



NEVADA LEGISLATURE JOINT INTERIM STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

(Nevada Revised Statutes [NRS] 218E.320)

MINUTES

February 5, 2024

The first meeting of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education for the 2023–2024 Interim was held on Monday, February 5, 2024, at 9 a.m. in Room 4401, Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 3137, Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada.

The agenda, minutes, meeting materials, and audio or video recording of the meeting are available on the Committee's [meeting page](#). The audio or video recording may also be found at <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/Video/>. Copies of the audio or video record can be obtained through the Publications Office of the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) (publications@lcb.state.nv.us or 775/684-6835).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT IN LAS VEGAS:

Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Chair
Senator Roberta Lange, Vice Chair
Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop
Assemblyman Reuben D'Silva

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ATTENDING REMOTELY:

Senator Carrie A. Buck
Assemblywoman Natha C. Anderson
Assemblywoman Alexis Hansen
Assemblywoman Melissa Hardy

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU STAFF PRESENT:

Jennifer A. Sturm-Gahner, Principal Policy Analyst, Research Division

Alex Drozdoff, Senior Policy Analyst, Research Division

Crystal Rowe, Senior Research Policy Assistant, Research Division

Asher Killian, Legislative Counsel, Legal Division

Cameron Newton, Senior Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division

James Malone, Principal Program Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division

*Items taken out of sequence during the meeting have been placed in agenda order.
[Indicate a summary of comments.]*

AGENDA ITEM I—OPENING REMARKS

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Good morning and welcome to our first meeting of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education.

We have a lot of members on Zoom. We are having bad weather both in Las Vegas and up in northern Nevada, so in the interest of keeping people safe, if members needed to Zoom, that is what we did.

At this time, I will take a few minutes and allow members to introduce themselves.

Vice Chair Lange:

Good morning. I represent Senate District 7 in Las Vegas, which is by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), and then goes all the way east. During session, I am the Chair of Senate Education, and I am happy to be here to talk about education.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

It is good to see everybody this morning. I represent Assembly District 28 in East Las Vegas and parts of North Las Vegas. I am a high school history teacher at Rancho High School, I am very happy to be here with you. I am looking forward to the issues at hand.

Senator Buck:

I represent Senate District 5 in Henderson. Thank you for having me today.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I represent Assembly District 30, which is the Truckee Meadows area, Sparks, and a little bit of Reno. I also am a teacher—Civics, as well as Creative Writing. Thank you for allowing me to be on this Committee.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Good morning from snowy northern Nevada, it is nice to see you all. I represent Assembly District 32, which covers six counties here in the northern part of the State—from Washoe all the way over to Elko. I have been on Interim Education, and during regular session—the Education Committee, since 2019. I am honored to be able to serve on education. I have a great interest, as you all do, in the education issues of our State. As a mom of eight and grandma of 24, education is a big deal, not only to my family but to my constituents and our fellow citizens in the State. Thank you for the chance to be here.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I have the honor of chairing the Education Committee during the regular session, and this time chairing the Interim Education Committee. We have a robust agenda. Our meetings go long, as you know. We have a lot that needs to be discussed, figured out, and planned for next session so I am excited to jump back into it.

Now, I am going to introduce our LCB staff.

Ms. Drozdoff:

This is my second interim with the Committee, and I am very excited to be back.

Mr. Killian:

This is my first interim as Legislative Counsel, but thankfully, not my first interim serving the Interim Education Committee as Committee Counsel. I am excited to continue to assist you in any way that I can.

Ms. Sturm-Gahner:

I am happy to be here. I have been staffing the Committee on Education since 2016.

Mr. Newton:

I am a part of LCB Legal. This is my first interim period, so this is also my first interim with the Education Committee. I am looking forward to working on the issues the Committee addresses this interim.

Mr. Malone:

I am a principal program analyst. This will be my first interim with Education and looking forward to assist.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Our Committee Secretary is Crystal Rowe.

[Chair Bilbray-Axelrod reviewed meeting protocol and information related to providing public comment.]

AGENDA ITEM II—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

With that, let us get started with public comment. I will begin with those wanting to make public comment here in Las Vegas.

Is there anyone wishing to make public comment in Las Vegas? Please begin when you are ready.

Gil Lopez, Executive Director, Charter School Association of Nevada:

Hello, Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the Committee. I am with the Charter School Association of Nevada, representing a little over 67,000 students in the State of Nevada. We are very excited to have the presentation by the Charter Authority today. It is going to showcase a lot of the gains, a lot of the achievement that we had during the last couple of years. We are very excited about showcasing that to the State and all the great things our public charter schools are doing.

Second of all, we are very excited to have Director Mackendon at the reins of the Charter Authority. She is going to be following the great work that Director Feiden has done and the foundation that she has laid to have the great achievements that we have had.

Finally, I will reach out during the spring semester and hopefully, we can get some of our legislators to visit the schools in your district to see firsthand all the great things they are doing.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Is there anyone else in Las Vegas? I am not seeing anyone coming up.

We will go to Carson City. Is there anyone in Carson City wishing to make public comment? It does not look like anyone is coming up to those chairs.

I will go to Broadcast and Production Services (BPS) is there anyone on the phone lines wishing to make public comment?

BPS:

To provide public comment, please press *9 now to take your place in the queue.

Kent Ervin, Past President and Director of Government Relations, Nevada Faculty Alliance (NFA):

Good morning, Chair Bilbray-Axelrod and Committee Members. I have submitted my full comments in writing to the Committee ([Agenda Item II](#)), and we look forward to Chancellor Carlton's presentation on the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). The NFA is the independent association of professional employees of NSHE. We work to empower our members to be fully engaged in our mission to help students succeed.

As you select topics for deeper review during this interim period, please consider the following:

1. The tragic shootings and fatalities at UNLV on December 6 made apparent deficiencies in campus safety. Committees at NSHE and the institutions are studying safety issues and will make recommendations. We ask legislators for support when the time comes for NSHE to request financial assistance for safety infrastructure improvements;
2. The Assembly Bill 493 (2023) Committee on Higher Education Funding has started its work to examine the NSHE funding structure and formula. That is a big task. Assembly Bill 493 contained no provision for bill draft requests (BDRs) though, so you may need to act to ensure the Funding Committee's recommendations are considered during the 2025 Session; and
3. Given the potential for new funding formula recommendations and voters' approval of removing the Board of Regents from the *Nevada Constitution*, the Legislature will need a higher level of engagement with an oversight over public higher education in Nevada. The Nevada System of Higher Education is a large and complex part of State government, and the education committees already have a huge workload with K through 12 issues, as is evident from today's agenda. We recommend that a standing committee or subcommittee on higher education be established in each house so that sufficient time and effort can be focused on improving higher education in Nevada.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you, Mr. Ervin. This is the first meeting we have had since that tragic day at UNLV. It was a horrible day. I appreciate you bringing it up, and we will talk about safety. Today, on our agenda, we will be talking about higher education, and we will have full agendas coming up.

BPS, are there any other callers?

BPS:

Yes, Chair. Caller, you are unmuted and may begin.

Shantal Marshall, Vice President, NFA:

Good morning. I want to reiterate the comments made by my colleague, Kent Ervin; specifically, about the creation of a new interim committee on higher education. As an educator at Nevada State University, with a partner who is a Clark County School District (CCSD) teacher at a Title I school, our conversations around education are very good to have around the kitchen table, but it is very clear that our needs for the two systems are very different. They should be definitely speaking to each other in terms of preparing our CCSD students for higher education. Right now, having the two systems under one umbrella of education in the Legislature is a lot. I am sure you would appreciate a shorter agenda since you just mentioned how long your agendas are. I think it is important to realize that the needs of NSHE are very different, especially if Question 1 passes and we are under the guidance of the Nevada Legislature.

BPS:

Chair, the public line is open and working, but there are no more callers at this time.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will have another public comment at the end of the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM III—REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE’S DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Staff will provide an overview of the Committee's duties and responsibilities for this interim. Ms. Sturm-Gahner and Ms. Drozdoff, please begin when you are ready.

Ms. Sturm-Gahner:

Before I begin, I would like to remind the Committee and members of the public that as staff of the LCB, we serve in a nonpartisan capacity and can neither advocate for nor against any proposal that comes before the Committee.

I am happy to be here today with my colleague, Ms. Drozdoff, who is in Las Vegas, to go over the Committee Brief, which has been uploaded to the Committee website and is available in both meeting locations ([Agenda Item III A](#)). The Brief provides information on the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education, including its membership and staff support on page 1. The powers and duties of the Committee are outlined on page 2. One thing I wanted to highlight here is that the Committee may request up to ten BDRs for

the 2025 Session. The tentative meeting dates are also outlined on page 2, any changes to these dates will be reflected on the Committee's website. On page 3, we have listed the mandated Committee activities this interim. As you can see, the Committee is required to study several topics including hearing reports on charter schools, accountability, school funding topics, studying pupils, higher education, and educational personnel topics including the appointment of members to the Nevada State Teacher and Education Support Professional Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force—that is something the Committee will consider later today. Each of these mandated activities include a reference to the relevant statute or enacted legislation requiring the topic. With that, I will turn things over to my colleague, Ms. Drozdoff in Las Vegas.

Ms. Drozdoff:

In addition to the mandated activities, this Committee may also consider issues relating to accountability, early childhood education, and school personnel, among other topics. Other resources that may help the Committee complete its work are the education related reports that multiple entities are required to submit. This includes reports relating to higher education programs, pupil teacher ratios, professional development and training, and more. A more detailed list of reports can be found in the materials for this meeting ([Agenda Item III B](#)).

Additionally, this Brief includes a short description of several of the K through 12 and higher education entities in Nevada, including the Commission of Innovation and Excellence in Education which was implemented in the 2023 Session via Senate Bill 425 and the primary sponsors of the bill are both members of this Committee—Senators Dondero Loop and Lange. Finally, starting on page 6, the Brief includes an appendix detailing the final status of recommendations for the 2021–2022 Interim. Multiple bills capturing the recommendations proposed during this interim passed, including SB 71 (2023), which amended the Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force to include education support professionals; AB 72 (2023), which created the Advisory Committee on the Safety and Well-Being of Public School Staff; AB 73 (2023), which entitled pupils to wear traditional tribal regalia or recognized objects of religious or cultural significance as adornments at a high school graduation; SB 72 (2023), which requires this Committee to conduct multiple studies; and SB 98 (2023), which included changes related to the Commission on School Funding. Two other bills stemming from Committee recommendations died, while a third was vetoed. This concludes our presentation.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any questions for Committee staff? Not seeing any, we will move on.

AGENDA ITEM IV—APPOINTMENT OF THE NEVADA STATE TEACHER AND EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ADVISORY TASK FORCE (SENATE BILL 71 [2023])

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

The Committee will now appoint the members who will serve on the Nevada State Teacher and Education Support Professional Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force ([Agenda Item IV](#)). In 2019, AB 276 created this Task Force to evaluate and address the challenges of attracting and retaining teachers throughout Nevada. It was amended this past session, through SB 71, to include the perspectives of education support professionals.

Later this interim, the Task Force will report back to the Committee on its recommendations.

I want to take time to thank you all for those who applied to be a part of this important Task Force, and we did have many. We have some incredibly accomplished applicants and I hope those who were not appointed this time will please apply again the next time around.

I also want to note that we did not receive applicants for Esmeralda County or White Pine County. If you are a teacher or educational support professional from either of those districts and you are interested in serving on the Task Force, please consider submitting an application to Nevada's Department of Education (NDE) so we can fill these vacancies and make sure the perspectives of these districts are included.

I will now take a motion to appoint Task Force members.

VICE CHAIR LANGE MOVED TO APPOINT THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS TO THE NEVADA STATE TEACHER AND EDUCATION SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION ADVISORY TASK FORCE:

- FROM CARSON CITY: KERRI FINN;
- FROM CLARK COUNTY: RODNEY BELL, MARCI KUTZER, AND MARLON NEAL;
- FROM CHURCHILL COUNTY: E. ANDREW CAMPBELL;
- FROM DOUGLAS COUNTY: LOUIE TRIO;
- FROM ELKO COUNTY: COLENE PARADISE;
- FROM EUREKA COUNTY: SUZANN LEMAIRE;
- FROM HUMBOLDT COUNTY: JARED KIFER;
- FROM LANDER COUNTY: SANDRA AYERS;
- FROM LINCOLN COUNTY: SHERRY SPENCER;
- FROM LYON COUNTY: BRIDGET PEREZ;
- FROM MINERAL COUNTY: ANN KEE;
- FROM NYE COUNTY: REBECCA TATE;
- FROM PERSHING COUNTY: EMILEE HOUSTON;
- FROM STOREY COUNTY: VIENGKHONE PEABODY; AND
- FROM WASHOE COUNTY: NATALIE CALLAHAN AND ESPERANZA RAMOS.

ASSEMBLYMAN D'SILVA SECONDED THE MOTION.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Do we have any discussion? Assemblywoman Hansen.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I noticed when we read the names for Washoe County, there was a Kerrian Neu on the agenda, and I only heard Natalie Callahan and Esperanza Ramos.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

The agenda includes all applicants. We listed the ones who were selected.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I see, thank you.

THE MOTION PASSED (SENATOR DONDERO LOOP AND ASSEMBLYWOMAN HARDY WERE ABSENT FOR THE VOTE).

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Congratulations to those who are appointed to the Task Force.

**AGENDA ITEM V—OVERVIEW OF NATIONAL TRENDS IN EDUCATION
LEGISLATION AND POLICY**

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will now hear an overview of national trends in education legislation and policy from Matthew Weyer, Policy Director with the Education Commission of the States (ECS). Welcome, please go ahead when you are ready.

Matthew Weyer, Ph.D., Policy Director, ECS:

I have been with ECS for five years, prior to that I worked for the National Conference of State Legislatures. I have been here a couple of times before; it is great to be back. Most importantly, I was a kindergarten teacher for a long time in the Denver public schools, so I love this work. At ECS, I primarily focus on age 3 to grade 3, the early childhood space. I am joined by my colleague Gabriela Rodriguez, who is in the audience. She is your State Relations Liaison to Nevada, please reach out to her with any questions. I know she is eager to meet folks on the ground today.

We are a national education policy organization that has been serving state policymakers in all 50 states and the District of Columbia for nearly 60 years. We are nonpartisan, unbiased, and cover the full spectrum of education issues from early care and education (ECE) through postsecondary and the workforce. We believe in the power of learning from experience. Using what we know about state trends and approaches from across the country, we aim to help policymakers make informed decisions about what might work in their states. We do this in a variety of ways through research, publishing reports, hosting convenings, and providing counsel. We research and report on trending education topics and are often invited to talk with groups, like this one, to share how states are approaching challenging education issues and offer ideas to consider.

We are grateful for the opportunity to be here to present today on legislative trends from around the country ([Agenda Item V A](#)). Being that we are relatively new into 2024, a lot of these trends are pulled from 2023, but we are folding in as much new stuff as we are seeing in the first couple of months of 2024.

At ECS, we track state education policy for all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. As I mentioned, we cover a wide range—this includes over 40 educational topics. The primary method for identifying these trends comes from our state bill tracking. We read almost every single education-related piece of state legislation, that number is in the thousands, and we provide summaries for all the bills that are either enacted or vetoed. You can follow those on our State Education Policy Tracking tool, which is at www.ecs.org. We also have an instructional video if that is of interest.

From our analysis, here are the top trends from 2023. They might seem a little obvious at first, but we will dive in and provide some State examples here. The top trends are teaching—I am excited to see that Advisory Task Force, I think there is a lot to uncover; K through 12 funding; as well as student health. We also tracked a significant amount of activity around career and technical education (CTE) and workforce development. Then my personal favorite, where I work a lot, is ECE.

In 2023, we summarized over 1,100 bills that were enacted and vetoed across the country. We also put tags on thousands of bills, and you can find those in our database.

The first trend I want to unpack is around teaching. Obviously, this has been a focus of state policymakers and continues to rank as the top issue year over year. We know teacher quality is the most important in-school factor influencing student achievement. It is very much worth the attention. Through the end of 2023, we tagged and summarized 167 enacted teacher-related bills across 37 states.

As legislators work to strengthen the teacher pipeline, we have seen policies that address three components. The first is certification and licensure, the next is recruitment and retention, and the third is compensation. I will go into each of these components. Around certification and licensure, we saw several states respond to teacher shortages by removing or altering certain licensure requirements. Many states have been evaluating teacher licensure assessments to understand if that screening tool provides a meaningful bar to entry into the profession, with several states opting to move toward portfolio models for licensure instead. Alternatively, some states have been adding licensure requirements to promote alignment with various initiatives. One example I am familiar with is around the science of reading and early literacy development. Some states have been working on including new coursework that is required prior to initial licensure or new licensure assessments related to the teaching of reading.

Another area of movement in 2023 was around reciprocity. We want to commend Nevada on joining ten other states in the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact, which is an interstate agreement allowing for eligible teachers to transfer. For recruitment and retention, states across the country expanded or created new grow your own programs, as well as teacher residency and apprenticeship programs to better prepare aspiring educators with many of these programs being provided at little or no cost. States have also taken steps to address specific teacher shortages in a variety of ways. We have seen dozens of states enact legislation or introduce legislation around providing housing assistance to educators and aspiring educators. Arkansas, Illinois, New Jersey, and Virginia created incentives for retired teachers to return to the profession without penalty for pensions.

Moving into compensation, with healthy state budgets and a tight labor market in 2023, we saw quite a bit of action around compensation. Several states raised minimum wages, salaries, and provided bonuses and stipends. Arkansas bumped their minimum salary to \$50,000; Tennessee provided increases; and New Mexico worked on promoting raises for their assistant teachers in addition to their educators. Other states provided additional bonuses and stipends in hard to staff schools, building on some of those things that are already provided. Teacher shortage areas were a focus for those states as well.

