

# Examining Nevada's Education Priorities: Which Initiatives are Worth the Investment?





### **About the Kenny C. Guinn Center for Policy Priorities**

The Kenny C. Guinn Center for Policy Priorities (Guinn Center) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) bipartisan, think-do tank focused on independent, data-driven, relevant, and well-reasoned analysis of critical policy issues facing Nevada and the Intermountain West region. The Guinn Center engages policy-makers, experts, and the public with innovative, independent research, ideas, and analysis to advance policy solutions, inform the public debate, and expand public engagement. The Guinn Center does not take institutional positions on policy issues.

© 2015 Kenny C. Guinn Center for Policy Priorities  
All rights reserved.

#### **Contact Information**

Kenny C. Guinn Center for Policy Priorities  
c/o InNEVation Center  
6795 Edmond Street, Suite 300/Box 10  
Las Vegas, NV 89118

Phone: (702) 522-2178  
Email: [info@guinncenter.org](mailto:info@guinncenter.org)  
[www.guinncenter.org](http://www.guinncenter.org)

#### **Contacts**

Nancy E. Brune, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
[nbrune@guinncenter.org](mailto:nbrune@guinncenter.org), (702) 522-2178

Victoria Carreón  
Director of Education Policy  
[vcarreon@guinncenter.org](mailto:vcarreon@guinncenter.org), (702) 522-2178



### **About Nevada Succeeds**

Nevada Succeeds is a bipartisan education policy organization founded by concerned members of Nevada's business community. We seek to bring effective, evidence based education practices to Nevada's P-20 Education System by engaging education professionals, policy makers, and the public to understand the needs of our State and to advance the policy solutions that will improve literacy outcomes for all students by improving the quality of teachers, leaders, and systems in Nevada.

#### **Contacts**

Brent Husson, President, (702) 483-7096  
[brent@nevadasucceeds.org](mailto:brent@nevadasucceeds.org)

Seth Rau, Policy Director, (702) 483-7096  
[seth@nevadasucceeds.org](mailto:seth@nevadasucceeds.org)

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction .....	7
Expansion of Pre-K (Early Childhood Education) .....	9
New Funding Formula.....	12
English Language Acquisition Initiatives .....	15
Career and Technical Education (CTE) .....	19
College and Career Readiness Programs .....	20
Great Teaching and Leading Fund .....	21
Rollover Bonds for School Construction .....	23
Universal Full-Day Kindergarten .....	25
Technology Funding .....	28
Bullying Prevention/ Mental Health Services in Schools .....	30
Jobs for America’s Graduates Nevada .....	32
Public Charter Recruitment Fund .....	34
Opportunity Tax Credit Scholarship.....	36
Breakfast at Schools.....	38
Gifted and Talented Education .....	40
State-Funded Advanced Placement Exams .....	41
Appointed School Boards.....	42
Formation of School Districts.....	43
Achievement School District .....	44

## Tables

Table 1: Identification and Prioritization of the Governor’s Education Programs .....	4
Table 2: Identification and Prioritization of Nevada's Education Programs.....	7
Table 3: Current Authorization for School Facilities Bonds.....	23

# Examining Nevada's Education Priorities: Which Initiatives are Worth the Investment?

## Executive Summary

During the *State of the State* address delivered on January 15, 2015, Governor Brian Sandoval advocated making targeted investments that would help move Nevada into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Central to his vision were almost two dozen K-12 education initiatives which he argued would improve student outcomes and help modernize the State's currently antiquated education system. This policy brief provides an analysis of each of these initiatives and suggests that many of these proposed interventions are successful only under the correct conditions. As such, careful attention must be paid to such conditions for these proposals to produce positive results.

In the pages that follow, the Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities and Nevada Succeeds evaluate all proposed interventions and identify those education initiatives for which there exists strong evidence to suggest that these initiatives are robustly correlated with improved outcomes. Based on this body of data-driven research, we prioritize consideration of these proposed education interventions.

The scope of this paper seeks to address the question, "How do we help legislators prioritize investments by demonstrating which programs are supported by data-driven evidence suggesting a positive relationship between the intervention and improved educational outcomes?" The intent of this policy brief is to provide Legislators with an independent summary of the body of data-driven research linking the proposed intervention to improved educational outcomes.

Based on the evidence, we prioritize consideration of the proposal and offer recommendations to inform the debate. For programs ranked "High Priority," we propose that the research indicates investments made in these programs are more likely to realize the biggest bang for the buck in terms of improving Nevada's educational system. For "Low priority" items, we do not mean to suggest they are not important; we simply intend to convey that investing in these programs, while worthwhile, may not significantly improve the State's educational system. Additionally, we prioritize programs relative to each other, not against the default of doing nothing and continuing with the status quo.

We do not consider here the question of whether the funding levels are adequate and sufficient, or whether the State needs to raise additional revenues to fund K-12 education. While we acknowledge Legislators must consider revenue streams when weighing priorities, we believe that decision makers will be better equipped to evaluate the set of options once provided with an independent analysis of which programs are robustly associated with improved educational outcomes.

**Table 1: Identification and Prioritization of the Governor's Education Programs**

<b>K-12 Education Program</b>	<b>Additional Cost (biennium)</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Expansion of Pre-K (Early Childhood)	\$10.3M	<b>High</b>	-Leverage Federal funds and target funding for full-day programs for low-income students -Invest in high quality professional development for teachers and continue annual external evaluations
New Funding Formula (to be phased in)	\$25M	<b>High</b>	-Adopt a weighted funding formula for school districts and charter schools, with base goal and weights for sub-groups -Create an accountability model with oversight

<b>K-12 Education Program</b>	<b>Additional Cost (biennium)</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Language Acquisition Interventions: Read by 3, Zoom Schools, and Victory Schools	\$177.5M	<b>High</b>	-Ensure each intervention has an accountability plan that can be evaluated
Career and Technical Education (CTE)	\$8M	<b>High</b>	-Provide high quality professional development for CTE teachers -Conduct a statewide strategic plan of CTE
College and Career Readiness Programs	\$8M	<b>High</b>	-Expand STEM offerings -Prioritize offerings at schools with high numbers of FRL students -Survey students who have completed programs to evaluate its overall effectiveness
Great Teaching & Leading Fund	\$16.3M	<b>High</b>	-Adopt standards for professional development -Require rigorous evaluations of all professional development and training programs -Fund through grants according to State Board priorities; can include teacher pipeline and recruitment and retention programs as well as PD
Rollover Bonds for School Construction	NA	<b>High</b>	-Legislators should consider additional financing options
Universal Full-Day Kindergarten	\$74.4M	<b>Medium</b>	-Majority of schools offer kindergarten -But high priority for full-day English Language Learners and Free and Reduced Lunch students
Technology Funding (Ready 21 Plan)	\$48.8M	<b>Medium</b>	-Launch a scaled down version of the program -Continue to monitor and evaluate Nevada school districts that have implemented this pilot program
Bullying Prevention/ Mental Health Services	\$36M	<b>Medium</b>	-Launch a scaled down version of the program -Allow school districts to use grant funds to hire various types of mental health professionals
Jobs for Nevada's Graduates	\$4M	<b>Medium</b>	-Continue to evaluate student outcomes -Link funding to performance goals
Public Charter Recruitment Fund	\$20M	<b>Medium</b>	-Identify schools in low-income areas where there is the greatest need for high quality choice
Opportunity Tax Credit Scholarship	\$10M	<b>Low</b>	-Establish a Task Force to develop a plan for the design and implementation of the scholarship/tax credit program -Analyze the supply of private school seats
Breakfast at Schools	\$2M	<b>Low</b>	-Fund with existing State and Federal monies
Gifted & Talented Education	\$10M	<b>Low</b>	-Determine a weight in the new funding formula for gifted students
Appointed School District Boards	NA	<b>Low</b>	-Create a Task Force to assess fiscal impacts
Formation of School Districts	NA	<b>Low</b>	-Create a Task Force to assess fiscal impacts -Consider option as part of funding formula discussions

<b>K-12 Education Program</b>	<b>Additional Cost (biennium)</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Achievement School District	NA	<b>Low</b>	-Continue to evaluate the models in other states before implementing in Nevada

In this policy brief, we provide an independent assessment of the potential of the Governor's proposed priorities to actually improve student outcomes, and to accelerate the modernization of the K-12 education system. We believe the appropriate role of the state is to allocate funds to programs that serve and benefit Nevada's school-age children, establish standards of quality and performance, and demand accountability (NRS Title 34).

Nevada is a diverse state and each school district and charter school has its own set of challenges. The State should establish standards of quality and performance, but then allow school districts and charter schools the flexibility to direct and allocate resources, based on best practices, to the programs that best serve their students.

Legislators must consider that these proposed interventions are inextricably linked with each other and funding decisions should not be treated as isolated decisions. For example, a decision to fund pre-K expansion will not improve student outcomes unless there is a simultaneous decision to ensure that there are high quality, effective teachers and principals in the schools.

We recommend the following:

- Establish standards for assessing and delivering quality professional development training. Effective teaching is a critical determinant in realizing positive returns on many of the initiatives supported by the Governor. Improved student outcomes begin with quality teaching in the classroom.
- Prioritize English Language Acquisition interventions so that all students can read on grade level.
- 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 Learners, at-risk students, and Special Education students.
- For all programs, the state must demand greater accountability from the stakeholders and link financing to performance goals. For example, for the weighted funding formula, the Legislature should create an accountability model with oversight. For many other programs, the Legislature must ensure that education officials develop and implement a rigorous accountability plan.

We conclude by emphasizing the importance of strengthening the accountability mechanisms in place at the school, district, and state levels. Through our research, we have discovered that, by and large, existing accountability mechanisms lack rigor, are inconsistently applied, and are inadequately monitored. Unless accountability mechanisms are included in legislation and are linked to funding, investments in these programs are unlikely to produce significant gains. This, we argue, is not a responsible allocation of public funds. In order to inform the public debate, the Guinn Center for Policy Priorities and Nevada Succeeds will be publishing a follow-on report titled, *"How do we get from A-Z: Recommendations for Strengthening Accountability and Performance,"* which will outline accountability measures and performance metrics.



## Introduction

During the *State of the State* address delivered on January 15, 2015, Governor Brian Sandoval advocated making targeted investments that would help move Nevada into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Central to his vision were almost two dozen K-12 education initiatives which he argued would improve student outcomes and help modernize the State's currently antiquated education system. This policy brief provides an analysis of each of these initiatives and suggests that many of these proposed interventions are successful only under the correct conditions. As such, careful attention must be paid to such conditions for these proposals to produce positive results.

In the pages that follow, the Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities and Nevada Succeeds evaluate all proposed interventions and identify those education initiatives for which there exists strong evidence to suggest that these initiatives are robustly correlated with improved outcomes. Based on this body of data-driven research, we prioritize consideration of these proposed education interventions.

The scope of this paper seeks to address the question, "How do we help legislators prioritize investments by demonstrating which programs are supported by data-driven evidence suggesting a positive relationship between the intervention and improved educational outcomes?" The intent of this policy brief is to provide Legislators with an independent summary of the body of data-driven research linking the proposed intervention to improved educational outcomes.

Based on the evidence, we prioritize consideration of the proposal and offer recommendations to inform the debate. For programs ranked "High Priority," we propose that the research indicates investments made in these programs are more likely to realize the biggest bang for the buck in terms of improving Nevada's educational system. For "Low priority" items, we do not mean to suggest they are not important; we simply intend to convey that investing in these programs, while worthwhile, may not significantly improve the State's educational system. Additionally, we prioritize programs relative to each other, not against the default of doing nothing and continuing with the status quo.

We do not consider here the question of whether the funding levels are adequate and sufficient, or whether the State needs to raise additional revenues to fund K-12 education. While we acknowledge Legislators must consider revenue streams when weighing priorities, we believe that decision makers will be better equipped to evaluate the set of options once provided with an independent analysis of which programs are robustly associated with improved educational outcomes.

**Table 2: Identification and Prioritization of Nevada's Education Programs**

<b>K-12 Education Program</b>	<b>Additional Cost (biennium)</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Expansion of Pre-K (Early Childhood)	\$10.3M	<b>High</b>	-Leverage Federal funds and target funding for full-day programs for low-income students -Invest in high quality professional development for teachers and continue annual external evaluations
New Funding Formula (to be phased in)	\$25M	<b>High</b>	-Adopt a weighted funding formula for school districts and charter schools, with base goal and weights for sub-groups -Create an accountability model with oversight
Language Acquisition Interventions: Read by 3, Zoom Schools, and Victory Schools	\$177.5M	<b>High</b>	-Ensure each intervention has an accountability plan that can be evaluated

<b>K-12 Education Program</b>	<b>Additional Cost (biennium)</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
Career and Technical Education (CTE)	\$8M	<b>High</b>	-Provide high quality professional development for CTE teachers -Conduct a statewide strategic plan of CTE
College and Career Readiness Programs	\$8M	<b>High</b>	-Expand STEM offerings -Prioritize offerings at schools with high percent of FRL students -Survey students who have completed programs to evaluate its overall effectiveness
Great Teaching & Leading Fund	\$16.3M	<b>High</b>	-Adopt standards for professional development -Require rigorous evaluations of all professional development and training programs -Fund through grants according to State Board priorities; can include teacher pipeline and recruitment and retention programs as well as PD
Rollover Bonds for School Construction	NA	<b>High</b>	-Legislators should consider additional financing options
Universal Full-Day Kindergarten	\$74.4M	<b>Medium</b>	-Majority of schools offer kindergarten -But high priority for full-day ELLs and Free and Reduced Lunch students
Technology Funding (Ready 21 Plan)	\$48.8M	<b>Medium</b>	-Launch a scaled down version of the program -Continue to monitor and evaluate Nevada school districts that have implemented this pilot program
Bullying Prevention/ Mental Health Services	\$36M	<b>Medium</b>	-Launch a scaled down version of the program -Allow school districts to use grant funds to hire various types of mental health professionals
Jobs for Nevada's Graduates	\$4M	<b>Medium</b>	-Continue to evaluate student outcomes -Link funding to performance goals
Public Charter Recruitment Fund	\$20M	<b>Medium</b>	-Identify schools in low-income areas where there is the greatest need for high quality choice
Opportunity Tax Credit Scholarship	\$10M	<b>Low</b>	-Establish a Task Force to develop a plan for the design and implementation of the scholarship/tax credit program -Analyze the supply of private school seats
Breakfast at Schools	\$2M	<b>Low</b>	-Fund with existing State and Federal monies
Gifted & Talented Education	\$10M	<b>Low</b>	-Determine a weight in the new funding formula for gifted students
Appointed School District Boards	NA	<b>Low</b>	-Create a Task Force to assess fiscal impacts
Formation of School Districts	NA	<b>Low</b>	-Create a Task Force to assess fiscal impacts -Consider option as part of funding formula discussions
Achievement School District	NA	<b>Low</b>	-Continue to evaluate the models in other states before implementing in Nevada



## Expansion of Pre-K (Early Childhood Education)

**Budget item:** \$17.0 million over the biennium for pre-Kindergarten (pre-K) education: \$10.4 million for a Federal matching grant, and \$6.6 million to maintain current levels of State funding.

