

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS  
AND  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE  
SUBCOMMITTEES ON K-12/HIGHER EDUCATION/CIP**

**Eighty-Second Session  
March 22, 2023**

The joint meeting of the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means and Senate Committee on Finance Subcommittees on K-12/Higher Education/CIP was called to order by Chair Shea Backus at 8:08 a.m. on Wednesday, March 22, 2023, in Room 3137 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4412 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/82nd2023](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/NELIS/REL/82nd2023).

**ASSEMBLY SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Assemblywoman Shea Backus, Chair  
Assemblywoman Sandra Jauregui, Vice Chair  
Assemblywoman Heidi Kasama  
Assemblyman Cameron (C.H.) Miller  
Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno  
Assemblyman P.K. O'Neill  
Assemblywoman Sarah Peters  
Assemblyman Steve Yeager

**SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop, Chair  
Senator Dina Neal  
Senator Heidi Seevers Gansert  
Senator Robin L. Titus

**SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Senator Nicole J. Cannizzaro (excused)

**GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:**

None



**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sarah Coffman, Assembly Fiscal Analyst  
Wayne Thorley, Senate Fiscal Analyst  
Adam Drost, Principal Program Analyst  
Lilliana Camacho-Polkow, Program Analyst  
Madison Ryan, Program Analyst  
Janice Wright, Committee Secretary  
Janet Osalvo, Committee Assistant

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education  
David Brancamp, Director, Office of Standards and Instructional Support,  
Department of Education  
Maria Sauter, Education Programs Supervisor, Office of Student and School  
Supports, Department of Education  
Megan Peterson, Deputy Superintendent, Student Investment Division, Department of  
Education  
Craig Statucki, Interim Deputy Superintendent for Educator Effectiveness and Family  
Engagement Division, Department of Education  
Celeste D. Arnold, Administrative Services Officer, Student Investment Division,  
Department Support Services, Department of Education  
Patricia Oya, Director, Office of Early Learning and Development, Department of  
Education  
Christina (Christy) McGill, Interim Deputy Superintendent for Student Achievement,  
Department of Education

**Chair Backus:**

[Roll was called, and the Subcommittees' rules and protocols were explained.] I know we have Superintendent Ebert and others who will be presenting a variety of budgets this morning. I will open the hearing on budget account 101-2675.

**EDUCATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**NDE - STANDARDS AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT (101-2675)**

**BUDGET PAGE K-12 EDUCATION-46**

**Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education:**

I am honored to serve as the Superintendent of Public Instruction in our great state of Nevada. I know we have several different budget accounts that we are looking at today [[Exhibit C](#)]. Starting at a high level, setting the stage for the Department of Education and the work that we do, we have two charges. One is to support the entire system of the State of

Nevada, making sure that our schools are lifting our children and have student success and student achievement every single day. Two is compliance, making sure that the law that is set and the policy is transpiring into our schools and classrooms as well as at the federal level.

When we think about those two pieces, first is student achievement. What is it that the Department does? How can the Department help and lift students? We know that we are the third most diverse state in the nation. We lead in so many ways on opportunities to show the rest of the nation what a strong education system can look like and should be, and drive a diverse economy where all the citizens thrive. That starts with our prekindergarten (pre-K) earliest learners, making sure they have the supports that they need to become great citizens who can read, write, and participate in a democracy and all the work that they need to do. We are looking at today's budget and those two charges and thinking about reading, and the Read by Grade 3 Program has been successful. We want to continue that work. Our young students learn to read and write, and their reading becomes their learning. It shifts over time.

I just spent a couple of days with my colleagues from across the United States. The chiefs in several different states are focusing heavily on this work and looking at the science of reading. In Nevada, we have established that direction, but the other states are doubling down. The General Assembly in Tennessee is adding an additional \$50 million to reading on top of the \$4.2 billion they have received from the federal government for the pandemic. They are doubling down in supporting their work.

When I spoke with Dr. Penny Schwinn, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Education, she indicated their Department of Education staff is in almost 300 schools a month. I asked how can you do that? She said because I have staff. I said we have four staff who do literacy work in the state of Nevada. I do not know how they can get into all our 750 schools to do that work. We are competing with states that are heavily investing in early learning. I know that we will get into details on the budget, but I want to set the stage about with whom we are competing. If we want to drive the economy in our state, it is going to start with a heavy investment in education.

As you receive this presentation, I want to address the population numbers and numbers of positions in other state departments of education. To contextualize these requests, our Department of Education has approximately 185 positions. Most of those positions are federally funded. We serve approximately 500,000 students in this state as well as 47,000 school district employees. This morning, our Interim Deputy just took a call because our school districts have tragic things that happen every single moment and every day. Immediately, she stopped what she was doing to help the school district with a tragedy that is occurring. You need staff to be able to support our students moving forward. When you compare us to other states like Alaska that has a large landmass, they serve approximately 127,000 students and have 281 employees. That equates to approximately 425 students per state employee. In Utah, they have 675,000 students with 400 department staff. That is

approximately 1,688 students per employee to support. The Department of Education in Nevada is efficient. I love my team. We serve about 2,551 students per state employee with our team. Those are just some numbers and overviews as we dig down into the budget for funding.

Our work is establishing and maintaining our standards, our core academic content areas, our performance indicators, our courses of study, and coordinating and monitoring technical support with our school districts. We work collaboratively with the regional professional development programs (RPDPs) in the implementation of the standards and requirements through the approval of our instructional materials and align everything to our standards. The standards are approved by the State Board of Education. We work through those cycles and continue to update looking at the diversity of our state.

In our first budget account (BA) 2675, decision unit enhancement (E) 232 provides funding for one education programs professional (EPP). This position will provide learning opportunities for all students through distance learning. We learned during the pandemic that having systemwide support is critical to make sure that all our students have access to advanced placement classes and career and technical education (CTE) classes no matter what their zip code is. Our rural, urban, suburban, and even our urban core at times cannot find computer science teachers or CTE teachers, and technology allows us to make sure that we have access to those pieces. This EPP position will continue the work to build out the digital learning collaborative.

The Governor is recommending out-of-state travel in decision unit E-235. The staff for Standards and Instructional Support has not had the opportunity to travel. Usually, we look for scholarships from other entities to provide support for travel. My own experience being with my colleagues for a few days reminds me of the importance of face-to-face conversations about how we can improve what is transpiring in our state. That travel would cover competency-based learning, computer science, early literacy, and we can delve more if you would like some specifics there.

In decision unit E-275, the Governor is recommending funding for two EPP positions totaling \$177,370 in fiscal year (FY) 2024, and \$226,239 in FY 2025. We are specifically looking to support elementary science and reading with all of it working collaboratively together to move our work forward. We are looking for a key sixth science person and a K-12 English language arts and world languages position. We do not have a dedicated person at the secondary level who can span across these subjects. The work is not just helping an English teacher teach literacy. We know our students are not achieving at the level that we need them to, and we want them to be successful.

I was talking to the team this morning. I think most of you know my degree is in mathematics. Mathematics is reading as well. Mathematic equations are sentences. If you look at the end of an equation in a textbook, it has a period at the end because it is a sentence.

You read all those pieces, the Xs and the Ys, and everything is a sentence. There is a period at the end of it. We need someone to work with our social studies educators. Every single educator is a reading literacy teacher, and we have not, for a portion of time, focused in and led that work in supporting all our educators to become great literacy instructors. Those are our three decision units for BA 2675.

**Chair Backus:**

I am going to ask you the first question. Given most schools are back to in-person instruction after the COVID-19 pandemic, please indicate what benefits would be realized from providing additional resources to support the Nevada Digital Learning Collaborative.

**Jhone Ebert:**

The pandemic gave us the opportunity to start the Nevada Digital Learning Collaborative and build out some of those resources that are readily available. We have not expanded those courses because of a lack of staff and time. We are working with the other school districts and RPDs to make sure there is coursework available for students. I provided the computer science course work that is readily available. We have several school districts that are using that, but professional development is also needed. It is just in time that the resources are made available for professional development for educators and teachers. They will be doing both content and curriculum for students, as well as ensuring that the coursework that we do for adults is readily available in our system.

**Assemblywoman Jauregui:**

I have questions regarding the two new EPPs. This is great, and I want to better understand it. Do we currently have professionals to support professional development in state?

**Jhone Ebert:**

At the Department of Education, we do have professionals. I will use English language arts as an example, and we can give you the organization chart. We have four people right now who serve all of literacy. The recommendation for the 7-12th grade literacy position would give us a fifth position to serve the entire state with literacy. We do not have a specific person dedicated to K-12 science. We also work collaboratively with the RPDs, but they are a separate arm and are not part of the Department.

**Assemblywoman Jauregui:**

Right now, you have four positions in literacy and then we would add the extra two. That would give us six for the entire state. How many teachers are they responsible for working with? The six EPPs are there to coach and help teachers. I think about how many teachers we have and want to know with how many teachers would they work?

**Jhone Ebert:**

If we go strictly with all the educators that we have in our state, it is about 28,000 educators that we have; however, I would expand that beyond just licensed teachers because all of us should be working in that way. It is more than 28,000.

**Assemblywoman Jauregui:**

Could you walk me through how this works? That is six professional development professionals for 28,000 teachers. How does that result in increased student achievement? How do they work with the teachers?

**Jhone Ebert:**

I am very passionate about this work. As a Department, we not only have the passion but the heart. Working collaboratively with the school districts, we have a small but mighty team that works at the Department to build those core pieces. In the past, the Department worked on standards and textbook adoption. If the state only wants us to work on standards and textbook adoption, that is a minimal amount of work, and you would not need a lot of people. In the conversations that I have, no one else in the United States has the context that we have about how you lift this small team to make sure it gets into the classroom. You capitalize on technology, and you also develop a policy of working with higher education and creating an entire system to make sure that every part of the system is working together. We are not just talking about the six positions. It is us working collaboratively with higher education, making sure the coursework that they provide for our preservice teachers is in alignment with what is transpiring in our schools. The RPDs are in alignment with what happens in the school buildings because we cannot be in every school building with only six staff, but we can build a system that has guardrails and scaffolding that supports all our students to great student outcomes.

