

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

A meeting of the Legislative Committee on Education (created as a result of Senate Bill 482), was held at 9:40 a.m. on November 25, 1997 at the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Raymond D. Rawson

Senator Jack Regan

Senator Maurice Washington

Assemblywoman Marcia deBraga

Assemblyman Patrick Hickey

Assemblyman Richard Perkins

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator William J. Raggio, Chairman

Assemblyman Wendell Williams

GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE:

Beryl Aytell, Career Schools

Marcia Bandera, Elko County School District

Diane Hecht, Elko County School District

Carl Morgan, Churchill County School District

Pam Mueller, Reno business owner

Mark Alden, Regent, University and Community College System of Nevada

Dorothy Dermody, Washoe County School Board Trustee

Cheryl Blomstrom, Association of General Contractors

Sheila Ward, Carson-Douglas Christian Coalition

Evelyn Brzezinski, Interwest Applied Research

Henry Etchemendy, National Association of School Boards

Jon Price, Nevada Bureau of Mines & Geology, University of Nevada, Reno

Bob Dickens, University of Nevada, Reno

Barbara Johnson, Lyon County Schools

Catherine Cunningham, Governor Miller's office

Dan Fox, Pershing County School District

Brandon Swain, Council to Establish Academic Standards

Pendery Clark, Douglas County School District

John Soderman, Douglas County School District

Larry Spitler, Clark County School District

Neena Laxalt, Rose/Glenn

Eric Anderson, Nevada Department of Education

Mary Peterson, Nevada Department of Education

Dan Piel, Storey County School District

Danny Gonzales, University and Community College System of Nevada

James Brant, Nevada Department of Education

Tony Taormina, Unified Construction

Ray Bacon, Nevada Manufacturers Association

Anne Loring, Washoe County School District

Gloria Dopf, Nevada Department of Education

Roy Casey, Nevada Department of Education

Jerry Holloway, Washoe County School District

Nat Lommori, Lyon County School District

Eugene Paslov, EMC, Inc.

Janine Hansen, Nevada Eagle Forum

Kathy St. Clair, Nevada Department of Education

Geoff Dorman, Nevada Appeal

Sy Ryan, Las Vegas Review Journal

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A - Agenda

Exhibit B - Attendance Roster

Exhibit C - Meeting Packet provided by the Legislative Counsel Bureau

Exhibit D - Copy of Transparencies provided by the Council for Basic Education

Exhibit E - Videotapes provided by the Council for Basic Education (on file at the Fiscal Analysis Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau)

Exhibit F - Nevada's Academic Standards provided by the Nevada Department of Education

Exhibit G - Provided by the Douglas County School District:

--Strategic Plan

--Brochure explaining the Strategic Plan

--Timeline, Standards-based reform, an historical overview, Content area curriculum

--Draft Secondary Competency Curriculum Objectives

Exhibit H - Provided by the Elko County School District

--Textbook adoption cycle

--Language Arts curriculum

--Elementary Social Studies curriculum

--Elementary Math curriculum

Exhibit I - Mission Statement adopted by the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools

Exhibit J - Status report from the Commission on Educational Technology

Exhibit K - Request for Proposal on Developing and Writing an Educational Technology Plan for the Public Schools of Nevada, provided by the Commission on Educational Technology

Exhibit L - Testimony provided by Dr. Jonathan Price, Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, University of Nevada, Reno

Exhibit M - The Standards Primer (on file at the Fiscal Analysis Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau)

1. **Roll Call**

Senator Raymond Rawson called the meeting to order, noting that the Chairman, Senator William J. Raggio, and the Vice-Chairman, Assemblyman Wendell Williams, were both excused from the meeting. He announced a quorum was present.

2. Approval of Minutes of October 21, 1997 meeting

Senator Rawson asked the committee to review the minutes from the October 21, 1997, meeting, contained in the packet provided (Exhibit C). He stated he would accept a motion to approve.

SENATOR REGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE

OCTOBER 21, 1997 MEETING.

ASSEMBLYMAN PERKINS SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY THOSE PRESENT.

Senator Rawson announced the meeting was directed as a primer on standards. Although that was not a new issue, the committee would be reviewing what standards are and what the school districts were doing in the way of developing standards. He stated that the first presentation would be from Mr. Christopher Cross, President, Council for Basic Education, Washington, D.C. Mr. Cross, coincidentally, was selected by the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools, to assist them in establishing Nevada's statewide standards. From 1994 to 1997, Mr. Cross was President of the Maryland State Board of Education. Before joining the Council for Basic Education, Mr. Cross served as the director of the Education Initiative for the Business Roundtable and as assistant secretary of Education Research and Improvement for the United States Department of Education. There, he was responsible for the research, statistical and improvement programs, supervised a staff of 450 people and a budget of nearly \$400 million. Prior to joining the Department of Education, Mr. Cross worked for 11 years in the private sector as an executive with professional service firms specializing in government research, technical assistance, and training programs. Senator Rawson provided the committee with further background information on Mr. Cross' educational and professional background, including academic accomplishments.

3. Presentation on standards - Mr. Christopher Cross, Council for Basic Education

Mr. Cross thanked the committee for allowing him to speak about standards and explain why the Council for Basic Education believed standards were so important. Mr. Cross explained that he would discuss the rationale behind establishing standards and would provide examples of good and bad standards. He would further be discussing the issues that would likely be faced by the state in setting standards. He added that his presentation would cover some of the programs that have been successful in raising student achievement levels. Mr. Cross indicated he would be showing a videotape at the end of his presentation showing public service announcements developed nationally on the issue of standards. He explained public service announcements were useful in building public understanding of the reason standards are important. Mr. Cross' presentation was made in conjunction with overhead displays. A copy of the transparencies is attached to these minutes as Exhibit D.

Mr. Cross stated standards were important for a number of reasons:

Economically: Mr. Cross showed a chart that revealed in 1990 there were 11 workers supporting every person on social security. In 13 years, that should be reduced to 5 workers and those persons will be persons of color or women--groups that have not been served well by education over many decades. He said it was important to improve public schools to maintain the economic health of our country.

Mr. Cross showed a graph from a poll of economists published in the Wall Street Journal in 1996 which reflected the widening range in equality in wages over the past 15 years in this country. He noted that behind technological change, the next largest cause of inequality is deterioration of public schools. Interestingly, that was above international trade, immigration, declining of minimum wage and changing demographics. Mr.

Cross concluded that it was necessary to view education standards from what was happening with the economy.

The next graph presented by Mr. Cross showed data taken from studies performed by the United States Department of Labor and Census Bureau which looked at eight states with the lowest unemployment rate and the percentage of the labor force without a high school diploma in 1995. In the eight states with the lowest unemployment rate in 1995, 17 percent of the adult population did not have a high school diploma. Conversely, in the states with the highest level of unemployment, 28 percent of the population did not have a high school diploma. He again stressed the importance of education in terms of the economy.

Educational Equity. Mr. Cross presented a graph of a study of what happened when states did not have academic standards. He noted that students who earned "A's" in schools with low levels of poverty scored on the average at the 87th percentile on examinations, but students in high poverty schools who received "A's", scored 36th percentile on the same examination. He concluded that the students and parents in the high poverty schools were victims of "educational fraud" because they were led to believe that they were succeeding and the "A" they received at their school was the same as an "A" at other schools. When these students enter the work force or higher education, they often require remedial courses or special employment training programs. This is what happens when standards are not in place and an "A" grade has a different meaning for different students with different backgrounds. Mr. Cross discussed how those examinations translated into ACT and SAT scores.

Assignment of Teachers. Mr. Cross showed a graph depicting where high school teachers were assigned. The low poverty schools had fewer teachers without at least a minor in their field. This was most visible in math, science and English. The percentage of high school teachers without a minor in the subject which they teach was high. He asserted that academic standards were complex and had many different facets. Setting standards was only the beginning of the process leading to a major change in the educational system.

Mr. Cross showed a poll prepared by the Wall Street Journal that asked the public whether schools should have tougher standards, easier standards, or remain the same. The results indicated that 72 percent of the public wanted tougher standards, 1 percent said standards should be easier, and approximately 23 percent said that standards should be about the same as they presently are. He stated it was important that parents and the public understood the importance of standards and what it meant to society. He noted that when students were asked about setting standards, a poll of high school seniors from 1997 revealed that 81.4 percent of the students did not feel their classes were challenging, 73 percent said the school needed more interesting and exciting classes, and 62 percent said teachers did not require enough work of them outside of the classroom.

Mr. Cross informed the committee that the American Federation of Teachers conducted a poll of their membership in 1995 asking what the most important proposal was for improving public schools. The results revealed that 70 percent wanted a standard test for promotion, 57 percent wanted more challenging requirements, 44 percent stated that automatic promotion occurred because there were no rules or standards in the school. When asked why a student was passed to another grade, teachers did not feel they could stand their ground because there were no standards or rules in that area. He stated if standards were in place, teachers would have a firm ground on which to stand and be less influenced by parents and principals.

Mr. Cross stated the Public Agenda Foundation polled a variety of high school seniors, adults, and teachers on the question of whether students would study harder or pay more attention to their school work if there were graduation standards for high school. 84 percent of the students polled stated that all students should be held to the same standards. He said that adults held low expectations for students. If students had higher expectations, they could do better and if given the opportunity, could succeed. The percentage of teachers in K-12 education who do not have a major or minor in the area in which they teach was shown to be 36

percent.

Mr. Cross reported that a poll performed recently by a group called "Different Drummers" asked the faculty at teacher education institutions what they felt were the most important qualities for prospective teachers. It was revealed that 84 percent believed being life-long learners and constantly up-dating their skills were most important, while 57 percent felt it was important for teachers to be deeply knowledgeable about the content of the specific subjects in which they were teaching. Mr. Cross said that if the institutions that prepared teachers to teach did not believe that content knowledge was important, that would not in turn be stressed to prospective teachers.