	2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
<b>State funds</b>	\$6.6M	\$17.0M	\$10.4M (154 percent)
<b>Federal funds</b>	0	\$20.7M	

### Background

In 2013-14, Nevada funded 1,272 pre-K seats, which represents only 3 percent of 4-year olds in the state (Senate Bill 522, Section 17, Chapter 382, *Statutes of Nevada* 2013).<sup>1</sup> Nevada was one of five states in which pre-K funding in 2014-2015 was lower (by 2.7 percent) than 2013-2014 levels.<sup>2</sup> While there are other providers and sources for pre-K funding, including school district general funds, Federal Title I funds, and private grants, only 30 percent of Nevada's 3- and 4-year olds attend any form of pre-K.<sup>3</sup>

In December 2014, Nevada was one of 18 states selected to receive monies from the latest round of Federal *Race to the Top in Early Childhood* funding. This Federal grant will double the proposed State allocation of pre-K investment (\$10.3 million in 2015-2017 biennium) with Federal funds over the next four years. Nevada will receive the full Federal allocation of \$43.4 million if the State can commit an additional \$11.4 million in the 2017 biennium over 2013-2015 spending levels.<sup>4</sup> The grant is expected to create 2,500 new seats in the next four years in public, private, charter, and religious schools among students with family income up to 200 percent of the poverty level in Churchill, Clark, Lyon, Nye, and Washoe Counties.

The Federal grant provides clear guidelines on how State authorities can use Federal monies.<sup>5</sup> First, based on research that finds full-day pre-K has a greater impact on positive outcomes and attendance than half-day pre-K, all seats created in Nevada must be full-day pre-K seats.<sup>6</sup> The grant mandates the full alignment of pre-K standards with the Nevada Academic Content Standards (Common Core), a universal Kindergarten entry assessment among all grantees, the collection of longitudinal data, and adoption (and revision) of the Nevada Tiered Quality Ratings Improvement System (TQRIS), which is currently optional.

### Analysis

An extensive body of research has well documented the benefits of quality pre-K.<sup>7</sup> Nobel Prize winning economist James Heckman and Paul Gertler (2014) find that when pre-K can successfully close the achievement gap before kindergarten, students are more likely to have greater future academic success, higher lifetime earnings, more developed cognitive skills, and even better health outcomes.<sup>8,9</sup> Heckman et al (2011) estimated that "every dollar spent on early childhood education returns 10 cents annually over the life of a child."<sup>10</sup> The landmark Perry Study (2005) followed 120 individuals from pre-K to the age of 40 and found that "adults at age 40 who had the preschool program had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have preschool."<sup>11</sup> Collectively, these widely-respected studies provide convincing evidence that an investment in early childhood education can save the state money over the long term. Additionally, evidence suggests that pre-K interventions have the greatest impact on Special Education students, English Language Learners (ELLs), and African-American students.<sup>12</sup>

While the positive gains and improvement in outcomes may not be realized immediately, effective pre-K programs significantly and positively impact student outcomes into third grade and beyond.<sup>13</sup> Most recently, a study found that two pre-K programs in North Carolina that were able to successfully exit students from Special Education in pre-K maintained their gains through third grade.<sup>14</sup> These gains were very similar across all subgroups and led to *significant cost savings* for the state.<sup>15</sup>

Some critics argue that the gains of pre-K are short-lived and fade by the time students reach third grade, if not sooner.<sup>16, 17</sup> Further analysis, however, suggests that the biggest predictor of the ability to sustain the advantages of pre-K interventions over the long-term is the quality of teaching in grades 1-3. Quality of classroom instruction is the most important factor for student success.<sup>18</sup> In the absence of high quality teachers at all levels of a child's education, the gains from effective pre-K interventions are likely to diminish over time.

This finding underscores the importance of coupling pre-K programs with initiatives to invest in developing high quality classroom teachers. A high quality pre-K program requires professional, skilled teachers in the classroom. Studies suggest that pre-K programs have been most successful when teachers are licensed and paid similarly to their K-12 counterparts.<sup>19</sup> Additionally, job-embedded, sustained professional development can improve classroom instruction and significantly improve student achievement.<sup>20</sup> Armed with the necessary training to properly educate our youngest students, these skilled teachers are more likely to close the achievement gap for those students who enter behind their peers.

More importantly, high quality pre-K programs must include rigorous evaluations to ensure that students are meeting expected outcomes. In the short term, students should be able to pass a Kindergarten Readiness Assessment to ensure they begin Kindergarten on grade-level. In the long run, pre-K should help students stay on grade level throughout their academic careers. All pre-K interventions should have a third party external evaluator conduct a program evaluation and assessment.

Nevada conducts an annual evaluation of its existing Early Childhood Education (ECE) program.<sup>21</sup> The 2011-12 evaluation concluded that over the short term, "Nevada ECE children made large cognitive gains in preschool and were clearly better prepared to enter kindergarten academically than if they had not participated in Nevada ECE."<sup>22</sup> Over the long term, the evaluation concluded that children have maintained the significant learning gains achieved in preschool and that participation in the program may have decreased the need for intervention services in elementary school.<sup>23</sup>

### **Challenges to pre-K expansion**

While the benefits of pre-K are well documented, efforts to expand pre-K in Nevada at this time would face several challenges. The first is related to the shortage of teachers. Nevada currently faces a shortage of teachers, including pre-K teachers. The State, in conjunction with the Nevada System of Higher Education, should work together to develop a plan for addressing the shortage of qualified, professional pre-K teachers. The second issue is rural access to pre-K programs. As of 2010, the vast majority of early childhood care in 13 of Nevada's 17 counties is family, friends, and neighbors (FFN) care or home care. In Eureka, Esmeralda and Lincoln, 100 percent of early childcare was FFN care or home care.<sup>24</sup> Another major concern for school districts is facilities. In the Clark and Washoe Counties, elementary schools are currently over capacity, which can make it difficult to add additional pre-K classrooms.<sup>25</sup>

### **Recommendations**

1. Fund the *Race to the Top in Early Childhood* State matching requirement to ensure receipt of Federal funds.
2. Invest in high quality professional development for teachers and leaders in pre-K.
3. Require districts to test students at the beginning and end of the pre-K programs for skill development.
4. Ensure that NDE and school districts continue annual external program evaluations.
5. Ensure pre-K students filling new classroom seats come from sub-groups that have low levels of language and reading proficiency, including ELLs, Special Education students, and low-income students eligible for Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRLs).
6. The Nevada Department of Education and the districts should devise a system for identifying which teachers may have had specific training in early intervention and/or literacy programs.

**Benchmarks**

1. Higher numbers of students enrolled in high quality pre-K programs
2. For those students in pre-K programs, an increase in the percentage of students who can pass the required Kindergarten entry readiness assessment
3. An increase in the percentage of students reading on grade level in third grade
4. An increase in the percentage of quality instructional personnel
5. A decrease in the achievement gap among language poor subgroups (ELLs, FRLs, and Special Education students)

**Priority: High**



## New Funding Formula

**Budget item:** Phase in implementation of a weighted funding formula, beginning with Special Education.

2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
\$257.2M for Special Education	\$316.4M for Special Education	\$59.2M (23 percent)

### Background

Nevada's existing K-12 financing system has been criticized for not providing adequate funds and for not providing funding that targets specific student needs. There are also large disparities in funding per pupil between school districts. To date, Nevada has not been sued over these issues, but some stakeholders argue that the funding formula should be addressed to prevent a costly and lengthy lawsuit over K-12 funding.

In June 2014, the Legislature's Task Force on K-12 Public Education Funding proposed transforming Nevada's existing finance system from one based on historical expenditures to a weighted funding formula that takes into account the additional cost of educating students with special needs (Senate Bill 500, Chapter 500, *Statutes of Nevada* 2013). Specifically, the Task Force recommended implementing weights of not less than 1.5 for English Language Learners and Free and Reduced Lunch students, until such time as a cost (adequacy) study could be conducted. For Special Education, the Task Force suggested a weight of 2.0 with a funding cap of 13 percent of enrollment. The Task Force also endorsed the creation of a statewide Special Education contingency fund to assist districts with high-cost students.

The Task Force recommended that the base for applying weights would include all State and local funding but exclude all Federal and State categorical funding. The Task Force also suggested that the funding associated with these weights be treated initially as a categorical program outside the funding formula and then transitioned into the formula at a future date.

In the State of the State, Governor Sandoval proposed phasing in a weighted formula, beginning with Special Education. The budget allocates an additional \$25 million in FY 2017, with the eventual goal of achieving a funding weight of 2.0. The Governor also recommends creation of a \$5 million contingency fund for high cost pupils. With these augmentations, total special education funding in FY 2017 is proposed to be \$168 million.

This increased allocation makes progress towards the 2.0 weight. The per pupil statewide funding rate, including revenues inside and outside the Nevada Plan, is projected to be \$6,928 in FY 2016 and \$7,009 in FY 2017. Under the Governor's proposal, the funding provided for Special Education would represent a per pupil funding rate of 1.38 in FY 2016 and 1.44 in FY 2017.

The Governor proposes that funding for Special Education remain in a separate fund and not be folded into each district's general fund. This is appropriate since Federal Maintenance of Effort requirements mandate that school districts keep track of state and local special education funding.

### Analysis

#### Determining Weights

The Governor's proposal does not specify when weights for English Language Learners and Free and Reduced Lunch students would go into effect. Prior to specifying weights for different groups, it is important to determine the base funding rate upon which the weights will be applied. A public finance consulting firm, Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (2015), recently released a report, commissioned by UNLV's Lincy Institute, recommending that the base funding rate for all students be \$8,251, with adjustments for district size.<sup>26</sup> The report recommends weights of 1.42 for English Language Learners, 1.35 for at-risk students

and 2.10 for Special Education.<sup>27</sup> The researchers intended the weights to be additive, so a student who falls into more than one category could qualify for funding under multiple weights.

The base funding and weights are intended to be funded by a combination of local, state and Federal funding sources. If a new formula is implemented using existing funds, monies would simply be reallocated and rural districts could receive significantly less revenue, which could create equity concerns. Alternatively, the State could establish a per-pupil funding goal and create a multi-year plan to reach that objective. The State would also need to consider how long it should hold districts harmless to avoid sharp decreases in revenue in rural areas.

After the base funding rate has been determined, it will be critical to a successful weighted funding formula for the weights to be aligned with the known and anticipated needs of the different categories of students and localities. Nevada has experienced tremendous demographic and urban/rural development changes, since the funding formula was last revised. The evolving needs of students in rural areas of the state as well as students in very impoverished urban areas should be specifically included in the funding weights to be established. If such alignment does not occur, then a revised funding formula may not achieve its intended allocation priorities.

#### Weighted Funding Formulas and Improved Student Outcomes

While other states have implemented weighted funding formulas,<sup>28</sup> there is limited research showing these formulas have a significant impact on student outcomes. Maryland, which was one of the first states to implement and fully fund a weighted funding formula, has realized improved outcomes in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), but no study has analyzed the specific impact of the funding formula.<sup>29</sup>

Some research suggests that it costs more to adequately educate students with special needs.<sup>30</sup> However, studies also show that providing increased funding does not guarantee improved student outcomes.<sup>31</sup> These diverse conclusions point to the need to ensure that new funds are spent in a way that improves instruction and student outcomes.

If a new funding formula is put into place, the public will need assurances that the funds are being spent effectively and are generating a positive return on higher investment. According to the American Institutes of Research, "In concert with increased flexibility, states and districts implementing a [weighted student formula] have seen the need to develop supporting accountability systems that ensure that districts and schools are spending funds effectively and are ultimately held responsible for the achievement of all subgroups of students."<sup>32</sup> Nevada can learn from the accountability systems put into place in other states that have implemented weighted student funding formulas such as California, Florida, and Hawaii.<sup>33</sup>

Nevada's school districts and charter schools are currently required to complete School Performance Plans for each school, which include goals, measurable objectives, action plans, monitoring plans, as well as a budget to implement the goals. However, when measured against best practices, these existing plans lack several key elements.<sup>i</sup>

#### Implementation Issues for Charter Schools

Under current law, charter schools are required to receive a proportionate share of local, State, and Federal funding. In practice, charter schools receive far less grant funding than school districts.<sup>34</sup> For special education, charter schools received an average of \$105 per pupil in FY 2014 (including State funds and transfers from school districts) compared to \$305 per pupil for school districts. The average State

---

<sup>i</sup> Comprehensive integration between the school budget and the goals in the School Performance Plan; Technical assistance to develop goals, benchmarks and intervention plans; Oversight by an external entity to evaluate progress towards goals, provide technical assistance, and help the school district retool interventions; and Concrete interventions for schools that do not make sufficient progress.

categorical funding for charter schools was \$13 per pupil while school districts received an average of \$668 per pupil.<sup>35</sup>

This funding disparity occurs for several reasons. In some cases, charter schools are not eligible for funding, such as the Class Size Reduction program. In other cases, the amount of the grant is too small to create a viable program. These issues are likely to become more pronounced under the Governor's budget, which would create several new categorical programs.

The new funding formula should ensure that charter schools receive parity in funding with school districts. Charter schools should receive the same base funding and weights as other schools. For programs that remain outside the base funding formula, charter schools should receive a categorical block grant which would be equivalent to the statewide funding per pupil that districts receive for these programs.

### **Recommendations**

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 Learners, 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.
6. NDE and districts should provide training for principals in areas of financial management, project management, and performance based accountability metrics.

### **Benchmarks**

1. New weighted funding model implemented
2. Development of a multi-year implementation plan
3. Development of an accountability plan to accompany the funding formula
4. Alignment of weights with identified funding needs by category of student, or need of locality, or other prioritized need

### **Priority: High**

- Nevada's system for funding K-12 education is complex and has not been substantially revised since it was created in 1967. It has been criticized for not providing sufficient funding to adequately educate students and for not fully recognizing the additional investment needed to educate special populations such as low-income students, English Language Learners, and Special Education students.
- In order to ensure that additional funding to adequately educate students is robustly linked to improved student outcomes, legislators must ensure that education officials develop and implement a rigorous accountability plan.

## English Language Acquisition Initiatives

*Read by 3, Zoom Schools, Victory Schools*

**Budget item:** The Governor has proposed a set of interventions worth \$176.9 million, all aimed at increasing acquisition of academic English: Read by 3 (\$27.1 million); Zoom Schools (\$99.9 million) and Victory Schools (\$49.9 million).

	2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
<b>Read by 3</b>	0	\$27.1M	
<b>Zoom Schools</b>	\$49.9M	\$99.9M	\$50.0M (100 percent)
<b>Victory Schools</b>	0	\$49.9M	
<b>All Literacy Programs</b>	\$49.9M	\$176.9M	\$127.0M (254 percent)

### Background

In 2010, the Annie E. Casey Foundation published a report titled, *Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, which demonstrated the long-term societal costs of poor literacy by the end of the third grade.<sup>36</sup> High school graduation rates, along with prison construction projections, are correlated with grade level reading proficiency by the end of third grade. The Annie E. Casey Foundation report highlighted the adoption by many states of Florida's Read by 3 law, passed in 2002, which has resulted in significant gains over the last decade on both the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) assessments.<sup>37</sup> Referencing the positive results in Florida, Governor Sandoval wants to replicate a similar program here in Nevada. While reading by third grade is the primary goal of this program, there will also be middle school and high school literacy interventions as part of the Zoom and Victory Schools to ensure all students can acquire academic English skills.

The Governor has indicated his interest in funding three English Language Acquisition programs, their assessments and evaluations for a total sum of \$176.9 million: Read by 3; the Zoom Schools, which will target 48 schools with large number of ELLs; and the Victory Schools, which targets 35 schools with high numbers of students on Free and Reduced Lunch.<sup>ii</sup> It is anticipated that the funding for Zoom Schools will become the basis for the ELL weight and the funding for Victory Schools will become the basis for the FRL weight. While it is not clear what percentage of funds will be directed towards assessment, the law will require every student in Nevada to take the same assessment, regardless of the type of school they attend, to ensure each student reading below grade-level will receive the proper intervention.

