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MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 18, 2008
TO: Chairwoman and Members, Legislative Committee on Education
FROM: Melinda Martini, Senior Research Analyst
Research Division
SUBJECT: **Testing in Nevada: Senate Bill 110 (Chapter 229, *Statutes of Nevada 2007*)**

Out of concern that the number of standardized tests students are required to take detracts from instructional time in the classroom, Senate Bill 110 (Chapter 229, *Statutes of Nevada 2007*) limits district-wide examinations to those required by federal or State law, or those adopted by the school district before July 1, 2007. Beginning January 1, 2009, a school district may require district-wide examinations that it believes are vital to measuring student achievement and progress.

In order to obtain information on the number of hours students, teachers, and other licensed personnel spend on testing, S.B. 110 requires school districts to submit a report to the Legislative Committee on Education detailing hours spent on testing during the 2006-2007 school year. The report was due on or before March 1, 2008; this memorandum summarizes the reports received from the school districts.

TESTING IN THE STATE OF NEVADA

The 1977 Legislature adopted a mandated student testing program—the Nevada Proficiency Examination—to provide a statewide measure of student accountability that was not previously available. Since 1977, the Legislature has required statewide testing to measure how Nevada's pupils compare to those in other states and the nation as a whole. Tests originally included a standardized, norm-referenced test (NRT) in language arts, mathematics, reading, and science; a writing assessment; and a High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE).

The 1999 Legislature added a requirement for criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) linked to the State's academic standards in selected grades and required the HSPE be revised to measure

EXHIBIT H Education	Document consists of 13 pages.
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<input type="checkbox"/> Due to size limitations, pages _____ provided. A copy of the complete document is available through the Research Library (775/684-6827) or e-mail library@lcb.state.nv.us .	
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the performance of students on the academic standards beginning with the class graduating in 2003. In the 19th Special Session of 2003, to comply with the Federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLBA), the Legislature modified the State assessment system to add tests aligned to the academic standards in mathematics and reading for grades 3 through 8.

Today, most Nevada school districts require tests that are in addition to those required by federal or State law. The following defines the more common tests administered at the school district level:

Achievement Level Tests (ALTs)

Achievement Level Tests provide a way to measure academic progress over time. The ALTs measure achievement in language arts, mathematics, and reading. Each level of the test contains items of increasing difficulty; students take a level of test that corresponds to their achievement and not to their grade level so that growth can be measured for each student, regardless of the starting point. The tests are normally administered, at a minimum, in the fall and spring so that academic progress can be tracked.

Student scores are reported in two ways for the ALTs. First is the RIT score (Rasch Unit), which is a measure of the student's skill level in the subject area tested. A RIT score represents a point on a continuous scale of learning; measuring a student's learning on the RIT scale is similar to measuring a student's height with a yardstick. The second score received through an ALT is a percentile score. The percentile score provides for a measure of how students are doing compared to students in other schools around the country that are using level testing.

Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)

MAP tests are the computerized version of the ALTs. With the ability to test students up to four times a year, educators can use the growth and achievement data from MAP to develop targeted instructional strategies and to plan school improvement. According to the Northwest Evaluation Association (creator of MAP), more than 3,100 school districts and educational partners use MAP. MAP tests are available in the subject areas of language arts, mathematics, reading, and science. Student scores are reported in the same manner as the ALTs.

Benchmark Assessments

Benchmark Assessments are standards-based assessments administered to a whole-group or individual at regular intervals. The assessment results can be used to determine student growth and student performance relative to statewide grade-level achievement. Benchmark assessments can be used to guide classroom instruction and identify individual student needs for re-teaching and intervention.

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)

The DIBELS assessment is a paper-based test that identifies students at risk for reading failure. School districts utilize this test to meet the requirements of Reading First. Reading First is a federal grant program with the goal of all pupils reading at grade level by the end of third grade.

K-PALS: Kindergarten Peer Assisted Literacy Strategy

The K-PALS is a 20-week program that helps kindergarten teachers assess student phonemic awareness and alphabetic knowledge.

