

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

**Seventy-Ninth Session  
May 1, 2017**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chairman Tyrone Thompson at 3:19 p.m. on Monday, May 1, 2017, in Room 3142 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4404B 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:**

Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Senate District No. 5  
Senator Patricia Farley, Senate District No. 8  
Senator Donald (Don) G. Gustavson, Senate District No. 14



**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Amelie Welden, Committee Policy Analyst  
Karly O'Krent, Committee Counsel  
Sharon McCallen, Committee Secretary  
Trinity Thom, Committee Assistant

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Brian L. Mitchell, Director, Office of Science, Innovation and Technology, Office of the Governor  
Mark Newburn, Vice President, State Board of Education, Department of Education; and Co-Chair, Advisory Council on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics  
Craig M. Stevens, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, Government Affairs, Community and Government Relations, Clark County School District  
Tyson K. Falk, representing Nevada Museum of Art  
Austin Slaughter, representing Las Vegas Metro Chamber of Commerce  
Mary Pierczynski, representing Nevada Association of School Superintendents; and Nevada Association of School Administrators  
Paige Ritzman, representing Nevada Association of School Boards  
Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director of Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association  
Jonathan P. Leleu, representing Insomniac  
David W. Carter, Member, District 2, State Board of Education, Department of Education  
Brad Keating, Legislative Representative, Community and Government Relations, Clark County School District  
Janine Hansen, State President, Nevada Families for Freedom  
Lynn Chapman, State Vice President, Nevada Eagle Forum  
Cheyenne Clayson, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada  
Sadie Brown, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada

**Chairman Thompson:**

[Roll was called. Rules and protocol were explained.] We have four bills today. We will start with Senate Bill 241 (1st Reprint).

**Senate Bill 241 (1st Reprint): Provides for the establishment of the State Seal of STEM Program and the State Seal of STEAM Program. (BDR 34-680)**

**Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Senate District No. 5:**

I am here to present Senate Bill 241 (1st Reprint), which establishes the State Seal of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Program and the State Seal of the Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM) Program to recognize students who have achieved a high level of proficiency in those subjects.

As you know, one of Nevada's primary workforce development goals has been to emerge as a global leader in science, technology, and innovation. As such, Governor Sandoval reestablished the Office of Science, Innovation and Technology in the Office of the Governor and prioritized STEM education to support workforce demands here in Nevada. Making progress on these objectives, Nevada has become an international center for innovation in science and technology, and has recently attracted companies within these industries, such as Tesla and Switch, to establish operations here and hire skilled Nevadans to fill these positions. Although Nevada has made great progress in the STEM and STEAM fields, we must not become complacent and lose the momentum that we presently have.

In the coming years, workforce demands for skilled labor in these areas will become even greater. Even with the effects of the recession, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that employment in STEM companies grew 10.5 percent between May 2009 and May 2015. In Nevada, growth in STEM jobs is projected to be 40 percent higher than in non-STEM jobs between 2014 and 2024. This bill not only encourages students to pursue and become proficient in STEM and STEAM subjects, but it also acknowledges this proficiency upon their high school graduation. Senate Bill 241 (1st Reprint) expands upon an existing program in which high school students with a high level of proficiency in one or more languages in addition to English receive a diploma with an affixed, special seal denoting biliteracy along with a notice of this skill on the student's official transcript. Senate Bill 241 (1st Reprint) expands this program to include high-level proficiency in STEM and STEAM subject areas.

Further, this bill specifies the academic performance criteria that must be met for the student to qualify for the program. Once entering the workforce, our students are expected to have the necessary, well-rounded skills to make them competitive in a global, twenty-first century market. To maintain a competitive advantage and attract innovative companies to Nevada, we need to encourage, support, and recognize our students who pursue STEM and STEAM education.

It is critical that we act now with a long-term and focused workforce development bill. This bill celebrates our students' achievements while ensuring that Nevada remains competitive with a skilled workforce capable of meeting the increased demands for years to come.

**Brian L. Mitchell, Director, Office of Science, Innovation and Technology, Office of the Governor:**

I am here to support S.B. 241 (R1). This bill would support both the work of my office and the work of the Advisory Council on Science, Technology, Engineering, and mathematics in the Department of Education in two ways. First, it would augment our efforts to raise awareness amongst kindergarten through twelfth-grade students both about the career opportunities in STEM and the academic and technical requirements for those careers. The seal would give students very clear benchmarks to achieve in order to be ready for STEM careers.

