

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

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

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chairman Tyrone Thompson at 3:15 p.m. on Wednesday, March 8, 2017, in Room 3142 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4406 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda ([Exhibit A](#)), the Attendance Roster ([Exhibit B](#)), and other substantive exhibits, are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.leg.state.nv.us/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
Sharon McCallen, Committee Secretary
Trinity Thom, Committee Assistant

OTHERS PRESENT:

Pat Skorkowsky, Superintendent of Schools, Clark County School District; President, Nevada Association of School Superintendents
David Jensen, Superintendent, Humboldt County School District; Nevada Association of School Superintendents' Appointee, State Board of Education
Richard Stokes, Superintendent, Carson City School District
Rodriguez Broadnax, Superintendent, Esmeralda County School District
Teri White, Superintendent, Douglas County School District
Gregg Roberts, Dual Language Immersion and World Languages Specialist, Utah State Board of Education
Nicole Rourke, Associate Superintendent, Clark County School District
Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents and Nevada Association of School Administrators
Lindsay Anderson, Government Affairs Director, Washoe County School District
Ruben R. Murillo, Jr., President, Nevada State Education Association
David W. Carter, Member-District 2, State Board of Education
Jessica Ferrato, representing Nevada Association of School Boards
Steve Jimenez, representing Nevada Hispanic Legislative Caucus

Chairman Thompson:

[Roll was taken. Committee rules and protocol were explained.] Today we are going to hear a presentation on iNVEST by the Nevada Association of School Superintendents. However, I would like to start with a bill draft request (BDR) introduction. Bill Draft Request 34-353 was requested by the interim Legislative Committee on Health Care. I would like to emphasize that a vote to introduce this BDR does not imply support for the content, it just means that we are introducing the BDR into the system and to our Committee.

BDR 34-353 – Requires certain school districts to collect and report the height and weight of certain pupils. (Later introduced as [Assembly Bill 273](#).)

ASSEMBLYMAN EDWARDS MADE A MOTION FOR COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION OF BILL DRAFT REQUEST 34-353.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SWANK SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION PASSED. (ASSEMBLYMEN DIAZ, PICKARD, AND TOLLES WERE ABSENT FOR THE VOTE.)

Now, onto our presentation about iNVEST.

Pat Skorkowsky, Superintendent of Schools, Clark County School District; President, Nevada Association of School Superintendents:

Many of our members are here today because we felt it was important. I would like to introduce the superintendents who are in the room. I have Richard Stokes from Carson City, Teri White from Douglas County, Rod Broadnax from Esmeralda County, Dan Wold from Eureka County, Dave Jensen from Humboldt County, Jim Squibb from Lander County, Wayne Workman from Lyon County, Dale Norton from Nye County, Russell Fecht from Pershing County, and Traci Davis from Washoe County. The rest of the school superintendents were not able to be here today. We all are a united front. We have been together and working hard since a year ago January to put together this document to present to you today ([Exhibit C](#)). This document started in 2003 with a group of superintendents from across the counties who came together and realized that there are many commonalities in education across the state—from rural, urban, and suburban needs. They are very similar, so we came together in a united front to focus on what is important for education in Nevada. We have monthly meetings where we work closely with the Department of Education to ensure that education is running well across the state. The iNVEST plan is supported by the Nevada Association of School Boards and their executive team, and most of the school districts have passed resolutions to support it. We have a couple that still have meetings next week where they will, hopefully, also be passing resolutions to support it.

This year, we have seven priorities we are focusing on [page 3, ([Exhibit C](#))]. I will start with the funding formula. We understand that this is not the Ways and Means Committee, but education is so closely tied to dollars that we have to talk about how those dollars will be spent and how we need them to be spent in the future to support our students. An interim committee run by Senator Mo Denis was to come up with a way to move toward a weighted funding formula [page 4, ([Exhibit C](#))]. We have been working on this in the Clark County School District (CCSD) as one of our initiatives since 2011. Senate Bill 508 of the 78th Legislative Session came forward with some of those weights. Special education, English language learners, students living in poverty, and gifted and talented education (GATE) are the four categories, and money from the 2015 Session aligned directly to them. We know there are bills in place to work on that this session. As superintendents and school boards across Nevada, we are committed to helping support those initiatives and making sure those bills are passed and signed so we can improve education in Nevada.

Special education is among the four categories. We understand it costs significantly more to educate these children, so each of us has to supplement the money from the State General Fund. In Clark County, we are giving \$361 million a year to support our special education students. We know it costs more for our second-language students, and we have all been working on English language learner (ELL) master plans to help support them. Every district across Nevada has students who do not speak English; English is not their native language. We have students who are living in poverty. In Clark County, 64 percent of our population is on free or reduced lunch. That does not change when you go out to the rural counties or in Washoe County. Each of these students costs more, and we have been working toward this

weighted funding formula over the past years. We are glad that we are able to make some strides toward having dollars follow the students, so we can give them the education necessary to be successful in our schools.

David Jensen, Superintendent, Humboldt County School District; Nevada Association of School Superintendents' Appointee, State Board of Education:

I am going to talk about adequate basic support [page 5, [\(Exhibit C\)](#)]. As many of you are aware, Nevada's funding formula is known as the Nevada Plan for School Finance. The Nevada Plan was developed in 1967. Following the development of that plan, it went through a series of minor modifications; however, we have now gone 40 years without any changes to how funding for education in Nevada is factored. Despite the fact that Nevada has changed dramatically in that time frame, we continue to operate under an antiquated funding mechanism. We recognize that there are efforts to make changes, and we appreciate your support in updating that funding formula.