**Assemblywoman Jauregui:**

It was my understanding that these two new positions, if approved, would be in Carson City. I am assuming that the other four are also located in Carson City. If they are not, please correct me. There is no travel budget built into this budget account. How are these six teachers going to work? I am assuming with technology they are not going to travel throughout the state to work one-on-one with our teachers.

**Jhone Ebert:**

I apologize if it is stated that they would be placed just in Carson City. We have about two-thirds of our staff in Carson City and one-third of our staff in the Las Vegas office. We hire the best talent where they are. We have the technology to be able to support them at a distance. We will post these positions for the most qualified person, whether they are in Las Vegas or Carson City. We also blend funds quite often through our federal grants where we do have support for travel as well. We would always appreciate additional funds where you see we may have missed something.

**Assemblywoman Jauregui:**

I know that in addition to what their primary function is going to be, these two positions were also going to be used to support the new language pilot program that is recommended by the Governor. Can you talk to me a bit about how they are going to do that?

**Jhone Ebert:**

We are excited about the pilot program. We have had the conversation about how many languages there are in our state, and it would be nice if every child graduated speaking multiple languages. We can capitalize on the assets that we already have in our state, including students, families, and teachers who are multilingual. We plan to offer grants to school districts with the dual language pilots as well as hiring a contractor to specifically oversee those pieces. When that contractor goes, we want to make sure there is someone within the Department who can help continue that work. They will work collaboratively together as that pilot launches, and then that pilot will be successful and can continue, and we will have a person in the Department who could continue to support that work.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

Along the same lines as some of the previous questions about the six professional trainers statewide, would there be a regional approach of how that training would happen with the educators? Where do the special education educators fit into this training?

**Jhone Ebert:**

We have been very intentional as a Department to make sure that as our standards are revisited and rewritten, not only special education but English language learners (ELL) and multiple languages are integrated into all the work that we do. In the past, we used to do our standards and then apply those to special education. We are not doing that; we are integrating it as we move forward with inclusive classrooms, making sure that all students have support, and recognizing the differentiation of instruction that needs to transpire.

The Department is becoming laser focused on those most in need. It would not be a regional approach. We depend on the RPDPs to look at regions and strategically support those schools that are most in need. Looking at our data with our schools that are identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools coming up in another budget, we are working alongside our one-star and two-star schools and being intentional with our reporting of where shifts need to happen. We need to have boots on the ground and focus on those most in need and triage them first, like the medical profession. We start with the Tier 1 Supports globally, but we also look at those most in need and are strategic with the support given the size of the Department.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

I heard from a few special education teachers that they are in classrooms for which they had not received specific training. I am happy to hear that you are going to integrate them. If we

are going to utilize our special education teachers not just to do their primary job as being a special education teacher for that subset of students but also going into other classrooms, we must make sure they are prepared for those other classrooms as well.

**Assemblywoman Peters:**

My question relates to the amount budgeted for out-of-state travel. What has necessitated the addition of out-of-state travel expenditures for the 2023-2025 biennium in this budget, given this budget historically was not budgeted for out-of-state travel? What conferences will these positions attend in each of the content areas?

**Jhone Ebert:**

As you know, this budget has not contained out-of-state travel. We have seen a lack of understanding and support of what others are doing across the nation, and how they are succeeding and excelling at a faster rate. I gave the example of Tennessee. We also have Mississippi, which has done good work in this area, and we learned from them as well. I would ask Director Brancamp to provide you specifics on what conferences they wish to attend.

**David Brancamp, Director, Office of Standards and Instructional Support, Department of Education:**

One example of the conferences that we are referring to would be the Association of State Supervisors of Mathematics. Our math leads would get to meet with their colleagues, chiefs, and their fellow math leads around the entire country. These conferences are usually rotated from the West, Midwest, and then to the East Coast and back. Those travel costs are recommended. Unfortunately, if we cannot support them with travel funds, staff have not been able to attend in the past. They must catch up as best they can through email with their counterparts. Each content area has its own state supervisory group conference that they would attend to get training.

**Senator Dondero Loop:**

I want to editorialize here. As an educator, I can tell you attending conferences is beneficial when you are there in person and have the option to hear from different people who are doing best practices. How did the Department determine that \$2,000 was the appropriate amount for each of these conferences? I know conferences cost different amounts and plane flights vary as do other costs. I would appreciate it if you could address that.

**David Brancamp:**

We used an average based on the U.S. General Services Administration rates. We calculated the average of airfare, lodging, meals, and transportation. On occasion, there is also a registration cost.



**Senator Dondero Loop:**

Do you ever use any grant funding or are you ever reimbursed if one of you is presenting at that conference? I know sometimes there are reimbursements or grants that cover those types of expenses. Does that happen?

**Jhone Ebert:**

Yes. At certain conferences, when staff are attending as speakers, presenting and sharing information, they will be reimbursed for that travel. The state does not have to pay those expenses.

**Senator Dondero Loop:**

Can you also provide our Fiscal staff with some information regarding the actual conferences that would be attended, along with the locations, projected airfare, projected costs for registrations, meals, hotels, mileage, and other expenses? Please provide that to our Fiscal staff with your priority order for each conference for the consideration of the Subcommittees when the budget is closed. That would help us. I know you will want to do some cross section so that everybody gets an opportunity to have some of that conference/professional development to make us better in Nevada.

**Chair Backus:**

We will close the hearing on budget account 2675 and open the hearing on budget account 2712.

**EDUCATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**NDE - STUDENT AND SCHOOL SUPPORT (101-2712)**

**BUDGET PAGE K-12 EDUCATION-90**

**Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education:**

This budget account provides funding to support programs to enrich and improve opportunities for students, including Title I and Title IV-A, English language learners, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, as well as private school supports to name a few. The first decision unit enhancement (E) 231 provides funding for the data and project management platform used by the Department. The tool that we use is called Smartsheet. This platform provides staff with a tool to track data, manage projects, and collect compliance materials from our subrecipients. The enhancement recommends \$50,000 per fiscal year. Currently, that work is tracked on an Excel spreadsheet. We would like to modernize that so both our grant recipients as well as the Department have access to one tool, and we can exchange those files easily.

The second decision unit is E-232, which provides funding of \$43,726 per fiscal year for our videoconferencing. We use Zoom, and we work with our stakeholders to provide technical assistance. Participation in these events continues to grow. I am proud to say that we were

able to host one conference with 450 educators across our state using Zoom. This enhancement provides funding to allow the Department to provide additional supports, have breakout training rooms, and streamline the sharing and the recordings once they are complete. I push hard. I think most of you know that part of my life was as a chief technology officer. The Department is using Zoom, but the state is using Teams. We continue to work closely with the Division of Enterprise Information Technology Services, Department of Administration because our tool cannot support enough individuals from outside the state system. We need a tool that can supply us with that support and support sufficient people in and outside of the state system.

Decision unit E-233 funds one education programs professional (EPP) position to provide technical assistance in the school improvement process. This position will provide improved accountability and ensure equitable funding. This position will support schools that have been identified as one- and two-star schools.

Decision unit E-237 provides \$500,000 each year of the biennium to partially restore funding that was cut by the Legislature during the 32nd Special Session. This funding will provide incentives, which include networks to support school leaders, principals, and supervisors with problems of practice, resource sharing, and professional development. Most of you will recall that we had Turnaround Program schools, and that support was successful. The funding that you provided was just over \$2 million per year. The Governor is recommending a partial startup to continue to move in that direction. With that, we stand ready to answer any questions.

**Senator Neal:**

How would the new school improvement program build on the work that has already been completed by the Department?

**Jhone Ebert:**

I will start by saying the work is not finished. We have a lot of work to do. We are moving in the right direction coming out of the pandemic. We track our data, but we are nowhere near where we need to be, and these resources will continue to help lift the state.

**Senator Neal:**

I was reading that the plan is to include continuing support for school leadership capacity, teacher development, and the evidence-based instructional strategies. But what I was interested in is what are the gaps that you are seeing in the current leadership now that you would be improving the school leadership?

**Jhone Ebert:**

Across the state of Nevada within the last two years, we have had almost 200 new administrators leading schools, and they are great leaders. They were selected for those positions. But as we know, mentoring, support, guidance, and just someone coming in and

tweaking what they see with another set of eyes is helpful. It is a partnership of working alongside the school district and the school leader within the building to build the capacity of those leaders. We had a massive exodus across our state of administrators and teachers who need more support than ever, given the pandemic and moving forward in our trajectory.

**Senator Neal:**

I want to ask one final question related to school leadership. Is there a conversation when we talk about improving schools, about leaving the current school leaders who do well at their schools and allowing them to continue to move their schools to a five-star rating before we move them to another school? Traditionally within the district, when a principal is doing well and he is taking a one-star school to a three-star school, we move him somewhere else. Then there is a loss because there is no overlap, and there is no training for the new principal who comes into the school and must start from square one. Then we see a loss in the star rating because the principal coming in does not have a proper overlay or mentorship with the principal who did the good work but was moved across town to then do the work somewhere else.

**Jhone Ebert:**

Yes, you are right. When you have leadership or people move, sometimes they take staff with them. It is not just about the leader, but it is about building the capacity and stabilizing a system. Those controls are locally determined for who is assigned at each school. When you have that stable leadership across the system it lifts the entire system up, and what you just shared is the research. I agree with everything that you said, but moving principals is not in the purview of the Department. We support the new leadership as they come into those schools.

**Senator Neal:**

Please explain how the funding of the \$300,000 over the 2023-2025 biennium for contract, capacity building, and evaluation expenditures was determined and the various deliverables that would be provided from that funding.

