

**MINUTES OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Eighty-first Session
March 15, 2021**

The Senate Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Moises Denis at 1:01 p.m. on Monday, March 15, 2021, Online. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Moises Denis, Chair
Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop, Vice Chair
Senator Roberta Lange
Senator Fabian Donate
Senator Joseph P. Hardy
Senator Scott Hammond
Senator Carrie A. Buck

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

Senator Ben Kieckhefer, Senatorial District No. 16

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jen Sturm, Policy Analyst
Asher Killian, Counsel
Michael Guss, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Katie Lackey, Principal, Sky Canyon Campus of Somerset Academy Las Vegas
Janine Hansen, President, Nevada Families for Freedom
Chris Daly, Nevada Education Association
Lynn Chapman, Nevada Eagle Forum
Ed Gonzalez, Hickey Elementary School
Erica Valdriz, Vegas Chamber

CHAIR DENIS:

I will now open the hearing on Senate Bill (S.B.) 102.

SENATE BILL 102: Revises the date by which children must be at least a certain age to be admitted to certain grades of school. (BDR 34-479)

SENATOR SCOTT HAMMOND (Senatorial District No. 18):

This issue of when a student should or should not begin school is not just about ensuring the student is old enough to sit still and absorb classroom lessons. Decisions about when to begin school can have a large impact on a student's future.

Broad concerns affect this decision, including social and behavioral development, and how these concerns translate to academic progress. The importance of attention to a student's overall social and behavioral development came into sharp focus over the past few years, and issues associated with students' overall social and behavioral development include an increase in school-related violence and depression associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. A national longitudinal study by the University of Southern California (USC) Center for Economic and Social Research indicates that entering kindergarten at an older age has significant positive effects on students' social and behavioral skills through the elementary school years.

Others believe that some children can begin school early. We all hope for a scenario where all children have access to school as early as possible. This discussion is not that simple. From a public policy perspective, many children are not ready to begin school.

In the USC study, researchers pointed out that differences in reading and math test scores between older and younger kindergarten students start out large at school entry and diminish over time, although the difference in reading achievement remains significant and sizeable at the end of the eighth-grade year.

A student's learning, particularly in the early grades, is fundamental to their success in future school years and in life beyond school. One of the most critical lessons is learning to read. If a child is not socially and behaviorally ready to learn when he or she enters school, how can he or she build a foundation of early reading skills?

In the last several years, the Legislature has focused its attention on intervention services, such as those for struggling readers. Why not be proactive rather than reactive? For many years, I heard the frustrations of parents, teachers and administrators who find it challenging to maintain the focus and engagement of some pupils who are not ready for the classroom. Sometimes, this negatively affects the learning of other pupils in a class. Often pupils who are not ready for the classroom are the youngest in their class.

Many of these students barely made the cutoff date in order to enroll; some of these students end up being held back a year, thereby losing friends they made. In some cases, these students feel embarrassed or inadequate. This is a disservice to these students and their families.

Here are some statistics on where other states are on this issue. According to research by the Education Commission of the States, 36 other states have cutoff dates before Nevada's required date of September 30. Senate Bill 102 would put Nevada in a similar position as other states while addressing other issues that were mentioned earlier.

Existing law generally requires each school district to offer a full-day kindergarten program in each elementary school; however, parents are not required to enroll their child in a public school until the child is seven years of age.

In Nevada, children between the ages of 7 and 18 must attend school. Additionally, *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 392.040 provides that a child who is five years of age, on or before September 30 of a school year, may be admitted to kindergarten at the beginning of that school year. With certain exceptions, if a child turns six years of age on or before September 30 of a school year, generally the child must be admitted to either first grade or kindergarten at the beginning of that school year if the child has not already completed kindergarten.

Senate Bill 102 changes from September 30 to August 1 the cutoff dates by which a child must be a certain age to enroll in certain grades.

I have a proposed amendment ([Exhibit B](#)) to Senate Bill 102.

I spoke with various stakeholders affected by this bill. Schools were supportive of this bill. They did, however, indicate that it will take some time to implement the bill. This timing element is why I would like to offer the amendment, [Exhibit B](#), to modify the effective date in section 2 of the bill to be effective upon passage and approval for purposes of adopting regulations and performing other administrative tasks and on July 1, 2022, for all other purposes.