I wanted to show a map of what we are tracking around the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact. As I mentioned, Nevada is one of 11 and you can see those in the purple, the states in orange have currently pending legislation. This might be a place of interest to look for future educators to come into Nevada potentially.

I want to move to a couple of state examples, a little more in depth. One recruitment and retention strategy we have seen emerge is paid parental leave for eligible school employees. We were tracking this in six states in 2023, with a few more introduced this session. The exhibit links to South Carolina and its House Bill 3908; if the Committee is interested in learning more. Another national trend is around teacher apprenticeships. Florida established their statewide teacher apprenticeship program, joining 17 other states and the District of Columbia as having a statewide initiative. Many of the programs we track have certain components to them such as mentorship, coaching opportunities, professional development, hands on experience, and having access to the network of past program participants. A unique one we found, in addition to teacher apprenticeships, is North Dakota recently established a school leader apprenticeship program for teachers who are aspiring to become a principal or other school-level leader in their state.

Obviously, funding is a central issue as every state has to pass a budget. In 2023, we tracked 145 pieces of legislation that were enacted across 42 states. The top three trends were funding formulas, additional allocations for specific student populations, and student counts. I will start with funding formulas. We witness funding formula changes towards increasing the base level of state funding per student. Some of these changes were enacted to keep pace with the high levels of inflation or as a policy decision to increase the adequacy of state investment. State examples include Arizona and Nebraska who bumped up their base allocations. Various other states adjusted based on inflation ranging from 3 percent upwards of 8 percent for students in those states. New Mexico added a factor to the formula that awards additional state funds for schools that provide increased instructional time beyond the required 180 days for schools on a five-day school week—thinking outside of the box there. The next effort we saw was around targeted funding for specific student populations. In 2023, the most active space for this was around special education. We tracked six states that increased their allocations to districts. We also saw three states increase funding for students from low-income families and two states increase funding within the formula for English learners.

Student counts is the final trend. Due to declining student enrollment, many districts are facing the prospect of reduced state aid going forward. Some states are adopting policies to help cushion the blow from these declines by enacting hold harmless policies or blended student accounts over the next several years. I was talking with one of our school finance experts at ECS and he wanted me to mention the deadlines for the remaining federal fund spending. Those are set to expire at the end of the year, but there are applications available for upwards of 18 months, that can start in 2025, should those funds not be fully spent.

A couple of state examples here, Nebraska revised their foundation aid for the current school year and increased it by \$1,500 per student. It is notable because previously, not every district in Nebraska received state equalization funding. This new bill makes sure funding is provided for each school. They also increased the amount they are reimbursing each school district for special education services, up to 80 percent of the district's total allowable excess cost. Utah enacted legislation and passed a joint resolution taking a unique approach to declining enrollment in school districts. The state is planning to reallocate their uniform school fund savings. The law states, for at least the next five years, if the state is projected to save money because of declines in enrollment, those savings will then be passed down to increase per pupil spending. Rather than decreasing the overall state aid for school, those funds are being reallocated and making sure that money goes towards students.

The final high-level trend we saw in 2023 and into 2024 was around health and wellness. These include policies to address student health and wellness. We tracked and summarized

over 140 bills across 35 states in 2023 and are seeing more in sessions this year so far. Those trends include mental and behavioral health, providing a focus on nutrition in schools—lunches and other meals, and then expanding access to health services. We know mental health and wellness are a critical part of students' overall health and their educational achievement. It is a factor in their success. A couple of state examples, Illinois enacted Senate Bill 1709, which requires the Department of Human Resources to partner with the Illinois Board of Education, which is the state's education agency, to increase the provision of mental health care during school hours. In Louisiana, students are now allowed to be absent for up to three days in a given school year for mental and/or behavioral health reasons. We also tracked legislation on teachers gaining mental health days, on top of their sick days, as a retention strategy and to avoid burnout.

For nutrition, we saw several states passing legislation. New Mexico established a universal school meals program to provide one free breakfast and one free lunch, joining eight other states in that effort. There was also movement around providing and expanding free meals during the summer months for students who may not have access to consistent meals.

The last health trend was around expanding access to health services in school settings. This includes increasing the number of health professionals, the services that are administered in schools, and access to medications and other lifesaving equipment on school property. Research indicates that for many students, their first point of access to quality health services are sometimes in the school setting. For example, to adjust the shortage of mental health professionals in schools, Virginia enacted House Bill 2124, which allows the districts in the state to hire clinical psychologists licensed for a period of three years on a provisional license to bolster the workforce. To get a sense of the national scope of the issue, the National Association of School Psychologists recommends a ratio of 1 psychologist for every 500 students. Currently, that number is 1 for every 1,200. Lastly, many states have been pursuing the community school model as another avenue to expand school health services.

A couple other trends we have seen, the first is CTE and workforce development. We tracked 114 CTE and workforce bills across 38 states in 2023, and those themes fall out as partnership and collaboration. States enacted legislation that encourages, promotes, or requires postsecondary institutions to work closely with industry and community partners, ideally leading more directly to jobs and careers. Because of this, there is an increased focus on the importance of community colleges as well as apprenticeship connections to broader workforce development priorities in states. A side note too, ECS is happy to pull bill specifics—that is what we are here for.

The second trend was around work-based learning. Building on the theme of partnerships, many states considered or passed legislation focused on addressing barriers to this issue. States also supported and implemented incentive strategies for industry partnerships that support work-based learning for high school students. The third, the elephant in the room in every state, is funding. States have provided funds to support new programs to increase CTE programs as well as career connected learning participation and prioritizing funding for education and training in specific industries within states. We wanted to note, this looks different in every state, depending on those high need or high demand jobs and different sectors. Obviously, Nevada might have different needs than your neighbors.

The last trend is my issue, and I am happy to follow up offline on ECE. We tracked and summarized 83 enacted bills that met the main criteria in 2023. We are seeing over 400 bills thus far in 2024 that have been introduced across the country—there is a lot of activity in this space. Maybe an obvious one is around the science of reading. A lot

of momentum to change how reading is taught, with many states enacting legislation that requires reading instruction to focus on evidence-based practices, removing various practices that might be detrimental or not evidence-based, including three cueing and various other strategies. Some of the strategies we are seeing enacted include requiring school districts to adopt curricula aligned with the science of reading and requiring the Department of Education to develop guidelines to integrate those principles into teacher preparation as well as on the ground professional development. We are aware of Nevada's Early Childhood Innovative Literacy Program, kudos on that. We are here to support if there are any questions, we can help you with that effort as it moves forward.

Another interesting trend, that I have been personally tracking, is around early mathematics. It is not quite parallel to what is going on with early literacy, but about six or seven states have been focused on the same kinds of strategies to build early math skills in young students. Professional development, teacher preparation, curricula, instructional materials and more. It might be something to watch there.

Access to childcare and pre-K, several states have been working at this for years—always trying to add more slots and to do that in a targeted and equitable way. Colorado is in the first year of their universal preschool program and being a resident of Denver, it is not without its hiccups. They moved from an enrollment ranking of 26th up to 8th with over 38,000 four-year-olds and several thousand three-year-olds that meet certain criteria for the program. They are doing that through a variety of blended funding from the state.

An emerging trend is around addressing childcare. We are moving into some of the younger ages around early intervention, early childhood, and special education. One place we are trying to focus on is looking at childcare as an educational environment and adding that to the spectrum of issues we cover. We have seen almost all states looking at resetting subsidy and reimbursement rates to make it more affordable and accessible for families as well as reforming zoning regulations and studying their state's unique context for improvement and efficiency. A lot around governance and finance, states are enacting several study committees with that as well.

Some other trends, we are seeing the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI). We are tracking a handful of states that have study committees. We know technology is something that can affect the student's ability to learn and has been a common trend, but it has been something developing more rapidly in the last year or two with the emergence of AI in school settings. States have been monitoring this closely and continue to discuss the implications it has for achievement, health, and well-being. States are also looking at postsecondary affordability and a focus on the higher education space as a place to drive workforce development and make sure every kid has what they need post high school. Lastly, school choice continues to be a consistent trend, it is spreading around the country. States continue to explore ways and expand opportunities for parents to choose the best option for their student regardless of their zip code. A couple of weeks ago, ECS updated our 50-state comparison on school choice, capturing everything up and through 2023, and is on our website as a resource for you.

I will close with the State of the State addresses. Every first quarter of every year, we comprehensively analyze every state's governor's speech for education mentions. Through Friday of last week, we had 26 governors, over half of the states put into our database, and we will be releasing a resource on this in March. You can see the mentions of those topics. The topics I brought up today have all been reinforced through governors' speeches thus far. I know Nevada's Governor is not making comment because you are not in session. You can see, K through 12 finance being a top one, teacher staffing, postsecondary affordability,

CTE and workforce, ECE, and health. Just to reinforce those issues as some of the major trends we are tracking.

I am happy to take questions with the caveat that I cover most of our ECE, and I can refer questions to my colleagues back in Denver to follow up with more specifics.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I have a couple of questions, but I am going to start with members. Assemblywoman Anderson, you indicated that you had a question, please go ahead.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you for the presentation, interesting information. I have three questions. My first question has to do with the information on getting more people into our profession. I was wondering if there are any other states that utilize what we did with AB 428 (2023), which was—I believe, only specific at this time to Clark County—trying to get high school students to be able to get academies into our profession of education. Is there anything similar in any other state?

Number two and a much larger issue, I think, for our entire State. We have school buildings that are getting older. We were able to get through AB 519 (2023), which was helping our Owyhee school, but we have other school districts across the State that are literally looking at school buildings that are falling apart. Are there any trends you are seeing with that?

Finally, based on the public comment earlier, when I look at your information, it seems like higher education is only about funding and possibly access to higher education. Is there any information about the safety issues that are required for our higher education and/or if there is a specialized area for post high school education through ECS?

Dr. Weyer:

We can follow up on the high school students. We have staff that look at the matriculation of high school students into the education profession. I cannot speak to those examples, but we can follow up on that one.

On facilities, we released a 50-state comparison last year—there are some trends that might be of interest. A couple of my colleagues are on the finance side and have a lot of good work they have developed. I think that resource could be especially helpful.

Continuing into the higher education piece, I want to acknowledge the safety issue because it was not the numbers of bills, it is probably one of the most serious—if not the most serious—education issue we face. One of my colleagues can follow up, his name is Zeke Perez. He covers our school safety. He has been working with the Learning Policy Institute on a project around the different ways states are thinking about school safety as time moves on.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for your presentation. We will go to Assemblywoman Hansen.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

First, a comment and then a quick question. I am thrilled to hear one of the national legislative trends is under ECE and the idea of going with the science of reading as evidence-based and the removal of three cueing. I am excited to see that maybe we are moving in that direction in a lot of these legislatures and hopefully in Nevada.

Under the national trend of teaching, you mentioned that compensation was an important one, and due to the surplus in a lot of the state funds, I am assuming there was compensation for teachers. When we look at the compensation of other states with their teachers and their pay, do other states delineate between traditional public school teachers and their compensation and public school teachers who are in a charter school setting? I am wondering if they saw increases in their pay in the public charter school space with their teachers and with their traditional teachers.

Dr. Weyer:

To your point around the signs of reading, we have seen a major uptick. Some states were early implementers and are now moving into the next phase. There is a middle group, the largest group, that are setting up pathways and all the structures and are moving into that either this year, next year, or the following year. We are looking forward to seeing scores hopefully increase, less focus on retention, and more on these preventative measures around using the science.

For your question on teacher compensation across public and charter, I am happy to kick that to our policy team. We can get you a written memo likely by the end of the week, I do not know the team's capacity, but ECS is here to act as a quick resource for you all and we can put together something.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

If you would have them give that to our Committee Staff, and then we will get it out to our members.

Any other questions? We will come to Las Vegas with Assemblyman D'Silva.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

I had a question pertaining to AI. It is one of the hot button conversations we are having throughout education, K through 12, higher education, and everything pertaining to how we are interacting with educational processes. In regard to the trends we are seeing, were these the state legislatures and how they were approaching AI in the classroom, was it constrictive and constraining, or was it open and embrative to AI? Will we be seeing programs being implemented that allowed for AI to be brought into the classroom—maybe some kind of technical training on how we can adequately use AI? Or were we seeing laws that were looking at disallowing AI into the classroom or controlling students access to AI programs that may help them in the classroom in non-adequate manners. I wanted to see what the trends were there.

Dr. Weyer:

One thing we have seen is a handful of states introduce study committees. I do not think they fully made their decisions around whether it is going to be restrictive or more expansive, they are really exploring. We could probably put together a memo for the

Committee around those handful of states. One thing I found fascinating, I was at a conference last year and heard the benefits of AI—using AI as an equitable tool for literacy development and letting kids read in their native language, picking up on different nuances in their speech, if their speech skills are behind, and not penalizing students who may be behind in their speech skills, but really understanding their literacy skills. This company had this interesting software. I think there is a lot of great things to come for AI. I also think it brings obvious harms that need to be addressed and dealt with and regulated there too. Hopefully, I am not pontificating because it is not my space, but it was exciting to see from the early grades.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I think we are all excited, with some trepidation, about what AI is going to bring into the student realm. Any information you have, get it to the Committee Staff, and we will disseminate it out.

In the part of your presentation about licensure, you used the term portfolio. I was hoping you could expand on what that looks like. Then moving on from that, have you seen any states moving as far as increasing the time before the licensure needs to be renewed? In Nevada, we are currently at five years, but I know retirees can do a ten year. Do you have any data on that? You mentioned homegrown, I was wondering if you had any data about what that looks like?

Dr. Weyer:

These sound like all teacher-based questions. We have a great staff of about three or four, an internal working group, at ECS that tries to stay on top of these. For the portfolio, as it relates to the work I see in the early spaces, instead of passing the Praxis or something, which has equity considerations around the approachability and accuracy of how well it screens teachers, I think states, in the portfolio sense, try to bring in different ways to demonstrate proficiency, whether it might be something through a demonstration or coursework or grades. I can follow up on that and the same around the renewal times. Do you have a bill that we could reference?

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Obviously, as a lot of states are, we are dealing with not only getting teachers here but the retention and that brought it into the homegrown. We know, anecdotally, that usually teachers who are from Nevada tend to stay in Nevada, but we do not have that empirical data. I was wondering if you had that information.

Dr. Weyer:

We can look at the homegrown, maybe we can follow up for more details about the specific question within there too. What I am hearing is you are asking about state-level data on the placement percentages and things of that nature. Is that correct?

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Correct, the retention of that and also states that have longer licensures, if the retention is higher or, as I suspect, that we might see teachers moving out at the end of their five years because their license is up for renewal. Once again, this is anecdotal information, and anything you have with empirical data would be appreciated.

My last question is, throughout your presentation, you use the term early care. This is the first time I have seen it, are you referring childcare, pre-K?

Dr. Weyer:

Yes. Since the pandemic started, ECS has tried to learn from those in the space, reframe it, and look at childcare and pre-K not as two different things but learning environments. We are trying to talk about it as ECE as a blended terminology. We recognize those environments are in mixed delivery, they happen all over. How we try to define it was to make sure we are very inclusive of what is happening for three-year-olds through five-year-olds.

Vice Chair Lange:

I am interested in CTE. We had some bills in the Legislature, and they did not go through because the cost was prohibitive. I am interested in creative funding for CTEs, and what kind of bills are out there? How many states did you say ran bills on CTE? In Nevada, we are below the national average on what we fund for CTE so we tried to get at the average and could not even get there. I am interested in ways we can facilitate that leading up to our next legislative session to get something across the finish line this time.

Dr. Weyer:

I found the number, 114 bills across 38 states in 2023 alone. I will follow up with my colleague, Tom Keily, who is a Principal at ECS and does a lot of our CTE and workforce. I am sure he can find some innovative bills, especially around that creative funding space.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for the presentation. We have a lot of follow up and look forward to receiving that from you and your team.

[Subsequent to the meeting, Dr. Weyer provided information responding to questions from Committee members ([Agenda Item V B](#)).]

AGENDA ITEM VI—PRESENTATION ON THE STATE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN NEVADA (NRS 385.230)

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Next, we will move on to the presentation on the state of public education in Nevada. We have Jhone Ebert, who is the Superintendent of Public Instruction for NDE, and her team. Thank you for being here this morning, and please begin when you are ready.

Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, NDE:

Good morning, Madam Chair Bilbray-Axelrod, Vice Chair Lange, and Committee Members. As you noted, I did bring the team here today. We have a lot of work we are doing together, and it takes a team to make sure it gets completed to everyone's expectations. To my right, I have President Felicia Ortiz. As you know, she oversees everything with the State Board of Education. To my left, I have Lisa Ford who is our Chief Strategy Officer. In the North, the three deputies, Megan Peterson, Christy McGill, and Ann Marie Dickson. Online, I have Jeff Briske, because I know there might be questions with teacher licensure, and

Craig Statucki who during the legislative session, stepped up to serve as an Interim Deputy Superintendent.

This morning, I am going to dive into the many aspects of what was passed during the legislative session ([Agenda Item VI A](#)). You see our Mission Statement, our objectives, and keywords to the presentation. Specifically, we are going to talk about seven bills. I know you may have questions about other bills because you can see all the bills passed relating to education. We are excited with the work that has transpired. I will call out AB 428, AB 72—which was mentioned earlier, AB 256, AB 285, and AB 330. These bills have various points and pieces of lift for NDE, as well as the school districts.

