

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

**Eighty-second Session
March 8, 2023**

The joint meeting of the Subcommittees on K-12/Higher Education/CIP of the Senate Committee on Finance and the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means was called to order by Chair Marilyn Dondero Loop at 8:19 a.m. on Wednesday, March 8, 2023, in Room 3137 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4406 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

ASSEMBLY SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Wayne Thorley, Senate Fiscal Analyst
Sarah Coffman, Assembly Fiscal Analyst

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Lilliana Camacho-Polkow, Program Analyst
Madison Ryan, Program Analyst
Paul Breen, Committee Assistant
Michelle Friedlander, Committee Secretary
Joko Cailles, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nevada Department of Education
Megan Peterson, Deputy Superintendent, Student Investment Division, Nevada Department of Education
Celeste Arnold, Administrative Services Officer, Office of Department Support Services, Student Investment Division, Nevada Department of Education
Dave Brancamp, Director, Office of Standards and Instructional Support, Student Achievement Division, Nevada Department of Education
Fredina Drye-Romero, Education Programs Professional, Office of Inclusive Education, Student Achievement Division, Nevada Department of Education
Christy McGill, Interim Deputy Superintendent, Student Achievement Division, Nevada Department of Education
Peter Zutz, Administrator, Office of Assessment, Data and Accountability Management, Student Achievement Division, Nevada Department of Education
Craig Statucki, Interim Deputy Superintendent, Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement Division, Nevada Department of Education
Chris Daly, Deputy Executive Director of Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association
Sarah Garrison, Washoe Education Association
Debbie Reynolds, Washoe Education Association
Amanda Jones, Washoe Education Association
Jackie Tonoff, Washoe Education Association
Doug Brubaker, Washoe Education Association
Gilbert Lenz, Washoe Education Association
Melinda Bower, Washoe Education Association
Anna Binder

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CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

We will consider Nevada Department of Education (NDE) budget accounts, beginning with budget account (B/A) 101-2673 for the Office of the Superintendent.

EDUCATION

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NDE - Office of the Superintendent — Budget Page K-12 EDUCATION-23
(Volume I)
Budget Account 101-2673

JHONE EBERT (Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nevada Department of Education):

The NDE budget presentation is ([Exhibit C](#)). Budget account 101-2673 on page 4 of [Exhibit C](#) provides funding to help the Superintendent of Public Instruction administer statutory provisions. The Superintendent collaborates with the Nevada State Board of Education, the Nevada Commission on School Funding, Nevada's 17 school districts and the Nevada State Public Charter School Authority.

Pages 5 through 7 of [Exhibit C](#) list seven enhancement units in B/A 101-2673. Decision unit E-231 provides \$6,700 in each year of the 2023-2025 biennium for out-of-state travel. The pandemic made travel impossible. As restrictions lift, we want to work with and learn from education colleagues across the United States.

E-231 Efficiency & Innovation — Page K-12 EDUCATION-25

Decision unit E-232 in B/A 101-2673 provides \$10,058 in each year of the 2023-2025 biennium to fund staff travel to meet with groups such as the Nevada Association of School Administrators. This restores in-state travel expenditures to prepandemic levels.

E-232 Efficiency & Innovation — Page K-12 EDUCATION-25

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Decision unit E-233 in B/A 101-2673 funds travel for State Board of Education members to prepandemic levels. Board members must effectively represent all areas of the State. They work from both Carson City and Las Vegas. As Board members work on measures enacted by the Legislature, it is important they can meet in particular locations throughout Nevada.

E-233 Efficiency & Innovation — Page K-12 EDUCATION-26

Decision unit E-234 in B/A 101-2673 funds travel for members of the Commission on School Funding.

E-234 Efficiency & Innovation — Page K-12 EDUCATION-26

Assembly Bill 4 eliminates the prohibition on the Commission on School Funding meeting past September 30. The Commission needs more time for its work. Decision unit E-234 accounts for additional meetings by providing \$24,549 in each year of the 2023-2025 biennium for travel.

ASSEMBLY BILL 4: Revises provisions relating to certain educational commissions. (BDR 34-280)

Decision unit E-275 in B/A 101-2673 provides \$500,000 in each year of the 2023-2025 biennium for written translation services. We had not translated NDE documents prior to the pandemic. Given the State's diversity and NDE's mission to provide prekindergarten to Grade 12 services to all students, it is important for our documents to be translated to the five most spoken languages in Nevada. We need the top two languages after English to be translated at a minimum. There are over 500 documents to translate at this time.

E-275 Elevating Education — Page K-12 EDUCATION-27

We used part of our funding from the federal American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) III for translation. A document published by NDE, *Nevada's Path Forward*, outlines education recovery after the pandemic. It took approximately \$8,000 to translate this text.

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Collaboration with the Nevada Department of Administration, Purchasing Division helped reduce translation costs. The State has since negotiated an agreement to lower the price of translation services for all agencies. Additional translation funding is still required given the volume of documents we have. Our work must be accessible to all communities we serve.

Decision unit E-490 in B/A 101-2673 eliminates ESSER III funding for FY 2024-2025. This federal grant will expire on September 30, 2024.

E-490 Expiring Grant/Program — Page K-12 EDUCATION-27

Decision unit E-226 in B/A 101-2673 provides a General Fund appropriation of \$96,365 in FY 2024-2025 for an educational programs supervisor position which is currently ESSER funded. The period of performance for ESSER grants ends on September 30, 2024. The NDE knows from its experience with federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act of 2020 that workloads can significantly increase after a grant period ends. We received our largest set of federal relief funds from ESSER. The NDE needs the position to help close out grants, author reports and ensure compliance with federal requirements. We received \$1 billion in our last batch of ESSER dollars.

E-226 Efficiency & Innovation — Page K-12 EDUCATION-25

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

Could you further explain why the education programs supervisor position in decision unit E-226 needs additional funding after ESSER grants expire?

MS. EBERT:

At just over \$1 billion, ESSER III grants are the largest of the relief funds we received from the federal government. The money was distributed to public school districts and the State Public Charter School Authority. The supervisor position will ensure we can file grant reports after September 30, 2024.

The NDE closed out ESSER I grants on September 30, 2022. That process, in addition to our regular duties, increased our workload. We want to ensure no mistakes are made when closing ESSER III grants.

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ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

Would the NDE continue the position past the 2023-2025 biennium?

Ms. EBERT:

The position would only last until spring 2025, when all ESSER III filing is completed.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

Please provide an update on the \$2 million in federal COVID-19 relief funds that the NDE spent on document translation services. The NDE indicated it had used some Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act money for this purpose.

Ms. EBERT:

I will follow up with that information.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

How many documents did the NDE translate with COVID-19 relief funds during the 2021-2023 biennium? Which languages were documents translated into most often?

Ms. EBERT:

The top two languages in document translation have been Spanish and Tagalog. Excluding our website, we have over 500 documents yet to translate.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

Does the NDE need to translate its website in addition to those 500 documents?

Ms. EBERT:

Yes.

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

What necessitated the increase in travel expenditures for the 2023-2025 biennium compared to the legislatively approved travel expenditures for the 2021-2023 biennium?

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MEGAN PETERSON (Deputy Superintendent, Student Investment Division, Nevada Department of Education):

There were multiple factors. Gas prices have increased. Newly appointed members of NDE boards live further away from meeting locations compared to previous members, increasing travel costs.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

You have identified 88 languages spoken in Nevada schools. Has the NDE considered translating fewer documents into more languages?