During the 2013 Legislative Session, a task force based on Senate Bill 500 of the 77th Legislative Session was formed to recommend a plan of weighted funding. We appreciate your support of the weighted funding. Something that came out of the 2015 Session that we wanted to touch on is the categorical funding, such as Read by Grade 3 and Victory schools. What a profound impact that is having in our districts, and we want to thank you for that. As we think about the categorical funding, what we need to emphasize is that it does not improve or enhance basic support funds. The reason those funds are so critically important for us is because those monies turn on our lights, fuel our buses, and pay the salaries for our teachers. We are at a point right now where our funding levels have not had increases relative to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), creating some significant issues for school districts as we continue to work to operate to meet the needs of our students. Since 2003 when the first iNVEST document was submitted to the Legislature, we have asked the Legislature to continue to consider base funding and providing those supports. If we could only meet that national average. Based upon 2013 data, the national average for education funding was \$10,700. We recognize that does not occur overnight, so any support that could move us in that direction would be significantly appreciated.

The next area I want to cover is preserving current funding sources [page 6, [\(Exhibit C\)](#)]. One key area of education funding comes through property taxes. The Nevada Plan includes local taxes in the calculation of basic support for the school districts. Unfortunately, recent legislation has limited those resources. We want to make it very clear on behalf of the Nevada Association of School Superintendents (NASS) that we advocate and support the attempts that have been made to bring new business and industry into our state. It makes a difference to us; it brings in revenue to the state. However, the tax credits that have been provided have eroded the funding mechanisms for public education. In 2016, abatement caps put in place in 2005 reduced available funds to the public sector, including schools, by \$700 million. The secondary cap, which is tied to the CPI, provided little growth in property tax revenue in the past year despite the massive growth that both Washoe and Clark Counties are facing. This is straining their budgets, and as a result, will create larger than expected funding gaps. We ask that this legislative body revisit the tax caps and institute inflationary

factors to restore ad valorem revenues for districts and municipalities, as this becomes a critical revenue stream to support the education in our districts.

Richard Stokes, Superintendent, Carson City School District:

In 1995, my family and I moved to Hawthorne, Nevada. I had just been named the high school principal there. In making preparations for that move, we were a little distressed because we did not have a place to live. The superintendent at that time said, "We will take care of that part for you." As we got to town, I learned that part of Nevada was having a boom. There were a lot of things going on. Our schools were full, and our town was full. In six short years, that boom had turned to bust. We lost nearly half of the students in our schools and, consequently, had to make changes to our processes.

In 2008, after having moved to Carson City, we saw another down cycle which started to give indicators of the economy turning in a negative way. Of course, we have all lived through the last ten challenging years which have been termed as our "Great Recession." During all of these events, we have lost people, talent, resources, and materials. Of course, schools were not the only public agencies to be challenged by this condition. Not only have we lost all of those things, but there were pay freezes and losses of benefits for many of our staff.

Historically in Nevada, when times have been bad from an economic perspective, cuts have had to be made. In good economic times, however, there seems to be a surplus of money that is collected towards education, but those funds tend to be reverted to the General Fund of the state. The superintendents would like to see a process implemented in Nevada that creates a rainy day or stabilization fund that accumulates up to 10 percent of the annual Distributive School Account (DSA) revenue to be used to support educational services when we experience negative economic times [page 7, ([Exhibit C](#))]. A stabilization fund would help to ensure that critical educational processes, materials, and staff are maintained in a position where we are able to continue our processes when economic conditions turn down.

Since 1979, more than \$700 million in funds designated for education have been reverted to the State General Fund. The stabilization or rainy day fund would help school districts have softer landings. In other words, we would have the ability to utilize state funds strategically, responding to that next bust cycle that may impact Nevada. We appreciate this time to speak with you, and would appreciate your consideration of this part of our iNVEST process.

David Jensen:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about improving and expanding school facilities [page 8, ([Exhibit C](#))]. One of the key expectations of my colleagues and me is ensuring a safe learning environment in each of our schools. That also requires that we have a twenty-first-century learning environment. In the Humboldt County School District, the median age of our buildings is 58 years. Our newest construction was in 2000, and then we have buildings on the Historic Register. Because of the age of our buildings, it becomes problematic for us to meet upgrades and the needs of those facilities. The constructors of our buildings never thought about school safety issues; they did not think about computers and

technology or wireless Internet. Those are all things that we have had to do to supplement and prepare those schools to educate our students for jobs that have yet to be created.

Currently in Nevada, there is no funding mechanism through the Legislature to help support what is happening in our schools. In Humboldt County, we are fortunate. Our voters supported a rollover bond—13.5 cents per \$100 assessed valuation. It generates \$1.2 million for me. I have 11 schools; but to quantify that, two projects last summer cost us \$1.4 million. We had an antiquated boiler spouting water that we had to replace, then we had to put on new roofs. That money goes away very quickly, but we are fortunate in Humboldt County. When I think of my comrade in White Pine County, Adam Young, who is here today, there is no bonding capacity in White Pine County. As a result, there is no capacity for him to address the needs of his buildings.

We also have to recognize that in 2015, this legislative body provided some tremendous supports to the districts. In Humboldt County, the ten-year extension on our rollover bond guarantees funding through 2028. When we think of our friends in Clark County, \$4.1 billion over the next ten years will allow them to build 35 new schools, additional classrooms, and improvements in many of their older schools. Washoe County estimates \$315 million in revenue to repair and restore aging facilities. Each of those funds is going to be critical as we look at the expansion and needs of our students through the twenty-first century; and, as such, we would ask for your support in looking at improving and expanding school facilities.