**Maria Sauter, Education Programs Supervisor, Office of Student and School Supports,  
Department of Education:**

We determined this based on what we are doing so far with the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) dollars. We currently have \$1.3 million in support of our school improvement programs across the agency for this work with our lowest performing schools. We also had \$2.5 million per fiscal year in Turnaround Grant funds that were used in support of our one- and two-star schools. Based on what has been created for this system of support and based on the work that we still need to do, we thought that \$300,000 with the additional \$200,000 for a total of \$500,000 across each fiscal year would be sufficient for us to continue that work.

**Senator Neal:**

Where is the \$200,000 in the budget? It is coming from what money?

**Megan Peterson, Deputy Superintendent, Student Investment Division, Department of Education:**

The \$300,000 that you are referring to is in addition to the \$200,000 that brings us to the \$500,000 total. The \$300,000 was the identified portion to go to the contract that is supplemented by the other part of funds that Ms. Sauter referenced.

**Senator Neal:**

How would the funding of the \$700,000 over the 2023-2025 biennium for aid to schools be awarded and utilized by the lowest performing schools?

**Maria Sauter:**

We did not budget it as a grant fund out to schools. Obviously, part of our plan is to always provide money to the schools for the needs. The contract that we are anticipating will continue to work through one-on-one coaching with schools. School leadership will receive one-on-one coaching. They will receive professional development and any other support to create a system that works for them. It is not a specific grant to school districts on behalf of the schools. The funds are used to create those systems of support to uplift the district as well as the school leadership.

**Senator Neal:**

You get the funds, you do the one-on-one coaching, but how are you identifying what you need to coach so that the money is effectively expended?

**Maria Sauter:**

We have surveyed our principals and the many new administrators across the state, and they have let us know what their needs are. We also have needs assessments that are annually submitted to the Department based on the needs of the local school districts and their school performance plans. We have trend data across all the achievement indicators of our Nevada Report Card. We look closely at those indicators to create cohorts of like needs, and then we target those schools based on those needs.

**Senator Neal:**

How long do you expect the funding to be expended for that work past the 2023-2025 biennium? Are there targets, deadlines, or moments where we have reached 2027 and believe that the coaching and the supports have achieved the goals that are needed?

**Maria Sauter:**

The work is never done. We always anticipate that there will be schools at our one-star and two-star levels. We hope that one day we can look at all the academic achievement of our schools and find that there are no one-star schools. That would be amazing. It would be

such a lift for the state. Currently, we have more than 172 schools that are rated as one-star schools that are not federally designated. They do not receive any federal supplemental funds. We believe that it will be a process to lift every school, and we see the work as ongoing.

**Senator Neal:**

I understand what you are saying that the work is continuing and that one-star schools and two-star schools may be a part of the fabric of the Clark County School District. I immediately thought of all the interventions and Turnaround schools. There are several interventions. With the current state of funds that we have now, how are we going to target and do that specific work that is an integration of what the Department of Education is saying are the broad top goals that you want the local education agencies (LEAs) to do? Let us talk about Clark County. How are we going to make those dollars target those students so that we are lifting all sails? We cannot say this is our 20-year story, or our 40-year story, or our 50-year story and that these students are just difficult. The students are not Title I, and therefore they are not receiving federal money, but they are getting state money. At a certain point, I do not believe that you are hopeless, but there is an acceptance that a one-star school will always be present, which is not what any of us want to continue or to keep funding with these interventions that may not intervene.

**Jhone Ebert:**

I will answer that question in two ways. First, I am pleased with the new funding formula and how it is working and the proposed budget that has been submitted. The \$2,000 per student is a huge lift for us as a state. This is my 33rd year, and I have never seen \$2,000 per student added to the budget. I hope that moves education forward and everything else in that realm. That is one piece of the work.

The other piece that I would say in education that we have not been clear about is some days it feels hopeless, but we know what needs to be done. The question is how many resources are we willing to put toward that piece? It is a balance. When we meet as a team at the Department, we start out asking if you could have what you want, what would you need if every single school is going to achieve the level that we expect. How many resources would the Department need to support the school districts and their leadership? What the team determined was \$125 million. I did not come to you with a \$125 million request for the Department of Education; the supports for the various schools need different actions. We need a different adult action than what is happening in each school today because if that adult action does not change, the student outcomes are not going to change. We know what needs to happen. I did not bring you a \$125 million request today, I came with a \$1 million recommendation.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

I have a few questions on the education programs professional (EPP) position. In the Governor's recommended budget, there was a funding recommendation for \$300,000 for

contracted vendors to provide consultation services to the Department, assist school districts with improvement plans, and other similar duties to those of the new EPP position. How would the duties performed by the EPP position differ from the services provided by the contracted vendors in the Governor's recommendation?

**Maria Sauter:**

Currently, we have four personnel who work in the team of the lowest performing schools for school improvement. The entire agency of school improvement works, but we have two EPPs and two contractors currently overseeing all the Comprehensive Support and Improvement schools (CSI) and Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) schools. This new position will assist with those schools that are currently being exited from status at the one-star level to ensure that they have sustainability. The momentum that they have created in their systems and on their campuses continues. They are worried, and we do not want to cut them off as they exit status because they would lose that federal funding, and we do not want that to occur. This EPP will ensure continued support and assist with the many criteria and responsibilities for CSI and TSI reporting to the U.S. Department of Education.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

The EPP position will work in collaboration with that. That is why you need four positions or five?

**Maria Sauter:**

There are currently four positions, and this would be the fifth on that team. All are federally funded right now through Title I.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

I like federal money. How did the Department repurpose the EPP positions that historically supported Zoom, Victory, and Turnaround schools? Why are those positions unable to support the new school improvement program instead of hiring a new position?

**Maria Sauter:**

Currently, there is no funding for those schools, but the need still exists. Two of those three state-funded EPPs are working to ensure that the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP) and the weights of that funding are going to the appropriate strategies and activities as required by the *Nevada Revised Statutes*. The EPPs are monitoring how LEAs are using those funds, and they are designing support just as we did under the Victory and Zoom programs. They are continuing that work. The third EPP is working in conjunction with our ARPA ESSER funding and all the federal funding programs including Assembly Bill 495 of the 81st Session. That person is assisting with advising districts in planning, revising plans, and making sure that everything is aligned with their needs. They are still working on the same types of activities. We have so many now that our capacity is not fulfilling all the requirements.

**Jhone Ebert:**

I would add that we had Zoom, Victory, and Read by Grade 3 categorical grant funding that was put into the PCFP, but there were only 35 Victory schools that the EPP was supporting. The EPP was supporting approximately 60 specific Zoom schools. We know that our English language learners and our at-risk students are not just in those 35 or 60 schools but are in every single school. The EPPs now are not just supporting a few schools but are supporting all the schools, students, and leadership across the state. How that work has transpired is much different, but that expectation is still the same, and the requirements in the law are still the same. It is different work because it is spread across more school buildings.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

It is not targeted just to the specific schools, so the workload increased because you are targeting the students who are in other schools throughout the state.

**Senator Titus:**

I appreciate all the effort you are putting in trying to fix it, but somehow there is a disconnect. I am going to back up to an earlier statement you made that you have had 200 new administrators in this last year alone. I had several Clark County school teachers come to my office who were frustrated about the selection process for new administrators including principals as administrators. They were not engaged in the process of picking administrators or the evaluation of the principals. Administrators had a three-year evaluation process, and now it is back to just one year or something along that line. The teachers were frustrated about that process when these principals arrived. My colleague to my left mentioned about a school doing well and then the principal was moved and a new principal arrived. The teachers did not know what that process was and how that made the school succeed. Has there been a change in how you follow these new administrators? Are they held to some accountability? Could you address that for me?

**Craig Statucki, Interim Deputy Superintendent for Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement Division, Department of Education:**

Could you please repeat the question?

**Senator Titus:**

I met with some teachers from Clark County from several different schools, and they were concerned that the process has changed for evaluating these new principals and administrators. In the past, they were on a three-year evaluation process but now it is a one-year evaluation process. They were concerned that the teachers in these schools did not have the same input as they had in the past when it came to evaluating their principals. There was some disconnect and frustration, and I am worried that the teachers are frustrated about that accountability piece with these 200 new administrators. The teachers are feeling left out of the process.

**Craig Statucki:**

I can go back to the historical piece. I am not sure I can go back to the team to see if there was a point in time where teachers were part of the evaluation process. As a former administrator within the Clark County School District, I am not familiar with having teachers be part of the evaluation other than receiving feedback from my supervisor in terms of my performance and my interactions with them. I can go back on that piece. The Nevada evaluation performance framework for principals has them being evaluated on an annual basis, and we will be able to share that information with you.

**Senator Titus:**

As you said early in your presentation, part of the loss of your teachers and people fleeing the classroom is not just about income and pay, but it is about accountability and them feeling that they are not part of a team. When the teachers are feeling that they are not part of any decision-making process or not part of any team, then they look at themselves as less valued, not only from an economic point but from the professional opinions. I would appreciate you giving us more details on how that piece is involved where we engage the teachers with the administration because there is a significant disconnect from what I can see.

**Assemblyman Yeager:**

I have a few questions about external evaluations. Why is the Governor recommending funding for external evaluations when the funding for categorical programs was transferred to the PCFP and most of the statutory requirements for these external evaluations have been repealed?

**Jhone Ebert:**

It is a system. I sit here in front of you with years of experience in all the work, and I call upon my colleagues to do that as well. But sometimes you need those external eyes to come in and look at the work that you are doing. The Department received a letter that the Legislative Counsel Bureau is coming in to audit the Department. We think it is important to have external reviews because we do not have that experience that the researchers have who have done reviews nationally. Bringing in experts to look at the work that you are doing and give you validation and/or midcourse correction with the path that you are following has value.

**Assemblyman Yeager:**

Do you know yet what K-12 programs will be evaluated in fiscal year (FY) 2025 with the funding provided in The Executive Budget?

**Jhone Ebert:**

I do not have that list right in front of me, but I can provide you with that information.