Based upon reporting from school districts, the following table summarizes tests administered in the State of Nevada.

TYPE OF TEST	GRADE LEVELS	SCHOOL DISTRICTS
State/Federal Required Tests		
Norm-Referenced Tests (NRTs)	4, 7, and 10	All
Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs)	3 through 8	All
Writing Examination	5, 8, 11, 12	All
High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE)	10, 11, and 12	All
National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)	4, 8, and 12	Federal Government Sample
School District Tests		
Achievement Level Tests (ALTs)	K through 12 (dependent upon the school district)	Douglas
Measures of Academic Progress (MAP)	K-12 (dependent upon the school district)	Carson City, Churchill, Douglas, Lincoln, Lyon, Pershing
Benchmark Assessments	K-12 (dependent upon the school district)	Clark and Washoe
NRTs	1, 2, and 3	Pershing
Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)	K-6 (dependent upon the school district)	Esmeralda and Pershing
K-PALS: Kindergarten Peer Assisted Literacy Strategy	Kindergarten	Churchill and Humboldt
Pearson Benchmark Assessment	3	Elko
Preliminary SAT (PSAT)	10	Clark and Pershing

TIME SPENT ON TESTING

Attached to this memorandum is a spreadsheet that summarizes time on testing by school district. The information contained in the spreadsheet was compiled from the reports submitted by school districts in compliance with the requirements of S.B. 110. Please note that reports were not received from Lander County and Mineral County School Districts. In addition, the information obtained from Lincoln County and Washoe County School Districts was not in a format similar to other school districts and therefore is not included in the spreadsheet. The following highlights time spent on testing by pupils, proctors, and educational personnel, as reported by school districts:

Pupils—Time Spent on Testing

The following summarizes time on testing by pupil and by grade.

Kindergarten: Eight of the 13 reporting school districts test kindergarten pupils. Tests include the K-PAL, the NRTs (school district required), DIBELS, benchmark assessments, and MAP. Annual time per pupil on testing ranges from 12 minutes in Pershing County School District to 18 hours in Clark County School District.

First Grade: Seven of the 13 reporting school districts test first grade pupils. Tests include the NRTs (school district required), DIBELS, benchmark assessments, and MAP. Annual time per pupil on testing ranges from 30 minutes in Douglas County School District to 18 hours in Clark County School District.

Second Grade: Eight of the 13 reporting school districts test second grade pupils. Tests include the NRTs (school district required), DIBELS, benchmark assessments and MAP. Annual time per pupil on testing ranges from 30 minutes in Douglas County School District to 18 hours in Clark County School District.

Third Grade: All school districts test third grade students; State required CRTs begin in the third grade. Tests include the CRTs, the NRTs (school district required), the Pearson Benchmark Assessment, DIBELS, Renaissance Learning Assessments, benchmark assessments and MAP. Annual time per pupil on testing ranges from 6 hours in Humboldt, Storey, and White Pine County School Districts to 24 hours in Clark County School District.

Fourth Grade: All school districts test fourth grade students; State-required CRTs continue and the State-required NRTs begin. Tests include the CRTs, the NRTs, DIBELS, Renaissance Learning Assessments, benchmark assessments and MAP. Annual time per pupil on testing ranges from ten hours in Humboldt and White Pine County School Districts to 28 hours in Clark County School District.

Fifth Grade: All school districts test fifth grade students. The state writing assessment is administered for the first time in fifth grade; in addition, the State-required CRTs continue.

Tests include the CRTs, the State Writing Assessment, DIBELS, Renaissance Learning Assessments, benchmark assessments and MAP. Annual time per pupil on testing ranges from 6 hours in Elko and Storey County School Districts to 26 hours in Clark County School District.

Sixth Grade: All school districts test sixth grade students; State-required CRTs continue. Tests include the CRTs, DIBELS, Renaissance Learning Assessments, benchmark assessments and MAP. Annual time per pupil on testing ranges from 6 hours in Churchill, Elko, Humboldt, Storey and White Pine County School Districts to 33 hours in Clark County School District.