When we talk about the regalia bill that passed—I am excited about that. The Department quickly had to develop the guidelines for the school districts, make sure they were out, and, if students needed to challenge, the process that would transpire. Right away, before the legislative session was finished, we were working on that bill for implementation. As I speak through other components of the bill, there is work that has been completed, but there is still work that needs to be done, and I will go through those pieces with you. Looking forward to the questions you may have as we move forward through all this work.

Overall funding and accountability, early childhood education. I loved hearing the questions with our colleagues from ECS. I commend the Legislature when he talked about the pieces of where states are leading. I could tick off where this Legislature has been and is already looking towards those pieces, it was exciting. We will be talking about school safety and restorative justice; teacher recruitment and retention—which is extremely important; CTE and work-based learning; and curriculum, instruction, and standards.

I was pleased to walk into the room and see Senator Denis because of the funding formula. I do not think we can emphasize enough the change in the funding formula—54 years, it took us to get where we are today. In 2019, during the Legislative Session, you passed the bill. I sat at the table an hour and a half before Session ended and the bill passed 90 seconds before the end of the session. It did not become fully realized during the 2021 Session because of the pandemic, but during the 2023 Session, we were blessed and honored to have the funding run as intended and built. Fully funded, all of the weights including English language learners (ELL), over \$4,000 per student, which is extremely exciting, as well as the other categories there. The Legislature also added additional funding for our special education students. A total of \$2.6 billion was invested—I use that word intentionally—this is an investment into our future. I am thankful for the work everyone has put into making this happen. We have a rainy day outside, but as noted, the rainy day fund for education. For many years, education was part of the normal budget cuts and were competing with other entities. Again, starting with pre-K through 12, we need to be able to know there is consistency in funding across our State and the funding formula built exactly that.

Out of AB 400 (2023) and SB 98 (2023) was the requirement for the State Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop metrics in mathematics, English language arts (ELA), looking at college and career ready courses, and others. With the Governor, we announced the Acing Accountability initiative in September and those metrics. We started meeting with the superintendents during the legislative session, as the bill started to move through, and talk about what the metrics are. We did not want to add any new assessments, we have enough assessments out in the field. How are we going to use those assessments and how are we going to measure progress of our students moving forward? There are two pieces, not only proficiency—proficiency is extremely important, but we know where our students are today. How do we honor their growth, their movement forward? If a student is in

third grade, but are attaining proficiency at a first-grade level, how do we honor if they gain 18 months of learning in one school year? It is massive and needs to be captured and honored. With Acing Accountability, there are the components in mathematics and ELA, where we ask for proficiency gains, as well as growth gains.

We are also measuring teacher retention and recruitment in our school districts. Those metrics are extremely important. Having a high-potential, high-quality educator in every single classroom is critical to the success of all our students.

During the conversations, there was a lot of, “superintendent these metrics, we have always seen them, they have been here for a while.” Now, with the additional funds, we will make sure the resources are allocated to those initiatives where we know there is growth and support and being able to move forward, but we want to see a shift in the accountability system. In addition to the five pieces outlined in the Acing Accountability initiative, we added the innovative metric components. We are working with school districts right now on what those other components are, within an accountability system, that school districts can turn to and say our students are accomplishing. For instance, with CTE, are they going out into the workforce and attaining jobs at a higher rate than we have seen before. It is not accounted for right now in our State accountability system for the federal government, but it may be something we want to capture in the future. We will be coming to you and asking for support in changing our accountability system moving forward, and it will require additional funds.

The Commission on School Funding—I know you are going to hear from Chair Hobbs and the great work they have been doing and will continue to do. They are going to be diving into an area that was not in their initial scope of work. In both AB 400 and SB 98, there was a requirement they review additional reports. Our team was also asked by the State Board of Education to put together the comprehensive list of State reports, federal reports, and individual reports across the entire spectrum of education. It is a three-page document and I have the team looking through, with the superintendents, to make sure we captured all those reports required. We want to be held accountable. We want to make sure you have the information you need to make an informed decision. We are hoping as the State Board and the Commission on School Funding looks through this, we will be able to collapse some of those reports and see the information in one place instead of different segregated components. We are noting the same information is being asked in several different ways. Streamlining the information we provide to you so it is actionable and being efficient with the resources we have to be able to provide you with the information you need going forward is a huge goal. The Commission on School Funding has broken up into nine work groups. Nevada’s Department of Education does staff the Commission. They had their most recent meeting about ten days ago and meet once a month. They are trying to work within the environment of both online and face-to-face. I will leave the rest of those pieces to Chair Hobbs to present to you.

Education achievement and opportunity was AB 400, the Governor's bill moving forward. There was an exciting piece to it, the Early Childhood Literacy and Innovation grants. Director Patricia Oya, Early Learning and Development, NDE, has been running that work—her and her team. As you know, when the funding is initially provided, we have the opportunity to go back and develop applications, which takes a little bit of time. I am proud to tell you they have awarded over \$40 million in grants across the entire State. For the first time, we have been able to fund three-year-olds for pre-K. We are excited about that work and hearing wonderful pieces. Most recently, we were in a meeting with Senator Rochelle Nguyen, Senate District 3, regarding early childhood and how we can make sure those dollars are expended. We are looking forward to the next fiscal year to

make sure those funds are available. In this grant, as well, is the \$7 million for charter school transportation. They are not funded out of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan for transportation, these are additional funds provided to the State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA).

In early childhood, I spoke to the over \$46 million that has been awarded. We are now moving to a monthly award—not waiting and putting out the request for proposal (RFP); we have put it out twice already. We are going to go ahead and accept grants as they come in, and each month we will award those funds until they are expended.

With the science of reading, our Read by Grade 3 team is using \$6 million out of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) fund to support early literacy. There are four pieces to this effort, which includes the expansion of the Nevada Path to Reading Excellence at School Sites (PRESS) Project. This is in partnership with the Center for Applied Research and Education Improvement, University of Minnesota. The course does include the science of reading, which we are very pleased to have. I am going to talk about the listening tour we have been on this year. It was exciting to visit Yerington and the elementary school Principal there who had some of her staff participate in the PRESS learning. We have been doing this now for two years. She said, “Can you require all of our staff to take the PRESS training?” I said, “No, we are not requiring it at this moment in time, but we do have additional funds and you absolutely can have your entire staff participate.” We are looking forward to that. We are also developing the third project with pre-K through 12 administrative courses. We are working with the Summer Literacy Institute in partnership with the College of Education, University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). Then, we are also working with all the NSHE institutions to develop a paraprofessional course including the science of reading so they can be involved in and support our early literacy.

The State Board of Education with early literacy and the work we do, they set the standards in *Nevada Administrative Code*, and AB 400 did make the shift in School Year (SY) 2028–2029 for retention. The State Board of Education is looking at those components over the next period.

Felicia Ortiz, President, State Board of Education:

We heard from the Read by Grade 3 team in our last meeting, and we are putting together a subcommittee on the State Board to look at what is currently happening, where we are in our literacy plan, and what is the right method to evaluate whether a student is retained. Our decisions are going to be research-based and focused on the benefit for children. Basically, the subcommittee is going to be doing a lot of work to make sure that we put all the right supports in place. We are looking forward to what they come back with. We have phenomenal people on that subcommittee including a school psychologist and an early childhood teacher in special education. We are confident they will give us good recommendations to put forth. More to come on that.

Ms. Ebert:

We have the Nevada State Literacy Plan, which is required by the federal government. Thank you for allowing us to do this work, providing the funding. We have selected all the committee members, which are inclusive. Thank you, Assemblywoman Anderson for raising your hand and willing to serve on the Literacy Plan Committee. We also have our NSHE institutions represented as well as the Chancellor of NSHE sitting on the Executive

Committee. We have State Board of Education members as well as representation across the entire State.

I would like to call out the picture on this slide. It is from Myrtle Tate Elementary School. If you have not visited Tate, I highly recommend it. They have an amazing Principal there and her staff. They have a room dedicated to Spread the Word Nevada, where they also provide children with books. They, too, are supporting early literacy.

Another part of AB 400 is the opportunity for cities and counties now to become charter school authorizers. The NSHE system itself already had the opportunity, if they chose, to participate as a charter school authorizer. To date, they have not taken that opportunity. It was something people were not aware of—that NDE could work with NSHE to have them become an authorizer and support them in authorizing schools. What expanded in AB 400 was the opportunity for cities and counties to become a charter school authorizer. Assembly Bill 400 is a large bill, but this is one of the components of the bill where Ms. Ford has been working since its passage, with Opportunity 180 and others, to develop an RFP process, which we have since brought on a team to work with us. The application will go out this month for the cities and counties to be able to apply. We will have information sessions and then we plan to have those authorizers by April 2024. If someone submits an application and it does not go through the process and they would like to have it reviewed again, we will have that available for those who would like to go through that process.

Assembly Bill 400 also included the Advancement Scholarship. It is the first time ever the State has provided support for those who want to earn their master's degree, higher education. Eligible candidates must have completed full-time contracted teaching in a Nevada public school for at least two out of the last five years. Immediately preceding the application, they attend an approved Nevada educator prep program resulting in a master's degree in education or related field. We have allocated \$1.5 million at this point in time, and we are excited to see the outcomes.

Work based learning, AB 256, which is related to a few areas including an incredible program. Again, back to the listening tour—we have a teacher that did mechanics within NASCAR. He is the automotive educator in White Pine and Ely and has experience. Now these students are receiving the support, training, and knowledge from this wonderful educator. I will also note, we had the opportunity to visit the welding program there. We met an amazing young lady who we thought was going into welding, that was her path, she was going to become a welder. As we are having the conversation, she said she did not want to be a welder. She wanted to be a nurse, but she lives on a ranch. Her family owns land, and she wanted to have those experiences. She had those experiences mending fences and because the students did not have a welding teacher for a period of time, she co-taught, led, the class with the skills she picked up on her own, with her peers. It was a very exciting time to see how our students progress through our CTE courses and attain those skills.

The Teacher Academy College Pathway Program, AB 428. A lot of great work happening here. We know CCSD is required and must offer the Pathway Program to all their schools with more than 250 students, as well as other school districts may offer this course. We have several school districts interested and leaning into this work, which we are excited about. If our students—as they are in elementary, middle, and high school—see themselves on a pathway to become an educator in Nevada, we know if they live here, they will stay here, and they will most likely teach within ten miles of where they grew up and return home to be with their family and colleagues in a community within our great State. The Governor's Office of Workforce Innovation (GOWINN), Department of Employment, Training

and Rehabilitation, leads this work. As you know, they just got a new Director and we have been working with him. We are also working with the Chancellor and NDE to make sure this bill moves forward. The Teacher Academy College Pathway Program is one piece of this body of work. The bill asks that there are three pathways developed, and we will continue to work with the school districts, GOWINN, and higher education to move this forward.

Senate Bill 442, the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact. You heard we are one of the first ten states, that means we are a voting member, and we are going to help shape the work moving forward. Director Briske attended, a week and a half ago, the first meeting of the group. He will be shaping the dues that may be required of states and the requirements you want to see. Nevada has a seat at the table in moving that work forward.

Senate Bill 425 had its first meeting last month. It requires the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education to develop a statewide vision and create an implementation plan that will move Nevada's education system and prepare our young people for a future that we have yet to imagine. When you think about the work that is going to transpire, we are excited. We put out an RFP and the National Center on Education and the Economy was awarded the bid. They are working alongside this group. Senator Dondero Loop is on that Committee, as well as others. During their first meeting, they selected Tina Quigley, who is the President of the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance, as Chair. This is bringing together workforce, education, and all our partners across the entire State of Nevada to envision the next version of education.

I am excited about the Portrait of a Nevada Learner work ([Agenda Item VI B](#)). We know our education system is not, and was not, where we expected it to be prior to the Pandemic. The Pandemic gave us the opportunity to say we are not going to look in the rearview mirror. How are we going to build out the future of education? How are we going to make sure our students see themselves in this work, and we build out an education system where all our students can thrive and move forward with this work? The Portrait of Nevada Learner started about 18 months ago. We had our first convening, which many of you attended in October, to talk about where we wanted to go. We brought in students and parents and asked them, "What is the education that we know where our students can thrive?" We received feedback from our entire community and came up with four core measures for the Portrait of a Nevada Learner. You can see social, emotional, academic being the first focus. I get a lot of questions on, "I do not specifically see mathematics in here. I do not specifically see ELA." But when you talk about a student and they know—like our young welder—they fully understand they need to know mathematics, they need to be able to communicate beyond the classroom when they are going to open their own business and work with others. It is the core, the base of all the work we do. We also want to make sure they have understandings and can engage—civic engagement is one of the key components in this work—that they know how to be able to do that and can learn within the pre-K through 12 system.

Assembly Bill 72 is the safety and well-being work led by Deputy Superintendent McGill. She is spinning up that Committee, and they should have their first meeting soon.

We have school safety with AB 285 and AB 330. On Friday, we had our listening tour in the Carson City School District. The Principal there thanked you and the Governor for moving these two bills forward, it has changed her entire school environment and a lot of learning in restorative practices moving forward. Also, when we were in Winnemucca, I had another teacher and Principal come up and specifically call out this work at the State level and how

it has changed their classroom. I want to make sure you know they are appreciative; those are their words. They are appreciative of the work helping all children to move forward.

Our ESSER funding, I wanted to include this on slide 25 because, as noted earlier, the funding is winding down. The initial end date is September 30, 2024. Most recently, the United States Department of Education (DOE) put out additional guidance for extending the funding beyond that date. We are working with our U.S. DOE to make sure we share information on the plans that must be in place before the end of that date and how those funds can be expended beyond. I am proud of all entities—Office of Finance, Office of the Governor (GFO); NDE; and LCB. We have 99.6 percent of the funds out of ESSER 1 that have been expended, less than 1 percent is left. Our job is to drill that down to zero so none of those funds get reverted back to the federal government. We are working with the school districts, as well as SPCSA, to do just that. Some people are asking why I included things in red on there. As you know, I believe in transparency. Emergency Assistance to Non-Public Schools (EANS) 1 and EANS 2, were the federal dollars made available to our private schools. We, as NDE, have never provided funds passed through from the federal government to private schools, and private schools have never had the opportunity to participate in federal requirement reporting. Everybody was in a learning mode of how to report expenditures to the federal government for private schools. We spent a lot of time visiting private schools and getting those dollars out the door and they are doing just that. But it took a little bit of time because everybody was in a learning phase.

We are very proud, as a Department, that we continue to be competitive in attaining federal dollars. Over tens of millions of dollars we compete for—we write grants. Our teams are awarded those funds, which then move out to the classroom.

We were asked to list a few challenges. Nevada's Department of Education is one of the smallest across the United States. We talk about ratios—NDE serves 1 to 2,729 students. Then you have other departments of education, Florida is 1 to 1,136. This is data our Team pulled up over a year ago. Our small but mighty Team serves a lot of students, and we would like to be able to drop that ratio if ever possible. Like many other entities, challenge in recruiting—we were excited you allocated additional funds for State employees to receive a raise, but for NDE, we now are competing with the 20 percent raise the school districts were given in similar positions. We lost ground, even though were able to gain more funding for our staff.

Ms. Ortiz:

I would like to add, from the perspective of someone who receives services from NDE, we all do—the Commission on School Funding, the State Board of Education, and SPCSA. We are all basically beholden to NDE for data, information, and services. As much as we would like them to be a proactive partner with our school districts, they are often so short staffed they are focused on checking all the boxes and requirements the accountability arms have. I would like to advocate heavily that we consider how we might be able to support NDE to have more staff to adequately serve the needs of the State—both from the accountability arms and asking for data and information to hold the system accountable, but also to do the innovative and strategic things we need to make the system successful. Often, they are so busy developing grant proposals and writing grants—there are even some that slip through the cracks that we do not get the chance to apply for. Or, there is work we could be doing to be more strategic about the work that falls to the wayside because they are checking the box on, “We have to get this report to someone, or we have to do that presentation.” I want to make sure we are thinking about that going forward.

Ms. Ebert:

I think she hit right on the next bullet, which is the competing priorities and how we allocate our resources. Most of you know, I was honored to serve as the Chief Technology Officer for CCSD many years ago and when I look at NDE, our internal systems need to be modernized. During the next legislative session, we will be coming to you to ask for additional funds to modify our data systems. If you read the *Nevada Independent* yesterday, you saw they used some of our data, but they also had to collect it from different sources. How do we make sure we modernize the tools we use so we can provide you with up-to-date information?

I had to end with a great quote from Margaret Mead, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." The last picture is our one-room schoolhouse in Elko County School District, which houses nine children in grades K through 8. I am ready to answer any questions you may have.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for your presentation, and we do have a few questions. I will start with Assemblyman D'Silva.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

I am excited about the teacher pipeline plan, I serve as a teacher. I want to give shout outs to exquisite educators like Rachel Ruttan, who has been doing great work in the north and east Las Vegas and serving my constituents and these young folks who want to become teachers. My question is two parts: (1) what has been the bird's eye perspective from NDE when it comes to implementing the work to be accomplished with AB 428; and (2) what are the challenges you have seen, and how can we help as we go to make sure the bill and the work is done properly in the upcoming session?

Ms. Ebert:

I have visited Rancho High School teaching and training program, and I believe she has built the program up to three or four sections now. It is wonderful to see young people that see themselves becoming an educator. If there are four sections and there are 120 kids, maybe not all of them become educators, but if half of them become educators, the other half understand what is transpiring in an education system.