MS. EBERT:

Decision unit E-275 in B/A 101-2673 provides for the translation of documents into 20 languages. We are working with school districts on which languages and documents to prioritize. Not all documents are widely circulated.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MONROE-MORENO:

Please discuss the various adjustments that may be proposed related to the additional out-of-state travel, State Board of Education travel and Commission on School Funding travel for the 2023-2025 biennium.

Will the NDE continue videoconferencing as pandemic restrictions are lifted?

MS. EBERT:

We will continue to videoconference. The chair and members of the State Board of Education have indicated that not all meetings need to be held in person, but there are certain hearings in which having a physical presence with constituents is important. We will keep pandemic-era lessons in mind as we return to in-person travel.

Travel funding for the State Board of Education was reduced because of the pandemic. Funding is being restored to prepandemic levels, with adjustments based on gas price inflation and Board members living further away.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MONROE-MORENO:

Will a budget amendment be submitted to make necessary revisions to decision unit E-234 in B/A 101-2673?

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MS. PETERSON:

The NDE is working with the Office of the Governor, Office of Finance (GFO) and the Legislative Counsel Bureau, Fiscal Analysis Division on technical adjustments to decision unit E-234 for increased costs that were identified after the Executive Budget was submitted.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN KASAMA:

Which documents are being translated?

MS. EBERT:

The NDE intends to translate its *Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils*, a five-year strategic plan which outlines expectations for us, Nevada's public school districts and students. It is 40 pages and available only in English on our website. The State Board of Education works on regulations and family community engagement documents that parents need to have access to. Translation will ensure accessibility.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN KASAMA:

Would the NDE translate both policy documents and family engagement documents?

MS. EBERT:

Yes. The NDE aims to translate for parental reference standards that students are expected to meet. They are currently only available in English.

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

We will now consider B/A 101-2676 for career and technical education (CTE).

NDE - Career and Technical Education — Budget Page K-12 EDUCATION-102
(Volume I)

Budget Account 101-2676

MS. EBERT:

Budget account 101-2676 begins on page 9 of [Exhibit C](#). It receives General Fund and federal appropriations to support the development of CTE programs in Nevada. Decision unit E-231 provides \$8,000 in each year of the 2023-2025 biennium for in-state travel. While several meetings can now be

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held virtually, leaders and educators must still conduct in-person meetings to assess recent programs and collaborate with partners across the State. This allows us to make sure best practices are being implemented and expectations are being met. We want to monitor and ensure the continuity of CTE courses as they transition from a three-year program to a two-year program.

E-231 Efficiency & Innovation — Page K-12 EDUCATION-104

Our Office of Career Readiness, Adult Learning and Education Options has an extensive monitoring program called Quality Program Review, with aligned quality program standards. Recently, 430 students with Family, Career and Community Leaders of America spoke about their quality career preparation programs. They are holding themselves accountable for progress.

The number of CTE programs in Nevada has increased as has the number of locations. Schools hosting CTE have firsthand technical support, stretching the capacity of local education agencies as the NDE moves forward with its five-year cycle of visiting campuses.

Decision unit E-276 in B/A 101-2676 provides \$8,400 in each year of the 2023-2025 biennium for out-of-state travel. This allows CTE leaders in Nevada to attend national trainings. Attendees are able to keep informed on CTE and federal Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act of 2018 funding updates. The knowledge CTE leaders bring back ensures our curriculum remains timely and relevant to industry standards and the workforce.

E-276 Elevating Education — Page K-12 EDUCATION-104

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

Can you confirm that total General Fund appropriations in B/A 101-2676 reflect the amounts approved by lawmakers during the Eighty-first Session for the 2021-2023 biennium?

CELESTE ARNOLD (Administrative Services Officer, Office of Department Support Services, Student Investment Division, Nevada Department of Education):
Yes.

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ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

Can you discuss any adjustments or budget amendments that may be needed to meet that funding level?

Ms. ARNOLD:

While writing budgets, the NDE worked with program offices to ensure we captured any potential travel that may have been missed during the pandemic when we created the enhancement units. Funding is requested for trips that may not have occurred during the 2021-2023 biennium but will take place as CTE programs are restored to prepandemic levels.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

Will budget amendments be submitted for revisions?

Ms. ARNOLD:

We will work with the GFO and Fiscal staff on technical adjustments.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

Please provide justification for the recommended increases in out-of-state travel expenditures in the 2023-2025 biennium.

Ms. ARNOLD:

When the budget was developed, the NDE used the U.S. General Services Administration per diem rates and estimated potential flight costs at the time for travel requests. The cost of living and travel have since climbed significantly. I can provide the projections we used for the proposed increases in B/A 101-2676.

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

We will now consider B/A 101-2713 for NDE literacy programs.

NDE - Literacy Programs — Budget Page K-12 EDUCATION-98 (Volume I)
Budget Account 101-2713

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MS. EBERT:

Budget account 101-2713 beginning on page 12 of [Exhibit C](#) funds the Read by Grade 3 program and plans to improve the literacy of students in all grades per *Nevada Revised Statutes* 388.157.

Decision unit E-275 in B/A 101-2713 provides \$250,000 in each year of the 2023-2025 biennium for the Nevada State Literacy Plan. The enhancement includes allocations for the establishment of the new Nevada State Literacy Plan revision team and its associated costs, such as research and professional consultation. The Plan has not been updated since 2015. By the time the new Plan is published, even more time will have passed. Given the volume of literacy and reading research made available over the past decade, it is time to update our Plan, making sure it incorporates constituent feedback and allows for families to reflect upon its suggestions. The goal is to create an environment where all children are literate and ready to continue learning by Grade 3.

E-275 Elevating Education — Page K-12 EDUCATION-99

Decision unit E-276 in B/A 101-2713 provides \$50,000 in each year of the 2021-2023 biennium for Nevada Reading Week. We want to continue going to schools and reading to students. Nevada Reading Week includes an author live event, bringing in writers from across the United States and promoting local authors. We bring students in from across the State through virtual live Nevada Reading Week events. Decision unit E-276 will help pay for authors' works and materials. The funding helps bring award-winning authors to the State. During Nevada Reading Week in 2023, over 20,000 community members, students, parents and teachers participated.

E-276 Elevating Education — Page K-12 EDUCATION-100

SENATOR NEAL:

Can you explain the work the Nevada State Literacy Plan revision team will do and the role the NDE will play?

I read through the 2015 edition of the Nevada State Literacy Plan. There were statements about alignment, daily assessments, monitoring and continuing 90-minute reading blocks for students. What will change if the Plan is updated?

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MS. EBERT:

We are not abandoning best practices, including most of what you mention, from the 2015 Plan. Much work was done implementing and investing in the Read by Grade 3 program. Professional development was given to educators to help them prepare.

In 2019, assessment results indicated that the Read by Grade 3 program helped students meet the national average. Nevada is generally below average on education metrics. We saw a return on our investment in the Read by Grade 3 program.

The NDE and several Nevada school districts are moving with the science of reading. We want to ensure that Response to Intervention Tier 1 instruction, what we expect all students to know and do, is introduced consistently in classrooms. We should not immediately jump to the second or third Response to Intervention tiers. When students returned to classrooms as pandemic restrictions eased, some were seen to be far behind as they lost face-to-face instruction time. Revisiting the Nevada State Literacy Plan for solid tier one instruction allows us to improve classroom instruction without throwing out proven best practices.