KATIE LACKEY (Principal, Sky Canyon Campus, Somerset Academy of Las Vegas): I have prepared a presentation ([Exhibit C](#)). I am the principal of the Sky Canyon Campus of the Somerset Academy of Las Vegas. I have been an educator for 26 years and in administration for 9 years.

Approximately a year and a half ago, Senator Hammond toured the Sky Canyon Campus. I first mentioned this issue to Senator Hammond at that time.

Most of my educational career was in elementary education. I was a kindergarten teacher for a long time. Senate Bill 102 revises the date by which children must be at least a certain age to be admitted to certain grades of school. The proposal is to change the date by which a child must turn five years old to enter kindergarten from September 30 to August 1.

In 2017, Nevada schools started the school year at least two weeks earlier than in previous years, but the age cutoff date did not change accordingly. Under the law, kindergarten students can enter kindergarten at the beginning of August at age four and be four years old for an entire quarter of the school year. Developmentally, students who enter at four can be in a class with students who could be a year older than they are. Changing the age date to August 1 would address this issue.

At least 47 states, including the District of Columbia, articulate a specific age students must be in order to enter school. The majority of states have an age cutoff date well before September 30. Students must be age five by September 1 in 35 out of 50 states. Only 2 of 50 states have an age requirement for entering kindergarten later than Nevada.

Somerset Sky Canyon has been in existence for three years. These data in [Exhibit C](#) also identify the academic qualifications of students. These designations may have been avoided had the student had another year of maturity and preparation for entering kindergarten. Of the 29 students who

started at my school at age four over the last three years, 13, or 44 percent, qualified for Read by Grade 3 or reading Response to Intervention.

We have to provide additional academic assistance to these students; literary specialists support these students. Literary specialists will be eliminated by the State in the 2022-2023 school year. While the positions of literacy specialists are being eliminated, schools are still expected to support these students. We feel the majority of these four-year-olds need the additional time to mature and prepare for kindergarten.

Somerset Sky Canyon is in an affluent neighborhood. We have a 12 percent free and reduced price lunch program participation rate. Knowing the link between socioeconomic status and student achievement, the percentage of four-year-old students needing additional assistance in an average Nevada neighborhood would likely be higher than what we see at Somerset Sky Canyon.

There is a report by the Legislative Analyst's Office that states the following:

Data suggests that children who are older tend to perform better on standardized tests.... Taken together, this body of research suggests that changing the kindergarten entry age would be generally positive, with no overall negative affect on children's academic achievement.

Because the start date of the school year was adjusted, we believe that the date by which a student must be a certain age to enter kindergarten should also be adjusted.

We want to support students and set them up for success.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I have lived this. And while I do not profess myself to be an expert in any subject, I have a great deal of experience as I taught 30 years, all of them in elementary schools; ten of those years were kindergarten years. Most of the kindergarten years were when we had two sets of kindergarteners in a day.

I also have three children of my own. I lived this with my own children. I have one daughter who was a June birthday; she could have waited another year to

enter kindergarten but she was a June birthday. I had another daughter who was an August birthday, who definitely could have entered kindergarten, but I held her out. She was tiny, two of her friends were not going to school that year because they missed the cutoff date, so I held her out.

I also taught many children who were four years old when they entered kindergarten, ready for school and extremely successful as well as children who were five years old when they entered kindergarten who were not as successful or ready for school. I understand this issue. I see both sides of this policy.

My concern is there are schools which start in mid-July. We could also push back school to starting at the end of August. In the charter school system, it is my understanding that they have different starting times.

We know that children benefit from being older when they start kindergarten. What I always told my parents was, "You have to make that decision for your child." I held one of my children out of school for an entire year. The bad part was she was driving as a sophomore.

My question is, how do you stop this, and why not allow this to be a parent choice? As a charter school, why not say that you would like this to be a parent choice? You have the ability to do that. We do not in a public school, but charter schools and private schools do have that ability. With that, and the fact that kindergarten is not mandatory, I would like discussion on these issues.