Rodriguez F. Broadnax, Superintendent, Esmeralda County School District:

I would like to speak today about increasing the teacher pipeline [page 9, ([Exhibit C](#))]. I echo the words of my colleague, Traci Davis, who stated yesterday that this initiative is very important and impacts all the districts throughout Nevada. Each of us in this room has the same common goal, which is to provide every student in Nevada with a high-level education. Teachers who really care about students have a tremendous impact within our classrooms. As we know, highly qualified teachers are not just tied to student learning, but also to student achievement. As an educator, I can reflect on my own schooling and think of a teacher who really impacted my life by encouraging, pushing, challenging, and caring about me. If you take the time and reflect, you can also reflect on that teacher who really took the time to impact your life and pushed you to where you are today.

I have heard the saying, and I believe, that students do not care how much you know until they know you care about them. We continue to align with the vision and plan of state Superintendent of Public Instruction Steve Canavero to ensure that Nevada is the fastest-growing state in America as it relates to enhancing and improving student achievement through high-level educational instruction and programs. We must understand that the key is attracting, recruiting, hiring, and retaining highly qualified teachers for every classroom throughout the state. Therefore, we believe we must continue to enhance and expand recruitment initiatives and incentives to continue to drive accelerated student growth and student achievement throughout Nevada. Currently, there are two trending challenges as related to this initiative. First, there is a national shortage of teachers. There are fewer

people going into the education realm or into teacher preparation programs. Moreover, with the increased changes in education, current teachers are leaving the profession, which continues to have an impact on every school district in our state by increasing the number of vacancies. Second, in order to bring more highly qualified teachers to Nevada, we must become more competitive at the national level. As the current Superintendent of Esmeralda County School District, which is the smallest district in our state, I can tell you the current incentives do not just affect us, but also the other districts throughout our state, including Washoe and Clark Counties. As the data shows, Clark County has been able to reduce its vacancy rate by two-thirds. Nevada students must come first; therefore, we ask that these incentives be approved earlier, as all districts are currently recruiting for the 2017-2018 school year; and continue to fund the base, because that is where our operations start. On behalf of our NASS president, Superintendent Pat Skorkowsky, and the NASS, I would like to applaud, appreciate, commend you, and thank you for your hard work, dedication, and vision, and the current incentives you have already developed to increase the teacher pipeline for the great state of Nevada.

I would like to leave you with a quote from an unknown author. I leave this because it is very strong: "Each day that we fail to do our best, we fail to gain something that we can never get back." I leave this because our Nevada students are worth whatever it takes.

Teri White, Superintendent, Douglas County School District:

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to speak before you today on behalf of all those we represent. A world-class education in Nevada begins with high-quality teachers, administrators, and support staff. Increased expectations of rigor and performance for our students and teachers will help us achieve Dr. Canavero's vision of assuring that Nevada is the fastest-growing state in the nation, but it depends upon the quality of the work that takes place in every classroom every day. Our current school calendars offer us the opportunity to provide professional development two to three days prior to the start of the school year. The remaining days are filled with the hard work of educating our students. It is the collective belief of the superintendents of this great state that we will be able to have a higher degree of impact on improving our schools if we are able to provide at least two additional days of professional development to our teachers, administrators, and staff [page 10, ([Exhibit C](#))]. The effective implementation of programs like Read by Grade 3, safe and respectful learning environments, social/emotional learning, college and career readiness, personalized learning environments, improved educator efficacy through tools provided through the Nevada educator performance framework, Nevada Ready 21 initiatives, family engagement strategies, and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) instruction, necessitate time for professional development which is paramount to improving student achievement across our state. Additionally, the work of the regional professional development programs is critical to the success of improved opportunities for students in rural districts across Nevada.

Having served as the superintendent of the Mineral County School District, I can attest to the fact that operational budgets in small rural districts are very tight, and there are virtually no funds available for professional development, staffing, or activities. My neighboring

counties always shared opportunities for me to send staff to any trainings they were offering, but I found that I relied heavily, as do the superintendents in many of our rural counties, on the regional professional development piece to help them roll out state initiatives such as I just mentioned. We are extremely grateful of your continued support of the work we do and the work of our regional professional development programs, and truly appreciate your consideration toward the funding of two additional professional development days for school districts.

Pat Skorkowsky:

We want to recognize the hard work that has gone into the Zoom schools for the past three and a half years; and the Read By Grade 3, the Victory schools, and the Nevada Ready 21 in the past year and a half. We have done extensive work on implementation of these initiatives from the 2015 Session, and are all seeing great progress towards moving our students toward that higher achievement level. We want to thank you for that, and ask for your continued support as we move forward.

This last quote is up on the screen [page 12, [Exhibit C](#)]: "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for ALL its children." We are here in unity, all 17 counties across Nevada, to show you that we have the knowledge and the capability of improving education across Nevada. We need your support to make this goal a reality.

Chairman Thompson:

Thank you so much, Superintendent.

Assemblywoman Swank:

I had a question for the superintendent speaking about historic buildings. I would be happy to talk with you about any problems you are having working with schools in historic buildings. That is my day job. I think our schools are the important buildings in our communities. The temporary structures we have at schools now undermine that centrality that schools have always been in our communities. The ways we can work with our older buildings to keep them around; and as the center, especially of smaller towns, is a really important part of what schools do in communities. I would be really happy to talk with you afterwards about that.

