teaching of Spanish in the schools in Clark County? The reason I ask is because in my neighborhood, Assemblyman McCurdy II's district, there are many businesses that employ a lot of Hispanics. The customers, to a large extent, may be Hispanic. If we do not train other members of the community, it will add to the already high unemployment rate.

**Chairman Thompson:**

We will take those questions under advisement, and I am sure we will answer those. You have your Assemblyman here who can also get you those answers. I am sure that is going to become part of the dialogue throughout these next 118 days.

**Assemblyman McCurdy II:**

I want to say thank you, Mr. Soares, for participating. It is refreshing to see someone down south attending the meetings.

**Chairman Thompson:**

The meeting is adjourned [at 5:18 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Sharon McCallen  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Assemblyman Tyrone Thompson, Chairman

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

## **EXHIBITS**

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

[Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster.

[Exhibit C](#) is the Assembly Committee on Education, Committee Policies, 2017 Legislative Session.

[Exhibit D](#) is a document titled "Assembly Committee on Education, Committee Brief," presented by Amelie Welden, Committee Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau.

[Exhibit E](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Nevada Department of Education," dated February 8, 2017 and presented by Steve Canavero, Ph.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education, Brett Barley, Deputy Superintendent for Student Achievement, Student Achievement Division, Department of Education, Dena Durish, Deputy Superintendent for Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement, Department of Education.

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