In 2013, Nevada Legislators authorized Zoom schools (schools with the highest proportions of ELLs) to allow more customized interventions to more effectively assist the 67,836 ELL students in Nevada (Senate Bill 504, Section 16.2, Chapter 515, *Statutes of Nevada* 2013). Zoom Schools are mandated by the State to have open enrollment pre-K, full-day kindergarten capped at 21 students per class, Reading Skills Development Centers, and an extended school year. The Victory School model is a direct response to the public concern that Zoom Schools primarily focus on ELLs and not on all students who are struggling, especially black male students, who have the lowest academic performance of any subgroup in the country, as well as students in schools in Native American tribal lands. Victory Schools are designed to be more independent than Zoom Schools, and principals will submit a detailed plan outlining how they use additional funds to increase student achievement.

### Analysis

In Florida, the Read by 3 literacy intervention program was accompanied by the end of social promotion. In its first year, Read by 3 resulted in the retention of 21,799 students (13.5 percent of the state's third graders), although the retention rate dropped in subsequent years. Schwartz and West (2013) found that student achievement did increase temporarily due to retention, but only when accompanied by more effective teaching.<sup>38</sup> However, Cannon and Lipscomb (2011) found that retention in first and second grade

<sup>ii</sup> For Zoom and Victory schools, it is unclear how many of these schools will be elementary schools. Currently all 24 Zoom Schools are elementary schools, but that is proposed to change in 2015-17.



was more strongly correlated with higher student achievement.<sup>39</sup> Although the evidence is mixed, some studies indicate that earlier retention (starting as early as kindergarten) is positively correlated with larger gains in future student achievement. Additionally, research assessing School Improvement Grants over 2012-2013 found that schools that specifically dedicate staff to work on improving ELL student outcomes realized the largest gains in student achievement. These results informed the Zoom School model.<sup>40</sup>

### Zoom Schools and Student Outcomes

Of the three literacy interventions proposed by Governor Sandoval, only one – the Zoom Schools – is underway in Clark County School District (CCSD) and Washoe County School District (WCSD). However, it is too early to determine the academic impact of Zoom schools. Because this program has focused on early interventions through pre-K and full-day Kindergarten, third grade reading results for the first cohort of students who started in 2013-2014 will not be available until September 2018. Additionally, state and local authorities failed to establish a rigorous, scientific evaluation system for the Zoom Schools upon their opening. Current assessment efforts are neither methodologically rigorous nor uniform across the State.

We note that in the 2013-2014 school year, four of the Zoom Schools lost a star in their ratings. However, we would caution against attempts to establish a correlation to outcomes. The star ratings only account for results in grades 3-5 while the Zoom School literacy interventions were aimed primarily at pre-K and Kindergarten students. The Reading Skills Development Centers only provided services to students in grades 1-3, and the extended school year occurred after the summative assessments. In Clark County, reading proficiency in grades 3-5 increased in 13 of the 14 schools, but math proficiency only increased in one school. In Washoe County, only two of the five Zoom Schools realized an increase in reading and/or math proficiency levels. School authorities will be closely monitoring the Smarter Balanced Assessment results from Zoom Schools this spring.

There are two additional possible reasons for mixed results from Zoom Schools. First, because the State legislation authorizing Zoom Schools did not pass until June 2013, Zoom Schools were forced to hire additional teachers at the last minute during the summer. Research, however, finds that teachers hired once the summer starts are far more likely to leave the classroom and are less impactful on student outcomes than those teachers selected earlier in the hiring cycle.<sup>41, iii</sup>

Second, it is not clear that best practices for teaching ELLs have been effectively implemented at Zoom Schools. A comprehensive review of studies of interventions for struggling readers, including ELLs, identified that the best programs have a strong focus on classroom instruction and use licensed teachers to provide one-to-one, phonetic tutoring to students who experience difficulties.<sup>iv,42,43</sup> The authorizing legislation deferred to the judgment of the school districts regarding which reading practices would be implemented under the program. In CCSD, Reading Skills Centers were implemented using paraprofessionals and student teachers who conducted small group tutoring under the supervision of a licensed teacher.<sup>v</sup> In contrast, WCSD placed licensed teachers in their Reading Skills Centers. While there are isolated cases of one-to-one tutoring being offered at some Zoom Schools, the practice was not formally adopted at all schools. That said, the preliminary results from the pre-K and Kindergarten programs in Clark County and Washoe

---

<sup>iii</sup> Reports indicate that 51 of the 95 teachers hired in Clark County School District were first year teachers and the law prohibited funds from being spent on professional development and family engagement. CCSD supplemented funds for professional development and family engagement from its own budget.

<sup>iv</sup> Research based findings on effective interventions include: (1) Cooperative learning, where students work in teams of four to five to help each other learn academic content; (2) Professional development is key to ensuring quality instruction; (3) One-to-one tutoring is very effective in improving reading performance; (4) Tutoring models that focus on phonics are associated with much better outcomes than others; (5) Teachers are more effective than paraprofessionals and volunteers as tutors; (6) Small-group, phonetic tutorials can be effective, but are not as effective as one-to-one phonetically-focused tutoring; and (7) Lessons that emphasis on vocabulary and writing.

<sup>v</sup> In the original Reading Skills Development Centers, the paraprofessionals were UNLV student teachers that were closely supervised by their university professors. Under the current system in CCSD, that is no longer the case and the paraprofessionals often lack the direct training, supervision and support that existed under the previous model.

County find that students in Zoom Schools are meeting their academic goals. Nonetheless, it remains too early to assess whether current gains will be sustained through third grade and beyond.

Additionally, while there are a handful of individual schools that have been very successful in determining strategies that ensure academic English Language achievement among most of their students, no district or charter school network in Nevada has mastered a system that works across multiple sites to consistently increase academic English Language proficiency. This owes in part to a lack of prioritization but also a weak system of monitoring and evaluation so that education officials can identify what interventions are working and scale them up.

The Governor's proposed intervention programs all seek to ensure that high risk students are able to read on grade level and acquire academic English. Political realities and Federal funding constraints, however, have given rise to different models and approaches. It is logical, then, to treat all of these proposed programs as English Language Acquisition programs that seek to ensure students from all backgrounds can read on grade level. Given that targeted literacy interventions, when grounded in evidence based practices, can positively affect third grade reading proficiency outcomes, we believe that literacy/English language acquisition interventions should be treated as high priority items for consideration.

#### Moving English Language Acquisition Interventions into the Funding Formula in the Long Term

The Governor has recommended that the proposed English Language Acquisition programs be separate categorical programs and that they be moved into the funding formula at a future date. This is being proposed to ensure that school districts place a high priority on these interventions and to facilitate monitoring of outcomes. Some stakeholders argue that these intervention programs should not be placed into the funding formula until they have demonstrated effective results.

In the short term, it would be appropriate to combine these programs into a single grant program given that the three English Language Acquisition programs have duplicative goals. This would remove the artificial barriers between these programs and recognize that all of the targeted schools have a combination of both ELL and FRL students. This would also move the focus to individual student needs as opposed to creating different labels for schools.

In the long term, placing the English Language Acquisition interventions in the funding formula as the funding weights for at risk students and English Language Learners can provide schools with the flexibility to implement data-driven practices tailored to student needs. In return for this flexibility, strong accountability provisions should be put in place and regularly evaluated. Current accountability provisions can be revised to include: 1) comprehensive integration between the school budget and the goals in the School Performance Plan; 2) technical assistance to assess and select research-based programs, develop goals, benchmarks and intervention plans, and manage program funds and accountability measures; 3) oversight by an external entity (NDE and external evaluators) to evaluate progress towards goals, provide technical assistance, and help the school district retool interventions; 4) concrete interventions for schools that do not make sufficient progress; and (5) greater emphasis on teacher quality and effectiveness. To ensure that there is significant benefit from this intervention, it is also critical that decision makers accelerate efforts to rigorously monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these proposed interventions programs.<sup>44</sup>

#### **Recommendations**

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/3<sup>rd</sup> 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. Ensure the State designs effective, evidence-based intervention programs that reduce retention rates.
5. Ensure the availability of high quality professional development for effective teaching.
6. Review skill development annually for each targeted school and for targeted populations.
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.

**Benchmarks**

1. An increase in the percentage of students reading on grade level in third grade
2. An increase in fifth and eighth grade reading proficiency
3. An increase of students who are reading at grade level when they transition to middle school
4. An increase in high school graduation rates, particularly in schools offering interventions in middle and high schools
5. A decline in the retention gap between students of color and the general population
6. A decline in the achievement gap between ELL/FRL students and the general population as measured by grade level reading
7. Identification of a measure of relative effectiveness of teachers/schools in completing successful student interventions
8. Increase in the percentage of teachers who are determined effective or highly effective on the NEPF in these schools
9. Increase in the percentage of students exiting ELL status each year as measured by World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Scores
10. Increase in the Percentage of teachers in Zoom Schools who are properly trained to teach ELLs

**Priority: High**

## Career and Technical Education (CTE)

**Budget item:** The Governor has proposed \$16.1 million for career and technical education.

	2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
<b>Career and Technical Education</b>	\$27.9	\$32.4M	\$4.5M (16 percent)
<b>--State Funds</b>	\$7.8M	\$16.1M	\$8.2M (105 percent)
<b>--Federal Perkins Funds</b>	\$20.1M	\$16.3M	-\$3.8M (16 percent)

### Background

In 2005, Assembly Bill 580 appropriated \$1.0 million in each fiscal year for NDE to provide grants to local school districts or charter schools to establish technical skills advisory committees that are to review the curriculum, design, content and operation of a program of career and technical education (CTE) to determine its effectiveness. Two years later, Assembly Bill 627 allocated \$4 million in each year of the 2007-2009 biennium to maintain and expand CTE programs. CTE funding levels have been relatively flat over the period 2007-2014 (Senate Bill 522, Section 16(5)(e), Chapter 382, *Statutes of Nevada* 2013). However, enrollment in CTE programs has increased almost 12 percent over the period 2006-2015.

### Analysis

According to NDE, more than 49,000 students enroll in CTE courses each year, at over 100 schools (including seven Career and Technical Academies). At the College of Southern Nevada, for instance, there are over 60 CTE programs offered in local high schools (through its Tech Prep program, a dual enrollment program that allows eleventh and twelfth graders to earn college credit for career and technical education courses completed in high school).<sup>45</sup> In recent years, CTE enrollment has declined from 48 percent in 2008-09 to 38 percent in 2011-12.<sup>46</sup>

Comparative national research suggests that there are significant financial and economic benefits realized by investing in CTE. Hollenbeck (2011) calculated the return on investment (ROI) for CTE and found that participants in CTE programs enjoyed significant returns and that at the postsecondary level, the economic payoffs of participating in CTE outweighed any associated participation costs (i.e., tuition, foregone earnings).<sup>47</sup> Studies also find that CTE students have: (1) higher than overall state averages on proficiency examinations; (2) higher graduation rates (often 10-15 points higher than state average); (3) lower dropout rates; and (4) greater success transitioning to postsecondary education and training.<sup>48</sup>

### Recommendations

1. Provide training to CTE teachers at 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

### Benchmarks

1. Increased enrollment in CTE programs
2. Higher graduation rates among CTE students versus the general population
3. Higher post-secondary enrollment rates and job placement among CTE students versus non-CTE students

**Priority:** High

## College and Career Readiness Programs

**Budget item:** The Governor has proposed \$8.0 million in new funding to expand dual credit programs and data interventions to ensure that are students are ready for college and/or the workforce upon graduation.

	2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
College and Career Readiness Programs	0	\$8.0M	

### Background

In 2013, the Nevada Legislature revised the higher education funding formula to focus on course completion. The funding formula also awards funds from a performance pool to public colleges and universities based on the number of degrees or certificates awarded, the number of students who successfully transfer, and the number of underserved students who succeed in postsecondary education. This initiative would expand dual credit programs, which can help prepare students earlier so that they successfully transition to and complete courses once enrolled in institutions of higher learning.

### Analysis

Dual credit programs can help high school students transition to college and are a critical component of strengthening career readiness programming. Dual credit programs ease the transition process by allowing students to begin earning college credit while still in high school. In doing so, these programs increase the rigor of high school courses while strengthening the alignment between high schools and the credit-granting institutions.

Nationally, the evidence linking dual credit programs to improved student outcomes (i.e. placement, postsecondary retention, etc.) is mixed.<sup>49</sup> That said, previous research has demonstrated that dual credit students achieve higher persistence and graduation rates in postsecondary institutions than non-participants.<sup>50</sup> Dual credit programs support CTE efforts so these two initiatives are linked.

### Recommendations

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 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.

### Benchmarks

1. Increased enrollment in dual credit programs
2. Increased number of STEM classes offered for dual credit
3. Reduction in remediation rate among students who have received dual credit

**Priority: High**

## Great Teaching and Leading Fund

**Budget item:** Proposal would establish a competitive grant process supporting Professional Development and improvements to the teacher and leader pipeline

	2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
<b>Professional Development</b>	\$17.3M	\$24.9M	\$7.6M (44 percent)
<b>-Regional Professional Development Program</b>	\$17.3M	\$8.6M	
<b>-Great Teaching and Leading Fund</b>	NA	\$16.3M	

### Background

For the 2015-2017 biennium, the Governor's proposed budget provides \$24.9 million for professional development programs, which is an increase of \$7.6 million. In FY 2013-2015, State professional development funds were allocated solely through the Regional Professional Development Programs (RPDPs) (Senate Bill 522, Section 21(2), Chapter 382, *Statutes of Nevada* 2013). For FY 2016, the Governor proposes \$7.6 million for the RPDPs and \$4.9 million for a new program called the Great Teaching and Leading Fund. In FY 2017, most of the funding for the RPDPs would be reallocated to the Great Teaching and Leading Fund. The RPDPs would receive \$1 million and the Great Teaching and Leading Fund would receive \$11.4 million for a total of \$12.4 million. Under the Governor's proposal, the RPDPs would have an opportunity to compete for funds along with other organizations.

The proposed Great Teaching and Leading Fund initiative would incentivize professional development and improvements to the educator pipeline. In the first year, the focus of these funds would include the Nevada Educator Performance Framework roll-out, Next Generation Science Standards, teacher pipeline recruitment and training, and leadership training. After the first year, NDE would establish criteria for the fund. Entities eligible to apply for and receive Great Teaching and Leading Fund Grants would include the RPDPs, school districts, higher education institutions, and nonprofit organizations. An external evaluator contracted by NDE would assess this program.

### Analysis

Critics of professional development in Nevada claim that the quality of professional development is uneven. Its impact on student outcomes in Nevada, however, has not been fully and effectively evaluated. Regardless, there are numerous studies that demonstrate under specific conditions, professional development can be transformational for teachers and leaders and improve student learning and outcomes.<sup>51,52</sup> Research suggests that education stakeholders must place greater attention on the structure, content and design of professional development programs.

In order to realize positive and significant gains, legislators must consider reforms that address and improve current methods for evaluating professional development programs, regardless of which entity (RPDPs or NDE) provide PD training. Investing in high quality teachers and professional development could leverage the investments made in many of the aforementioned initiatives, the outcomes of which depend heavily on having highly effective teachers in the classroom.

There are concerns from the RPDPs that NDE does not have the capacity to oversee a statewide professional development system. By having NDE set the goals and objectives and use student achievement data along with third-party evaluation, the Department and the State Board of Education can effectively provide oversight for the RPDPs and all Professional Development in the state. Many of the rural school districts rely heavily on the RPDPs, and it is likely that the RPDPs will continue to provide these services to the rural communities unless an alternate service provider is created.

### Recommendations

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.