Second, this bill will boost our efforts to increase college and career readiness in high school. We know that students who take four years of math and at least three years of science are almost twice as likely to continue to a two- or four-year Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) institution in any major than those who take fewer math and science courses. Specific to STEM, we also know that 80 percent of students who have taken a higher level math course in high school and major in STEM persist to the following year versus only 50 percent of students with STEM majors whose highest level of math in high school was Algebra II.

I would like to thank Senator Woodhouse and the Clark County School District (CCSD) for all of their work and research in bringing this bill forward. I would also like to thank all the other districts, especially Washoe County School District, for their thoughtful comments that improved this bill in the Senate. In a recent survey by the Bank of Nevada, 55 percent of business leaders believe that increasing the pool of STEM graduates will have the most positive impact on Nevada and its economy. This bill provides a pathway and the motivation for students to prepare themselves for STEM postsecondary education and careers.

**Assemblywoman Joiner:**

I am a huge advocate for encouraging our kids to get into science and technology. I personally also love STEAM, the new movement to include the arts, because I think it is all interrelated and crucial. I am trying to do a side by side of the credit requirements. Is it possible for a student to earn both, or is the concept that they would earn one or the other? It looks like for the STEAM, they need additional credits in the arts, humanities, and technology.

**Senator Woodhouse:**

That question has not come up before. I do not think it could happen that way because the STEAM person does have the additional arts and humanities requirements. However, when CCSD comes up, I would suggest that we ask them. We worked heavily with them to identify each of those requirements for each of those seals.

**Chairman Thompson:**

Is there anyone wishing to testify in favor of the bill?

**Mark Newburn, Vice President, State Board of Education, Department of Education;  
and Co-Chair, Advisory Council on Science, Technology, Engineering,  
and Mathematics:**

I am in strong support of this bill.

**Craig M. Stevens, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, Government Affairs,  
Community and Government Relations, Clark County School District:**

We fully support the bill, and we believe it will do a great thing for our students. Of the top five high schools in Nevada, three of them are in CCSD, and they are all career and technical or performing arts schools. We think this will encourage more of our students to try to attend these schools. We also believe we should reward all the hard work put in by our students.

When it comes to the standards in the bill, we looked at other states that were doing this, such as Michigan. We compared what we are doing and what would be in this bill to what they are doing. We also looked at the academic unit and what they believe the bar should be for students to reach. Not every student would get this; however, those who are planning a career in these fields and working so hard in this area will be able to achieve it.

**Assemblywoman Joiner:**

Can they earn both? It looks like you could add humanities credits into technology and end up with both of them. They were a bit different, but I am not sure.

**Craig Stevens:**

I believe the idea was to have one or the other. I can work with you and the bill sponsor if you think both would be achievable.

**Tyson K. Falk, representing Nevada Museum of Art:**

We advocate teaching and learning that celebrates the authentic integration of art, design, and creative thinking into all learning environments. Today, we call this approach STEAM education and utilize it to create well-rounded education dependent on whole-brain thinking and the expression of multiple intelligences. The Nevada Museum of Art is actually the only accredited art museum in Nevada, so we have a responsibility to the public. We operate a number of programs that are relative to the STEAM goals set forth in this legislation. I will highlight a few of them.

We have educator evenings, where we do teacher training for workshops regarding interdisciplinary connections between STEAM and art integration practices. We have school tours—8,000 prekindergarten through college-age students come through on tours. There is another piece of legislation being considered in the Senate that would appropriate funding to some arts across the states. This would be able to expand some of these programs down into the south as well.

**Austin Slaughter, representing Las Vegas Metro Chamber of Commerce:**

The Las Vegas Metro Chamber of Commerce supports S.B. 241 (R1) as STEM and STEAM education has been a longstanding priority for the Chamber. This helps create a more informed and prepared Nevada workforce.

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

We want to thank Senator Woodhouse for bringing the bill forward. We appreciate her emphasis on STEM. It has been there for a few different sessions now. I think these seals encourage students to pursue more STEM classes and give recognition to those students who have worked hard in the STEM curriculum.

**Paige Ritzman, representing Nevada Association of School Boards:**

I echo the comments of my colleagues, and we support this bill.

**Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director of Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association:**

We support S.B. 241 (R1) to recognize well-rounded students who have achieved a high level of proficiency in STEM or STEAM education programs. They are an important component for ensuring our students are college and workforce ready for the emerging high-tech economy here in Nevada, but STEM and STEAM should be more than just subjects in an acronym. They should be engaging, hands-on education that helps students make technical information relevant to the real world and foster critical thinking and creativity. We are excited about engaging with cutting-edge developments, curriculum, and teaching, so we are best educating the leaders of tomorrow.

**Chairman Thompson:**

Is there anyone wishing to testify in opposition to the bill? [There was no one.] Is there anyone wishing to testify as neutral to the bill? [There was no one.]

**Senator Woodhouse:**

Thank you for everything you all are doing for our students in Nevada, and I encourage your support for this piece of legislation. As Mary Pierczynski said, we have been working for a number of sessions now on STEM programs for our students. We see this one as the next step to really recognizing our students who are going the extra mile in STEM and STEAM. We want to keep this momentum going.

**Chairman Thompson:**

We will close out the hearing for S.B. 241 (R1). Next we will open the hearing for Senate Bill 164 (1st Reprint).

**Senate Bill 164 (1st Reprint): Authorizes a school district to lease school buses or vehicles belonging to the school district in certain circumstances. (BDR 34-668)**

**Senator Patricia Farley, Senate District No. 8:**

I am here to present Senate Bill 164 (1st Reprint) today. This bill responds to an issue that has been brought up before the Legislature in the past, but it has not been resolved. With some of the larger conventions and events in Las Vegas, organizers are being forced to go out of the state to find a sufficient number of buses or other transportation options. Senate Bill 164 (1st Reprint) addresses these issues by allowing school districts to lease out school vehicles for events like these. Not only would this solution keep money in Nevada that is currently going out of state, it would also allow school districts to potentially generate some revenue.

Before I outline the key provisions of S.B. 164 (R1), I would like to note that the language in the bill is enabling, not mandatory. It would be up to each school district to decide whether they would like to participate.

Section 1, subsection 1 allows the school district to enter into an agreement to lease school buses or other district vehicles for special events that take place in the county where the school district is located. This agreement must not interfere with providing transportation for students. Further, pursuant to section 1, subsection 5, the district must determine that a commercial bus is not reasonably available for the event. Section 1, subsection 2 lays out the specifications for a lease agreement. These include a security deposit, fee requirements, indemnity provisions, responsibility for damage, proof of insurance, driver licensure, and proof of a permit or approval for a special event if required by a government entity. Section 1, subsection 2, paragraph (i) requires that the district employees be given preference in hiring for operation of these vehicles.

Section 1, subsection 3 requires that any identifying lettering must be covered when a school vehicle is leased, and no signs or wordings may be attached. Flashing red lights and mechanical devices at the front of each school bus may not be used unless there is an emergency. Pursuant to section 1, subsection 4, any money collected from a lease agreement that exceeds district costs must be used to replace school buses and other district vehicles.

Section 1, subsection 6 specifies that no more than 8.5 percent of the total number of the district vehicles may be leased out at any time. Finally, section 1, subsection 7 provides the definition of a "special event" for the purposes of this bill. In short, S.B. 164 (R1) allows districts to use their assets to generate additional revenue and addresses a problem that has come up with insufficient transportation options for some of the larger events in Las Vegas. We believe there is a friendly amendment coming to this bill. As soon as that has been completed, we will get that to the Committee.

**Chairman Thompson:**

Would you like to talk conceptually about the amendment?

**Jonathan P. Leleu, representing Insomniac:**

The conceptual amendment is with respect to statutory immunity. As most of you know, the state is immune from certain types of lawsuits. The concern brought to our attention was whether this bill would allow the statutory immunity that the school district would enjoy to inure to the benefit of the lessee under the lease transaction. The intent of the bill was not to do that. The intent was always to ensure liability was upheld. In fact, the bill does ensure that the lessee indemnifies the school district in the event of a lawsuit. The conceptual amendment will make abundantly clear that the statutory immunity will not inure to the benefit of the lessee under the lease transaction.

**Assemblywoman Miller:**

What is the need that there is not enough public transportation? What is the impact on the transportation industry right now?

