

**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 12:30 p.m. on January 22, 1999, at the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada.

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Senator William J. Raggio, Chairman  
Senator Maurice Washington  
Assemblywoman Marcia deBraga  
Assemblyman Pat Hickey

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Senator Raymond D. Rawson	(Excused)
Assemblyman Wendell Williams	(Excused)

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Jeanne L. Botts, Senior Program Analyst  
H. Pepper Sturm, Principal Research Analyst  
Kelan Kelly, Senior Research Analyst  
Kristin Roberts, Senior Deputy, Legislative Counsel  
Mindy Braun, Education Program Analyst  
Lu Chen, Education Research Statistician  
Joi Davis, Committee Secretary

**GUEST LEGISLATORS:**

Senator Ann O'Connell  
Assemblyman Bob Beers  
Assemblywoman Barbara Cegavske

**GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE:**

Richard Naccarato, Washoe County School District  
Fred Dugger, Commission on Educational Technology  
Dave Hill, Rose-Glen Advertising  
Myrna Matranga, University of Nevada, Reno  
Gus Hill, University of Nevada, Reno  
George Perreault, University of Nevada, Reno  
Carolyn Chapman, University of Nevada, Reno  
Bill Arensdorf, Nevada Department of Education  
Kendyl Depoali, Washoe County School District  
Jacquie Moore, Nevada Department of Education  
Frank Meyer, University of Nevada, Reno  
Dorothy Todd, Carson City School District  
Paul LaMarca, Nevada Department of Education  
David Smith, Nevada Department of Education

Holly Walton-Buchanan, Nevada Department of Education  
Ray Bacon, Nevada Manufacturers Association  
Eugene Paslov, Education Management Consultants, Inc.  
Vince Illia, McMullen Strategic Group  
Pendery Clark, Douglas County School District  
Erik Reed  
Henry Etchemendy, Nevada Association of School Boards  
Jim Hager, Washoe County School District  
Peggy Lear Bowen, Nevada State Board of Education  
Steve Williams, Washoe County School District  
William Sparkman, University of Nevada, Reno  
Terry Owens, Nevada Department of Education  
Stanley Chow, WestEd  
Chris Moyle, McMullen Strategy Group  
Anne Loring, Washoe County School District  
Dotty Merrill, Washoe County School District  
Jerry Holloway, Washoe County School District  
Marcia Bandera, Elko County School District  
Brian Cram, Clark County School District  
Mary Peterson, Nevada Department of Education  
Bob Dickens, University of Nevada, Reno  
Sherry Blunt, University of Nevada, Reno  
Teresa Jordan, University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Martha Young, University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Rick Bennett, University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Yvonne Shaw, Nevada State Board of Education  
Mark Shellinger, White Pine County School District  
Val Pooley, White Pine County School District  
Tim Curtin, White Pine County School District  
Lynne Ruegamer, White Pine County School District  
Paul Johnson, White Pine County School District  
Hugh Qualls, White Pine County School District  
Keith Conley, White Pine County School District  
Warren Kirch, White Pine County School District

### **List of Exhibits**

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|-----------|---|---|
| Exhibit A | - | Meeting Notice and Agenda   |
| Exhibit B | - | Attendance Roster   |
| Exhibit C | - | Meeting Packet  |
| Exhibit D | - | Brochure – “Raising the Bar” submitted by Assemblywoman Vonne Chowning                      |
| Exhibit E | - | State Plan to Implement Technology, submitted by Fred Dugger                                |
| Exhibit F |   | Overview of Nevada School Accountability System, provided by Dr. David Smith                |
| Exhibit G | - | Nevada School District Accountability Program 1997 & 1998,<br>provided by Dr. Eugene Paslov |
| Exhibit H | - | Power Point displays provided by Dr. Eugene Paslov  |
| Exhibit I | - | Overhead displays provided by Julie O’Brian, ECS  |
| Exhibit J | - | Education Commission of the States (ECS) Folder of materials<br>provided by Julie O’Brian   |
| Exhibit K | - | LCB Bulletin 99-04 provided by H. Pepper Sturm  |

- Exhibit L - Second Annual Report of the Legislative Bureau of Educational Accountability and Program Evaluation (LeBeape), provided by Jeanne Botts
- Exhibit M - Impact of SB 482 on Student Achievement, provided by Dr. Dotty Merrill
- Exhibit N TerraNova Test Analysis for White Pine School District, provided by Mark Shellinger
- Exhibit O Survey of Time Spent Testing, provided by Lu Chen

**NOTE:** All Exhibits are on file at the Research Library and Fiscal Analysis Division of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

### **Roll Call**

Chairman Raggio called the meeting to order at approximately 12:35 p.m. He designated Senator Ann O'Connell in place and stead of Senator Raymond Rawson, excused. Chairman Raggio announced that Senator Jack Regan passed away last night. He acknowledged Senator Regan's long and dedicated service to the Committee and to both houses of the Legislature. The Committee observed a moment of silence in respect for Senator Regan.

### **Approval of Minutes from November 23, 1998, Meeting**

Chairman Raggio asked the members if they had any additions, modifications, or corrections to the minutes in the Meeting Packet (Exhibit C, Tab 2). Hearing none, he indicated he would accept a motion for approval.

SENATOR O'CONNELL MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES  
FROM THE NOVEMBER 23, 1998, MEETING.

SENATOR WASHINGTON SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY BY THOSE PRESENT. ASSEMBLYMAN  
PERKINS WAS NOT PRESENT FOR THE VOTE.

### **Status Report from the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools**

Chairman Raggio recognized Assemblywoman Vonne Chowning and Senator Ann O'Connell, members of the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Education (Council), to provide the status report to the Committee.

Mrs. Chowning explained that Debbie Smith, Chairperson to the Council, was unable to attend because she was at a State Parent-Teacher Association Board Meeting in Las Vegas. Mrs. Chowning stated it has been her pleasure to serve on the Council during the past interim. She noted that the Council members have put in countless hours and dedication to accomplish the task delegated to them by Senate Bill 482.

She explained that the performance standards for English language arts, math and science are in the draft stages and are available for public comment. Public input sessions have been held in Reno and Las Vegas. During those meetings, four performance levels were identified to describe whether students have met the standards:

- Exceeds the Standards
- Meets the Standards

- Approaches the Standards
- Below the Standards

In addition, the Council has received examples of student work to will help teachers and parents understand the types of assignments that will meet the standards.

Mrs. Chowning stated the Council has produced a brochure entitled, "Raising the Bar" (Exhibit D). She pointed out that the pictures throughout the brochure reflect the ethnic diversity of Nevada's students. The Council hopes to distribute the brochure to community agents and educational entities to educate persons on the new standards.

Mrs. Chowning stated that the Council will be requesting that every school district in the state to provide them with a plan for implementation of the standards.

Continuing on with the status of the Council's activities, Mrs. Chowning stated that the Phase II standards-setting process is underway, and the writing teams met two weeks ago in Las Vegas. She participated in the Arts writing team and Senator O'Connell participated in the Social Studies writing team. The arts, health and physical education, and computer education and technology writing teams have completed their first rough draft of the content standards. The writing teams for social studies, due to the complexity of that subject, will be required to meet one more time before draft standards are available. The writing teams have been working on both content and performance standards during this process.

The issues that Council members will address during the upcoming legislative session include: Professional Development; Remediation; Assessment; and Continued Review of the Standards.

Senator O'Connell added that she has had the pleasure of working on the content writing teams and the performance indicator writing teams and she has never worked with a more professional group. Teachers have a genuine interest in making the standards-setting process a success. In addition, she noted that parents and teachers have been concerned about how the performance and content standards will be used. The format that has been developed allows a parent to see exactly how a student is doing and the teacher can easily show, with performance standards, why a particular grade was given.

Senator O'Connell thanked the Committee for allowing her to serve on the Council; although it has been much work, it has been a positive experience.

Senator Raggio said it was not that long ago that the idea of education reform was discussed; it is remarkable what has been done to date. Further, Assemblywoman Chowning and Senator O'Connell have set a good example by working together in a bipartisan, "two-house" manner toward such an important goal. The cooperation that has been brought forth from all aspects of the field of education has been remarkable. He commended everyone in attendance for the magnificent job that was accomplished in a short period of time.

Senator O'Connell said the major concern that people have is what will occur if a child does not meet the standards. She said that will be the largest challenge for the Legislature: whether to require summer school or retention of students. Having served on the social studies writing team, Senator O'Connell said teachers have expressed concern about the time necessary to implement the expanded definition of social studies into an already busy school schedule. She encouraged the Committee not to shorten the school day, but to consider lengthening the school day, or add another day to the school year. Senator O'Connell opined that the training of teachers was the most important component in the standards-setting process. She has worked with over 160 teachers during this process and they take much pride in what is being accomplished. Teachers are the greatest salespersons for education reform but they are going to need time to train other

teachers.

Senator Raggio said remediation is necessary and teacher training is essential; both will be high priorities for the upcoming legislative session.