### **Benchmarks**

1. Creation of effective implementation programs to prepare teachers and leaders for the Next Generation Science Standards
2. Higher percentage of highly effective teachers and leaders as rated by the NEPF
3. Increase in student achievement due to professional development
4. Ensure the NDE creates a clearly defined, transparent and fair RFP process
5. Ensure every classroom has a well-prepared teacher and each school has a well-trained leader

**Priority: High**





## Rollover Bonds for School Construction

**Budget item:** Supports Rollover Bonds for New School Construction and Rehabilitation

### Background

#### Rollover Bond Extension Proposal: Senate Bill 119

Senate Bill 119 extends expired rollover bond authority for 10 years without going back out to the voters. Bonds would have to be issued within the existing tax rate. This bill would expedite construction of facilities in Clark County. It would probably not, however, accelerate capital projects in the rest of the state. It also would not generate sufficient revenue to address outstanding capital needs for the State.

#### Current Status of Rollover Bonds

When voters approve a rollover bond, a school district can issue bonds for a period of 10 years as long as the same tax rate is maintained (NRS 350.020). As shown in Table 3, there are 10 school districts in Nevada with active rollover bonds and only two districts with expired rollover bonds: Clark and Washoe. There are also two districts with expired traditional bonds that would not be affected by this proposal. Table 3 also shows the school debt tax rate for each district and the highest overlapping tax rate in each county. There are eight counties at the maximum tax rate of 3.66 per \$100 of assessed valuation.

**Table 3: Current Authorization for School Facilities Bonds**

District	A Voter Authorization	\$3.66 per \$100 Tax Cap		
		B School Debt Rate 2014-15	C Highest Overlapping Rate 2014-15	D Capacity for higher rate (3.66-B) 2014-15
Carson City	Rollover expires 2020	0.4300	3.5400	0.1200
Churchill County	Rollover expires 2018	0.5500	3.6600	0.0000
Clark County	<b>Rollover expired 2008</b>	0.5534	3.4030	0.2570
Douglas	Rollover expires 2018	0.1000	3.6600	0.0000
Elko	Pay as you go expires 2022	0.0000	3.6567	0.0033
Esmeralda	None	0.0000	3.0195	0.6405
Eureka	None	0.0000	1.9896	1.6704
Humboldt	Rollover expires 2018	0.1350	3.1716	0.4884
Lander	None	0.0000	3.6600	0.0000
Lincoln	<b>Traditional expired 2014</b>	0.2231	3.6600	0.0000
Lyon	Rollover expires 2016	0.5867	3.6600	0.0000
Mineral	<b>Traditional expired 2002</b>	0.2800	3.6600	0.0000
Nye	Rollover expires 2016	0.5850	3.6599	0.0001
Pershing	Rollover expires 2018	0.4000	3.6592	0.0008
Storey	Rollover expires 2022	0.1447	3.4607	0.1993
Washoe	<b>Rollover expired 2012</b>	0.3885	3.6600	0.0000
White Pine	Rollover expires 2018	0.2490	3.6600	0.0000

This proposal would extend the Clark County School District's authority to issue new bonds through 2025. This would enable the district to issue bonds in FY 2016, which is one year earlier than the district would be able to issue debt if the voters approve a new 10-year rollover bond in November 2016. Under the proposed extension, the district estimates that it could issue \$266 million in September 2015 and build four new schools by August 2017. Issuances would continue over the 10-year extension for a total of \$2.8 billion. During the same time period, the district could issue \$713.5 million in bonds from other revenues

for a total bond program of \$3.5 billion. While this proposal would help begin to meet critical overcrowding issues in the district, it would not address the full facility needs currently identified by the district, which total \$7.3 billion. A shortfall of \$3.8 billion for current needs would remain. Future student population growth would add to this shortfall.

The proposal would extend Washoe County School District's bond authority through 2025. However, this would not likely have a significant impact in the near term. The district estimates that it will not have substantial capacity to issue new debt within the current tax rate of \$0.3885 for a few years because the current revenues are being used to pay debt service from prior bond issuances and current tax revenues are not high enough to support substantial new debt service. In 2016, the district estimates it could issue only \$10 million, which would not be sufficient to build a new school, which typically costs \$20 million or more. Over a 10-year period, the district estimates it could issue \$270 million. Since the capital needs over the next 10 years total \$784 million, this would leave an unfunded need of \$514 million.

No rural districts currently have expired rollover bonds. However, the proposal would extend bonding authority for 10 years once the original authority expires. As shown in Table 3, rollover bond authority for rural school districts will expire over the period of 2016 to 2022. Due to the limited tax base in many rural school districts, the revenue raised from the extended rollover bonds would likely be insufficient to meet all unfunded capital needs. In addition, this proposal would not assist the two rural districts that have expired traditional bonds (Lincoln and Mineral)

It is important to emphasize that the revenue raised by extending rollover bonds will not generate sufficient revenue to address all unmet facility needs. Other strategies would need to be employed to address these unmet facility needs. Regardless of whether SB 119 passes, Legislators should consider alternative sources of financing school facilities. Please note that more detail on these proposals is available in the Guinn Center's policy brief: *Expanding Financing Options for K-12 Facilities Funding*.

### **Recommendations**

1. Create a statewide funding mechanism for school facilities.
2. Provide school districts with the ability to create Special Improvement Districts.
3. Explore the feasibility of creating multi-county tax districts for rollover bonds.
4. Change Existing Laws Related to Tax Caps and Abatements:
  - a. Exempt new voter-approved bonds from the statutory tax cap of \$3.66 per \$100 of assessed valuation.
  - b. Exempt voter-approved tax increases from the property tax abatements for one year.
  - c. Reset property tax abatements when property is sold. This would allow taxes to be assessed at market value when a property changes hands.
5. Encourage the Governor's Office of Economic Development to conduct a school facilities impact study and develop a funding plan prior to approval of development incentives.

### **Benchmarks**

1. Statewide assessment of school district capital needs completed in the 2015-2017 biennium.
2. Development of a statewide strategy to address school district maintenance and new construction needs.

**Priority: High**

## Universal Full-Day Kindergarten

**Budget item:** Expansion of full-day kindergarten to every school at a total cost of \$149.5 million, plus an additional \$10 million for portables. The additional request in funds amounts to \$74.4 million.

2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
\$77.6M, & \$3.M for portables	\$149.5M, & \$10M for portables	\$74.4M (97 percent)

### Background

The Governor's proposed budget would extend State-funded full-day kindergarten to all unfunded schools over the next two years. The proposal includes \$22 million in new funds in FY 2016 for school districts and charter schools and \$42.4 million in FY 2017. The budget also includes \$5 million per year for portables.

Full-day kindergarten is currently optional in Nevada. Schools are not required to offer full-day kindergarten and students are not required to attend school until age 7 (NRS 392.040). Kindergarten students are funded at 60 percent of the funding rate provided for other students, making it difficult for school districts to provide full-day kindergarten without additional funds.

The Nevada Legislature has provided State funding for full-day kindergarten since 2005 (AB 4, 22<sup>nd</sup> Special Session, Chapter 3, *Statutes of Nevada* 2005). Funds are prioritized for schools with the highest levels of students eligible for free and reduced price lunch. Funding was increased in the 2013-2015 biennium (SB 522, Section 17, Chapter 382, *Statutes of Nevada* 2013). As of FY 2015, 74 percent of elementary schools offer State-funded full-day kindergarten. The schools that do not have State-funded full-day programs are located primarily in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods. However, there are also low-income students in these neighborhoods.

In some areas where State-funded full-day kindergarten is not provided, parents can opt to pay for full-day kindergarten.<sup>vi</sup> These programs represent approximately 8 percent of all kindergarten classes in CCSD and 4 percent in WCSD. The cost of the program is \$3,100 per year in CCSD<sup>53</sup> and \$65 per week in WCSD.<sup>54</sup> Some stakeholders have argued that tuition-based kindergarten programs are inequitable and the State has a duty to make free full-day programs available to all students.

### Analysis

Academic research on the impact of full-day kindergarten vs. half-day kindergarten is mixed. One review of several empirical studies indicates that the weight of evidence shows that full-day kindergarten: 1) contributes to school readiness; 2) leads to higher academic ability that persists over time; 3) improves student attendance; 4) supports literacy and language development; 5) benefits children socially and emotionally; and 6) reduces costs by reducing retention and remediation rates.<sup>55</sup> Students in full-day kindergarten also receive more instructional time in reading and math than students in half-day programs. As such, some educators have expressed concern that there is not enough time in the half-day program for students to master the Nevada Academic Content Standards (NVACS).

Other research finds that the academic impact of full-day kindergarten is significant during the kindergarten school year but that positive effects fade as early as first grade.<sup>56</sup> Other arguments against full-day kindergarten include: 1) the curriculum of full-day kindergarten is overly demanding; 2) half-day kindergarten is more appropriate for the short attention span of five-year olds; 3) half-day kindergarten provides more time for informal play and exploration; 4) half-day kindergarten leads to more parental

<sup>vi</sup> Here we note that there are significant legal concerns in creating a system where some families must pay for full-day kindergarten. This issue is a priority for the Governor since the State wants to be proactive in ending the paid kindergarten system before families file a lawsuit against the State of Nevada.

involvement; and 5) some parents feel as though half-day kindergarten is more developmentally appropriate for their child.<sup>57</sup>

In the context of this debate, these studies do appear to clearly demonstrate that full-day kindergarten programs can be successful in the short-term and the long-term, if certain conditions are set. For example, research suggests that effective kindergarten programs emphasize language development and appropriate pre-literacy experiences, and assess students' progress through close teacher observation and systematic collection and examination of students' work, often by using portfolios.<sup>58</sup>

#### Impact of Kindergarten in Nevada

Currently, Nevada lacks a universal assessment to determine academic outcomes for kindergarten. Instead, each school district uses its own assessments, which often vary within a school district. During the current biennium, the State has piloted an assessment called Teaching Strategies Gold. If the Legislature approves universal full-day kindergarten, it is critical that the State implement a statewide kindergarten assessment to measure improved outcomes. The State should also measure long-term outcomes through third grade, when students begin taking state-mandated assessments.

Despite the absence of a state-mandated assessment tool, several school districts have conducted research on the effectiveness of full-day kindergarten. Clark County School District conducted a longitudinal study of students in full- versus half-day kindergarten in FY 2006 and tracked these students through fourth grade.<sup>59</sup> The study concluded that "the positive effects of attending full-day kindergarten remain through third and fourth grade. When they are in third and fourth grade, students who attended full-day kindergarten continue to outperform students who attended half-day in both reading and mathematics."

WCSD conducted a comparison of student achievement in full- versus half-day kindergarten in FY 2009 using the WCSD Kindergarten Portfolio assessment. Their research suggests that students in full-day kindergarten began the school-year academically behind their peers in half-day, but caught up by the end of the year. The district also found that ELL students in full-day programs had better academic outcomes than ELL students in half-day programs. In addition, the district's longitudinal data provides evidence that ELL students in full-day programs have acquired English language skills faster than previous cohorts that attended half-day programs in the same schools.

The Lyon County School District implemented universal full-day kindergarten in FY 2013. The district found that the percentage of students proficient on the district assessment, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), increased in FY 2013 and FY 2014 after universal implementation of full-day kindergarten. The district found that these gains were sustained for students who were in first grade in FY 2014.

Thus, the preliminary results from various local Nevada districts support further implementation of full-day kindergarten. Moreover, the fact that some districts, including the two largest districts, have had positive experience with these programs increases the likelihood that an expansion of these programs would be successful.

This recommendation must be tempered with a few significant considerations. First, many (but not all) of the remaining school areas which do not have full-day kindergarten are not areas which contain large numbers of students in underperforming demographic categories. It is possible that the students in these future full-day classes may not realize the same level of skill improvement because many of them may not start out as skill deficient as others who come from more challenging learning environments. This is not to say that these students will not realize significant skill improvement and that such improvement should not be supported. Rather, there may simply not be as dramatic of a skill level increase. Second, it will be critical to maintain high standards for existing programs. It might therefore be necessary to use some of the new funds to support continued improvement in existing programs. There must be a continuing focus on improving skills for those students in targeted categories who are at greater risk of being skill deficient.

### Maximizing Choice

The Governor's proposal does not indicate whether half-day kindergarten would continue to be provided once universal full-day kindergarten is implemented. It may not be feasible for school districts to offer both full- and half-day kindergarten given staff and building constraints. If the mandatory school age remains age 7, parents who do not want their children to participate in a full-day program would have the option of educating their children at home or enrolling their children in a private half-day kindergarten program.

### Implementation Challenges

Even though full-day kindergarten provides benefits, especially to students from language poor backgrounds, Nevada faces several challenges in expanding full-day kindergarten. First, Nevada is a currently net importer of teachers and hiring additional kindergarten teachers has proven to be challenging in recent years. Public colleges and universities produce approximately 600 teachers per year.<sup>60</sup> In contrast, CCSD currently projects it will need approximately 2,600 new teachers in FY 2016. If the full-day kindergarten proposal is approved, it is likely that some kindergarten classes will be larger than the State-required ratio of 21:1 since it could be difficult to recruit sufficient teachers to meet the demand. This demand for teachers represents one of the greatest challenges to the successful implementation of this initiative.

Another major concern for school districts is facilities. The Governor's budget would provide \$10 million over the biennium for portables but it is unclear whether this will be adequate to meet additional facility needs. In CCSD, elementary schools are currently 17.6 percent over capacity, which has resulted in increased reliance on portables and year-round schedules.<sup>61</sup> In WCSD, elementary schools are currently at 103.6 percent of base capacity.

### **Recommendations**

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

### **Benchmarks**

1. Higher number of children enrolled in kindergarten
2. Improved achievement in reading/phonics and mathematics during kindergarten
3. An increase in the percentage of students reading on grade level in third grade

**Priority: Medium** (but High for full-day kindergarten for English Language Learners and Free and Reduced Lunch students)

## Technology Funding

**Budget item:** The Governor has proposed \$48.4 million to implement the Nevada Ready 21 Plan, including Nevada Ready Technology Incentive Grants and WAN Incentive Match.

	2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
<b>Technology Funding (Ready 21 Plan)</b>	0	\$48.4M	\$48.4M

### Analysis

The Governor recommends providing \$48.8 million to launch NDE's *Nevada Ready 21* Plan, which would put instructional technology in middle schools across the state.<sup>vii</sup> The logic behind the *Nevada Ready 21* Plan is that the writing requirements contained in the Nevada Academic Content Standards necessitate the use of technology.<sup>62</sup> In the long-run, the Governor wants to see all Nevada Middle and High Schools move towards a 1:1 plan.

The *Nevada Ready 21* Plan includes devices, internal infrastructure, professional development for teachers and school administrators, parent outreach, internal evaluation, and program staff. NDE has publicly stated that half of the requested amount (\$24.4 million) will be directed towards professional development for teachers. School enrollment data for FY 2015 projects 105,000 students in Grades 6-8. Based on the data, the *Nevada Ready 21* Plan would bring instructional technology to middle school students for a cost of \$230 per student.

### Research

Research finds that there is no consistent evidence to support the claim that technology improves student outcomes and how students learn. Education experts have commented that educational technology is not "transformative on its own." A "lack of professional development for technology use is one of the most serious obstacles to fully integrating technology into the curriculum."<sup>63</sup> Rather, effective teachers who are skilled at integrating technology into the curriculum and aligning it with student learning goals can positively impact student outcomes. As such, it is critical that professional development accompany any effort to introduce technology in the classroom.

An extensive body of research has identified the key components and practices of effective professional development for technology use by educators.<sup>64</sup> To ensure teachers use technology appropriately to promote learning for all students in the classroom, there should be a well-planned, ongoing professional development program that is tied to the school's curriculum goals, designed with built-in evaluation, and sustained by adequate financial and staff support.

