



**Legislative Testimony** Department of Education Budgets

May 16, 2015

**Testimony before the Senate Committee on Finance and the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means**

*Prepared Statement of the Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities*

**Introduction**

In February 2015, the Guinn Center released *Examining Nevada's Education Priorities: Which Initiatives are Worth the Investment?* (in collaboration with Nevada Succeeds). We reviewed data-driven research and prioritized each proposed program based on the potential impact on student outcomes. Based on our findings, we offer the following prioritization for the Legislature's consideration.

**Prioritization of the Governor's Education Programs**

K-12 Education Program	Additional Cost (biennium)	Priority	Recommendations
Expansion of Pre-K (Early Childhood)	\$10.3M	High	-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	\$25M	High	-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	High	-Combine Zoom, Victory, and Read by 3 programs into a comprehensive English Language Acquisition program that targets English Language Learners (ELL) and Free and Reduced price Lunch (FRL) students -Ensure each intervention has an accountability plan that can be evaluated
Career and Technical Education (CTE)	\$8M	High	-Provide high quality professional development for CTE teachers -Conduct a statewide strategic plan of CTE
College and Career Readiness Programs	\$8M	High	-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	High	-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 Construction	NA	High	-Legislators should consider additional financing options
Universal Full-Day Kindergarten	\$78.4M	Medium	-Prioritize expansion of full-day kindergarten for ELL and FRL students -Implement a statewide kindergarten assessment



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Technology Funding (Ready 21 Plan)	\$48.8M	Medium	-Fund 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	Medium	-Fund 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	Medium	-Continue to evaluate student outcomes -Link funding to performance goals
Public Charter Recruitment Fund	\$20M	Medium	-Identify schools in low-income areas where there is the greatest need for high quality choice
Breakfast at Schools	\$2M	Medium	-Prioritize funds for schools with at least 75 percent FRL students -Allow grant funds to be used to subsidize meals so eligible schools in small districts can provide universal breakfast
Opportunity Tax Credit Scholarship	\$10.5M	Low	-Establish a Taskforce to develop a plan for the design and implementation of the scholarship/tax credit program -Conduct an analysis of the supply of private school seats
Gifted & Talented Education	\$10M	Low	-Determine a weight in the new funding formula for gifted students
Appointed School District Boards	NA	Low	-Create a Task Force to assess fiscal impacts
Formation of School Districts	NA	Low	-Create a Task Force to assess fiscal impacts -Consider option as part of funding formula discussions
Achievement School District/ Underperforming Schools	N/A \$10M	Low	-Continue to evaluate the models in other states before implementing in Nevada -Use underperforming schools funds for schools in the Achievement School District

**See full reports:**

1. **Examining Nevada's Education Priorities: Which Initiatives are Worth the Investment?** <http://guinncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Guinn-Center-Nevada-Succeeds-Education-Priorities-FINAL.pdf>
2. **Nevada K-12 Education Finance** <http://guinncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Guinn-Center-K-12-Education-Finance-Fact-Sheet.pdf>
3. **Expanding Financing Options for Nevada's K-12 Facilities** <http://guinncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Guinn-Center-K-12-Education-Facilities-Policy-FINAL.pdf>

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