**Jonathan Leleu:**

The bill has safeguards within it such that the existing rolling stock within the state or county in which the event would be occurring would need to be exhausted before this option would be allowed. The impact on existing companies in the state is zero. The answer to your second question is that the need is great. To give you a snapshot of what is going on here, by way of background, I used to be the general counsel of the World Market Center in Las Vegas for five years, from 2008 to 2013. During that time, I noticed that our transportation costs were extremely high. We dove into what the cost was, and it was going to a company in Phoenix, Arizona and Texas to bring rolling stock to Nevada for purposes of moving people from the casinos and hotel resorts to the convention facility in downtown Las Vegas. The reason World Market Center had to do that was because the rolling stock was exhausted. There just are not enough large buses in Nevada to accommodate that need.

This bill seeks to do two things. It seeks to not damage the transportation industry. I represent a transportation association as well. We do not want to damage the transportation industry. We want to ensure they are flush with business. This bill ensures that. The second thing we want to do is ensure money that is used for these types of events stays in the state and can be used for a beneficial purpose. I would love to be able to say that I came up with this. The person who did come up with this was Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson. I do feel odd bringing this bill while he is not here. He brought this bill in the last session, and it went through the Assembly. It passed unanimously, but ultimately it was amended in the Senate and put on the desk right around May 28 of 2015. If you look at that date, you can see it died for political and not substantive reasons.

That being said, we thought it was a good idea to bring it back. We have done our homework and talked to a lot of different people. There is wide support for this bill. We wanted to ensure that the transportation industry was protected, money stayed in the state, and it was done for a good purpose. We hit all three with this bill.

**Assemblywoman Miller:**

When we are talking transportation, the majority of our rural districts have different dynamics. They have major events and functions that they do as well. I am separating from our larger districts and our more rural districts, but since you brought up keeping money in Nevada, that is my next question. How much money are the school districts projected to make? Along with that, when I look in the bill, it says in section 1, subsection 4, "A school district shall separately account for any money collected as a result of an agreement to lease a school bus or vehicle which exceeds the actual cost to the school district and such money must be used for the replacement of school buses and vehicles belonging to the school district." That implies that the money obtained by the school district would not just be revenue for the school district to use for the other multiple needs that school districts have. It is just money to replace and repair the school buses. Can you speak to that?



**Jonathan Leleu:**

You are right. That is exactly what that says, and it is exactly what that does. As we work through this bill with the school districts, that was the language that the school district was comfortable with. As a person testifying in favor of this bill along with the bill sponsor, I would not have any issues with refining that language or ensuring the language had the breadth to allow the money to go to different sources and needs within the schools. That said, I believe the reasoning was that if the buses are being used, we have to ensure they are maintained. Chief among the reasons why we have buses in the first place is to get kids to school—it is not to rent them. We want to ensure our buses are maintained and in good operating order.

On the Senate side, Senator Harris asked us to amend the bill such that there was a limit put into it. We put two limits into it. The first was to ensure only 8.5 percent of the rolling stock that the school district had could be leased at any one time. The number one priority of school buses is to get kids to school. The second limit we put on it was to ensure that the district renting the buses was also holding the special event. We did not want districts renting buses for events well outside the district and increasing the wear and tear on the buses.

The reason for section 1, subsection 4 is to ensure that the buses are maintained and the kids get to school. I do hear what you are saying loud and clear. Our schools need money. I do not think anyone would be offended if it was suggested that we tweak the bill to ensure money could go to other places as well.

**Assemblywoman Tolles:**

Section 1, subsection 2, paragraph (g) provides that they need proof of insurance. Do we anticipate that this would cause any changes in insurance rates or changes in the coverage because it will be used outside the school district for its primary purpose? Have we verified that?

**Jonathan Leleu:**

The purpose of section 1, subsection 2, paragraph (g) is to ensure that the lessee has insurance that can take over and insure the vehicle and liability risk that would come from leasing the vehicle. At the time that the vehicle is leased, the school district's insurance would not be on the risk—the lessee's insurance would be on the risk at that time. We did not anticipate any change to the school district's insurance premiums or risks because of this particular provision, forcing the lessee to have insurance that covers the liability risk.