As reported in the *Nevada Ready 21* Plan, state education departments and school districts in Alabama, Arizona, Maine, and South Carolina have implemented similar 1:1 technology programs and early results are promising. Improved outcomes include: increases in students' writing assessment scores, 21st Century skills development, geographic spatial awareness, and higher student engagement in classroom activities, as measured by learner perseverance, aspirations, study habits, and desire to learn.<sup>65</sup> In Arizona, student attendance, engagement and achievement improved, resulting in higher graduation rates: between 2007 and 2010, the graduation rates increased from 71 percent to 82 percent. Over the period 2011-2013, Huntsville, Alabama, which boasts the largest 1:1 digital learning initiative, saw reading scores improve by 18 percent, and math scores improve by 27 percent. The graduation rate also increased by 14 percent.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>vii</sup> NDE has not stated its reasoning for prioritizing the roll out of Nevada Ready 21 in middle school. That said, NDE has already launched pilots in middle schools in three school districts. This suggests an interest in expanding the existing program.

Nevada has implemented a limited (pilot) 1:1 technology program in middle schools in three school districts: Lincoln County, Carson City, and Clark County. In 2009, Lincoln County received a \$245,000 grant to implement a 1:1 technology program at one middle school. Although in its early phases, Lincoln County has reported an improvement in student outcomes: "Substantial student gains were found in four areas: increased student engagement in classroom activities, increased motivation of low-achieving students, increased use of technology, and increased anytime-anywhere learning. A recent student survey revealed that 79 percent of students found the integration of netbooks into their classroom activities beneficial to their learning experience."<sup>67</sup> Carson City and Clark County launched their programs in 2012, making it impossible to assess outcomes at this time.

Additionally, other concerns remain about 1:1 technology initiatives. In a number of states, for instance, educational technology (digital) initiatives have experienced delays due to broken or damaged hardware, security concerns, and community concerns.<sup>68</sup> Around the country, these concerns have slowed the pace of implementation and could affect the projected improvement in student outcomes and educational achievement.

### **Recommendations**

1. Given the absence of a rigorous evaluation of the on-going efforts to introduce 1:1 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.

### **Benchmarks**

1. Number of professional development hours associated with each laptop distribution
2. Number of hours of professional development for technology training
3. Improvement on test/achievement scores
4. Lower number of absences
5. Reduced number of behavior incident reports

**Priority: Medium**



## Bullying Prevention/ Mental Health Services in Schools

**Budget item:** Governor Sandoval proposed an allocation of \$36.2 million for 2015-2017 to ensure each school has a mental health professional and creation of the Safe and Respectful Schools Office.

	2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
<b>Safe and Respectful Schools Office</b>	0	\$36.2M	\$36.2M

### Background

The Governor's budget provides \$12.0 million in FY 2016 and \$24.3 million in FY 2017 for a new block grant program to provide a social worker or other licensed mental health worker in schools with identified needs. In the first year, a mental health screening tool will be administered to identify schools in need. Funding will be allocated to school districts as a block grant based on needs identified through the screening survey.

This initiative also provides \$300,000 per year to create a new Safe and Respectful Schools Office. This office will have two positions and will oversee the grant program. It will also: 1) establish programs and training to prevent, identify and report incidents of bullying and cyberbullying; 2) monitor school district reporting of bullying and cyber-bullying and compliance with related state laws; and 3) perform investigations and compliance hearings within prescribed timeframes.

This initiative stems from a recommendation from the Governor's Council on Behavioral Health and Wellness to provide appropriate mental health professionals in public schools.<sup>69</sup> The Council, however, did not specify what type of mental health professionals should be hired. The Council's vision is to ensure that mental health screening, intervention, and referral services are available at each school, with a focus on suicide prevention and identification of students who have experienced adverse childhood events.

### Analysis

Nationally, less than one-third of children who need mental health services are receiving treatment.<sup>70</sup> The Governor's Behavioral Health and Wellness Council estimates that 19.3 percent of Nevada's elementary school children have behavioral health needs and over 30 percent of adolescents self-report significant levels of anxiety and depression.<sup>71</sup> Without adequate access to crisis intervention and stabilization services, emergency room use in Nevada for child mental health issues has risen steadily in the last five years. In addition, bullying has also emerged as a major issue in recent years. In FY 2014, school districts reported 3,189 verified incidents of bullying and 532 verified incidents of cyberbullying.<sup>72</sup> Concerns have also been raised over racially disproportionate discipline of African-American students and other minorities for bullying and other behavioral issues.

Research suggests that schools can be an effective location to provide mental health services and that addressing psychosocial and mental and physical health concerns is essential to positive school performance for some students. Early identification and treatment of students with mental health issues can result in a net savings to society of nearly \$2 million per student.<sup>73</sup> There is also research on the feasibility and effectiveness of using mental health screening tools to identify students needing intervention.<sup>74</sup>

### Current school-based mental health services

School districts already provide some mental health services. Under the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), schools are required to provide "related services," to students with disabilities.<sup>75</sup> This includes psychological services, social work services, and counseling services. Medicaid funding is used to reimburse some of these services, but only Carson City, Churchill, Clark and Washoe are currently billing for reimbursement. To go beyond traditional services, the Legislature created a pilot program in 2013 to provide mental health screenings in at least one secondary school in both Clark and Washoe (Chapter 361,

*Statutes of Nevada* 2013). Additionally, Communities in Schools, which is working in 43 schools in Nevada, provides social worker outreach as part of their Integrated Student Support.

The Legislature has also created requirements in NRS 388.121 to prevent and address bullying. School districts must report bullying and cyberbullying through the Nevada Report Card website. Information includes the number of incidents reported, incidents determined to be valid after investigation, and incidents resulting in suspension or expulsion.

While increasing school-based mental health services is important, a new Safe and Respectful Schools Office may not be needed. Existing staff at the Department of Education can distribute grant funds while school districts can conduct all policy and reporting functions related to bullying as currently required by statute. Additionally, programs like Communities in Schools, can continue to provide social work professional services and make mental health referrals, where necessary.

Additionally, Nevada faces a critical shortage of mental health professionals throughout the State, which includes psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical counselors, social workers, as well as school psychologists. WCSD has one psychologist for every 2,000 students and CCSD has one psychologist for every 1,500 students.<sup>76</sup> In contrast, the National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of one to 500-800 students.

Institutions of higher education and State agencies have been working to build the pipeline for mental health professionals. However, this effort will take time and school districts may not be able to fully expend the funds included in the Governor's initiative.

### **Recommendations**

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, including Communities in Schools.
5. Maximize Federal Medicaid reimbursement for school based mental health services.
6. Conduct an annual evaluation of the program, including a pre/post school climate survey assessing whether students feel safer in school.

### **Benchmarks**

1. Improvement in the way bullying and cyber-bullying incidents are handled.
2. Improvement in the mental health screener used at served schools.
3. Increase in attendance rates at served schools.
4. Decrease in bullying and violence reports at served schools.

**Priority: Medium**

## Jobs for America's Graduates Nevada

**Budget item:** Funding for Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) Nevada, a national high school dropout prevention and career readiness program.

	2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
<b>Jobs for Nevada's Graduates</b>	\$1.4M	\$6.1M	\$4.7M (342 percent)

### Background

Governor Sandoval is the national Vice-Chair of Jobs for America's Graduates, a non-profit organization that provides a dropout prevention and career readiness program. School districts have the option of bringing JAG into the school district and schools have the option of having a JAG program in their school. In 2013-2014, there were 681 students enrolled in JAG Nevada across 23 high schools. JAG first received state funding in the 2013-2015 biennium (Senate Bill 522, Section 16(5)(f), Chapter 382, *Statutes of Nevada* 2013). Additional funds would enable JAG to expand into an additional 50 high schools. In October 2014, USA Funds gave a \$1.25 million grant to JAG Nevada.

### Analysis

The JAG program is one of the few national programs that has demonstrated tremendous success with increasing graduation rates among students who are most at-risk for dropping out. Since 1980, JAG has helped nearly 950,000 young, high-risk students stay in school through graduation (or completion of a GED), pursue a postsecondary education and/or secure quality employment that leads to career advancement opportunities.

JAG is nationally recognized as a cost effective program. Nationally, cost-savings are approximately \$260,000 per student, while the direct costs of the program are approximately \$1,470 per student and can be recovered in 14 months of full-time employment. Nationally, JAG has a graduation rate of 93 percent.<sup>77</sup>

In 2013-2014, the graduation rate among JAG Nevada seniors was 75 percent. While this is lower than the national average, the JAG Nevada program is building out its infrastructure. Additionally, most of the seniors in the JAG Nevada program have a greater number of risk indicators or identified 'barriers to success' than the national average, reflecting the challenges associated with the target population of JAG Nevada.<sup>viii</sup>

JAG is a stand-alone non-profit organization that operates outside of the school district while providing services to school district students. However, due to the limited budgetary resources, JAG has adopted a cost-share model with CCSD. This arrangement could muddy lines of accountability for outcomes.

### Recommendations

1. Given that Nevada's outcomes lag behind the JAG national average, legislators should condition 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, 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 risk populations.

<sup>viii</sup> JAG has identified a set of 36 research-based barriers to success.

5. Encourage JAG Nevada to work closely with NSHE Community Colleges to improve the career readiness programming.

**Benchmarks**

1. Graduation rates of JAG Nevada Students versus state graduation rate
2. Higher job placement rate

**Priority: Medium**



## Public Charter Recruitment Fund

**Budget item:** Governor Sandoval has proposed an allocation of up to \$20.9 million in a 1:1 philanthropy match to recruit high quality charter management organizations and help Nevadans start their own charter schools.

	2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
Public Charter Recruitment Fund	0	\$20.M	\$20.M

### Background

The Governor is focused on recruiting the best in-class charter management organizations to Nevada. This commitment up to \$20 million will enable great charter school management organizations to locate in Nevada by providing them with financial support for facilities. The Public Charter Recruitment Funds would be provided to help charter schools build and/or finance facilities.

### Analysis

The current performance of charter schools in Nevada is the lowest in the country according to a 2013 CREDO report examining outcomes in 26 states with a relatively large charter school sector. The average Nevada charter school student lagged more than five months behind the average school district student in reading and more than six months behind in math. Much of this data was collected from 2010 to 2012 and the schools under the state charter authority have shown consistent improvement under the Nevada School Performance Framework in the past few years. However, recent high school graduation rates, especially at the Virtual High Schools (Beacon, Nevada Virtual, and Connections Academy) have driven down the overall performance of charters in Nevada.

The recruitment fund is only aimed at high-performing physical schools, not virtual schools. Currently, most charter schools do not have access to state funds for facilities. Only schools that have been open for five years and have a four or five star rating can bond for facilities (NRS Chapter 386). Even then, these charter schools do not have access to local tax support to pay off the bonds, as all payments are deducted from the Distribute School Account (DSA). Allowing charter schools that are incubated locally (or as part of the Charter School Growth Fund, a non-profit that invests in the highest performing charters across the country) to have access to facility funds through this source would eliminate the largest barrier for high quality charter school management organizations to enter Nevada. The same CREDO study shows that these organizations have been effectively raising student achievement outcomes among ELL and FRL students in other states.<sup>78</sup>

Nevada also faces significant challenges in opening new charter schools around the state beyond the issue of facilities. Specifically, many aspiring charter school executive leadership teams lack capacity and technical understanding of how to run and sustain a charter school. With over 700 teacher vacancies across the state, these schools will likely have to hire out-of-state teachers or non-licensed teachers. It will also be difficult to find high quality school leaders. As such, any effort to provide financing to charter schools must be accompanied by resources to develop leadership and expertise to run high quality charter schools.

### Recommendations

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.

### Benchmarks

1. Increase the number of charter school seats created in high poverty zip codes

2. Increase the percentage of students reading on grade level in third grade
3. Increase graduation rates
4. Decrease the Achievement Gap between students in these schools and their more affluent peers

**Priority: Medium**





## Opportunity Tax Credit Scholarship

**Budget item:** Governor Sandoval has proposed the creation of a fund whereby up to \$21 million of (foregone) state taxes can be put towards scholarships for low-income students to attend private schools. The Assembly Committee on Education proposed a bill (AB 165) that would provide up to \$10 million in FY 2015-2016 with a 10 percent increase in each subsequent year.

### Background

This proposal will establish a mechanism to allow businesses to receive a tax credit to provide financial support for low-income students to attend private schools. Governor Sandoval offered a similar proposal in 2011 and 2013. In states that offer similar instruments, businesses or taxpayers receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for money donated to a scholarship-granting organization. These scholarship-granting organizations are non-profits formed to award scholarships that help children attend the schools of their parents' choice.

### Analysis

Almost one dozen states, including Colorado, Florida, and Oklahoma, have implemented similar scholarship programs.<sup>79</sup> The vast body of research indicates that states do save money from these programs. For example, in 2008, Florida's evaluation of its program found significant budget savings each year as a result of the program: in FY 2007-08, Florida saved \$1.49 for every \$1.00 it issued in tax credits.<sup>80</sup> In 2013, the Nevada Policy Research Institute (NPRI) estimated that should Opportunity Tax Credit Scholarships be offered to all Nevada's current and future public-school students, these Opportunity Scholarships would save taxpayers nearly \$1 billion over the next 10 years.<sup>81</sup>

Research linking 'choice' programs to improved student outcomes is mixed. Some studies confirm that 'choice' programs are positively associated with improved student outcomes.<sup>82</sup> Other studies, however, find that the correlation between choice – the form of open enrollment -- and student outcomes is spurious.<sup>83</sup>

Additionally, measuring the fiscal impact of the Opportunity Tax Credit Scholarships is difficult, given that the State would not directly fund any part of the program. The program could still significantly affect Nevada's budget. By issuing a new tax credit, Nevada would be forgoing tax revenue it otherwise would have collected.<sup>84</sup> However, the potential lost revenue is countered by the savings realized from transferring students from publicly funded schools to private ones. Overall, determining the fiscal impact of this Opportunity Tax Credit Scholarship will depend upon how the credit is structured – namely whether it will be refundable and/or if it can be carried forward to future years. Some states, for instance, have made the tax credit refundable, which means taxpayers can claim the entire credit even if their tax liability is less than the value of the credit. In these cases, taxpayers are refunded the difference between the credit and the amount they owe in taxes. Other states allow taxpayers to carry forward unused credits to future years. If the credit is more than a taxpayer owes in taxes, the unclaimed amount can be applied to future tax returns with no additional donations needed.

In AB165, the credits would come from the modified business tax (MBT) and it would be capped at the 100 percent of DSA) dollars that a student would receive in a district school. In Florida, the State allows the credits to apply to corporate income taxes, insurance premium taxes, severance taxes on oil and gas production, self-accrued sales tax liabilities of direct pay permit holders and taxes on beer, wine and alcoholic beverages. In Florida, the amount of the scholarship per student amounted to \$4,880.<sup>85</sup> In Nevada, only families that make 300 percent or less than the Federal poverty line would qualify for these scholarships.

Unfortunately, Nevada's ability to fully roll out this program could be constrained by the lack of supply of private school seats. Simply put, demand for this Opportunity Tax Credit Scholarship may exceed supply of seats so the market may limit the program, at least in the near term. To conclude, while research suggests that greater parental choice over school selection is positively associated with improved student outcomes,



we have some concerns with the implementation and rollout schedule of the Opportunity Tax Credit Scholarship in the short-term due to uncertainty of seats and tax policy.

**Recommendations**

1. Establish a Task Force to determine the design and structure of the tax credit and its implementation.
2. Working with NDE, the Legislature should commission a study that would assess current supply of private school seats, project potential demand, and evaluate the potential fiscal costs to Nevada's budget.