MS. LACKEY:

I agree with you. We are a school of choice; however, we are required to follow the State Public Charter School Authority and Department of Education mandates. We fall under the same guidelines as a public Clark County School District school for students entering kindergarten. We are affected by this. We cannot make up our own start date.

In regard to our start date for school, we tend to align ourselves with the same calendar as the Clark County School District. Ours is slightly different, primarily based on when we choose to do professional development days, but our start date is aligned with the Clark County School District. We want the start date to be more equitable. We bumped up the start date a few weeks; that widened the gap of when students were able to start. We ask for that to be narrowed and to be more in line with other states.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

There is more than us in Las Vegas and Clark County. We have to be cognizant of the fact that we have 17 school districts plus the State Public Charter School Authority. We do have schools that, in the past, started in July. There is always going to be a younger child and an older child. There is no magic date for stopping that because children are not all born in one month. For my daughter, who was at the end of August and who I held out, she was a year older than her classmates. It did not make her classmates less smart. Some of her classmates, including the person who is now her husband, were incredibly smart. I struggle with changing the date because I can see how we just keep changing this. When do we stop? There is always a younger student and an older student.

SENATOR HAMMOND:

I think the Clark County School District is one of the last school districts to move the dates up. Washoe County School District moved the date up before Clark County School District. As Principal Lackey pointed out, charter schools, and I suspect some private schools, try to align their schedules with the rest of the public schools. Some parents have children in charter schools and public schools; other parents may have children in public and private schools.

As far as moving the dates, we could make any date we wanted to, but what we are trying to point out is that by making it universal on August 1, we are in line with other states. When we are making comparisons, as we often do in education with other states' test scores and achievement, we would be making a better comparison by aligning the date with other states because more students will be the same age when taking tests.

Some children are more capable of reading in an earlier grade because they waited more time before entering school. That helps with the allocation of resources within the class. We do not have the resources for reading specialists that we would like to have. Research shows that students who start at a later age have a better focus and ability to adjust to certain pressures. As student's age they balance out academically, but the social and emotional development of students who start school later remains better as student's age.

School could begin on any date, but if schools had a universal start date of August 1, or whatever this Committee determines is an appropriate start date, we as a State would benefit. After a student's first or second school year, if he

or she is much more capable of doing academic work, there is nothing that would prevent a parent to go to the administration to figure out if that student should skip a grade. Parents and schools would have a better idea of what to do with a student after a year of school.

CHAIR DENIS:

Is there a process for parents who believe their children should start school earlier to petition schools and begin children in kindergarten earlier?

MS. LACKEY:

We do not have a formal process at Somerset Sky Canyon. We currently have a kindergartner who is well advanced in her academic progress and is sitting in with first grade. We have both sides of the coin. It is important to work with parents in order to make the best decision for a student. If a parent were to come to the school, I would have the autonomy to look at the child, have them come into the school and potentially sit in on a kindergarten class to see if the student was prepared to begin school earlier; however, there is no formal process.

SENATOR BUCK:

How will Senate Bill 102 work in high-need areas? We try to get students in high-need areas into school as soon as possible. How will this impact high-need areas?

SENATOR HAMMOND:

Ms. Lackey has spoken with several colleagues who work in Title I schools.

MS. LACKEY:

I agree. There are high-need schools where we want children to begin school as soon as possible. I believe this is why a bill establishing Pre-K was passed. We try to support early learners. Early learners have the ability to attend Pre-K programs within their neighborhood. In all schools we want to support the student so that he or she is socially, emotionally and developmentally ready for school.

SENATOR LANGE:

I have been in both situations as a parent. I had a grandson who lives with us start early and we had a son who academically excelled and skipped a grade. There are more things involved in kindergarten than how a child will perform

academically. As a parent, I think we look at the size of the child, how mature the child is as well as other factors. Today, our grandson is ten years old and stands five feet eight inches. You can imagine what he was like in kindergarten. He has always been taller than his classmates; if we held him back, he would be much taller than all of his classmates. The difference in height created social situations that we feel were not advantageous. Today, our grandson is in fifth grade and getting 95 percent or above in every subject.

