



NEVADA LEGISLATURE JOINT INTERIM STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

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

MINUTES

March 20, 2024

The second meeting of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education for the 2023–2024 Interim was held on Wednesday, March 20, 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 3138, 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 Carrie A. Buck
Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop
Assemblyman Reuben D'Silva
Assemblywoman Melissa Hardy

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT IN CARSON CITY:

Assemblywoman Natha C. Anderson
Assemblywoman Alexis Hansen

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
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 the second meeting of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education.

A quick reminder, there is one meeting material we could not upload because of copyright infringement. I found out today, we cannot upload documents created on Canva. I know it is a popular way people are creating things, but if you create it through Canva, we cannot upload it because of copyright.

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

AGENDA ITEM II—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will get started with public comment. I will begin with those wishing to make public comment in Las Vegas.

Lillian Aguirre, Nevada Resident:

Good morning. My name is Lillian Aguirre, social worker, professional, mother, and concerned Nevada citizen regarding education, specifically for special needs of those with behavioral and intellectual disabilities ([Agenda Item II](#)). I am an advocate, leader, and founder of Bless-Ed Day Academy. I am here today to introduce the first early intervention daycare and private school for special needs in Las Vegas, Nevada. Starting at eight weeks, we focus on early intervention and readiness programs for pre-Kindergarten to grade 12. We focus on the person center approach with the collaboration of teachers, caregivers, and clinical team. The core values that drive curriculum are for the wellness of all students by enhancing their spiritual, intellectual, physical, and social means. In addition, clinical services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and applied behavior analysis, and cognitive behavioral therapy are provided to students. We are the first daycare and private school to bring wraparound services to students and those families.

Bless-Ed Day Academy was founded on Nevada's crisis for support and resources for children with special needs and disabilities in education. Throughout the valley, there is an urgent requirement for comprehensive clinical services, resources, education, research, and advocacy. It is estimated as many as 8,500 school age children in Nevada have been diagnosed with autism and it continues to increase. Clark County is already dealing with a shortage of teachers. Class sizes are increasing in all classrooms, including special needs. At the same time, some schools in the Clark County School District (CCSD) are cutting back on the number of aids in those special needs' classes.

This increase can be attributed to various factors, including improvement in diagnostic screening, education access, and wraparound services for families. Currently, families are having to pay out of pocket for clinical services in which there are not enough providers. The current providers have over a year's waiting list—

To provide a strong foundation, Bless-Ed Day Academy has life readiness programs to set students up for success. Bless-Ed Day Academy seeks to continue to support students, families, and the Committee in creating effective change in education.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you, I appreciate your testimony.

It does not look like we have anyone else in Las Vegas. Is there anyone in Carson City wishing to make public comment? I do not see anyone.

Broadcast and Production Services (BPS), is there anyone on the phone line?

BPS:

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

AGENDA ITEM III—APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE MEETING ON FEBRUARY 5, 2024

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

With that, we will move to [Agenda Item III](#), approval of the minutes for the meeting on February 5, 2024.

SENATOR LANGE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON FEBRUARY 5, 2024.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION PASSED (ASSEMBLY MEMBERS HARDY AND D’SILVA WERE ABSENT FOR THE VOTE).

AGENDA ITEM IV—UPDATES, TRENDS, AND METHODS OF ADDRESSING CHRONIC ABSENTEEISM

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will go to Agenda Item IV. We will hear from several stakeholders on the updates, trends, and methods for addressing chronic absenteeism, and will take time for questions and answers after all the presenters have presented. First, we have Autumn Rivera with the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) joining us via Zoom. Please go ahead when ready.

Autumn Rivera, Policy Specialist, Education Program, NCSL:

I am going to talk about the state attendance trends, including chronic absenteeism, as well as truancy ([Agenda Item IV A](#)). We are going to look at attendance overview, absenteeism trends, truancy patterns, the impact of attendance on academic performance, strategies and interventions, and case studies.

Today, our focus will be on two critical aspects of attendance—absenteeism and truancy. Both terms represent challenges and implications. My goal is to provide you with the

oversight into statewide attendance trends by examining general patterns, absenteeism, and truancy rates. I aim to foster a comprehensive understanding of the current landscape and potential areas for improvement.

I want to clarify the two distinctions between truancy and chronic absence using definitions from Attendance Works. Attendance Works is a national initiative advocating for attendance awareness. According to Attendance Works, truancy focuses exclusively on unexcused absences, emphasizing adherence to school rules and relying on legal and administrative solutions. While on the other hand, chronic absence encompasses all absences, prioritizes the academic impact of missed days, and typically employs community-based and positive strategies. Attendance Works research says a student should not miss more than nine days a year to stay engaged, successful, and on track for graduation. By the sixth grade, absenteeism is one of the signs a student may drop out of high school. By the ninth grade, it is a strong predictor on whether they will graduate. Missing 10 percent of the year, or about 18 school days, can drastically affect a student's academic success. Students can be chronically absent by only missing a couple of days every few weeks.

I am not going to look too deeply into enrollment, but I think it is important to touch on. We have noticed a trend in public school enrollment. My colleague, Dan Thatcher, compiled a dashboard using data spanning the School Years (SYs) 2000–2001 and 2021–2022. I want to highlight the 2.16 percent decrease in enrollment observed between the SYs 2021–2022 and 2018–2019. This small shift prompts us to consider what might be worth looking into when we are considering attendance numbers.