David Jensen:

Thank you very much. The school I was referring to in particular is Winnemucca Grammar School. If you get a chance, look it up online. It is a beautiful building. We wanted to make sure that the project we did there did not detract from its beauty. Our kids ask for variances to go to that school, just because of how beautiful it is.

Assemblywoman Swank:

I was in Winnemucca for work a couple of months ago. I might have scared some of the staff, because I was peeking in all the windows. It is a beautiful building, and you did a wonderful job.

Assemblywoman Diaz:

I want to go back to the property tax issue. We have been having conversations this legislative session, but I do not think they are capturing the issues that are affecting our schools. I want you to educate the Committee. Is there a way to quantify the detriment this property tax formula has brought upon the different school districts? Is it affecting just the larger ones, or is it also affecting the more rural ones?

Pat Skorkowsky:

In Clark County, it is anywhere from \$15 million to \$20 million. That is money we were counting on to further promote the programs we are working on, and then the reorganization. That is money that could have been put into our per-pupil allocation that would have gone directly to schools. I know this has had an impact on all counties in the state. We had a presentation last May in Nye County, and we can get you that information about how much it impacted the districts across the state.

Assemblywoman Miller:

As you mention more buildings that will come in the future with your projections, are those buildings based on projected growth—student growth, population growth? How many would actually be replacing some buildings that need replacing?

Pat Skorkowsky:

We have 35 new-growth schools, and then we have replacement schools. Right now we have targeted seven or eight replacement schools. We have 39 additions being added to elementary buildings across the Las Vegas Valley to increase the capacity in areas where there is not enough land to build a new school. It takes approximately ten acres to build a new school. We cannot put ten acres together in some of our population-dense areas, so we have had to build additions—anywhere from 14- to 18- to 22-room additions to increase the capacity of those buildings.

David Jensen:

In terms of the rural counties, Superintendent Skorkowsky and Clark County have been amazing to us. They donate buses. There were seven replacement schools mentioned. If we could get them in the rural counties, we would take them because they are nicer than the schools we operate in. That is the reality in the rural counties. We do not have the capacity to build new schools, and we would need to completely bond. When you look at an elementary school being somewhere in the neighborhood of \$20 million-plus, the smaller districts lack any capacity to generate that revenue.

Chairman Thompson:

You are saying there has been good progress in Read By Grade 3. I have some major concerns about it, so can you tell us what that progress is because hearing that should they not pass, we are going to have thousands of kids who will be held back to third grade, that will double the number of students in third grade.

Pat Skorkowsky:

The progress we have made is on the systems and structures to ensure that kids do not fall through the cracks and are on target at the end of each grade level. Each large school district, and a collaborative of rural districts, have put in place systems and structures through the response-to-instruction model so that the students who are behind are getting tracked regularly through progress monitoring. We are providing additional remediation skills to those students so that we can catch them up and get them on grade level. We are using some of the concepts of the Zoom model, and some of our schools are creating reading skill centers to catch up students who are not successful. We are seeing some growth in that. When I testified in the 2013 Session, it was the first time we had the concept of retaining third graders if they were not on track. We would have had to have added 223 third-grade teachers, and that was in 2013, for all the kids who were not passing our state assessment.

David Jensen:

For a specific example, 72 miles north of Winnemucca is a little town called McDermitt. McDermitt is a K-12 school—65 percent Native American. These students come to us very significantly academically deficient. These are the same challenges my colleagues see in other locations. Read By Grade 3, the tracking components, and specific interventions—but more important for us is the intervention specialist we have been able to bring in—can build capacity with our teachers. As a result of that, we are seeing in excess of one year's growth, which we have celebrated in the past. Now, we are looking at one and a half year's growth each year as a result of this effort. We can attribute it directly to Read By Grade 3.

Assemblywoman Diaz:

Yesterday while in the Committee on Ways and Means, I got a glimpse of our Smarter-Balanced Assessment Consortium data as a state. I am wary that our math performance is not on par. I think our focus has been too heavy on the reading side. I think we are missing the boat when we are not making sure that all areas are maintained at adequate levels of proficiency. Are there any innovative things the districts are looking to do to make sure our math does not fall by the wayside? As a state, we are trying to move toward a workforce that is more focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). We do not want those jobs we are trying to create for future Nevadans not going to Nevadans because they are not well prepared.

Pat Skorkowsky:

You are exactly right. With the change of the Nevada Academic Content Standards, mathematics is taught very differently now. The teachers were struggling to maintain the basic math facts we learned. The process is to get those and have those at your fingertips at all times. One of the biggest challenges we face is that math has now become part reading as well, because there is extensive work that has to be done through reading the problems to be able to come to the answers. We are still working on that. It is a struggle at this point in time, because we had to spend so much time on literacy. Now we have to balance it so we do not drop literacy, but push math higher.

Chairman Thompson:

We will close out the presentation. Thank you. You have a challenging position, but know that we, collectively, want to make this right. We have to make our education system phenomenal for our children.

Assemblywoman Krasner:

To follow up on Assemblywoman Diaz's question, I met with the superintendent from my district. I asked about textbooks or online books. I wondered why so many school districts, especially high schools where we are focusing on STEM and where they are using standardized testing for math and science, do not have textbooks or online books. The ones they do have are eight years old or more, out of date, and not in line with the standards kids are being tested on in high school. Could you address that?