Senator Regan asked if the "touchy, feely" philosophy was being imparted by the colleges of education and when that would change. Mr. Cross said that making standards specific, clear and rigorous would greatly aid in dispelling that philosophy. In addition, students and adults needed to know that the standards applied to them. Further, academic standards had to be crafted in such a way that the "touchy, feely" notion was not being promoted, but rather, that substance was being promoted.

Senator Rawson stated there was a general misunderstanding in education. It was common knowledge that only 16 percent of students went on to college, and as a result, there was a long-standing argument to place money into occupational education. He suggested there was a definite place for occupational education; however, the argument assumed that educating students was an attempt to get them into college and that was far from the truth. Educating children was to help them function in any role, not specifically to go to college. Mr. Cross concurred, adding that the same basic knowledge that aided an individual going to college was also going to be required in the workplace since there were no longer decent-paying jobs that could be held where knowledge was not content-based and substantive.

Senator Washington commented on the surveys of students who expressed a desire for higher standards and asked if the students were asking for a higher standard, why was it so difficult for adults, educators, and legislators to raise those standards. Mr. Cross responded that during the 1960's and 1970's expectations for student achievement were low and that was also when the "touchy, feeling" notion became popular. Since then, there has been a let-down in what the poor and minority students were expected to do. He stated that could be readily seen in the Baltimore, Maryland, school system where the entire system had let down the students resulting in consistently lowered expectations. Very few students achieved more than what adults expected of them. So, when low expectations were set, they could be met.

Senator Regan commented he worked in Baltimore, Maryland, and related an example of what happened to a young black man coming from unbelievable poverty, who was now a Ph.D. from Syracuse or a national institution. Other examples were the brilliant people who were schooled in one-room classrooms and were now successful in life. He opined that poverty was irrelevant, and as for standards, the State of New York has had standards for years, but they were not successful whatsoever. Mr. Cross acknowledged Senator Regan's comments and added that the State of New York was in the process of revising the Regent's exams presently.

Mr. Cross stressed that he did not want to be misunderstood in that students who were poor did not have needs. Rather, the question was, who would meet those needs, was the school's mission subverted in order to meet those needs, or should other ways be used to meet the needs of those students. Senator Regan stated that was his point exactly and he did not want to see the state "dummying down." Even though not all students went on to higher education, there were plenty of challenges in the area of vocational education, and the student needed much in the area of technical education in order to succeed in many areas of occupational education. In fact, some skilled craftsman were making more money than persons with masters degrees from the University of Nevada.

Mr. Hickey acknowledged Mr. Cross' statement that teachers needed to be better prepared for teaching

students, and asked if, in his experience, there were examples where colleges of education imperically focused course preparation and content curriculum to teach towards those standards and if that was an area the committee should be looking at when setting standards in the state. Mr. Cross replied that was absolutely correct. He stated there were examples of institutes across the country who had done that well; however, those institutions were the exception rather than the rule. He stressed that it was important to get the higher education community engaged in an understanding of why higher standards were important, and they needed to be a part of the standard-setting process. Mr. Cross stated that the Council for Basic Education recommended that the higher education community needed to be included by the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools (Council) in writing the draft standards in the subject matter areas. Further, the state, if they adopt a high school exit examination, might use that examination as the entrance examination to the public institutions of higher education in the state. That would give the examination some real "stakes" and provide a direct connection between the higher education side and the K-12 side. More and more, the transition between the K-12 education and higher education will become logical and will be considered throughout within the system.

Senator Washington commented that the committee had been looking at remedial programs and he noticed that higher educational institutions were involved in remedial courses because students were coming out of high schools without the skills or ability to perform at a higher education level. He asked if the remedial programs should be playing a part in setting standards also. Mr. Cross answered absolutely. He stated that in Maryland the higher education community became involved with the K-12 people in every subject area and that was extremely helpful. He stated the largest controversy in that area was in the area of math, and it took an extra year to work out the problems with the math standards between the higher education community and the K-12 community because the higher education community had much higher expectations of what an entering freshman should know than what the K-12 community thought an exiting senior should know.

Senator Washington noted that Nevada had geographical problems whereby the rural schools may have difficulties implementing standards or interacting with higher education institutions. He asked how the secondary schools and higher education might work together using technology and long-distance learning to afford a better opportunity for students entering higher education. Mr. Cross answered that the committee may want to look at how the money is distributed by the Commission on Educational Technology to support the standards set by the Council to Establish Academic Standards in Public Schools. He stressed that in addition to the use of computers, the committee needed to look at ways of bringing courses to isolated schools through distance learning.

Mr. Cross provided another graph in response to the question "What is the role of teachers?" The results revealed that 92 percent of teacher trainers say teachers should see themselves as facilitators of learning to enable their students to learn on their own, and 7 percent said teachers should see themselves as conveyers of knowledge, to enlighten their students with what they know.

Mr. Cross provided a chart from a publication by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which encompasses 28 countries throughout the world. The chart compares the percentage of teachers to other educational staff. In Belgium, Japan and Italy, teachers represent 75 percent or more of the staff in the school districts. Whereas, in the United States, teachers represent approximately 45 percent of the staff in the school districts. Other administrative and support staff ranges from 10 percent in Belgium to 35 percent in the United States. Mr. Cross stated the chart represented to him how "out of balance" the United States has become in terms of the ratio of teachers to other employees in the system. He also compared the Riverside School District in California to the Zurich, Switzerland school system since they were approximately the same size in terms of total student body. In Zurich, all the schools were small, with approximately 300 students in an elementary school. Thereby, it was not necessary to have a large administrative staff. In Germany, for example, there are no principals; they have a principal teacher who is released at times to act as a principal. Mr. Cross acknowledged that the issue of class-size reduction is

prevalent in our state, but perhaps the small school size is more important than class size. Looking at class-size reduction, the quality and the qualification of teachers needed to be studied more carefully because if the percentage of qualified or marginally-qualified teachers is increased in the system at the same time class-size reduction is enacted, there will be many teachers in the system that may need retraining.

Mr. Cross announced that the Council for Basic Education was asked, by Education Week, a newsletter circulated throughout the K-12 community, to prepare an annual report on all the states. Last year, Education Week, wanted to rate how rigorous existing standards were. They asked the Council for Basic Education to undertake that evaluation and their report, which should be published in January, 1998, includes the evaluation of standards in 43 states. He stated the report revealed that there was more rigor in math standards than in the English language arts. The average grade earned by a state in math was "B" and the average grade in English language arts was in the mid-C range. In English language arts, standards in 50 percent of the states were found to be rigorous, 17 percent of the states very rigorous, and 33 percent were not rigorous. He pointed out that Nevada was not out of sync with what was happening throughout the country as far developing standards. Although there are other states that have been at it longer, that does not mean they have completed the job.

Mr. Hickey noted that regarding the rigorousness of standards, S.B. 482 required the committee to look at Virginia's standards, and he asked how they rated. Mr. Cross replied Virginia did not receive the highest grades. He said Virginia had quite specific standards but did not have as much rigor as most people thought. Senator Rawson asked which state received the highest grade for rigorous standards. Mr. Cross answered he did not recall which states had the highest grades in each of the subject areas and the report has not been published yet. Senator Rawson stated the committee would like to see the ranking provided by the Council for Basic Education and the committee could look to other states. Mr. Cross commented that Virginia had standards established for every grade level and that was only one approach to take. In order to provide a degree of flexibility to local districts meeting the standards, another approach would be setting "benchmark" standards at the end of elementary school, the end of middle school, and at the end of high school, instead of having standards for every grade. He said there was also a difference between standards and curriculum. In some ways, it was easy to cross the line into curriculum frameworks while trying to set standards.

Mr. Cross pointed out that the federal Title I program now requires states to have standards. Yet only 17 states have met the requirement for having content and performance standards under the Title I requirements, and only 15 states have developed an aligned assessment. He asserted that those schools probably did not have rigorous standards or as substantial a set of criteria as the committee and the council will want in the state of Nevada.

Senator Rawson stated the committee would like to see Mr. Cross assist the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools, to set rigorous standards. Mr. Cross acknowledged the concern of the committee and assured them that the standards which emerge from the council will be rigorous standards.

Mr. Cross said he is often asked for examples of where standards have been successful. He provided a publication from USA Today published in August, 1997, which devoted a full page to Corpus Christi, Texas, which describes how that state's math and reading achievement levels increased between 1995 and 1997. He suggested that the committee look at how the state of Texas established standards. In addition, several places in Maryland have taken standards seriously, such as St. Mary's County, Calvert County, and Frederick County. These areas have made enormous gains in educating their children because they have maintained a central focus. In setting standards, Mr. Cross opined, the standards drive the system.

Mr. Cross stated the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), had 42 countries participate in an assessment of math and science in which the international average score was 529, and the United States was above the international average. He pointed out that in the area of science, the United States was second in the world behind only Korea. He noted, however, that when the survey reported math

and science at the eighth grade level, things changed. In math at the eighth grade, the international average score was 513, and the United States scored 500. In fact, there were only five countries that scored lower than the United States in eighth grade math. Senator Rawson asked if those results implied that teachers in the United States did not have more than a fourth grade understanding of math and science. Mr. Cross replied that he believed that in the United States we do not expect enough of students as they progress through the grades, and the system tended to be one where too much material was repeated and the bar was not raised as it was in other countries. He noted that in the area of science, the United States dropped from being second in fourth grade science to ranking twelfth in eighth grade science. Mr. Cross concluded that the twelfth grade results in the areas of math and science will be released in approximately three months. He predicted that the data will show that the United States did well at the fourth grade level, badly at the eighth grade level, and the twelfth grade will show the United States as doing very badly.

Senator Reagan asked Mr. Cross to explain "proportionality" in relation to mathematics. Mr. Cross answered that would be where the student determines what proportion one number was to another number, such as calculating the amounts used in mixing a recipe.

