

Legislature Contributions to Failing Schools

No Investment in teachers = No investment in students

Our students, especially in southern Nevada, are facing many obstacles in trying to receive a good education. While some of those are clearly the fault of the local school district, others have their origin at the state level – right here in the NV Legislature.

That's occurring for a few reasons. First, the unintended consequences of your legislative actions has resulted in our students not having their needs met, second is chronic underfunding in areas of priority, and third the state has been redirecting educational funding to your friends.

Some examples - NV has had a documented shortage of math teachers since 1985. While Nevada is hiring less and less qualified teachers who clearly need assistance, the state's professional development budgets have been cut by approximately 50% over the last decade and a half. And added to that, the administrators who evaluate and supervise these less than qualified teacher often know a lot less math or science than the substitutes teaching those subjects – how does that help our students?

If STEM is, in fact, a priority, you would not know it by following the money,

Now, the state and nation are facing an exacerbated teacher shortage. Shortages in all grades and subject areas. Students being taught by good, hardworking substitutes. Is it possible that you are so naïve that you don't understand when students don't have teachers that know their content or can't teach it in a way that students understand, they get frustrated and act out? This contributes to the discipline issues schools are facing.

Last session, with all those added federal dollars, you and Governor Sisolak didn't bother to address the need for having these less than qualified teachers have some professional development.

These issues are ongoing at this level in Nevada, let me refresh your memory. When the new math and ELA standards were introduced, while the rest of the state received professional development funds to ensure teachers were aware of those new standards, the funds allocated for southern NV were diverted to a program associated with a senator's wife in an agreement with you and then Governor Sandoval and State Superintendent Erquiaga. You might remember the next year the Governor then complained that the teachers did not know the new standards. Talk about a need to invest in mirrors.

And, if that slight to southern Nevada students was not enough, when the new science standards were introduced 4 years later, southern Nevada students suffered again because of funding distribution. The northern school districts received funding in the first year – the south did not! So, what do those actions say about your concern for southern Nevada students or your commitment to STEM? Why do southern Nevada students have these obstacles to their education placed in front of them?

And, to improve the graduation rate, the district has imposed Minimum F policies and the state did away with exams that might alert the public that those graduation rates are a sham. Was that actually intended?

You also passed legislation that removed central administrators from the administrative association. These long-term Nevadans are now classified as "at-will" and can be fired for no reason. Have you even noticed that no central administrators have spoken up about the policies causing such strife in our schools? These people can't afford to disagree with the superintendent and risk being fired and have to move

their families out of state. That's silence is another unintended consequence of legislation that has resulted in some pretty poor policies not being thought out and placing our students and staff in harms way.

Central administrators need protection so they can speak up!

Your response to breaking up the district was a reorganization plan that has been almost completely ignored. Administrators, principals, their assignments and promotions are determined by the superintendent. If they try to follow state law, their career and livelihood is placed in jeopardy. As you know, school principals who tried to carry out state law were bought out, approximately 60 of them, and that exacerbated the teachers shortage. Another unintended consequence of your legislation.

Hopefully, you will start listening and place priority on improving education – not on your ability to pass some bill with your name on it or to reward some crony, but to actually and thoughtfully pass legislation to create a better learning experience for our students.

Here are 3 suggestions:

You need to re-store funding to the RPDP's to previous levels so teachers have opportunities to receive professional development in the content they teach, strategies to teach that content, resources that support that as well as assessment strategies that set students up for success.

You also need to amend the central administration legislation that effectively silenced voices and allowed insane policies to be implemented.

And, you need to deconsolidate CCSD. I'm sure that will result in additional costs. But, whatever that amount, it won't come close to the obstacles and price our students are currently paying under this system.

Deconsolidating CCSD Benefits

- Increased parental involvement
- Increased competition
- Increased choice
- Increased opportunities for students
- Increased local control
- Increased accountability
- Increased mobility for teachers
- Increased mobility for administrators

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