I like the premise of S.B. 102. I understand what the bill is trying to do, but I believe there should be some leeway. One model will not fit every child. I think parents plan for when their children are going to start school. Many parents have their children in day care. I am glad that you extended the effective date because I think parents need to plan for when their children enter school. Holding students back a year costs parents an additional year of day care, which costs parents around \$6,000. Forcing students to stay out an additional year could be a hardship to parents. We do not have enough affordable day care available to parents.

To Senator Buck's point, parents of children in lower income communities may not be able to afford day care. Getting these students into school is a good thing.

SENATOR HAMMOND:

Senator Lange, I would like to talk with you offline to address your concerns. I had a call from a parent who talked about the scenario of a parent knowing their child well and wanting to get the child into school as soon as possible. I think there has to be another mechanism, but S.B. 102 does not address that. Senate Bill 102 only moves the cutoff date from September 30 to August 1. If there is language that needs to be placed into the bill to address the procedure for getting a child into kindergarten earlier, then I would entertain that.

On the comments on getting students into school because parents are struggling either at home or with day care, I understand those concerns. I had a long discussion with Clark County School District about how many teachers and positions that would affect; this conversation led to me moving the effective date of the legislation back to allow both parents and school district to plan for changes. In the first year, all the students who would be held back for an additional year as well as students who would normally be beginning school would be in kindergarten. Delaying the effective date of the legislation allows

school districts the ability to move personnel in order to address increased needs.

If there are any changes that can be made to assuage your concerns about S.B. 102, I will listen to them.

SENATOR BUCK:

What if there were more autonomy for school districts and charter schools to have principals assess a child and determine if a child is ready to begin kindergarten? I believe that we need children to start school as soon as possible, especially in high-need areas ... if they are ready. I know the struggles when it comes to behaviors as a principal. I wonder if the Committee will consider some autonomy for principals in this bill?

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I lived through the days when we tested four-year-olds because parents believed their children were smart enough and mature enough to begin kindergarten. We had four-year-olds who went to school because parents believed their children were ready and did not want to wait until their children turned five. At that time, the cutoff date was October 30 or November 1. We had kids in October whose parents wanted them in school.

I want to do what is best for children, but I want to note that there will always be a younger student and an older student; there will always be a parent who believes that their child is smarter than all the others; and there will always be a parent who needs help. I am concerned about continually moving dates when we continually move dates for other reasons.

I am not sure that this is what is best. I lived this with my children; I lived this with teaching children; and I have lived this on the testing side.

SENATOR HAMMOND:

I agree that there will always be a youngest student and an oldest student. Senate Bill 102 will not change that, but the bill does recognize that if a student starts at an older age, outcomes can be better.

Social and emotional behavior also changes for students who begin school at a later age. Too many times, we believe a student has attention deficit disorder when it may be that the student was not old enough when he or she began

school. If a child stays home longer and gets what researchers call play time—play teaches children how to behave in group settings—that helps students as they age throughout the early period of their education. I was surprised by the research findings.

We are not saying that we are not going to have older students and younger students. That difference will remain, but S.B. 102 will ensure that all kindergarten students are at least five years old. That will help with reading. A student who can read by the third grade will have a better life; the income of students who can read by the third grade is better as they age. If we wanted to make the date August 7—most schools are starting around that time—I would be OK with that as well.

SENATOR LANGE:

Research shows that testing for kindergartners is not reliable. I am not a supporter of having children tested in order to be able to enter kindergarten.

JANINE HANSEN (President, Nevada Families for Freedom):

We support S.B. 102. This bill will ensure that children are at least five years old when they start school. Researchers Kathy Bedard and Elizabeth Dewey found that grade-schoolers who are amongst the oldest in their class have a distinct competitive learning advantage over their youngest classmates; older students score 4 to 12 percent higher on standardized math and science tests.

In their landmark book, *School Can Wait*, Raymond and Dorothy Moore established the fact that children are expected to learn much sooner than their cognitive skills will allow. The book covers 6,000 studies showing definitively that children are far more successful in school if they start at an older age. This is especially true for boys, who are approximately a year behind girls developmentally. This means more boys end up with behavior problems and learning disabilities and more boys fail in school.