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### **Status Report from the Commission on Educational Technology**

Fred Dugger, Member, Commission on Educational Technology (CET), informed the Committee that the CET has accomplished the tasks they were charged with under Senate Bill 482. He provided the Statewide Technology Plan (Exhibit E). He thanked Kathleen Barfield of WestEd, the contractor hired to assist the CET, for all her help. He stated the Statewide Technology Plan will be reviewed every year.

Senator Raggio thanked Mr. Dugger and all the commissioners for their dedication in completing the plan.

Mr. Dugger said the school districts were very cooperative and helpful and worked hard to identify their needs and complete their own district technology plans which have all been approved. Mr. Dugger related that in his previous appearances before the Committee he was unable to address the subject of computer labs; however, the CET recently distributed the last of the funding and all reporting has been completed. He reported that there are computer labs now existing in every school in Nevada, except for 18 schools, which is not bad for 422 total schools.

Mr. Dugger directed the Committee to page six of the technology plan (Exhibit E), stating that the CET distributed funding to bring all school districts to an equal level in technology, giving preference to districts with the greatest financial needs. Page six of the plan describes Level One, expected technology integration for all schools. Available funding was used to get every school to Level One. However, that goal was not reached.

Standards in computer technology were also developed by the CET and are set forth in the Statewide Technology Plan (Exhibit E). Further, Mr. Dugger said the most recent activities of the CET was distribution of the special funding requests pursuant to applications made by the school districts. Noting that Mark Shellinger of White Pine County School District was present, Mr. Dugger explained that special funding was provided to that school district for the NovaNet Program; a program designed for pupils that are having difficulties and this allows them to return to school at night to work at their own pace so they can complete requirements for graduation.

In another instance, Mr. Dugger explained, the Lincoln County School District experienced special implementation problems because the building walls are so thick that special requirements were needed. The funding made available through Senate Bill 482 allowed for the special needs of that school district. The funding distribution has been equitable amongst the districts. Also, the state funding that was provided has been matched by federal grants.

Directing the Committee to the meeting packet (Exhibit C), Mr. Dugger pointed out that the CET has made a bill draft request (BDR) which changes the law applicable to the structure of the CET. He explained that the BDR would expand the role of the CET to clearly define that the commissioners would oversee the policy and recommended structure for K-12 inter-district networking.

Senator Raggio asked if the Committee had any objection to the CET submittal of the above BDR. Seeing none, he directed staff to follow the recommendation for a BDR for the CET.

Continuing, Mr. Dugger said the CET also submitted a funding description recommended by WestEd at the approximate level of \$32 million per biennium for the next two biennia to further the progress that CET has made to date. He said the CET met with school districts to prioritize funding and the outcome of those meetings is what has been brought to the Committee in the funding request (Exhibit C, page 24). In comprising the funding request, the CET took the five goals of the technology plan and prioritized those goals in conjunction with what the districts reported as their current needs. One such priority identified by school districts is the need for databases in school libraries. Also, low-cost licenses can be obtained statewide by virtue of obtaining composite licenses.

The establishment of a statewide professional development program is essential for the Statewide Technology Plan to be fully implemented and effective. A funding request in the amount of \$4 million has been requested for professional development in technology. Mr. Dugger said that the school districts will also need technical support because computers develop problems and will need repair. The school districts will need experienced technicians to work on computers at school sites. In addition, Mr. Dugger stressed that the technical infrastructure of the statewide plan will need to be supported to provide the technology and instructional resources which is the fundamental work that began in the last biennium and needs to be continued during the next biennium.

Senator Raggio noted that the descriptions of funding outlined by Mr. Dugger were all ongoing costs. The money committees will have the plan available to them should they have questions. Then, to the extent that money is available, they will have to review the funding requests and make some determinations. He said it was his understanding that if there is money available it will go toward teacher training and remediation programs. Hopefully, the school districts can also locate other means of funding to aid in these efforts.

Mr. Dugger said the CET is working on self-help for the school districts to maximize capabilities without a lot of money.

Senator Raggio commended Mr. Dugger and the other members of the Commission on Educational Technology for their time and effort in producing the Statewide Technology Plan in such a timely fashion. He acknowledged that Mr. Dugger has spent more time as a commissioner than was originally intended. Mr. Dugger thanked Senator Raggio for giving him something to do during his retirement.

## **Annual Reports**

Chairman Raggio asked that persons presenting annual reports, in the interest of time, provide a summary of the report. He asked Dr. David Smith, Nevada Department of Education, to come forward to present his report.

### **▪ Overview of Nevada School Accountability System and Review of the School Year 1996-97 Reporting.**

Dr. Smith provided the Committee with a brochure published by the Department of Education for parents and persons interested in the state's educational accountability system, along with his report on Nevada School Accountability System (Exhibit F). Copies of the overhead displays used by Dr. Smith in his presentation are contained at Tab 4, Exhibit C.

Dr. Smith said his report is broadly distributed. For example, parents who are considering moving to Nevada will call for the report, educational research centers, and so on. He explained there are three reports that districts are required to provide:

- Individual School Reports—Distributed to parents and anyone else on request.
- District-wide Reports—Distributed to the media, libraries, local meeting places, and on request.
- School Improvement Planning Reports.

Dr. Smith explained that individual school reports are received from 251 elementary schools, 121 secondary schools, and 2 combined schools. In addition, combined reports are received from 21 rural schools in Clark, Esmeralda, Elko, Pershing, and Humboldt, for schools with less than eight students per class. Although they are not required to prepare an individual report, the school district puts together information into one report.

Dr. Smith mentioned that he prepares his report by using certain required data elements (Exhibit C, page 28-29). The Nevada Education Reform Act of 1997 (NERA) added to those required data elements such items as teacher attendance rates, graduates enrolled in remedial classes, possession of alcohol and controlled substances, technology use and equipment. Those data were collected during the 1997-98 school year and will be released in the March 1999 report. Dr. Smith opined that the school districts did an excellent job on reporting the required information.

Turning to his report (Exhibit F), Dr. Smith stated that the data tables included in the Appendices in the back of his report, were compiled cooperatively between the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and the Legislative Bureau of Educational Accountability and Program Evaluation (LeBeape). He noted that the data tables are accessible through the NDE web-site at [www.nsn.k12.nv.us/ndoe](http://www.nsn.k12.nv.us/ndoe).

Dr. Smith directed the Committee to page 31 of the Meeting Packet (Exhibit C), and stated that the Department of Education sent out a questionnaire to school districts to find out what it cost to produce and distribute school district accountability reports. Fourteen school districts reported that the total time for those 14 school districts to produce the report was 12,071 hours of staff time, and the cost of distribution for all 14 school districts was \$318,581. In addition, the NERA required school districts to report on and designate schools' achievement levels. Two schools in the state were designated as high-achieving, and 23 schools were designated as having inadequate achievement. Senator Raggio added that one high achieving school was in Washoe County and the other one was located in Clark County. The 23 inadequately achieving schools are located in four counties, Elko, Churchill, Clark, and Washoe.

In the past four years, the NDE has looked at factors relating to school performance. Therefore, Dr. Smith noted, the last section of his report reviews the most significant and reliable factors related to school performance. Those include norm-referenced testing, writing assessments, high school proficiency exams, college entrance exam results, drop-out rates, and truancy rates. He stated there are two teacher characteristics that also play an important role in school achievement: Teachers teaching within licensed area; and teachers with degrees above a bachelor's degree.

Chairman Raggio thanked Dr. Smith for his report and participation over the years in the area of accountability; the expertise he has provided has been very helpful. Chairman Raggio recognized Senator O'Connell.

Senator O'Connell asked Dr. Smith to discuss the attendance information on the number of students that took the test. Dr. Smith replied that information regarding the number of students tested is contained in his TerraNova report previously produced and the Data Tables produced by the Legislative Counsel Bureau. Speaking to the reliability of the data, Dr. Smith opined that this year's data will be rather reliable. However, last year, the reporting of attendance was based on daily attendance instead of the highest enrollment. That means there will be some schools reporting over 100 percent because the students were there at least one day. The average daily attendance would eliminate those students from being reported. For the 1998-99 school accountability reports, the school districts will provide the highest enrollment at the school during the

testing time frame, how many took the test under regular conditions, special accommodations, IEP or special education exempt, ELL exempt, and the percentage of eligible students who took the exam. That information will be provided in future reports.

Senator O'Connell stressed the importance of knowing the daily attendance in conjunction with the number of pupils taking the tests.

### ▪ **Panel of Scholars Report on Nevada School District Accountability Program**

Chairman Raggio asked Dr. Eugene Paslov, President, Education Management Consultants, Inc., to come forward and present the Panel's Report on School Accountability. A copy of the report is attached as Exhibit G.

Dr. Paslov stated he would address four items in his presentation:

#### *Purpose of the Accountability Report and Role of Panelists*

The Accountability Report is not about assigning blame. Accountability is about assuming responsibility. Dr. Smith's report provided quantitative indicators; whereby, the panel's report discusses qualitative indicators of accountability for two years, such as:

- How well Nevada school sites perform in teaching all students basic academic skills;
- How well statutory accountability data requirements are being followed; and
- How well accountability data are being used for improvement.

The purpose of the review panel was to also provide independent review and recommendations.

