



Legislative Testimony

SCR 1 Interim Study on Professional Development

March 9, 2015

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Legislative Operations and Elections

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The Guinn Center coauthored a report with Nevada Succeeds in July 2014 titled: ***Reforming Professional Development to Improve Literacy Outcomes in Nevada***. This report examined some of the elements listed in the proposed interim study. SCR 1 would build upon this research and could provide information to help improve the quality of professional development in the future.

Cost Data

- The interim study requested in SCR 1 would analyze the cost of professional development and the availability of Federal funding for this purpose.
- Our research found that school districts spent approximately \$70 million for professional development in FY 2014, primarily from Federal funds. Professional development expenditures are not currently reported to the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) so data had to be requested from each school district and the State Public Charter School Authority. Professional development activities are typically reported under Function 2210: Improvement of Instruction and Function 2213: Instructional Staff Training. In addition, each Federal grant has its own project/grant code.
- To fulfill the intent of SCR 1, data could be gathered annually using the financial report required by NRS 387.303 1(b) without making statutory changes. This statute requires school districts and charter schools to report annual expenditure data to NDE. The data requested from school districts and charter schools could be expanded to include: detailed function codes to identify professional development expenditures; and detailed project/grant codes to identify specific Federal funding sources. To ensure all data on professional development is captured, NDE should consider requesting that school districts and charter schools submit data for the full account string, which includes fund codes, project/grant codes, program codes, function codes, and revenue/object codes.

Evaluation of Professional Development

- The interim study requested in SCR 1 would evaluate the quality and effectiveness of professional development programs, as well as the impact on student achievement.
- We found that rigorous evaluation of professional development has not been conducted in Nevada. While most professional development is evaluated with participant surveys, more in-depth evaluations that explore the impact on instructional practices and student achievement are not usually conducted at the district or school level.
- To effectively evaluate professional development programs, school districts should shift the focus of evaluation from measuring participants' reactions to measuring the impact on classroom instruction and student learning. Our report presents an evaluation model by Dr. Thomas Guskey that includes five levels of professional development evaluation: participants' reactions, participants' learning, organization support and change, participants' use of new knowledge and skills; and student learning outcomes.



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- The Regional Professional Development Programs have begun to focus on how to improve the evaluations of their programs using research-based best practices.
- To analyze the effectiveness of professional development as envisioned in SCR 1, funding would need to be provided for an external evaluation. In addition, the evaluation would need to begin in August 2015 to analyze the impact on student achievement over an entire school year.

Standards for Professional Development

- The interim study requested in SCR 1 would analyze the standards used for professional development.
- Nevada currently has professional development standards in place for the Regional Professional Development Programs (RPDPs) but not for school districts.
- In January 2015, the Statewide Council for the Coordination of Regional Training Programs adopted the Learning Forward professional learning standards for the RPDPs. These are national standards adopted by 37 other states.
- We recommend adopting Legislation requiring the Nevada State Board of Education to adopt uniform professional development standards that apply to the RPDPs and Local Educational Agencies.

See full report: *Reforming Professional Development to Improve Literacy Outcomes in Nevada*
http://guinncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Reforming-Professional-Development-to-Improve-Literacy-Outcomes-in-Nevada_July-2014.pdf

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