According to a new study from the National Bureau of Economic Research, children who start school at an older age do better than their younger classmates. Children who start school have a better chance of attending college and graduating from an elite institution.

In my own experience, I went to school a year late. I found that to be an advantage. When I put my son in the first grade, he ran away from school and

broke out in dollar-sized hives. After considerable effort, I pulled my son out of school and waited a year. The next year he was fine; he was at the academic top of his class and had no behavior problems. Just waiting a year solved my son's problems.

We encourage the Committee to support S.B. 102, which will help more of our children succeed in school.

CHRIS DALY (Nevada Education Association):

We support S.B. 102, which will change the minimum age for attending kindergarten from five on October 30 to five on August 1 of the school year. Thirty-seven of forty-two other states who have set a minimum age for attending kindergarten require kindergarteners to be older than Nevada's requirement. Seven other states leave the decision on the age of kindergarteners to school districts.

Research shows a positive relationship between children's school starting age and cognitive development. It also recognizes additional expectations on the kindergarten year, including the development of fundamentals for learning to read and write. As Nevada considers moving up the required age for kindergarten, we should also refocus on the importance of the Pre-K years and ensure that there are meaningful Pre-K opportunities for all Nevada children.

LYNN CHAPMAN (Nevada Eagle Forum):

I support S.B. 102. We want our children to be successful throughout their school career. A child is a little more mature and more apt to be able to handle all types of situations that may come up in a school setting if they are slightly older when they begin school. I work with children through my church's Awana Program, which is similar to a scouting program. I work with three-year-olds, four-year-olds and Pre-K five-year-olds. The difference between the three-and-four-year-olds is pretty evident. The difference between a four-year-old and a Pre-K five-year-old was also evident. We should let our children be children. Having children mature a little bit before putting them into a school setting might be helpful for children. Children's maturity is very important. Please support S.B. 102.

ED GONZALEZ (Hickey Elementary School):

I support S.B. 102. Some of our kindergarten teachers asked me to share with the Committee why they think this is a good bill. They feel younger students

may struggle with academics, fine motor skills, social stamina and the school day in addition to reading and mathematics as they enter the fourth grade. They also feel like the students who are most successful in the classes are in fifth grade and beyond are older. Elementary school teachers are supportive of this bill.

SENATOR HAMMOND:

In conclusion, S.B. 102 ultimately ensures our kids have a smoother transition to begin their compulsory educational years. I know as well as everyone here how important it is that kids are at a specific developmental level prior to attending kindergarten. Again, I urge your support of this bill to ensure our kids start their schooling with the necessary social and behavioral knowledge to support a successful educational future.

CHAIR DENIS:

I will now close the hearing on S.B. 102. I will now open the hearing on S.B. 202, which requires the board of trustees of a school district or the governing body of a charter school to provide credit for a foreign or world language to pupils who complete certain courses of study or providing for other matters properly relating thereto.

SENATE BILL 202: Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-818)

SENATOR BEN KIECKHEFER (Senatorial District No. 16):

I do not have a star witness, as in my constituent who was here last week, but hopefully we will be able to spark a good discussion about how to solve a couple significant issues that face students and our workforce today.

There is a lack of ability to do computing coding. Computing jobs are the No. 1 source of new wages in the United States. There are currently 400,000 job openings in the field. Coding jobs are expected to grow at twice the rate of other jobs. The Department of Labor estimates another 546,200 will be added to the U.S. workforce by 2028.

We focus a lot on science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education in this State. Of all new STEM jobs, 67 percent are in computing. Only 11 percent of STEM graduates are in computer science. Research shows that taking an advanced placement (AP) computer science class in high school is a clear predictor of pursuing computing in college. Women who take AP computer

science in high school are ten times more likely to major in computer science in college; Black and Latinx students who take AP Computer Science in high school are seven times more likely to major in computer science in college.

We are not doing a good job nationally of incorporating women, particularly women of color, in the computer sciences. Women of color make up ten percent of all bachelor's degrees in computing. Women, generally, earn just 21 percent of all doctorates in computing; of that less than 5 percent are awarded to Black, Latinx or Native American women. There is a large gap in education in computing that translates directly to the workforce. Less than 1 percent of leadership positions in Silicon Valley are held by Latinx women and less than 0.5 percent of those by Black women.