Senator Washington asked if the data presented by Mr. Cross meant the countries that scored high had rigorous standards and higher expectations for their students and the United States was lacking in that area. Mr. Cross answered that was correct. For example, in the area of math, students were exposed to algebra, geometry, chemistry and physics at a much earlier age in other countries. Mr. Cross discussed how Germany set standards individually through each lander or state but worked in conjunction with the other states on setting those standards. He pointed out there was a way to benchmark standards among states. There is an organization called Achieve, created out of the summit meeting in 1996, of which Governor Miller is a member. That organization affords states the opportunity to benchmark their academic standards against the best in the country and even to international standards if they chose. The question is "Are the standards in Nevada as good as the standards in Michigan, Virginia or Maryland?" That becomes an important question because rigorous standards might be set but they still might not be at a level consistent with the best in the country.

Senator Reagan stated that it was important to remember when performing an international review of criteria that some countries do not view public education as a right, and while everyone was guaranteed education through the sixth or seventh grade only the "smartest" go on to secondary and post-secondary schools. Under those circumstances, he asked how conclusions could be drawn under those circumstances with eighth graders or twelfth graders in the United States, since the environments are so vastly different. Mr. Cross responded that the compulsory system in place in other countries took effect at the age of 15 years. However, the academic training they receive prior to that was rigorous even if they go on to a vocational program. In Germany, students go to apprenticeship programs for a certain number of days per week and the remainder of the time is spent in school receiving the academic training they need. That academic training must be high in order to succeed in the workplace. In Japan, compulsory education stops at age 15, and 97 percent of the students proceed into high school; however, parents pay for a part of students' high school education in Japan.

Mr. Cross said there were lessons from TIMSS that were important to consider. For instance, United States eighth grade students had more hours of instruction in math and science than students in other countries. Secondly, they did more homework and except for students in Japan, United States eighth grade students watched as much television as other students. Japanese students watch a lot of television but television programs are more educationally oriented. The myth is that students in the United States do not get instruction and are not doing enough homework. These results show that the real issue is quality. Because there are no standards outlining what that instruction should be, the quality of the instruction that students receive and the nature of the homework do not amount to as rigorous an education as students in Japan receive.

Mr. Cross stated that when the TIMSS was conducted, there was a video-taped study done of 50 eighth grade math lessons in Germany, Japan and the United States. Then, those lessons were transcribed into scripts and teams of mathematicians from around the world were brought in to analyze the quality of the teaching. The results revealed that 87 percent of the classes in the United States were deemed to be low quality and none were deemed to be high quality. In Germany and Japan, 23 to 30 percent of the lessons were deemed high quality. Mr. Cross informed the committee there were copies of the video tapes available which might be a useful tool for the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools. The video tapes show the actual teaching styles in these three countries, and one can see the differences in how students are instructed in eighth grade math in Japan versus the United States. The teachers in the United States, when asked what they used to guide their instructions, said "NCTM standards." However, the independent analysts that reviewed the transcripts believed the high quality teaching lessons in Japan and Germany were closer to what the United States teachers thought they were following. This proves there is a lack of teacher training. Many educators believe that teacher training encompasses two hours in an afternoon, one afternoon per month. However, that type of training would not meet the anticipated standards to be set in the state. He suggested that the state would need to consider the investment necessary in teacher training once the standards were in place. He stressed if standards are implemented and teacher training is inadequate, there will be failure.

Mr. Cross shared with the committee examples of questions presented by TIMSS on the eighth grade math tests. In one such instance only 42 percent of the students in the United States answered the question correctly, but students in China, Singapore and Japan had a much higher percentage of correct answers. Mr. Cross provided examples of eighth grade science test questions and the results of students, internationally. In all instances, the United States students scored low. Exhibit D. He stated it was important to see the actual question the students were being asked to answer.

Senator Washington pointed out that the data shown by Mr. Cross revealed that students in Singapore answered 83 percent of the test questions correctly--noting that was a country with high discipline. He commented that discipline, along with high standards and high expectations, might have produced the increases in their educational system. Mr. Cross concurred, adding that Singapore was an extreme example.

Mr. Cross stated the American Federation of Teachers has looked at standards from around the world. He showed the committee an examination question for students not going into higher education in Scotland which asked the radius of the orbit of a satellite and calculating the speed of the satellite. He showed another question from Germany involving business expenses, profit value and added tax. He also showed a question from France and then showed a test question from the GED exam, the high school diploma equivalent exam, used across this country. The multiple choice question which asked about the least likely occurrence on another planet (Exhibit D) did not require any particular thought process for the student.

Mr. Cross went on to show an example of a set of history and math test questions used in the state of Kansas during the 1920's for eighth grade students (Exhibit D).

Mr. Cross expressed the importance of standards

- They provide visible objectives for schools, teachers, students, community and parents. If you know what the standards are, there will be a much greater focus on what is being accomplished.
- They provide rigorous expectations for student achievement. It is important to convey to students what is expected of them. If they do not think there are any expectations, or the expectations are not high enough, they will not be met.
- They assure equity and reflect the importance of what an "A" grade is at every school to every student. Unless there are meaningful, high standards in place, education will not have equity.

- They provide the basis for accountability. This is important for teachers, students and parents to be made to understand they should be accountable for knowing that standards are important and why.
- They are the linchpin of systemic reform. It is important that standards be more than just established, they need to be implemented.

Mr. Cross said that setting standards builds an accountability system with assessments tied to it. The standards will influence how teacher training is handled for in-service training as well as for the preparation of teachers in colleges and universities. Also, Mr. Cross continued, standards will drive the budget in every school district in the state. Every county in the state will then be looking at how funds are spent to help their children meet the standards that have been adopted by the state. Then, the legislature, when making appropriations, can look at how opportunities for children to meet the standards might be accomplished. The standards should be the "linchpin" for everything else that is done. The system should be built around the standards.

Mr. Cross went on to discuss terms specific to setting standards:

- Content standards - what a student needs to know or be able to do.
- Performance standards - the level the student needs to know the content.
- Curriculum - the curriculum should be aligned to the standards.
- Professional Development - the teaching and training of teachers and principals on standards so that students can achieve the standards set.
- Opportunity to Learn - this term became politicized a couple years ago because people felt that students could not be held accountable unless they were given the opportunity to learn. This was viewed as an excuse not to have standards. He said that remote learning or distance learning was sometimes needed. For instance, if physics was a required course in the curriculum yet it was never offered, it needed to somehow be included through another means.

Mr. Cross said that when assessments are set, a reporting system had to be included with the assessments. The reporting system had to be user friendly, a document that parents and the average taxpayer could understand. Parents needed to be able to see how their child compared with other children in the state, and superintendents needed to be able to see how their schools compared with other schools in the state. He said this referred to as criterion-referenced assessments, which meant "against the standards." This means there would not be a bell-shaped curve, because bell-shaped curves were applied to norm-referenced examinations.

Mr. Cross stated setting standards meant that accountability systems were needed. A system of continuous improvement was also required in that setting standards one time did not mean you stopped there. Rather, standards needed to be reviewed and updated. In fact, during the next legislative session, the legislature may want to examine the quality of the standards set during 1998-99. He stressed there needed to be a process in place to determine if standards needed to be improved or fine-tuned.

Mr. Cross said establishing standards involved community engagement, also known as public engagement. He said that public engagement needed to include the entire community and community involvement is necessary every step of the way in developing standards because in the end the community had to support the standards.

Mr. Cross said there were criteria necessary in setting content standards. The first item was the standard

needed to be rigorous. Also, standards needed to have balance of knowledge and skills, clarity of expression, degree of specificity, adaptability, interdisciplinary connections, and potential for instruction, to name a few.

Mr. Cross provided examples of standards that were not very good. For example, "Apply formulas to solve problems in science." He indicated that the language used in that standard was not clear and usual and it could not be measured. He provided an example of an improved standard, "Select and use appropriate units and tools customary in metric systems to measure length, weight, mass, monetary value, time and temperature, with the appropriate degree of accuracy." He said this was a better standard in that it could be measured and it was rigorous. Another example of a bad standard was "Use measurement and formulas to solve practical problems." Again, Mr. Cross stated this standard provided no clarity or specificity. He provided an improved standard as "Observe and describe the behavior of matter with respect to motion, force and energy transformations and relate findings to Newton's law of motion. Predict the effects of gravity, density and electromagnetism on the behavior of matter."

Mr. Cross reiterated that content standards defined what a student should know and be able to do, and performance standards identified how well that student should be able to do it. He stated there were different ways to express performance standards, such as defining the percentage needed to pass. Also, descriptions of the behavior could be outlined such as "emerging, proficient, and above expectation." In other words, categories could be established to provide feed-back on how the performance rated relative to the standards.

Mr. Cross said he was asked to discuss possible contentious issues that may develop when establishing standards. He noted that two of the contentious issues were the balance of content standards and skill standards. He stated that could get replicated in other ways such as the use of calculators which, for some reason, evoked passion. In English, there seemed to be contention over whether the standards should specify a reading lists or advocate the learning of a canon, a base of knowledge of literature. Also, whether the students whose first language was not English, should be required to be taught and evaluated exclusively in English--this was an emotional issue. In history and social studies, there was a question of whether students in the early grades should be taught about their expanding environment or actually learn history. Mr. Cross stated education had been on a course for the past 30 years of talking about expanding environments--your house, street, and community. The argument is that that does not have any content to it. The other alternative was to expose young children to history so they can begin to understand the importance of historical dates, times and incidents in the state and in the United States.

Also, the attention given to social studies could be vacuous and not have a lot of content. The Council for Basic Education believed that standards in history and geography should be separate and should not be mixed. Depending on whether economics is taught, that could be separate as well. In science, evolution and creationism is the first issue of contention. The second area of contention in science is the experience with "hands-on" science, using laboratories and materials.

Mr. Cross provided examples of successful programs in educating students from all backgrounds, particularly those students from low-income and minority backgrounds:

- Success for All - This program was developed at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. It is a school-wide reading, writing and language arts program for grades preK-5. It organizes resources to ensure that every student will reach grade 3 with adequate reading skills. The program focuses heavily on language as the basis. The principle components of the program are research-based reading instruction. In phonics, cooperative reading assignments help to determine reading progress, along with one-on-one tutoring for students failing to keep up with classmates.
- Roots and Wings - This program, a part of the *Success for All* program, deals with mathematics, social science and science, as well as reading and language components. Standardized testing in Baltimore,

Memphis, Wichita Falls and Miami showed significant progress from students exposed to the *Success for All, Roots and Wings* program. Mr. Cross stated *Success for All* was an inexpensive program to begin, provided a focus for the state, and could be aligned to standards set individually for each state.