Seventh Grade: All school districts test seventh grade students; State-required CRTs continue, as well as the State-required NRTs. Tests include the CRTs, the NRTs, Renaissance Learning Assessments, benchmark assessments and MAP. Annual time per pupil on testing ranges from 10 hours in Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Storey, and White Pine County School Districts to 37 hours in Clark County School District.

Eighth Grade: All school districts test eighth grade students. The State-required CRTs and Writing Assessment continue. Tests include the CRTs, the State Writing Assessment, Renaissance Learning Assessments, benchmark assessments and MAP. Annual time per pupil on testing ranges from 8 hours in Eureka, Humboldt, Storey, and White Pine County School Districts to 35 hours in Clark County School District.

Ninth Grade: There are no State-required tests in ninth grade. Five of the 13 reporting school districts test ninth grade pupils. Tests include the benchmark assessments and MAP. Annual time per pupil on testing ranges from 2 hours in Churchill County School District to 12 hours in Clark County School District.

Tenth Grade: All school districts test tenth grade students. The state required NRT continues in tenth grade. In addition, the High School Proficiency Examination (HSPE) in reading and math is administered for the first time. Tests include the benchmark assessments, MAP, the NRT, the PSAT, and the HSPE. Annual time per pupil on testing ranges from 6 hours in Elko, Eureka, Humboldt, Nye, Storey, and White Pine County School Districts to 20 hours in Clark County School District.

Eleventh Grade: All school districts test eleventh grade students. The state required HSPE in math and reading is administered to those students who failed one or more parts during the tenth grade. In addition, the writing portion of the HSPE is administered for the first time. Tests include the benchmark assessments, MAP, and the HSPE. Annual time per pupil on testing ranges from 2 hours in Elko County School District, to 9 hours in Lyon County School District.

Twelfth Grade: All school districts test twelfth grade students. The state required HSPE in math and reading is administered to those students who failed one or more parts during the

eleventh grade. Tests include the benchmark assessments, MAP, and the HSPE. Annual time per pupil on testing ranges from less than one hour in Elko and Storey County School Districts, to 8 hours in Lyon County School District.

Proctors—Time Spent on Testing

Review of the annual time per proctor on the administration of tests shows that proctors spend the most time administering tests in grades 4, 7 and 8; this finding was consistent across school districts. At grades 4 and 8, the federal NAEP assessment is administered in addition to the State-required examinations, which lends support to the findings. However, it is not clear at this time why proctor time is high at grade 7; the only State/federal required assessments at grade 7 are the NRTs and CRTs.

Educational Personnel—Time Spent on Testing

According to reports submitted by school districts, educational personnel involved in testing includes: licensed personnel (i.e. counselors, teachers, et cetera), support staff (administrative assistants, clerks, secretaries, teacher and instructional aides, et cetera), and administrative personnel (assistant principals, deans, and principals).

Review of the annual time educational personnel spend on testing shows that the most time is spent in grades 4 and 5. One support for this finding may be that the NRT is administered for the first time in grade 4 and the Writing Assessment is administered for the first time in grade 5.

SCHOOL DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING TESTING

1. **NRTs**: If the Nevada State Standards and CRTs were aligned with the NAEP academic standards and test format, the State could eliminate the need for the current NRTs in grades 4, 7, and 10. The NAEP results at grades 4, 8, and 12 would provide a statewide sampling of student results for comparison to schools nation-wide. (Clark County School District)
2. **Growth Model**: The state should adopt an official method to provide information regarding “growth” from year-to-year. (Clark County School District)
3. **On-Line Testing**: While Clark County School District has many concerns about the feasibility, due to hardware availability and connectivity issues, the district believes that piloting on-line testing on a limited basis is a worthwhile pursuit. While some administration costs might be minimized (printing, delivery, and scoring), cost savings might not be realized since the software, hardware, technical support, and connectivity requirements might offset those savings. However, the results return rate should be

exponentially decreased allowing much faster access to achievement data. (Clark County School District)