The State has made significant changes to encourage more computer science classes in our schools, including a requirement that students have exposure to some computer science education before the sixth grade. We approved that in S.B. No. 200 of the 79th Session. That bill also requires that a computer science class be offered in every high school. Senate Bill No. 200 of the 79th Session was a significant step forward. The computer science classes that are being offered are not specific to coding. Coding is a specific skill within the computer science realm that we need to focus on in order to ensure that Nevada students are adequately prepared to capture these jobs that are so prominent in our economy.

What S.B. 202 attempts to do is encourage more students to take actual coding classes as a piece of their curriculum, as opposed to general computer sciences. The attempt to do this is by allowing coding to be counted toward a student's foreign language requirement for their high school graduation. The bill is prescriptive and says that coding classes shall be counted toward a foreign language requirement; that may be too prescriptive and perhaps we should make the language more permissive. We also allow computer science courses to count toward math and science requirements for graduation.

Adding foreign language to that list would, I believe, allow students the ability to choose their course of study when they are in their upper high school grades. Senate Bill 102 would allow junior and senior high school students to make their own decisions about the educational path that they wish to take.

I am a strong supporter of liberal arts education. I think there is inherent value in teaching people to think critically. I recognize that the education in world languages is a component of a liberal arts education. I would not want to undermine the value that education in world languages provide students. I do not want to diminish the value of the work that people who have dedicated their lives to teaching foreign languages do; I think their work is incredibly valuable. But there is an opportunity to look toward the future in terms of what our academic structure is preparing students for, both in the workplace and in higher education, and provide more incentives for students to learn a critical skill that will prepare them for higher education and the workforce.

CHAIR DENIS:

We made significant changes to the computer science curriculum, including adding coding in the last Session. Senator Woodhouse and others, including myself, made those changes, which are just starting to be implemented. How does this bill fit into the new programs that are going to be starting?

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

I agree. I think good work was done by previous Legislatures in trying to expand opportunities for computer science learning. Senate Bill 202 adds to that by increasing flexibility for students as they structure their high school academic pathway. A student works with his or her counselor to decide whether the student wants to get an advanced diploma and what the student needs from the world language requirement to receive an advanced diploma. A student may ask the counselor if one year or one semester of coding can count toward the world language credit.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Why did you choose world languages? Many colleges require languages in order to be accepted. Because some colleges require world language study in order to be admitted to college, we may have students who are coding instead of taking a world language; those students may not be able to attend college because they have not taken a foreign language.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

I checked with Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) Chancellor Melody Rose, and NSHE colleges and universities do not require a specific foreign language in order to be admitted. I understand that other institutions outside of the NSHE system do require a student to have taken foreign language in high

school in order to be admitted. Senate Bill 202 would start a process where a student works with his or her counselor to plan a pathway and make sure to meet the course requirements needed to achieve college goals.

If a student decides that he or she wishes to obtain a standard diploma, in high school that would require two years of foreign language. If the same student decided to apply to out-of-state schools, then that student should take two years of Spanish, Latin or German. But, for a student who wishes to get an advanced diploma, the third year of foreign language is required; that student could take a coding class to meet the third-year foreign language requirement.

Senate Bill 202 is about providing pathways for students and allowing them to work with their counselors to ensure they are meeting requirements. I understand that the transition from high school to college or university is an issue that we need to be cognizant of.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I know there are only a few states that allow that. Why did you choose foreign language?

SENATOR KEICKHEFER:

We already allow computer science classes to be counted toward science and math requirements. If a student is particularly interested in the computer science subject matter, Senate Bill 202 would allow that student to develop a robust course offering in the upper grades of high school around science and math. Adding a coding class would meet another part of their graduation requirements while still allowing students to focus on STEM education.

To me, coding is a language, though coding is perhaps more of a universal language than a foreign language. Coding is something that fits into the criteria of a language.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I am concerned that we are going to have children who do not know where they are going to go to school, or where they might get a scholarship, or whether their parents move to a state where colleges require a foreign language and students do not have one. I am thinking more broadly about this bill.