- Direct Instruction - This program has not been received well because it was viewed as being "too programmed." However, *Direct Instruction* has shown tremendous results for students in low-income areas. The creed for the program is "If the student has not learned, the teacher has not taught." The program provides many descriptive ways to teach the material at the elementary level.
- Core Knowledge

Sequence - This program was developed by E.D. Hirsch from the University of Virginia. Mr. Hirsch has published the series of books entitled "What every first grader should know" and so forth. The books are developed to guide teachers and parents as to what should be taught. Although the program has been adopted widely at numerous schools, it is only at the elementary level and has shown remarkable success in moving students ahead. The program is designed as a network to achieve greater excellence.

Mr. Cross stated the common denominator of all three of the above programs was what was taught and when. When standards were not in place, the same material was repeatedly taught, particularly in the area of math. That was why math test scores, internationally, were low. Mr. Cross indicated he was not advocating any particular program over the other, and choosing a program depended on how well the state standards were aligned and what assessments were in place.

Senator Rawson stated the committee was aware of the class consciousness and struggles that took place, especially with the low-income families. Therefore, knowing about programs that were successful was helpful knowledge in light of setting standards.

Mr. Cross showed a video tape that included several public service announcements created nationally in support of the importance of standards. The video tapes are marked as Exhibit E and are on file in the Fiscal Analysis Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau. He suggested that the committee or the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools use similar public service announcements to get the public to understand the importance of setting standards.

Senator Rawson recognized members of the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools present: Brandon Swain, Scott Craigie, and Debbie Smith, chairperson to the Council.

4. Status Report on Nevada's statewide standards - Nevada Department of Education

Senator Rawson announced that the Council to Establish Academic Standards took action on November 20, 1997, to consolidate the state standards setting process into a single process with the Council being in charge. The Council does not want to duplicate the efforts of the Department of Education. He noted there was an article pertaining to that issue under tab 9 of the packet (Exhibit C).

Mary Peterson, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nevada Department of Education, introduced Holly Walton-Buchanan, from the Nevada Department of Education, who is actively involved in the standards-setting process. Mrs. Peterson stated she was asked to provide a status report on what the department was doing regarding statewide standards and to provide a description of the process and what had been used to date. She reiterated that the Council took a clear stand on the future direction of standards development. She

explained that she would be discussing the process the department had used up to this point in developing draft standards to be reviewed by the Council.

Mrs. Peterson stated the department developed task forces for all of the Phase I standards: English, language arts, math and science. A list of the members of the task forces is set forth in the handout provided to the committee (Exhibit F). She explained that the department used a process whereby they comprised task forces for each subject matter area, with diverse representation from the education community, the university community, and from the business and industry community in the state. The subject area task forces have reviewed a variety of documents, including standards from other states, national standards in some subject areas, and from that information, have developed content and performance standards for review by the Standards Council. From there, the task forces generated ideas for teaching and learning. It will now be up to the Council to make recommendations on assessments that align with the content and performance standards. Mrs. Peterson stated there was a bibliography and glossaries developed by the task forces for each of the draft standards and that information was contained in the handout (Exhibit F).

Mrs. Peterson stated the department defined content standards as "clear, measurable statements about what students should know and be able to do at a particular point in their educational experience." She stated that definition was used to guide the development in the Phase I standards: English, language arts, math and science. Performance standards were defined as: "Activities by a student that demonstrate proficiency in a particular knowledge or skill." She stated that definition differed from the definition provided by Mr. Cross earlier.

Mrs. Peterson went on show examples and comparisons of the old standards with the new standards. In the former model, contained in the state course of study, there were broad, general objectives which were not easy to measure. For example, the science standard read, "to demonstrate an understanding of metabolic process." Whereas, under the new science draft standards, there is a different approach, "Plants and many micro-organisms use solar energy to combine molecules of carbon dioxide to form energy-rich compounds and oxygen." She noted that was more specific and could be measured and also was more clear to teachers on what was expected of students.

Mrs. Peterson stated the department set standards for what students should know and be able to do by the end of kindergarten, the end of third grade, the end of fifth grade, the end of eighth grade, and by the end of the tenth grade. She noted there was now statewide testing such as Terra Nova, norm-referenced testing at grades 4, 8 and 10. Pursuant to recent legislation, she explained, the department now had a writing assessment in grade 4, in addition to grades 8 and 11.

Mrs. Peterson stated the Council would be making recommendations to the State Board on assessments that were linked to the standards in English language arts, math and science that must be approved by September 1, 1998, on what the criterion-referenced testing should be in the state. Mrs. Peterson pointed out the members had included in their packet, Exhibit F, the "Standards for Standards" which the department used to guide the setting of standards to date. She noted there was similarity between the criteria used and applied and what was recommended by Mr. Cross. For example, the first standards for standards was that standards should assess objective and measurable knowledge and skills. Secondly, standards should be high for all students and reflect academically rigorous content. Next, standards should be focused, economical, while including those elements that represent the most important knowledge and skills within the discipline. Standards should be understandable and useable. Lastly, the standards should be adaptable, permitting flexibility and implementation needed for differing local variations. Mrs. Peterson stated that was why the department chose to look at grade spans and grade clusters, rather than grade-by-grade standards.

Mrs. Peterson stated the handout (Exhibit F) contained an example of a nomination form that was used when the department began developing task forces. The form was sent to local school districts, the university system, chambers of commerce and other business and industry groups. The department asked for

volunteers to serve on the task forces.

Next, Mrs. Peterson pointed out the membership in the English language arts task force--noting there was a representative from many local school districts. The department viewed the development of standards as a professional opportunity for teachers and educators in the state. They can become involved in the process and enter into many discussions as to what students should know and be able to do. Further, these are the people who have the responsibility for implementing standards in the classroom so the department believed it is important to involve teachers in the process.

Mrs. Peterson stated the English language arts, science and math task forces included UCCSN staff. In order for standards to be effective in the state, they will have to be infused into the teacher preparation programs. Teachers already in the field will need professional development on standards and will need to learn how to most effectively teach the standards. Therefore, collaboration and cooperation with the UCCSN is absolutely essential. She pointed out that the task forces also had members from the business and industry sectors of the community.

Turning to the final tab in the handout provided by the department, Mrs. Peterson discussed the status report on the standards developed thus far. For example, in the English language arts standards, a task force initially convened in January, 1995, and that task force reconvened in January, 1997. She directed the committees' attention to the article from *Time Magazine* which described the argument between the "whole language" approach and the "phonics" approach to reading. She stated that was one of the reasons the English language arts task force was redesigned in January, 1997, as the debate was very controversial and the first draft standards showed a preference toward the whole language approach rather than a balanced approach. Now, the draft standards in English language arts had a more balanced approach to include both phonics and whole language. The first draft of standards in English language arts was published in March, 1997; the second draft was ready in June, 1997, and was reviewed in September, 1997, by the State Board of Education; and now the Standards Council will look at those draft standards.

Turning to the subject area of science, Mrs. Peterson pointed out that the first task force was initiated in August, 1996. The first draft was ready in July, 1997, and the second draft was ready in November, 1997. The State Board of Education will review that draft when it meets on December 13, 1997. She stated the issues of evolution and environmental impact were effectively dealt with in the task forces by including religious leaders in the development of standards in science.

Mrs. Peterson explained that the drafting of math standards was just getting underway. However, draft standards were reviewed by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and they made strong recommendations on what needed to be done. Therefore, the task force that convened in September, 1997, began to tackle some of those issues, and they expected to have a draft available in January, 1998. One of the issues in that subject area was the use of calculators.

Mrs. Peterson stated her report summarized what the department had done in setting the Phase I standards.

Senator Washington asked if the committee could have a copy of the draft standards and highlights of the minutes from the task force meetings. Mrs. Peterson replied absolutely, and she would make sure they received a copy of the most recent drafts. Also, the Council has asked for all the comments received as the standards were drafted. Those comments have been compiled, and she would be happy to supply those to the committee as well.

Assemblyman Hickey stated that as mandated by S.B. 482, the department recently sent notice to school superintendents regarding the requirements in and testing which would incrementally increase the passing standards by April, 1998. He asked how Mrs. Peterson was approaching that requirement. Mrs. Peterson replied that the department pilot tested all students in the 11th grade in October, 1997, and those results

should be forthcoming. Based on those results, she explained, the department will make recommendations. Then the test will be administered in April, 1998, and based on those two items, the department will recommend passing scores to the state board. She stated her understanding of the legislative intent was that in the first year with the new test, the passing scores would be set the passing scores so there is not a dramatic increase in the number of students that would not pass and further increased each year within the next two years. She asserted that the department expected to see some failure in the high school exit exam but not a dramatic failure the first year, and then the passing score will be incrementally increased over the next three years.

Senator Washington stated with regard to community involvement, he noticed that when the department assembled task forces there was a questionnaire sent out for persons interested in serving on the task force. He stated that when he held constituent meetings, the number one topic that continued to supersede all other topics was education. Parents are adamant and vocal about the performance of their children and resent being criticized for not being involved in their childrens' education. They say they are involved but are not being informed. He asked how parents could be better informed regarding standards and assessments. He acknowledged that most parents do not understand the components of S.B. 482, but there seemed to be a lack of communication between parents and what legislators and the state department of education were doing. As a legislator, he was responsible for responding to these parents and the frustrations they had regarding the education of their children.

Mrs. Peterson asserted that the legislature funded public engagement based on standards. In the administrative budget account of the Nevada Department of Education, the legislature approved approximately \$53,000 for each year of the biennium for public engagement. In that enhancement, the department proposed to develop policy briefs, informational videos, press releases, and conduct community focus group activities, to inform the public and community about standards and standards-based reform in the state. With that appropriation, and other money in the department for those purposes, the department put out a Request for Proposal (RFP) and received four responses. She stated the department selected a contractor from those four responses, Dr. Evelyn Brzezinski of Interwest, to assist the department and the Council with the public engagement portion of the standards setting process in the state.