#### *Background on School Accountability in Nevada*

Dr. Paslov informed the Committee that he acted as Chairman to the panel. He explained that prior to acting in that capacity he had been out-of-state for three years. Prior to that, he served as the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. At that time, accountability was a controversial issue. Finally, the Legislature systematically required that accountability reporting be performed.

During the period from 1979 to 1985, Ted Sanders was the Superintendent of Public Instruction and Myrna Matranga was his deputy. Those two worked diligently to create an accountability system within the state under difficult conditions.

During 1987 to 1991, he was the Superintendent of Public Instruction and Marcia Bandera was his deputy superintendent. Together they worked with the Legislature to improve the accountability system. However, data was inconsistent. For instance, there was no dropout information. Dr. Paslov recalled that during the 1987-88 interim, he worked on a committee with Assemblyman David Humke, a child advocate. Mr. Humke wanted to know how many students dropped out of school. That information was not available. That information is available now. In addition, site-level dollar information was almost impossible to obtain. Dr. Paslov stated that while he was Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Department of Education had a high school proficiency exam, but it was very poor. He added that Senator Raggio pressed for a better high school proficiency exam and accountability in that program at the Department of Education.

Senator Raggio added that Senator O'Connell was integral in pushing to improve the high school proficiency



exam process.

During the 1991 legislative session, Senate Bill 511 required school site reports. Although that was a controversial issue, public reporting by school sites including school characteristics and student achievement is now fully implemented. The norm-referenced testing results for grades 4, 8 and 10 for all school districts are now contained in the school district accountability reports. In addition, the state has developed a consistent method for counting drop-out rates and number of incidents involving school violence and substance abuse. The end result in the history of accountability reporting is that there now is a strong focus on academic achievement and improvement with more rigorous standards and assessments.

Dr. Paslov commented that the recent national reports by *Education Weekly* and the *American Federation of Teachers* gives the State of Nevada high marks in standards development, public reporting and school improvement policies. In fact, Nevada has appeared on the “radar screen” as a list of small states that are making progress in the area of standards-based reform.

### *Findings and Recommendations*

Dr. Paslov said the findings of the panel were remarkable. He concurred with Dr. Smith’s comments that school districts throughout the state are doing a good job and are taking school accountability seriously. Schools are doing what the Legislature has been asking them to do—focus on academic achievement. For example, Clark County School District, in its Part III report was exemplary in reporting on areas of improvement for individual school buildings. He concluded that Clark, Washoe, Elko and Douglas County School Districts all developed good reporting methods and other school districts could look to those reports as models. Modest trends toward student achievement gains were reported. Approximately 80 out of 372 school sites reported during 1995-96 and 1996-97 school years that 40 percent or more students scored in the lower quartile in one or more subject matter. The designation for inadequate schools based on Senate Bill 482 of the 1997 session, is based on having more than 40 percent of students in the lowest quartile in all achievement areas. In 1998, 23 schools were so designated. Dr. Paslov commented that some principals were reluctant to admit problems; however, instance, the goals identified by the Superintendent and the board, should be similar to the goals of school principals.

The vast majority of school site administrators, superintendents and board members have assumed responsibility for making changes in the area of student achievement. Some districts had a disconnect between the goals of the superintendents and local boards of trustees. Some school site improvement plans had no relationship to the goals of the school district or the board. Therefore, if any progress is to be made toward meeting the goals in those particular schools, a re-evaluation of the goals outlined in their reports should be addressed. Dr. Paslov reiterated that high school principals were reluctant to admit any problems in their schools. Those schools have a tendency to focus on athletic teams, spirit leaders, and the number of merit scholars and the number of students that are sent on to academies, rather than the students with the most needs.

Dr. Paslov stated that the *List of Effective Remedial Programs* that was prepared by LeBeape and adopted by the Committee in March 1998, is being correctly used in some schools throughout the state; however, many are still using “homegrown” measures to remediate students. The programs in the *List of Effective Remedial Programs* have been researched and should be helpful to schools. In some instances, staff was simply unclear on the data or the meaningfulness of the data and how to use it. School staff need to learn how to disaggregate data in order to benefit from the data. In other words, the data should be used to help administrators and teachers improve student achievement.

As to the new content standards that were adopted by the State Board of Education in August 1998, Dr. Paslov revealed that very few districts took note of the standards and the influence those standards will have on their curriculum. However, he expects that will improve greatly as the implementation process of the new

standards gets underway. Dr. Paslov noted that there was one exception regarding the implementation of standards in that Douglas County School District has done more than any other district in the state as far as moving forward on standards, or what they call “competencies,” for that district. Other school districts have begun the process and will have the state standards to guide them.

Dr. Paslov informed the Committee that staff of the Legislative Counsel Bureau provided the data tables of the school district reports to the review panel members in a timely and efficient manner and there was excellent cooperation between the agencies. He noted his letter to Jeanne Botts, Senior Program Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau (Exhibit C, Tab 5), addressed aspects of the final report that were brought to his attention. He commented that preparing the Panel of Scholars Report was a difficult task to be coordinated between the Legislative Counsel Bureau, an independent contractor, and the Nevada Department of Education, and the review panel members. Bringing people together cooperatively was important in completing the task at hand.

The review panel recommended that school districts need to link current curriculum to Nevada’s new content and performance standards. Also, test development activities need to be linked to the new standards, and there should be continued support of professional development and revisions in curriculum related to the new standards. Dr. Paslov emphasized that districts should not be penalized for providing professional development. Further, continuation of the norm-referenced test (NRT) is recommended even though there are debates regarding NRTs and criterion-referenced tests (CRTs). While both tests are important, learning to use test results is important. Supplements to NRTs and the CRTs could be used to broaden the assessment process. Additional statistical analysis should be conducted to help school district staff better understand the dynamics of improved academic achievement. Some of the larger school districts are already performing regression analyses and other types of statistical analyses with their body of data. This provides a better understanding of what is taking place at the local level.

Lastly, Dr. Paslov recommended continuing the independent review panel’s work with individual districts that have requested technical assistance. In addition, it is recommended that test preparation be a part of teaching and learning. Preparing students to take tests does not have to be viewed as cheating.

### *Observations of Panelists/Questions*

Dr. Paslov stated that the panelists have all participated in this process on previous occasions, except for himself and Dr. Frank Meyers. The panelists include university professors, researchers, statisticians, and general education policy-makers. Dr. Paslov acknowledged and introduced the review panelists:

- Carolyn Chapman, Ph.D, UNR
- Kevin Crehan, Ph.D, UNLV
- George Hill, Ph.D, UNR
- Eunsook Hong, Ph.D, UNLV
- Myrna Matranga, Ed.D, UNR
- Frank Meyers, Ed.D, UNR
- David Noonan, Ed.D, UNR
- Eugene Paslov, Ed.D.

Senator Raggio complimented and thanked the review panel members for their work and Dr. Paslov for his presentation to the Committee. Dr. Paslov’s Power Point displays are attached as Exhibit H.

Senator Washington asked how teachers are selected and placed in schools. Dr. Paslov replied that teacher selection and placement is a local school district and board responsibility. Policies have been established and contract provisions from the teachers’ unions play a role as well.

Senator Washington opined that teachers play a significant role in how schools are designated (inadequate, adequate, and high achieving). Therefore, the process of selecting and placing teachers is important, especially in the placement of new teachers, teachers in at-risk schools and the use of master teachers. He asked if that process could be clarified for the Committee.

Dr. Brian Cram, Clark County School District, interjected that it is a nationwide trend that higher income schools tend to have more experienced teachers. He explained that in Clark County School District, the “at-risk” schools are given the first opportunity to select teachers. Although they are picking new teachers, they get the best of the new teachers. The reality is, however, when teachers are allowed to transfer, they most often move from “at-risk” schools to other schools as they gain more seniority.

Dr. Cram continued that in other states the issue has been addressed by paying teachers more money to teach in “at-risk” schools. However, there has been limited success with that approach, resulting in poor teachers teaching in “at-risk” schools because they can make more money. Dr. Cram said the issue of teachers teaching in “at-risk” schools is central to many other problems the Clark County School District currently faces.

Dr. Cram commented that if funds are not earmarked for the university system specifically designated for teacher production and training, a crisis situation could occur. Secondly, the Colleges of Education need to train teachers to work in at-risk schools. Recently, the University of Nevada, Las Vegas has been working on that issue. UNLV has recently agreed that they will be “co-players” in designing the curriculum in the Colleges of Education, and they will be co-players at exit exams. They want to ensure that when students exit the university they have the skills to work with students in non-traditional areas. Traditionally, new teachers are prepared for teaching in high-income schools. The Clark County School District actually tries to put more materials, more money per pupil, more training and other incentives into at-risk schools. Unfortunately, even with all those efforts, the problem is still unsolved.

Senator O’Connell informed the Committee that she, along with Assemblywoman Vonne Chowning randomly visited many schools, including some at-risk schools, unannounced. Many of the teachers were first-year teachers. She said the teachers were terrific and she was pleased to see such enthusiasm for teaching. Dr. Cram said they intend to be proactive in the area of student achievement in at-risk schools. Those schools are motivated to improve also because they are not happy with the “inadequate” label that has been placed on some of them. In most of those schools, the teachers have developed precise plans yet are working against great obstacles.