**Assemblywoman Tolles:**

If we could just verify that, I think I would feel more comfortable. In the same way that I have a certain kind of personal car insurance, if I started renting my car out to others, it might bump me into a different category. I want to make sure we do not have a surprise on the other side of this for the school districts in terms of insurance rates.

**Assemblyman Pickard:**

I find it interesting that we would be trying to replace the higher end buses with school buses for transportation, particularly with respect to the trade shows. I am not opposed to the concept. One thing did trip me up a bit. In the presentation, Senator Farley, you were talking about keeping the money in the state and giving opportunities to the state. Section 1, subsection 5, says, "A school district may not enter into an agreement pursuant to this section: . . . (b) If the school district determines that transportation by a commercial bus is reasonably available for a special event." I understand we are probably trying to use the term "reasonably available" to avoid going to Texas, but any time you use "reasonably," you open the door to an argument. I wonder if this is really trying to capture what we are trying to do, which is to say that they should use ours first as opposed to reaching out too far. The way I read this, I might think it is reasonable to go to New York for a bus if it is a great bus that I want to get. Is that something we could tighten up or reformulate? How should we address that?

**Jonathan Leleu:**

The intent of the bill is protect Nevada's transportation industry. The intent is to exhaust existing rolling stock here first and then move to the use of the school buses. To the extent that the language needs to be tightened up, I am happy to have that conversation and see what we can do to tighten it up.

**Assemblyman Pickard:**

You mentioned the 8.5 percent. Where did that number come from?

**Jonathan Leleu:**

That is how we negotiate in hallways.

**Assemblyman Pickard:**

There is no substantive data that would support that number over 9 percent or 8 percent or 2 percent?

**Jonathan Leleu:**

We had the lion's share of our conversations with CCSD on this bill. Based on their total rolling stock, that was the percentage that they felt comfortable with.

**Assemblyman Pickard:**

I suspected that was probably the case. I would just be interested to hear from other school districts to see if a different number might be more appropriate for them.

**Chairman Thompson:**

Is there anyone wishing to testify in favor of the bill?

**Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director of Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association:**

The Nevada State Education Association supports S.B. 164 (R1), authorizing school districts to lease school buses to the broader community. We wanted to thank the sponsor for inclusion in the bill of giving a hiring preference to school bus drivers who are currently working for their districts.

**Chairman Thompson:**

Is there anyone wishing to testify in opposition to the bill? [There was no one.] Is there anyone wishing to testify as neutral to the bill?

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

Ten counties are rural districts. Washoe is the only county in my district that is not rural. To Assemblyman Pickard's question, I would like to suggest an amendment to indicate that the 8.5 percent would be either for the urban districts or specifically for Clark County. We would like a different formula or no formula for the other districts because, depending on where the buses are located, you may not be able to come up with a reasonable percentage.

**Brad Keating, Legislative Representative, Community and Government Relations, Clark County School District:**

We are neutral on S.B. 164 (R1). We certainly appreciate the conversations we have had with Senator Farley and the stakeholders on this bill. Tweaks have been made, and they have worked closely with CCSD on this bill, so we appreciate that. I am neutral on the bill because it gives the school district the opportunity to decide if they want to give the buses or not. Our one concern as a school district with contracting out buses is school safety. The worst thing that could happen is that we could contract out to an event in Las Vegas and there is an illegal substance left on the bus that is missed, and a student picks it up on a Monday after school. We appreciate that it allows the school district to create a contract with the vendor in moving forward, but safety would be our one concern.

**Chair Thompson:**

We will close out the hearing for S.B. 164 (R1). We will open the hearing for Senate Bill 86 (1st Reprint).

**Senate Bill 86 (1st Reprint): Authorizes the provision of instruction in cursive handwriting to pupils enrolled in elementary school. (BDR 34-200)**

**Senator Donald (Don) G. Gustavson, Senate District No. 14:**

I am here to discuss Senate Bill 86 (1st Reprint). This bill provides permissive language that would allow for cursive writing to be offered as an available module in Nevada's elementary school curriculum. Cursive writing was eliminated as a requirement several years ago. Several states have realized the importance of learning penmanship and have returned to a curriculum that includes cursive writing as a mandate. Senate Bill 86 (1st Reprint) is not a mandate.

As written, section 1 of this bill would give the school districts and charter schools the option to offer a course of instruction in legible cursive writing by the completion of the third grade. When I initially introduced the bill, the original intention was to offer it as a requirement in course study as other states have done, because cursive writing is beneficial to a child's early development. However, I amended the bill because applying additional curricula to the teaching agenda may be problematic for some classrooms.