SENATOR NEAL:

How were the team member stipends of \$5,000 per year determined?

DAVE BRANCAMP (Director, Office of Standards and Instructional Support, Student Achievement Division, Nevada Department of Education):

There are 17 Plan revision team members who will work 18 months. The \$5,000 stipend was determined based upon workload expectations. We seek team members from school districts and charter schools. They need to be compensated because revision duties will take place outside their regular working hours, including on Saturdays and during evenings. Team members should not perform work away from the classroom without pay.

SENATOR NEAL:

Will team members be teachers? Will they conduct site visits where they study best practices of instructors at certain grade levels and determine whether

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intervention tiers are being performed correctly? Many things have changed between 2015 and 2023. The pandemic impacted performance.

MR. BRANCAMP:

The NDE Office of Standards and Instructional Support would contact curriculum directors to determine which school districts have designated Read by Grade 3 specialists or leads. Not all of them do, which is why some work will have to be done on weekends and in evenings.

We assess best practices from experts and see how they were implemented. The pandemic taught us lessons in effectuating distance learning. These will be useful in developing hybrid physical-remote instruction guidelines within the overall Nevada State Literacy Plan.

SENATOR NEAL:

Will parents be involved in Plan revisions? One of the strategies from the 2015 edition is parental engagement to attain literacy gains. It is not just about reading at home. Kids need someone in the household who is engaging them with literacy.

Many parents in Clark County lack the tools they need to engage their kids in out-of-school literacy work, especially at the prekindergarten level. If revision team members will be paid \$5,000, it is imperative we meet our goals.

MR. BRANCAMP:

Parents and students would be involved.

SENATOR NEAL:

Why are the projected expenditures, such as printing and publishing costs, needed each year of the 2023-2025 biennium? If the final Nevada State Literacy Plan will not be published and printed until it is completed, why are there printing and publishing costs in each year of the biennium? Break down these costs.

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MR. BRANCAMP:

Initial drafts will be printed, and there is a 30-day period in which the public can access the document and provide feedback. Language translation would be partially covered by the enhancement request.

We need to make the Nevada State Literacy Plan compliant with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The 2015 edition contained graphics that were not ADA-compliant.

SENATOR NEAL:

How will parents know to review the Nevada State Literacy Plan draft? Will the NDE have an engagement campaign? Members of the public generally do not visit the NDE website on a whim to review document publications.

MR. BRANCAMP:

Read by Grade 3 specialists and schools can distribute that information. The Superintendent of Public Instruction can include information in her biweekly communications. I would give drafts to curriculum directors.

SENATOR NEAL:

When does the NDE anticipate the revised Nevada State Literacy Plan will be completed and published?

MR. BRANCAMP:

We plan to begin working on revisions by summer 2023 and aim to complete it by fall 2024 at the latest.

SENATOR NEAL:

What will the NDE provide, in terms of literacy, while it is updating the Nevada State Literacy Plan? Will you continue following the 2015 edition? Are you going to incorporate pandemic-era lessons in the classroom before the updated Plan is released?

MR. BRANCAMP:

We will follow pandemic lessons and continue best practices from the 2015 Plan edition.

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN BACKUS:

How much federal funding would Nevada have been eligible for in recent fiscal years had a current state literacy plan been in place? We lost federal dollars because our last edition was written in 2015.

MR. BRANCAMP:

Unfortunately, certain federal funds were withheld during the pandemic, but those were offset by ESSER grants.

Literacy plans are tied to the Innovative Approach to Literacy, Full-Service Community Schools and Promise Neighborhoods federal grants. There is between \$25 million and \$30 million available. Plan revision would unlock this money.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BACKUS:

The plan will not be done until FY 2023-2024. How frequently will you need to update the plan to remain eligible for funds?

MR. BRANCAMP:

We remain eligible for funds as long as we are in a review-and-revision process. Five-year updates are ideal. If a review committee is active within that timeframe, the U.S. Department of Education tends to allow grants to continue.

SENATOR SEEVERS GANSERT:

You testified that, for the first time, Nevada fourth graders were reading at the national average in 2019. We have made progress since the Read by Grade 3 program and other academic initiatives were implemented in 2015. The pandemic set the State back in its literacy goals.

In 2015, the NDE wrote, "To fight poverty, preschool must provide an enormous boost that changes the academic trajectory of a child forever." The Governor outlined \$60 million for prekindergarten programs in his State of the State address. Will prekindergarten money in the Executive Budget go to literacy initiatives? Are they grant funds?

During the Eighty-first Session, lawmakers looked at education dollars being in one area, the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP). The *Nevada Revised Statutes*

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outline literacy requirements. We previously had separate measures for literacy accountability.

Money in the PCFP needs to go to literacy. I remember a callout for prekindergarten literacy of \$60 million. How will different funding sources mesh for literacy programs?

MS. EBERT:

The NDE is looking to expand prekindergarten seats. Ten percent of eligible students are in public preschools. We want to add 300 students during FY 2023-2024 and another 300 seats during FY 2024-2025.

The NDE received a federal grant of \$30 million aimed at adding prekindergarten seats with high quality standards as assessed by the Nevada Quality Rating and Improvement System. These monies enhance literacy and family engagement. State and federal funds for prekindergarten are intended to help students have a growth trajectory by making sure the children are fully engaged by kindergarten.

SENATOR SEEVERS GANSERT:

An expansion of 300 to 600 students is a minor increase. There are programs for parental engagement. Are any grants being directed to that area? What is being done for students who are unable to attain a preschool slot?

MS. EBERT:

The NDE collaborates with community partners. We braid funds from federal grants, community partners and the General Fund. Does the expansion address full prekindergarten demand in our State? No. But we work to amplify all opportunities for eligible students. We want families to be equipped for success.

SENATOR SEEVERS GANSERT:

Changing the trajectory of education in Nevada begins with literacy. In 2019, the Nation's Report Card indicated that Nevada's average math score moved closer to average, though it did not meet it. Emphasizing literacy lifts all students. Persistently high rates of illiteracy are frustrating. During the Eighty-first Session, 114,000 out of 450,000 students in Nevada were not

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reading at grade level. We need those numbers to improve. Efforts must begin for kids at an early age.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PETERS:

Are there any school districts or charter schools that have not historically participated in Nevada Reading Week events? If there are, would the recommendations in the Executive Budget ensure we can reach universal participation?

MR. BRANCAMP:

Most school districts participate. The Executive Budget requests Zoom account licenses so all campuses can access Nevada Reading Week safely. Remote opportunities allow for authors to access more schools. Popular authors deal with scheduling issues.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PETERS:

Historically, not all schools have participated. Is the intent to expand participation through Zoom? Will there continue to be limitations based on interest in specific authors and time availability?

MR. BRANCAMP:

Most teachers do an excellent job trying to access Nevada Reading Week. Unfortunately, some of them face technology issues that prevent them from participating. Schools saw success from physical author visits. Zoom licenses expand the ability of teachers to participate in Nevada Reading Week.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PETERS:

Is the intent to expand participations? Will there continue to be limitations based on interest in specific authors and availability of time in the schools?

MR. BRANCAMP:

Virtual participation issues are due to technology resource limitations and license capacity. More license authorizations would provide for expanded access.

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN PETERS:

Does the recommendation in the Executive Budget include an expansion of resources to allow all school districts and charter schools to participate in Nevada Reading Week?