Dr. Cram said when he visits schools, the teachers make him feel proud to be in education. Senator Raggio thanked Dr. Cram.

Chairman Raggio noted with pleasure the attendance at the committee meeting. He acknowledged other school district superintendents in the audience: Marcia Bandera, Elko County School District; Mark Shellinger, White Pine County School District, Vaughn Higbee, Lincoln County School District; and Pendery Clark, Douglas County School District. The Chairman also recognized Bill Sparkman, Dean of the College of Education, UNR, successor to Dean Meyers. State Board of Education members, Yvonne Shaw and Peggy Bowen, were introduced as was Superintendent of Public Instruction, Mary Peterson. Local School Board members included Valerie Pooley, White Pine County School District, and Anne Loring, Washoe County School District.

### **Helping Low-Achieving Pupils: Pulling Together Dollars From All Sources**

Chairman Raggio deviated from the Agenda to accommodate Julie O’Brian, Education Commission of the States. Ms. O’Brian’s overhead displays are attached as Exhibit I

Ms. O'Brian indicated that she has appeared before the Committee previously so she would not spend any time on describing the purview of the Education Commission of the States. However, she provided a folder for those interested (Exhibit J). She indicated the focus of her discussion was in bringing resources together to assist low-performing schools. Ms. O'Brian informed the Committee that the Nevada Education Reform Act (NERA) of 1997 based accountability on the performance of schools. In addition to Nevada, 18 other states measure and judge the performance of schools as their primary unit of accountability.

### *Performance-Based Accountability*

Ms. O'Brian stated there are key decisions that must be made when designing and reforming a performance-based accountability system:

- What is the purpose of an accountability system?
- Who will be held accountable and to whom?
- What data will be used to determine that accountability has been met?
- How will performance be judged?
- What are the consequences of judging that performance?
- How does the state intervene?

All decisions are important in determining how a state might bring together resources to improve its accountability system. She congratulated the state for its efforts in establishing mechanisms to measure and judge the performance of schools. Also, the state has established consequences and interventions for schools that are not improving. Nevada deserves accolades for the work already performed. Many states are currently experimenting with accountability systems.

One of the most difficult decisions is how to improve low-performing schools, school districts, and students. There are many different ways states across the country are handling that problem:

### *Common State Intervention Strategies*

- Require schools to develop improvement plans.
- Require schools to choose research-based improvement models/programs.
- Assign expert teachers or principals.
- Assign a state department liaison or expert.

### *Available Resources*

Ms. O'Brian said states are either direct providers or the funnel through which a great deal of assistance is provided to schools in the form of dollars, materials or professional development. For the most part, states do not think of that type of assistance as part of the state intervention strategy for low-performing schools. Assistance is not explicitly connected to the state accountability system. Most assistance is provided to schools indiscriminately and on a competitive basis. Therefore, only schools who select into that competition will benefit from the assistance. Alternatively, assistance is provided to specific schools that meet the criteria of a specific program in the form of an entitlement, such as Title I.

Ms. O'Brian mentioned that there are many federal programs, most of which are authorized under the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act:

- Title I, Title II, Title IV, and Title VI;
- Goals 2000

- Local Grants
- IDEA
- Carl Perkins Vocational Education grants

She concluded that there are many “pots” of money from which schools can obtain funds. However, the schools with the most needs still are not getting what they need to improve. In addition, it is rare that many different programs use brought together to make a learning experience that is comprehensive and coherent enough to make a difference for pupils. States are getting better at identifying which schools have the greatest need and distributing resources based on that information.

Ms. O’Brien stated that the 1994 Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act of the United States Congress contains provisions to the Title programs to make it easier for states to bring coherence to the programs offered and encourage states to incorporate Title I funds into their statewide accountability systems.

### *Federal Program Changes*

The provisions in 1994 as mentioned above were intended to make federal dollars more accessible for state goals:

- Consolidated planning. Instead of submitting separate applications for every federal program, this change allows just one application.
- School-wide Title I option. Schools that have at least 50 percent poverty are able to use Title I funds for the entire school rather than just target the students reaching that level in that school.
- Title I now requires states to develop standards and have assessments in place in at least reading and mathematics.
- Adequate yearly progress is also required and helps set clear guidelines for school improvement.

The changes outlined above were designed to make federal programs more a part of state strategies. However, very few states have been successful in this endeavor.

Ms. O’Brien stated that in November 1997, the United States Congress allocated \$150 million under Title I, called the *Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program*, sponsored by Representative Porter, a Republican from Illinois and Representative Obey, a Democratic from Wisconsin. They wanted to make sure schools could make sense of federal programs, creating an incentive for schools to bring federal funds together, and they wanted to make sure some of the dollars went to low-performing schools. Ms. O’Brien shared characteristics of the *Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program*:

- Schools compete for \$50,000 grants based on a state-defined process;
- Funding is for research-based models and must be focused on reorganizing the entire school; and
- Includes assistance by an external provider.

Ms. O’Brien noted that because of the *Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration Program (CSRD)*, an entire market has been created geared at developing and assisting schools in “whole-school” reform models. Although a number of technical assistance providers have been identified, none of them can be implemented for \$50,000. For a school to implement reform, they must continue all of the dollars from within their school from other sources. Schools must use their Title I funds, they must use their professional development dollars; and they may need to change how they allocate staff resources.

There are eight CSRD schools in Nevada; three of them are schools that were last year identified as having “inadequate performance.” They have just received the \$50,000 CSRD grants are moving toward

comprehensive school reform. Those schools (Risley Elementary, Mathews Elementary, and Booth Elementary schools all located in Washoe County) will be interesting to watch.

Ms. O'Brian noted that 17 of the 23 schools identified as inadequate are Title I schools and have funds available but for some reason are not using those resources to adopt approved programs.

### *Why Not?*

- Lack of help and knowledge. Many schools do not have much help in allocating resources.
- Inadequate information about assistance resources that can be accessed or reallocated.
- Limited choices about the form of the assistance.
- Misconception about program restrictions. Even since the reauthorization of Title I in 1994, many schools and districts still have not changed how they manage Title I applications and funding and, therefore, are not taking full advantage of the release in restrictions.
- Difficult trade-offs; choices. This might include changing how staff time is allocated, or letting staff go.
- Habit. Schools are reluctant to change the way they have been doing something in the past.

Ms. O'Brian commented on how states could improve access to federal funds:

### *State Leverage Points:*

- Look at local contacts and link resources for assistance to the accountability system.
- Provide better information to the schools about available resources and actual restrictions on those resources.
- Reduce the restrictions on resources, which may mean deregulation at the state level.
- Provide technical assistance to schools to make them aware of opportunities to help reallocate resources. Most school principals have not been trained in this area and it should be made easier for them.
- Create incentives. Make sure that remediation programs are structured to include an incentive to encourage schools to reform. Although \$50,000 is not a great sum of money from the federal government, it is making a difference in how schools are focusing and reorganizing their resources.

Chairman Raggio thanked Ms. O'Brian for her insight into accessing resources at the federal and state level. He said there was no question that input from the school districts was needed and coordination and reorganization was needed particularly in light of the new goals. He hoped that schools could better utilize this funding.

## **Continuation – Annual Reports**

### ▪ **Legislative Committee on Education**

H. Pepper Sturm, Chief Principal Research Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau, supplied the Committee with a copy of Bulletin 99-04 ([Exhibit K](#)) setting forth the work of the Committee during the past interim. He briefly explained that the Bulletin was structured to cover information about the policy briefings and the major topics that came before the Committee. Section 3 is a summary of the major findings and recommendations and the background for those recommendations. Mr. Sturm commented that the Committee reviewed 43 proposals regarding public education, including issues involving academic standards, accountability, teacher quality, testing and assessment. Forty recommendations were adopted, including requests for 14 bills and two resolutions.

Turning to Tab Six of the Committee Meeting Packet (Exhibit C), Mr. Sturm identified the Abstract of the Committee's activities and a summary of the recommendations of the Committee. Senator Raggio asked if there were any questions for Mr. Sturm. Seeing none, he thanked Mr. Sturm for his presentation.

Chairman Raggio acknowledged legislators present at the meeting: Assemblywoman Barbara Cegavske and Assemblyman Bob Beers.

▪ **Legislative Bureau of Educational Accountability and Program Evaluation**

Jeanne Botts, Senior Program Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau, provided the Committee with the Second Annual Report of the Legislative Bureau of Educational Accountability and Program Evaluation (Bureau)(Exhibit L). She stated there is a requirement under Senate Bill 482 that the bureau report each year to the Legislative Commission. The report details the activities of the Bureau. She reminded the Committee that the Bureau was created as a unit within the Fiscal Analysis Division to provide staff support to the Legislative Committee on Education.

The Bureau consists of primarily three employees: An Education Program Analyst, Melinda Braun; an Education Research Statistician, Lu Chen; and the Management Assistant, Joi Davis. They are supervised by Jeanne Botts, and work closely with the Chief Principal Research Analyst, Pepper Sturm and Senior Research Analyst, Kelan Kelly, from the Research Division. Ms. Botts said the Bureau has been fully-staffed since February of 1998.