Pat Skorkowsky:

One of the big challenges specifically is that. When you go back and look at that eight-year time period, you are talking about 2008, 2009, 2010, when we all had to cut our instructional supply budgets, our textbook budgets, just to keep the doors open. With the advent of the Nevada Academic Content Standards, we have not seen the textbook companies step up to the plate to provide quality resources to use. Instead of changing the way their textbooks are organized, they put new pictures in the books, put new covers on the books, and say that they are now aligned to the Nevada Academic Content Standards. These are not the quality materials we need to instruct with. Some of us have not spent money on textbooks because we could not find anything of quality. We have teachers who go online for resources. We have a curriculum planning tool in our district that we share with other districts so they can share those quality resources in their lesson plans so that teachers can teach to the standards they have.

David Jensen:

At one point there was an allocation from the Legislature to the school districts, and I believe it was \$50 per student. That allowed us to do some of these textbook adoptions, but the economic downturn caused us to make decisions about hiring staff. In Humboldt County, a very small district, the last time we did a math adoption—and I believe it was a grades 6 through 12 adoption—it cost us \$800,000. That is a significant price tag as we are struggling sometimes to meet our basic needs. We find it very problematic to actually purchase a new textbook. We have the same concern you do, and I believe all my colleagues would express it as well.

Chairman Thompson:

Could we follow that up offline? [Assemblywoman Krasner replied, "Sure."] I will now open the hearing on Assembly Bill 139. This is a bill that came out of the interim Legislative Committee on Education, so Assemblywoman Swank will be providing introductory remarks, and then we will have additional information provided by Gregg Roberts from Utah, who is joining us on a conference call.

Assembly Bill 139: Provides for the voluntary establishment of a program of dual language immersion in certain public elementary schools. (BDR 34-442)

Assemblywoman Heidi Swank, Assembly District No. 16:

As a linguistic anthropologist, I was excited to be asked by the Legislative Committee on Education to shepherd this bill through. I worked with bilingual Tibetan refugees in India for almost 20 years. This program does not eliminate English being taught in our schools. If we look across the world, we see that multilingualism is the norm. Not only across the globe, but also if we go back in time. I am, at best, moderately multilingual. I speak French, Japanese, and Tibetan. I wish I had had this opportunity as a kid to be fully multilingual. I have lots of friends who are, and I am eternally jealous.

During the past interim, the Legislative Committee on Education received a presentation from Gregg Roberts, the dual language immersion (DLI) specialist with the Utah State Board of Education. The Committee learned how this program is provided throughout the elementary school years, years we know are very important to learning a language; how it teaches all subjects half in English and half in a foreign language chosen by the school community; and how it has a positive impact on student achievement, behavior, and attendance.

The Committee was also interested to hear the program is relatively inexpensive. It expands the pool of available teachers beyond United States borders, because it requires teachers whose native language is not English. Given our statewide teacher shortage, this is a significant benefit. I think we all understand the economic benefits that come with speaking multiple languages. Students in Utah who complete a full dual language immersion program and supplementary secondary classes, can graduate high school just a few credits shy of a college minor in a foreign language. Utah currently offers five language options for its dual language immersion schools. There is also a growing body of research showing substantial cognitive benefits for young children who receive bilingual education. Immersion students typically develop greater cognitive flexibility, demonstrating increased attention control, better memory, and superior problem-solving skills as well as an enhanced understanding of their primary language.

Immersion students also demonstrate increased cultural sensitivity, because they are more aware of and show a positive attitude toward other cultures and people. In a dual language immersion school that has chosen Spanish as its foreign language, for instance, an English language learner is no longer an academic outsider. He or she, just like all the other students, is a native speaker of one of the two languages spoken in the school. These English language learners possess a skill that many of their peers are pursuing and can serve as mentors in this regard. It seems to me that dual language immersion models should be available at all our Zoom schools.

This bill requires the State Board of Education by regulation to prescribe guidelines for the establishment of an optional program of dual language immersion in public elementary schools. The regulations must:

1. Require 50 percent of all coursework in each participating grade to be taught in a language other than English.
2. Establish a list of foreign languages that may be selected. This would include American Sign Language.
3. Establish the process by which a school may select a language for its DLI program. The intent here is to get intensive involvement from staff and parents. This is based at the community level as to what languages they choose.
4. Require an elementary school establishing a program to provide an option of English-only instruction for families who do not want to participate. This is an optional program.
5. Require the Department of Education to create a competitive grant program that will enable up to 30 schools to start dual language immersion programs—20 in Clark County, 7 in Washoe County, and 3 in the balance of the state.
6. Require the Department of Education to develop performance and outcome indicators to measure the effectiveness of these programs,
7. Require submittal of an annual report to the Governor and to the Legislature.

Finally, Assembly Bill 139 appropriates sufficient funding for the Department of Education to hire two part-time staff to manage the program; \$300,000 for grants of approximately \$10,000 to each participating school, and an additional \$300,000 for program support services such as teacher recruitment, professional development, and other technical assistance.

Dual language immersion programs have emerged as low-cost, high-impact options for elementary schools. Utah has been leading the way. Utah has only 3 percent of the United States' K-12 students, but 80 percent of those speaking Chinese because of their dual language immersion program. Is there any doubt that the state will be leading the future of international business with China? It seems to be an amazing opportunity for kids.