Absenteeism, in an educational context, refers to the habitual or chronic absence of students from school. The measurement is typically based on the percentage of days missed out of the total school days in a specified period. We are seeing, in the most recent data from states, there has been some progress made in the recent SY, but not quite enough to go back to the prepandemic level. Since attendance rates are usually released at the end of the SY, the lack of real time data may be hindering some of the post pandemic progress because it takes us a bit to be able to work with it. Rhode Island is currently one of the states we know has a tracker that can spot the number of students in each school who are on track to miss more than 10 percent of the school year. It is the best real-life data we are able to look at.

I want to look at some potential factors influencing absenteeism in schools. They are multifaceted and can stem from a variety of sources. It is important to recognize that absenteeism is complex, and includes the individual, the family, and school-related factors. Here are a couple of key factors. Health-related issues—it can be a student missing days due to their own physical health or related to a student's mental health, which also may impact a student's ability to attend school regularly. We see instances of school safety concerns—bullying or harassment at school can contribute to absenteeism as students may avoid attending to avoid negative experiences. A positive, engaging school culture may foster attendance and a negative one may discourage regular attendance. We see students who are bored, or have a lack of interest in the curriculum, can contribute to absenteeism, as they may not see the relevance in attending class. We had a lot of conversations around transportation recently, including whether students have reliable access to it, especially in rural or underserved areas, which may affect them from being able to attend regularly. A lack of parental involvement or support in a child's education may contribute to absenteeism. We see that parents who are engaged and supportive generally encourage regular attendance. School policies have also come into play because punitive measures may discourage regular attendance, while supportive policies may foster a more positive environment and may have students want to attend. We have seen, from the research, that

schools, families, and communities working collaboratively can play a significant role in tackling absenteeism and supporting students in their educational journey.

I will look at the same when it comes to truancy. While absenteeism encompasses all types of absence, truancy specifically refers to unexcused and intentional absences. It is essential to differentiate these categories when we look at attendance patterns and think about how to solve them. Truancy can have detrimental effects on academic performance, social development, and long-term educational outcomes. Truant students are more likely to experience academic struggles, lower grades, and are at a higher risk of dropping out. Some of these factors are similar to what we saw with the absenteeism. It is disengagement with school—lack of interest in academic activities, boredom, disconnection—prompting kids to skip classes. Same thing with academic challenges, if they are struggling with course work and not getting the support they need, they may have a contribute to truancy because they may avoid situations where they feel academically inadequate. We have also seen that peer pressure, the desire to fit in, or the influence of friends, get involved in truancy and can lead students so they can socialize or conform to those group norms. Bullying and safety concerns are still a concern. Family issues, same thing. Students may be dealing with personal issues at home that impact their ability to attend school regularly. Mental health plays a big part as anxiety, depression, or emotional issues can lead to truancy as students may struggle to cope with their emotions and find it difficult to engage in the school setting. In some cases, we have seen substance abuse may contribute to truancy. Students dealing with addiction may prioritize substance over attending school. A negative, unsupportive school climate can contribute to truancy. Again, students who feel safer are more regular to attend and feel more connected to the school community. We have also seen economic challenges within a family, such as needing the child to work to contribute to the household income. This can lead to truancy as students may prioritize employment over school attendance.

We know is it not just about grades, those long-term effects of consistent attendance extend overall educational success, including higher graduation rates and a better life outcome. Understanding that link is important to shaping our interventions. A couple of examples of what poor attendance can be linked to. Students who are missing out are, obviously, going to miss out on the consistent instruction that is vital for developing fundamental skills. It especially has an impact on those early grades. Absenteeism leaves children falling behind in crucial reading skills, creating a potential snowball effect on the future of learning. Children with learning and thinking differences face heightened vulnerability as absenteeism limits the opportunities for necessary interventions. Research indicates that students not reading at grade level, by the end of third grade, are four times more likely to drop out of high school—again impacting that long term success. Beyond academics, the consequences into adulthood where individuals without a high school diploma often face lower incomes and higher unemployment rates, putting them at a greater risk for poverty throughout their life. Poor attendance also hampers social and emotional development. Chronically absent students may miss out on key readiness skills and fall behind in social, emotional milestones. Excessive absences are also associated with lower scores on standardized tests, which typically assess primary skills and concepts, impacting overall academic performance. While students bear the highest cost of extensive absenteeism, it is important to recognize that high absence rates also burden the teachers. Making up for the loss of instruction adds to their workload and takes away from valuable classroom time for all students.

I want to give a quick note about the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). The Act gives states the responsibility of choosing at least one indicator to measure school quality or student success. Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia submitted ESSA plans to the

United States Department of Education and included chronic absence or similar attendance as an accountability metric. Nevada submitted its ESSA plans to include chronic absence as absent 10 percent or more of the school year. What we are seeing states consider, in this space, is if attendance is a problem, and a known problem, is it a good strategy to keep it as part of their accountability system so they can continue to focus on it, or does it unfairly penalize schools that may not understand what is going on? For example, we are seeing attendance rates drop in elementary school and we may not understand why kindergartners are missing school. It is an anomaly and I find it important to mention.