In addition to education duties, the Bureau has duties that are fiscal in nature as well. The staff members are assigned budget accounts to monitor and analyze, they track legislation, revenues related to education, and are expected to be knowledgeable about federal revenues and programs in support of education. Ms. Botts related that the Bureau also collects and analyzes data and issues reports related to the Nevada Education Reform Act (NERA) provisions and statewide programs in accountability, testing, class-size reduction, and special education. The Bureau is also charged with evaluating performance and progress of public education and monitoring implementation of the act.

Ms. Botts stated that the Bureau closely monitors several committees, commissions, and councils, that are involved in public education, including two new bodies created by Senate Bill 482 of the 1997 session: The Commission on Educational Technology, and The Council to Establish Academic Standards.

Continuing, Ms. Botts said that one of the high profile provisions of the NERA was the designation of schools as having high, adequate or inadequate performance. The Bureau has been involved in that endeavor at all stages:

- By researching and recommending to the Committee remedial education programs that have been found to be effective in improving academic achievement;
- By reviewing applications and making recommendations to the Interim Finance Committee on the allocation of funding to low-achieving schools for remedial education programs;
- By monitoring the implementation of remedial programs in the low-achieving schools and the use of funding for such programs, and then evaluating the effectiveness of those remedial programs and school plans for improvement.

The NERA greatly increased testing requirements as a part of increased accountability for public schools. The Bureau has assisted the department in reviewing test items for bias and level of difficulty. Staff has also reviewed all test materials in order to be better able to answer legislator's questions regarding the tests. The Bureau has been assisted in the past several months by an ad hoc advisory group: the Testing Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC is comprised of school district test directors, university testing and measurement

experts, testing vendors, and the State Department of Education staff. TAC is designed to help the Bureau understand the issues and problems concerning testing and to better serve the Legislature.

Ms. Botts informed the Committee that the duty of the school accountability reports was transferred from the Department of Education to the Bureau by the NERA. The Bureau is required to analyze the effectiveness of the program and was authorized to contract for those services. That was performed by Dr. Eugene Paslov and the panel identified earlier. In addition, the Bureau produced the Data Tables, which are available as a separate document and are incorporated into Dr. Paslov's and Dr. Smith's reports. That was a joint endeavor with the State Department of Education to complete the Data Tables. Currently, the Bureau is working with the Department of Education to have the test results supplied directly from the test vendor to the Department in order to alleviate any concerns about errors.

Continuing, Ms. Botts stated that the Bureau conducted four regional workshops throughout the state in March 1998 in order to identify what teachers need to teach to higher standards. The outcome of those four workshops resulted in a BDR to create four regional professional development centers. Currently, a committee is working together from the four regions on development of those centers.

Also, Ms. Botts stated the Bureau visited all but five of the 17 school districts, and all of the 23 schools that were deemed inadequate based on test scores. The Bureau's duties also include preparing information for legislative committees and answering requests for information from legislators and others. Ms. Botts said an example of such requests includes a survey on the amount of time spent on testing. The bureau was also asked to provide help to districts experiencing problems on the revenue from net proceeds of minerals. In the future, Ms. Botts related that the Bureau plans to work in the coming year more closely on the development of the Statewide Management of Automated Student Records (SMART). This program has been monitored ever since its inception but now that it is nearing completion, in most districts, the Bureau will be interested in seeing what types of analyses are available once the system is operational. The Bureau will be expanding their analysis of test results and has a contractor working on that presently.

Ms. Botts commented that the Bureau would like to spend some time in the coming year with the Department of Education and school districts on the topic just addressed by Julie O'Brian—maximizing the use of state and federal funding for remedial education and school improvement programs. The Bureau will be reviewing effective teacher preparation and professional development programs and providing guidance on remedial education.

Ms. Botts stated the report ([Exhibit L](#)) provided much more detail on the activities of the Bureau and she was be available to respond to questions.

Chairman Raggio directed that the annual reports presented today be made part of the record.

### **Update on Success and Progress of Education Reform**

Prior to hearing from the presenters, Senator Raggio noted that he had received a telephone call from Tom Maher, Washoe County, regarding the funds for technology that were distributed among the school districts. He asked if either Mrs. Loring or Dr. Merrill could follow-up on that inquiry.

Senator O'Connell publicly recognized the contribution made by Anne Loring to the writing teams and the Council to Establish Academic Standards. Senator O'Connell opined that Mrs. Loring is "irreplaceable." Senator Raggio concurred; adding that Mrs. Loring was very dedicated.

Anne Loring, President of the Board of Trustees, Washoe County School District, provided the Committee with examples of the progress and success of the Nevada Education Reform Act of 1997:



First, on the issue of standards, Mrs. Loring stated that new academic standards were completed in August 1998 in English language arts, math and science. The Washoe County K-16 Council, in collaboration with the Washoe County School District, reviewed the state standards to see if they would meet the needs of local businesses, the future employers of most graduates. Over a period of four months, approximately 350 people from Washoe County reviewed the state standards and identified additional standards in each subject area that they felt needed to be included to meet the needs in Washoe County. Indeed, some changes were noted and these "enhanced standards" will be brought before the board next month.

Mrs. Loring said that the standards-setting process at the state level generated much enthusiasm in Washoe County. The chairman of the Washoe County K-16 Council asked her to point out to the Committee that funding is needed to align tests to the state standards because assessment is critical to ensure that the state standards are implemented.

Mrs. Loring said the Washoe County School District is looking at changing student requirements for academic programs needed to graduate and meet the standards, especially in math and science. The mathematics advisory committee will appear before the board next month with a proposal that every student pass at least the equivalent of Algebra I and Algebra II in order to graduate. That is a significant increase in the current mathematics requirements that has been driven by the state standards movement. The science advisory committee will also be appearing before the board to request an increase in science requirements for middle school students.

Addressing successes of the education reform act, Mrs. Loring said that during the first year, Washoe County School District had eight schools identified as having inadequate achievement under Senate Bill 482. Although the State Department of Education has not released the data for this school year, their preliminary analysis reveals that of those eight schools, seven have moved out of that category. Unfortunately, one school remains, and one school that was marginal last year, has dropped into the inadequate category. However, the one school that was high achieving in Washoe County will remain in that category.

Mrs. Loring stated that the district took immediate action in January 1998 when they learned that some schools would be categorized as having inadequate achievement and some schools were marginal. They asked the principals in those schools what was needed to improve academic achievement. Three workshops were held: 1) Successful reading programs for third and fourth grade teachers; 2) What TerraNova requires from students; and 3) Strategies for immediate intervention for math and reading. Additionally, teachers and principals were provided the flexibility to restructure their school day to focus on whatever time was needed for reading and mathematics.

Mrs. Loring indicated that the single, most dramatic change was when they tested third and fourth grade students from the inadequate schools in May 1998. By the end of the school year, they identified the students that were behind in reading and math and provided them with a mandatory summer school program, focused specifically on reading and math. A new series of tests were given and those scores are being reviewed for individual comparisons. The remediation money that was generously provided to these schools through Senate Bill 482 was used, along with Title I funding, to implement programs such as *Success For All*, *Reading Recovery*, and *Accelerated Reader*.

In closing, Mrs. Loring informed the Committee that a focus group of high school students was formed to review the state standards in conjunction with requirements for higher education and then they were asked to comment. She shared one of the comments from the students: "If more is expected of us, we will perform better."

Senator Raggio said that comment directly coincides with what the Legislative Committee on Education has

been hearing all along. Students will learn and teachers will teach to the level expected and that is why the level has been raised. He complimented the Washoe County School District for the logical steps taken to achieve a high degree of success.

Dotty Merrill, Testing Director, Washoe County School District, stated that in addition to the impact of Senate Bill 482 addressed by Mrs. Loring, there is another “value-added” impact of that legislation. Although the legislation focuses mostly on categories for student and school achievement, the information that determines those categories can be used by districts and schools for other purposes.

When teachers in Washoe County School District began to review TerraNova reports in the fall of 1997, and in the wake of Senate Bill 482, a number of schools adopted goals to lead to increased student learning. First, they wanted fewer students scoring in the bottom national quarter in three or four of the content areas mentioned for accountability purposes. Secondly, a goal was established to have more students score in the top national quarter in three or four of the content areas. Dr. Merrill clarified that these goals would mean that fewer students would perform in the range from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> national percentile rank; and that more students would perform in the range from the 76<sup>th</sup> to the 99<sup>th</sup> national percentile rank. Also, with thoughtful analysis of test results, classroom teachers target instruction so that low-scoring students can receive the help they need to improve, and students scoring in the higher quarters are challenged to improve and expand the skills they already possess. That extends equity across the classroom. Dr. Merrill presented displays of this concept (Exhibit M).

Dr. Merrill mentioned that in a number of schools, it was noted that there was a higher percentage of students in the bottom quarter and a lower percentage of students in the top quarter and that is not where they want achievement. However, as seen in the results of student scores, instructional progress and value-added learning are directly connected to the implementation of Senate Bill 482.