MR. BRANCAMP:

Yes.

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

How does the NDE anticipate Nevada Reading Week travel support for librarians and educators will be awarded? Would a librarian or educator awarded travel support in a prior year be eligible for travel support in the following year? Librarians are certificated differently across Nevada.

MR. BRANCAMP:

The \$3,000 appropriation for travel allows 10 staff members to travel. Applications will be made available, and participants will be chosen to ensure the breadth of the State is covered. We want staff members to cycle out each year.

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

We will now consider B/A 101-2715.

NDE - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act — Budget Page K-12
EDUCATION-111 (Volume I)
Budget Account 101-2715

MS. PETERSON:

Budget account 101-2715 on page 15 of [Exhibit C](#) receives federal funds related to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Funds in this account also go to Gifted and Talented Education and the Native Youth Community Project.

Decision unit E-275 in B/A 101-2715 funds an education programs professional position that will manage all aspects related to the federal Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 tribal consultation process. It is designed to facilitate meaningful cooperation between tribal entities and local education agencies.

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The emphasis is on improving tribal-district relationships, functional outcomes for students and regulatory compliance with the Every Student Succeeds Act.

E-275 Elevating Education — Page K-12 EDUCATION-114

Decision unit E-231 in B/A 101-2715 funds an education programs professional position with federal dollars. The position would ensure the Nevada Department of Education, Office of Inclusive Education monitors local education agencies for compliance with IDEA.

E-231 Efficiency & Innovation — Page K-12 EDUCATION-114

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:
Could you explain decision unit E-901 in B/A 101-2715?

E-901 Transfers — Page K-12 EDUCATION-115

MS. PETERSON:
Decision unit E-901 in B/A 101-2715 transfers a data recognition contract from B/A 101-2715 to B/A 101-2697. Budget account 101-2697 has corresponding decision unit E-901.

NDE - Assessments and Accountability — Budget Page K-12 EDUCATION-51
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Budget Account 101-2697

E-901 Transfers — Page K-12 EDUCATION-55

MS. PETERSON:
Information on that transfer will be later in the hearing.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BACKUS:
How will the education programs professional position funded by decision unit E-275 in B/A 101-2715 ensure the consultation process is managed with consistency among the local education agencies and tribal organizations?

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MS. EBERT:

The position is outlined in federal law. Within the last 18 months, we have had more interaction between school districts and tribal entities across the State. We still need to do a better job. The new position will provide consistency, ensuring school districts and tribes are collaborating and sharing technical assistance.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BACKUS:

Which other states have staff members designated to help local education agencies and tribal organizations navigate the tribal consultation process outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act? How do those states fund the positions?

FREDINA DRYE-ROMERO (Education Programs Professional, Office of Inclusive Education, Student Achievement Division, Nevada Department of Education):

The NDE works with groups in Nevada and across the United States that have similar school-tribe liaisons. The federal requirement to establish these liaisons is recent. The positions are imperative. States like Oregon, Montana and Washington have funded similar positions.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BACKUS:

How did the NDE determine those tribal consultations required another State position?

MS. DRYE-ROMERO:

I have been focused on Indian Education at the NDE for approximately 16 years. There is much work to do in the State. Having one education programs professional for Indian Education is not enough. Our tribes deserve a staff member who can meet with them one-on-one and provide a more consistent relationship.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

Can you explain how the transfer of the Indian Education Formula grant under Title VI of the Every Student Succeeds Act and the associated education programs professional position would properly align the work related to Indian education within the Office of Inclusive Education?

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MS. PETERSON:

The NDE restructured its Office of Special Education as the Office of Inclusive Education, partially to centralize programs unique to specific students. This includes Indian Education programs, special education and the gifted and talented students.

SENATOR NEAL:

Can you explain the duties of the new grants and projects analyst position in B/A 101-2715 decision unit E-225?

E-225 Efficiency & Innovation — Page K-12 EDUCATION-113

MS. PETERSON:

That position is no longer recommended.

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

How did the NDE determine the position in B/A 101-2715 decision unit E-231 should be funded by IDEA?

MS. PETERSON:

This work is specifically related to IDEA subrecipients. It was appropriate to fund this with the grant that provides such services.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PETERS:

What risks do we face if the new education programs professional position in decision unit E-231 is not approved?

MS. PETERSON:

This position will facilitate proactive monitoring with local education agencies. The NDE is in a more reactive state. We want to make an active effort to provide technical assistance and help local education agencies be responsive.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PETERS:

Is it less that the NDE is at risk of IDEA noncompliance without the position, and more that you wish to be proactive? Would not funding the position put the State at risk of noncompliance?

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MS. EBERT:

The NDE has two main functions: to support school districts and ensure compliance with State and federal legislation. We do not enjoy putting school districts under corrective action plans. There are school districts required to provide services to special education students that are not under corrective action plans. We need to help districts improve so they can exit that status. The NDE needs to ensure districts do not require corrective action plans again once they improve.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN PETERS:

Would the position in B/A 101-2715 decision unit E-231 ensure the State is offering districts the assistance they need ahead of time? Does having to implement corrective action plans increase the number of resources the State must expend? Do we want to remain at a consistent level?

MS. EBERT:

Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MONROE-MORENO:

Decision unit E-225 in B/A 101-2715 is still in the Executive Budget. Could you clarify why this position is no longer moving forward?

MS. PETERSON:

The NDE determined we could not move forward with the new position after consulting with the GFO. It is being recommended for removal as part of a budget enhancement.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MONROE-MORENO:

It was an important proposed position. Who will now handle the associated duties?

CHRISTY MCGILL (Interim Deputy Superintendent, Student Achievement Division, Nevada Department of Education):

The Division of Student Achievement is improving processes, looking at best practices and what it needs to move the districts forward. This was part of the Division's plan. It asked for a higher-ranking education programs professional position to facilitate the process.

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN MONROE-MORENO:

Would there be an impact to the NDE's ability to implement pupil improvement plans?

Ms. MCGILL:

No.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MONROE-MORENO:

On average, what is the frequency and number of local education agencies that are not in compliance with IDEA, thereby requiring a corrective action plan?

Ms. EBERT:

There are three existing corrective action plans with school districts.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MONROE-MORENO:

The NDE indicates it is in the process of transitioning its monitoring system to a results-based accountability model. How would this transition help to reduce the number of instances of noncompliance? How does the NDE foresee this transition improving its ability to properly implement IDEA?

Ms. MCGILL:

Being results-based means monitoring processes so we can identify and address issues earlier. This would prevent school districts from getting to a place where they need corrective action plans. The process entails working with school districts on the appropriate metrics for monitoring so the NDE and local education agencies can work together. This shift would allow us to do a better job of meeting students' needs.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MONROE-MORENO:

You mentioned three school districts with corrective action plans. Are any other districts on the verge of noncompliance?

Ms. EBERT:

Issuing corrective action plans is a continuous process, as is keeping tabs on them. More districts may have plans issued in the coming months.

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MS. PETERSON:

Budget account 101-2697 begins on page 18 of [Exhibit C](#). It funds several testing programs mandated by the Legislature and administered by the NDE. It is primarily funded by General Fund appropriations and includes funding for the College and Career Readiness Assessment, Nevada School Performance Framework, Nevada Report Card and Nevada Alternate Performance Framework.