Gregg Roberts, Dual Language Immersion and World Languages Specialist, Utah State Board of Education:

The future our students face is not the future we grew up in. What needs to happen is that students need to be multilingual and globally competent in cultural skills. In 2008, the Utah State Senate created the Utah Dual Language Immersion Program in Utah Senate Bill 41 through the good works of former-Governor Jon Huntsman Jr. and State Senator Howard Stephenson [page 2, ([Exhibit D](#))]. This provided the funding to start 20 programs. Since then, we have added a remarkable number of programs. The goal of this program is to provide Utah students with the opportunity to become linguistically proficient and culturally competent in a second language. It is a critical long-term investment in the viability and vitality of Utah's future economic competitiveness [page 3, ([Exhibit D](#))].

Currently, dual language immersion is offered in five languages, and we are adding a sixth language—Russian—this year [page 4, ([Exhibit D](#))]. As you know, Utah's students are no longer competing for jobs just against students in Texas, California, or Nevada. Utah students are now competing for jobs against students in Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the world. To do that, they must be multilingual and have cultural competency skills. Currently, we have 161 DLI schools serving about 32,000 students [page 5, ([Exhibit D](#))]. We just received funding from the Legislature yesterday to add another 35 to 40 schools, bringing our total close to 200 schools serving over 40,000 students. The Legislature is very dedicated in Utah.

As you see, this is not just an urban program in Utah [page 6, ([Exhibit D](#))]. We created the Utah dual language immersion model to be effective in large urban school districts and also in some of our small rural school districts. Some of our smallest rural school districts may only have 2,000 students. You also see a large pocket of schools on the border with Nevada in Washington County, which has almost 15 schools. We also recently added a program in Wendover on the Nevada border.

This is a very cost-effective program [page 7, ([Exhibit D](#))]. As you might know, Utah is fifty-first in per-pupil spending. No state spends less on education per student in the United States than Utah. That means if Utah can afford dual language immersion, any state in the U.S. can afford dual language immersion. It just takes the political will to prepare our students to be globally competent. This is also a general education program in Utah open to all students—students with disabilities, academic-delayed, and English language learners. There are no qualifying processes and no prerequisites. This is not a gifted program.

It is very important, if you fund this bill, that you actually fund a full-time position at your State Department of Education. You need language expertise to be there in the Department of Education in Nevada to help this program. Without boots on the ground, this program will not be effective [page 8, ([Exhibit D](#))]. Through the good works of Senator Howard Stephenson last year, we finally made this program a K-12 program [page 9, ([Exhibit D](#))]. You will see a picture there of our first group of Spanish students who took the advanced placement (AP) exam last May as ninth graders, who are now taking 3000-level, upper division classes at the University of Utah. These students are not college-ready; they are already in college. This is a truly remarkable K-16 program.

As you will see, we have a secondary pathway. As Assemblywoman Swank mentioned, when these students graduate from high school, they are only two classes short of a minor in a foreign language. That means they can go on to take double majors—engineering and Chinese, business and French, medicine and Spanish. There are a hundred different opportunities, and these are the students we need to produce in the future.

I would like to show a short video, so you can hear it through the words of a student ([Exhibit E](#)):

[Unidentified student] When I started Spanish, it was in first grade, so I was pretty little and it was my parents' decision. They thought it would be really good for me to be able to learn a whole other language and be able to converse with people I would not usually. Now, I want to do it because I think it is really cool that I can go to a different country and be able to talk to people and read in a different language and understand things that a lot of kids in my situation cannot.

[Unidentified man] Utah has the largest dual language immersion program in the country. These programs take students to a very high level of proficiency, but only to the end of eighth or ninth grade; so when they get to high school, there is really nothing available for them. The state board asked the University of Utah to lead this charge.

[Gregg Roberts] The language Bridge Program is the final component in a comprehensive K-12 dual language immersion program, which is the finest in the United States. This will allow Utah students to graduate from high school just two classes short of a minor in the foreign language.

[Unidentified student] I am super grateful for the Bridge Program, because it has helped me be able to keep advancing in Spanish and helped me continue to grow as a person.

[Unidentified man] We live in a global world. It is crucial to be able to understand other people, to see the world from a different perspective, and this is preparing our students to be able to do that.

[Student speaks a sentence in Spanish. End of video.]

Chairman Thompson:

At this time I will open it up for questions.

Assemblyman Pickard:

I am phenomenally supportive of this concept. You mentioned the idea of getting teachers from foreign countries. How do we get them credentialed to teach in the schools here?

Gregg Roberts:

Our state board of education created a special international guest teacher license that goes along with a J-1 visa that is good for the length of the J-1 visa. We send teams to interview highly qualified teachers in foreign countries. Once they meet the need, they will qualify for the license, so there is no need for them to qualify for a Utah license. If they stay, such as on an H-1B visa, then they would have to get a regular Utah Level 1 license. What we have

done with this international guest teacher is set up an international reciprocity license to help our school districts out. We have a very expansive international guest teacher program, and we now have memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with China, Taiwan, Peru, Mexico, Spain, France, Germany, and Brazil. We offer the visa; we do all the work at the U.S. State Department, and then we provide these teachers for the school districts.

Assemblyman Pickard:

Does this bill contemplate that kind of support at the state level?

Assemblywoman Swank:

We are starting out with Utah as the goal in mind.

Assemblyman Pickard:

I would be happy to amend on to this bill, if you would like.