**Priority:** **Low**



## Breakfast at Schools

**Budget item:** The Governor has proposed an additional \$1.9 million allocation towards the School Breakfast Program.

	2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
<b>Breakfast at Schools</b>	\$1.3M	\$3.2M	1.9M (152 percent)

### Background

This initiative aims to increase participation in the Federal School Breakfast Program based on recommendations from the Governor's Council on Food Security.<sup>86</sup> The Governor's proposal provides \$1 million per year in start-up grants to implement Breakfast After the Bell Programs. These programs provide food in the classroom during the regular school day. The goal is to break down the stigma and transportation barriers inherent in traditional programs that occur before school. Arkansas and Maryland recently approved legislation to fund similar start-up grants.<sup>87</sup>

Funds would be used for equipment and technical assistance to launch Breakfast After the Bell programs. The meals would be partially reimbursed by Federal funds at rates ranging from \$0.28 to \$1.93.<sup>88</sup> The Governor's budget reveals that Nevada currently receives \$26 million per year in Federal school breakfast funds. While this initiative aims to increase participation, the budget does not include a corresponding increase in revenue.

To participate in this initiative, the Governor's budget indicates that a school district must have a Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRL) participation rate of at least 70 percent. As of FY 2015, the statewide FRL rate is 55.3 percent and the district with the highest FRL rate is Nye County at 64.7.<sup>89</sup> Since no school district would be eligible for the program, the intent was likely to require schools to have an FRL rate of at least 70 percent. Statewide, there are 210 schools that meet this criteria, 73 percent of which are located in Clark County and 15 percent in Washoe County.

Another requirement of the initiative is that the district be below the current national average for school breakfast program participation. Data is not available for school district participation rates. However, the Nevada Department of Agriculture indicates that 202 schools have participation rates below the national average.<sup>90</sup> Data is not available to identify how many of these schools have an FRL rate of 70 percent or higher.

### Analysis

A large body of research shows that breakfast is important for students to be ready to learn. Skipping breakfast and experiencing hunger impair children's ability to learn.<sup>91</sup> Research also shows that eating breakfast at school helps improve children's academic performance.<sup>92</sup>

The Governor's budget states that this initiative is needed to increase participation in the School Breakfast Program. However, Nevada's participation rate is higher than the Governor asserts. Based on data from the Nevada Department of Agriculture, the Governor indicates that in FY 2013, Nevada ranked 41st in the nation in School Breakfast Program participation at 21.8 percent of eligible pupils, while the national School Breakfast Program participation rate was 27.3 percent.<sup>93</sup> However, data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture shows that Nevada's participation rate has improved in recent years, increasing from 29 percent in FY 2010 to 43 percent in FY 2014, slightly below the national average of 45 percent.<sup>94</sup>

In the absence of this program, there are currently several efforts underway to increase school breakfast participation. In the current biennium, the Nevada Department of Agriculture provided grants to Carson, Lyon and Washoe of \$18,000 to increase school breakfast participation.<sup>95</sup> School districts are also currently implementing several initiatives to increase school breakfast participation, including: universal free

breakfast (63 schools), universal breakfast at Title I schools (76 schools in CCSD), free breakfast to students eligible for reduced price meals (438 schools), Breakfast after the Bell (73 schools), and Breakfast in the Classroom (32 schools).

Experiences in other states have revealed a number of challenges in implementing Breakfast After the Bell programs, including the loss of instructional time.<sup>96</sup> Specifically, teachers expressed concern that the program reduced valuable instructional time and created sanitation issues. Advocates of the program, however, suggest that the loss of instructional time can be minimized by performing routine tasks such as roll call and morning announcements while students are eating breakfast.

### **Recommendation**

1. Utilize existing funding to ensure eligible students receive breakfast through the School Breakfast Program.

### **Benchmark**

1. Increase participation in the School Breakfast Program by 10 percent through current efforts.

**Priority: Low**



Source: *Create a Change Now, Las Vegas, Nevada;* [www.createachangenow.org](http://www.createachangenow.org)

## Gifted and Talented Education

**Budget item:** The Governor has proposed \$10.0 million for gifted and talented (GATE) education.

	2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
<b>Gifted and Talented Education</b>	\$0.3M	\$10.0M	\$9.7M (2808 percent)

### Background

Nevada currently spends \$176,000 each year on Gifted and Talented (GATE) Education students. There is no national consensus on the cost of adequate GATE funding. The highest weight in the country is 1.67 from Georgia. Many states fund GATE through grants and others entirely neglect GATE funding.<sup>97</sup> While Nevada has 2.6 percent of students enrolled in GATE (according to NDE), there has never been a formal, statewide consistent designation for GATE students. The Legislation creating the Task Force on K-12 Public Education Funding in 2013 did not include GATE, but many members of the Task Force wanted to examine it. To date, analysts have not yet proposed a suggested weight for GATE students in Nevada.

Currently, almost every school in Nevada has a GATE program funded primarily through general funds. If the Legislature approves funding, CCSD anticipates using these additional funds to supplement their current programming.

### Analysis

The research on the impact of funding GATE is quite limited. Some advocates claim additional funding is needed for more customized instruction to meet the needs of these learners. Currently, Nevada only has one entirely GATE school, the Davidson Academy on the campus of the University of Nevada at Reno. At \$17,988, this school has one of the highest per pupil spending totals in the state, largely because it funds University courses. In Nevada, as elsewhere in the U.S., policymakers have yet to develop a system to ensure that high-risk, Latino, African-American, Special Education, and ELL students have adequate access to GATE programs.

### Recommendations

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

### Benchmarks

1. Percentage of Gifted and Talented Students attending Tier I Colleges
2. Increase in the number and percentage of students from traditionally underrepresented groups identified as GATE students

**Priority:** Low

## State-Funded Advanced Placement Exams

**Budget item:** The Governor has proposed a \$1.2 million increase for state-funded AP exams for low-income students.

	2013-2015	2015-2017	Change (+/-) (%)
<b>Advanced Placement Exams</b>	\$0.6M	\$1.2M	\$0.6M (90 percent)
<b>--State Funds</b>	0	\$1.2M	\$1.2M
<b>--Federal Funds</b>	\$0.6M	0	-\$0.6M

### Background

The Nevada Department of Education has proposed \$1.2 million over the biennium to expand advanced placement courses. Although authorities have not revealed the specifics of the program, funding would likely be used to increase access to courses for teacher preparation, double student participation, and offer competitive grants to increase participation and passage. Since 2002, NDE has participated in the Federal Advanced Placement (AP)/International Baccalaureate (IB) Test Fee Program grant, which was designed to increase the number of low-income, minority and disadvantaged students enrolled in AP/IB courses and remove the financial barriers that prevent many low-income students in high schools from taking AP/IB course tests. Through this program, test fees are reduced for qualifying low-income students who are eligible for advanced placement testing offered through the College Board and the International Baccalaureate Organization. In 2002, only 2,239 Nevada students took AP exams; as of 2012, the number had increased to 6,890.

Nevada ranks 24th in the nation on AP exams with scores of three or higher. Additionally, NSHE has reported that there is a lack of access to AP courses by minority students.<sup>98</sup>

### Analysis

Research documents the benefits of Advanced Placement exams. In particular, AP success is a strong indicator of college success.<sup>99</sup>

### Recommendation

1. Increase in AP participation rate among schools with high rates of Free and Reduced price lunch.

**Priority:** Low

## Appointed School Boards

**Budget item:** The Governor has proposed moving from a governance model whereby school board officials are elected to a system in which school board members are appointed.

### Background

Currently, the boards that govern the school districts in Nevada are elected (NRS 386.160-NRS 386.225). Governor Sandoval has indicated his interest in passing legislation that would change the current system of electing school boards to one in which school board members are selected, or possibly developing a hybrid model of elected and appointed officials.

### Analysis

While limited, the existing body of comparative national research finds that there is no significant difference between elected versus appointed school boards on student outcomes.<sup>100</sup> However, a handful of studies suggest that school boards that are more representative of the students they serve are associated with positive student outcomes. For example, Meier and Stewart (1991) found that Latino students in districts without the Latino representation among the board members were suspended and expelled more frequently, were underrepresented in gifted and talented classes, and were overrepresented in special education. In contrast, they found that Latino students in districts governed by Latino board members experienced better educational conditions.<sup>101</sup>

As such, if under a revised system of governance, school boards in Nevada were designed to more accurately reflect the students they represented, then one could expect to observe improved student outcomes. Regardless of whether school boards are elected, there are best practices associated with effective board governance. Effective boards, regardless of whether they are appointed or elected, are associated with improved student outcomes.<sup>102</sup>

The details of the Governor's proposal are vague. Lawmakers would need to consider the selection process for school board members and identify mechanisms for ensuring that school board members reflect diversity and needs of the local community. Additionally, we acknowledge that the impetus behind the proposals to appoint school boards and reconfigure school districts (page 43) appears to be the desire to increase the responsiveness of school boards and school districts to the needs of the students.

### Recommendation

1. The Nevada Legislature should establish a Task Force to explore the process by which school boards would be appointed.

### Benchmark

1. Better student outcomes in schools where board members better represent the diversity of the children they represent

**Priority:** Low

## Formation of School Districts

**Budget item:** The Governor has proposed establishing pathways for local government entities to possibly establish their own school districts.

### Background

Under this proposal, it is anticipated that some school districts might be consolidated, while other larger ones (like CCSD, currently the 5th largest in the nation) might be broken up. Briefly, this is not the first time that this issue has been brought before the Nevada Legislature. In 1995, the 68<sup>th</sup> Session adopted SCR 30, which directed the Legislative Commission to study the feasibility of reconfiguring the structure of school districts in Nevada.<sup>103</sup> Following completion of the study, no further action was taken by the Legislature. Similarly, in 1997, AB 596 proposed to create a separate school district for Incline Village; Governor Bob Miller later vetoed this measure.<sup>104</sup>

### Analysis

Many states and cities have explored the reconfiguration of school districts. The national comparative research is quite mixed and inconclusive on how the initial size or subsequent reconfiguration of school districts impacts student outcomes. In 2014, a public policy research group using statistical analysis found little to no correlation between school district size, education spending levels and student proficiency.<sup>105</sup> This recent finding contradicts an earlier 2003 study in California that finds (larger) district size appears to hinder educational achievement, having its biggest impact on middle school student performance.<sup>106ix</sup> In Texas, the consolidation of rural school districts led to higher per-pupil expenditures and lower student achievement for the bigger school district absorbing the smaller district.<sup>107</sup> Another study found that consolidation in Alabama had a "positive, yet practically insignificant performance impact on students from consolidating districts and a small negative performance impact for students in districts that merged with consolidating districts."<sup>108</sup> Breaking up of school districts is not a simple solution without costs.

Efforts and resources to significantly impact student outcomes and modernize the educational system could be misplaced by focusing on the district, including issues of size. A recent Brookings Institution report found that "very little of the total variation in student achievement, only about 1 percent to 2 percent, lies at the level of the school district."<sup>109</sup> In short, reconfiguring school districts may not improve student outcomes.

However, we acknowledge that Legislators may want to explore this idea for its fiscal impact. At present, rural school districts in Nevada face varying levels of State support. Legislators may want to explore the reconfiguration of school districts in the context of discussions about a revised K-12 funding formula and for addressing school district capital needs.<sup>x</sup>

### Recommendations

1. The Legislature should create a Task Force to review previous studies and examine the fiscal impacts of either consolidating and/or splitting up school districts in Nevada. The Task Force should examine and compare the fiscal impact and effect on student performance in other states that have taken similar measures.
2. The Legislature should include this proposal in discussions about a new K-12 funding formula and capital needs.

**Priority: Low**

---

<sup>ix</sup> The authors of this study said the findings pointed toward not only reducing school district size, but also school and class size at the elementary level.

<sup>x</sup> For more on this topic, see the Guinn Center's Nevada K-12 Education Finance Factsheet. <http://guinncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Guinn-Center-K-12-Education-Finance-Fact-Sheet.pdf>



## Achievement School District

**Budget item:** The Governor proposed the creation of a Charter School District for the lowest performing schools in the state.

### Background

This rapid acceleration zone would initially target 6-10 of the state's chronically underperforming schools and direct more resources at them, while demanding greater accountability for student outcomes. The schools would be removed from their school district and turned over to a charter management organization designated by the State. The goal would be to put struggling schools with a negative trajectory into the performance zone and exit them in three to five years once they have reached a consistent four-star rating. At full capacity, the zone would likely contain approximately 30 schools, which is significantly fewer than the 78 schools in Nevada identified as underperforming.<sup>110</sup>

The Governor's Budget also includes \$9.9 million over the biennium to implement a program for turning around persistently underperforming schools. A list of 78 schools (10 percent of all schools) has been identified that would be eligible for these funds.<sup>111</sup> NDE indicates that some of these schools could be managed by the proposed Achievement School District (ASD) but the Superintendent of Public Instruction has testified before legislative committees that these are two distinct initiatives. These funds will be used for vendor contracts, performance management assessment, staff incentives, and other services targeting student achievement in the lowest performing schools. The State funds would be in addition to \$7.8 million in Federal School Improvement Grant funds Nevada receives, which also target underperforming schools.

### Analysis

Several states around the country have experimented with this Achievement School District model. The program in Louisiana, the first state to test this model, remains controversial. However, many of the schools within the Recovery School District (RSD) are performing better than they were prior to Hurricane Katrina.<sup>112</sup> While the body of research documenting overall impact is fairly limited,<sup>113</sup> the RSD is correlated with a trajectory of outcomes trending in the right direction. Significant gains, however, are limited.

In Tennessee, the state upon which the Nevada model is based, the schools inside the Achievement School District are improving, but not as fast as expected and their growth is slower than similar schools in the Shelby County School District's I-Zone (similar to CCSD Turnaround Zone and WCSD Acceleration Zone).<sup>114</sup> While there are positive trends in Tennessee, there is not yet enough data suggesting significant and sustained student achievement to justify its complete replication here in Nevada. Lastly, in Michigan, the Education Achievement Authority has not been successful. Due to poor management, schools overrun by vendors, and inexperienced teachers, Michigan's governance model has not resulted in improved student outcomes through test scores.<sup>115</sup>

Briefly, we note that ASDs are only one possible model to address chronically failing schools. Almost half of the states allow their State Department of Education to take over local schools. The results from these interventions are mixed at best. Student achievement increased slightly from interventions in Oakland and Rochester, New York, but similar programs in Philadelphia, Bridgeport, and Camden were less successful.<sup>116</sup> In Nevada, school districts can only be taken over for financial mismanagement, not poor academic performance. White Pine County School District was taken over briefly from 2000-2005.<sup>117</sup>

### Recommendations

1. NDE must craft a detailed ASD implementation plan that addresses challenges encountered by other states that have launched this model.
2. Work closely with the charter incubator to develop new schools through both incubation and recruitment of top CMOs.

## **Benchmarks**

1. All ASD Schools should be 4 or 5 stars in 3-5 years after entering the zone
2. Reduction in the Achievement Gap between these schools and more affluent peer institutions
3. Recruitment of top-quality CMOs to run these schools
4. Increase in the percentage of students and teachers retained in these schools

## **Priority: Low**

---

## **Conclusion**

In this policy brief, we have provided an independent assessment of the potential of the Governor's proposed priorities to actually improve educational attainment and student outcomes, and to accelerate the modernization of the K-12 education system. We believe the appropriate role of the state is to allocate funds to programs that serve and benefit Nevada's school-age children, establish standards of quality and performance, and demand accountability (NRS Title 34).

Nevada is a diverse state and each school district and charter school has its own set of challenges. The State should establish standards of quality and performance, but then allow school districts and charter schools the flexibility to direct and allocate resources, based on best practices, to the programs that best serve their students.

Legislators must consider that these proposed interventions are inextricably linked with each other and funding decisions should not be treated as isolated decisions.