Decision unit E-226 in B/A 101-2697 provides inflationary adjustments of \$1.6 million in FY 2023-2024 and \$1.7 million in FY 2024-2025 for federal and State student performance reporting. This is based on conversations we have had with vendors updating their pricing as a result of economic conditions.

E-226 Efficiency & Innovation — Page K-12 EDUCATION-53

Decision unit E-227 in B/A 101-2697 funds the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment for the Read by Grade 3 program.

E-227 Efficiency & Innovation — Page K-12 EDUCATION-54

Decision unit E-900 transfers the EdGate In\$ite contract from the Legislative Counsel Bureau to the NDE. This would require \$391,509 in each year of the 2023-2025 biennium. The contract provides financial data from school districts and charter schools for use in the Nevada Report Card and other measures of performance.

E-900 Transfers — Page K-12 EDUCATION-54

Decision unit E-501 in B/A 101-2697 changes funding for the data recognition contract transferred from B/A 101-2715. This aligns the contract's funding source with that of similar contracts.

E-501 Adjustments to Transfers — Page K-12 EDUCATION-54

Decision unit E-901 in B/A 101-2697 discussed earlier effectuates the actual transfer of the data recognition contract. The contract would be 25 percent funded by General Fund appropriations and 75 percent funded by IDEA grant monies.

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN MONROE-MORENO:

In decision unit E-901, could you provide justification for reflecting funding for the Nevada Alternate Assessment in B/A 101-2697 rather than with B/A 101-2715, despite the fact these assessments are typically administered to students with disabilities?

MS. PETERSON:

This is an accounting measure which aligns the expenditures with the budget account where funding for assessments is located. This ensures testing is not spread out across multiple budget accounts.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MONROE-MORENO:

What are the federal guidelines limiting the continued use of IDEA grants to fund a portion of the Nevada Alternate Assessment?

MS. PETERSON:

There is no specific limitation.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MONROE-MORENO:

Are there any guidelines which incentivize the switch, even without specific limitations?

MS. EBERT:

We will follow up if research indicates there are federal limitations.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

If IDEA funds are no longer used for the Nevada Alternate Assessment, what will they be used for? Will they be reallocated? Will they still benefit special education services?

PETER ZUTZ (Administrator, Office of Assessment, Data and Accountability Management, Student Achievement Division, Nevada Department of Education):

Moving the funds into B/A 101-2697 will complete the total costs for the administration, scoring and reporting of the Nevada Alternate Assessment.

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

Will IDEA funds still be used for the Nevada Alternate Assessment, just in another budget account?

MR. ZUTZ:

Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

Were all costs associated with the Nevada Alternate Assessment reflected in B/A 101-2697 in FY 2020-2021 and FY 2021-2022?

MR. ZUTZ:

Yes.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

Why did the NDE make these changes prior to receiving legislative approval?

MR. ZUTZ:

This is to align all assessment contracts and work within the budget account associated with the administration, scoring and reporting of assessments.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

You need legislative approval to use General Fund dollars instead of federal dollars. Were those actions done without the consent of the Legislature?

MS. EBERT:

The NDE will research the issue and follow up in writing. The NDE knows it is important to follow the law.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN MONROE-MORENO:

If there were no limitations to federal money, why are we not using that source instead of General Fund dollars?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BACKUS:

For decision unit E-226 in B/A 101-2697, how did the NDE determine a 10 percent projected increase for assessment contract costs in each year of the 2023-2025 biennium was a reasonable increase?

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MR. ZUTZ:

We discussed projected cost increases due to inflation with our assessment vendors.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BACKUS:

You indicate the 10 percent cost increase is due to inflation. Can you provide a status update for the various assessment contracts due to expire in the coming months?

MR. ZUTZ:

We will follow up with that information.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN BACKUS:

Since the NDE's former assessment vendor, Measured Progress, had numerous issues providing services, what lessons were learned from that experience that will guide the NDE when selecting its next vendor? Will you pick a new vendor?

MR. ZUTZ:

Measured Progress has not been involved in any State assessment since 2015. That year, former Governor Brian Sandoval declared a Statewide testing irregularity.

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

How has the administration of the MAP assessment changed in school districts and charter schools since the Read by Grade 3 program funding was placed in the PCFP?

MR. ZUTZ:

The Read by Grade 3 program contracts with a vendor named Northwest Education Association. The product we administer, score and report to comply with the Read by Grade 3 program requirements is the MAP assessment and may also be referred to as the Read by Grade 3 assessment. The State has not had a Measured Progress contract since 2015. We ceased doing business with them after the Statewide testing irregularity was declared.

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ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

Why is the Governor recommending the permanent elimination of the end-of-course exams? This subject has a long history. Lawmakers initially suspended the exams due to budget cuts, and the Governor issued an Executive Order halting the tests during the pandemic.

In August 2022, the Interim Finance Committee approved \$1.3 million in federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars to administer end-of-course exams for the 2022-2023 school year.

The Executive Budget recommendation to eliminate end-of-course exams has companion legislation, Senate Bill 9. What is the line of thinking behind the permanent elimination of these tests? What if that legislation does not pass?

SENATE BILL 9: Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-282)

MS. EBERT:

There are several components here. The State previously had proficiency exams that students were required to pass to earn a high school diploma. We moved from proficiency exams to end-of-course exams. Proficiency exams were administered in tenth grade and covered content prior to that grade.

Nevada wanted to move away from the general pieces of the proficiency exam and focus instead on English language arts and mathematics. This was directed by the Legislature to the State Board of Education, which made the determination there would be four end-of-course exams. These would include freshman-level algebra, sophomore-level math, freshman-level English and sophomore-level English.

In December 2015, as Nevada was transitioning away from proficiency tests, President Obama signed the Every Students Succeeds Act. A college and career readiness test was required in all states. Nevada used the American College Test (ACT) to meet this requirement.

End-of-course exams and the ACT are duplicative. We test students too much. Senate Bill No. 76 of the 81st Session was aimed at the repeal of end-of-course exams, but lawmakers did not pass it. The 2021 Executive Budget did not

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include funding for end-of-course examinations, but the State was still required by statute to hold them. That requirement still exists. We are still administering the end-of-course assessments using federal dollars approved by the Interim Finance Committee, but we are not using General Fund dollars.

Senate Bill 9 would remove end-of-course exams. The NDE potentially will need to introduce an enhancement request if the legislation does not pass.

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:
We move to B/A 101-2705 for educator licensing.

NDE - Educator Licensure — Budget Page K-12 EDUCATION-62 (Volume I)
Budget Account 101-2705

MS. PETERSON:
Budget account 101-2705 begins on page 22 of [Exhibit C](#). It provides funding for the Nevada Department of Education, Commission on Professional Standards in Education, fingerprint clearance and background checks for teacher license applicants, and our Online Portal for Applications and Licensure (OPAL).

This budget account consists mostly of maintenance units and merit-increase enhancement requests. Decision unit E-710 in B/A 101-2705 provides funding for new computers as existing units are set to be replaced. Funding of \$9,616 in FY 2023-2024 and \$4,808 in FY 2024-2025 is requested.

E-710 Equipment Replacement — Page K-12 EDUCATION-64

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:
Please provide an update on the implementation of the new learning management system, including outstanding issues and the planned implementation date.

CRAIG STATUCKI (Interim Deputy Superintendent, Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement, Nevada Department of Education):
We expect implementation by fall 2023. We are still hiring staff to manage the system. The NDE promoted a person who was initially assigned to the learning

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management system and we now have a vacancy. We have a part-time contractor who is starting that work with system implementation.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

Is the contractor performing the management analyst position's duties?