Turning to the next transparency, (Exhibit M), Dr. Merrill noted that the fourth grade reading scores in 1997, showed 22.4 percent of the students scored in bottom quarter. When TerraNova (norm-referenced achievement test) was administered to fourth graders in the fall of 1998, results indicate that that percentage has dropped to 8.9 percent. In the same instance, the percentage of students scoring in the top quarter in the fall of 1997 was 26.5 percent which increased to 37.8 percent in 1998. Looking at all four content areas, similar progression is noted in the aftermath of Senate Bill 482. That is a strong indication that there has been an elevated awareness in classrooms that the kind of analysis of test scores that is occurring now makes a difference in student performance.

Dr. Merrill mentioned that 40 schools in the Washoe County School District demonstrated increased student scores from 1997 to 1998. That means that 40 schools in Washoe County reduced the percentage of students scoring in the bottom quarter in three out of four of the content areas, and the percentage of students scoring in the top quarter also increased. This kind of evidence is not isolated in just the Washoe County School District as similar patterns will emerge in other school districts with full implementation of Senate Bill 482.

Dr. Merrill acknowledged Chairman Raggio’s earlier comments about raising expectations for all students. She concluded with a quote: “A rising tide lifts all boats.” When looking at the number of children and young adults affected by the legislation crafted by the members of the Committee and other legislators during the 1997 legislative session, a profound impact can be seen on the instruction and achievement of students and a greater progress towards educational equity for all students. She thanked the Committee for allowing her to address them.

Senator Raggio concurred with Dr. Merrill’s comments and said along with the 1997 legislation, the

Legislature must be committed through efforts and funding to make sure everything contained in the reform act remains in place.

Mark Shellinger, Superintendent, White Pine County School District, introduced Val Pooley, Board of Trustee member, who would be aiding him in his presentation. Mr. Shellinger thanked Fred Dugger for his comments and the help the White Pine County School District received from the Commission on Educational Technology. He said the district has now exceeded Level One in the technology plan set forth by the Commission.

Mr. Shellinger said he recently visited a first grade classroom in the White Pine County School District, taught by Mary Harrison, the best teacher he has ever met. He noted that Mary used technology in a positive and exciting fashion. For instance, on his visit to her classroom he observed pupils participating in a phonics lesson. They were using three of the networked computers in the classroom for various tasks. He asked one of the first grade students about technology. The pupil responded enthusiastically about technology and indicated he wanted to show him something. The pupil went to a cabinet and pulled out a box, opened it and plugged it in. The pupil showed him a record player, which was a "real big deal."

Mr. Shellinger provided the Committee with a report from the White Pine County School District on test results (Exhibit N). Using the report, Mr. Shellinger stated that in their school district they have elected to test all students in grades 2 through 10. They believe this enables them to compare student growth from year-to-year. They are also developing a first grade criterion-referenced test that will be tied to the school district curriculum. In addition, the state mandates testing at grades 4, 8 and 10, using the TerraNova, norm-referenced exam, and the high school proficiency exam.

Mr. Shellinger commented that standardized tests are important and teachers are the best at assessing student progress. Standardized tests provide a mechanism for the teacher to see where his/her students compare nationally. The district has worked with the teachers to use standardized testing to improve instruction.

Mr. Shellinger reported that two years ago, the district administered their first TerraNova examination. The results of those exams shocked the school district. Their pupils were substantially below grade level. Since they tested grades two through ten, they obtained much information. Thereafter, they prepared some focus groups and met with every teacher in the district to discuss the meaning of test results. Then, they talked with every parent in the district to find out how they felt about their children performing so far below the national average. Finally, parents and teachers talked to students together about making the commitment to move forward.

The White Pine County School District has made a concerted effort to meet individually with parents so they understand exactly how their child measures up academically. They focus on the student's growth from year-to-year, and they have found that the parents must be totally involved; it cannot be just the teacher working with the child. Teachers use test results for individual class and school instruction. The administration uses school and district reports to recommend changes in curriculum and teaching strategies. After the disastrous test results two years ago, Mr. Shellinger said, the district made a recommendation that the elementary curriculum be completely revamped. This was accomplished in four months.

In changing the K-5 curriculum, the White Pine County School District looked to *E.D. Hirsh's* work on *Core Knowledge*, a content-based, specific curriculum. *Core Knowledge* provides flexibility for the teacher in terms of integrated instruction. The teachers were asked to come up with a product in four months, based on the *Core Knowledge* program. The response from teachers was "How come we haven't been doing this sooner?" Mr. Shellinger said a key factor in the success of the White Pine School District raising test scores has been in allowing teachers and parents a choice in making a change.

Once the new curriculum was in place for one year, parents were provided copies of what their children would be learning based on the *Core Knowledge* curriculum. However, elementary children can meet high expectations if that is what they are given.

Turning to page 13 of his report (Exhibit N), Mr. Shellinger showed test results for fourth grade students for 1997 and the gain in those scores for 1998. He said the difficulty with this type of reporting is that those two years do not compare the same set of pupils; rather, they are showing results of fourth grade students from 1997, and a different set of fourth grade students for 1998. Similar gains were seen in the eighth grade testing scores. The middle schools have incorporated *Core Knowledge* into some of the classrooms also.

Tenth grade test scores show less of a gain, but do reflect a move toward school improvement at the high school level.

Mr. Shellinger stated that when the district wanted to improve test scores, they dedicated resources at the primary level. First, they concentrated on K-2. The results were remarkable (See page 16 of report, Exhibit N). Another way that White Pine County School District increased test scores, was by increasing the school day. Essentially, they added two and one-half weeks to the school year by increasing the number of instructional minutes. This was done with the consent of teachers. The teachers were willing to work together to make a difference and see results.

Directing the Committee to page one of his report, Mr. Shellinger, discussed the report that allows them to look at two years of test score results of the same group of students. He stated this type of comparison is useful and provides a focus for teachers.

Turning to page 8 of his report, Mr. Shellinger stated that in 1997, 41 percent of the second graders were in the bottom quartile. Yet, in only one year, only 16 percent of the second graders in 1998 scored in the bottom quartile. They saw positive changes at every grade level.

Senator Raggio asked how the school district handled recalcitrant administrators or teachers that were reluctant to change. Mr. Shellinger replied that they try very hard to work with all the teachers. In addition, one advantage that was noted during the financial collapse of the White Pine County School District, was that people were willing to try something different. The school district did not simply collapse financially in 1995, it also collapsed structurally. People were demoralized. Mr. Shellinger commented that when he interviewed for the position of superintendent during that time, the board was anxious to reform everything and people were generally willing. Principals were given direction that unless major changes were seen, they would be gone. Principals gave the same kind of direction to teachers, support staff, parents, and students. They make the decisions at the school, not the board and not the superintendent.

Mr. Shellinger said it has been a team effort. However, when all this change took place, they said "goodbye" to over half of their administrators, and to a number of non-performing teachers.

Lastly, Mr. Shellinger shared with the Committee how the White Pine County School District used test results to focus on students that have the greatest need. They looked at what they were doing wrong by visiting every classroom. That showed him that great teaching was occurring but there was no focus. So, first they implemented the *Core Knowledge* curriculum, which exceeds the state standards. Secondly, they took their two best primary teachers and had them work with the kids that had the greatest need in the entire district, in second and third grades. Those students were targeted and placed in a "catch-up" class. The parents and students were given a choice on whether they wanted to be in the class or not, but they wanted to make sure they focused on the children with the greatest needs. Usually, the most popular teachers receive the most parental requests. Their policy to have the two best teachers (Pat Bernd and Cyndi Sanborn) unavailable for

the rest of the students made many parents angry.

Mr. Shellinger explained that the teachers in the “catch-up” class were allowed to use a variety of programs that best met the pupils’ needs. Twenty-three pupils were in the class; four had incomplete test scores from year-to-year so they could not use any of those records for comparison. Of the 19 remaining students, 18 were significantly below the 50 percentile on TerraNova tests in 1997. Only one student was above the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile when tested in October of 1997. Testing one year later in October 1998 revealed substantial academic gains—8 of the 18 that were well below-grade level in 1997, are at or above grade level in 1998. The class had an average total battery score in the 19<sup>th</sup> percentile in 1997 and reached the 45<sup>th</sup> percentile in 1998. Although the class did not completely catch-up, it has remarkably closed the gap.

Valerie Pooley stated she was speaking as a parent and a school board trustee member. She explained that she requested her daughter be placed in the “catch-up” class. Her daughter had an “average” reading ability. The class consisted of average second and third graders with very low reading skills. Test results for this year were significantly higher than for those same children from last year. In her daughter’s instance, she went from 49 percentile, showing what she had learned in first grade, up to a 76<sup>th</sup> percentile for what she learned in the second grade. Those two TerraNova tests hang on their refrigerator and represent incentive and proof to her daughter of how much smarter she now is, how turning in homework is an asset, and how hard she has worked to accomplish her goals.

As a board member, Ms. Pooley said she has to justify the cost of the program by having these two superb teachers in one classroom. It has been proven that this type of intervention is successful, but funding is needed to continue these programs.