**Assemblyman Yeager:**

What would be the ramifications if the Legislature did not approve funding for external evaluations in FY 2025?

**Jhone Ebert:**

We would not have that added value of having an external evaluator. We would have our own internal evaluations that we would rely upon in the work moving forward.

**Assemblyman Yeager:**

Sticking on the topic of evaluations, during the 81st Session, the Legislature funded some external evaluations. We originally believed those reports would come back to the Legislature by January 2023. I understand now that there may be some preliminary findings in March, and we are now in March. Please provide an update on the status of the external evaluations, the K-12 programs that will be evaluated, when the evaluations will be completed, and when the results will be submitted to the Fiscal Analysis Division.

**Jhone Ebert:**

Yes, I do apologize; I did send a letter in January. We ran into some problems during the pandemic, and that program did not get lifted as it should have. At the end of the day, I own that. We had to move forward with a contract and then the procurement process. The University of Nevada, Las Vegas, has been awarded that work. They are working on that data, and I will get you an update. I have not touched base with them this week. We are working to get that information to you as fast as everybody can. I apologize for not having that information for you in January.

**Chair Backus:**

We look forward to getting that update.

**Senator Seevers Gansert:**

I want to follow up on some of the questions. First, I appreciate the recognition that \$2 billion is a lot of money. We really think we can move the needle. Looking at the evaluations, in the past we had to make sure we evaluated the Read by Grade 3 Program. There was another Zoom Read by Grade 3, and Victory schools, and we were able to move the needle on reading literacy in the state. I want to get an idea when you get the feedback about how much is it to make sure that we evaluate that program externally. We need to keep improving. I know the dollars are significantly more, but they are spread thinner across schools. Please provide information on how much that would cost.

The other critical piece is there has been a discussion about the underperforming Turnaround schools and the work you are doing there. That is another area I think we should examine for how we are spending the money to make sure it is utilized as best as possible. Those are both requests to break out information. If we cannot fund or evaluate everything, we will be able

to select some because we did change the statute and some programs require evaluations and some do not.

**Assemblywoman Peters:**

I will pivot a bit to the Smartsheet software consultants. Why are Smartsheet software consultant expenditures recommended to be funded by the Student and School Support budget with State General Fund appropriations, rather than the Department Support Services budget that provides information technology (IT) support and is funded through a cost allocation?

**Megan Peterson:**

The Department budget that you are referring to is funded through indirect cost assessments, which have been extremely limited at times and provides for those other services that were directly needed by the programs. Previously, additional allocations were made available. We are trying to maintain support for those despite the program dollars potentially being allocated to other areas.

**Assemblywoman Peters:**

The Department Support Services budget is spread too thin. Is that the response?

**Celeste D. Arnold, Administrative Services Officer, Student Investment Division,  
Department Support Services, Department of Education:**

I have been with the Department for a little over a year and a half now. In the last couple of years, I have seen that with the funds from the federal government for the pandemic, we have not collected as much indirect cost assessments from our regular grants as previously. While the authority to collect indirect is there, the reality is what we have been able to collect is not as much. To support the Department, yes, those funds are getting spread a little thin. We must be strategic in how we spend those dollars. There is a need in many of our offices for many things. We must decide and prioritize what we can move forward on with the funding we have available.

**Assemblyman Miller:**

My question is a follow-up regarding the conferences and the executive licenses for Zoom. Why are the Zoom executive licenses recommended to be funded by the Student and School Support budget with State General Fund appropriations, rather than the Department Support Services budget that provides IT support and is funded through a cost allocation? You can confirm that the answer as to why we are using the School Support budget versus the IT support is the same as with the Smartsheet expenditures.

**Megan Peterson:**

That is correct. As our technical assistance grows with supporting our stakeholders, that support does continue to grow as well.

**Chair Backus:**

We will close the hearing on budget account 2712 and open the hearing on budget account 2719.

**EDUCATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**NDE - DISTRICT SUPPORT SERVICES (101-2719)**

**BUDGET PAGE K-12 EDUCATION-29**

**Megan Peterson, Deputy Superintendent, Student Investment Division, Department of Education:**

Budget account (BA) 2719 provides funding to support our staff who assist in the allocation of state and federal dollars to our school districts, and this includes the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP). Additionally, the reporting requirements such as the class-size ratio reporting and allocation and monitoring of our subrecipients is also managed in this account, as well as auditing functions for our enrollment and grants.

The first decision unit is enhancement (E) 231, which provides \$7,300 in each year of the biennium for professional development in our Office of Division Compliance. Included in this recommendation is associated travel, which will allow the Division compliance staff to support preaward risk assessment and monitoring processes to stay up to date with best practices throughout the country.

Decision unit E-226 provides funding for a management analyst 1 position. This enhancement augments our Division compliance staff as well by adding additional support for the preaward risk assessment and postaward monitoring process. Currently, we have approximately 103 subrecipients that we are monitoring and assessing for risk, and there is only one auditor and a management analyst 3 to support technical assistance. The addition of this position will allow for more focused technical support on the front end with our subrecipients as we are assessing risk as well as post assessment for compliance support.

Decision unit E-805 provides funding to reclassify an accounting assistant 3 position to a program officer 1. This will provide expanded compliance reporting duties to include several reports such as the class-size ratio reports that are required under state and federal law. Under the existing classification, the Department has struggled to recruit and retain staff in this position as the duties do not align with the work that is being required.

Decision unit E-227 is for a management analyst 3 position. This will provide funding for a position that will serve as an additional layer of support for our Grants Management Unit when reviewing and approving subgrants and revisions, as well as reimbursement requests. Currently, our Grants Management Unit is supporting 1,048 subawards. After an initial review and approval by a grants analyst, the grants management supervisor, which is a management analyst 3 currently, provides additional review before forwarding for final

approval and allocation of the funds. With only one supervisor to review the subgrant agreements, this creates a significant bottleneck in our approval process and delays our ability to approve subgrants and get the funds out to our subrecipients. This additional position will allow us to bifurcate those duties and ensure faster processing as well as additional technical support and training for subrecipients.

Decision unit E-228 is also for a management analyst 2. This position will assist in our online electronic grants management system. Currently, we are sharing this work across our grants analysts, and this position will allow one person to be a subject matter expert in the system, building out the grant applications, and providing technical assistance to not only Department staff but our subrecipients in how to use the system. Currently, there are 880 applications in the system for \$2.3 billion. Each year, we must reestablish the applications in the system, and it takes a significant amount of work to coordinate that. This position would assist in that process.

Decision unit E-229 also provides funding for a management analyst to assist and provide additional support for our state pass-through dollars that are awarded to the Department. With that, we will pause for questions.

**Senator Dondero Loop:**

It is not lost on me that we do things on a shoestring in Nevada. I appreciate your hard work. But I also know how important grants are to the education system. How did the Department determine the State General Fund should support the three new management analyst positions for the Grants Management Unit?

**Megan Peterson:**

In most cases, it was to ensure consistency. If we were to fund these positions with federal funds and the funds were to expire and not be renewed, we would not have consistency and positions to ensure the continuity of operations. The management analyst 2 is also used by multiple grants including state grants. The federal funds have already been fully allocated to pay for that system, and additional support was not identified through other means. This is a recommendation to ensure continuity of operations and maintain the support for all our grants.

**Senator Dondero Loop:**

How would the addition of the new management analyst 3 position, that would assist with supervision, improve the processing times for grant and subgrant documents, reimbursements, and awards?

**Megan Peterson:**

That is correct. Currently, it takes approximately 20 days to review and approve grants because some of our budgets have over 7,000 line items that require a review for function codes, object codes, and such. The addition of the management analyst 3 position will

provide additional supervision and a separate layer or opportunity for two supervisors to review the work of all our grants analysts to improve our turnaround time.

**Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education:**

To add to that, data is extremely important to us. Benchmarking compares what other states are doing as well as what the Nevada Department of Education does compared to other departments across the state of Nevada. We have the smallest unit in this area. We have additional data. I made sure we included that it was over 1,000 subawards that we monitor with the few staff that we have. Looking at my colleagues across the nation, in Nevada we have additional requirements that other states do not have in the approval process. There are additional layers that we have chosen to implement as a state.

I was asking why some other states can turn their money around faster than us because the money needs to be out in the schools and helping children. We have done some analysis and looked at customer satisfaction. I will tell you the school districts would like to see the money go out faster. There are many different data points that we looked at in this area as well. We easily could have asked for more positions, which would decrease the turnaround time. But knowing our current context, this is not going to get us to 100 percent of where we need to be, but this is moving us forward to drive those dollars into the classroom faster.

**Megan Peterson:**

I would also like to give some context as well. In the five-and-a-half years that I have been with the Department, I have seen the grants management supervisor position turn over at least three times. I have seen all our grants analyst positions turn over at least three times each. A lot of this is due to the workload that is associated with every one of the grants that we manage. We are hopeful that by adding the additional positions, we can assist in the workload as well as retain our staff. One of the struggles that supervisors have is we do not have the time or capacity to do the training that is required to bring staff up to speed because of the turnover. There are a lot of long, hard learning curves to get back to sustainable and efficient levels. We are hoping to address part of that problem with these positions.

**Senator Dondero Loop:**

In your previous answer you talked about the management analyst 2 position, but can you tell us why we have additional layers? You referenced just now that we have additional layers that other states may not have in getting this money out. Is that legislature driven, or is that your office driven? Who drives that decision?

**Jhone Ebert:**

It is legislature driven.

**Senator Dondero Loop:**

You said you had 880 applications for how much money?

**Megan Peterson:**

We have 880 subawards in the electronic management system totaling \$2.3 billion. This includes the federal relief dollars as well.

**Assemblywoman Jauregui:**

My questions are along the exact same lines as my colleague's questions. They are going to be similar answers, but mine are regarding the management analyst 1 position in decision unit E-229. It looks like it is taking about 15 to 20 days to process subaward budgets and revisions. If this position is approved, how will that improve the processing times for the grant award budget reviews and the requests for reimbursement?