MR. STATUCKI:

A contractor was promoted. We are looking to fill that position now.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

I understand that a contractor has filled the position. A State employee does not hold it.

MS. PETERSON:

That is correct. The NDE struggles with hiring. We attempted to recruit multiple times for the management analyst position authorized by the Interim Finance Committee but have been unsuccessful. The NDE had money left over from COVID-19 relief grants for a contract position to help with this programming. This is where all support to date has come from.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

Are hiring struggles connected to pay? What do we need to do to fill that position?

MS. PETERSON:

Pay is the most significant reason the NDE has recruitment difficulties. Applicants who interview and learn about our pay often choose different opportunities. Other applicants have already accepted other jobs when we send them interview requests.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

What are the ongoing costs for the new learning management system and why are those costs not included in the Executive Budget?

MS. EBERT:

Work pertaining to the licensed system is self-funded when possible.

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ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

Where do self-funded dollars come from?

MS. EBERT:

Licensure fees help fund NDE programs. The fees we collect through licensing fund those positions. The Legislature still needs to approve those expenditures.

MS. PETERSON:

The learning management system is actually a professional development and licensing platform. The intent is to charge a nominal fee for each professional development or micro-credentialing assessment. Vendors interested in providing learning activities will pay a \$25 fee.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

Are statutory changes needed for the assessment of the \$25 fee? Are we anticipating a budget amendment to reflect these revenues and expenditures?

MS. EBERT:

All of these funds and fees charged go through the NDE Commission on Professional Standards in Education for approval.

ASSEMBLYMAN MILLER:

Will there be an associated budget amendment?

MS. EBERT:

No.

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

We move to NDE data systems management B/A 101-2716.

NDE - Data Systems Management — Budget Page K-12 EDUCATION-57
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Budget Account 101-2716

MS. PETERSON:

Budget account 101-2716 begins on page 25 of [Exhibit C](#).

This is our funding source for the NDE's automated system of accountability and Statewide student information system. Budget account 101-2716 also includes funding for associated staff, vendor services, data system operations and related administrative expenses.

Decision unit E-490 in B/A 101-2716 eliminates expenditures for an expiring federal grant for the State Longitudinal Data System.

E-490 Expiring Grant/Program — Page K-12 EDUCATION-60

Decision unit E-235 in B/A 101-2716 updates the funding source for two positions originally funded from the State Longitudinal Data System grant. The positions remain necessary to continue supporting the Nevada Department of Administration, Enterprise Information Technology Services Division (EITS) staff who work on our identity and access management implementation. Technical support would be provided to EITS as it considers options for a Statewide identity management system implementation. The positions would continue to identify existing systems that can be migrated to our Microsoft Azure cloud. On-premises infrastructure would be deprovisioned to reduce and eventually eliminate our need to purchase, maintain, update and replace certain hardware related to business processes.

E-235 Efficiency & Innovation — Page K-12 EDUCATION-59

Decision unit E-236 in B/A 101-2716 funds an Infinite Campus enhancement of \$501,114 during FY 2024-2025. The NDE purchased several Statewide premium products to enhance the Infinite Campus system. These funds were initially provided by ESSER, which explains why the enhancement is only for the second year of the 2023-2025 biennium. These enhancements provide capabilities for our districts to engage in digital learning. The Infinite Campus learning component is a learning management system that will integrate with other third party learning management systems in what is called the Campus Analytics Suite. These are used Statewide by all schools and charter schools.

Districts are provided with the learning management system to improve communication between teachers and students. The system will allow teachers to create quick assignments, import educational content and quickly identify

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students who need assistance. Teachers could share lesson plans and assignments across the districts and charter schools. The system will allow monitoring and participation in online discussions.

E-236 Efficiency & Innovation — Page K-12 EDUCATION-59

SENATOR CANNIZZARO:

In decision unit E-236 of B/A 101-2716, please explain the functionality and features of the premium Campus Analytics Suite and Campus Learning Suite products for the Infinite Campus system.

MR. ZUTZ:

The Campus Analytics Suite and Campus Learning Suite products were purchased during the pandemic to meet the needs of students in a variety of learning environments, including those who were remotely learning 100 percent of the time.

Campus Learning is a learning management system product, syncing seamlessly with Infinite Campus, the Statewide student information system. Rolling that product out and getting stakeholders to use the tool to meet the educational needs of students happened quickly.

Campus Analytics is a sophisticated product which provides all districts insight into the status of students who are not on track to graduate on time.

SENATOR CANNIZZARO:

Lawmakers had discussions on the Infinite Campus Grad Score being used to identify at-risk pupils in the PCFP. If the Legislature determines not to use the Grad Score to identify at-risk students, would any other features from these products still be needed by the NDE for other purposes? I know you mentioned some functions were pandemic related.

MS. EBERT:

Yes. The Campus Analytics product contains several components. You can aggregate and disaggregate data points. The pieces made available by this tool are used by school districts.

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Nevada is a transient State. The products will help us support students as they move across school districts. The products track various learning components and resources.

SENATOR CANNIZZARO:

There has been debate over whether Infinite Campus would continue to be used. There was a contract extension with the vendor. Do any other vendors provide a Statewide student information system, aside from Infinite Campus?

MR. ZUTZ:

There are other vendors, but they are few. Infinite Campus provides a comprehensive set of tools. Some of Nevada's largest districts, prior to the Statewide adoption of Infinite Campus per the *Nevada Revised Statutes*, already made extensive and sophisticated use of the program.

SENATOR CANNIZZARO:

Please explain the fiscal and workload ramifications to the NDE, school districts and charter schools if the State were to move from Infinite Campus to another vendor.

MS. EBERT:

I was chief technology officer the fifth largest school district in the United States. The 350 schools in the district had individual file servers. Data was brought up centrally each night. If the district superintendent asked me how many students had been absent in a given day, it would have taken me three days to produce that information. Few vendors can handle Statewide data. Transitioning to another system would require developing a request for proposal, gathering stakeholder input and defending the rationale for switching from one system to another.

It took the school district I worked for three years to transition from one system to another. The Statewide transition to Infinite Campus took three years as well. I would estimate it would take at least three years to port and archive all of the information we have to a new system. Professional development would need to be addressed. With cybersecurity being a concern, we would need to carefully vet a potential vendor. Such a transition would be a massive undertaking, requiring tens of millions of dollars.

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

In decision unit E-235 in B/A 101-2716, the two affected positions are a business process analyst and an IT professional. The NDE went over what some of these positions' duties would be after the grant expires. What would be the consequences if decision unit E-235 is not approved? Will other NDE staff assume the associated responsibilities?

MR. ZUTZ:

State Longitudinal Data System work, initially funded through a federal grant, would not be assumed by existing staff and work would cease.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

Have we expended all money from the federal grant? Is that why we are switching to General Fund dollars?

MR. ZUTZ:

Decision unit E-235 would appropriate General Fund dollars for the positions upon termination of federal grant money. The grant is on a timeline.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

Please explain the need for expenditures of \$1.1 million over the 2023-2025 biennium for the identity management licensing contract.

MR. ZUTZ:

The identity management system is intended to bring Nevada into the modern era of IT operations. Identity automation allows the State to provide a single user sign-on with complete authorization and access. This includes two-factor authentication. An example is when a code is sent to one's cell phone during the login process.