Coming out of the legislative session, there was a Director of GOWINN, who then left, and that position was vacant. They were provided a staff member to implement this work—not just for the teacher pipeline, but for all three pipelines—and then NDE was provided a staff member. Those positions were just filled. We are working with NSHE, GOWINN, and the Treasurer's Office to map out the other components. The students who go through the entire pipeline will be able to have all their education paid. Those pieces are still being developed. I want to be clear, as those pieces are still being developed, it should in no way affect a school district for implementing this upcoming school year. We had those programs, those classes in place for over—this is the third year now. It is a matter of expanding. I have heard that making sure school districts can find a teacher who can teach the course and then making sure there are enough students enrolled in a section to be able to offer that work. Obviously at Rancho High School, that is not an issue—you have multiple sections and making sure the class is filled. What is exciting is that our partners in higher education, especially Nevada State University, have provided support to the high schools in

Clark County to offer the program and if there is a need for additional resources, they have raised their hand and said they are there to help. It is February, it is the time when students are thinking about the next school year. We are in constant contact with the school districts making sure that students are aware it is in every single course catalog, that is an opportunity they have to participate in the course. I was on a call with this entire Team, and I asked about marketing. They said yes, they are doing that work to be able to move forward. It is a work in progress, but we have a base to start with, and we are in the process of hiring staff and working and building it out into the future.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Next, we will go to Assemblywoman Anderson, who I am sure has numerous questions.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

There is a lot to unpack here. I will concentrate on three questions. The first one has to do with slide 22, I am excited about this, with the engaging of the [Inaudible] competencies, because we have always been preparing kids for a world that does not exist. When my grandmother was teaching, they were preparing for a better mouse trap, when my dad was, it was a better mouse pad; and now with me, kids do not even know what a mouse is. Has there been any discussion about the credits necessary for graduation? For example, Civics now is one semester, Art credits are being discussed about being cut. Has there been any discussion about the graduation requirements and the specific credits that are, quite frankly, not sufficient enough at this time? My second question has to do with what was brought up by President Ortiz and slide 26—the staffing at NDE. Is it solely based upon pay, or is it from expectations being too much? We need to do a better job, both as policymakers but then also as a Department, of making sure that three people are not doing the exact same job or whatever the case may be. Finally, a question that has to do with the Apprenticeship Board, because I know there has been discussions about creating that. I was wondering, when would that take place, and what the process would be for that to get started? I have another one too, if you want it, but I can do that offline.

Ms. Ebert:

I would like to start with Craig Statucki and go in reverse with the apprenticeship components.

Craig Statucki, Director, Career Readiness, Adult Learning, and Education Options, NDE:

I appreciate your question around apprenticeships. It is something we have been actively working on with the State Apprenticeship Council and the Labor Commissioner to expand opportunities, particularly at the secondary level youth apprenticeships. Recently, I am not sure this Committee is aware, UNLV was approved for a teacher apprenticeship. One of the things, through their teacher apprenticeship, they are working on is youth apprenticeships, not only in the teaching pathway but in a variety of other pathways as well. We are looking forward to engaging across the board, whether it is UNLV or any of our other partners, and looking at youth apprenticeships. We also, through ARPA funds and the Governor's office, are working on creating a construction youth apprenticeship pathway in the Washoe County School District (WCSD). We are looking at those opportunities as well.

The true apprenticeship portion is difficult because a lot of apprenticeships require students to be 18 years old and sometimes require a high school diploma. We are trying to look at

the youth apprenticeship space and identify opportunities for our students, secondary students, and postsecondary students to participate in those opportunities.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

At this time, there is no discussion of creating a board of individuals who are part of this to discuss? It has been more separate conversations going on between the Department and the different entities offering the apprenticeship?

Mr. Statucki:

Correct. The registered apprenticeships are approved through the State Apprenticeship Council, and they have the full oversight of apprenticeships. We have been working with them and various stakeholders to find opportunities for youth apprenticeships.

Director Giddens has been fantastic since she has been in the position for almost two years at working with the Department and helping us to try and identify opportunities. One of the key things as we start expanding work-based learning in various ways, is getting our students to understand that an apprenticeship is another option for them. A lot of students do not realize in a right to work state, you can go straight into the construction industry, but there are a lot of opportunities to participate through trades and apprenticeships. I think a lot of it is going to be improvement in communication from our part and getting students to understand all the pathways to work, whether it is through an apprenticeship or straight into the labor workforce.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I will try to contact you for more offline conversation, if possible.

Ms. Ebert:

Going to your second question with staffing, you made the comment about maybe several people possibly doing the same thing, we do not have enough staff to be able to do that. For instance, we have one staff member in NDE who does all K through 12 mathematics. One person for the entire State—750 schools, 500,000 children—and that person does not have the bandwidth to do anything else.

We will go through the legislative process. I am pleased with President Ortiz, and I hope my other colleagues around the State will also help amplify. We will be very specific and put in rank order, like we did during this last legislative session. I want to thank you for the staff that we did receive—we received a secondary literacy person, as well as an elementary science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) person. Those are just two of the positions I would flag. It is about pay, most of the staff members have noted. When we are interviewing people and they see the initial salary compared to a school district, the component into Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) in a school district is paid 100 percent and that is not the case if you are a State employee so the pay listed can vary. It is not comparable to a school district because of the PERS piece so that all plays into someone making a determination. We have had a lot of people, they like the work, they believe in the work, and they want to do it at a state level with impact across the entire State. But we usually lose an applicant when Human Resources is talking with that applicant about pay. Also, we have a wonderful Public Information Officer (PIO) in the room who used to be with NDE, but is now with another entity where she received a lot higher pay. We hated to see her go. Unfortunately, as the State Superintendent I cannot trump a person's pay. We have a pay scale that we follow and hopefully, we will have a pay scale in the future that is at least competitive with the school districts and on par. Then people can

make a determination if they would like to work with the State or if they would like to work with the school district.

On your first question, there are two handouts we provided in regard to the work for the Portrait of Nevada a Learner ([Agenda Item VI B](#)), it is the Nevada Future of Learning Network we have created. On the backside it says, "Piloting the Implementation of the Portrait and its Effects on Relationships, Experiences, and the Environment of School." [Due to copyright issues, the handout is on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, Carson City, Nevada. For copies, contact the Library at (775) 684-6827 or www.leg.state.nv.us/Division/Research/About/Contact.] You can see the different groups we have. I would specifically call out the "Competency Champions," because I think that is what you are getting at. How does a student demonstrate their skills, that they are ready to go on to college, go out into the workforce, or join the military. Those are competencies we want our students to be able to demonstrate. We have eight school districts with teachers and schools working with our partners to develop what those competencies would look like. Then how do we make sure our educators are prepared to teach in such a way because it is thinking differently, it is thinking across all the standards we expect. The base is our standards, and they all go up to students being able to demonstrate competencies. The work is in progress. We did visit other school districts that have been doing this work for about five years and we are almost in the same place they are because we are standing on their shoulders. We are using the work they have completed and moving forward. Those are the pieces and where we are at this moment in time.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

[Inaudible] In closing, I would like to advocate for us to take a look at the credits necessary for graduation. On Saturday, we had the "We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution" statewide Civic competition and Reno High School won. It was very clear from every school that participated, that Civics education needs to be expanded, as does the Arts education. I want to put it out there for a future discussion from your Board possibly.

Ms. Ortiz:

Assemblywoman Anderson, we are thinking through those things extensively. One of the things that has come up in discussions with these Competency Champions and in our discussions about the Portrait is the opportunity to start thinking about micro credentials for kids. How we can give them credentials that show they have mastered a specific content that can be stackable and equal to high school credits, and potentially college credits. So we are giving them the skill set they need to be successful in life but in a way that allows them to stack those credentials more usefully or more valuable than a high school credit per se. The next phase of the work, once we have established what those competencies are, then we have to evaluate the policy associated with that and where do we need to change policy? Is it changing our high school graduation requirements? Is it changing how we do accountability or assessment to make sure all of that is aligned and is going to allow for the successful implementation of the Portrait over time?

Assemblywoman Anderson, you also asked about the trends in capital investment for school buildings across the country. It is something I have been following closely with my work hat on. I do consulting as a day job, and one of my clients is the New Mexico Public Schools Facilities Authority. They have asked me to do research around that area as well. There is a federal bill that is being pushed right now, I am not sure if it has been heard yet. It is called the Rebuild Our Schools Act, and it is \$140 billion. I am tracking that closely. I have also talked to states around us, and it is a growing critical concern. There are states around us

that have upwards of \$10 billion in deferred maintenance in their school buildings and unfortunately, we are oftentimes competing for the same construction resources and teams. New Mexico has a unique approach, thanks to a lawsuit 20 some years ago, on how they handle capital construction and partner with school districts to make sure they get adequate facilities. I am willing to talk about that offline, it is an interesting model. I think there is an appetite and a need to talk about that here in Nevada. We have multiple aging facilities and the most recent number I could find for CCSD was a \$6 billion in deferred maintenance and we are probably above that at this point and that is one school district in the State.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Those handouts, I know at least one of them is connected to the Nevada Future of Learning online. It says [Agenda Item VI B](#). I am not sure the other one is online. I am not seeing it, but we will make sure we get it to the members and get it up there. [Due to copyright issues, the handout is on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, Carson City, Nevada. For copies, contact the Library at (775) 684-6827 or www.leg.state.nv.us/Division/Research/About/Contact.]

Ms. Ortiz:

They are also available on the website, www.nvfutureoflearning.org.

[This information is not available on this website.]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I clicked on that, but I am not seeing it.

It looks like we have another question from Assemblywoman Hansen, please go ahead.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I am feeling encouraged about some of the things that happened this last session and things we are looking and studying in SB 72—especially the slide you had on Read by Grade 3. For me, a lot of issues are very important, but literacy is key because I think so much success for a student depends on being able to read. It is not something I came up with, I think we all know that to be a fact. To see we are making inroads and getting to the roots, perhaps, of our concerns about literacy in Nevada, especially in light of what was said by Dr. Weyer with ESC about the trending things in other state legislatures and their concerns with education.

You had a photo of a principal at a school, and mentioned good things are going on there. I missed the name of the school and would love to visit.

Ms. Ebert:

Yes, it is Myrtle Tate Elementary School. It is a Title I school in Las Vegas. The amazing Principal Popek has been there for quite a while, and she has brought in the community. She retains her educators at her school building, has professional development for them. I think you will enjoy that visit.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

It got a total redo a couple of years back. It is a brand-new campus, and I am happy to see that. I think that is something we would all like to do. I would like to head out there again.

I have a question for you. You said you did a listening tour in Carson City on AB 285 and AB 330—restorative justice. I would like to know what that looks like in practicality. One of my biggest issues with making those changes to restorative justice is I felt the information was not out there. I think there are a lot of misnomers on what that looks like exactly. How is it going?

Ms. Ebert:

I would like to turn it over to Deputy McGill who was at the visit as well. Deputy McGill, will you also go into the grant opportunity at the end of sharing?

Christy McGill, Deputy Superintendent for Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement, NDE:

Carson City translated this work with a multitiered systems approach, looking at ensuring they had the appropriate interventions needed to put in other things than discipline. One of the reasons they had this is because they had two grants. One was the ESSER grants we talked about today, it put in multitiered systems of support (MTSS) coaching to make sure our students we are getting the Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 supports around behavior before discipline—that set the framework. Also, they received the Project AWARE (Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education) grant that looked at putting more social workers and board certified behavioral analysts (BCBAs) in the schools themselves. Again, looking at that therapeutic, helpful, and restorative approach instead of discipline and, when needed, they had all the tools necessary in the realm of discipline to do that as well. The last thing is, NDE will be working with Nevada Medicaid and the Division of Child and Family Services, Department of Health and Human Services. There are several grants coming out where we are looking at this in a shared approach so the schools do not feel like they are out there on their own, that we can get social workers, BCBAs, and our practitioners into the schools to support them in this. Those two grants are the System of Care grant that is due in a week and then also the new Medicaid in Schools money grant as well.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Is this unique in Carson City or is this being implemented statewide?

Ms. McGill:

It is being implemented school by school. The good news is the MTSS paired with those interventions does make a significant difference in discipline. The not so good news is it is a lot of work and takes three to five years to implement. You will see across the continuum, different districts and even different schools in different stages of that implementation. Using that progressive and restorative approach, it is embedded in that multitiered approach. The good news is we know what works, the bad news is it takes a long time for implementation, and it takes resources—mainly personnel resources to make sure those people are in our schools can support our teachers.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I know we want things to turn around immediately, but unfortunately, that is not how things work. Three to five years does not seem a crazy amount of time, but it obviously makes a difference to the kids who are in school right now.

I think that is all the questions for the Committee, and I appreciate you being here today.

AGENDA ITEM VII—OVERVIEW AND UPDATES CONCERNING THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION ON SCHOOL FUNDING

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will now hear the presentation on the Commission on School Funding, who will provide an update on the work of the Commission. Welcome Mr. Hobbs, always great to see you. Tell us all the great things you have uncovered.

Guy Hobbs, Chair, Commission on School Funding, NDE:

Good morning, Chair Bilbray-Axelrod, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee. It has been a while since I have been in front of you, but we have been working. We were tasked with a number of things to do by virtue of SB 543, AB 400, and SB 98—which are recurring themes you are hearing about today. One of the key differences between this update today and prior discussions, is that the prior interim, and leading up to the last session, a majority of our effort was focused on producing a report that embodied recommendations for optimal funding for education—as we were charged to do by SB 543—and also identifying potential methods of funding, that optimal funding level, over the ensuing ten years. We prepared a report, not an easy read, that we filed a year ago this past November. Part of what we are going to be undertaking has to do with updating that report. But were given a lengthy list of other tasks to do, including updating the optimal funding recommendations. Superintendent Ebert, in her presentation, covered some of the topical areas we are working on, but I will spend a little more time on those with you.

I want to start out by mentioning the Commission has identified its core mission and guiding principles to guide its work over the course of the next several months. I will briefly read that into the record. The Commission on School Funding, per the directives provided in SB 543, AB 400, and SB 98, shall endeavor to develop a framework for a system of reporting and accountability that will provide the State with a credible, reliable, and useful tool for measuring performance within the State's system of education. The Commission shall also continue its work to identify optimal funding for education in Nevada and the identification of methods of funding that would achieve optimal funding. The system of reporting and measurement of the effectiveness of investments in education must become the accepted standard by which future funding decisions are made. The guiding principles, any system—again, this refers to the system of reporting and accountability—that measures performance must be credible and meaningful and based on data from reliable and consistent sources and reflect what is actually happening in our schools. Any such system must be flexible and adaptable to changing data needs and conditions. Over the years, too often, we have seen sources of data that were not necessarily consistent and consequently not comparable, and it becomes very difficult for you to compare data that is not similar over time and come up with a meaningful conclusion. Any such system must be useful and understandable to all stakeholders. In other words, agreed upon by all of those stakeholders, there must be broad buy-in among stakeholders for the system to be accepted. Its design must contemplate use by elected decision makers, State and district

administrators, educators, parents, employers, taxpayers, and all other interested parties. Any such system must be clear in terms of its purpose and application and must provide for the transparency that is necessary for it to become the accepted standard of measurement. Any such system must tie performance metrics to investments to create a basis for determining academic return on investment, thus becoming a standard for decisions on future investments. Lastly, any such system must provide for peer-to-peer comparisons between and among states, school districts within Nevada, and schools within a district. Those are essentially the guiding principles we will use to guide the work over the course of the next several months.

As Superintendent Ebert mentioned, we divided our tasks. It took a while to get our arms around the variety of tasks we were given. Some were very clear and concise, dealing with optimal funding and methods of funding—that is very clear to me. A number of the tasks had to do with things like, and you have heard this discussion this morning, small school capital, teacher pipeline, teacher and support staff compensation, accessibility or mobility between and among public schools. Those things are very dissimilar from the topics we were given during the prior interim. It took a while to sort these out and place them into logical and meaningful buckets, so the work could be performed. We have identified nine working groups. Those working groups, I am happy to say, are all under way at this point.

The first working group is the performance of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan, and that working group is being led by former Senator Joyce Woodhouse. We heard discussion and testimony already this morning about the Plan being an improvement over the prior Nevada Plan, but we have to continue to look at it to make sure there are not any unintended consequences or things that pop up that may change our view or application of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. The question at the core, is the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan doing what you intended it to do? We want to come back to you and very affirmatively answer that question.

The second working group we identified deals with optimal funding, both targeting the optimal funding amount and identifying methods of funding that over a ten-year period. The ten-year period is prescribed in the legislation itself, and the person assigned to oversee that working group is me. I will be updating that report over the course of the next few months. Much of that work has already been done, and I hope to have that report updated—my timeline is about May, at this point, to have that portion of our work updated.

The next three deal with the accountability and reporting data, and framework of reporting we have heard discussed as a common theme throughout today's meeting. We broke that up into three different sections. The first working group is accountability reporting and data. One of our Commission members, Jason A. Goudie, is leading that group. You heard discussion this morning about the number of reports that are required to be filed by school districts, by schools within districts, where those reports go, how they may be utilized. All of that is being evaluated. It is fortunate that some of the folks who will be working on that working group also happen to be administrative officers within school districts. They are quite familiar with the preparation of these reports and would be able to certainly lend their expertise. The goal would be to eliminate unnecessary reporting and duplicative reporting and consolidate reporting, so it is more meaningful at the end of the day. It is an essential element for the accountability and measurements of return on investment because we need the correct data, and we need it in good form. If we are able to collect that data, we may become more of a repository for much of that information throughout the State.

Part and parcel with the whole reporting mechanism would be identifying a new reporting framework and that is another one of our working groups being headed by Paul Johnson, who is the Chief Financial Officer of White Pine County School District. The new reporting framework will identify the way this new data is being collected—some of which is not necessarily new data but recomposed data—how it will be presented for review and analysis in viewing by folks like you, LCB, and others. The final step in identifying the data and sorting the data out for presentation is, what do you do with the data? Once you have it, there is naturally an inferential element that follows the accumulation of data. In other words, what does all of that mean? What does it tell us? To me, it is an incredibly important element of this. We have a separate working group to identify that, and it is being headed by Dr. Nancy Brune, who is also a member of our State Commission on School Funding.