Assemblywoman Joiner:

I love this idea and have been trying to figure out how to get my children into one of these programs, just because of the positive responses I have heard in my own district where we have one of these programs. I think getting them young is so important. We know wiring their brains before they are ten years old is the statistic. I did not get to take a Spanish class until high school. I ended up loving languages and minored in Spanish in college, but it will never be second nature to me as it will be for these kids. I am extremely passionate about this. My question is, for the programs like the one in my district, when the new regulations are adopted, will they need to follow those regulations, or will there be an option for schools to continue as they are currently? I ask because in sections 2 and 3 of the bill, the grant program is a separate set of regulations. I want to make sure, if we have those 30 schools receiving the grants, that we still have the option for other schools to be doing this even if they are not receiving the grant. I worry that they would have to change too much. They are doing good things right now, and I do not want them to have to change too much and adhere to regulations. What would happen to the current schools?

Assemblywoman Swank:

I do not believe there would be any change to existing programs. That would be treated as something of a separate program from this particular one and the grant program that comes with it.

Gregg Roberts:

In Utah, we had lots of existing programs in Spanish before what we call the state models. We gave schools the option to either join the state model or to continue as they were. Right now, all the schools have joined the state model. We had about 20 different models out there, but they have all joined the state model because there are benefits with curriculum development, professional development, and teacher recruitment. They have all seen the benefits in having one united state model. We have one charter school that has remained unique, and they certainly have that option.

Assemblywoman Swank:

I would be happy to amend in anything that was needed to make sure that existing schools could stay independent, should they choose to.

Assemblywoman Joiner:

Just to be clear, can we have more than just the 30 schools? They would just be under the model, but not receiving a grant?

Assemblywoman Swank:

Correct.

Assemblyman Edwards:

I was fascinated by the idea that you are including sign language. I know Nevada State College (NSC) has a pretty extensive sign language program, and I would hope we could tap into that. Could that be a build-out of their program from a two-year to a four-year in order to provide that level of proficiency which would get kids a whole lot of great jobs around the world?

Assemblywoman Swank:

I think that sounds like a wonderful idea, and I think that being able to have kids who could go right into NSC and be pretty far along with that degree is going to be a really good thing as far as getting kids in and out of college more quickly.

Assemblywoman Diaz:

Does Utah have a Seal of Biliteracy?

Gregg Roberts:

Yes, we do. We have a Seal of Biliteracy in addition to this dual language immersion program.

Assemblywoman Diaz:

That is awesome to hear, because in the 2015 Session my colleague Assemblywoman Teresa Benitez-Thompson advanced Assembly Bill 166 of the 78th Session which created the ability as a state to affix a Seal of Biliteracy on a high school diploma. I am super excited to see that now we are going to give that legs to take off and ensure that our students have a way to access the seal. If we do not have the programming in our schools, then we are not creating biliterate students.

Assemblywoman Swank:

Sign language also does have a written form, which could also qualify for the Seal of Biliteracy.

Chairman Thompson:

We have a quick question from our legal counsel. Section 7 talks about a feasibility study for American Sign Language, so is it correct for us to say that it can be included until we have it?

Karly O'Krent, Committee Counsel:

Section 2 of the bill describes the languages that can be offered upon the effective date of the bill. To begin, the languages that would be offered are Spanish, French, and Mandarin Chinese. Section 7 directs the Department of Education to conduct a study to determine the feasibility of adding American Sign Language in the future, so as the bill is currently drafted, sign language would not be a language that would be offered in a program of dual language immersion.

Assemblywoman Krasner:

Could you just go over one more time what it is going to take to implement this? I know you mentioned \$300,000.

Assemblywoman Swank:

It is \$300,000 for grants; \$10,000 each to participating schools; and an additional \$300,000 for program support services such as teacher recruitment, professional development, and technical assistance.

Chairman Thompson:

Are there any other Committee questions? [There were none.] I do want some clarification. In section 2, subsection 2, is the statement "include, without limitation." Does that mean there could be other languages than these? Is this just to get the ball rolling? These are common languages, but it could include other languages, correct?

Karly O'Krent:

Currently, language in section 2 requires the regulations that are adopted by the State Board of Education to establish a list of the languages that can be studied in these schools, so it does not contemplate there being any other languages that can be studied. The "including, without limitation" language is not applicable to the regulations.

Chairman Thompson:

Could you elaborate; would the language in the bill supersede the regulation? By saying "without limitation," would that not open it up to more than the languages that are stated?

Karly O'Krent:

You are correct. I am sorry; I misspoke. It is somewhat tricky, because subsection 2 provides the specific languages that they are required to include in the regulations, but it could be expanded upon.

Gregg Roberts:

The original Utah legislation only had French, Spanish, and Mandarin Chinese. Since then, we have added Portuguese, German, and Russian, and have plans to add Arabic next year. It is pretty natural to add additional languages once you start out with a small group that are very successful.

Chairman Thompson:

Those in support of A.B. 139, please come forward.

Nicole Rourke, Associate Superintendent, Clark County School District:

We are here in full support of A.B. 139. Establishing dual language programs at Clark County School District (CCSD) schools is a priority that has been identified as part of the recently developed English language learners (ELL) master plan. The master plan was developed in collaboration with WestEd and with input from a wide range of stakeholders. In the master plan, CCSD has identified the need to begin establishing dual language programs beginning with the 2018-2019 school year. The CCSD has implemented dual language programs in elementary and middle schools in the past, and can draw on those experiences and resources to facilitate an expansion of programs as outlined in this bill. Additionally, providing state competitive grant funding as outlined in the bill will further aid successful implementation of these programs. Please note that we plan to be strategic about the speed at which this is implemented in order to do it right. We appreciate the allocation of up to 20 schools, but anticipate that in the first year it could be fewer than that. We would like to recommend that the grant process allow a year of planning to ensure that schools are ready to fully implement it, including professional development, teacher recruitment, and the purchase of curriculum materials.

