



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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