Then, we had other items, I mentioned earlier, that are not necessarily directly focused on accountability and reporting and return on investment but were nonetheless assigned to the Commission on School Funding. One of them is accessibility within public schools. Jim McIntosh, who is the Chief Financial Officer at the City of Henderson and a member of the Commission, is leading that working group to provide information and any recommendations that come out of that work.

Small school capital—again, you had discussions about that this morning. I could spend literally hours, which I will not do, talking about a lot of the barriers that exist that keep smaller school districts from being able to fund some of the capital needs they have. Most of those have to do with tax law throughout the State. I will be leading that working group as well. We had a bill drafted prior to the last session. I am not sure where that bill necessarily went. I know it did not go all the way through. Hopefully, we will be able to build off what we recommended the last go around and take into account some of the things President Ortiz was talking about with respect to the data they may be collecting and hopefully bring a better solution back.

We also had discussion about teacher pipeline. One of our members, Dusty Casey, who works for a charter school in the northern part of the State, is coordinating that effort.

Lastly, the teacher and support staff compensation, Punam Mathur, who is a member of our Commission—I know many of you know her—she is leading that working group for us. Obviously, there will be interplay between the teacher pipeline or the supply side dynamics of the analysis and the compensation side of it, which is the attracting and retaining part of the equation.

I am expecting the optimal funding, the small school capital piece, and probably the accessibility within public schools piece and maybe another area or so should be completed in the May to June time frame—that is what we are shooting for and what I am trying to inspire our working group leaders to do. I am two of those working group leaders, so I am inspiring myself to do that. We are trying to make sure we get those out of the way so the rest of us, who complete our tasks, can redeploy to other tasks as we move toward our November target date for the completion of our final report. We also wish to express our appreciation to you for, this time, providing us with support in the area of subject matter experts and the ability to fund the technical resources we need in each one of these areas. We have been working through, with NDE's help, navigating State procurement and getting those contracts put into place so they can complement the work that members of our staff are doing.

As a final note, it has been an exceptional experience for me over the last three years. My background is generally in state and local government finance and taxation and other

glamorous areas like that. The exposure to the world you are focusing on right now—education, the funding of education, and the different facets that make it as challenging as it is, has been an absolute eyeopener. I want to commend you for committing yourself to trying to improve that. I also wanted to thank NDE and their staff for the support they have given us, they have been remarkable. We appreciate the State Board of Education for allowing those folks to work with us as well and bringing forth the answers to the questions you have all tasked us to answer.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Assemblywoman Anderson, we can always count on you. Go ahead please.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Mr. Hobbs, you have such a calm and confident way of presenting the information that it makes me feel happy. Thank you for the fashion by which you present. Combining the two presentations that we had, are you also experiencing issues with getting information in a timely fashion from NDE based upon the staffing mechanisms or the lack of staffing?

Then, I am interested in hearing about identifying the new reporting fashion. Would that be done utilizing the current systems used with the school districts or with the current systems we have, or is it too early to tell yet?

Mr. Hobbs:

To the first question, NDE has been extraordinarily responsive in all regards. I think the fact that we were the beneficiaries of funding for subject matter experts will relieve NDE of having to become those subject matter experts or otherwise, be research assistants to the Commission. Clearly, in some areas, we do not look to the staff of NDE to help us get this work done. They are also expert resources; this is what they do for a living. We clearly want to get their input and guidance. I have regular calls with them to make sure the thoughts and ideas I may have, in any one of these topical areas, are well grounded. They have been generally kind about telling me when they are not, so I appreciate that part. They have been very helpful, but I try to be cognizant of the fact that they have regular work to do for the State Board of Education. They have a lot of this reporting to do and many other tasks, that I am sure are beyond my comprehension, as a part of their regular job. We hope to complement them over time and not drain them over time.

With respect to me being calm, with regard to everything we have been asked to do, I am anything other than that right now, but we will see as time goes on. The framework of presenting this data, I will give you my opinion at this point because it is not something the Commission has reached a consensus on. I think there are reporting mechanisms out there right now, if you look at the Nevada Report Card or elements of Acing Accountability—some that already exist, that certainly are worthwhile. I think being able to expand them to include more data. One of the things I noticed right away in looking at, for example, the Nevada Report Card, it gives you a point-in-time assessment. It does not give you a longitudinal assessment of change. I think that is very important to have and important to have over a wider array of metrics than those being used at this point. Again, that is my opinion as somebody who works in and around numbers all the time, I think that would be very helpful. We certainly want to reach consensus about the presentability of it. I think most importantly, it is you that I am talking to right now, you make the decisions about these things, that it really needs to be presentable too. We cannot make it so complicated that nobody wants to read it. We cannot simplify it so much that it loses any of its meaning.

We have to find that sweet spot in the middle where the information you are seeing is salient, meaningful, and contributes to good dialogue that you will have about making future funding decisions. I think I got both of your questions.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

You did, and if you can figure out how to find that Goldilocks report, I bet we could make a lot of money by selling that to every legislature in the nation. Thank you for that information and clarifications.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you, Mr. Hobbs, for being here and we look forward to that report in November.

AGENDA ITEM VIII—PRESENTATION ON THE STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN NEVADA

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will now hear from Patty Charlton, who is the Chancellor of NSHE, on the state of higher education. Begin when you are ready.

Patty Charlton, Chancellor, NSHE:

Good afternoon, Chair Bilbray-Axelrod, Vice Chair Lange, Members of the Committee, and those who are present remotely. While I may be sitting at the table by myself, I am far but alone. We have representatives from each of our institutions, as well as NSHE, available as we progress through this presentation, should there be any questions ([Agenda Item VIII A](#)). I appreciate the representation from all our institutions, presidents, government affairs personnel, and others.

First, I want to express my appreciation on behalf of the State for the support of education through our State. You heard from my colleague earlier today, Superintendent Ebert and I am grateful for the partnership we have with NSHE and our K through 12 partners. In particular, the K through 12 environment and with all our school districts across the State. I would be remiss if I did not add, on behalf of the Board of Regents, we are grateful for all the Legislature has done for NSHE and for all we will continue to work on together.

Before I begin my presentation, I feel it is important to address and recognize the tragic events of December 6, 2023, at UNLV. You heard earlier today in public comment about public safety, so that loss of life was very difficult for us, and we are stellar focused on what we can do to support our campuses. We have open campuses throughout our southern Nevada, northern Nevada, and our rural communities. Each of our presidents are very committed, as well as our faculty, staff, and students to engaging with you in partnership with the Legislature and others as it pertains to safety.

I want to start with talking about where we are and who we are. First, we are one system, we have worlds of opportunities. We have something for everyone from our community colleges, from the workforce development space to our universities, to our research component, as well as our professional schools. We go anywhere from providing dual and concurrent enrollment, all the way to providing our medical professionals. Who we are, as you know, we have had change to our Board leadership, consistent with their policies. Our new Chair is Amy J. Carvalho, who is in southern Nevada, and the Vice Chair is Jeffrey S. Downs, Ph.D. Our Regents are listed on the slide. I want to ensure you have our

current makeup as well as the amazing presidents of our universities, the Desert Research Institute (DRI), and our community colleges.

Our mission of NSHE is focused on supporting the State and our worldwide and global environment. We are focused on providing quality and consistent resources in our mission, acquiring and transmitting knowledge throughout our region, the nation, and the world. The System provides an educated and technically skilled citizenry for our public service, our economic growth, and the general welfare. We contribute to an educated and trained workforce, not just our industry and commerce, but we also facilitate the individual quest for personal fulfillment. We are here for wherever and however we need to meet our students and in partnership with, not just the State, but our local communities in how we can advance the State of Nevada.

The Board of Regents has a very focused strategic plan. In that, we have specific goals. One is increasing access to higher education. Access is paramount to the educational component of our higher education system. As you will hear as I go through our presentation today, we want to improve student success, and we will show you data of how our institutions have grown in that space. We want to close the institutional performance gaps; this is mostly in transfer and graduation rates. We want to meet our workforce needs throughout southern Nevada, northern Nevada, and our rural communities. Our focus is also on research, as we have two R1 institutions. Those are something we are very proud of, as well as our unique DRI. Most importantly, for you as well, is we want to ensure we are a system that is transparent and accountable to all the needs of the State and for this body.

As I mentioned earlier, our employee base is about 14,000 strong. Our largest institution from an employee perspective is UNLV. You can see the different populations of employee distribution, and this is based out of our current employee database. We have from UNLV, UNR, College of Southern Nevada (CSN), Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) and then you can look at where we land as a system as a whole. Our employee base is also based on administrative and teaching faculty—those are what we call faculty. We have a large component of part-time faculty and staff who support the work of the System across all our institutions. We have classified employees that are State personnel and then technologists. As you look at our different institutions, it varies quite significantly of the full-time academic and administrative faculty, as well as our part-time staff. Our largest institution of part-time staff is TMCC with almost 60 percent of their employees being letter of appointment (LOA) or part-time staff. Our largest full-time staff, and we are working on this, with Nevada State University, that has about 74 percent full time. We are rich in diversity of our employees. This most recent chart shows you the comparison of where we were from the fall of 2012 to fall of 2022. The reason this is dated as of fall of 2022, is because we report this information through the federal government. It is considered integrated postsecondary education data system (IPEDS) and you may have heard that through the data warehouse. We report it on an annual basis, and it usually is in a lag. You will see that our diversity continues to grow in our employees, this is from the System as a whole. We are continuing to expand our diverse populations of employees.

Our student enrollment—we are proud to say, as of the fall of 2023 semester, we are returning to prepandemic areas. We are coming close to that mark. In the fall of 2019, we had about 113,000 students, and in the fall of 2023, we are just under 108,000 students. We are continuing to rebound from that environment and engage more of a population. This data is also available on the NSHE data warehouse and is readily available. We can also dive into that by each of the institutions, which I am going to do now. From a head count population, as I mentioned, we are just under 108,000 students. Our largest institution—this is for credit population; it does not include our noncredit population and

those that are taking other classes—UNLV is at just over 31,000 students and CSN is just over 30,000 students. Our smallest, but also our most unique and rural college, is Great Basin College at 3,000 students. We have a wide range of size at our institutions.

Our student enrollment still is very much differentiated by full-time and part-time students based on the different institution type. Our universities—primarily UNLV and UNR—see a much larger component of full-time student enrollment to part-time students. Then when you go into our Nevada State University, as well as the community colleges, you will see a much larger component of part-time students as compared to full-time. This is an important distinction about the services each of our institutions offer and the population they serve.

As a former student, I like to see that we are looking at the population who is 17 and younger—obviously, this is our dual and concurrent enrollment students to our traditional college going rate age of 18 to 24. Then we have our 25 and older. As you can see, there are a lot of returning adults that come back into our institutions and/or those that are continuing. We have a wide mix of students throughout all NSHE and each of our institutions, and it varies based on where they are. An important distinction of our student population, also, is the race and ethnicity. As you know, NSHE a minority majority serving system, we are predominantly serving a minority population. Sixty-three percent of our students across NSHE are of a historically minoritized student population. This is important as you can see how we have changed and transitioned from 2012—that population has continued to grow, and we expect it to grow in the future. When we look at the gender distribution of our student population, you will see we have primarily females attending our institutions. It varies by institution, but well over 50 percent of our student population demographics is a female population.

I am going to move into a conversation on our dual and concurrent high school students. This has been a focused partnership we have done with our K through 12 system. You heard a little from Superintendent Ebert earlier today about the bills and legislation that have passed. This has been a very focused effort on behalf of each of our institutions to grow this population because we know what is most important for our State of Nevada is to increase our college-going rate and our college-going attainment. You have seen from 2014–2015, all the way to 2022–2023, a significant development and this is attributed to the great work from each of our institutions. In the last Fiscal Year 2022–2023, we are just under 15,000 students participating across our State in dual and concurrent enrollment. This is a huge opportunity for us as well as for our State as a whole. Looking at this a little different, we have our seven teaching institutions. You can see the different growth rates and where those are going from each of the institutions. One of the things we are most proud of is that our dual and concurrent enrollment provides access. It provides access to individuals that perhaps formally did not see college as an opportunity for them. We are serving populations who have the highest need and those minority populations. We have seen a significant growth in where we are going, and this is intentional, and we know this is most important for our State as well.

I am going to shift to financial aid from a lens of those students who meet the Federal Pell Grant eligibility. The reason we are reporting off 2022–2023 is that is the most recent completed academic year. When you look at the number of students who participate in or are eligible for financial aid, over 31,000 students of our 108,000 population are financial aid eligible from a Pell perspective. It represents about \$129 million coming into our State. The average award is based on the cost of attendance for each of those institutions. We are appreciative of the students who are completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form (FAFSA) and that brings in money to our State. When you look at the size of the institutions, for example UNLV, 41.3 percent of those that are eligible are in undergraduate

programs and getting financial aid—that represents 10,900 students. Then, all the way down to CSN at 28.6 percent or just under 11,000 students. This is a significant amount of money coming into our State to support our students' education. We are very grateful for the State and the Legislature for all they have done to provide State supported financial aid.

This is one piece of the pie; I am going to talk about what we do internally within NSHE. The Governor Kenny Guinn Millennium Scholarship is one of our largest programs, offering support to over 23,000 students. It brings in about \$36 million to higher education, but these are funds distributed based on the eligibility of those students. The Silver State Opportunity Grant is another program funded by the State, and we appreciate all you have done to provide that support. It is a \$5 million capped program. We also have the Nevada Promise Scholarship specifically for those individuals coming into us from the K through 12 environment. In addition to this financial aid program, for every credit hour a student pays, there is also funding retained by the institutions. Those funds represent over \$40 million across our system. We are always looking at the affordability for our students and providing educational opportunities. Financial aid is the most important thing for our students, and we want to ensure that we have all the funding available. In addition to the State supported programs, which we are very grateful for, we also have our internal resources that our presidents administer through the institutions as well as a carve out within our State supported operating budget.

Another important part of our financial support system is in fee waivers. We have several that have been put into place. Slide 22 provides you an overview of those through 2022–2023, the last completed academic year. Our largest is the Nevada National Guard fee waiver of 812 recipients and \$2.8 million. These are the fee waivers that come forward through legislation—the Foster Youth Program is one that was done internally within NSHE, and these are important populations we have. I am going to talk more in a moment about a newly developed fee waiver, passed the last legislative session, a Native American fee waiver. This is the distribution of waiver recipients by population, and I am happy to answer any questions as we move forward.

As I mentioned, we had a new fee waiver, and I know Assemblywoman Anderson is in this meeting today. This was a new fee waiver passed by the Legislature in 2023. The Native American fee waiver has been quite successful. We had over 360 people in the fall of 2023 who received the Native American fee waiver and that has been an amount of \$1 million. We received an appropriation for \$457,000 during the Legislature. We are in the process, as enrollments are continuing to be shored up for the spring, and we will have a total impact of this at the end of the spring semester. As you can see, we have had a significant impact and we anticipate for the spring of 2024, this amount will grow.

A little about how we are progressing, and how we are doing on outcomes. First, as we look at the numbers of awards conferred, we continue to grow across our system in our professional degrees, masters and doctoral programs, and bachelor's degree. We have seen somewhat of a shift in our associate degrees, but I would attribute that to the great work of our community colleges in shoring up and identifying opportunities for certificates of achievement, as well as skills certificates, those that are needed to place people into the workforce as well. This has been a great work of adding these different credentials for students to achieve.

When we look at our awards that have been conferred, from an ethnicity lens. I wanted to share this, which gives you the distribution of how that looks between our white population and our historically minoritized population. We continue to track those completions, but we know we have work to do here.

Graduation rates for our institutions, I wanted to give you trending data. We continue to increase graduation rates across our institutions. We track this based on the IPEDS data, which is a six-year time frame for bachelor's degree recipients. We know that we have the impact of the Coronavirus Disease on 2019 (COVID-19) that was realized at this time. For our community colleges, with each of the institutions, we provided data on that front as well from 2020 through 2022, which is the most recent year we can track for graduation rates. The other important story to tell with community colleges has to do with transfers. Many of our students will start at the community college and they will transfer to the universities. We continue to track data of those students who are progressing and transferring out from the institutions. You have a comparison of three-year data for each of our institutions as well. As I mentioned earlier, we have representatives from each of the institutions who can respond to any questions you might have.

The other thing we want to constantly monitor and track is where are our students going? When they graduate from high school, in particular, how many are continuing to postsecondary education? How many are going into the workforce, and where are they going? As you can see, we continue to grow from those continuing to NSHE, those going on to some form of postsecondary education, and those employed in the State of Nevada. We continue to monitor this data and dive into where those students are going because the most important thing is what your investment dollars are looking at from K through 12 and then where people are going and retaining within our system.

The next part I wanted to share with you is information about our corequisite math and English policy and implementation. Several bienniums ago, I remember having a conversation with the Legislature about individuals who were taking developmental or remedial education and what was happening. Students were getting lost in that pipeline. The Nevada System of Higher Education developed a very comprehensive corequisite policy. We developed reform curriculum and implemented that policy. We now have data to give you that we have assessed and are working on continuous improvement. In many cases, students were taking three to four classes, of perhaps math, before they could get into college level math. We have now seen a growth in that opportunity where students are continuing through that progress. The traditional remedial pathway had many layers. Now we have a corequisite support so students can take one class. It is a lot of credits, but it is proving to be successful. The remedial math component and English are the two main categories. In fall of 2015, we saw that 16 percent of our students were falling into that remedial math pathway. Now, we are seeing completion of 58 percent. In English, they were starting at 34 percent in 2015 and now 58 percent. This is a huge advantage to save student's money and it also saves them time to progress in their programs. We have individuals who can respond to any questions you might have.