I thought we could already do this by the virtue of electives. Students would just have to make some choices, which are always hard choices ... especially if a student participates in a sport, band or other extracurricular activity. Students have to start choosing between band and something else.

I appreciate the intent of the bill, but I have concerns about some of the logistics. We can talk about my concerns offline.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

I agree. Something like what S.B. 202 proposes relies on really good counseling at the high school level. This would require that guidance counselors work closely with their students to ensure that all their options are kept as open as possible. I share your concern.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

So there would be S.B. 151, which I sponsored.

SENATE BILL 151: Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-77)

SENATOR HAMMOND:

My questions are on the same wave length as Senator Dondero Loop. There are fewer colleges now that require two years of a foreign language than there were many years ago. But some colleges still maintain that requirement. I do not want to see juniors or seniors not meeting that requirement. Have you checked to see how many universities and colleges are allowing other things like coding as a foreign language? I know American Sign Language is a recognized language that can meet foreign language requirements.

Coding is a language. There are many people who immigrate from other countries who do not have the ability to speak English, but they know code and can communicate easily because of their knowledge of code. Are universities accepting coding as a language?

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

I will have to get back to Senator Hammond on that. I think the American Sign Language example is a good example.

SENATOR HAMMOND:

Senator Dondero Loop and I are on the same path. I do not want to see students get stuck in their senior year. As Senator Kieckhefer said, it takes robust counseling to implement what S.B. 202 proposes.

CHAIR DENIS:

On counseling, we have few counselors and a lot of students.

SENATOR LANGE:

Do you know if all schools have coding in their course offerings?

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

Senate Bill No. 200 of the 79th Legislative Session required all high schools to provide a course in computer science. I do not believe that robust coding instruction is necessarily the focus of that. Advanced Placement Computer Science A, according to the college boards, is dedicated to coding and describes the course as, "An introductory college-level computer science course in which students cultivate their understanding of coding through analyzing, writing and testing code as they explore concepts like modularity." That is the type of more robust coding instruction that I believe is important.

We do have a requirement to have a computer science course for graduation. I have two freshmen who are in high school in Washoe County, and they met that requirement through a junior high school course which did not have much coding associated with it. There are different levels of requirements based on the type of course. It is not explicit.

SENATOR LANGE:

I would like to see coding courses offered at every school if this is something that we are going to move forward.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

Opportunities for coding courses through dual enrollment, which we discussed when I previously appeared before the Committee, are a way that we could capture more availability. We do not restrict computer science courses to the physical classroom; computer science courses have always been considered options for distance learning.

CHAIR DENIS:

Regarding what the computing science courses we worked on over the past few legislative sessions, the high school classes were not intended to be a keyboarding class or an general overview of what a computer is; these are advanced, true computer science classes which would include coding. All schools are supposed to be implementing these classes, but they are just kicking in at the moment. There is still computer science work that is going to be going on, but most of it is still fairly new. Schools are trying to find enough qualified teachers to implement these courses.

ERICA VALDRIZ (Vegas Chamber):

We support S.B. 202. Allowing coding to be counted as a foreign language will allow our students to gain a better understanding of technologies and how they are shaping our world. Senate Bill 202 will increase students' abilities to work with the technology that surrounds them. The bill emphasizes the importance of investing in STEM initiatives. Allowing computer coding as a creditable foreign language in our schools is imperative for the future of Nevada's students and the future of Nevada's workforce. With the current shortage of computer science professionals, engineering professionals, developers and STEM integrators, we believe that teaching coding in classrooms will prepare students for real-life situations and sets up students for a successful transition to the workforce.

SENATOR KIECKHEFER:

I know the Committee is committed to ensuring that we pass public policy that is in the best interest of our students. The concerns that we heard today all circle around—ensuring that we are preparing our students accurately and not setting up false expectations for students. I am 100 percent in support of that. Maybe we can find ways to thread this needle.

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CHAIR DENIS:
I adjourn the meeting at 2:18 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Ian Gahner,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Moises Denis, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit Letter	Begins on Page	Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
S.B. 102	B	1	Senator Hammond	Proposed Amendment
S.B. 102	C	1	Katie Lackey / Sky Canyon Campus of Somerset Academy	Presentation