**Megan Peterson:**

With the addition of this position, the workload can be divided up more equitably. We currently have one person who is overseeing the Clark County School District budget. Their budgets are frequently about 7,000 lines depending on the subgrant application. By having a second position to share the work, we can divide work more evenly and improve the processing times. We are hoping to get it down to 10 business days with the additional position.

**Assemblywoman Jauregui:**

That just triggered a follow-up question. You said you are trying to get it down to 10 days, but the goal is 5 days. What happens if you are not meeting that 5-day goal? Is there any impact to those award recipients?

**Megan Peterson:**

Yes, absolutely. The longer it takes us to approve the subgrants and get the awards back to the subrecipients, the less time they have to spend the dollars to serve the students.

**Senator Titus:**

Several other teachers have reached out to me regarding this grant process. They were concerned that the school districts in the rural areas were notified that millions of dollars were left on the table because their school district did not apply for them. Whether that is true or not, I do not know. Are the individual school districts left on their own to search for grants and apply for grants that might be relevant to that school district or does the state or your Department reach out and say these grants are available to these different school districts and you might apply? Is there an association there?

**Jhone Ebert:**

When we find grants that are specifically for a Local Education Agency (LEA) or the local school districts, we make sure we push those out. I would even go beyond that—when there are any grants that would help our students, we make sure we push those out as well even if they are partnership grants available to nonprofits. With grants that are specific to the state, we always pull in the LEAs to make sure that the grant will lift our needs across the entire

state. It takes a lot of energy to apply for grants. One of the areas where we are lacking is where there is a required match. At times we do not have those matching dollars for grants so we cannot apply for those grants. That is the only time when we are not intentional applying for funds that we know will help us.

**Senator Titus:**

Are the individual school districts allowed to apply for grants, and do they have their own grant writers? Can they apply for grants on their own outside of the purview of your Department?

**Jhone Ebert:**

Not every school district has a grant writer. The school districts work collaboratively and will hire temporary people to help them write grants. The Department will help when it can.

**Assemblyman Miller:**

I wanted to follow up on the additional legislative requirements. Can you give an example of what a couple of those may be?

**Jhone Ebert:**

In some of the other states, my colleagues are not required to seek approval of the Interim Finance Committee (IFC). We are required to go to IFC for expenditure authority. Also, the federal relief dollars that we currently have were allocated to the states in a broad category. All the states have different needs, such as reading and devices. I was just speaking to one of my colleagues yesterday in Utah. She did not need devices. They have been 1:1 since 2016 in their state. That flexibility with those dollars has been provided by the federal government. As we have been expending those funds, we have found that school districts have difficulty finding teachers, counselors, and social workers. The IFC has initially approved funds for counselors and social workers. We do not want to return any funds. We want to make sure those funds are used for students. Now a school district or the Department of Education needs to pivot because we cannot find qualified staff. We want to use those dollars. I am going to use an example of telehealth or another item that is an acceptable expense by the federal government—we must seek approval from the IFC to expend funds because it has been identified as a change in purpose. The purpose is to support students. It is flexible, so in our minds, it is not a change in purpose, but we have had to come back to the IFC. Then that slows down the process for expending those funds. That is one example.

**Assemblyman Miller:**

I understand. Then as it relates to the turnaround time on the subrecipient awards, I know we are trying to get to ten days. We need to be at five days. Where are we right now? How long is it taking to turn around an award?

**Megan Peterson:**

On average, it is approximately 20 business days.

**Assemblyman Miller:**

My next question is about the management analyst position in the risk assessment and monitoring unit in decision unit E-226. There is currently an existing auditor position that is handling these tasks. How would the management analyst 1 position work in collaboration with the existing auditor position that is handling these tasks?

**Megan Peterson:**

The management analyst would support the front side of doing the technical assistance and working with the subrecipients to ensure all required documentation is coordinated and received for the auditor to do the supplemental work depending on the workload. This is a new process for the Department as we move through assisting and providing auditing support at least part time to ensure that we stay on track with the monitoring schedule that we have established for subrecipients based on their level of risk.

**Assemblyman Miller:**

The processing times should be improved?

**Megan Peterson:**

Yes, not only the processing time but the action of doing the monitoring should be improved. We are still setting up the program, but we have been struggling to meet the audit schedule that we have developed because we do not have the capacity to audit everyone that we have identified.

**Chair Backus:**

We will close the hearing on budget account 2719 and open the hearing on budget account 2720.

**EDUCATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**NDE - DEPARTMENT SUPPORT SERVICES (101-2720)**

**BUDGET PAGE K-12 EDUCATION-40**

**Megan Peterson, Deputy Superintendent, Student Investment Division, Department of Education:**

Budget account (BA) 2720 funds our Department Support Services. This account provides operating and personnel for the staff who support the Department in all fiscal matters. This includes development and monitoring of our Department budget accounts including completing work programs, all finance-related work including processing payables, assisting in the contract procurement and management process, and processing all the payroll for the Department.



Decision unit enhancement (E) 232 provides funding for an accounting assistant 3 position. Currently, the Department has three accounting assistants to provide Pend 3 and Pend 4 approval for all our payables. One of those accounting assistants also serves as our payroll clerk, and part of their time is dedicated every month to processing time sheets for our employees. This position would provide additional support in the form of Pend 4 approval for all accounting transactions for a quicker turnaround time. Additionally, with the introduction of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP), we moved from approximately 63 transactions a month, one for each school district and charter school under the Nevada Plan, to approximately 400 transactions every month to process those payments. This is in addition to all the additional contract payments as well as other payables associated with our work.

Decision unit E-233 funds a management analyst position that will support our contract position. We currently have one management analyst 3, and that position is responsible for all contract management within the Department. We currently have 100 active contracts and anticipate approximately 30 more. This person is solely responsible for assisting in the request for proposal process, ensuring that the contracts are reconciled, and tracking the declining balance sheet as part of the payable process. This management analyst would ensure that the current position could focus on the front side of the procurement and establishment process. The second new position would assist in reconciling and closing out contracts and ensuring that we have sufficient authority.

Decision unit E-230 provides for an administrative services officer (ASO) 2. Currently we have one ASO 3 who oversees the entire team. With the addition of the ASO 2, they would focus their supervision of our budget analysts in managing that process including work programs. The existing ASO 3 position would focus on supervising the contract team, which is the existing position and the one we are recommending, as well as providing direct supervision to our accounting assistant team. That concludes our presentation, and we are available for questions.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

Would you elaborate on decision unit E-230, and how the addition of a new ASO position would assist the Department and its existing staff with budget and contract work?

**Megan Peterson:**

This position would allow our existing ASO to focus supervision on the contract and accounting team. The recommended ASO would focus supervision over the budget analysts, which would provide additional support and supervision with tracking our budgets and reconciling. We have quarterly meetings with our offices to help make sure they are on track with their spend patterns and to make sure that we are planning for work programs in time to ensure that there is sufficient authority so that our operations are not at risk.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

Currently, the budget analyst 3 position supervises the budget unit. How would the addition of the ASO change the duties of the existing budget analyst 3 position, which currently provides supervision of the budget unit? Would this new position now be the supervisor for the budget unit?

**Megan Peterson:**

Yes, the new ASO would be the second line of supervision for that unit. Although the budget analyst 3 serves as the direct supervisor to the other two, frequently there is a lot of technical assistance and training required within all our offices to bring our budget analysts up to speed. This is an additional layer to help maintain that focus for this area. The current ASO 3 supervisor is spread thin supervising the contract, budget, and accounting teams.

**Assemblywoman Peters:**

I have a couple of questions on some of the other new positions that you talked about. The first one is decision unit E-233, the new management analyst position. How would this new management analyst position improve any current issues the Department is facing in the management of contracts?

**Megan Peterson:**

We have only one management analyst who is responsible for the entire process of all our contracts, and our ability to be timely in the reconciliation of the spend down of our existing contracts struggles in conjunction with the work that is required for establishing the new contracts and managing the request for proposal process. This position will allow us to divide the duties and focus solely on tracking the spend down and the close out of those contracts to ensure that we can apply for amendments to continue, if needed, or to ensure that we properly transition away from those contracts.

**Assemblywoman Peters:**

You would split the duties between these two positions—one would be management of close out and one would be management of standing up new contracts?

**Megan Peterson:**

That is correct. The existing management analyst would provide supervision to the new position.

**Assemblywoman Peters:**

My second question is related to decision unit E-232. How would this new accounting assistant position improve any current issues the Department is facing in its accounting unit?

**Megan Peterson:**

With the addition of this accounting assistant, we would have two accounting assistants who can provide Pend 3 approval and two accounting assistants who can provide Pend 4 approval.

The existing accounting assistant 3 performs payroll duties and management of the time sheets. Every other week in the month, they work on tracking down time sheets, providing approvals, and moving those through the system. They are not able to provide the Pend 4 approvals that we need to keep our payables moving forward. It does jeopardize our ability to process the payables in the required times.

**Assemblywoman Peters:**

My final question is about the same unit. Please explain how the elimination of various K-12 categorical programs and the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP) has increased the workload for the accounting unit?

**Megan Peterson:**

Yes, the work has increased significantly. Under the Nevada Plan, we had one payment a month for all the base funding. Although we had the categorical grants managed through grants, because of the structure under the PCFP and the different tiers of funding for every school and school district that receives that funding, we now have more lines to key into the system for payment. We have gone from approximately 63 payments a month to over 400 payments as a result. That does require approval at the Pend 3 and Pend 4 level. It is not just duplicated, but it significantly increased the work because both levels require review of those 400 lines of transactions.

**Chair Backus:**

We will close the hearing on budget account 2720 and open the hearing on budget account 2709.

**EDUCATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**NDE - OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT (101-2709)**

**BUDGET PAGE K-12 EDUCATION-77**

**Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education:**

Budget account (BA) 2709 provides funding to support the coordination of birth through third grade state-level work to improve access and quality of early childhood education programs. The work focuses on building strong connections between learning experiences and the critical learning period.