Mr. Cross added that with regard to public engagement, he suggested using not only the parent-teacher associations (PTA), but also churches, employer groups and associations such as the American Association of University Women (AAUW) to reach what might be deemed unconventional ways to network with as many organizations in the community. Mrs. Peterson stated the department had met with local school boards and the Nevada Association of School Administrators to inform them of S.B. 482 and offered that they assist in the public engagement portion of setting standards.

In addition, Mrs. Peterson advised the committee that the department had a K-16 Forum that focused on standards and the requirements of S.B. 482. The people in attendance at that forum were from the K-12 community and the university systems.

Senator Washington asserted there appeared to be a "disconnect" between the local school boards, institutions of higher learning and parents. For example, a parent engaged in working full-time and raising a family had concerns that their child be able to read, whether that be under the whole language approach or the phonics approach. To the community, S.B. 482 was just a number, "content standards" was just another term, the school board had no credibility, and higher education was too far off and unaffordable. He urged legislators to bridge that gap and provide the credibility to education issues that the public so wanted.

Mrs. Peterson responded that Senator Washington's concerns were acknowledged in the department and she would be meeting with Mrs. Brzezinski and Mr. Cross to find ways to get the message across to parents and the education community.

Senator Rawson turned to the subject of resources, and asked how resources had been allocated by the department and how those resources were coordinated. He also asked for the results of the eleventh grade pilot tests. Mrs. Peterson answered that she had not seen the data on the October, 1997, administration of the test to eleventh graders. In response to Senator Rawson's query, she stated the test results had been scanned; however, the department had not received the scores or analyzes of those tests.

Senator Rawson asked if the department had prepared performance standards for each of the subject areas. Mrs. Peterson replied the department had not prepared the performance standards in the way described by Mr. Cross. She stated that would have to be handled with as the department worked with the Council because there was more than one definition presently, and there needed to be a meeting of the minds to proceed.

Senator Rawson noted, in reviewing the list of task force members working on the subject area standards, there were persons representing other groups besides education. He asked that the groups contain more than just token members to ensure a broad representation in setting standards.

5. Presentation on Nevada School districts' efforts to establish standards

--Pendery Clark, Douglas County School District

Senator Rawson stated the Douglas County School District had recently finished a strategic planning process. Their mission statement, goals and strategies were located under tab 10 of the packet of material (Exhibit C). In addition, the district established high school competencies. Senator Rawson acknowledged that the Douglas County School District received some criticism during their process, and as a result, they have met with the public and modified their plan accordingly. He asked that they share with the committee their process in setting academic competencies.

Pendery Clark, Superintendent, Douglas County School District, introduced John Soderman, Assistant Superintendent, Douglas County School District, and thanked the committee for inviting them to share the process the district underwent for the past four years in their attempt to establish standards and set exit competencies for graduates.

Ms. Clark stated that in 1993 the Douglas County School Board decided it was important for the district to establish a strategic plan. She explained that Douglas County had been struggling with growth issues, failed bond issues, and establishing multi-track year-round schools. In 1992 the school bond passed, so the board wanted to concentrate on curriculum, instruction and student achievement. The board charged the district with developing a strategic plan. She stated the district spent approximately one year accomplishing that task. She added those attempts were not without controversy, but the district did involve a broad section of the community in developing the strategic plan. In actuality, there were close to 250 educators and citizens that developed the strategic plan. Ms. Clark stated their brochure helped explain the strategic plan (Exhibit G) and pointed out the mission statement contained therein:

The Douglas County School District, in partnership with parents and community, will ensure that all students are competent in the basic skill areas and are prepared to be productive, responsible citizens.

She stated that mission statement resulted from working with the entire community to have consensus of what should be done as a school district. Ms. Clark stressed the entire strategic plan supports the mission statement. The district's goals are very specific and clearly set forth that the responsibility of the district is to ensure that students graduating from this school district are competent in the basic skills and can be successful in the world of either work or further education.

Ms. Clark informed the committee that the Douglas County School Board approved the strategic plan in 1994 and met annually to revise, modify or adapt the plan, and to prioritize the strategies that will help accomplish the plan. She stated that every year since the implementation of the strategic plan, the district has set as its highest priority strategy number one, Competency, and that the district will develop measurable, observable competencies in all core curriculum areas. Ms. Clark stated the district had a comprehensive plan, and they are approximately three years into accomplishing those goals. She stated the district began the process of establishing standards by focusing on what the graduate needed to know and be able to do when they graduate--rather than looking at grade-level competencies or working from the bottom up.

The district felt it was important that the community be involved in a consensus process that clearly stated what the citizens in Douglas County felt the students needed to know and be able to do when they graduated from high school.

Ms. Clark went on to explain that the district devised a "District Accountability Committee" comprised of parents, teachers, administrators, community members and business representatives. She stated that two of the members of the District Accountability Committee were present in the audience, Brandon Swain and Ray Bacon, both very active and conscientious members of the committee. Ms. Clark stated the District Accountability Committee was charged with setting standards for graduates. The district anticipated that the process would take approximately six months, but it actually took 18 months because the group reflected all of the divergence of opinion and the controversies that Mr. Cross and Mrs. Peterson discussed earlier in their testimony. She said there were parents involved who felt strongly that creationism needed to be part of the curriculum and parents that felt that phonics was the only approach. There were individuals who did not want computers to be used because children needed to know how to read and write before they needed to know how to turn on a computer. There were educators from all grade levels and all schools.

Ms. Clark stated that the business community had sent strong messages of what they believed students should know. She stated the process was sometimes painful, but productive. Finally, it was agreed that the graduates of Douglas County would be competent in seven basic skill areas, staying away from "affective" areas of education and keeping with basic skills as follows:

COMMUNICATIONS

MATHEMATICS

SCIENCE

SOCIAL STUDIES

FOREIGN LANGUAGE

TECHNOLOGY

EMPLOYABILITY

A copy of the draft competencies was provided to the committee ([Exhibit G](#)). Ms. Clark stated the above seven basic skills and competencies accurately reflect the priorities of the Douglas County community. She further explained that Douglas County had four major casinos and Bently Nevada, and those businesses clearly stated that students needed to be competitive in an international environment. Speaking a second language, strong employability skills, and being competent in technology, were as important as being competent in the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. Therefore, the seven competency areas reflect the consensus of the community.

Ms. Clark stated that after the competencies were approved, the district performed a curriculum audit to

analyze the existing curriculum to see where it would align with the exit competencies. Then, they began recruiting teams of teachers to work at revising the curriculum to ensure that it would align with the exit competencies. She stated the committee had a copy of the competencies for grades 7-12 that showed what students needed to know at the end of ninth grade and the end of twelfth grade (Exhibit G). She explained that the secondary teachers of Douglas County School District are piloting the curriculum this year and would be providing feedback in order to revise areas that need modification. It is the intention of the Douglas County School District to benchmark students at the end of grades 3, 6 and 9. Students would not be promoted at the end of grades 3, 6, or 9 grades unless they meet the competencies outlined at those grade levels. Further, they would not be able to graduate from the Douglas County School District unless they meet the exit levels that have been established by the District Accountability Committee.

Ms. Clark stated that establishing competencies required assessments that showed how students were competent and how they met the requirements. She indicated it was a long-term process, and the district expected to have full implementation of the process for K-12 with fully established curriculum and assessments for the school year 1999-2000. They expect the first graduates to be accountable for meeting the competencies in the year 2002.

John Soderman, Assistant Superintendent, Douglas County School District, stated the district used the term "competency" instead of the term "standard" meaning that when someone is competent they can prove they know and are able to do something. Their definition of a competency is: "A measurable, observable demonstration of what a student knows or can do." He stated there were two general ways of assessing competencies: 1) Paper and pencil assessment, sometimes the best and cheapest way to assess something; and 2) Performance assessments, where the student has to prove they can do it.

Mr. Soderman explained, when describing performance assessments, he often used the example of a driver's license. He said that was a standard that did not change. The test could be taken as many times as needed, but it must be accomplished in order to receive a driver's license. He said the driver's examination required a written test and then a driving test. He asked the committee to think that even the least competent student most likely held a driver's license. He concluded that when there was a standard, people were able to measure up to that standard because it did not change. The example of a driver's license holds time as the variable and achievement as the constant. He said in moving towards standards, the biggest issue was time as the standard. Students will spend 13 years in school, but what they achieve is "up for grabs." He concluded that educators needed to ensure that students successfully completed the "driving tests" in the competencies areas, and then assist those who cannot.

Mr. Soderman acknowledged there was fear among teachers and school districts of what would happen if students did not pass the exit level examinations. He showed the committee a chart of where competency curriculum fit into the activities of the school (Exhibit G). He stated that although the competency segment composed 25 percent of his diagram, it actually was greater than that. He stressed that the chart showed the level of importance placed upon activities the schools believed to be important. He indicated there were areas that were difficult to measure, such as cooperation, arts, physical education, and sex education. The district was not trying to measure these areas presently, but they were still important or in some instances mandatory. He noted that presently there were a number of high school electives available to students that were more challenging. Mr. Soderman said the district believed most of the work of the school and the job of teachers was in the area of competencies. The next area that encompassed much time was testing as it was imperative to build a system that measured and held persons accountable.

Continuing, Mr. Soderman distinguished between criterion-referenced tests (CRT's) and norm-referenced tests (NRT's). He explained that NRT's were normed so that students in Douglas County could be compared to students in any other county or state. However, NRT's were not curriculum-based. A school district cannot improve its curriculum based on the results of norm-referenced tests because the tests are too general and are not predictable in determining how students will do one year to the next year. Whereas, criterion-

referenced tests were developed locally and were curriculum-based. However, the home-grown variety were not predictable and were subject to validity and reliability problems. In the event of a competency system, when students do not graduate, a school district would need to be prepared to go to court and those tests could prove unreliable in court.