4. HSPE: The HSPE program needs to have clarity of purpose. Some interpret the HSPE as an exit examination, which demonstrates that students have mastered specific content areas at the 12th grade level. However, the tests are first administered at the 10th grade level. Is it “fair” to expect students to pass an exit exam two years prior to graduation? Others interpret proficiency on the HSPE to mean that a student is “ready for college.” However, often SAT and ACT results conflict with the HSPE results. (Clark County School District)
5. HSPE—Summer Administration: While the addition of summer HSPE testing has provided students with another opportunity to take the proficiency examination, it cost the school district \$65,459 to pay “vacationing” teachers to proctor the test administration during the 2006-2007 school year. With the addition of the science examination and possible alternative assessments, the need for additional dollars, sites, and people is inevitable. (Clark County School District)
6. NRTs: Eliminate the requirement to administer the NRTs. While the NRTs provide comparative information nationally, they are not part of the calculation for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) under the NCLB. (Elko County School District)
7. MAP: Move to a different testing format that not only measures student proficiency but also student growth, such as MAP. The MAP provides timely feedback that actually impacts instruction relevant to the time the assessment is given. Current test data is more summative in nature and too much time exists between the results and impact for the individual student. Time spent testing would also be reduced, allowing for more instructional time during the school year. (Humboldt County School District)
8. NAEP and NRTs: The NAEP testing and NRTs are of much less value than the CRTs and district tests. The NAEP results do nothing to inform and improve instruction; the NRTs are only slightly better and do not tie to anything concrete. Since neither test does much of anything to help students or teachers, it would seem that dropping these tests in favor of better CRTs and district tests would be advantageous for the total education process. (Lincoln County School District)
9. MAP and NRTs: Assessment should be used to predict future success, document attainment of proficiency standards, and to show student growth. MAP assessments provide a consistent measuring tool to assess student progress and proficiency. The NRTs are used very little in the school district to promote the growth of our students. Lyon County School District

NOTE: According to information received from Nevada’s Department of Education, a new CTB McGraw-Hill contract for a Survey Battery NRT will replace the current Complete Battery NRT. The new test will be administered beginning in the 2008-2009 school year. The

Department notes that it is expected there will be a decrease in testing time for students of 95 minutes in the fourth and seventh grades. In tenth grade, testing time is expected to decrease 55 minutes.

CONCLUSION

I hope this information is useful to you in better understanding time on testing in the State of Nevada. It appears that the benchmark assessments and the ALT/MAP assessments are believed to be invaluable by the schools districts in improving student academic achievement.

If you have any questions concerning this information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (775) 684-6825.

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School Districts	CRTs				NRTs				Writing				HSPE - Reading/Math				NAEP				School District Formative/Summative Assessments*												School District "Other" Assessments**				TOTAL TIME - PER PROCTOR (HOURS)	TOTAL TIME - PER STUDENT (HOURS)	TOTAL TIME FOR ED PERS.																																																																																																																																																																																																																															
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TESTING IN NEVADA: SENATE BILL 110 (2007 SESSION)

School Districts	CRTs			NRTs			Writing			HSPE - Reading/Math			NAEP			School District Formative/Summative Assessments*						School District "Other" Assessments**						TOTAL TIME - PER PROCTOR (HOURS)	TOTAL TIME - PER STUDENT (HOURS)	TOTAL TIME FOR ED PERS.																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																				
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* Formative/Summative Assessments: Achievement Level Tests (ALTs), Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), and Benchmark Assessments
** School District Other Assessments: Dynamic Indicators or Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), K-PALS - Kindergarten Peer Assisted Literacy Strategy, Pearson Benchmark Assessment, Preliminary SAT (PSAT), and Renaissance Learning Tests
*** Educational Personnel: licensed personnel (teachers, counselors, etc.), support staff (clerks, secretaries, administrative assistants, teacher aides, instructional aides, etc.), and administrative personnel (principals, assistant principals, and deans)