We recommend the following:

- Establish standards for assessing and delivering quality professional development training. Effective teaching is a critical determinant in realizing positive returns on many of the initiatives supported by the Governor. Improved student outcomes begin with quality teaching in the classroom.
- Prioritize English Language Acquisition interventions so that all students can read on grade level.
- 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 Learners, at-risk students, and Special Education students.
- For all programs, the state must demand greater accountability from the stakeholders and link financing to performance goals. For example, for the weighted funding formula, the Legislature should create an accountability model with oversight. For many other programs, the Legislature must ensure that education officials develop and implement a rigorous accountability plan.

We conclude emphasizing the importance of strengthening the accountability mechanisms in place at the school, district, and state levels. Through our research, we have discovered that, by and large, existing accountability mechanisms lack rigor, are inconsistently applied, and are inadequately monitored. Unless accountability mechanisms are included in legislation and are linked to funding, investments in these programs are unlikely to produce significant gains. This, we argue, is not a responsible allocation of public funds. In order to inform the public debate, the Guinn Center for Policy Priorities and Nevada Succeeds will be publishing a follow-on report titled, *"How do we get from A-Z: Recommendations for Strengthening Accountability and Performance,"* which will outline accountability measures and performance metrics.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Paul Takahashi. May 14, 2014. Nevada lags on preschool spending, enrollment, report finds. *Las Vegas Sun*. <http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2014/may/14/nevada-lags-preschool-spending-enrollment-report-f/>
- <sup>2</sup> Bruce Atchison and Emily Workman. January 2015. State Pre-K Funding: 2014-15 fiscal year. Education Commission of the States. <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/16/97/11697.pdf>
- <sup>3</sup> Annie E Casey Foundation. 2012. KIDS COUNT. [http://www.aecf.org/m/databook/2012KC\\_profile\\_NV.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/m/databook/2012KC_profile_NV.pdf)
- <sup>4</sup> Social Impact Bonds are projected to be the sustainability mechanism that will ensure the maintenance of these seats beyond the grant.
- <sup>5</sup> Steve Canavero. 2015. Preschool Development Grant-Nevada. Nevada Department of Education. <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/preschooldevelopmentgrants/applications/nvapplicationpdg2015.pdf>.
- <sup>6</sup> While the Federal grant did not mandate universal pre-K programs, there is an absence of evidence documenting positive outcomes and longstanding gains associated with *universal* full-day pre-K programs. See R. Whitehurst. 2013. New Evidence Raises Doubts on Obama's Preschool for All. Brookings Institute. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2013/11/20-evidence-raises-doubts-about-obamas-preschool-for-all-whitehurst>
- <sup>7</sup> Bruce Atchison and Emily Workman. 2015. State Pre-K Funding: 2014-15 fiscal year. Education Commission of the States. <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/01/16/97/11697.pdf>
- <sup>8</sup> James Heckman and Paul Gertler. 2014. Labor Market Returns to an Early Childhood Stimulation Intervention in Jamaica. *Science* (Vol 344: 6187) pp. 998-1001. <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/344/6187/998>
- <sup>9</sup> Gregory Camilli. 2010. Meta-Analysis of the Effects of Early Education Interventions on Cognitive and Social Development. Teachers College at Columbia University. [http://rci.rutgers.edu/~camilli/Papers/38\\_15440.pdf](http://rci.rutgers.edu/~camilli/Papers/38_15440.pdf)
- <sup>10</sup> Pedro Carneiro, James J. Heckman, and Edward J. Vytlačil. 2011. Estimating Marginal Returns to Education. *American Economic Review*, 101(6): 2754-81.
- <sup>11</sup> Lawrence J. Schweinhart, Jeanne Montie, Zongping Xiang, W. Steven Barnett, Clive R. Belfield, & Milagros Nores. 2005. Lifetime Effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool Study Through Age 40. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> James Heckman and Paul Gertler. 2014. Labor Market Returns to an Early Childhood Stimulation Intervention in Jamaica. *Science* (Vol 344: 6187) pp. 998-1001. <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/344/6187/998>
- <sup>14</sup> C. Muschkin, H. Ladd H., and K. Dodge. 2015. Impact of North Carolina's Early Childhood Initiatives on Special Education Placements in Third Grade. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. Duke University. <http://epa.sagepub.com/content/early/2014/12/04/0162373714559096.full.pdf+html?ijkey=rro4HwVYfIeHc&keytype=ref&siteid=spepa>
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> US Department of Health and Human Services. January 2010. Head Start Impact Study: Final Report. [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/executive\\_summary\\_final.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/executive_summary_final.pdf)
- <sup>17</sup> J. Lyons. 2013. Academic Accountability and Early Literacy in Challenging Fiscal Times in the School District of Philadelphia. <http://thenotebook.org/sites/default/files/ARC-report.pdf>
- <sup>18</sup> S. Davis, C. Lake, N. Madden, & R.E. Slavin. 2009. Effective Programs for Struggling Readers: A Best-Evidence Synthesis. Baltimore: Center for Research and Reform in Education. Available: [http://www.bestevidence.org/word/strug\\_read\\_Jul\\_07\\_2011.pdf](http://www.bestevidence.org/word/strug_read_Jul_07_2011.pdf)
- <sup>19</sup> Ellen Frede, Kwanghee Jung, W. Steven Barnett, Cynthia Esposito Lamy, and Alexandra Figueras. June 2007. The Abbott Preschool Program Longitudinal Effects Study (APPLES). National Institute for Early Childhood Education. <http://nieer.org/publications/policy-reports/abbott-preschool-program-longitudinal-effects-study-apples>
- <sup>20</sup> G. Biancarosa, A.S. Bryk, & E.R. Dexter. 2010. Assessing the value-added effects of Literacy Collaborative professional development on student learning. *The Elementary School Journal*, 111(1): 7-34. Available: <http://www.literacycollaborative.org/docs/research/ESJ-value-added.pdf>; W.M. Saunders, C.N. Goldenberg, & R. Gallimore. 2009. Increasing achievement by focusing grade-level teams on improving classroom learning: A prospective, quasiexperimental study of Title I schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46(4): 1006-1033. Available: <http://aer.sagepub.com/content/early/2009/03/20/0002831209333185>
- <sup>21</sup> Nevada Department of Education. Early Childhood Evaluation Reports and Executive Summaries. [http://www.doe.nv.gov/Early\\_Learning\\_Development/Reports\\_and\\_Summaries/](http://www.doe.nv.gov/Early_Learning_Development/Reports_and_Summaries/)
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>24</sup> Linda Smith. 2010. Childcare Challenges in Rural Areas. National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies.
- <sup>25</sup> Clark County School District. Portables in the Clark County School District. May 22, 2014. [http://www.boarddocs.com/nv/ccsdlv/Board.nsf/files/9KB7EK77BCBE/\\$file/05.22.14%20Reference%207.03.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/nv/ccsdlv/Board.nsf/files/9KB7EK77BCBE/$file/05.22.14%20Reference%207.03.pdf)
- <sup>26</sup> Augenblick, Palaich and Associates. January 2015. Professional Judgment Study Report. [http://www.nvasb.org/assets/2015\\_augenblick\\_prof\\_judgment\\_report\\_re\\_funding\\_01-27-15.pdf](http://www.nvasb.org/assets/2015_augenblick_prof_judgment_report_re_funding_01-27-15.pdf)

- 
- <sup>27</sup> The weights were originally expressed as 0.42 for English Language Learners, 0.35 for at-risk students and 1.10 for Special Education. The way these weights are shown has been changed to be mathematically comparable to the Legislature's Task Force on K-12 Public Education Funding
- <sup>28</sup> Commonwealth Foundation. December 2014. School Funding Reform and Weighted Student Funding. <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.org/research/detail/school-funding-reform-weighted-student-funding>
- <sup>29</sup> Education Week Quality Counts 2015. Maryland State Highlights 2015. <http://www.edweek.org/media/ew/qc/2015/shr/16shr.md.h34.pdf>
- <sup>30</sup> American Institutes of Research. 2012. Study of a New Method of Funding Public Schools in Nevada <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/Interim/77th2013/Committee/Studies/K12Funding/Other/NVFundingStudyReportFINAL92812.pdf>
- <sup>31</sup> H. Rose and M. Weston. February 2013. Public Policy Institute of California. California School District Revenue and Student Poverty: Moving Towards a Weighted Pupil Funding Formula [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_213HRR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_213HRR.pdf)
- <sup>32</sup> American Institutes of Research. June 2013. Evaluation of Hawaii's Weighted Student Funding Formula. <http://www.hawaiipublicschools.org/DOE%20Forms/WSF/WeightedStudentFormulaEval061913.pdf>
- <sup>33</sup> California Department of Education. Local Control Funding Formula Overview. <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/aa/lc/lcffoverview.asp>; Florida Department of Education. Continuous Improvement Management System <https://www.floridacims.org/>; and Hawaii Department of Education. School Documents Online. <https://portal.k12.hi.us/SDO/DefaultP.aspx>
- <sup>34</sup> Guinn Center for Policy Priorities. February 2015. *Nevada K-12 Education Finance Fact Sheet*. <http://guinncenter.org/publications/policy-reports/#EducatingNevada>
- <sup>35</sup> NRS 387 Report: FY 2014. See Guinn Center for Policy Priorities. February 2015. *Nevada K-12 Education Finance Fact Sheet*. <http://guinncenter.org/publications/policy-reports/#EducatingNevada>
- <sup>36</sup> L. Fiester. 2010. Early Warning! Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters. Annie E. Casey Foundation. [http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early\\_Warning\\_Full\\_Report-2010.pdf](http://www.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/AECF-Early_Warning_Full_Report-2010.pdf).
- <sup>37</sup> Information from the Foundation for Florida's Future. [http://www.foundationforfloridasfuture.org/pages/Florida\\_Formula/Celebrating\\_Floridas\\_Literacy.aspx](http://www.foundationforfloridasfuture.org/pages/Florida_Formula/Celebrating_Floridas_Literacy.aspx).
- <sup>38</sup> G. Schwartz and M. West. 2013. The Effects of Test-Based Retention on Student Outcomes over Time: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from Florida. Harvard Kennedy School. [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/PEPG12-09\\_West.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/pepg/PDF/Papers/PEPG12-09_West.pdf).
- <sup>39</sup> J. Cannon and S. Lipscomb. 2011. Early Grade Retention and Student Success Evidence from Los Angeles. Public Policy Institute of California. [http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R\\_311JCR.pdf](http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_311JCR.pdf).
- <sup>40</sup> L. Golden. 2014. A focused look at schools receiving School Improvement Grants that have percentages of English Language Learner Students. NCEE Evaluation Brief. Institute of Education Sciences.
- <sup>41</sup> N. Jones, A. Meier, and E. Grogan. 2011. The Extent of Late-Hiring and its Relationship with Teacher Turnover: Evidence from Michigan. <https://www.sree.org/conferences/2011/program/downloads/abstracts/39.pdf>.
- <sup>42</sup> S. Davis, C. Lake, N. Madden, & R.E. Slavin. 2009. Effective Programs for Struggling Readers: A Best-Evidence Synthesis. Baltimore: Center for Research and Reform in Education. Available: [http://www.bestevidence.org/word/strug\\_read\\_Jul\\_07\\_2011.pdf](http://www.bestevidence.org/word/strug_read_Jul_07_2011.pdf)
- <sup>43</sup> A. Cheung & R.E. Slavin. 2012. Effective Reading Programs for Spanish Dominant English Learners (ELLs) in Elementary Grades: A Synthesis of Research. Baltimore: Center for Research and Reform in Education. Available: [http://www.bestevidence.org/word/ell\\_read\\_Mar\\_19\\_2012.pdf](http://www.bestevidence.org/word/ell_read_Mar_19_2012.pdf)
- <sup>44</sup> N. Safer & S. Fleischman. 2005. Research Matters/ How Student Progress Monitoring Improves Instruction. *Educational Leadership*. Volume 62, Number 5. Available: <http://www.studentprogress.org/library/ArticlesResearch/Edleadershiparticle.pdf>
- <sup>45</sup> Nevada Education Book. 2013. <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/Division/Research/Publications/EdDataBook/2013/2013EDB.pdf>
- <sup>46</sup> Nevada Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation. 2013. Nevada Career and Technical Education Accountability Brief.
- <sup>47</sup> Kevin M. Hollenbeck. 2011. Conducting Return on Investment Analyses for Secondary and Postsecondary CTE: A Framework. W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.
- <sup>48</sup> Nevada Legislature. 2008. Legislative Committee on Education. Summary Minutes and Action Report. [http://www.leg.state.nv.us/74th/Interim\\_Agendas\\_Minutes\\_Exhibits/Minutes/Education/IM-Education-032708-10172.pdf](http://www.leg.state.nv.us/74th/Interim_Agendas_Minutes_Exhibits/Minutes/Education/IM-Education-032708-10172.pdf)
- <sup>49</sup> Debra Brag and Eunyoung Kim. Dual Credit and Dual Enrollment. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign <http://www.ibhe.state.il.us/DualCredit/materials/APASS.pdf>
- <sup>50</sup> James Appleby. May 2011. A Study of Dual Credit Access and Effectiveness in the State of Texas. Greater Texas Foundation. <http://academicaffairs.southtexascollege.edu/highschool/pdf/research/Report%20>

---

%20A%20study%20of%20dual%20enrollment%20effectiveness%20-%20State%20of%20Texas%20-%20May%202011.pdf

<sup>51</sup> G. Biancarosa, A.S. Bryk, & E.R. Dexter. 2010. Assessing the value-added effects of Literacy Collaborative professional development on student learning. *The Elementary School Journal*, 111(1), 7-34.

<sup>52</sup> R. Gallimore, B. Ermeling, W. Saunders, & C. Goldenberg. 2009. Moving the learning of teaching closer to practice: Teacher education implications of school-based inquiry teams. *The Elementary School Journal*, 109(5), 537-553.

<sup>53</sup> Clark County School District. Tuition Based Extended Day Kindergarten Program. <http://ccsd.net/district/faq/resources/tuition-based-k-brochure.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> Washoe County School District.

<http://www.washoeschools.net/cms/lib08/NV01912265/Centricity/Domain/332/Alphabet%20handbook%20foster.pdf>

<sup>55</sup> WestEd. 2005. Full Day Kindergarten: Expanding Learning Opportunities. [http://www.wested.org/online\\_pubs/po-05-01.pdf](http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/po-05-01.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> Regional Education Laboratory: Northeast and Islands. 2013. [http://www.relnei.org/wp-content/referencedocs/RELNEI\\_RD0140\\_Kindergarten\\_Research\\_Support.pdf](http://www.relnei.org/wp-content/referencedocs/RELNEI_RD0140_Kindergarten_Research_Support.pdf); De Cicca, Phillip. "Does full-day kindergarten matter? Evidence from the first two years of schooling," *Economics of Education Review*, Volume 26, Number 1, February 2007, pp. 67-82. <http://www.ernweb.com/educational-research-articles/economist-sees-little-benefit-from-full-day-kindergarten/>

<sup>57</sup> NASP Center: Kindergarten - Full Versus Half-Day: Information for Parents and Early Childhood Educators. [http://www.naspcenter.org/assessment/kindergarten\\_ho.html](http://www.naspcenter.org/assessment/kindergarten_ho.html)

<sup>58</sup> Amanda Miller. Early Childhood and Parenting Collaborative. 2001. <http://ecap.crc.illinois.edu/poptopics/fullday.html>

<sup>59</sup> L. Pitch and B. Campbell. 2011. Long-term effects of full-day kindergarten in third and fourth grades (FEDS~L4). Clark County School District Department of Research. <http://www.ccsd.net/resources/assessment-accountability-research-school-improvement-division/long-term-effects-of-full-day-kindergarten-2011.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> University of Nevada, Reno, et al. May 28, 2014. Nevada Teacher Education, Assuring and Building Quality. Presentation to the Legislative Committee on Education. <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/interim/77th2013/Committee/StatCom/Education/Other/28-May-2014/VUNR.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> Clark County School District. Portables in the Clark County School District (May 22, 2014) [http://www.boarddocs.com/nv/ccsdlv/Board.nsf/files/9KB7EK77BCBE/\\$file/05.22.14%20Reference%207.03.pdf](http://www.boarddocs.com/nv/ccsdlv/Board.nsf/files/9KB7EK77BCBE/$file/05.22.14%20Reference%207.03.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> Nevada Department of Education. September 2014. Nevada Ready 21: Igniting Economic Development Through Students' 21st Century Skills.