Potential strategies and interventions can include engaging high school students through career pathways—career and technical education (CTE) and college level credits. These help them to make their education more relevant to future aspirations. Crafting schedules that accommodate work schedules, providing flexibility for high school students to balance academic work and work commitments effectively. We have seen implementing project-based learning approaches to foster hands-on experiences; collaboration and a deeper understanding of academic concepts; and making coursework curriculum more relevant to students by aligning their future goals and aspirations. Acknowledging that strategies and interventions for kindergarten and first grade are still under consideration, it is important we understand those specific challenges before we are able to determine effective interventions. Another potential strategy is gathering data-driven decision making. Emphasizing the importance of actionable data to understand attendance patterns, identify trends, and inform decision making for targeted interventions. We have also seen implementing a whole child, or a whole student, education approach that addresses not only the academic needs, but also considers students' social, emotional, and physical well-being. Implementing a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) to provide varying levels of intervention based on the severity of students' absenteeism. This includes a tailored approach to addressing attendance challenges. Collaborating with community partners to provide positive youth development programs and workforce readiness initiative. Those include after school programs or summer learning initiatives. These partnerships enhance students' overall skills and engagement. Using fair attendance practices that consider the diverse needs and circumstances of students and exploring those alternatives to legal action—focusing on supportive measures and intervention to reduce student absenteeism. This can include counseling, mentoring, or family engagement initiatives.

There are groups trying to understand absenteeism rates. Impact Tulsa is a collective impact organization that is using data to highlight disparities and create targeted strategies to support students. They have a Data Attendance Dashboard. As they see, it is one of the key indicators to measure and assess the events that impacts a child's likelihood to survive. At the end of 2022, they launched a collaborative working effort to try to understand and begin to address the barriers that impact those early kids, pre-K through third grade. We are hoping to have some data from them.

I want to go over some legislative options to combat chronic absenteeism and truancy. I will not go over all of them. For example, you can establish attendance policies, like Illinois did. I also see Nevada did that in 2021. It includes establishing a definition, a description of diagnostic procedures and supportive services. New Mexico enacted legislation that requires public schools to provide "progressive interventions" for "absent, chronically absent, and excessively absent students." States have also looked at how they can collaborate with community partners and families. In Vermont, they enacted legislation in 2021 that relates to equitable access to high quality education through community schools. Another strategy can be through data collection and reporting. In Maine, they require school administrative units, that exceed a specific chronic absenteeism, to establish an attendance review team to explain what is going on in those schools and districts. States have also looked at teachers.

In Illinois, they require professional development under school districts to include content on “appropriate and available supportive services for the promotion of student attendance and engagement”. States have also looked at offering financial support for students. In Colorado, school districts are required to provide a plan including support services for pre-K through 12 students who are at risk of dropping out of school and districts can apply for grants to provide support services. In Minnesota, they have pending legislation that proposes the establishment of a legislative study group on student attendance and truancy to look at what they are seeing in their state.

Some strategies for truancy—in Ohio, they enacted legislation that encourages and supports a preventative approach to excessive absence and truancy. Iowa is currently considering legislation that proposes the establishment of the truancy evaluation and pilot reduction program. In Rhode Island, they have looked at data collection reporting—like I said, Rhode Island has that dashboard. It also includes consulting with a parent or guardian and coordinating with the students identified support team before issuing a family court referral. Intervention has been an integral part of truancy and absence legislation. In 2021, Tennessee enacted legislation that amends the definition of a “progressive truancy intervention plan” adopted by their Board of Education to include three tiers of intervention.

I have some more resources here from NCSL for you to look into and my contact information so you can reach out to me.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

If you would stand by for a little bit, we are going to go through the other presentations and then we will ask questions.

Next, we have Dr. Kearney. Thank you for being here and begin when you are ready.

Christopher A. Kearney, Ph.D., Director, Child School Refusal and Anxiety Disorders Clinic, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV):

I am a Professor of Psychology at UNLV. I am a Clinical Child Psychologist, so my background is in mental health. We have looked at absenteeism issues for the last several decades, initially, from more of a mental health perspective and through the clinic we have on campus, that services students and families with children who have difficulty going to school. This is a much more broad-based issue, so in recent years, we have tried to expand our research focus to be more school based and to focus on service delivery systems so we can reach a larger number of children.

What I want to do today is give you an elevator talk on chronic absenteeism and some of the risk factors and interventions out there and what we are piloting moving forward ([Agenda Item IV B](#)). A lot of the information I am going to be presenting intersects with some of the other presenters. Chronic absenteeism refers to missing at least 10 percent of school days, that is a problematic metric in some respects because it implies that kids who are missing less than 10 percent of schools are not necessarily having problems, but they are. Even if a child is missing 5 percent of school days or 7 percent of school days, there is still a high risk of being socially and academically disconnected from school, in addition to a variety of other things. It is important to point that out. The level of chronic absenteeism nationally has doubled from the prepandemic to the post pandemic era. It is true in Clark County as well. The groups this has affected the most tend to be more minoritized, marginalized, and vulnerable students in addition to students with disabilities and health problems—we sometimes forget about that population. It is a very high-risk group for

absenteeism and eventual school dropout. If you look at the long-term predictors of school dropout, a lot of times this begins with the disengagement process in middle school, we sometimes call it the ABC model. In middle school, you tend to see attendance problems, behavioral issues, and problems with course grades. Students who have those issues in middle school tend to be at a much higher risk for dropping out in high school.