Also, when we look at it from the different ethnicities, a huge success from where we were in 2015 to 2021, that was the last data year. We have seen our students completing at a much higher level, specifically in math. We know that math often can determine the course of your pathway and what you will continue on for education purposes. Then, the same with English in 2015 and in 2021 continuing to make significant progress. We are working on what we are going to see in the outcomes of graduation rates as compared. Our Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, Daniel Archer, can answer any questions related to that.

I want to thank you again for the work from the 2023 Legislative Session, where we had many bills that came out in support of higher education. The first is AB 37, which is the Behavioral Health Workforce Development Center. This has been stood up and is the Behavioral Health Education, Retention, and Expansion Network of Nevada (BeHERE NV)

housed out of UNLV but providing statewide support. As I mentioned earlier, our Native American fee waiver. We also implemented policy changes on transcript access throughout our NSHE institutions and it has been put into place. We also have AB 245, which is a task force on power-based violence. This was a transition from and corrective language from the prior session. We are in the process of completing and reporting out on the survey as it relates to power-based violence—that was mandated by the legislation. We also have AB 226, which is the deferred action and in-state tuition. We have implemented the policy changes that NSHE can do at this point in time. We are working through those implementations as we move forward. We had the Purple Heart fee waiver and those policy changes have been changed. Then, our institutions received \$20 million, thank you to the Legislature, for our nursing program expansion, which has made a significant difference.

As we move forward—I have to say again, my appreciation to Superintendent Ebert for her comments earlier today—we are working together on all the educational opportunities. I have had conversations with several of you, public safety is the number one priority for our institutions. We need our faculty, staff, students, and the community to feel safe when they are on our campuses. Our presidents are steadfast dedicated to this process. I have created an ad hoc committee—the Chancellor's Ad Hoc Committee on Public Safety. You will be seeing recommendations coming as we move forward.

Also moving forward—and we have already started this process—is the Committee on Higher Education Funding, which was AB 493. The next meeting is on Monday, February 12, 2024, where that Committee will be working forward. Thank you for your work, Senator Dondero Loop, who is a participant on that Committee.

We are gaining the insights from the fee waiver study. We know that will be a part of the process we do together with you—looking at the fee waivers we have throughout the System and the impact it has on our students, as well as our institutions, because it is important and might help us to inform policy decisions.

Again, we are working steadfast with NDE on the implementation of AB 428, as well as GOWINN and GOED. It is a very large bill. We are looking forward to that.

With that, I wanted to get through the presentation so we could move forward to any questions you might have. I want to remind you that we have institutional representatives from everywhere—UNLV, UNR, Nevada State, and all our community colleges.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I know we have at least one question. I have a question too, but I will start with Assemblywoman Anderson.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I have many questions, some of them I will try to keep offline. You brought up the different faculty numbers and administration numbers. The first question has to do with slide 8 when it came to the staffing issue, is there a way to divide that up between faculty and administration? When I looked at it, it felt like it was all faculty and administration, which sometimes is different. Also, are all members of the employee group able to get PERS or is it only some that can have PERS as part of their benefit?

Question two has to do with the student access fees and whether it is waivers or financial aid. Thank you for the shout out on the Native American tuition waiver. Are students able to use any of that money for the numerous fees beyond tuition costs, or is it only for tuition?

My last question has to do with slides 11 and 12. Is there a way for us to get the full-time equivalent (FTE) of student enrollment, versus how it is being presented at this time because sometimes it might be different?

Ms. Charlton:

When it comes to the staffing distribution, it can be complicated to review, but we can separate it. For example, we also have our LOA faculty and staff, these are our paraprofessional employees. What we would have to do is, it is not as easy as it might sound, where they may be doing teaching and performing other administrative duties. We have administrative faculty that include our academic and career advisors, financial aid advisors, and a host of other administrative faculty who support our academic programs. We can certainly work to develop and provide you additional information on that. We are working collaboratively with our institutions to improve our faculty and staff data dashboards that are located on our NSHE websites.

You also asked about PERS and whether our employees are eligible for PERS. Our classified employees are a part of the State personnel process. Those are PERS eligible employees, and they are all PERS employees for the most part. If a professional employee came to NSHE from a former State public or other municipality and they were already within the PERS system—basically the context is once PERS, always PERS—so we do have professional employees who may be PERS eligible. But for the most part, we have what is called the retirement plan alternative. For the bulk of our professional employees, they are not within the PERS environment unless they formally worked for a different organization that was PERS required. Once you are in the PERS system, you maintain that through your career.

You asked about student access fees and financial aid. If I could ask you to repeat that question regarding the student access. We do have student access that comes from federal sources, and we also have those that we administer directly within NSHE.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

In particular, I am looking for the financial aid that is given from the State. If they are able to utilize any of those funds for their additional fees. For example, I know in UNR, there is the automatic health care fee, or the—I think there might be something the students voted on that has something to do with the gym fee, and other mandatory fees. Are they able to utilize any of that financial aid in that way?

Ms. Charlton:

I would like to ask Jose Quiroga. He works within the System and is a financial aid expert.

José Quiroga, Research Analyst, NSHE:

It is a good question. I will have to caveat it with, anything financially related—because it has so many regulations—it depends. But for the most part, yes. The State funds and fee waivers can be used for any of the mandatory fees. There are specific rules that limit what those funds can be used for in certain situations. For example, the Millennium Scholarship can go to any fee, and if paired with other aid, would be above mandatory fees. It can even be a refund for the student to go towards their housing or other educational expenses that

are directly with the institution. However, there is other aid, like the Nevada Promise Scholarship, that is limited to mandatory fees, that does include any of the other mandatory fees, not just registration, but it would not be refunded to the student. However, if a student is receiving additional scholarships, it can pair with one of those more limited financial aid sources to be a refund to a student for some of their educational expenses.

I hope that answers the questions and happy to answer any follow ups.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I know when we were having this discussion during the last two sessions, this has always been so confusing. It almost needs its own little road map on what can be utilized and what cannot.

Ms. Charlton:

Your next question related to student head count enrollment and whether we have FTE. We do have FTE data and would be happy to provide that information for you. We look at our head count enrollment because those are the number of students that institutions are supporting through all their services. Our website does provide comprehensive data on FTE, but we would be happy to provide any information the Committee would like.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

If you would send it to the Committee Staff, and we will get it out to our Members.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

This is my last question. When it comes to AB 428, is that work being done with many of our different higher education institutes or is that only being done at the UNLV level? I know there is also the option of being able to utilize this idea of the academy in other districts.

Ms. Charlton:

Assembly Bill 428 has a lot of different moving pieces. We are working on that collectively. It is UNLV participating, but all our institutions are also participating. There are different facets related to the teacher pathway that we have programs related to and highlighted earlier today was Nevada State University's program as well. This is a comprehensive approach through all of NSHE.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will stay in northern Nevada and go to Assemblywoman Hansen.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Thank you for being here and giving us insight into all of this. My questions are going to revolve around the corequisite model. This has been a concern of mine. I think you said the average is about six years for graduation. I am assuming that impact is students work a lot during college, and it takes longer. I have always had concerns about the remediation needs when kids are going on to college are delaying them—and I think that is reflected in some of the studies. But I am glad about the reforms that have been done—I think in 2019, this gateway change was done. I understand now it is in tandem, to cut down on the amount of time and the amount of money it is costing students having to be there longer. I am sure

you are working in conjunction—it sounds like even more—with Superintendent Ebert. How can K through 12 best prepare these students so when you get them, we do not have a lot of this remediation? In 2013, I was attending education meetings, even though I was not an elected member of the body yet. Chancellor Klaich said on the record, in a hearing in 2013, that remediation rates were 40 percent in the State, with about 25 percent being Millennium Scholarship recipients. I was flabbergasted by that. Then, we fast forward to 2019 and it is my first session. I asked one of the administrative officials from Clark County, what the remediation rates were. They said 50 percent for the State as kids graduate and go on to higher education, and 60 percent for Clark County. Then, the figure for Millennium Scholarship recipients moved to 30 percent. I am glad to see as of 2019, it was passed to try this new corequisite and college ready gateway policy. It is still new, and I guess we are still waiting to see all the stuff. My question is, are we intensifying our efforts to work hand-in-hand for suggestions, ideas, and recommendations for our high school or the whole system K through 12? What do they need to be doing so we are not having these remediation rates that then hold kids back and take so long for graduation. In 2020, in a UNLV News Center article that only 8 out of 100 students that end up in remediation in college graduate. Number one, kudos for addressing this and secondly, can you give us some idea of how you see this moving forward?

Ms. Charlton:

It has been very intentional work from our institutions and from our faculty specifically. I am going to turn the table over to Daniel Archer to answer your specific questions.

Daniel Archer, Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs, NSHE:

Those were great insights. We are in the midst of doing that right now, in terms of having more cross pollination in collaboration with K through 12. Right now, we are actively engaged with the Charles A. Dana Center, which is at the University of Texas at Austin. It is the leading entity on K through 12 and higher education math reform in the country. We have folks from our office right now, and within K through 12, who are in Anaheim, California, getting professional development in this space. One of the big things we are working on right now is revisiting the pathways that students take when they are pursuing an undergraduate degree. Everyone has to have a math, but not everyone needs college algebra. Some students may need statistics, as an example. If someone is majoring in political science, a statistics course is going to be far more relevant to the field of study they are going to go into in the workforce area they are going to pursue. We are trying to outline clear math pathways and have that alignment within all of the college universities within NSHE. As a second step, it would progress down to K through 12 and revisiting how we want to look at pathways for high school students because traditionally, it has been very rigid that every student has to have Algebra 2 and that may not be the best fit for everybody. I think it is a matter of us working with the Dana Center, using their expertise. There has been countless work that has been done in other states and replicating those models.

Ms. Charlton:

To follow up on that point, our intentional work with our K through 12 partners on dual and concurrent enrollment is also helping to alleviate that pathway challenge and remedial education much earlier on so students can be more successful as they matriculate into higher education.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

It is always good to hear moving forward. It looks like you really are trying to incorporate. We are on team higher education and team K through 12. It is great to hear about the coordinating efforts and looking outside the box and reexamining these pathways.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

As a former political science major, I would have enjoyed taking statistics over that college level algebra that I struggled through.

Do we have anybody else in the North with questions? I do not see anybody. We have a couple of questions here. We will start with Assemblyman D'Silva.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

I had a question about AB 226. This is a bill that dealt with the deferred action students and in-state tuition. I know there have been issues with getting the bill fully implemented. Can you give us insight into what is going on with the implementation of AB 226.

Ms. Charlton:

We have worked through all of the implementation of that bill that we can at this point. There were two points, specifically, that required either a change in federal legislation or an action of the Attorney General to close the gap on our deferred action students. We have implemented all the changes within the legislation that we are able to do at this point, and pending those two points, we are in a hold until either the law changes from the federal government and/or the Attorney General determines their next steps.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

Will any of the students who are intended now to receive that benefit, will they be able to get that in-state tuition break this semester?

Ms. Charlton:

Those students who were eligible, based on the policy changes that we were able to implement, were moved forward immediately. We made those policy changes as soon as the Legislature completed and the Board of Regents approved those changes, which was well in advance of the fall semester.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will recognize Senator Dondero Loop.

Senator Dondero Loop:

I am going to go back to public safety. I do not have a question, but I do have a comment. The reason I was delayed this morning is because I was on a panel about K through 12. I think it is important that we recognize we have a set of students who are being raised and then becoming adults that have lived through a pandemic. They had some stunted growth there, they have all this technology, but then on top of that, it is like every other day there is a shooting. Unfortunately, that finally touched our campus and because of that, I am hyper-aware that these kids have different needs. I wanted to say publicly, thank you to the

University System for recognizing that and doing some of these things. But also, these kids need to be educated differently. We need to be aware of their mental health. We need to be aware of how they feel on campus. I am even working through this with my granddaughter right now. We need to be aware that, as adults, we may go on, but some of them—and most of them—are stuck in this trauma they have faced. I appreciate all you are doing and please let me know if we can help.

Ms. Charlton:

I want to thank you for those comments. First and foremost, I will tell you that as we have had conversations with each of our institutional presidents and their leadership team, mental health and the challenges students face every day is one of their top priorities. We have a lot of priorities, and you will hear about that, and we will continue to share those priorities with you. This is a different environment and what happened did rock our world a little bit. It has been one that our presidents have come together, our institutions are united on this front. The campus safety and the safety of everyone on our institution—be it a physical safety, a mental safety—is at the very utmost paramount priority for them. I appreciate and need to recognize the leadership of each of our institutions because they deal with this every single day. I appreciate the offer that we will be coming back to you for what you can do to help us, because we need to do this together. It is not just the students, faculty, staff, and community at our institutions today, it is those that are coming forward. Imagine those students coming from K through 12 right now and what they have lived through, they are very different than the experiences that I had as a student. This is the most important work that we can do together.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Any other questions? I am not seeing any.

Thank you, Chancellor. I look forward to continuing to work with you. I appreciate, thus far, you being very open and willing to communicate, that is what we need to move Nevada forward—those open lines of communication.

[Subsequent to the meeting, Ms. Charlton provided information responding to questions from Committee Members ([Agenda Item VIII B](#)).]

AGENDA ITEM IX—OVERVIEW OF THE STRUCTURE OF CHARTER SCHOOLS IN NEVADA AND RECOMMENDATIONS THAT WOULD ASSIST CHARTER SCHOOLS IN ACHIEVING ACADEMIC, FISCAL, AND ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS (NRS 388A.171) AND A REPORT ON THE STATE OF NEVADA'S CHARTER SCHOOLS

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will move on to Agenda Item IX. We will hear a presentation regarding Nevada's charter schools from Melissa Mackedon, Executive Director of SPCSA. Please begin when you are ready.

Melissa Mackedon, Executive Director, SPCSA:

The first thing I am going to talk about in my presentation today is the SPCSA's context in the Nevada landscape ([Agenda Item IX A](#)). The purpose of SPCSA is to authorize charter schools of high quality throughout the State with the goal of expanding opportunities for

people in the State, including without limitation, pupils who are at-risk. Additionally, we provide oversight to the charter schools that we sponsor to ensure those charter schools maintain high educational and operational standards, preserve autonomy, and safeguard the interests of pupils and the community. Lastly, we serve as a role model for best practice in sponsoring charter schools and fostering a climate in the State in which all high-quality charter schools, regardless of sponsor, can flourish.

The SPCSA is made up of a nine-member board, which is appointed by the Governor, Senate Majority Leader, Speaker of the Assembly, State Board of Education, and Charter School Association of Nevada. We have 33 full-time employees who work for us. We have two offices, one located in Northern Nevada and one in Southern. We estimate in this Fiscal Year passing through \$26.8 million of federal funds to our schools and an additional \$66.6 million of federal emergency funds. Nevada's Department of Education is the State education agency and the SPCSA is the charter school sponsor. We also serve as the local educational agency (LEA) and are a State agency. We authorize schools and have charter contracts with the governing boards of each individual school. The governing boards may oversee one campus or several campuses and will work with vendors to provide services. The initial charter school contract is six years long and then can be renewed anywhere from three to nine years. It is important to note that some school districts also authorize charter schools.

Let us take a closer look at the structure of the charter schools themselves. Each charter school is governed by a board of directors. The charter contract is between the SPCSA and that board. Nevada law dictates certain representation and expertise on these boards. The board may have one single campus, or they may have multiple campuses. Charter schools, like all public schools, also have relationships with other vendors. Vendors provide services like maintenance, payroll, or professional development. Within the charter landscape, you may have educational management organizations or charter school management organizations. These are vendors who specialize in supporting charter schools centralizing services like accounting, professional development, coaching, administrative tasks like enrollment and registration, and compliance tasks like State reporting and grants management. These vendors are paid a fee based on a specific service agreement. Other vendors that schools use are professional services like speech language therapists, occupational therapists, attorneys, information technology specialists, or janitorial services.

It is important to note that WCSD, CCSD, and Carson City School District all authorize at least one charter school. The data I am sharing with you today only includes the schools in the SPCSA portfolio. There are 81 charter school campuses sponsored by the SPCSA located across five counties, Churchill, Clark, Elko, Washoe, and White Pine. Of the schools' campuses sponsored by the SPCSA, about 85 percent are located in Clark County. This includes a total of just under 62,000 students, making the SPCSA the third largest body of students in the State.

The SPCSA has opened 25 charter schools in the last five years, which is only 43 percent of the total applications we receive. The majority of applications are not approved. This school year we opened three new schools. Seventy-nine percent of the schools that have opened in the last five years are Title I schools. By offering a variety of school models, the SPCSA enables Nevada families to choose schools that best align with the needs and interests of their children. In our portfolio, we offer:

- Arts integration schools;
- Montessori schools;

- Bilingual education;
- CTE;
- Alternative high schools serving under-credited students;
- Schools aimed to meet the needs of young women;
- Dual enrollment high schools;
- Online or blended learning;
- Classical education;
- STEM; and
- Project-based learning.