<sup>63</sup> E. Fatemi. 1999. Building the digital curriculum: Summary. *Education Week* 19(4)(23 September); Office of Technology Assessment. 1995 Annual Report to the Congress <http://ota.fas.org/reports/9600.pdf>; and Panel on Educational Technology. 1997. "Report to the President on the Use of Technology to Strengthen K-12 Education in the United States." President's Committee of Advisors on Science and Technology.

<sup>64</sup> Babette Moeller and Tim Reitzes. 2011. Integrating technology with student-centered learning. Nellie Mae Education Foundation.

<sup>65</sup> Dawn Lane. 2003. Center for Education Policy, Applied Research and Evaluation. Early Evidence from the Field: The Maine Early Technology Initiative. Impact on Students and Learning: <http://www2.umaine.edu/mepri/sites/default/files/mltiimpactstudentslearning.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> Don Kilburn. February 7, 2015. Teaching Twice: The Hidden Cost of America's Education System. The Hill. <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/education/232046-teaching-twice-the-hidden-cost-of-americas-education-system#.VNZH2NNEH2E.twitter>

<sup>67</sup> Nevada Department of Education. September 2014. Nevada Ready 21. [http://grant.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/grantnvgov/Content/Research/Task\\_Force/NevadaReadyFactSheet.pdf](http://grant.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/grantnvgov/Content/Research/Task_Force/NevadaReadyFactSheet.pdf)

<sup>68</sup> Benjamin Herold. January 27, 2015. After Ed Tech Meltdown, A District Rebounds. *Education Week*. <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/01/28/nc-district-rebounds-from-ed-tech-meltdown.html?cmp=ENL-DD-NEWS1>; Schaffhauser, Dan. February 3, 2015. California District Deploys 23,000 1 to 1 devices, works to quell parental concerns. *Transforming Education Through Technology*.

<http://thejournal.com/Articles/2015/02/03/California-District-Deploys.aspx?Page=2>; Singer, Natasha. February 8, 2015. Uncovering Security Flaws in Digital Education Products for Schoolchildren. *New York Times* [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/09/technology/uncovering-security-flaws-in-digital-education-products-for-schoolchildren.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/09/technology/uncovering-security-flaws-in-digital-education-products-for-schoolchildren.html?_r=0)

<sup>69</sup> Joel Dvoskin. May 2014. Nevada Behavioral Health and Wellness Council: Proposed Council Recommendations. [http://www.health.nv.gov/BHWC/Reports/2014-05\\_ReportAndRecommendationsToGovernorSandoval.pdf](http://www.health.nv.gov/BHWC/Reports/2014-05_ReportAndRecommendationsToGovernorSandoval.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> K. Kutash, A.J. Duchnowski, & N. Lynn. 2006. School-based mental health: An empirical guide for decision-makers. Tampa, FL: University of South Florida, The Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, Department of Child & Family Studies., Research and Training Center for Children's Mental Health. <http://rtckids.fmhi.usf.edu/rtcpubs/study04/SBMHfull.pdf>



- 
- <sup>71</sup> Joel Dvoskin. May 2014. Nevada Behavioral Health and Wellness Council: Proposed Council Recommendations. [http://www.health.nv.gov/BHWC/Reports/2014-05\\_ReportAndRecommendationsToGovernorSandoval.pdf](http://www.health.nv.gov/BHWC/Reports/2014-05_ReportAndRecommendationsToGovernorSandoval.pdf)
- <sup>72</sup> Nevada Department of Education. Nevada Report Card. <http://www.nevadareportcard.com/di/>
- <sup>73</sup> Damon Jones et al. 2002. Early identification of children at risk for costly mental health service use. *Prevention Science* 3.4: 247-256.
- <sup>74</sup> Jessica Mass Levitt et al. 2007. Early identification of mental health problems in schools: The status of instrumentation. *Journal of School Psychology*; and Nemeroff, Robin, et al. 2008. "Establishing ongoing, early identification programs for mental health problems in our schools: a feasibility study." *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 47.3: 328-338.
- <sup>75</sup> Sara Ruff et al. Mental Health Related Services on IEPs. <http://www.williamdikel.com/mental-health-related-services-on-ieps.html>
- <sup>76</sup> Washoe and Clark County School Districts. July 15, 2014. Testimony to Legislative Committee on Education <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/interim/77th2013/Committee/StatCom/Education/Other/15-July-2014/MeetingPage.cfm?ID=61&d=15-July-2014>
- <sup>77</sup> Jobs for America's Graduates. 2013. A Special Briefing for: Governor's Task Force on Reducing Childhood Poverty March 4, 2013 <http://www.dcf.ks.gov/Newsroom/Documents/Childhood-Poverty-Task-Force/march4/LauriePhelan.pdf>
- <sup>78</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>79</sup> Lindsay Burke and Rachel Sheffield. 2011. The Heritage Foundation. School Choice in America: 2011: Educational Opportunities Reach New Heights. <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2011/08/school-choice-in-america-2011-educational-opportunity-reaches-new-heights>
- <sup>80</sup> Florida Legislature. Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability. December 2008. Report 08-68. <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/Reports/pdf/0868rpt.pdf>
- <sup>81</sup> Geoffrey Lawrence. January 17, 2013. NPRI: Sandoval misses opportunity to make case for fiscal conservatism <http://www.npri.org/issues/publication/npri-sandoval-misses-opportunity-to-make-case-for-fiscal-conservatism>
- <sup>82</sup> Cato Institute. Model Legislation: Scholarship Tax Credits. <http://www.cato.org/model-legislation-scholarship-tax-credits>; Verena Wondratschek, Karin Edmark, Markus Frölich. 2014. The Short- and Long-Term Effects of School Choice on Student Outcomes: Evidence from a School Choice Reform in Sweden. Discussion Paper No. 7898. Institute for the Study of Labor.
- <sup>83</sup> Julie Berry Cullen, Brian A. Jacob, and Steven D. Levitt. 2005. The impact of school choice on student outcomes: an analysis of the Chicago Public Schools. *Journal of Public Economics*. 89 (2005) 729 – 760; S. Levitt. 2004. <http://www.nber.org/reporter/winter04/levitt.html>
- <sup>84</sup> National Conference of State Legislators. 2013. Fiscal Impact of School Vouchers and Scholarship Tax Credits. <http://www.ncsl.org/documents/educ/FiscalImpactOfPrivateSchoolChoice.pdf>
- <sup>85</sup> [http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/CTC/files/Fast\\_Facts\\_FTC.pdf](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/CTC/files/Fast_Facts_FTC.pdf)
- <sup>86</sup> Nevada Department of Health and Human Services. Governor's Council on Food Security [http://dhhs.nv.gov/Programs/Grants/Advisory\\_Committees/Food\\_Policy\\_Council/Council\\_Meetings/](http://dhhs.nv.gov/Programs/Grants/Advisory_Committees/Food_Policy_Council/Council_Meetings/)
- <sup>87</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>88</sup> Food Research and Action Center. School Breakfast Program. <http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/school-breakfast-program/> and Federal Register / Vol. 79, No. 136 / Wednesday, July 16, 2014 / Notices <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/NAPs14-15.pdf>
- <sup>89</sup> Nevada Department of Agriculture. Child Nutrition Program. [http://nutrition.nv.gov/Data\\_Reports/Free\\_and\\_Reduced\\_Lunch\\_Data/](http://nutrition.nv.gov/Data_Reports/Free_and_Reduced_Lunch_Data/)
- <sup>90</sup> Nevada Department of Agriculture. School Meals in Nevada [http://dhhs.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dhhsnv.gov/content/Programs/Grants/Advisory\\_Committees/Food\\_Policy\\_Council/DptofAg\\_School-Meals-in-NV-Update\\_Summer2014.pdf](http://dhhs.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dhhsnv.gov/content/Programs/Grants/Advisory_Committees/Food_Policy_Council/DptofAg_School-Meals-in-NV-Update_Summer2014.pdf)
- <sup>91</sup> FRAC. Breakfast and Learning. 2014. <http://frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/breakfastforlearning.pdf>
- <sup>92</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>93</sup> Nevada Department of Agriculture. School Meals in Nevada [http://dhhs.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dhhsnv.gov/content/Programs/Grants/Advisory\\_Committees/Food\\_Policy\\_Council/DptofAg\\_School-Meals-in-NV-Update\\_Summer2014.pdf](http://dhhs.nv.gov/uploadedFiles/dhhsnv.gov/content/Programs/Grants/Advisory_Committees/Food_Policy_Council/DptofAg_School-Meals-in-NV-Update_Summer2014.pdf)
- <sup>94</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture. Child Nutrition Tables: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables> The participation rate is the ratio of total students participating in the School Breakfast Program to total students participating in the National School Lunch Program.
- <sup>95</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>96</sup> LAUSD's Free Breakfast Program has Gone Bad, Teachers Union Alleges. May 14, 2013. <http://www.nbclaosangeles.com/news/local/Teachers-Union-Alleges-Bad-Breakfast-in-the-Classroom-at-LAUSD-Schools-207303011.html>

- 
- <sup>97</sup> American Institutes for Research. September, 2012. Study of a New Method for Funding Public Schools in Nevada <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/Interim/77th2013/Committee/Studies/K12Funding/Other/NVFundingStudyReportFINAL92812.pdf>
- <sup>98</sup> Nevada Legislature Committee to Conduct an Interim Study Concerning Community Colleges' Subcommittee on Academics and Workforce Alignment. April 24, 2014. (*Senate Bill 391, Chapter 494, Nevada Revised Statutes 2013*)
- <sup>99</sup> Florida Department of Education. 2013. Florida Tax Credit Scholarship. [http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/CTC/files/Fast\\_Facts\\_FTC.pdf](http://www.floridaschoolchoice.org/Information/CTC/files/Fast_Facts_FTC.pdf)
- <sup>100</sup> Gary Hoover. January 2008. Elected versus appointed school district officials: Is there a difference in student outcomes? *Public Finance Review*. <http://pfr.sagepub.com/content/36/5/635.short>
- <sup>101</sup> National School Boards Association. October 2008. A question of representation: Diversity and 21st century school boards. Leadership Insider. <https://nsba.org/sites/default/files/reports/1008Insider.pdf>
- <sup>102</sup> Michael Ford. August 2013. The Impact of School Board Governance on Academic Achievement in Diverse States. University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee. <http://dc.uwm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1334&context=etd>; Center for Public Education. January 28, 2011. Eight characteristics of effective school boards: full report. <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/Main-Menu/Public-education/Eight-characteristics-of-effective-school-boards/Eight-characteristics-of-effective-school-boards.html>
- <sup>103</sup> Legislative Counsel Bureau. January 1997. Reconfiguring the Structure of School Districts. Bulletin 97-4. <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/Division/Research/Publications/InterimReports/1997/Bulletin97-04.pdf>
- <sup>104</sup> Nevada Legislature. 1997. History of AB 596-1997. <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/Division/Research/Library/LegHistory/LHs/1997/AB596,1997.pdf>
- <sup>105</sup> Tom Pelham and Benjamin Kinsley. 2014. Education Outcomes and Spending: A Data Driven Analysis. <http://www.campaignforvermont.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Report-on-Education-Spending-and-Outcomes.pdf>
- <sup>106</sup> Donna Driscoll, Dennis Halcoussis, and Shirley Svorny. 2003. School district size and student performance. *Economics of Education Review*. Vol 22: 193–201. <http://www.csun.edu/~vcecn007/publications/SchoolDistrictSize.pdf>
- <sup>107</sup> Dwight Colley and Kay Floyd. Small Rural School District Consolidation in Texas: An Analysis of its Impact on Cost and Student Achievement. *Administrative Issues Journal, Education Practice, and Research*. Volume 3. Issue 1 <http://www.swosu.edu/academics/aij/2013/v3i1/cooley-floyd.pdf>
- <sup>108</sup> Jonathan Mills et. al. March 2013. An Analysis of the Effect of Consolidation on Student Achievement: Evidence from Arkansas <http://www.uaedreform.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Mills-McGee-Greene-2013-Consolidation-and-Student-Achievement-EDRE-WP-2013-02.pdf>
- <sup>109</sup> Grover J. "Russ" Whitehurst, Matthew M. Chingos, and Michael R. Gallaher. March 2013. Do School Districts Matter? Brown Center on Education Policy at Brookings Institution The same study also suggests that despite that, differences between school districts in effectiveness are large enough *at the extremes* to represent more than a half-year difference in schooling. [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2013/3/27%20school%20district%20impacts%20whitehurst/districts\\_report\\_03252013\\_web](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2013/3/27%20school%20district%20impacts%20whitehurst/districts_report_03252013_web)
- <sup>110</sup> Trevon Milliard. November 30, 2014. "Nevada mulling dramatic crackdown on low-performing schools" Las Vegas Review Journal. <http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/education/nevada-mulling-dramatic-crackdown-low-performing-schools>
- <sup>111</sup> Nevada Department of Education. Statement of State Superintendent of Public Instruction Dale Erquiaga regarding the Governor Sandoval's Education Proposals and Underperforming Schools. (January 16, 2015) [http://www.doe.nv.gov/News\\_\\_Media/Press\\_Releases/2015/Statement\\_from\\_State\\_Superintendent\\_Public\\_Instruction/](http://www.doe.nv.gov/News__Media/Press_Releases/2015/Statement_from_State_Superintendent_Public_Instruction/)
- <sup>112</sup> D. Harris & M. Larsen. January 2015. Parents, Schools, and Choices: It's Complicated. Tulane University. [http://tulane.edu/news/newwave/011615\\_study\\_on\\_nola\\_school\\_choice.cfm](http://tulane.edu/news/newwave/011615_study_on_nola_school_choice.cfm)
- <sup>113</sup> J. Williams. October 10, 2014. "Tulane's Cowen Institute retracts New Orleans School Report, apologizes." New Orleans Times-Picayune. [http://www.nola.com/education/index.ssf/2014/10/tulanes\\_cowen\\_institute\\_retracts\\_new\\_orleans\\_schools\\_report\\_a\\_pologizes.html](http://www.nola.com/education/index.ssf/2014/10/tulanes_cowen_institute_retracts_new_orleans_schools_report_a_pologizes.html)
- <sup>114</sup> Howard E. August 2014. "Just the Facts: A Longitudinal Analysis of ASD Schools Before and After Takeover" Bluff City Ed. 20 <http://www.bluffcityed.com/2014/08/just-the-facts-a-longitudinal-analysis-of-asd-schools-before-and-after-takeover/>
- <sup>115</sup> C. Guyette. September 24, 2014. "The EAA Exposed: An Investigative Report." Detroit Metro Times. <http://www.metrotimes.com/detroit/the-eaa-exposed-an-investigative-report/Content?oid=2249513>



---

<sup>116</sup> W. Hu. December 11, 2011. "State Takeovers of Other Districts Have Had Mixed Results" New York Times. [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/12/education/state-takeovers-of-school-districts-have-had-mixed-results.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/12/education/state-takeovers-of-school-districts-have-had-mixed-results.html?_r=0)

<sup>117</sup> L. Curtis. July 10, 2011. State Takeover Looms in North Las Vegas. *Las Vegas Review-Journal*. <http://www.reviewjournal.com/news/government/state-takeover-looms-north-las-vegas>.