



Legislative Testimony

Education Budgets 2610, 2699, 2615, and 2618

February 27, 2015

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Finance and Assembly Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittees on K-12/Higher Education/CIPS

Prepared Statement of Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities

A. Distributive School Account: 101-2610

Implementation of New Funding Formula-Special Education (E299): Priority-High

1. Adopt a weighted funding formula during the 2015 Legislative Session for school districts and charter schools, with a base funding goal and weights for English Language Learners (ELL), at-risk students, and Special Education students.
2. Establish a multi-year plan for phasing in the new funding formula.
3. Create a hold harmless formula to ensure that districts do not receive less funding per pupil.
4. Create a detailed, rigorous accountability model with oversight.
5. Ensure charter schools receive a proportionate share of any categorical funding outside the formula by providing charter schools with a categorical block grant, thus moving toward per capita funding.

B. Other Education Programs: 101-2699

Read by Three (E280) - See Zoom Schools and Victory Schools in Section C.

Social Worker Grants to Schools (E281): Priority- Medium

1. Consider beginning the mental health professional grant program at a smaller scale given the current shortage of mental health professionals in Nevada.
2. Allow school districts to use grant funds to hire various types of mental health professionals, including psychologists, counselors, and social workers, or subcontract with community organizations that provide these services.
3. Utilize existing NDE staff to administer the proposed grant program and leave bullying policy and reporting functions to school districts.
4. Leverage (and subcontract with) existing programs that provide Integrated Student Support (e.g. Communities in Schools).
5. Maximize federal Medicaid reimbursement for school based mental health services.

Career and Technical Education (CTE) (E283): Priority-High

1. Provide training to CTE teachers at Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) institutions in order to help CTE educators, many of whom come from industry, become better teachers and thereby improve CTE teacher retention.
2. Promote more work-based learning to benefit both CTE students and employers in connecting CTE curriculum with industry's needs.
3. Embed more academic content and integrate CTE in the implementation of Nevada Academic Content Standards.
4. Require districts to review CTE offerings to ensure they are linked to emerging workforce trends.
5. Strengthen collaboration between NSHE, employers, regional development authorities, non-profit institutions and school districts to improve the CTE curriculum and workforce pipeline and to ensure that CTE students graduate with industry-recognized and endorsed portable credentials.
 - a. Conduct a statewide strategic plan for CTE



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College and Career Readiness (E285): Priority-High

1. Expand dual credit programs offerings of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) classes.
2. Prioritize dual credit programs in schools with a high percent of Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL) students, underperforming high schools, and other schools that offer integrated services.
3. Train teachers and counselors on how best to use the ACT data to prepare students for college and the work force.

Jobs for America's Graduates (E289): Priority- Medium

1. Legislators should tie funding over the biennium on student outcomes and various programmatic and organizational benchmarks.
2. Disburse sufficient resources so that JAG can employ its own specialists (as opposed to school districts), which will improve the line of accountability.
3. Legislators should require an assessment of all the educational and career readiness programs available in each school district and encourage stakeholders at each school to collaborate and leverage existing resources so as to avoid duplication of resources and inefficient expenditure of public resources.
4. Prioritize JAG expansion in schools with high at-risk populations.
5. Encourage JAG Nevada to work closely with NSHE Community Colleges to improve the career readiness programming.

Charter School Harbor Master Fund (E291): Priority- Medium

1. Define benchmarks charter management organizations must meet to qualify for State funds.
2. Actively raise private and federal dollars to match State funds.
3. Run an aggressive and deliberate campaign to get the highest quality teachers and leaders in these schools.
4. Locate the schools where the need is the greatest for a high quality choice.
5. Develop a formal timeline for the first new charters in this fund to open.

Nevada Ready 21 (E294 & E295): Priority- Medium

1. Given the absence of a rigorous evaluation of the on-going efforts to introduce one-to-one technology in the school districts of Lincoln County, Clark County and Carson City, we recommend that the State launch the *Nevada Ready 21* Plan as a pilot program.
2. As part of this pilot, we recommend that NDE prioritize the launch of the pilot in rural and schools with high FRL rates.
3. Ensure that NDE continues to monitor and assess outcomes in the recently implemented initiatives in Clark County, Lincoln County, and Carson City.
4. Ensure development of a rigorous evaluation system to accompany and evaluate the launch of the *Nevada Ready 21* Plan pilot program.
5. NDE officials will need to work closely with professional development and curriculum staff to ensure that the professional development training for technology is tied to Nevada Academic Content Standards and curriculum.

Gifted and Talented Education (E300): Priority- Low

1. Ensure all students have an equal opportunity to be identified as GATE Students
2. Consider determining a weight in the new funding formula for GATE students

C. School Remediation Trust Fund 101-2615

**Zoom Schools (E275), Victory Schools (E276), and Read by Three from 101-2699 (E280):
Priority- High**

1. Combine Zoom, Victory, and Read by 3 programs into a comprehensive English Language Acquisition program that targets ELL and FRL students.
2. The State (and districts) should provide technical assistance to principals at schools funded by English Language Acquisition funds that support selection of research based literacy programs and NDE/3rd party evaluators should conduct an independent review of the selection of literacy programs.
3. Ensure that the State implements a high quality formative assessment to monitor student outcomes.
4. Review skill development annually for each targeted school and for targeted populations.
5. Ensure the State designs effective, evidence-based intervention programs that reduce retention rates.
6. Ensure the availability of high quality professional development for effective teaching.
7. Require schools to track progress by student annually and report these results publicly and to the state.
8. Require districts to maintain and report out data on other factors related to improved school performance such as teacher experience, teacher turnover rates, etc.

Full Day Kindergarten (E287, E292, E293): Priority-Medium

1. Given the significant benefits full-day kindergarten has on language poor students and low-income students, prioritize expansion in schools that have higher numbers of ELL, FRL and language poor students.
2. Implement a statewide assessment to measure academic outcomes at the end of kindergarten.
3. Ensure the State conduct an evaluation of full-day kindergarten through third grade.
4. Focus on early teacher recruitment.
5. Maintain emphasis on literacy and language acquisition.

D. Professional Development Programs 000-2618

Great Teaching and Leading Fund (E298, E299): Priority- High

1. Adopt standards for quality professional development programs statewide.
2. Ensure NDE develops rigorous evaluations of all professional development training and programs.
3. Ensure NDE conducts annual evaluation based on student achievement to ensure effectiveness.
4. Use the Great Teaching and Leading Fund to provide incentive grants to high quality, effective teachers who want to teach in Title I schools or rural areas.
5. Fund disbursement decisions should be weighted toward overall state educational goals such as literacy.

See full report for analysis leading to these recommendations: *Examining Nevada's Education Priorities: Which Initiatives are Worth the Investment?* <http://guinncenter.org/publications/policy-reports/#GoverningNevada>

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