The SPCSA has been operating under its strategic plan since 2019. We are in the final year of that five-year plan. The vision of the SPCSA is equitable access to diverse, innovative, and high-quality public schools for every Nevada student. Our mission is that SPCSA sponsors, supports, and oversees dynamic and responsive public charter schools that prepare all students for academic, social, and economic success. We do this work by focusing on our values, which are student focused. We put what is best for our students at the center of our work and honor the critical role that families play in student success. Excellence through improvement—we establish clear, high expectations, and constantly seek growth for ourselves and foster improvements for our schools. Transparency—we promote transparent and open communication and make school performance data accessible to all stakeholders. Accountable autonomy—we provide our charter schools with the autonomy to innovate in the best interest of students, while holding them accountable for academic results, financial performance, and legal compliance so students, families, and taxpayers can be confident in the quality of the schools we sponsor. Equity and diversity—we are committed to ensuring equitable access for students from all backgrounds and value the voice of all members of our community. Lastly, leadership—we earn the public's trust by holding our agency to the highest standard and investing in our growth and development. The strategic plan establishes three goals that we aim to meet through four key strategies: (1) proactive oversight; (2) strategic growth; (3) expanded support; and (4) progress recognition.

The first goal of our plan is to provide families with access to high quality schools. The SPCSA aims for all sponsored schools to meet academic, organizational, and financial performance standards. Seventy-three percent of SPCSA schools are three-star or better and 47 percent are four- or five-star. Our high schools have a graduation rate of 83.8 percent and all but one exceeded the statewide graduation rate.

Slide 17 provides national context for SPCSA performance in ELA and math on the Smarter Balanced (SBAC) assessment given in third to eighth grades. We located a sample of states that also administer the SBAC—including California, Connecticut, Delaware, Oregon, and Washington—and found that in both ELA and math, SPCSA outperformed those states' showing for SY 2022–2023, which is similar to the previous year. The SPCSA-sponsored schools outperform the State on both title and non-title schools.

Public charter schools have additional oversight above and beyond that of a traditional public school. In addition to the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF), or the star ratings, as we sometimes refer to it, our schools are evaluated on a separate academic performance framework. This framework is based on the NSPF, a performance comparison between the charter school, the district, and nearby school sites. The framework also measures the diversity of each school compared to the local district.

Additionally, charter schools are subject to site evaluations. At a minimum, schools get a site evaluation in the first, third, and fifth year of their contract. Each site evaluation

involves document submissions, classroom observations, and focus groups with parents and students. For the SY 2023–2024, the SPCSA has 36 site evaluations scheduled. Next year there are over 70 site evaluations that will take place.

In addition to the academic performance framework and site evaluations, charter schools are rated annually on an organizational framework and a financial framework. The organizational framework measures five major categories: (1) the education program; (2) financial management and oversight; (3) governance and reporting; (4) students and employees; and (5) the school environment. The organizational framework takes into account over 40 annual compliance requirements and is focused on answering the question, “Is the organization effective and well run?” The financial performance framework measures four near-term financial measures and four sustainability measures. It aims to answer the question, “Is the school financially viable?”

The second goal of our strategic plan is to ensure that every student succeeds, including those from historically underserved student groups. All SPCSA student groups outperformed their State peers in third through eighth grade math and ELA. I want to highlight the ELL subgroup, the individualized educational plan (IEP) subgroup, and the free-and reduced-lunch subgroups outperformed those of their peers in the State.

Most SPCSA groups outperformed their State peers in eleventh grade math and ELA. Most SPCSA student groups had graduation rates that exceeded the respective statewide student groups. I think it is important to note this data does include the Beacon Academy of Nevada. Beacon Academy is an alternative high school that does incredible work serving students who are credit deficient, have previously dropped out, or are adjudicated. We are so proud to have them in the portfolio and of the work they do. With that said, if we are to pull Beacon Academy out of the data, our free- and reduced-lunch graduation rate would be 93.7 percent, which is significantly higher than the State’s average.

Our third and final goal is to increase the diversity of students served by the SPCSA. The SPCSA aims to sponsor schools to serve a population of students that is representative of the State with regard to race, ethnicity, and additional student groups. New SPCSA schools, that opened in recent years, are more reflective of State enrollment rates. In particular, if you look at free- and reduced-lunch rates, you will see that charter schools opened in the last four years have the same rate as the State average. English language learner enrollment is 7 percent higher than the State and IEP enrollment is within 3 percent of the State, in spite of the fact there remain inequities in special education funding.

The SPCSA’s demographics show steady progress towards alignment with the State. We certainly anticipate the AB 400 transportation dollars will help these numbers grow. Inequities in facility funding and lack of viable location for schools continue to be an equity issue. I will not go through the detailed information within the appendix which includes a list of schools that have opened since 2019, more detailed star rating data on our schools, proficiency rates on State assessments for our schools, graduation rates, and a more detailed look at demographics. It is there for your reference, so you have the information. With that, I am happy to take any questions you might have.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Yes, there is a lot of good information in this appendix, so I appreciate that. We do have questions. I will start out by asking something you did not touch on. We talked about it last session and allocated some funds, and that was transportation. How are you moving

forward with that? What is your anticipated goal? How do you think that will impact the diversity of the student population?

Ms. Mackedon:

We recognize the transportation dollars allocated through AB 400, with \$7 million this year and \$7 million next year. We have already allocated \$5.5 million for this Fiscal Year and anticipate that we will allocate all \$7 million each year of the biennium. We expect to see that help the free- and reduced-lunch number grow. However, like any initiative, it is going to take a few years before those numbers really show up. We do believe that was a major first step towards equity in charter schools. We hope to see it continue past this biennium. I think that was one of the challenges for schools, is it is a little nerve wracking to stand up something as major as a transportation plan when you only know that it is good for the next two years. We have approved over 22 plans; I have been pleased that schools have stepped up and taken the leap of faith that money will be there going forward.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Unfortunately, we are always in that predicament because we cannot bind future Legislatures, even when there is not a change in the administration, which we will not have next time. What do those plans look like? Are you seeing school buses? Are you seeing bus passes? Are you seeing micro transit? What is it looking like for the charters that have given you those plans?

Ms. Mackedon:

It is a combination. I would say a majority of the plans we have, with the exception of one or two, are all located in Clark County. The reason I think you are seeing that in Clark County is because there are third party vendors who are coming in, that schools are contracting with to provide transportation services. It makes it, I do not want to say easy, but certainly an easier lift than a rural school out in Elko or Ely, who has to stand up a whole transportation department on their own. There are a ton of policies, and it becomes basically a full-time job to manage that. I think that is why you are seeing more of them in Clark County, they can outsource some of that. With all of them, you are seeing a combination of buses and vans and the majority of them are outsourcing it to third party vendors.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Do we have any other questions? I will go to my colleague who I always can count on Assemblywoman Anderson.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I have so many questions. I am going to do them one at a time because they are in different areas. My first question is not actually something that was presented today, I know it has been presented in the past. I will understand if you do not have that information in front of you. It has to do with the licensure of the educators, whether they are in-classroom teachers, the principals, or the counselors. What is the current percentage of those individuals who are licensed through the State, or do they have to be licensed? The second part, are these same individuals able to get PERS, so we can be consistent with the question brought up earlier from NDE?

Ms. Mackedon:

I do not have the exact percentages of licensure. The last time you got this presentation, it was about 97 percent of teachers in the Authority were fully licensed through NDE. I think like all schools, charter schools are struggling to find teachers that do not just have a substitute license. I think it really hurt charter schools when they were left out of SB 231 and the matching teacher salary increases because they were not eligible to apply for those. It really put charter schools at a disadvantage for giving teacher raises. Now, having said that, they absolutely are eligible for and do get PERS.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Do we also know for the principals and the counselors? Because I know we have numerous education personnel licensed in the State. You can get that later if you would like.

Ms. Mackedon:

I can get you the principal and counselor information. I do not have that off the top of my head.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

My second question, I will start going into the slides and will go in order. On slides 5 and 6, you talked about the different charters that are present and there is one or multiple campuses. Each time that happens, does the charter school sponsor have to apply for each new campus and go through the whole conversation with the school districts and other entities or is it automatically given? What is that process?

Ms. Mackedon:

Let us pretend there is ABC Charter School, I think it is the best way to do this. They go through a very rigorous—again, only 43 percent of applications are getting approved. They have a great plan. They get approved, two or three years go by, they are knocking it out of the park, they are working with Title I kids, they are doing great. They do not automatically get to have more campuses. They have to fill out what is called an amendment request. The amendment request does require us to notify the district where that would be taking place. It is a rigorous process where we are looking at all those things. What is their academic performance? What is their organizational performance? What is their financial performance? Do they have a plan in place to scale up to the size they are proposing in their application? If the staff of the SPCSA feels like they have a proven track record and a solid plan to scale up, they will recommend approval. Ultimately, it is the SPCSA Board who will either approve or deny, based on staff recommendations. Typically, schools will only expand by one campus at a time, but there have been instances where they have scaled up multiple campuses at one time. So, they had ABC Charter School located here and now they are going to open two or three charter schools across a region. Typically, it is a little bit slower, and it is one campus at a time.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Let us say ABC Charter School has K through 6 and they are doing great. Then, they decide they want to do K through 12, but they want to have K through 12 at a different site. The building has not been built yet or they do not own the land yet. Are they able to do that or do they need to have the structure already in place based upon the process you spoke about on the research and the discussion with their school district?

Ms. Mackedon:

Yes, NRS is very clear that expanding grades is another reason why a charter school might seek only an amendment. They can do that through an amendment request, and it has happened many times in the State of Nevada. It is not uncommon for a school to start off small. In fact, a lot of charter schools will use a slow growth model where they will start K through 3 and then add, add, add, add. Then once they get to eighth grade, they put in an amendment request and want to add high school. Again, after a rigorous evaluation of, do they have a plan to offer high school? Do they have another site in-state that is already offering high school? How is it going there? A lot of times these are replications. It is really about the evaluation of the plan, and do they have a solid plan to provide grades other than those they have already been servicing? Sometimes they have been K through 5 and then they add a middle school. Sometimes they are K through 8 and then they add a high school.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you for the clarification. I am going to move on to slide 7, there was a mention of percentage of State funding that can be utilized. Can you expand upon what that term means and/or what that definition could be? I am confused by the idea of a percentage of State funding going to something other than helping students get to school, having more educators, or textbook supplies. What exactly that phrase meant?

Ms. Mackedon:

Essentially, just like they could reach out to a janitorial service to come in and work doing cleaning and light maintenance, there are organizations who specialize in supporting charter schools. Those organizations would have a fee; like the attorney might have a fee. A lot of schools now are using third party vendors to provide occupational therapy and speech therapy services. We have busing now as a vendor that is providing those services. It is a different company that specializes in supporting charter schools in a variety of ways. They are all kind of different.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I misunderstood what that phrase meant, thank you for the clarification. It makes sense because I know we see that in the public schools.

My next question has to do with slide 13, and all I wrote down was the phrase "accountability autonomy." It was under the great focus, like the values, but it has to do with the accountability autonomy. Does that mean the educators are going through the same evaluation process necessary for the public schools—like with the student learning objectives and the student learning and growth goals that are necessary at this time.

Ms. Mackedon:

In their application process, a charter school has to outline how they will be evaluating their teachers and administrators. They do not necessarily have to use the Nevada system in place that a traditional public school is using, but they absolutely have to have a plan in place that is vetted and approved as part of the application to open a school.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

It is up to the charter school board to authorize whatever that evaluation would be. It could be as simple as, "I observed your lesson plans on a daily basis." It is not actually tied to a test score and/or growth as is true for our public schools.

Ms. Mackedon:

Many charter schools do tie it to test scores and student outcomes, it is part of that autonomy piece where they are establishing it on their own. For example, in the school I used to run, we used *Teach Like a Champion* teaching strategies. Our evaluation system was based on the use of those strategies and how they were impacting outcomes of students. Every school is different and unique, and it is usually based on the model they are operating under tied in closely with that evaluation.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

When the teams look at the different on-site evaluations, is that part of their process to double check the teacher evaluation and/or principal evaluation? Or is that a check mark—yes, we did it or no, we did not?

Ms. Mackedon:

I have only been in this role for two months, so I am trying to rely on when they did a site evaluation at my school. Rather than rely on my shaky memory, I would rather go back to staff and find out exactly how that fits into their site evaluations. Whether they are looking at those or whether they are talking about them in the focus group. Let me get you the specifics rather than try to go off my memory from my last site evaluation.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I appreciate that because we all know it depends upon the team and the day you are on there. My last question has to do with slide 26. How many of these applications are coming from organizations that have charter schools in multiple states? Is that part of the application or is this only anecdotal information? In other words, do we have groups applying to make charter schools that are in multiple states and not necessarily only in Nevada?

Ms. Mackedon:

The quick answer is both. Sometimes there are schools coming in and applying, they still have to go through the full charter application, but they are a replication. They exist in Tennessee, Texas, California, or Florida. Now they want to open a school in Nevada; that is considered a replication. Then you also have standalone charter schools that are made up of local lead people who started them. If you look on slides 31, 32, and 33 you can see the schools that have opened in the last five years. Let us look at slide 33. The three schools that opened this year were Eagle Charter School—that was a replication out of Washington, District of Columbia. Pinecrest Academy of Nevada—that was a replication of a Nevada school. We have Pinecrest Academies here and they did what we talked about previously, they had an amendment request. They opened an additional campus after being successful at other campuses. Then Southern Nevada Trades High School—that is a standalone school. This year alone in those three, you see all the different scenarios possible. When I look quickly at the previous years, again, it is a mix. CIVICA Career and Collegiate Academy was a replication. Teach Las Vegas Charter School, Battle Born Academy—those were

brand-new. We call them like mom and pop or standalone charter schools that are not replications. It really is a hodgepodge; you never know what you are going to get each application cycle.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I appreciate that and wondering if there is a way for us to get that information as a legislative body of how many are in that boat. I want to give full disclosure, I think everybody on this Committee—whether they are Senators or Assembly Members, they know where I am on this one. At the same time, I want to support our kids. My concern has to do with how we have a large amount of charter schools that are the exact same as our public schools and it feels like they do not always have to go by the same rules. Knowing this information would be greatly helpful and allow for me to do more research with it. I have a hard time taking a look at the IEP information. Congratulations on those great test scores, that is wonderful. But I also think it is difficult to compare IEP students when not all services are required at all charter schools and yet they are public schools. Full disclosure. I am more than happy to have that conversation offline, but that is one of my concerns. I appreciate the information and time you have given to present this information today.

Ms. Mackedon:

Assemblywoman Anderson, I want to get you the right information. I would be happy to get you the schools that are replications versus standalones. Would you like it just for the schools opened in the last five years or the entirety of our portfolio?

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you for that clarification. Chair, if you are okay with this for the entire Committee, I do think it would be great for the entire portfolio. This way we can see if there are trends over the last few years or if there are other things that we need to do more of a discussion around.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Yes, if you would get that information, once again, to the Committee Staff, and we will disseminate it out to our folks.

Senator Buck, I see your hand up. I am going to go to Senator Dondero Loop quickly because it is on the same micro topic.

Senator Dondero Loop:

I have a clarifying question, when you said a replication. If I am replicating a school in Washington, D.C., do I still have to start a brand-new application, and I still have to meet all the standards? I am confused about the replicating word because I am not sure it matters if they are replicating something in Washington, D.C. or not. They are in Nevada and if they are starting a brand-new application, it is a brand-new application.

Ms. Mackedon:

If they are an operator in another state who is expanding their services, generally, they are doing that because they have been successful elsewhere, but they do not automatically get a green light in Nevada. We have turned down a lot of replication applications. They refer to them as that because they start with a—they have to do the full application. They have to

meet all of Nevada's standards and all of Nevada's requirements. When it is a replication, the application will lean on the model that has been in existence in another state and the successes there. If they were a bilingual school in Washington, D.C., that had been around for seven years, they had developed this curriculum, they were successful, and they wanted to replicate in Clark County, we would rely on some of that background information. They still have to go through the rigorous process, but they would include their successes in the information about their other schools to help inform our decision about whether we should give them the green light in Nevada or say no, you are not quite there yet—you are not meeting our standards. Which, again, does happen the majority of the time.

Senator Dondero Loop:

The reason I ask is because if you said you were replicating Pinecrest or Doral Academy of Nevada and they were right here in Nevada and they had a successful model, those are the same students we are serving. I could say I am replicating a public-school model in Massachusetts, and it is a very successful model, that does not mean it is going to be successful here. Relying on that information from outside of our community was of interest to me, and I am not sure I agree with that model totally. It has nothing to do with charters or public schools, we have businesses that come to this town from other states, and they are not successful here. We might try to go do a business in another state, and it might not be successful there. I think the replication, and maybe it is the word that bothers me, because I feel like it should be a model that is successful here in Nevada, serving our students.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Now, we will go to Senator Buck.

Senator Buck:

Congratulations on the data and results. Bringing in more diversity, I know, has been a focus and strategy as we look at our IEP students. I am seeing more students with autism, severe disabilities, and Down Syndrome and that is great because we need to make sure that we are serving all students across the board.

I know there are pockets of excellence in the school districts, but I am interested in the second layer of accountability because I know with high expectations and accountability, a lot of times what happens is our schools, the educators within our schools, and our students rise to those levels. Can you talk more about the different layers of the accountability when you go to these schools and talk to the principal and the teachers, visit the schools, look at their data, and really touch each school? In the big districts, the superintendent cannot get around to each of those schools or even have the staff do this. I think there is a lot to be learned with the second layer of accountability where you can be shut down if you are not making the grade or not doing well by the kids. It is something this body needs to look at as far as replicating for our school districts in some sort of capacity. Can you speak about the second layer of accountability the charter schools have that helped them raise the grade?

Ms. Mackedon:

I did not mention that, but I think it is important to note that if a charter school is consistently not meeting standards in academics, organization, or finance, they can be shut down. We have an intervention ladder that we use. It begins with a notice of concern—this is not cutting it—and a notice of breach and a notice of closure. Nevada law mandates closure under certain circumstances. I think you are also talking about the site evaluations.