Mr. Soderman stated Douglas County School District had a long history with home-grown, criterion-referenced tests, which had served the district well to a point but would not serve the district well in a standard-based system. Therefore, the district began looking at working with the North West Evaluation Association which they believed combined the best of both worlds. North West Evaluation Association (NWEA) developed criterion-referenced tests through item banks so a test can be directly aligned to the standards in that location. It has been accomplished nationwide so it can be specified for individual districts. He stated there was a dual advantage to this form of testing, known as RITS scoring, a scaled scoring system, which allowed for predictability of projecting from year to year what students were projected to do. He stated that was the testing mechanism that Douglas County School District was going to be using, and such tests would be developed in the spring of 1998.

Also, Mr. Soderman stated the district would be administering performance testing because in instances of communication, there was no true and false type of questions to answer. In addition, in assessing foreign language, the test would be a conversation in Spanish. Testing in the area of science required a demonstration of certain scientific processes.

Mr. Soderman stated one of the questions the District Accountability Committee had from the beginning was whether standards were actually raised. He asserted that currently in Douglas County, 23 credits are required for graduation. However, that could be 23 credits of D- work. In terms of technology, students, by the sixth grade, have to be able to demonstrate that they can do a spreadsheet, database, and word processing. Regarding science, every student will be required to perform scientific inquiries. In math, every student in Douglas County will have algebra and geometry experience. In communications, they have determined that students would need to have a college-level of reading. They have since found out that a college-level of reading is equivalent to a tenth grade reading level. In social sciences, they will be adding the principals of economics, which in the 21st century will be even more important and is not currently being addressed in the curriculum. In foreign language, students will be required to read, write and speak at the sixth grade level in a foreign language.

Mr. Soderman stated the district had a competency known as employability, which will likely be difficult to measure. The employability competency involved resume writing, interviewing, and being prepared for the world of work. That is another competency area where performance assessments were necessary to demonstrate employability status. This stresses to the student the importance of being to work on time, having necessary materials and other characteristics expected by employers. Mr. Soderman stated once the results were in, the district would be looking at whether the competencies were high enough. He reiterated that currently achievement is the variable but time is the standard. The Douglas County School District is working at having achievement be the standard, and time be the variable. He added that one of the strategies of the district was that students had access to Douglas County schools until they graduate--so the time element has shifted.

Senator Rawson stated that an old theory on education was that certain things build on other building blocks. For instance, a student is not involved in a higher order of learning until the lower building blocks were in place so they could relate all the pieces together. He inquired if that was what was occurring in the area of science education. As it appeared now, third and fourth graders were being dazzled with videotapes and experiments and then became bored when they reached the upper-level science courses and have to actually work the formulas. He concluded that perhaps the lower concepts were not being fully developed before students were introduced into the higher concepts.

Senator Rawson expressed his appreciation to the Douglas County School District in not waiting for the rest of the state to direct them and that they proceeded to tackle the problem on their own. He asked if they perceived any problems as the state began to tackle the issue now.

Pendery Clark answered that was the strong message that she wanted to leave with the committee. However, she wanted to stress three things the district learned in going through the process, before she replied to his question.

Assemblyman Hickey stated he was interested in curriculum because standards, unless translated into curriculum, were meaningless. He asked what conflicts or challenges school boards anticipated in preparing for teaching in line with standards.

Senator Washington asked Ms. Clark to include in her closing remarks any emphasis or comment she could add regarding teacher training, how it will be implemented to meet the standards, and budgeting and resource allocations. He echoed Senator Rawson's comments about how the state standard setting process would affect the competencies set up by the Douglas County School District.

Ms. Clark emphasized that the strategic plan they developed governed everything done by the district. The budget was developed based on the strategic plan; training opportunities for teachers are based on the strategic plan. Any grants they write are designed to move the strategic plan forward. She stressed their strategic plan was not a document that sat on the shelf. The district committed to the teachers in the district that when the strategic plan was developed, it would not be something additional they would have to do. Rather, the strategic plan focused and prioritized what they had to do, and items less critical to their mission were eliminated.

Ms. Clark continued by stating that the Douglas County School District had a long history of strong, professional development, having had a center established for 16 years. There were three full-time trainers at that professional development center. The district believed teacher training was critical and was an absolute key. Another key component was site-based decision making. The district had site accountability counsels that made decisions on how best to address the needs of students at individual schools.

Ms. Clark said there were three things that the district learned from setting competencies and developing a strategic plan:

- **Involve everyone in the process**. She stated the Council needed to make an effort to bring divergent opinions together in the development of standards. She stated the voices that disagree must be heard in order to develop standards that reflect what is necessary in the state. Conflict and controversy were not necessarily negative if the group could stay focused on the needs of the student. Ms. Clark stated generally people are of good will and get involved in the process because they want to make things better for students and want to see students achieve. It took time to work through that process.
- **Language is critical**. Ms. Clark stated much attention should be given to semantics. Anything that is written should be easily understandable. There should be a lay person test of all written material so that parents, business representatives, and any community member could pick up the standards and understand what the district was expecting from the schools.
- **It takes time**. Ms. Clark acknowledged the time-line set by statute for the setting of standards. However, she hoped that the legislature would understand that if the concept was truly to impact learning for the students of Nevada, it would take time to work through the engagement process.

In closing, Ms. Clark stated the district was concerned with how the state's efforts may affect the efforts they had implemented. She explained that the Douglas County School District and the community of Douglas

County had already expended four to five years of work in developing a strategic plan and preparing competencies. She added they had several years remaining and hoped that whatever occurred at the state level would not negate or derail the efforts made in Douglas County to involve the community in the process. Further, she hoped that the Legislative Committee on Education, as an oversight committee, would consider at every level the role the school districts had in the process. She stated she strongly believed that if the state was going to systemically reform education through standards-based education, the local communities must be engaged in the process. That was particularly true in Nevada, and it needed to be accomplished externally, with the external community--senior citizens, the business community, legislative constituents--because they need to know that their money is being spent to educate students in their local district in a way they support.

The community needs to understand what children were being taught and to have a role in providing input, and the education community needs to listen to those people and enable educators to teach.

Ms. Clark stated the engagement process needed to be conducted internally as well, with teachers, principals, bus drivers, instructional aids, etc. In order for standards-based reform to be successful, three things need to occur: 1) Curriculum must be aligned with the standards; 2) Assessments must be in place that measure the curriculum; and 3) The teachers had to teach the curriculum. If the teacher closed the door and did not teach the curriculum, there will not be a successful impact of the legislation. The people responsible for the education of the students in the state need to be involved or the effort will be less than successful.

Senator Regan commented that during the 1997 legislative session, the legislature provided funding for the community college building in Douglas County and asked if the school district was coordinating efforts with the community college and high school so that multi-million dollar building was being used. He asked what efforts had been done to facilitate those efforts by Douglas County and the higher education facilities. Ms. Clark replied the Douglas County School District had a long relationship of working closely and cooperatively with the community college in that the college had used the high school facilities for years. She stated the community college extension building in Douglas County is a small building. The school district did not use that facility as yet but they hoped to use it in the future as the high school becomes over-crowded within the next several years. Ms. Clark indicated the school district hoped to have a technical center, such as the ones funded throughout the state, or to develop a magnet program that would bring students out of the high school to the community college location to work cooperatively with higher education.

Senator Washington asked Ms. Clark what leverage was given to the administrative staff to ensure that teachers were teaching the curriculum. Ms. Clark answered that the Douglas County School District had not implemented the curriculum aligned with the competencies; that would begin in the year 1999-2000. They have begun teacher training and administrator training, and the administrators were very aware of what would be expected. In addition, many of these individuals were involved in the writing teams and curriculum revision teams so they were knowledgeable about the competency areas. In further response to Senator Washington, Ms. Clark stated that students will be tested every year to determine where they are in relation to the competencies so the district will know how the students in a particular class are performing. Ms. Clark asserted that teachers from the Douglas County School District would not be evaluated unless a problem arose. If there was a problem, then the evaluation process would be initiated.

5. Presentation on Nevada School districts' efforts to establish standards

--Marcia Bandera, Elko County School District

Senator Rawson announced that the Elko County School District was in the process of re-writing their curriculum at each grade level. The district has performed an audit of their curriculum to see if it was aligned with textbooks and examinations.

Marcia Bandera, Superintendent, Elko County School District, introduced Diane Hecht, Director of Elementary Education Student Assessment, Instructional Services, Elko County School District. Providing the committee with background data, Ms. Bandera stated the Elko County School District had doubled its enrollment figures from 1985 to the present. Prior to that growth spurt, teachers and families knew each other and everything was maintained informally. However, with the increased population in the county, the district added numerous teachers and staff. That activity forced the district to solidify the previous informal process.

Ms. Bandera provided the committee with a chart showing the cycle of review used for curriculum review, textbook and material adoption. She explained the cycle of review followed closely with the cycle used by the state Department of Education ([Exhibit H](#)). In addition, she provided the committee with examples of the districts' "curriculum guides." They were not called "competencies" or "standards."

Ms. Bandera stated the Elko County School District's approach was different than Douglas County in that they looked at keeping an established cycle of review and revision in order to examine grade-by-grade level curriculum. She stated the district took the approach of lining out the grade-by-grade level of expectations and areas in which course content and student learning should be taught. Ms. Bandera stated the district benefitted by being able to establish a finance cycle for materials, adoption of textbooks and software, because it was known far in advance what was needed. For example, the district spent between \$550,000 and \$750,000 per year for textbooks, materials, and software. The district knew how to plan so that an all-grade level adoption of these materials could be conducted.

Ms. Bandera stated the Elko County School District sorted through the samples of curriculum guides ([Exhibit H](#)), in terms of expectations and improvement. They were currently in the process of determining what format to use for all curriculum guides, then they will look at developing performance standards.