Mr. Shellinger said that they hope to track the test scores from this same group of students and the program will be repeated again this year so they will have those test scores to review. In conclusion, Mr. Shellinger reiterated what worked for them:

- They went to a curriculum that was curriculum-based, rather than concept-based;
- They involved parents and students as partners in making the change;
- They gave control to the school site;
- They began offering summer school;
- They offer before-school and Saturday tutorials for students in Grades 1-12;
- They involved parents and students as partners in making changes, with control given to the school site;
- Summer school, before-school, and Saturday tutorials for students.

Mr. Shellinger stated that working together as a team is what helped make the White Pine School District successful. He introduced the following persons from the White Pine County School District:

Tim Curtin, Director of Special Projects  
 Lynne Ruegamer, Principal at Norman Elementary School  
 Paul Johnson, Finance Officer  
 Hugh Qualls, Principal at Lund School  
 Keith Conley, Principal of three small schools (McGill, Baker and Murray Street)  
 Warren Kirch, Vice-Principal of White Pine High School

Senator Raggio thanked Mr. Shellinger for his presentation.

### **Update on Final List of Effective Remedial Programs**

Mindy Braun, Education Program Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau, provided an update to the current *List of Effective Remedial Programs*, and recommendations for nine (9) additional programs. Ms. Braun thanked Bill Arensdorf, Terry Owens, Kathy St. Clair, and Chopin Kiang, Nevada Department of Education, and Dr. Eugene Paslov, Education Management Consultants, Inc., for their help in the review process.

On March 26, 1998, the Committee adopted a list of 21 remedial programs that were found to be effective in increasing the academic achievement of students. At that time, the Committee made two recommendations:

- That the 21 programs undergo evaluation to determine their effectiveness to remain on the list; and
- That new programs be reviewed and recommended to the Committee, as appropriate.

Ms. Braun stated that during the 1997-98 school year, 23 schools were designated as performing inadequately. Therefore, those schools became eligible for a portion of the \$3 million allocated for remediation. All 23 schools applied for the money and all 23 schools received funding that was sufficient to have their top priority programs implemented. Over the past year, those 23 schools have been implementing their programs and have begun to collect data. Remediation funding was requested for eight of the 21 effective programs:

Reading Renaissance	13 requests
Success For All	9 requests
CCC	7 requests
Reading Recovery	6 requests
FOSS	4 requests
Books & Beyond	3 requests
Contemporary Math	1 request
Voyager	1 request

Overall, 70 percent of the requests were for reading programs, 19 percent of the requests were for comprehensive programs (those programs that include all subject areas), 9 percent of the requests were for math programs, and 2 percent were for science programs. Ms. Braun informed the Committee that once the data has been collected from the schools using these programs, a report will be compiled and presented to the Committee. However, at this point, the first recommendation from the review committee is to keep all 21 programs on the list.

Ms. Braun pointed out that when the Committee adopted the *Final List of Effective Remedial Programs* in March 1998, two areas were lacking at that time: Programs for middle/highs school age level; and science programs.

Ms. Braun informed the Committee that she received many suggestions from school districts, education staff, community members, parents and others on programs that could be included on the List and these calls were extremely helpful in identifying programs to review. Ms. Braun stated the committee reviewed 45 new programs for possible inclusion on the List.

When reviewing the new programs, Ms. Braun stressed that the same criteria was used which was established for the first 21 programs adopted:

- Is the audience appropriate?
- Is the age group appropriate?

- Is the program remedial? Ms. Braun added that many programs were submitted; however, they were not remedial in nature, even though they are good programs.
- Is there evidence of effectiveness? Ms. Braun said the review team received many programs that included letters of recommendation or other types of articles. However, actual data (pre-test/post-test) was necessary for review.
- Requirements for implementation. The program must be reasonable, especially in consideration of funding and the effectiveness of the program.
- Cost effectiveness.

In addition, Ms. Braun informed the Committee that some of the programs are comparing their programs to the TerraNova or other tests and state standards. Two programs, Josten's Learning and Brainchild have been aligned to the TerraNova exam. The review team would like to include as a criterion during the next review process: "Does the program align with Nevada's standards? Does the program align with the TerraNova?"

Ms. Braun stated that nine of the 45 programs reviewed were selected:

- Brainchild
- Bridges
- California Early Literacy Learning (CELL/ExLL)
- Jostens Learning
- MathWings
- NovaNet
- Saxon Math
- Saxon Phonics
- Soar to Success

A description of the above programs is located under Tab 8 of the Meeting Packet (Exhibit C). Continuing, Ms. Braun noted that five of the nine programs are designed for middle school age level. Soar to Success, for instance, is a remedial reading program specific to older children. The CELL program uses the same techniques as Reading Recovery except that the program is contained within the classroom. Math Wings is part of the Success for All Roots and Wings program which began with reading and has now added math. Although Math Wings is a relatively new program, data supports it. Also, through the Comprehensive School Reform federal funds that Julie O'Brian mentioned earlier, three of the schools in Washoe County designated as inadequate have incorporated MathWings.

In the upcoming year, Success for All will be developing a science and social studies program. The review team can evaluate that data within the next couple years for possible inclusion on the list.

Ms. Braun provided the following information in comparing the remedial programs from the list adopted in 1998 to the recommended list for 1999:

	1998	1999
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	18 programs	26 programs
MIDDLE SCHOOL	11 programs	17 programs
HIGH SCHOOL	7 programs	12 programs
READING	14 programs	21 programs
WRITING	10 programs	14 programs
MATH	13 programs	19 programs
SCIENCE	7 programs	9 programs
COMPREHENSIVE	6 programs	8 programs

Senator Raggio said in the interest of time, and seeing no objections from the Committee, he directed that the nine additional remedial programs be forwarded to the Department of Education for inclusion on the *Final List of Effective Remedial Programs*. He thanked Ms. Braun for her efforts in reviewing all 45 programs submitted.

### **Status Report on the Nevada High School Proficiency Examination**

Dr. Stanley Rabinowitz, WestEd, discussed the results of the High School Proficiency Exam (HSPE) administered in October 1998. His overhead displays are contained in Exhibit C, Tab 9. He informed the Committee that two populations were tested: Eleventh graders for the first time, and Twelfth graders who failed the exam in April 1998. He recalled that the legislation on the HSPE mandated a moderate passing score for the first exam and then the State Board of Education adopted an intermediate score for 11<sup>th</sup> graders, eventually moving toward a more rigorous score. He reminded that the intermediate score for the reading exam is 71 and the moderate standard is 70. In math, the intermediate standard is 64 which was raised from 61 in April 1998. He explained that a pupil who failed the exam in April 1998 would stay with the 61 score at re-take even though that score had been increased to 64 for the next class.

Of the first time test-takers, 73 percent passed the reading test and only 49.1 percent passed the math test. Dr. Rabinowitz advised the Committee that two factors have changed since the April 1998 administration of the exam: 1) The passing score is higher; and 2) the exam was administered six months earlier.

If the passing score had remained at the moderate score (70 instead of 71), 76.4 percent of the students would have passed the reading exam. When 11<sup>th</sup> graders were first tested last April at the moderate score level, 78.7 percent passed. If the passing score in math had remained the same (64 instead of 61), 62 percent of the students would have passed, rather than the 49.1 percent that actually passed.

Reviewing the results of the HSPE for gender and ethnicity, Dr. Rabinowitz stated that girls perform better in reading than boys. However, results reveal that boys outperform girls in the area of math. He assured the Committee that the HSPE has undergone bias and statistical bias review so even though there are differences among gender and ethnicity, it is not due to bias.

Turning to results of the HSPE based on ethnicity, Dr. Rabinowitz said that the state average for the reading portion of the exam is 73.3 percent—ranging from 82.3 percent for the white population to 51.1 percent for the Hispanic population. The math results considering ethnicity are more troubling, with the state average being 49.1 percent and the white population is at 58.8 percent. Only 21.4 black students in the state are passing the math test the first time it is administered; Hispanics, 26.5 percent; American Indian/Eskimos, 32.7 percent; and the Asian Americans are comparable to the white population at 56.8 percent. He concluded that performance on the math exam is low for all groups. He reminded the Committee that those students who have failed the exam, now have four more opportunities to take the exam.

Turning to the 12<sup>th</sup> graders who retook the exam or were absent for the first exam, 58.4 percent passed the reading test and 42.1 percent passed on the math exam. By the second administration, another 40 percent were able to pass the math exam. Dr. Rabinowitz said that in 1998 when the HSPE was administered, 50 percent of the students were reported as being “at risk.” Programs are now in place to help those pupils raise test scores. Hopefully, by June 1999 when he comes before the Committee again and discusses the number of pupils that did not graduate, the number will be lower. In most states those numbers go from the thousands to the hundreds. Dr. Rabinowitz said the state should also look at the gender and ethnicity differences when seeking to improve student achievement.

Dr. Rabinowitz informed the Committee that his contract with the Department of Education includes a



partnership with the State Board of Education and the District Test Coordinators to identify which pupils are failing and why, to identify strength and weaknesses in programs that are preparing and remediating pupils. Therefore, he will be performing statistical analyses of ethnic groups divided by gender groups to determine what portion of the reading exam males are not passing and identify the content strands that are making it difficult for females to pass the math exam. Similar analyses will be performed for ethnic groups as well. In addition, they will survey teachers, administrators, students and perhaps parents to find out what classes they are taking, what programs are working. He will be working with district test directors to identify models of programs that work and those programs will be discussed at his next meeting with them on February 2, 1999.