You heard me say in the presentation that every school gets a site evaluation at least their first, third, and fifth charter contract at a minimum. A school performing at standard or above on all the frameworks, that will be their cycle. Any school not meeting standard on the frameworks will have additional site evaluations. A school might have a site evaluation annually if they are not three stars or above on the academic performance framework or if their finances look like they are problematic. I think having staff who are experienced, who have run schools, who have been teachers, getting onto these campuses on a regular basis, doing classroom observations, teacher focus groups, parent focus groups, and student focus groups is informative. The charter schools know when it is time for their charter to be renewed, after that initial six years, those site evaluations are going to inform that work. They are also going to inform the work if a charter school comes along and says, "We are serving 300 kids, we would like to grow and add 600 kids." If we look at our site evaluation and it is not stellar, we are going to say, "No, you are not ready yet. You are going to stick with what you are doing and when you reach this benchmark, talk to us again about doing an expansion." It is a rigorous process to either get approved or to get an expansion and site evaluations help inform that work.

Senator Buck:

I know that success comes from the autonomy of the charter schools. Autonomy, in staffing, budget, and evaluation per se, but they have to show results in the end. However that cake is baked, as long as it is really good in the end and is making a difference for every single child on that campus. A lot of times this body wants to go after licensed teachers, but we have an airline pilot teaching aviation as an elective. We have a cybersecurity coder teaching cybersecurity as an elective. I want this body to be leery about going after autonomy of evaluation, when ultimately, if the school is performing according to the first layer, the NSPF, as well as the second layer, which is this whole big body of accountability they have to hold for the SPCSA, all of those layers go into making excellence for students. If you could speak a little bit again, I know they have substitute license, but I know we have a pilot at one of our schools who teaches aviation to our students. There are several other examples. Maybe there is an emergency medical technician or a fireman who teaches paramedic skills for that CTE. If you could address that.

Ms. Mackendon:

I think a good example of that is to bring it back to something everyone might be familiar with which is Southern Nevada Trades High School. They are focused on the construction industry trades. I think Nevada has done a good job of making ways for a contractor to get some type of license so they can be a teacher at that school. But you are exactly right. A performing arts school might have a ballet teacher that comes in and teaching ballet who might not have gone through the full teacher licensure process, but they have years of experience as a principal dancer. You gave a lot of good examples. Ultimately, I think what you are saying is true. What goes into the pie does not necessary—I do not want to say it does not matter, it is all important—you need to have quality ingredients, or you are not going to have a quality product in the end. If the end result is that kids are growing academically, socially, and emotionally, ultimately, I think that is the most important thing. All of these things are so important. Teacher licensure, teacher evaluation, they are very important. But, if they were the solution, then every teacher would be successful because they are being evaluated with ABC tool or they have gone through this licensure or this higher education program. You cannot say that one thing is more important than another. It is all important, but none of it is as important as the actual outcome for students.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will go to Senator Lange.

Vice Chair Lange:

I thought I heard you say that you have X number of people who apply to be in a charter school, and you turn away about 40 percent. Did I hear that right? What reasons would you turn someone away? In a public school you get to go there, you do not have a choice about whether you can get in or not. You automatically get to go. Could you expand upon that and then I have a follow up question?

Ms. Mackedon:

I am glad you asked that question because, yes, that is a misunderstanding. All students are eligible regardless of disability, ELL status, or economic status to attend a charter school. What I was referring to are the entities—we call them committees to form—the groups of people that come before us and say, “I want to open a charter school. Here is my application. Here is my plan to open a charter school.” We get, let us say we got eight of those this year. Historically, we approve about 40 percent. It is not the student application to attend the school. It is the adults who are putting together a plan and want to open a school. We only end up authorizing or giving them the green light to open that school about 43 percent of the time. The reason we would say no, is because we only want to be opening the very best schools that students deserve. If for any reason, that Committee to form does not have a plan that meets Nevada standards—to go back to Senator Dondero Loop's comments—great, this worked in Tennessee, but what you have on paper does not appear meet our standards in Nevada, so it is a no. We are not going to recommend that you get to open a charter school here. These applications are sometimes thousands of pages long. If any component of that plan, “No, I am sorry, you do not have a solid enough plan to serve special education students or ELL students. We are denying this application. We are not recommending that you get a charter contract.” There are many reasons why 60 percent of schools get told they cannot open a charter school, but it has nothing to do with students attending.

Vice Chair Lange:

Thank you for the clarification. My next question goes back to Senator Buck's comments about how the charter schools have expanded and are adding more special needs kids and other types of students like you would see in the population of a typical public school. It is difficult for me to wrap my arms around comparing a charter school to a public school because with a public school, every kind of student has to be admitted. You are mixing apples and oranges, and you do not have the same makeups in the schools.

Ms. Mackedon:

Charter schools do have to enroll every single student. It does not matter what their disability is, it does not matter what their IEP calls for. If in my lottery, I draw a student who has an IEP and is blind, I am on the hook for that as a charter school. I have to provide services to that student. It is the law in the State of Nevada. The distinguishing difference is that in those charter contracts, we say with ABC charter school, we are only approving you to serve 500 students. We do not let them enroll as many students as they want. They have strict caps on the number of kids they can enroll. What starts to happen is they receive more applications than they have seats available, and it slips into a lottery system. The only distinguishing factor is that you have to get in via the lottery system. But if you get any

student with a disability, a charter school cannot ask on their application, "Does your child have an IEP?" You do not know that as a charter school when you hold your lottery and you find out after the fact—we have students here that have disabilities. There are charter schools that have had to hire nurses to support their students, lots of one-on-one aides. You name it. They are offering the gamut of services and they are on the hook for that.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Any other questions from the Committee? Assemblywoman Hansen, go ahead.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I have a request, not for you per se, but maybe for our Committee, that I think would be good for us. I have been involved in public schools with my children and with my job as a legislator. I have been involved and very interested in charter schools and have a lot of familiarity with both spaces over a multitude of decades. I think it would probably be a great idea, at some point, if we could consider doing some field trips. We could go to traditional public schools, but I think we need to get into these charter schools. I am sure all of us are familiar with charter schools, but maybe we need to revisit it. Why education exists, is for the benefit of the child and that will look different in different places with respect to my colleagues' concerns. If we are doing things in a traditional public school, why do we need to do them in a charter school setting? I will give you an example. I had a traditional public middle school, that one of my daughters went to probably about 16 or 17 years ago, not a single at-risk feeder school into this middle school. Meaning it was not a Title I, it has no at-risk schools. We lived out in the country, and she was bused to this school. I went to the open house and the teacher was very transparent and said 60 percent of the kids—at this what would be deemed a middle class, maybe lower, middle income neighborhood school—cannot read at grade level. The question would be that school is doing the traditional public school, but maybe a charter school can come in. The difference would be, it was a reading program that I disagreed with from the original conception of it in our district back in 1986, and they kept it for 14 years. The only escape for parents who were frustrated with a failing reading program, in Washoe County at that time, was to either pay for private school—which a lot of parents cannot including myself at the time—or home school or a charter school, which is a public school. They have the autonomy to have a reading program that works for their population. I would like to put on the record that while charter schools might be replicating, a traditional public school is not replicated in the curriculum. What we have to look at, as legislators, is the ability for parents to have access to their tax dollars going to public education in a setting that benefits the child's development over anything else. I am supportive of traditional public, I am supportive of charter, and I am supportive of homeschooling for those that it works for. I hope we can expand our feet on the ground and get in. I have visited several charter schools, Title I, and all free- and reduced-lunch. We have Mater Academy of Northern Nevada here at the Boys and Girls Club of Truckee Meadows and the Principal was a teacher at the public elementary school my kids went to. They are doing phenomenal things. I do not see it, necessarily, as some sort of competition because these are all our children—whether they are in traditional, charter, home school, or private. Not so much a question, as more of a statement because we know we get a little uncomfortable in this space sometimes and I do not think we need to; this is not a partisan issue. Education is about what we are all about. I look forward to, Chair, if we could consider seeing some of the great things happening in our traditional public schools and in our public charter schools.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for being here, and I look forward to additional robust conversations about what we should expect in the next legislative session.

[Subsequent to the meeting, Ms. Mackedon provided a memorandum responding to questions from Committee Members ([Agenda Item IX B](#)).]

AGENDA ITEM X—PRESENTATION ON THE STATE OF NEVADA’S SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will go to Agenda Item X, which is a presentation on the state of Nevada school districts. We will hear from Pam Teel, President of the Nevada Association of School Superintendents (NASS) begin when you are ready.

Pam Teel, President, NASS, and Superintendent, Lincoln County School District:

The presentations this morning from NDE and Mr. Hobbs had a lot of the same references that I am going to make, so I will not make this too lengthy for you. The substantial increase in our funding was greatly helpful in aligning what we needed to do this year. It is the same conversation around continuing with the Commission of School Funding work towards that optimal funding so we can ensure we have the resources necessary for what we need to do for the future of students. It brings me to the valuable conversation we are having around the Nevada Future of Learning Network, the future of Nevada, and the innovative commissions that are happening. It is all the right work around those students we know are not coming to us the same as they were wired even a year ago. Continuing to do the right work around every student in Nevada does take that amount of energy, time, and money.

Modernizing statutes or modernizing our whole system was mentioned as well. Keeping in the forefront, the policy discussion at the very beginning, talking about other policies that are working in states that are for the future is the right conversation to have. Keep seeking those good quality items that allow us to look for what is going right for the future of Nevada and our students.

Keeping technology on the forefront, making sure we have what we need to align to the future with technology as well as always remembering that accessibility for all students is hugely important. There was a conversation around AI and ensuring we have those valuable tools, that means access for all our students.

The safety and security, I cannot say enough about how we have to maintain and ensure that all of our students, staff, faculty, and even every community is safe and secure when they are at our schools and at our campuses. It is at an all-time high making sure those are in the forefront at all times too. Then, you will layer that within the mental health and wellness of all our students. All time high of ensuring we have trauma-based practices and ensuring that all faculty and staff understand it is the whole child we serve, as we serve those children.

I am one of those districts that has a school built in the 1960s and would love to build a new school. I continue to remind the conversation around ensuring that all of Nevada is able

to build and sustain our capacity with school buildings and infrastructures that some school districts do not have the capacity currently to make.

This reflects all the needs of the districts, provided funding to ensure we are able to do the things that are unique from district to district. There are 17 of us, and 17 different unique needs for all those students that are facing the Nevada classrooms at the moment. I will leave you with a quote by Cicely Tyson, "To soar towards what is possible, you must leave behind what is comfortable." I do believe in the last legislative session, and as we embark on the next chunk of our future, we have left what is comfortable for the right things for kids.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Do we have questions? Assemblywoman Anderson.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Are you seeing people leaving the profession earlier than 25 or 30 years, I know we have been having that problem in the past. Or have you found the increase of funding—which I know we passed last session—has helped people stay on a little bit more?

Ms. Teel:

Lincoln County School District has not seen a big shift in teachers leaving, other than retirement. We have had some natural turn of retirements. Also, Lincoln County has been very fortunate, and we do not see a lot of exoduses from one school to another. Once you are a teacher in a school in your community, you want to stay in that school. We have teachers who want to stay until their 30 years and retire. I cannot speak for the rest of Nevada. I know there is a big concern in other areas where teacher retention is a problem.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

If you could get that to us, we would appreciate it because it has been a concern for us for a number of years. My second question has to do with what was presented earlier with the NDE when it came to the progressive discipline plans. I know there has been increased training. I was wondering if that has, in fact, increased, or if we need to have more discussions around discipline in the classroom, and/or if we need to try to push more statewide trainings around it, or in your opinion, if what is being provided at this time is sufficient.

Ms. Teel:

Of course, increased support in any of those areas is helpful. Nevada's Department of Education has been helpful in resources and support towards the restorative practices and MTSS. Every district takes it from a different angle from where they were the previous year in implementing the new legislation and ensuring we have those programs in place. Of course, increased funding to ensure we have the training mechanisms and ability to train is always a huge benefit to either NDE—who, like they said, already short staffed—or then ensuring districts have the capacity for those trainings as well.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Assemblywoman Hansen, did you have a question?

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Does Lincoln County or any of the other counties, dealing with their teacher situation and hiring, have a four-day school week? I know Lander County does and they have had wonderful success with retention. It does not work for everybody—and a lot of people are probably having a heart attack with me bringing this up—but like you said, every county is different. I was curious if Lincoln County or if you are aware of any other rural counties that might do a four day for the teachers and students.

Ms. Teel:

There are quite a few rural school districts that are four day. Lincoln County has been four day for over 13 years and has worked for us for a lot of reasons—with Friday for sports travel, less teacher absenteeism on a Friday. It has worked for us in Lincoln County. I know Lander. I cannot rattle off the others, but I know there are at least five other school districts in rural Nevada that have four-day school weeks. I am sure it does aid and assist when we recruit.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Do we have any other questions from Members? Thank you for your presentation.

AGENDA ITEM XI—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

This brings us to our final agenda item, which is once again public comment.

[Chair Bilbray-Axelrod reviewed information related to providing public comment.]

Douglas Unger, UNLV Chapter President, Nevada Faculty Alliance:

I would like to reiterate the points our past president made in a written statement to this Committee to look at three points as you move forward. Certainly, the safety improvement funding that is going to be necessary, not only for UNLV but the whole NSHE system, to assure the safety and security of our faculty and students. To reiterate also, this Committee may need to think about needing to steward a BDR in support of the AB 493 funding formula committee, and I thank Senator Dondero Loop for serving on that Committee. Also, to look ahead toward if, and when, Question 1 might pass. Who will be responsible for really, at least, some advanced planning as to what the shape of NSHE will look like in the future and that may fall under the responsibilities or charge of this Committee. I want to say that having lived through and been on campus on December 6, 2023, and being in communication with my colleagues at Michigan State University when they celebrate on February 13th, the anniversary of their mass shooting, celebrate is not the right word. They acknowledge it had happened. We are working very hard with UNLV Strong and the Rebel Recovery system, implemented by President Keith E. Whitfield, Ph.D., to take care of our trauma affected students and our trauma affected faculty and university community. We will need your support as we move forward for short-term, medium-term, and long-term implementations for safety improvements that we are going to need to make, including probably some increased base funding to increase University Police Services Southern Command. I appreciate your cooperation and support as we develop—I serve on the Chancellor's Committee and working within the State to try to figure out what the needs will be. I hope you will be receptive and take seriously our suggestions for your support. Thank you for being there, and I hope to talk to you again in the future.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for being here and making public comment.

Is there anyone in Carson City wishing to make public comment? No.

BPS, do we have any callers on the line wishing to make public comment?

BPS:

To provide public comment, please press *9 now to take your place in the queue.

Tricia Braxton, Las Vegas Resident:

Madam Chair Bilbray-Axelrod and distinguished Committee Members. I am a resident of Congressional District 1, Senate District 20, and Assembly District 23. I have parented two young leaders who have been educated by public, charter, and private schools here in Nevada and it has been a journey, indeed. I have taught elementary school but loved to work to support our classrooms with community-based education. I also have family members and friends who have been and are still educators within CCSD. My hope for education in Nevada includes expanding cross agency collaborations to increase student success, increase support for our teachers, increase community involvement, and increase safety. As a Nevada resident and parent, I want to thank you all for working hard to improve education. We are tasked with providing complex solutions to complex problems and we certainly have improvements to celebrate. But I leave you with this statement—perfection is not realistic, but progress is. There is still a lot of work to do to keep our students first. Again, thank you.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for your public comment, and yes, we have to remind ourselves that we do not let perfection get in the way of the good. We are trying to move the needle.

BPS, are there any other folks on the line for public comment?

BPS:

Chair, the public line is open and working, but we have no additional callers at this time.

[Subsequent to the meeting, Anna Marie Binder submitted written public comment for the record ([Agenda Item XI](#)).]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you, Members and everyone who presented before the Committee today. An archived version of today's meeting will be available online. Our next meeting is currently scheduled for Wednesday, March 20, 2024, at 9 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM XII—ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 2:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Crystal Rowe
Senior Research Policy Assistant

Jennifer A. Sturm-Gahner
Principal Policy Analyst

Alex Drozdoff
Senior Policy Analyst

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Shannon Bilbray-Axelrod, Chair

Date: _____

MEETING MATERIALS

AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER/ENTITY	DESCRIPTION
Agenda Item II	Kent Ervin, past President and Director of Government Relations, Nevada Faculty Alliance	Written Remarks
Agenda Item III A	Jen Sturm-Gahner, Principal Policy Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) Alex Drozdoff, Senior Policy Analyst, Research Division, LCB	Committee Brief
Agenda Item III B	Alex Drozdoff, Senior Policy Analyst, Research Division, LCB	Report List
Agenda Item IV	Nevada's Department of Education (NDE)	List of Candidates for the Nevada State Teacher and Education Support Professional Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force
Agenda Item V A	Matthew Weyer, Ph.D., Policy Director, Education Commission of the States (ECS)	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item V B	Matthew Weyer, Ph.D., Policy Director, ECS	Memorandum
Agenda Item VI A	Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, NDE	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI B	Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, NDE	Handout
Agenda Item VIII A	Patty Charlton, Chancellor, Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE)	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VIII B	Patty Charlton, Chancellor, NSHE	Memorandum

AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER/ENTITY	DESCRIPTION
Agenda Item IX A	Melissa Mackedon, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority (SPCSA)	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item IX B	Melissa Mackedon, Executive Director, SPCSA	Memorandum
Agenda Item XI	Anna Marie Binder	Written Remarks

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