Decision unit enhancement (E) 226 provides funding for one education programs professional (EPP) totaling \$99,890 in fiscal year (FY) 2024, and \$123,621 in FY 2025. This position will lay the foundation for an early childhood integrated data system working with other early childhood agencies and programs. Additionally, this position will serve as the state's lead data steward in the Department of Education Data Governance Board and the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council Data and Evaluation Subcommittee. The duties

will include collecting, analyzing, and reporting early learning data such as quality ratings, assessment scores, and program surveys.

Decision unit E-275 provides \$8.8 million in FY 2024 and \$11.3 million in FY 2025, bringing the total investment in pre-K to approximately \$60 million for the biennium. Fiscal year 2024 funding includes the restoration of funding lost as part of the pandemic-era cuts totaling \$3.1 million. The remaining funds allow the program to serve an additional 300 children in FY 2024, then an additional 300 on top of that so at the end of the biennium—it will be an additional 600 students, which brings us to 3,694 seats for pre-K. Patricia Oya will come to the table because I am sure there are specific questions regarding pre-K that she is well positioned to support as well.

**Senator Dondero Loop:**

Please provide an update on the Department's work with WestEd regarding equity adjustments for pre-K program funding.

**Patricia Oya, Director, Office of Early Learning and Development, Department of Education:**

I am happy to provide an update on the work with WestEd. WestEd is currently in the second year of the project, which is a cost study of the actual cost of pre-K that includes the equity piece of how we distribute the funds and who is obtaining the services that we currently provide. We provided an interim report on June 15, 2022, to the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education and responded to the letter of instruction. The report is scheduled to be completed by June 30, 2023, and will be ready for distribution after that.

**Senator Dondero Loop:**

At this time, is it anticipated that recommendations will be brought forward for the Legislature's consideration during the 83rd Legislative Session to change the funding model for the State Pre-K program in the 2025-2027 biennium?

**Patricia Oya:**

We originally used the methodology of \$8,410 per seat, and we knew that was based on expenditures alone and not the best way to determine a per-seat cost. It helped us because we had wide ranges on how we allocated the funds. Now they are looking clearly at whether it is more expensive to provide State Pre-K in rural areas or urban areas. Our State Pre-K program has many seats in childcare centers through our partnership with United Way of Southern Nevada. We are looking at whether those costs are more expensive than when we serve children in our school districts. For example, we know that school districts do not have rent in their budget, but childcare providers obviously do have to provide rent. There are some differences there such as teacher costs and things like that. There are differences, and we want to recognize that equity piece of how we are distributing those funds. I do not have an exact number of what that will look like for future requests for funding or how that will be distributed yet.

**Senator Dondero Loop:**

I would like one last clarification. The Department indicates the recommendation for additional State Pre-K program funding would restore the number of pre-K seats funded prior to the COVID-19 pandemic of 3,094 seats. However, these seats were previously funded using braided funding in addition to the State General Fund appropriations. Do any school districts and nonprofits still provide other funding sources to fund additional pre-K seats? I would add, pre-K is not only important but essential to student success.

**Patricia Oya:**

Yes, it is an essential piece of student success. Yes, we do still have some districts reporting braided funding in determining their overall budget. When we talk about our new position for data collection, this is part of it. How do we collect the funding of what is being braided per district? We have some rough numbers, and we know that braided funding is needed for special education to make sure our programs are inclusive of all children.

**Senator Dondero Loop:**

In my mind, I am thinking 3,000 seats or 3,100 if you will, seems so few. I hope that we can continue to build on that.

**Chair Backus:**

Has the Department received interest from school districts that currently do not participate in the State Pre-K program that would be eligible to participate in the program with the addition of these funds?

**Patricia Oya:**

We currently allocate funds by giving the same grantees the same amount moving forward if there are no additional funds available. We sent out a survey that asks for additional information. If we are successful in getting additional funding, we asked the grantees if they would be able to take additional seats. I am unsure whether the few districts that we do not serve right now have replied, but I know that Clark County School District responded that they can serve an additional 700 seats. United Way of Southern Nevada has requested an additional 300 seats, and the State Public Charter School Authority has the largest waiting list of 494. We know that our current subgrantees could fill the seats that we have added in the enhancements—that is before we even talk about the other districts.

**Chair Backus:**

It would be interesting to see what the responses are from those other districts. How did the Department determine that the additional state funding that would replace the federal Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEER) revenues should be allocated entirely to the Clark County School District?

**Patricia Oya:**

We had two amounts for GEER funding that crossed over two fiscal years, and it was only a matter of the reporting on the GEER funding that would add up to a burden. We did not want to equally spread the burden across all our subrecipients because that would have added an extra federal reporting requirement. United Way of Southern Nevada agreed to accept and report \$1.8 million of GEER funding in fiscal year (FY) 2022. In FY 2023, Clark County School District agreed to accept and report the GEER funding. We allocated \$3.1 million of GEER funding strictly to Clark County School District so that we did not burden the other subrecipients with the federal reporting requirements.

**Chair Backus:**

How does the Governor's recommended budget address and shorten the statewide waiting list for the State Pre-K program?

**Patricia Oya:**

It does help us address the waiting list. To be clear, the 3,094 seats to restore us to prepandemic numbers is an additional 613 seats. We add 300 new seats in FY 2024, for those 913 new seats. That does help, and we want to continue to grow the program and continue to work towards universal pre-K down the road.

**Senator Seevers Gansert:**

It looks like we spend about \$8,400 per student for pre-K programs, and those are within the school districts themselves, but we also spend tens of millions of dollars in childcare subsidies, which is in a different bucket. We have all these dollars that we spend for childcare. Have you had any conversations with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) about potentially moving some of the children who are in subsidized childcare into pre-K programs and how those dollars would flow?

**Patricia Oya:**

Yes, we work closely with the Division of Welfare and Supportive Services, DHHS that runs the childcare subsidy program. Eligibility for the Nevada Ready! State Pre-K program is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty limit. The Head Start program is at or below 100 percent of the federal poverty limit. The childcare subsidy is based on the state median income, which is a bit over our eligibility. It is tricky to compare apples-to-apples when you are talking about eligibility. Children who qualify for the Nevada Ready! State Pre-K program are 4-year-old children, and the childcare subsidy would apply to that entire range. We look at their before and after school care out of the childcare subsidy. If they qualify for the Nevada Ready! State Pre-K program and those sites are participating in the subsidy, then yes, we do look at trying not to duplicate those costs and take one from the other. With only less than 2,500 seats and the number of childcare centers we can work with, there is not always a lot of overlap, and the childcare subsidy is needed for the birth and above range.

**Senator Seevers Gansert:**

I appreciate you working with them because we had a discussion last night about childcare. We want to make sure there is education related to childcare. If we can move students into pre-K, I think that would benefit the child. I appreciate you working with them to see how many children we can move over and perhaps use some of that subsidy money towards pre-K.

**Assemblywoman Jauregui:**

I wanted to confirm these numbers first. You said Clark County School District has a waiting list of 700 seats. United Way of Southern Nevada has a waiting list of 300 seats. The State Public Charter School Authority has a waitlist of 494 seats. Is that all the waitlists or are there others? Do any other counties have waitlists?

**Patricia Oya:**

Yes, there are waitlists across our subrecipients. The current waitlist for the school year was 877 eligible children. We collect their waitlist numbers on December 1st, when we count how many students we are serving, but we do not go back and further count or update that number. Families could leave the waitlist because they find other services. They could add to our waiting list and/or they could not even join the waiting list because if you hear you are number 400 you may not even bother to put your name on a waiting list. We do have the breakdown of those by grantees if you need it. The Clark County School District number was 480—there were 250 on our Nevada Ready! State Pre-K waitlists and 230 on the Title Pre-K program waitlists—the total was 480 just for Clark County alone.

**Assemblywoman Jauregui:**

I doubt this is the case, but is every single seat across the state filled? I want to make sure there are no vacancies, and that there are not some areas that have more seats than they need.

**Patricia Oya:**

For this school year, we have some vacancies, but that is due to a teacher shortage. When we talk about high-quality pre-K, we have a ratio of 1 teacher to 10 children and a group size of 20 maximum. If they cannot find the teacher for the classroom, then yes, we cannot accept more children. Sometimes that is an issue, especially as we were coming out of the pandemic, but that is getting better.

**Assemblywoman Jauregui:**

Since we do have some vacancies, would it be possible to get the Subcommittees a list of those vacancies and how many there are and where they are located? If there are vacancies, is it something the Department can address? Can we transfer those seats to an area where there is need?

**Patricia Oya:**

There are two considerations when you are talking about a vacancy for this current school year and trying to move that money. For example, if a classroom has 18 children and 2 teachers, they may not be able to fill 2 seats, but they still have the same costs unless you have fewer than 10 kids. You are still going to need the two teachers, the aide, or a teacher and an aide, and you are going to have the same cost. It is not as easy as saying we will give you \$8,410 per child. You are serving 19 children—we are going to take \$8,410 from your budget. That would impact our smaller districts where it really is just the teacher costs. The other part of it is during that school year for the biennium, we may not be able to pivot that quickly from December 1st to take that funding and work with each district. The larger districts—Clark County, Washoe County, and the State Public Charter School Authority—are allowed to shift within the school or within their school system, but we cannot always shift from one location or district to another or one geographic area to another.

**Assemblywoman Jauregui:**

That makes sense. If we could get those lists of vacancies, I am curious to see where vacancies exist.

**Assemblyman Yeager:**

I have a few questions about the education programs professional position (EPP). How would this position further the development of an early childhood integrated data system?

**Patricia Oya:**

We do not currently have an early childhood integrated data system in the state. This position would feed the data from the Department into that system and work towards building that system. The position is needed because we do not have someone who can collect data across the other types of pre-K. I can provide the Nevada Ready! State Pre-K program numbers, but we also have Title Pre-K and Special Education Pre-K. At first, this position would focus on what pre-K programs managed by the Department could feed into an early childhood data system and then further branch out from there and think about the other agencies that would participate in the same data system.