Ms. Bandera stated the Elko County School District was familiar with NRT's. Until two years ago, every grade level was tested with an NRT achievement test. She said the NRT tests were dropped for first graders due to the lack of motor skills for children this age in completing the "bubbles" present on the test sheet. Ms. Bandera expected the process of deciding what would be retained in the curriculum, what would be removed from the curriculum, and at what level the students would be expected to know it. That process was expected to take another 18 months. Then, the district would engage in the process of what assessments, besides NRT's, could be used to find out what the students learned at a particular level. She stated the district did not expect to conduct these tests at every grade level, but for some students NRT's would remain. At other grade levels, a different form of testing will be presented, acknowledging that the Terra Nova exam is used on fourth, eighth and tenth graders. Ms. Bandera stated the district already included an analytic writing analysis at grade six, and the teachers were trained in that area. They found that since that process began over two years ago, students' writing performance increased significantly.

Ms. Bandera concluded that the district did not feel they had progressed far enough in terms of action and levels of expectation for the performance of students, so the district allotted the next 36 to 42 months to complete the process. She stated Mrs. Hecht would be discussing how the grade-by-grade curriculum efforts were coming together.

Senator Washington commented that what he was hearing from Elko County, Douglas County, and another county that called regarding the state standards, was that if the state set parameters, these school districts wanted flexibility to work within the parameters based on their community, the students, the involvement with business and parents, teachers and higher learning institutions, so that they can reach the standards. He asked if that was the message Elko County had for the state. Ms. Bandera stated that was true.

Diane Hecht stated that when the committees for curriculum were established, letters were sent to the principals in the school district asking them to solicit interested staff as members. She stated there were

always representatives on the elementary level of curriculum, from primary (K-2) to the upper level of 3-6 from each school. She stated they also asked administrators to be on the committee. Once the committee was formed, they collected national standards and standards and curriculum from other states and counties. The committee looks to the standards to see if there was anything missing from the county that needed to be upgraded to make students from Elko County more viable when entering the job market or higher education.

Ms. Hecht stated the steps taken at the elementary school level were designed so that students would be able to pass the eleventh grade proficiency test. She stated the district sent brochures to teachers asking them what was working and what was not effective, so they could take that input and revise curriculum accordingly. She said revising the curriculum was designed to challenge the students of Elko County. The curriculum was eventually reviewed by the board and the board either made revisions or passed it.

Ms. Hecht stated the next step was to look at textbooks. The district viewed texts to ensure they met the curriculum. She stated the curriculum was piloted for one year and there were two texts being reviewed. The teachers on the curriculum committee piloted it by using one book for six months and the other book for the next six months. She stated it was important that teachers received training on the adopted text and how it met the curriculum.

Ms. Hecht stated that training had been implemented by using federal Eisenhower grant funds with a science symposium, and the district started a science camp in Lamoille Canyon for teachers for hands-on science projects. Further, the district paid Ruth Parker, a national math trainer, to work directly in the schools with the teachers and students in the classroom. Ms. Hecht emphasized it was important that teachers across the state be involved in the standards movement.

Senator Washington recalled testimony regarding the norm-referenced testing currently being done from grades 1-11, and asked if the district had considered CRT processes. Ms. Bandera replied the district had considered keeping some of the grade levels with the NRT's. However, Mrs. Hecht and a group of others have been looking at the testing procedures offered through NWEA assessments and were recommending that the board take a look at that assessment sequence. Senator Washington stated it was interesting to note that the reason Douglas County School District was turning to the NWEA program was due to a legal aspect. Ms. Bandera concurred that there was always that concern in terms of fairness and equity--that a measurement of a student or set of students was consistently used for all sets of students. In other words, if a student was found not to be competent, if an argument was presented, the district would have the documentation showing that other students were competent.

Senator Regan asked if Dorothy Gallagher was included in the curriculum committee discussions. Ms. Bandera stated that Ms. Gallagher spent much time with the Elko County School District.

Ms. Bandera concluded her remarks by stating that the district expended much energy identifying the weakness and strengths of the district. They were moving ahead with that process and, hopefully, whatever they accomplished would align with standards set by the state. She stressed that the Elko County School District would not be waiting for the state before taking action in their process.

Senator Rawson stated it was not the intention of the committee to hold counties back from progressing; however, he noted that as the state moved forward, for some counties, the state may be asking for a higher standard and for some counties, it may be a lower standard.

Assemblywoman deBraga asked if the reason Elko County took the initiative to establish curriculum cores was due to low test scores in comparison to other districts, or some other factor. Ms. Bandera replied that Elko County School District did not have low test scores in relation to other school districts, nor did they have a high incidence of students attending the university or community college that must first take remedial courses. Rather, the district took action on their curriculum as a result of the growth spurt that affected the

county. The district lost track of where they were progressing. Further, when teachers, principals and parents had questions as to curriculum, the district was struggling to answer those questions. In other words, the district felt they had lost track and needed to get back on track.

6. Consideration of request from Council on Academic Standards for contractual services.

Debbie Smith, Chairperson, Council to Establish Academic Standards, introduced Brandon Swain, member, Council to Establish Academic Standards, and teacher in Douglas County. Mr. Swain provided a brief status report on the activities of the Council stating that the Council met on September 30, 1997, in Las Vegas, October 27, 1997, in Carson City, and November 20, 1997, in Reno. He stated the first meeting outlined the duties of the Council and a discussion on open meeting laws was held. The Council reviewed S.B. 482 and state standards and assessments. The Council also set meeting times throughout 1998.

At the second meeting, the Council was addressed by Governor Miller and Senator Raggio, and was provided recommendations by the Legislative Committee on Education. In addition, the Council received a presentation from the State of Virginia on their standards. The Council also received an update on the State Department of Education's standards development.

Mr. Swain stated that at the most recent meeting of the Council, many action items were discussed. Senator O'Connell and Council member Estrada provided mission statements for review, and the two mission statements were fashioned together and adopted by the Council. They also approved consolidating the development of standards in order to expedite the process in consideration of the concise time-line under which the Council was operating. They approved a time-line for organizational purposes, including delineating and approving the make-up of writing teams. The Council further reviewed proposals submitted by consultants and approved the Council for Basic Education as their consultant, provided such contract received approval from the Legislative Committee on Education. Mr. Swain stated the Council engaged a counselor, Dr. Eugene Paslov, to offer guidance in terms of contractual and time obligations. That contract was for assistance through January 6, 1998. Lastly, Mr. Swain stated the Council's last meeting provided an overview of the public engagement contract signed by the State Department of Education.

Mrs. Smith provided copies of the mission statement that was adopted by the Council to Establish Academic Standards on November 20, 1997 (Exhibit I). She acknowledged the comments made thus far and asserted that the Council was aware of the need for broad engagement of the public. They believed that since the Council was comprised of such a diverse group, that would be a task afforded much consideration. The Council had heard several ideas on bringing parents into the process to make sure the information was getting to them. Mrs. Smith confided that as a PTA person, the idea that the parents would come to a meeting to provide input and listen was not realistic. In fact, there were other ways to contact parents and community members. Further, she acknowledged the comment about writing standards in a language that was easy to understand. She said that did not necessarily mean the state was dealing with a public that had an eighth grade education, but rather it was a public that had broad experiences and it was important not to use "educationese."

Mrs. Smith pointed out that the committee had a copy of the request from the Council for funding to hire a facilitator and a counselor to coordinate the efforts of the Council and the proposed writing teams (Exhibit C, Tab 6). She stated that engaging these organizations would allow the Council to produce the desired results in the short time frame available to the Council under the law. Mrs. Smith indicated she was pleased that the committee was able to meet Mr. Christopher Cross as the Council wished the committee to approve his request. Mrs. Smith indicated she was available to answer any questions regarding the Council's request.

Senator Rawson asked about the selection process and inquired if the Council competitively looked at various companies before selecting the two consultants. Mrs. Smith responded that the proposal was submitted to seven organizations. These companies were recommended to the Council by various

individuals and agencies. Of those seven, there was some response from agencies that were unable to bid on the process, but they received formal proposals from three companies. Senator Rawson asked if the Council expected the two proposals presented to be the full need of the Council for consultation services or would the Council have additional needs. Mrs. Smith replied that from the discussion held thus far, the Council believed the two consultants' requests would allow the Council to get through Phase I of the standards process. However, they may have to re-look at the assessment process, but there were possibilities that may not require the Council to expend funding during the assessment portion of the process so they expected that request to be limited.

Senator Rawson stated he understood the Legislative Counsel Bureau would prepare the contracts and administer that process. He asked if the committee had any questions on the proposals.

Senator Regan stated in reviewing the first contract for Mr. Cross, there was a 9-step process to be used by CBE for implementation and development. He stated he hoped that would not be "boiler plate" information from another state, but rather any work coming from CBE should be relative and specific to the needs of the State of Nevada for all 17 school districts. Senator Washington concurred with Senator Regan's concerns.

Mrs. Smith stressed that the Council was cognizant that the Council delegate the work to the consultants and fully address the needs of the state as delineated by the Council, not needs that only the consultants may see. The message had been loud and clear to the Council, and she acknowledged that they walked a fine line between reinventing the wheel and rubber-stamping. There had been plenty of discussion that many products will be reviewed, but the Council will certainly look at what other states had accomplished.

Senator Rawson stated that impression was made during Mr. Cross' presentation. Senator Regan stated he would be pleased if the consultant could recognize that something that might work in White Pine County or Lincoln County might not work in Clark County. He reiterated that the problems affecting the state and each individual school district needed to be known, addressed, and recognized in order to bring a successful result.

Jeanne Botts, Senior Program Analyst, Legislative Counsel Bureau, Fiscal Analysis Division, commented on the document she prepared regarding available funding for contractual services. She explained there was a total of \$330,000 available for the biennium, and the document showed the amount for the two contracts for the Council to Establish Academic Standards, \$137,000 for the Council for Basic Education, and \$5,000 for Eugene Paslov, EMC, Inc., and the amount requested by the Commission on Educational Technology, \$155,000 which left a balance of \$33,000.

ASSEMBLYMAN PERKINS MOVED TO ADOPT THE REQUEST FOR
PROPOSAL FROM THE COUNCIL TO ESTABLISH ACADEMIC
STANDARDS AS PROPOSED.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN DEBRAGA SECONDED THE MOTION.

Senator Regan noted the contract showed ground transportation for \$65 per person, per trip, for a total of \$585 but there was also a rental car listed on the contract for \$60 per day, for three trips. He asked what ground transportation was if a rental car was also being requested. Mr. Cross explained that was for parking his car in Baltimore and getting back and forth to the airport in Washington DC.