There are a variety of risk factors. I am not going to go through each of these, but I want to highlight some different factors that amplify a risk for student absenteeism. The reason I list so many is because I want to illustrate this is a very complex problem, what researchers call a wicked problem, which means it has various ecological levels that impact absenteeism. We tend to focus on student and family variables, those are legitimate variables, but there are a lot of more broad-based factors related to school and the community as well that impact absenteeism. Some primary contextual factors or risk factors at the child level—a big one is mental health. We have had very substantial increases in anxiety, depression, suicidality, substance use, and ADHD since the pandemic. It has gone hand in hand with a substantial increase in the absenteeism rate. Absenteeism is an early warning signal for a variety of problems in areas of functioning in children and adolescents—academic functioning, mental health functioning, physical health, and social and emotional health. It is a great way to track early problems because it is a great benchmark that schools have at their disposal as an early warning signal.

At the parent level—low parent involvement, the parents' own mental health issues often intersect with school absenteeism. At the family level, any transitions during the school year are high-risk factors. If a family moves residences during the academic year, residential mobility, and especially a delay in the new bus and school assignments are high-risk factors for absenteeism during the school year. As the previous presenter mentioned, transportation vulnerability is a key aspect as well. At the peer level, victimization at school. Bullying—for example, but also less friendships, less social support. A lot of kids go to school to see their friends, if they are not there or feel alienated at school, they tend to be at higher risk for absenteeism. At the school level, a dangerous school climate is a very high-risk factor. Another one I want to point out is schools that do not actively or proactively monitor their attendance data paradoxically have higher rates of absenteeism. A lot of schools tend to wait until a particular student has missed 10, 15, or 20 days of school, then there is some kind of administrative response. Going forward, schools are going to need to be more proactive about monitoring the attendance data and catching problems as they are emerging and trying to nip them in the bud. Then at the community level, there is a variety of broad-based macroeconomic factors related to absenteeism. One in particular are economic pull factors, which we have in Las Vegas, where students are able to leave high school and get pretty well-paying jobs. A lot of the programs emerging on the K through 16 level are trying to focus on blending the end of high school with the next stage of adult and career readiness in a more flexible way.

This morning, you will hear about MTSS, it is where a lot of the districts are moving. From our standpoint, we have always been more mental health focused. We have tried to navigate towards a school-based service delivery system because that is where the kids are and where many of them are missing school. The MTSS model focus on three main tiers: (1) universal or preventative interventions designed to be more broad, district- or school-based, to increase school attendance; (2) targeted strategies or early intervention strategies to initially get those students just starting to miss school, not necessarily waiting until the 10 percent benchmark; and (3) intensive interventions for the more complex, severe cases where a variety of contextual factors are involved. One of the things we are developing in our group is a community asset map of mental health providers in Clark County. We hope to have that available via website this summer. It is something in-house

school personnel could use to try to link families more quickly with available mental health supports in Clark County. The website will have things on mental health providers, the type of services they provide, whether they are bilingual, what kind of insurance they take, waiting lists, and things to cut down on the lag time between the initiation of school attendance and mental health problems and available supports.

I have given a schematic of the MTSS model. It is a little dense but basically, it refers to all the interventions out there for school absenteeism, but they are organized by levels. At the bottom of the pyramid are those interventions designed more broadly to decrease violence and increase physical and mental health at school. These are all strategies designed to boost attendance rates among the student body more generally. At Tier 2, these would include more psychological approaches, clinical approaches to address mental health issues. In addition to increasing student engagement and mentoring. Then at Tier 3, most districts have some alternative educational pathway, second chance program. Again, the goal here is to draw students back into the educational process if they have been disconnected. Some of these kids have been out of school for months to years at a time, for example.

We have a variety of partnerships with community groups in Clark County. We just got some collaborative funding with the Lincy Institute at UNLV to pilot test an MTSS model for school attendance and mental health challenges specifically in preschool and K through 1. It is an important inflection point because problems in school attendance and mental health and behavioral issues at that point tend to set the stage for later absenteeism, academic, and social and emotional problems. Trying to catch these problems as early as possible. We also have collaborations with the Family Court and their truancy diversion efforts, The Public Education Foundation, United Way of Southern Nevada, and the Clark County Truancy Prevention and Outreach Program (TPOP). We have also worked a lot with the CCSD research office to get their district wide survey data on school climate, academic mindset, and absenteeism. We will be looking at some of the pre and post pandemic data in that regard. We have already looked a lot at the prepandemic data.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for the presentation and stay close because we will be calling you back up when we have questions at the end.

Next, we have Christy McGill with Nevada's Department of Education (NDE) and Kristen Searer with the Public Education Foundation (PEF). Begin when you are ready.

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

The benefit of going third is that I am going to skip many of the slides that were already discussed, and really focus on what Nevada is doing ([Agenda Item IV C](#)). Nevada is aligned with the national recommendations and our definition of chronic absenteeism is the same. Students who are absent 10 percent or more of their enrolled school days. Also, if a student is absent more than 50 percent of the school day as well.

You already heard about the differences of truancy and chronically absent by the first two presenters. In Nevada, our partners, the districts, and NDE have moved toward a chronic absent approach, as recommended by national experts. The important piece of chronic absenteeism is it can be an early warning light, signaling that either a student or group of students are starting to struggle. It helps to reduce costs and it helps to get kids engaged earlier.

I am going to pause here so you can look at who is absent in Nevada schools. As you can see, this slide is prepandemic and goes through to post pandemic. One of the things you should pull from this slide is the great increases across all populations. This is a problem experienced by all students, but a few student populations are experiencing this problem more acutely. One is the American Indian population, the second is our Black community, and the third is Pacific Islander. The reason this is important is it lets schools know, that gets to have the joy of these students, to pay attention to interventions that are culturally appropriate and mutually reinforced.