**Assemblyman Yeager:**

How would the development of an early childhood integrated data system be expedited if Assembly Bill 113 is approved, and the Office of Early Childhood Systems is created in the Office of the Governor?

**Patricia Oya:**

Assembly Bill 113 recommends that every agency participate in the data system. I think it would be a great partnership between the Department of Education as well as other state agencies that participate in this development. It is a big project. Not every agency has a database to feed into an early childhood integrated data system. We really need that coordinating piece.



**Assemblyman Yeager:**

Please discuss how the Department currently collects, analyzes, and reports on early learning data and how the new EPP position would enhance these tasks?

**Patricia Oya:**

Currently, we use a variety of either Excel documents or Smartsheets that are submitted by email or a Smartsheet form. It is not the best way to coordinate and collaborate data. We also do not even have it across our offices to ensure that we are comparing apples to apples, a fiscal year, children served, or braided funding. Those types of questions are collected in Excel documents by our management analyst. When you collect things in Excel documents and try to aggregate, there is human error as well. I think we can produce a better system for collecting that information.

**Senator Neal:**

Please explain the various Department activities that would be funded using the recently awarded federal Preschool Development Grant: Birth Through Five Renewal Grant.

**Patricia Oya:**

We love talking about this very recent grant that we received. The purpose of the Preschool Development Grant is to strengthen Nevada's early childcare and education system across families. It is an extension of the original Preschool Development Grant that we received six or seven years ago that was focused on preschool seats. This one is focused more on systems building. We took time when writing the grant to partner and get input from other agencies because it is a systems grant. The major activities include an updated statewide needs assessment and strategic plan. The major activities of the grant are strengthening approaches to authentic family engagement, stabilizing the early childhood workforce, and expanding high quality supports for programs serving young children. We do have a new Canvas course, which walks through all the components of the grant, and I would be happy to share that link if needed.

**Senator Neal:**

Given the Governor is currently recommending State General Fund appropriations to replace the expiring federal Governor's Emergency Education Relief grant funds, please indicate if it is the intention of the Department to seek General Fund appropriations to support any of the expenditures identified to be funded by this grant over the three-year period after the grant expires.

**Patricia Oya:**

The preschool development grant activities are funded with a three-year grant. We have 100 seats per year designated in years 2 and 3, which focus on expanding the Nevada Ready! State Pre-K into family childcare. We are currently only in licensed childcare centers. We have some seats that focus on the groups that are not currently served in the Nevada Ready! State Pre-K program. We have heard from some of our districts that the 200 percent

federal poverty limit is too restrictive, especially in our rural areas. There are minimal seats available in the grant, and they are mostly considered pilot seats to see where we can expand our services because of the sustainability. We do not want to open new seats in an area where we will be unable to sustain them past the grant.

**Senator Neal:**

I heard you say you do not want to add any seats or do anything that would not be sustainable. Are you saying that after the three-year period is over, you will not need any General Fund?

**Patricia Oya:**

We did not want to build in too many Nevada Ready! State Pre-K program seats into the grant because we knew this was a three-year grant, and we would be unable to sustain those seats. When we look at a pilot seat in terms of adding seats into a licensed family childcare, we are not sure whether that is going to be successful or not. There is a lot of interest, and as we expand towards universal pre-K, we will need the space. Those seats would be considered pilot seats, and if the program is successful and we can demonstrate that this is a viable place to add children into our program, then yes, we would come back and ask for General Funds to sustain those seats. We do not know if the federal government plans to continue to fund the Preschool Development Grants after this initial three-year period. It is possible that could happen as well.

**Chair Backus:**

We will close the hearing on budget account 2709 and open the hearing on budget account 2721.

**EDUCATION**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

**NDE - SAFE AND RESPECTFUL LEARNING (101-2721)**

**BUDGET PAGE K-12 EDUCATION-82**

**Megan Peterson, Deputy Superintendent, Student Investment Division, Department of Education:**

Budget account (BA) 2721 provides funding for our Office for a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment. This includes monitoring compliance for school districts with applicable laws regarding student safety and is inclusive of behavioral and physical health of our students. It also includes programs of training to improve school climate and prevent, identify, and report incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, school safety reporting, suicide prevention, and restorative practices. It also includes the implementation and monitoring of the SafeVoice hotline as well as the Handle with Care programs and several others.

Decision unit enhancement (E) 350 is for the SafeVoice platform and continues funding for each year of the biennium. It was previously funded with COVID-19 dollars and a National

Institute of Justice Grant, which has expired. SafeVoice provides a tip hotline that is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide a platform for students and the public to report concerns. During the recent budget review process, it was noted the \$386,000 amounts that were recommended in each year of the biennium were incorrectly built into the budget. Budget Amendment A232392721 has been submitted to decrease this amount by half to \$193,000 in each fiscal year.

Decision unit E-351 relates to the school climate surveys. This provides surveys to collect information about student and teacher climate and school safety as well as school conditions. Similarly, \$620,000 was recommended in fiscal year (FY) 2024 and \$400,000 in FY 2025. After the agency requested budget had been submitted and approved, we were able to secure funding from alternative sources. A budget amendment has been put forward to remove this from the Governor's recommended budget.

Decision unit E-352 is a program officer position for the SafeVoice program. The grant has expired, and the Governor is recommending a position to continue supporting the SafeVoice platform. This position will provide additional support to the platform to ensure that we are supporting our school safety education programs professional (EPP) and all aspects of the SafeVoice platform as well as the Handle with Care program.

Decision unit E-490 removes the revenue and expenditure authority for the Trauma Recovery grant that is expiring. With the expiration of the grant, we are recommending additional funding to support the EPP that was funded through that grant to maintain support for our trauma recovery services. With that, we are available for questions.

**Chair Backus:**

In decision unit E-350, you said an amendment had been submitted to reduce the \$396,000 to \$193,000 in each of the fiscal years in the biennium; is that correct?

**Megan Peterson:**

That is correct. During the budget building process, we had some training that needed to occur, which relates back to our earlier ask for the administrative services officer position, and instead of requesting half the amount in each fiscal year for a total of \$386,000, we built in \$386,000 for each fiscal year. This relates back to our earlier ask for the administrative services officer position. Budget Amendment A232392721 will reduce this amount by half in each fiscal year for a total of \$386,000 for the biennium.

**Chair Backus:**

Did the Department explore the use of any other funding sources such as grants for the annual licensing fee for the SafeVoice bullying reporting system for the 2023-2025 biennium?

**Christina (Christy) McGill, Interim Deputy Superintendent for Student Achievement,  
Department of Education:**

Yes, the SafeVoice platform has been supported by federal grants both from the National Institute of Justice and the U.S. Department of Justice. We utilize a blended model. Right now that is mandated in *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS). We do need some base state funding. For example, enhancements in the response for case management just got a new grant from the Department of Justice to do that, but the base part of SafeVoice needs to be sustained. We really cannot have any interruptions in services in the SafeVoice platform, and state money is some of the more stable funding that we have.

**Chair Backus:**

I have a follow-up question about those federal grants that are being made available. Do they also look to see that the state is providing the funding to keep SafeVoice online with no interruptions?

**Christina McGill:**

Yes, we try to leverage every bit of state money we get with federal dollars in these programs for school safety.

**Senator Seevers Gansert:**

I have some questions about tips. You provided the trends and the counts for tips, but I want to know the percent of tips related to suicides or students threatening themselves or students threatening others. In the past, those have been a significant number or percentage.

**Christina McGill:**

It depends on the year, and it depends on the month. Suicide ideation and suicide tips are either our number one tip, or number two, or number three. This last February we had our highest volume of tips ever in the history of SafeVoice with 1,141 tips, and suicide was the second most common tip.

**Senator Seevers Gansert:**

Was the most common tip about bullying or some form of bullying?

**Christina McGill:**

Yes, it was bullying and school complaints.

**Senator Seevers Gansert:**

It looks like there is a bill to change a requirement that any tip that is provided by coaches, administrators, staff, or the governing body must be investigated, but that may change, and I want to understand that better.

**Christina McGill:**

I want to start out with the data first. In 2020, we needed to follow up on 130 tips. We had 173 tips in 2021, and 786 tips in 2022. Yes, the bill will help us with that initial investigation that originates at the school, so we are not duplicating that effort for those 786 tips on which we need to follow up. We still have an appeal process for our parents and communities in case they feel like their needs are not being met at the school or they need an objective review. We are doing that and those increase as well, depending upon the volume of the tips. The bill is going to help us, and we also need the position as well.

**Senator Seevers Gansert:**

It sounds like tips increased from 130 to 173 to 786, but some of the 786 may be duplicates around the same topic or do you think most of them are still unique?

**Christina McGill:**

There may be some overlap, but when it comes to bullying and complaints, it is usually a 1:1 ratio. If it is a school threat, it could be one school threat with a whole lot of multiple tips because of rumors or particularly a conversation that was overheard. Bullying and suicide tips are a 1:1 ratio, though there may be some overlap there.

**Senator Seevers Gansert:**

I appreciate the work that you have been doing over the years. I think the system has been important.

**Assemblywoman Peters:**

Those numbers are incredible. It is amazing to see students using their voice and even adults using their voice when it has historically been stuffed under the rug or considered to be the social norm to treat people with disrespect and to threaten people in different ways. Unfortunately, we still see that happening even as adults in this building. This work will encourage the next generation to be better. I would like to start with some follow up on my colleague's questions. What is the current turnaround time on the complaints?