In conclusion, Dr. Rabinowitz said although the results of the HSPE may appear discouraging, the program is working and improving. Further, he does anticipate that in June 1999, the numbers of pupils not graduating will be much smaller than he presented today.

Senator Raggio thanked Dr. Rabinowitz for his report on the high school proficiency examination.

### **Report on Time Spent Testing Students**

Jeanne Botts, Senior Program Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau, reported that a survey was conducted by the Legislative Bureau of Educational Accountability and Program Evaluation (Bureau) in response to a legislator's request. The Testing Advisory Committee (TAC) assisted the Bureau in designing the survey instrument. Lu Chen, Education Research Statistician, prepared the results of the survey compiled into a booklet ([Exhibit O](#)). The survey included such factors as time used in testing, time spent in class preparing students for testing, lost time due to schedule changes, and similar items. The Bureau attempted to present a thorough analysis of all the time spent testing students. However, college-entrance exams, tests relating to the military, diagnostic tests and program assessments were not included in the survey since those tests are at the discretion of the student and are not administered to a majority of the pupils.

Ms. Botts stated the survey was broken into state-mandated tests and tests given at the discretion of the district. Some districts only administer the state-mandated tests: the norm-referenced tests given at grades 4, 8 and 10, the writing assessment given at grades 4 and 8, and the HSPE, while other districts test many grades. One of the highest amounts of time used for testing was 47 hours in grade 11 in the Clark County School District. Roughly half of that time was spent on district-wide tests. Nine school districts report no class time spent in testing grades one and two. Twelve districts did not give any district-wide tests to 12 graders. In general, it appeared that fourth and eleventh graders spent more time testing than pupils in other grades.

Ms. Botts provided a blue insert sheet for the booklet ([Exhibit O](#)), replacing Table A for Elko County School District, which reported, after publication, that they needed to change their numbers. Ms. Botts went on to describe the attachments to the booklet ([Exhibit O](#)). She stated that it was brought to their attention that the bar chart was confusing in that the scales used were not uniform and therefore just looking at the length of the bar could be misleading.

### **Report of District Testing Practices and Expenditures: 1998-99**

Dr. Paul LaMarca, Evaluation Consultant, Nevada Department of Education, said that NRS 389.017 requires the Department of Education to report information pertaining to district testing practices. Specifically, they are mandated to report examinations administered at the district level, grade levels of test administration, the costs incurred and the purpose for which the examinations are used. Excerpts from his report were included in the Meeting Packet ([Exhibit C, Tab 10](#)).

Turning to Table One of his report, Dr. Lamarca stated that the table presents information regarding district testing practices outside of the state-wide program. The districts vary in the types of tests used, the amount of tests used, and the grade level in which they administer tests. For instance, Washoe County and Douglas County school districts use a large number of assessments throughout K-12. That is in contrast to smaller school districts where only one assessment is used, such as Esmeralda County. He added that Storey County is the only school district that does not perform any assessment besides the state mandated tests.

Dr. Lamarca, in discussing the types of assessment used, 14 of the 17 school districts are using norm-referenced tests in off-grades. In nine districts, criterion-referenced tests are being used, including some performance, portfolio type assessments. In eight districts, college-entrance exams are used. How the tests are being administered varies among the districts. For instance, five of the 17 districts are beginning to administer assessments in Kindergarten.

Dr. Lamarca asserted that the primary purpose of assessment is to identify proficiency levels in a variety of subject areas. The tests are also being used to guide instructional practices for student placement and to measure student achievement growth from year-to-year.

Turning to costs associated with tests, Dr. LaMarca informed the Committee that school districts, in total, are spending approximately \$645,000. Approximately 88 percent of that figure is for professional and clerical salaries, since state funds are used for testing materials. Testing outside of the state-mandated program includes approximately \$1.5 million being spent across the school districts. He commented that since there is much variability among the districts, it is difficult to compare that information.

In conclusion, Dr. LaMarca stated in 1998-99, districts will spend in excess of \$2 million on testing. Approximately 30 percent of that amount supports the state program, but that amount has grown since 1997, mostly due to student population growth, and there have also been increases in the state testing program and individual district testing programs.

### **Report on Class-Size Reduction Program**

Dr. Mary Snow, Evaluation Consultant, Nevada Department of Education (NDE), provided a summary of her class-size reduction report located at Tab 11 of the Meeting Packet (Exhibit C). Dr. Snow stated the class-size reduction program became effective in 1990-91.

She pointed out that the first study of the class-size reduction program was prepared by her in 1993. This study focused on second grade students who experienced reduced class sizes during school year 1991-92. This group was compared to the second grade students during the previous two years before the program went into effect. Data included standardized test scores for reading and math as well as student characteristics. The result of that multi-year analysis did not produce clear evidence of a relationship between class size and achievement. However, there were two important findings:

- There was a strong, negative relationship between achievement and student characteristics of low socio-economic status, limited English proficiency, and special education status. In many cases, there were 20+ points difference between those scores and other students.
- The second finding of importance was that only 20 percent of the variance in the test scores was accounted for by the variables that they were able to collect. This clearly indicated that more variables needed to be considered to determine achievement in order to understand how and under what conditions class size reduction affects achievement. Additional variables would include teacher characteristics, administrator interest and support, parents and community.

In addition to the quantitative study, surveys were conducted of those most involved in the program: First and second grade teachers, parents of first and second graders, and administrators of those schools. The responses were positive in most cases that the program was making a difference in how teachers instructed, and in student attitude and performance.

The 1995 evaluation examined the length between small classes and test scores by focusing on the second grade students in 1992-93 and 1993-94. Some third and fourth grade data was collected from districts who were voluntarily testing in those grades. So, in addition to the data collected for the first study, this report added whether the third grade students had been in Nevada in the second grade and whether the second grade students had been in Nevada in the first grade. Dr. Snow said the most positive finding from the 1995 study was from the analysis of third grade students who had attended Nevada schools. The graduates of Nevada second graders scored significantly higher in reading and math than second graders who did not attend Nevada schools.

Dr. Snow said that in regards to the 1993 study, special education status, socio-economic status, and limited English proficiency status accounted for more variance in test scores than class-size. Secondly, some of the differences between student scores could be explained by class-size and student characteristics, but the majority of the differences were unexplained by the data. They determined that the study was leaving out important variables such as school and teacher characteristics.

Dr. Snow related that the Department used a new evaluation model for the 1997 report on class-size reduction. The Department had been previously unsuccessful in obtaining financial support to conduct a comprehensive evaluation study of the class-size reduction program, yet recognized its obligation to provide evaluation data for the 1997 legislature. The key feature of the new model was the sole use of existing data routinely collected for the Nevada proficiency testing program. The proposal for the 1997 report was to study the fourth graders tested in October 1996. Data on standardized test scores in reading, math and language arts and attendance in Nevada schools for first and second grades when reduced class size would have been experienced. Variables on ethnicity, socioeconomic status, special education and limited English proficiency status were also collected. Test scores were compared for the four attendance groups and the following results were shown:

- When mean scores or percentiles for reading, language and math tests were examined with the attendance variable, it was found that higher scores were associated with having had two years of the class-size reduction experience.
- Mean scores were higher for those pupils with one year of experience compared to those with no years experience with class-size reduction.

Dr. Snow pointed out that the differences among the test scores were small but statistically significant. The other major finding was that evidence cannot be shown that the experience of a reduced class size is affecting pupils with special needs.

The 1998 study which used data from 1997 revealed similar results as the previous year. Dr. Snow stated the 1999 report will be adding eighth grade test scores. This would analyze eighth graders that have been in Nevada that had the class-size experience in the first or second grade. Those scores will be compared with other students.

Finally, Dr. Snow said that in light of the results of the above studies, it is recommended that in order to completely understand the effects of class-size reduction, it will be necessary to conduct a comprehensive study which takes into account the many variations that exist. The literature reveals that it is not just a matter of reducing the size of the class, but what is done within the classroom. Future studies need to determine if

the quality of instruction has improved because of class size. Other variables that need to be considered include the relationship between student/teacher and the influence of a principal at the school.

Dr. Snow stated based on her report, the recommendation is that a comprehensive study would make it possible to know which variables are related and under what conditions. The expected outcome would be the identification of those variables most related to improved student achievement. Thereafter, it would be possible to provide research-based suggestions and guidelines to teachers, schools and districts which would have the potential of maximizing the impact of class-size reduction for all students.

Chairman Raggio stated the Committee would take the recommendations under advisement and thanked Dr. Snow for her report.

### **Public Testimony.**

Seeing none, Chairman Raggio moved to the next agenda item.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

Chairman Raggio stated the next meeting of the Committee was tentatively set for February 10, 1999, but a notice would be posted.

Senator Raggio thanked Assemblyman Hickey for attending and for his input over the interim on the Committee and during his legislative time. There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

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Joi Davis, Committee Secretary

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Assemblyman Wendell P. Williams, Chairman

Date: 9-20-99