Here is a shot of how Nevada is doing aligned with the nation. When you look at high chronic absence, that is a school experiencing more than 30 percent of their population who are chronically absent. Before the pandemic, Nevada was at 15 percent and the nation was at 14 percent. After the pandemic, Nevada is at 65 percent and the nation is at 43 percent.

Here is a snapshot to show the chronic absenteeism problem in the different regions of the nation and Nevada. The first table is Nevada, and it is a problem whether you are in rural Nevada or in urban Nevada. As opposed to the nation, which looks at it as more of a prevalent problem in urban areas. It makes Nevada different, and we need to make sure many of our strategies focus on different kinds of rural and urban strategies.

I want to look at the differences of prepandemic and post pandemic. Prepandemic, we did not have the same that elementary, middle, and high. If you look at post pandemic, all our grades have issues with this. This slide is telling us that we have a Tier 1 issue and our strategies across the State, districts, and schools should be aimed at all students and all grades both in rural and urban Nevada. This is a holistic approach.

Alongside of me is my partner with the Nevada PEF and she is going to talk about the important role of the community in this problem.

Kirsten Searer, President, PEF:

Thank you for having us here to talk about the community response to this critical issue. We have heard about the reasons why students are chronically absent, so we can advance from this slide. I am excited to tell you about the Go to Grow coalition, Southern Nevada Family Engagement Center (A Project of the PEF), which is a growing community partnership to address the issue of chronic absenteeism. This initiative is driven from an equity lens because the numbers Ms. McGill presented to you are staggering when you look at discrepancies between the different student subgroups and absenteeism. We have seen some schools are rebounding from prepandemic absenteeism levels, but we are seeing some schools are still experiencing this problem, so I think it is an important thing to highlight. You heard, in the presentation from the NCSL, the importance of community partnerships. The Go to Grow coalition is rooted in best practices and evidence-based research around the ways we can establish consistent messaging around absenteeism to reinforce the message that every day does matter throughout the community and to support our schools and CCSD in addressing the various reasons we are seeing for absenteeism.

For the next slide, I will not go too far into this because we have heard a lot about the common causes. The good news is, we all seem to be aligned on what we are seeing from our students and our families. I am excited to tell you about [NVfamily.org](https://nvfamily.org), which is the website the Go to Grow coalition helped to establish in English and in Spanish. We provide videos and resources for families who are dealing with barriers to school attendance. We know there is no one solution to absenteeism, so we are diving into these topics that align,

with what we have seen so far today, around some of the reasons why kids are missing school. We are hearing a lot from families that they are confused about what is excused and what is unexcused. If it is an excused absence, does it apply to their chronic absenteeism rate? It is a huge concern among families. As Dr. Kearney mentioned, we are seeing a lot of fear and anxiety around going to school, especially since the closure of school buildings and the increase of social media chatter about online threats. We are seeing a lot of lack of connection to school, especially in our schools with higher rates of substitute teachers and lower rates of permanent teachers. We are hearing a lot from students that they feel frustrated they do not have a consistent teacher. Those students tend to be more likely to miss school. Obviously, we know a lot about the physical and mental health concerns we have seen since the pandemic and again, the need for wraparound supports.

The Go to Grow coalition—our vision is that absenteeism will decrease when our community supports our students and families in Clark County to access resources and remove barriers that prevent them from attending school. We are combining our expertise and dedicating resources to wrap students and families in support. These are the organizations currently involved in the coalition. We are specifically supporting the Clark County TPOP, which is knocking on the doors of 14,000 families referred to them by CCSD because their students are chronically absent. We have three shared goals: (1) we want to get the right community partners to the table; (2) we want to map out community resources for students and families—we have started doing that with the website and will continue; and (3) we want to break down silos within our community. We know this tends to be a siloed community and often there is not a central place where families can go for support. Again, all of this is aligned with the work of the CCSD and Clark County TPOP, both of which are knocking on doors of families whose students are chronically absent.

Ms. McGill:

I wanted to give a brief update on the MTSS work happening at the state, university, and district level. It could not have been queued up better by Dr. Kearney who described the different tiers—Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3. Nevada's MTSS has a systems approach which focuses on teaming—making sure districts are not seeing this as only their program, they have appropriate community partners that can come together looking at problem solving and database decisions. Again, this is a team approach to make sure our districts and partners have the data necessary to make good decisions. Systematic implementation and progress monitoring—progress monitoring is important because we want to make sure the strategies that districts are implementing, or the State or our community partners are looking at, are having a positive effect across all our student populations. Progress monitoring becomes important. A tiered continuum of support, what you heard Dr. Kearney talk about from UNLV. Regular screening, so if a child starts to disengage from school and we are not sure why, there is screening involved—whether it is mental health, social and emotional, or academic—there is some sort of screening to start to get to the why. Of course the evidence-based interventions. The last, but not least, is the high-quality instruction that includes social and emotional and academic development. Our partner, the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), has been working with our districts to teach the system. Then we have partners like UNLV and mental health providers that go deep into the actual practices of Tiers 1, 2, and 3 themselves. Here is a logic model of what the Nevada system looks like. Then a sample training series from UNR of what the districts have been experiencing over the years. As you can see, in Tier 1 training, looking at the universal strategies that affect all students—things like climate, good academic instruction, schoolwide database decision making, and classroom systems. Also, disproportionality to make sure schools have the skills they need to look at disproportionality in their data. When you get to Tier 2 and Tier 3, that is where the practices come into view and to make sure

schools know what is a good practice that meets the needs of that particular school or student population.