With the existing system, authorizations can only be made at the district or administrator level for certain student and educational records. With the new system in place, parents could access their child's student information in specific ways. This provides a complete access portal of information to authorized individuals. This meets the State requirement to make education data transparent, while protecting student privacy.

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ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

Would parents be able to use the identity management system?

MR. ZUTZ:

Yes.

CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

We will now hear public comment.

CHRIS DALY (Deputy Executive Director of Government Relations, Nevada State Education Association):

I am reading from written testimony ([Exhibit D](#)).

SARAH GARRISON (Washoe Education Association):

I am using my teacher voice. My background is in the helping professions. I have worked as an emergency medical technician, a paramedic in a busy dispatch system, detoxification administrator and addiction counseling intern at a residential rehabilitation facility in Reno. I have worked in women's health care and crisis intervention, helping survivors of rape and other forms of domestic violence.

These past careers help me as a middle school teacher every day. I have been teaching at Dilworth Middle School in Sparks for 10 years. It was not until this past year that I reached an annual salary of \$50,000. This took a decade-long investment of my blood, sweat, tears and love for my students. Middle school students at a federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Title I school are not always easy to love. Due to inflation and drastic cost-of-living increases over the past decade, being an education professional is not enough for me to support myself as a 48-year old professional woman. I am highly qualified with a bachelor's degree in psychology, a teaching credential with which I am qualified to teach science and a unique occupational background allowing me to translate education standards into real world scenarios for my students.

I simply cannot afford to live alone in the city where I teach. Instead, I am renting a small back part of a house where I live with a roommate. By small, I mean 500 square feet. Since my rent takes up about 50 percent of my take-home pay, I am forced to work a second job during weekends and

evenings just to get by. These times are usually dedicated to endless out-of-classroom teacher duties. I am driving for Lyft. In 2021, I earned over \$20,000 with my part-time job. That might sound lovely, but that took a ridiculous number of hours, a lack of sleep, and wear and tear on my car. The haggard teacher look is a reality.

Why on Earth am I killing myself at a second job? It is because my chosen profession, arguably the most important career of them all, does not pay me enough to survive. I do not mean thrive. I do not dress in designer clothes or take extravagant vacations. I do not fill my shared fridge with healthy organic foods to eat after daily massages.

When I tell Lyft passengers my full-time job is being a middle school teacher, they are surprised. They say they could never teach middle school because they remember what they were like around that age. They say I have a tough and demanding job.

People do not know half the realities of a day in the life of a teacher. Yet they still know we deserve to be paid exponentially more. It is well past time for lawmakers to listen to voters, teachers, and your own consciences. It is time for a 20 percent increase in educator pay and at least \$20 an hour for workers who make our schools run. Teachers have had a huge impact on Nevada's economy. Think about how much an inspirational teacher from your life deserved to be paid.

DEBBIE REYNOLDS (Washoe Education Association):

I teach first grade at Ted Hunsberger Elementary School in the Washoe County School District. I am a proud member of the Washoe Education Association as a college-educated and credentialed teacher. I am blessed to have been a part of this prestigious occupation for nearly 20 years. I have enjoyed the incredible opportunity to inspire hundreds of children to read, write and think critically in ways that will impact their lives forever.

If Nevadans believe education is important, we must acknowledge teaching is a prestigious profession. Teachers are simply asking to be treated as professionals. Lawmakers are greatly respected individuals who won their elections because they are uniquely gifted at communication and leadership.

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You have a vision for Nevada to reach its greatest heights. I know you had teachers who encouraged you on your journey. They believed in you. Those same teachers are still applauding for you to this day.

Do you believe in our teachers? Do you see them as esteemed and highly-trained professionals? The future of the profession is bleak. The best teachers are retiring early. They feel discouraged and disrespected. Potential good teachers are sadly choosing other career paths in college.

Education is for our children. Dreams are for every child in Nevada. We all believe this, but dreams need to be nurtured, taught, explained and developed. There are certain ways in which only teachers can do that. There is no greater return on Nevada's investments than to care for teachers and schools. The rainy days were long ago and our time is short. The waters are rising, and this is your chance to change everything in Nevada's future.

AMANDA JONES (Washoe Education Association):

I am a special education facilitator and teacher in the Washoe County School District. I serve as special services director for the Washoe Education Association. I have worked in education for 16 years. I have a master's degree in administration and educational leadership. I am the mother of a graduating high school senior, a third grader and a kindergartner.

I love teaching and watching our children grow up to be successful. Close your eyes for a moment and imagine you are supporting students with extremely violent behaviors. This is through no fault of their own, but due to disabilities such as emotional disturbance, autism and fetal alcohol syndrome. They may deal with trauma or post-traumatic stress disorder.

In special education programs, teachers must protect themselves, their students and other students. You will be kicked, punched and spat on. This will sometimes happen daily or weekly. You will be called every name in the book.

We block our bodies for protection. As students escalate violent situations, we are trained to restrain them while providing deescalation supports. You can imagine the bruising and emotional abuse that we endure repeatedly, all while not being paid a cost-of-living wage. A program like this allocates \$18 per hour

for one assistant. If you are lucky, someone is recruited for an aide job paying \$13 an hour.

A new teacher makes about \$2,700 per month. That wage will not get you an apartment in the lowest-income housing in Reno. A teacher was recently attacked by a student in a specialized program in Washoe County. The next day, the school shut down and students were rezoned. They entered a safety and social intervention program. Another high-needs program opened with no teacher in place. I took this role on because it was best for the kids.

A few weeks ago, I was stabbed three times in the leg. A student grabbed my hair, dragged me down and proceeded to punch me repeatedly in the head. In that first week of my new role, I was sexually assaulted multiple times and heard vulgarities which broke my spirit. By the end of the day, I broke down and cried due to hearing such dark comments. The story is not unique as part of my role as a special education facilitator. I have connected with hundreds of special education professionals across the Washoe County School District and all of them have similar stories. I am still in the position because it needs to be filled. Who will take similar positions in the future?

The lack of competitive pay for teachers and aides, the lack of resources, and the lack of support on campus and at the district level is forcing teachers out of the profession quickly. The State has enough money to reverse this trend. Leadership is not about being in charge. Leadership is about taking care of those individuals in your charge. The NDE talks about infrastructure, but none of this matters if you do not have teachers in the classroom.

JACKIE TONOFF (Washoe Education Association):

I have been a special education teacher for seven years. These last five years, I have worked at a Title I middle school in Reno. I have a master's degree in educational leadership. In addition to teaching, I am a department lead, member of the school leadership team, multi-tiered systems of support coach, special education teacher / mentor and school representative for the Washoe Education Association.

I love my job, school, administration, colleagues and students. I know so many other educators who can say the same thing. We are in a critical point in

education in which loving our jobs is simply not enough. A teacher shortage crisis has heavily impacted special education programs in Washoe County.

My school started the year with a brand new strategy program for students with autism. Over a month passed before someone even applied for the position. We also had a special education resource position go unfilled through the first semester. Multiple paraprofessional positions are unfilled.

Those of us who can step up because we love what we do. We give up our preparation periods, overload our caseloads and work several hours beyond what our contracts stipulate, to do what is best for students. We are physically, emotionally and mentally drained as a result.

I am here today to represent those students, my school department and special education teachers across the State. We call for change. There is money available in the Account to Stabilize the Operation of State Government, also known as the Rainy Day Fund, to properly increase per-pupil funding and provide students the resources they deserve.