**Christina McGill:**

SafeVoice has two levels; there is the school level and then there is the state level. At the school level, if it is bullying or a staff to student complaint, the timelines of the bullying law need to be addressed. That is also in a bill draft request where we are looking to extend the timelines for investigation, but not the safety plan. At the school level, a safety plan and parent notification must be done the same day as the complaint. We are requesting a longer amount of time to do the actual investigation of the issue, because some of these complaints have to do with discrimination or large groups, and it starts to get more complex. The turnaround time at the school level is based upon NRS Chapter 388 bullying laws. At the state level we make sure that if we get a complaint of an adult to child bullying, we check with the school district to ensure that a safety plan is in place, and then we move on from

there to investigate, and that can take anywhere from two weeks to six weeks depending upon the complexity of the complaint and appeal.

**Assemblywoman Peters:**

How would the SafeVoice and Handle with Care programs be enhanced if the new program officer position were approved to assist the existing EPP position that serves as the SafeVoice coordinator, and how would that impact the scope of your program?

**Christina McGill:**

Yes, the program officer is going to be that first line of defense in the SafeVoice platform. The tip volume has increased a lot, and we want to make sure that we are doing a good job of checking and making sure the safety plans are in place. We work closely with the school districts even on the weekend hours. We work with the Department of Public Safety as well. The project officer will take care of that kind of daily work increase. The EPP will work on school safety. We have one EPP for school safety. It is a lot of work. Part of that EPP scope of practice is looking at the emergency management plans and making sure that, as evidence comes out for safety around violence, wildfires, floods, and threat assessment, all of that should be part of the emergency operations plan. We must make sure that each school district has a good threat assessment process and the districts feel confident in their response to a school threat that comes through SafeVoice. That piece is related to the school safety position. It is a lot of work, and this project officer will take that day-to-day work of the SafeVoice tips from the EPP.

**Assemblywoman Peters:**

We have been talking about Assembly Bill 65. Please discuss why the recommended program officer position would be needed if A.B. 65 were approved, which would shift a portion of the investigation responsibilities associated with the SafeVoice program to trained personnel at the public schools. What does that transition look like? Will the schools have to ramp-up their professionals? I am thinking particularly of our social workers and mental health specialists in our schools. What does that impact to schools look like? How does A.B. 65, if approved, shift some of that burden onto our schools?

**Christina McGill:**

It does not shift a burden onto the schools because the schools are already doing investigations. What we are trying to do in A.B. 65 is to reduce any kind of duplication. The schools operate in a lean and mean fashion, as do we, and we want to reduce any duplication as we learn how to do this well. We want to make sure students are safe. We learned that there was a duplication because both the schools and the Department of Education do an initial investigation of teachers. We wanted to eliminate that duplication so that we could be more efficient with our time. The schools could focus on that first investigation and make sure students are safe. Then we could focus on if the parent felt their child continued not to be safe and we would then pick up that baton. It is a coordinated approach trying to get systematic and strategic.

**Assemblywoman Peters:**

This is an interesting way to do this. I think about our public safety offices. If there is a problem within the Washoe County Sheriff's Office, they do not necessarily review themselves. I have some initial concerns, but we are not hearing A.B. 65. What are the implications of that? What could that look like for schools or people in a school self-regulating within the school? How could that impact students and their families as they pursue complaints and issues? Please clarify how the addition of this program officer position would ensure the Office for a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment remains in compliance with statutory requirements related to SafeVoice and Handle with Care programs.

**Christina McGill:**

The volume of tips has increased so much that we are no longer doing a good job now with just one EPP and myself toggling the SafeVoice tips. This person will ensure that division of duties. Parents can still call us any time they feel like their child is unsafe and the school is not addressing the problem. We will stop and address that issue. This program officer will be able to take the time to go through the tips. As they review the tips and see the kinds of responses, we also want the program officer to craft a training plan from that data so that we have training plans, materials, supports, and on-demand trainings that meet the needs of the districts as they arise. For example, if there is a compliance issue around the investigation or discrimination, instead of waiting, we can start to put training plans in place. The additional staff will allow us to increase that capacity.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

I would like to talk about decision units E-275 and E-490. I want to thank you for sharing that data. Please discuss why the ongoing duties for the grant funded program officer position are unable to be handled by the remaining staff in this budget if this is not funded?

**Christina McGill:**

Overtime—I do not want to burn out my staff, and working on SafeVoice is difficult because you see those tips every day. You know in your heart that your work helps the kids be safe, and you are doing a good job, but it is difficult work and is not something someone should ever be doing 50 hours a week. I must be careful to not burn out the staff in this work. We have been doing it this way, and I have been blessed to keep my staff, but it takes a toll to go from 100 tips to almost 700 tips that you must lay eyes on, and the diversification of issues that are coming through is difficult. It gets to be too much to have to parcel out and make sure the emergency management piece, the threat assessment piece, the bullying training piece, and the discrimination piece, are covered. This position is important for us to relieve some of that day-to-day work from the EPP for SafeVoice.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

Relationships are extremely important, especially when dealing with trauma issues of children, educators, and parents. What would be the ramifications if the program officer position were eliminated?

**Christina McGill:**

I got the SafeVoice and the trauma position mixed up. Although the grant is going away for trauma, we are requesting to keep the position for two reasons, both rooted in evidence and good practice. I was reading a brief today from the Nevada Psychiatric Association highlighting the impact that trauma has on our students including some of the anecdotal data and stories, and the tips for Handle with Care and SafeVoice. We have many students toggling traumatic episodes as well as chronic stress.

What this position will continue to do is three things. One is they will continue to support the districts in evidence-based training as it comes up. Trauma informed schools is a very new approach. As we are learning how to do it well, we want to make sure those lessons are learned and that we give that information to our districts. Two, we have learned outside of the pandemic and with the increase of youth suicide that some of our smaller districts, schools, or charters may be experiencing some of these community traumatic events for the first time and need additional supports. This person helps coordinate that. For example, in a rural area you may need to have people coming from an urban district to help provide support during a traumatic event. It is extremely important to have that fluidity of support between our districts in a time of crisis. This person would help support that as well.

Three, we currently have a fund and use a systems approach to trauma because the evidence tells us that if a system is trauma informed, then we can reduce some of the angst that the students are going through. Also, the students themselves may need additional support individually. We have a fund right now through this federal grant that supports those students who lack insurance due to a whole host of reasons to get that specific trauma care to help them move through the trauma, stay in school, and keep doing well. I think one of the most difficult things to see is a student who just lost a parent or experienced a big traumatic event who is not well supported. Schools can only do so much and bringing in these service providers to our schools is helpful. We hope to continue to look for federal grants and state funds to retain this fund for those vulnerable students. Those are the three important things that we want to sustain with this position.

**Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno:**

Students today in schools are dealing with things that I did not have to deal with when I went to school. There are so many things that happen outside of the school before that child even goes through the doorway of the school, and the teachers and the staff must deal with those things. Thank you for sharing what you said about putting this position together with local agencies. You did not say it, but nonprofit organizations can help the students and parents



deal with those issues that are happening outside that have a direct impact on what is happening inside the classroom.

**Senator Dondero Loop:**

Before I ask my question, I just want to say aloud that I have been that teacher who has had a young student in second grade whose entire family was killed in a tragic car accident. Having to face the students the next morning is daunting. Those support services are crucial and, as a teacher, I have had it happen more than once.

Please confirm that the \$1 million recommended over the 2023-2025 biennium for school climate and working conditions surveys is no longer needed due to funding provided at the October 20, 2022, IFC meeting. I always worry about what is really happening when we start taking away funding.

**Christina McGill:**

Yes, I checked five times because I had the same response. I wanted to make sure everything was covered. At least for this biennium, we were able to find federal funds to do this. We will come back next session if we do not continue to get those federal funds. We found federal funds to do the surveys and continue with that important work. These funds and this program are really focusing on staff as we learned that their voice needs to be heard as well.

**Senator Dondero Loop:**

When something happens in a school like that, it happens to everybody. It does not happen to that one classroom. In the case I just spoke about, I had a daughter in the fifth-grade class that it touched. It not only affected my classroom but the entire school, all the teachers, everybody that is there, and all the parents. You can affect 800 people quickly and need support services. I hope that when schools have tragic events, we can continue to support them and have the funds to do that.

**Assemblyman Miller:**

During its October 20, 2022, meeting, the IFC approved an allocation of \$4 million for the school based mental health programs. Can you give us an update on where you are with getting that funding out?

**Christina McGill:**

I have specifics but do not have them with me because I was not prepared to talk about that today, but I would be happy to forward that to you.

**Chair Backus:**

At this time, we will close the hearing on budget account 2721. We are going to roll budget account 2710 to Friday's meeting. I know we have Superintendent Ebert on the calendar for Friday. We will add this budget to those other three budgets scheduled for Friday.

The following budget account was on the agenda but was moved to the agenda for Friday, March 24, 2023.

**EDUCATION**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**NDE - COVID-19 FUNDING (101-2710)**  
**BUDGET PAGE K-12 EDUCATION-35**

We will open public comment.

[Public comment was heard. [Exhibit D](#), [Exhibit E](#), and [Exhibit F](#) were submitted and will become part of the record.]

**Chair Backus:**

There being no further business before the Subcommittees, this meeting is adjourned [at 10:59 a.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Janice Wright  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Assemblywoman Shea Backus, Chair

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

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Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop, Chair

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

## **EXHIBITS**

[Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda.

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

[Exhibit C](#) is a copy of a PowerPoint presentation titled "Nevada Department of Education 2023-2025 Biennial Budget Department Budgets," dated March 22, 2023, presented by Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Department of Education.

[Exhibit D](#) is a letter dated March 22, 2023, presented by Julian High, President and CEO, United Way of Southern Nevada, in support of the budget of the Office of Early Learning and Development, Department of Education.

[Exhibit E](#) is a document titled "NSEA Comments on NDE—COVID-19 Funding Budget 101-2710," presented by Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director, Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association.

[Exhibit F](#) is a letter dated March 22, 2023, submitted by Jamelle Nance, CAA Director of Prenatal to Three Initiatives, on behalf of the Children's Advocacy Alliance, in support of the budget of the Office of Early Learning and Development, Department of Education.