This is our most recent outcomes. Schools that were implementing MTSS with fidelity had better rates. This one is for chronic absenteeism and the next one is a trend for the schools implementing with higher fidelity had lower rates of chronic absenteeism. We will be available for questions.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you. Next, we will go to Adam Young with the Nevada Association for School Superintendents (NASS). Go ahead when ready.

Adam Young, Vice President, NASS, and Superintendent, White Pine County School District:

I am here on behalf of the 17 school districts that comprise the NASS, along with the charter authority. I want to acknowledge the tremendous information that has been provided to this Committee so far today. We will be able to move through this presentation with more speed because of the overlap that has been shared so far ([Agenda Item IV D](#)). We represent all the school districts. We would like to thank all the legislators in Nevada for your service, your advocacy for public education, and particularly over the last year, for engaging with the school districts in the future of learning events and with the National Center on Education and the Economy (NCEE) through the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education.

You have heard today from multiple groups that the hammer method of addressing chronic absenteeism is not something that is effective. As your public school district superintendents, we would echo that sanctioning model does not work with any parts of trying to make improvements in public education. We believe in partnership and coming to the table with an asset-based approach, looking for the ways we can all work together to address this issue.

We have heard this implied through a couple of the presentations so far, standardized tests and the way our accountability system is set up is not helpful for students. They feel a disconnect. According to the work we have done in the trenches, this is one of the problems that creates an environment where students do not feel like coming to school is worth it for them. I will talk about that more in a moment. You heard that student engagement is 10 percent of the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) for all our schools right now, that is only measured by chronic absenteeism. One of our suggestions is there are other models of student engagement that would be more helpful from a policy level to talk about, as opposed to only defining student engagement as chronic absenteeism.

One more quote here, "...not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted," sometimes attributed to Einstein. It is a very appropriate thing to think about with some of this data.

Ms. McGill and others shared some of the trends in Nevada. The average daily attendance rate you can see prior to the Coronavirus Disease of 2019 (COVID-19) and in 2022–2023, and you can see the chronic absentee rate across Nevada in 2018–2019 versus 2022–2023 as well.

I am not going to spend a lot of time on these because I know you have a version of these slides that contain this information. This is pulled off Nevada Report Card website. You can see many of our districts have made progress with this important issue over the course of the last year. There are others who have struggled to try to make the types of improvements we would all like to see. This is for your reference.

Some of this has been talked about, so I will not spend a lot of time. I want to highlight a couple of issues here for you. States with higher initial chronic absentee rates also had the highest increases according to Thomas S. Dee., Ph.D., Professor, Graduate School of Education, Stanford University, in 2023. The other thing I want to highlight, which was brought up by one of the presenters, is the third bullet—remote learning impacted student habits and academic engagement. This has manifested itself, in schools and employers, we tell people nowadays when you are sick, do not come to work, do not come to school, go home, and take care of yourself—do not spread whatever you have and come back when you are feeling better. This approach, I think, is the right approach to take, but it does result in people being gone more. The change in approach has had an impact on these rates and how they are reported from district to district and school to school because we tell people to stay home now when they are not feeling well. It is the disconnect between does chronic absenteeism truly measure student engagement or is it just a measure of who is at school and who is not at school? It is also represented in the fifth bullet, a positive correlation between stay at home when sick policies and chronic absenteeism.

Besides these nationwide trends, what are the things we see in the trenches in schools in Nevada? We cannot say these very narrow measures of counting the things we feel ought to be counted as measured only by standardized tests. The narrow definition of what schools are supposed to do has changed the types of offerings that bring kids on to school campuses—music, art, physical education, theater, CTE, athletics, clubs, and project-based learning. When those things go away because schools are worried about the hammer of accountability, it should not be a surprise that students do not want to come to school as much as they wanted too before. Additionally, the high stakes testing focus, we have heard this directly from students in my district, and we do not emphasize testing at all here—we are in testing season right now. I have families and students who stop me in the grocery store and tell me we are not sending our students to school to take these tests. We are sick and tired of it. We appreciate what you are doing to emphasize other things, and we are going to exercise our civil disobedience by keeping our students at home until these policies change. We recently had an article by a Washoe County School District (WCSD) student that was published in the *Reno Gazette Journal*, I am sure many of you read that. It is a perspective from a student, and we need to value those perspectives.

I want to talk about the things that cannot be counted since we talked about things that can count. There are crushing mental health needs in many communities—rural, suburban, and urban—across our state. This is highlighted by a mental health provider pipeline that is scarce and an educator pipeline that is dry, which means our school leader pipeline is dry, and facilities in some of our rural areas and communities of poverty. These are all things that are hard to count and quantify, but they are things that have an impact in the chronic absentee rate. I want to give one example of what a district in Nevada has dealt with through the course of the year that has impacted the things that count, but maybe in a way that cannot be counted. There was a suicide, a murder suicide of several parents, an accidental death of several parents, a near death injury of several students, and then an accidental death of a very young student. These are things not happening on school campuses but are things that create trauma. When there is a pipeline of folks to address these concerns that is not as deep as we need it to be, it should not be a surprise that

sometimes people cope by staying in the spot where they feel they are going to be the safest, and that is at home.