Mrs. Smith added that once the request was finalized, the Council would need to finalize the terms of the contract, so if the committee had any other issues or concerns they wished to address, let her know.

Senator Rawson brought the motion back to the floor for a vote.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY THOSE PRESENT.

7. Consideration of request from Commission on Educational Technology for contractual services.

Fred Dugger, member, Commission on Educational Technology (Commission), introduced Joan Kerschner, Director, Museums, Libraries and Arts, and member of the Commission. Mr. Dugger provided the committee with a copy of a request for proposal (RFP) in the amount of \$155,000 so they could go through the process to select the appropriate person for the consultative effort.

Mrs. Kerschner provided a two-page report indicating the status of the Commission to date (Exhibit J). She stated the report showed the makeup of the Commission and the information provided at their meetings to-date. At second meeting, the Commission heard from the school districts which provided status reports on the progress of technology planning. She was relieved to hear of the progress made by the school districts, including some districts which have extensive, detailed technology plans. The school districts urged the Commission to be as flexible as possible in including their needs in the development of plans by the Commission.

Mrs. Kerschner stated the school districts indicated to the Commission that they were ready to move forward with their technology plans and urged the Commission to put activities on the fast track. In that regard, the Commission made funds available to districts that were ready to move forward with their technology plan. Lincoln County wanted funds for their planning efforts as they were not quite ready for implementation. She concluded her comments by stating that the Commission was committed to working productively to get the activities up and running.

Mr. Dugger stated he was impressed with the members of the Commission for Educational Technology. The membership has a diverse background, is dedicated to basic education fundamentals and viewed technology as an integrated part of curriculum.

Mr. Dugger asserted the original goal of the Commission on Educational Technology was to do everything at once--allocate funds, establish technical standards, and so on. However, that had proven to be difficult to implement with a volunteer committee in the time frame provided under S.B. 482. Therefore, the Commission was requesting funds to hire a consultant to assist the Commission in developing plans. He noted the legislature allocated a position during the budget process for the Department of Education for a full-time person to work with technology. Although that position had not been filled, the clerical staff had been hired to assist the Commission. The Commission needed to take the RFP (Exhibit K) and issue that to prospective firms. He indicated they would be receiving referrals from H. Pepper Sturm, Research Analyst, Legislative Counsel Bureau's, Research Division. In addition, the Department of Information Technology volunteered to put the RFP on the worldwide web site they maintained in order to receive maximum exposure.

SENATOR REGAN MOVED TO ADOPT UP TO THE AMOUNT
OF \$155,000 AND ALLOW THE COMMISSION ON EDUCATIONAL
TECHNOLOGY TO PROCEED WITH THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL.
SENATOR WASHINGTON SECONDED THE MOTION.

Assemblyman Perkins asked why the amount of \$155,000 was being approved before the RFP was circulated. He expressed concern that in so doing the Commission would likely receive ten RFP's all for \$155,000 each, rather than allowing for a competitive environment whereby vendors may bid \$130,000 or any amount less than \$155,000. He asked whether the RFP could be circulated first and then have the Commission return to the committee after they chose a contractor.

Mr. Dugger responded that the Commission had to have a draft statewide Educational Technology Plan in place by July 1, 1998; therefore, they need to fast-track their activities. He agreed they were not comfortable in getting the amount approved before the RFP , and they would prefer to be able to select their vendor and approve a contract. However, there would be a delay if the Commission had to come back to the committee after selecting a contractor.

Senator Rawson stated it was not necessary to advertise the amount in the RFP. Mr. Dugger concurred and pointed out that the amount was not listed in the RFP. Senator Regan said it was his understanding that the \$155,000 was the upper figure and that it would not be in the RFP. Mr. Dugger related that cost would be used by the Commission in selecting a consultant. The \$155,000 amount was a "not to exceed" figure, but they would consider the cost as well.

Senator Washington noted that the letter provided by Mrs. Kerschner (Exhibit J) mentioned the Milken Foundation. He asked if the Commission had knowledge the amount that foundation would be contributing in grant funds. Mrs. Kerschner replied the Commission had been invited to work with the Milken Foundation, who offered their services to look at the process to be undertaken in implementing a technology plan. She stated that was a gratis activity for one day during a technology meeting last month. However, she was uncertain whether they would be bidding on the RFP.

Senator Rawson brought the motion back to the floor for a vote.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY THOSE PRESENT.

Senator Rawson stated the Commission could proceed and they should review the document with staff to see if there were any omissions or anything further that needed to be reviewed.

Senator Rawson directed the staff to develop for the next meeting recommendations for engaging a contractor to review school accountability data and to assist with plans for improvement. Also, a report on the progress of the Legislative Bureau of Education Accountability and Program Evaluation was due to the Legislative Commission before December 31, 1997. In addition, the staff would need to work out the details of the contracts requested today for consultants.

Senator Rawson stated the committee needed to schedule their next meeting. He noted that January 13, 1998 was a potential date and asked if that date was all right for the committee. He said the meeting was scheduled to be held in Las Vegas and the topic would be assessments.

Senator Washington asked if the Committee on Health Care was meeting in Las Vegas on January 12, 1998. Senator Rawson replied that meeting was in Carson City. The committee suggested the meeting on the January 13, 1998, be held in Carson City instead of Las Vegas.

8. Public testimony.

Mark Alden, Board of Regents, University and Community College System of Nevada, commended the committee for the work completed to date. He commented that the test scores in rural areas of Nevada were usually higher, and that was due to parental involvement. Speaking on behalf of Dr. Jarvis, University of Nevada, Mr. Alden insisted the UCCSN was committed to working with K-12 on standards issues and other issues. He informed the committee that UNLV and UNR were aware of the current method of educating teachers, and UCCSN would be working closely with the state and school districts to produce teachers who are better equipped in the classroom. He concluded that the UCCSN realized that standards were important to the entire education system.

Mr. Alden indicated testimony by Christopher Cross revealed that there were Colleges of Education across

the country that succeeding in producing good teachers and he would like to see that report. Also, he asked if the study included research into whether the liberal arts curriculum ran parallel to doing a good job in the school of education. He stated he would like that question answered by Mr. Cross.

Mr. Jon Price, Director, State Geologist, Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology, read prepared testimony to the committee ([Exhibit L](#)) indicating he reviewed the draft science standards prepared by the Nevada Department of Education group which stressed critical thinking, and he was pleased with those standards.

Tony Taormina, President, United Construction Company, and President of the Nevada Chapter of AGC, thanked the committee for hearing his concerns regarding education. He stated his primary concern was the lack of skills and programs for non-college bound kids in the school system. He stated the curriculum should reflect skills that students needed to become a valuable, productive members of society to be able to provide for themselves and their families. Mr. Taormina indicated that schools usually focused on college preparation, which only served 20 to 30 percent of the students. He stressed he wanted to see teachers and counselors providing alternate career paths in construction, manufacturing, mining and other high-paying jobs with good futures. He acknowledged that students taking that path also needed to graduate with strong reading, writing and math skills, coupled with a good work ethic.

Mr. Taormina stated he supported the movement toward higher standards, not just for the small percentage of students that went to college, but for the majority that did not attend college. He asked that the committee, during the legislative interim, view vocational programs in a fashion that would better serve the students not going on to college.

Mr. Taormina acknowledged that he must get involved and stated that several of the members and companies he knew were partners in education. However, in talking with those organizations, it was his understanding they had little effect or input into career paths. He suggested that he be allowed to be part of the solution as he had many resources to offer.

Senator Rawson thanked Mr. Taormina for his comments and informed the committee that approximately 26 percent of the workforce was involved in construction. Mr. Taormina stated he had a videotape that the committee may wish to view at a later date and he would leave it with the committee.

Beryl Aytell, Coordinator, Vocational Education, University of Nevada-Reno, testified he worked with the Department of Labor, Business & Industry, and Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training to facilitate the program established at UNR. He stated he had a problem with the academic world in his attempts to assist the students who have "dropped through the cracks." He explained that these students were dropouts because of a variety of problems. He worked diligently to assist them with the program, Northern Nevada Career Schools. Mr. Aytell described some of the vocational programs offered through the school to dropouts. The programs provide these students with the opportunity for an occupation and also to complete their high school education by obtaining a GED. He said the program was designed to get kids off the streets.

Mr. Aytell said implementing standards was a great idea, but he was concerned with the kids who were not going to meet the standards and would consequently drop out of school. He stressed he was not looking for any financial assistance, but what he needed was cooperation from the academic world to recruit kids who were going to drop out or before they dropped out, otherwise they will be lost to the judicial system.

Senator Rawson stated the committee had a very specific purpose--to facilitate the standards process. The members of the committee sat on education committees and understood his pleas and took his comments seriously.

Senator Regan asserted that the mission of UNR was not vocational training. He suggested Mr. Aytell contact the administration at Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) or Western Nevada Community College (WNCC). Mr. Aytell related that he already worked with TMCC and WNCC.

Senator Washington suggested Mr. Aytell contact Assemblywoman Chris Giunchigliani, Chairperson to the Committee on Special Education & Student Discipline, as she was setting up task forces to study a variety of issues.

Senator Rawson stated that the committee had asked for a report from the Department of Education regarding the courses of study that might be removed from state law, and the Human Resources Committee may wish to discuss that subject as one of the first items for the 1999 legislative session. He stated that as the Council went through the standards process, they would be enumerating things that do not need to be in state law in order to simplify the law.

Ms. Bandera, Elko County School District, acknowledged the concerns of the Legislative Committee on Education, the Commission on Educational Technology, and the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools, expressing a desire for school districts and superintendents to attend the meetings of those committees and participate in those hearings. She noted that during the last interim, video-conferenced meetings were between the north and south portions of the state. She informed the committee that it was extremely difficult for some persons to get to Las Vegas, and she urged the committee to consider video-conferencing some of the meetings.

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Joi Davis, Secretary

Senator Raymond Rawson

Acting Chairman

Date: _____