The bill allows for, and we would encourage the grant process to consider, program implementation to begin with kindergarten and first grades, followed by the addition of one grade per year. Finally, for the record, we would hope that Tagalog be considered as one of the eligible languages for the program, as we have a significant population speaking that language in our community.

Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents and Nevada Association of School Administrators:

This bill creates an exciting opportunity for our students and a great start to something that could really take off in Nevada. We are in support of the bill.

Lindsay Anderson, Government Affairs Director, Washoe County School District:

I appreciate Assemblywoman Joiner's comments about the existing programs within our school district. We currently have four elementary schools offering two-way immersion programs. It is not exactly the same as the dual language program talked about in the bill, but I think we are looking forward to working with the state to make sure we are following those best practices. It has been well received by our community; there are waiting lists, but there are challenges, as you heard in the presentation, in terms of hiring teachers who have these skill sets and are willing to continue. So there are challenges we face and lessons we have learned in our district, but that does not mean we do not think we should keep forging forward. We are here in support. This bill has two of my favorite things: it is optional and has an appropriation.

Ruben R. Murillo, Jr., President, Nevada State Education Association:

The Nevada State Education Association (NSEA) supports A.B. 139 and thanks Assemblywoman Swank for bringing it forward. The NSEA believes that students should have access to the kind of world-class education students receive in dual language immersion programs. Every student should attend a school that embraces kids from all cultural, racial, economic, and linguistic backgrounds. Every student should have access to a fun and rigorous curriculum that inspires academic excellence. Every student should have the benefit of a language-rich, bilingual environment that represents the world in which we live. In dual language programs, you get to see firsthand what the research tells us: Students in dual language programs, both ELL and English-dominant, often significantly outperform their same-language peers in traditional schools. Even more telling, dual language immersion students who begin elementary school as English language learners and become fully proficient in English often perform as well or better than native English speakers. It is the hope of NSEA that dual language immersion programs be offered not only in the suburbs, but in socially and economically disadvantaged schools. This could expand public school choice now offered by public schools.

David W. Carter, Member-District 2, State Board of Education:

I love this idea and will do my part to have the Board of Education support this initiative, especially in some of the languages mentioned today.

Jessica Ferrato, representing Nevada Association of School Boards:

We are here in support of the bill. Lindsay Anderson said it really well; this language is enabling and there is an appropriation, which helps us. This is an excellent program. I am excited personally. My daughter is zoned for one of the two immersion programs in Washoe County and will start next fall. This provides a lot of opportunities for both foreign language speakers as well as for English language speakers.

Steve Jimenez, representing Nevada Hispanic Legislative Caucus:

We support A.B. 139. We understand that dual language immersion programs help English language learners. Research has shown that dual language programs yield long-term, better achievement outcomes for English language learners. First, ELL students can build on their native language skills. They can also build confidence, as dual language shows that the classroom values their home language. Bilingual children develop more complex thinking, which helps students with critical thinking and other cognitive skills. There are currently no true dual language immersion programs in the Clark County School District (CCSD) public schools, according to WestEd's review, even though the CCSD has one of the top five populations of English language learners. It is appropriate for the Legislature, through Assemblywoman Swank's bill, to help push our district in this direction.

Chairman Thompson:

Is there anyone else in support of A.B. 139? [There was no one.] I will move to opposition. Is there anyone in opposition to A.B. 139? [There was no one.] Is anyone neutral? [There was no one.] I want to note that there are two exhibits on NELIS. One in opposition ([Exhibit F](#)) and one in support ([Exhibit G](#)). [[Exhibit H](#)] was submitted but not discussed and is included as an exhibit for the meeting.]

If you would like to come up, Assemblywoman Swank, and close the testimony.

Assemblywoman Swank:

I do not have a lot of closing comments. I would just like to say kerangtso teng la thuk je nang [thank you for your time].

Chairman Thompson:

Thank you, Mr. Roberts, for your expertise and sharing your time with us today. At this time, we will close the hearing on A.B. 139 and go to public comment. If there is anyone here today for public comment, please come forward. [There was no one.] Are there further comments from the Committee? [There were none.] This meeting is adjourned [at 4:29 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Sharon McCallen
Recording Secretary

Terry Horgan
Transcribing Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblyman Tyrone Thompson, Chairman

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

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

[Exhibit C](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "iNVEST in education 2017, Meeting the Challenges and Realizing the Future for Nevada Students, Assembly Committee on Education," dated March 8, 2017, presented by Pat Skorkowsky, Superintendent of Schools, Clark County School District; President, Nevada Association of School Superintendents.

[Exhibit D](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Utah Dual Language Immersion, Providing a World of Opportunities for Students," provided by Gregg Roberts, Dual Language Immersion and World Languages Specialist, Utah State Board of Education, and presented by Assemblywoman Heidi Swank, Assembly District No. 16, in support of Assembly Bill 139.

[Exhibit E](#) is a video about the Bridge Program presented by Gregg Roberts, Dual Language Immersion and World Languages Specialist, Utah State Board of Education.

[Exhibit F](#) is a letter to the Committee on Education, dated March 8, 2017, in opposition to Assembly Bill 139, authored by Janine Hansen and Lynn Chapman, representing Nevada Families for Freedom.

[Exhibit G](#) is written testimony submitted by the Nevada State Education Association, dated March 8, 2017, in support of Assembly Bill 139.

[Exhibit H](#) is a letter dated March 8, 2017, in support of Assembly Bill 139 submitted to the Committee on Education by the Latino Leadership Council.