The School Superintendents Association recently provided some recommendations for school districts. The focus is avoiding a punitive model, conferencing with students and parents—bringing them into the fold, working with other community agencies, compassion, encouragement, and incentives. The days of dealing with this from the hammer perspective and the punishment perspective, everybody recognizes those are not helpful ways to address this issue.

I appreciate your time and the opportunity to participate in this important conversation. I want to highlight two school districts, the Carson City School District and my district, the White Pine School District, on some approaches that have been taken and we found to be helpful. They address the things that might not be able to be counted but are the things that really matter. In Carson City, Mr. Feuling and his team have strongly focused on creating a public recognition idea with their newspaper, other elected officials, community businesses, and agencies that highlight and celebrate students who are turning things around with their attendance, students who are achieving, and students who are overcoming obstacles. Again, the key here is this work is being done by the community, in a recognition that everybody owns this problem. In the White Pine School District, we began by having our leaders sit down with the juvenile probation judge and juvenile probation officers, not as a form of punishment for students, but as additional support—as were referenced with the MTSS model looking at it from a community lens. Whenever a student misses four days, we have a meeting with the family and when they miss eight days, we have another meeting with the family. We also formed this incredible community partnership called, “You are not alone; together we belong.” This is an idea that promotes well-being and belonging, not just at schools, but every person in our community of White Pine has a place, everybody has value and by being together, we are stronger. This has had a positive impact on us.

What could we look at for better approximations for engagement? Going back to the accountability model, the superintendents feel all these things are better ways to measure engagement than only attendance. We would not argue that attendance does not have a place in that, and chronic absenteeism is certainly important. If we can shift our focus to these types of things and ensuring these are part of the model and the vision we are aspiring to as educators in Nevada, then we are focusing on the right things and chronic absenteeism is going to reduce, and attendance is going to increase. These are the Tier 1 interventions that Ms. McGill was referencing a little bit ago.

We have some questions we would like this Committee to consider. Nevada’s Department of Education has done a lot of work with personalized and competency-based models. What does chronic absenteeism look like in a model where students might have mastered their core skills and their attendance on campus is not necessarily required? What is the place of seat time in a more flexible student-centered model? We think those are appropriate questions to be asking.

We would like to encourage you to continue to develop your deeper understanding of the entirety of schools. Let us not be misled by stars and only by counting. Those can be part of the equation, but they should not be the entire equation. We also want to encourage you and urge you to continue to honor the incredible work that students, families, and educators are doing. Again, as referenced by a previous presenter, education itself is a wicked problem. It is so complex to put together all the pieces and strive towards this world class education model that we embrace in our states. We would encourage you to govern in a

way that empowers innovation and flexibility and not restricts that. We need to encourage our leaders to try everything that is on the table versus being boxed into that accountability model where you can only try certain things. Let us create legislation that enables the work that educators and schools do. We would love for you to visit our schools; the invitation is open. I speak for every superintendent as well as the Nevada State Public Charter School Authority. Please come to our campuses. Let us sit down and gain a deep understanding of what your expertise is, what ours is, and how we can work together to address this wicked problem of education and chronic absenteeism. Thank you for your time today and we appreciate your service to our State.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you, Mr. Young. If you would stand by, we have one more presentation and then we will go to questions.

Our final presenters are Dr. Mike Barton and Danielle Jones with CCSD. Thank you for being here this morning and begin when you are ready.

Mike Barton, Ed.D., Chief College, Career, Equity, and School Choice Officer, CCSD:

A definite overlap with other presenters today ([Agenda Item IV E](#)). We are thankful for all the partners because I can tell you, with the first slide is acknowledgments, knowing that as a system, sometimes you can feel like you are alone with a problem. The reality is when you think about Go to Grow, the work of this legislative body that enacted Assembly Bill 309 (2019) to produce Clark County TPOP, we could not do it without those partners. Sometimes these issues, as you have heard the word wicked or complex, it is a challenging, multifaceted problem. I want to give a great acknowledgement to these partners and the state Legislature for passing good laws to make sure we tackle this problem together.

We are all about accountability. We know that—we have trustees here today—as we look at this problem and try to tackle it as an entity, transparency with the numbers is quite important. When you think about a number with chronic absenteeism, we are still not at the prepandemic levels; however, we have made it a requirement in the CCSD that on a quarterly basis, we are providing updates to our trustees on where we are with the numbers. We also provide to our trustees monthly updates on our chronic absenteeism rates. In front of you, it gives you our year-to-year comparison for Semester 1. When you look at how we compare SY 2022–2023 to our current SY, 2023–2024, you can see there is improvement, but again, as you have heard from multiple presenters today, we are nowhere near those prepandemic levels. We have seen dramatic drops with our students of color, but when you look at those numbers based on where were prepandemic, we have a long way to go. The intent of this slide is to share with you that we embrace accountability, knowing this is a metric controlled by many outside factors. We still want to be very prudent in providing to the public that this is where we are at this point in time.