Money is available to increase paraprofessional wages to accurately reflect their roles and responsibilities. Money is available to offer competitive wages and make special education a desirable career path for future educators in Nevada.

More pay will eliminate the need for educators to pick up part-time jobs just to make ends meet. I know money will not buy the love needed to do this job, but it will push us in the right direction and bring new educators into Nevada public schools. It will help retain the few special education teachers Nevada has left. We have done our part. It is time for lawmakers to do theirs.

DOUG BRUBAKER (Washoe Education Association):

I have been a teacher since 1991. In that time, I have taught in the inner city schools of Los Angeles and on the shores of Lake Tahoe in Incline Village. I have taught middle schoolers and high schoolers. I earned a bachelor's degree and master's degree. I completed 56 additional college units in math so I could take an unfilled position.

I come here today to talk about my students. Due to the pandemic, high school seniors are experiencing their first normal year of high school. It will be the only one they know. Ninth-grade students have not had a normal year of schooling since elementary school. This has put students behind. Not only have they been deprived of the fun experiences school offers, but they lose out on learning that teachers dedicate their lives to.

The crisis in education is made worse by inflation, rising housing costs, and issues in teacher recruitment and retention. Nevada is ranked second to last in spending and our results are still around the national average. That is remarkable. The Governor asks you to place billions of dollars in the Rainy Day Fund while our students and faculty are experiencing a blizzard of challenges. If it is not a rainy day, what is? Money is needed to stem the loss of qualified teachers who are leaving for higher-paying jobs. We need to invest in students' futures, rekindling their discovery of learning and skills that will help them in college or vocational training. Nevada is growing. Education problems are not new, but pandemic recovery requires funds. Please consider the challenges our students face.

GILBERT LENZ (Washoe Education Association):

I graduated from Nevada schools 23 years ago. My amazing teachers inspired me and taught me the skills that made me who I am. I am a decorated combat veteran of the War in Afghanistan, a major in the Army National Guard, a certified welder and a Nevada career and technical education teacher. I teach about welding and power systems at North Valleys High School in Reno. My students build Nevada. They are our structural welders, mechanics, electricians and plumbers. They construct and maintain our buildings. They fix the machines that transport freight. My students are capable and will carry Nevada into a brighter future.

I have been teaching for 15 years. I hold a master's degree and am certified to teach in nine different subject areas. Each day I leverage my skills and experience to make 150 students into builders of Nevada's future. One of my favorite moments is when my former students contact me and say: "Lenz! Lenz, I am doing great. I just want you to know that I got a raise, and now I am making more than you."

Over the years, I have witnessed a struggle to hire and keep skilled teachers in our schools. I actually gave up my preparation period to teach my school's diesel technician program in addition to my welding program. This is because we could not find a teacher willing to take a 70 percent pay cut after leaving the industry. Much money is being recommended for the Rainy Day Fund. It is raining now. In fact, it is pouring rain and it has been for a while. It is time to start paying Nevada teachers what they are worth. Nothing less than the future of democracy is at stake. It is time for a 20 percent pay raise for teachers and a \$20 minimum wage for education support staff.

MELINDA BOWER (Washoe Education Association):

I have been teaching for 12 years. I am a teacher at McQueen High School. I am a member of the Washoe Education Association. I never thought I would have to be here, away from my students during the school day, to talk about the importance of education in our State.

I am here because we are in a crisis. The working and learning conditions of our public schools are in desperate need of attention. I am here to ask you to increase public education funding by at least 20 percent to offer competitive salaries that will attract and retain quality teachers and to decrease class sizes in our public schools.

I have always wanted to be a teacher. I earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish and my master's degree in Spanish literature. I began teaching in 2009. From 2013 to 2015, I taught Advanced Placement Spanish and my students scored in the top ten percent internationally in both years. I am a knowledgeable and competent teacher.

In 2015 I became part of the 44 percent of teachers that leave the profession within 5 years. I was great at teaching, my \$28,000 annual paycheck was not enough to repay student loans, pay rent and eat. Keep in mind that \$28,000 in 2008 is the equivalent of about \$39,000 today. The starting salary for Washoe County teachers is \$41,000. Effectively, there has only been a \$2,000 increase for teachers over 15 years. It is absurd to think any talented person would work for that salary. A 20 percent pay increase is necessary to attract and retain teachers in Nevada. Even with the Governor's proposed increases,

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Washoe County would still be 30 percent under the national average and educational funding.

When I left teaching, I doubled my salary. I did not have to create lesson plans on nights and weekends. Adolescents did not verbally abuse me every day. I was not living my passion. I love teaching. Four years after my initial resignation, I rejoined the Washoe County School District. I am now five years into my reignited career, and nothing has changed. The pay is still low. My classes are still overcrowded. I am now a mom, and I would have to quit again if it were not for my husband's financial support of our family.

Unfortunately, I do not have time to address the mental health crisis that our students and teachers face, nor the learning disadvantages of overcrowded classrooms. Thank you for voting for a 20 percent increase in education funding, the first small step towards bettering the public school for our kids.

ANNA BINDER:

As a parent, I am a big supporter of a 20 percent raise for teachers and a \$20 minimum rate for school support workers. I am the mother of six children. Four of them are students in the Clark County School District. Two of them graduated last year and are specialists in the Nevada National Guard. I am proud of them and their service to the State. Nevada educated them.

I have a disability, and three of my children have intellectual disabilities. I hear terms like "accountability" come up. As a mother who sends her kids to school, I rely on teachers to provide wonderful care to them. Teachers help my kids learn how to speak and other basic skills.

We need a 20 percent pay raise for teachers and a \$20 wage for support staff. That is not much of a price when you consider what they do for students. They have been instrumental in educating and helping raise our children. My kids spend more time on a school campus compared to at home with me.

When it comes to accountability, there is a lack of transparency. Lawmakers ask about appropriations of \$1 million. The Clark County School District applied for a \$52 million federal grant to improve special education. I found no other discussion about it. Who knows if they got the money? If they did get it, what

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did the money go to? Two years later, special education is not any better in Clark County. Around the same time, the Clark County School District applied for a \$100 million grant to improve English Language Arts in Title I schools. Two years later, there has been no improvement. I consistently hear the Clark County School District say they lack funds for instruction materials to support English Language Arts. Where did the \$100 million go?

There are two grant programs with \$152 million. I do not know the math around 20 percent raises for educators, but I would think \$152 million would give at least some teachers something of a raise.

I submitted information requests on financial matters. I am a member of the Clark County School District Audit Advisory Committee. For two years, I have fought for greater transparency. At our last meeting, I told the chief financial officer on our Advisory Committee that if we were really doing our jobs, "the top would not be coming down on them." We hope to submit bylaw recommendations during our next meeting. I am going to try to create a path of greater financial transparency. I do not know if the Advisory Committee will approve my request.

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CHAIR DONDERO LOOP:

Seeing no further public comment, I adjourn this meeting at 10:40 a.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Joko Cailles,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop, Chair

DATE: _____

Assemblywoman Shea Backus, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBIT SUMMARY				
Bill	Exhibit Letter	Introduced on Minute Report Page No.	Witness / Entity	Description
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
	C	3	Jhone Ebert / Nevada Department of Education	Nevada Department of Education Budget Account Presentation
	D	36	Chris Daly / Nevada State Education Association	Nevada State Education Association Written Testimony