There are ways to incorporate this course of study into other required current studies. For example, cursive handwriting can be blended into the art curriculum, such as it did in one Ohio school district. This bill amends *Nevada Revised Statutes* Chapter 389 to allow the State Board of Education the option to adopt regulations for those school districts and charter schools who may decide to offer class instruction in cursive writing.

Cursive writing brings forth benefits to the student's learning process, and once learned, is never unlearned. Cursive writing engages the brain in ways that improve developmental skills. The ability to create words by hand as opposed to typing them enhances the focus of young children, improves attention, reinforces memory, and develops motor coordination in young students who are in the early developmental stages of establishing communication skills. Cursive handwriting has cognitive and neurological benefits. As the finer motor skills of cursive writing begin to develop, students will benefit later in life whenever a task involves hand and brain dexterity and synchronization.

Instructional cursive writing teaches an acquired skill that, when taught at a young age, becomes a useful aid that quickens a student's ability to perform future learning tasks at a faster pace. Cursive instruction is an in-class activity that does not require a computer. The learned skill becomes a useful tool that school children are able to apply in any setting. I do celebrate the luxury of being able to communicate with modern day electronics, but if the student cannot perform cursive, the student will more than likely be unable to read cursive. Imagine the expression on a young person's face as they try to decipher a handwritten letter that grandmother sent. To allow the disappearance of cursive writing in course study is to disconnect students from the past. Children who are not taught cursive will be unable to study historical documents. We need to pass on these benefits of cursive writing to future generations the same as we pass on our languages.

Many official documents require a personal signature. We even use our signature to validate our presence at the voting polls. Block printing can be readily forged, but the learned art of penmanship remains with the student who learns it, and it becomes an instrument that is used to shape expression. I encourage your support of S.B. 86 (R1).

**Assemblyman Pickard:**

I learned cursive by third grade, and if you were to ask me to write in cursive right now, it would look like I am still in third grade. I do not use it. I have not for many, many years. When this came up for the first time in my experience, it was in my own children's education. They were learning cursive. At that time, I learned about the other cognitive benefits that come from that. I am under the impression that schools are currently permitted to teach this

if they wish to. I am wondering what the genesis of the bill is. Is that changing, or is this just trying to strengthen a request as opposed to a mandate? What are we currently seeing in the districts?

**Senator Gustavson:**

I agree to a point, although by putting this into statute, we will encourage other school districts to do it. Some classes, not even the entire school or school district, are using cursive writing as a tool, but some are not. It is pretty much left up to the teachers' discretion. There are some teachers who maybe have not learned it. I do not think it has been optional for that long. I would like to see it a mandate, but we have so many mandates. This encourages teachers to do that. From what I understand, the common core curriculum allows up to 14 more subjects to be taught, so I would like to encourage the school districts to incorporate this into their curriculum.

**Assemblyman Edwards:**

I have to completely agree with you about historical documents, Senator Gustavson. I think it would be an abysmal shame if the American people could not read the Declaration of Independence or the *United States Constitution*. Foreign languages also have cursive styles within those languages, so if we want our kids to learn foreign languages at a younger age, it would help them by also teaching cursive in our own so that they could translate that into whatever the other foreign language is. I think it is a basic skill. I do not understand why people say we do not have time for it, that we cannot do it, or that it is too inconvenient. I would have agreed to make it a requirement because it is a basic skill set that takes you into a professional setting so that you can write a professional letter and sign your name rather than just print it out. Can you say why we seem to get any resistance to having cursive writing? Unless I am mistaken, we used to teach cursive writing when we were not fiftieth in the nation.

**Senator Gustavson:**

I agree with you. I look back at all of our founding documents, like the Declaration of Independence, the Mayflower Compact, and all the letters written by our Founding Fathers. They were all in cursive writing. I learned cursive writing in school, too, but when I got out of school, I got into engineering. I was drawing plans, and we did not use cursive writing. I had to print block letters. The rest of my life after that, all I do is print. I can still write in cursive, but it still looks like I am in third grade, too. I would encourage you to support this bill so that we can get these skills back and our kids can read these documents.

**Assemblyman Edwards:**

I absolutely support it, and I would support it more if it was a requirement and not a choice.

**Senator Gustavson:**

I could not give you an honest answer as to why they have taken this out of schools. I was shocked when I heard that they were no longer teaching it.

**Chairman Thompson:**

Is there anyone wishing to testify in favor of the bill?

**Craig M. Stevens, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, Government Affairs, Community and Government Relations, Clark County School District:**

We are in full support of S.B. 86 (R1). We appreciate that the bill is permissive. There are a lot of things we have to do specifically in third grade when it comes to testing requirements and other things required of our students to learn and our teachers to teach. Many of our schools already do teach cursive, but we appreciate that this is permissive and allows the school to determine where the best part of the curriculum should be when it comes to teaching cursive.

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

We appreciate Senator Gustavson for bringing the bill forward as well as the amendment. Cursive is being taught in a lot of schools, but I think this bill brings forward that this is important and if teachers can work it into their curriculum, they need to do that.

**Janine Hansen, State President, Nevada Families for Freedom:**

I think one thing we need to note in the bill is that it does allow the State Board of Education to adopt regulations describing the standards. I think that is an important part of the bill, which would be provided to teachers. We supported the bill in its original form, and we support this one because we think it is so important. Handwriting engages the brain in important ways that selecting letters on a keyboard does not. Research continues to show that the hand-brain relationship is important for children and adults. The sequential strokes required to form letters and words activate regions of the brain involved in thinking, language, and working memory. It seems there is something really important about manually manipulating and drawing out two-dimensional things we see all the time, according to Indiana University's psychology and neuroscience researchers. Researchers used magnetic resonance imaging to see that the practice of learning letters and shapes can improve idea comprehension and expression, and may add fine motor skill development.

According to the National Science and Math Initiative, "Today, most use keyboarding. Yet the skills of handwriting remain important. They are memory, focus, prediction, attention, sequencing, estimation, patience and creativity" ["Pencils and Brainwaves: An Analysis on Handwriting and Memory," by Timothy Huneycutt, September 25, 2013]. I am a grandma. I have 14 grandchildren. I would certainly like my grandchildren to be able to read a birthday card from grandma. I would like them to be able to sign a document as important as their driver's license or marriage license. I would also like them to be able to read their great-grandfather's journal. I think so much will be lost from our history if we cannot read and write cursive, so we support this bill.

**Lynn Chapman, State Vice President, Nevada Eagle Forum:**

You have already heard about the hand-eye coordination as a major developmental feature. The thinking level is magnified in cursive because the specific hand-eye coordination requirements are different for every letter in the alphabet. The handwriting movements are continuously variable, which is much more mentally demanding than a single stroke. Cursive letters are more distinct than printed letters. Children, especially those with dyslexia, may learn to read more easily. Virginia Berninger, a researcher and professor of educational psychology at the University of Washington, says that the brain scans during handwriting show activation of massive regions of the brain involved in thinking, language, and working memory.

I homeschooled my daughter all the way through school, and I decided I was going to teach her cursive writing because I felt that it was a basic skill. You never know when you will need that basic skill. I also taught her because I felt that it would make her more well rounded to be able to read even old script. I think it is very important. I encouraged a lot of parents as a homeschool consultant in this state for many years. I did encourage people to have their children not sit at a computer with a keyboard, but to pick up a pencil and paper and learn.

**Cheyenne Clayson, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada:**

I am in sixth grade at Carson Montessori School, a school that still teaches cursive writing. I can read and write cursive, and I am speaking in favor of S.B. 86 (R1). Even though I am a member of the digital generation and I realize that we live in a world of smart phones and computers and where texting is the most common method of communication, I really feel that cursive has a place in today's world.

By being able to read cursive, history will come to life as we read the original versions of the important documents that our country was founded on. Those same documents give me First Amendment rights to freedom of speech and allow me, as a 12-year-old, the freedom to be here and speak to you about S.B. 86 (R1). With this bill, we will all have a legal signature. It was not that long ago that being able to sign your name was a sign of being educated. In the real world today, we are still required to sign contracts, checks, wills, and legal documents. Even when you swipe a credit card, you write your signature across the screen. Every student at Carson Montessori School, including kindergarteners, develops a legal signature.

For me, there is another important reason we need to be able to read cursive. It is to be able to read those wonderful birthday cards sent by our grandparents. This year, I am bridging up to middle school, and I guarantee my congratulations cards will be in cursive.

At Carson Montessori School, we are a bucket-filling school, and we use our cursive to make our own cards. These are cards to say "thank you" and cards to give hope, like when one of my classmates' dad was critically ill. We even make cards to say "I am so sorry you lost your dog." Today, May Day baskets were made with cards written in cursive and delivered to our school's neighbors. They say, "May your month be filled with joy." Cursive helps us keep in touch and teaches us to care about someone else. These are all skills that are being lost in a digitally connected, but very disconnected world.

Senate Bill 86 (1st Reprint) has a simple premise. Nevada's students will be able to read and write cursive by the end of third grade. Teaching cursive will not need to overwhelm any teacher or clutter any classroom lessons. There is a very simple way to incorporate cursive into everyday classroom lessons. My teammate, Sadie Brown, is going to explain to you just how simple weaving cursive writing into the curriculum is.

**Sadie Brown, Private Citizen, Carson City, Nevada:**

I am in third grade at Carson Montessori School. During this year, I have been learning to read and write in cursive. It is not taught as a separate subject, and it does not take time away from other lessons or from the mandated Common Core. Instead, cursive enhances what we are learning. Cursive helps us to stimulate the creative side of our brain and build the part of our brain where we make choices, and it helps us with our fine motor skills beyond just strengthening our texting thumbs.

The way that cursive is incorporated into my class so that it is not an extra burden on my teachers, because their plates are full, is by using curriculum wrapping, where nothing is taught in isolation. Subjects are taught with real-world application. In my class, cursive is taught as part of literacy choices. The teacher models the lesson, and then it becomes a choice. Cursive is broken down into a piece at a time, and then woven into everything we do. If teachers do not know how to teach cursive, there is a free program online at [www.kidzone.ws](http://www.kidzone.ws) that has everything they need.

In my class, we use penmanship paper, and Kid Zone has kid-friendly terms, like "climb" and "slide," used for making lower case Ls and Bs. Rock N Round is any letter that uses a circle, like the letter O, and even magic C letters, which are lower case G and A. The first words we learn are called "sight words," like "to," "said," "in," and "the." An example of curriculum wrapping with cursive writing is our morning message. When the year starts, our morning message is printed. There are only two things signed in cursive—"sincerely" and a character signature—because our morning message is written from the perspective of a character representing what we are learning for the day.

As the year progresses, we learn more pieces and parts of cursive, so more and more of the message is written in cursive until March, when the entire message is written in cursive. Learning cursive this way is super easy. It is an art form. We can create something beautiful and unique. We love it. We feel special, and it is like knowing a secret language.



Please remember, you do not need to mandate how cursive is taught. Instead, S.B. 86 (R1) should be passed so that every student in Nevada has the opportunity to learn something special called cursive.

**Chairman Thompson:**

Is this your first time testifying before the Legislature?

**Cheyenne Clayson:**

Yes.

**Chairman Thompson:**

You all nailed it. You did a great job. You might have to teach some classes. Is there anyone wishing to testify in opposition to the bill? [There was no one.] Is there anyone wishing to testify as neutral to the bill? [There was no one.]

**Senator Gustavson:**

I am listening to these two beautiful young ladies talk about the bill, and I do not even know why I came up here to talk about it. They explained it so well. I do not think I can add anything to what they said, other than that Sadie brought up the point that this curriculum is available online for free. It would not cost the school districts anything if they were willing to teach this in the classrooms. Thank you for hearing S.B. 86 (R1). I ask for your complete and total support.

**Chairman Thompson:**

We will close out the hearing for S.B. 86 (1st Reprint). We will open the hearing for Senate Bill 247 (1st Reprint).

**Senate Bill 247 (1st Reprint): Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-326)**

**Chairman Thompson:**

We will take a quick recess.

[The Committee recessed at 4:22 p.m. and reconvened at 4:32 p.m.]

We will reschedule Senate Bill 247 (1st Reprint). We will move it to Wednesday. Is there any public comment? [There was none.] This meeting is adjourned [at 4:33 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Sharon McCallen  
Recording Secretary

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Isabel Youngs  
Transcribing Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Assemblyman Tyrone Thompson, Chairman

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

## **EXHIBITS**

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

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