You also heard from other presenters the root causes—this is giving you some internal context in CCSD. We did a “five why’s” activity with all our departments because previous to the pandemic, chronic absenteeism was siloed or absent or truancy was siloed in our system. With getting all our departments involved and doing a five why’s exercise—with even transportation, food services, and all these leads in our district—we came up with five root causes to drill down why this is happening. A sense of belonging, you heard about the data sharing we have with UNLV with our survey data. Physical and mental health, you heard repeatedly. Basic needs not being met. Childcare and academic gaps. As we did our five why’s activities with our strategy officer and our multifaceted departments, that is what

we came up with. As a result of this root cause, we hired a great individual. With your permission, I am going to turn it over to her for the remainder of the presentation. Ms. Jones is now everything chronic absenteeism in CCSD. She oversees all our initiatives to help move the needle and improve these numbers by working with multiple partners in the community.

***Danielle Jones, Director of Chronic Absenteeism, Education Services
Division, CCSD:***

As we mentioned, we have these root causes that we worked hard with our departments and community to identify. When I got into this role, I became hyper focused on these root causes and trying to streamline the resources we already had in place, as well as the support systems the schools were providing. With the Every Day Matters campaign, it is a countywide informational website, it made everybody involved in attendance. This website does a lot of things. This campaign gave consistent messaging to the schools, for the families—they are able to get text message reminders, streamline to our family engagement centers, our family support center, and direct contact to the school personnel for support. All of this together made it a community issue. It is no longer just one school dealing with it, we are trying to work together to solve this problem. The Superintendent's office also has a student advisory committee where students are creating their own campaign to encourage their peers to go to school. This is another important aspect to encourage students and let them know that school does matter.

Other efforts we use to decrease chronic absenteeism is, with the efforts some of the legislative members of this Committee, we are able to utilize attendance codes for medical, physical, and mental health. It opened the communication between schools and families. Parents were letting the schools know why their students were absent, and it helped to identify some of those issues.

Going forward, my department was able to get a grant to fund a home visit program. This is different from what our attendance officers do. Our officers, so far, have done over 24,000 home visits with identified students from our office or schools requesting officers to visit homes on their own. With this home visit program, our office is giving orientations to schools that want to be part of the program, so their staff members can do the home visits now. With the orientations, we have done over 300 participants with the home visit program. We have over 70 schools signed up to do this. This focuses on the root cause of the feelings of belongingness. It is important because when a student hears a knock on the door and it is somebody they know from school, that are showing compassion and encouragement, they are more likely to feel more connected and that is the goal of this program. We are going from removing punitive to more supportive because we know, as mentioned before, punitive does not necessarily work. The goal of my office and our department is to bring the schools together and give them the tools necessary to do these home visits to provide supports to the families.

Another role of my office is connecting to school administrators. I do one-on-one trainings, professional development, so we can get early communication going for staff to reach out to families for students who have been absent. Teaching them how to use best practices in those communications and using more of a supportive approach to get students to come back to school. We also have taught them how to pull their data more efficiently. Along with the Panorama Universal Screener and multidisciplinary leadership teams (MLT) on school campuses we are able to identify students who are in need of support, and we are able to work together to identify some of these causes.

I mentioned community partnerships, many of them spoke here today. One of our strongest allies is The Harbor. The Harbor gives opportunities for our schools to refer students to get the resources they need outside of the school campus. This is also in connection with juvenile probation, and they work with them as well. Dr. Barton mentioned Clark County TPOP, it is the \$12 million funding that has helped schools to refer their chronically absent students to get a case worker assigned, visit their home, and have one-on-one mentorship, guidance, and somebody they can connect back to the school within their family.

We have also done work to get the municipalities to work together to provide support to some of our high schools and their feeder alignment schools. We have some schools that are part of the program. For example, we are working with Lyal Burkholder Middle School, Robert L. Taylor Elementary, and Gordon McCaw STEAM Academy elementary school that align with Basic Academy of International Studies high school. We have Sunrise Acres Elementary, Oran K. Gragson Elementary School, and Roy W. Martin Middle School that align with Desert Pines High School. These are things we are working on to focus on some of the schools in the higher needs area. Other community partnerships that are on campus with our students—we have Communities In Schools of Nevada (CIS), Boys Town Nevada, and Jobs 4 Nevada's Graduates (J4NG). Some of these programs service up to 80 of our schools. These are direct connections to our students, providing the support needed on campus. Many of the mentors and professionals on campus are not only working with students but also their families, finding them pathways to graduation and careers post high school.

Other schools I would like to highlight, because of their decrease of chronic absenteeism. In 2022, Roberta C. Cartwright Elementary School was at 39 percent and now they are at 6 percent as of yesterday. Reynaldo Martinez Elementary School also saw a decrease from last school year, they went from 41 percent to 22 percent. We know some of these efforts and resources are working. Our goal is to tie them together so all schools can utilize the same things.

We have the expansion of our community partnerships. The two groups I have been working with in our department is Disconnected Youth Coalition and the Chronic Absenteeism Intervention Providers, which is now known as Go to Grow coalition. We are excited to work with both coalitions. Disconnected Youth Coalition through Workforce Connections is led by Dr. Ricardo Villalobos and Dr. Tyler-Gardner. It is composed of public, private, and nonprofit organizations that coordinate efforts to connect the 42,000 disconnected youth in southern Nevada. These are individuals that are ages 16 to 22, they are not enrolled in school and are not employed. We are working with them, starting in the high school levels, to help them find that pathway for success. The other partnership, as mentioned previously, is the Go to Grow coalition. My part in the organization is trying to get feedback and ideas from our schools, school administrators, school staff members, and teachers on what they are seeing on their individual campuses and how our coalition can address those needs on an individual basis. Ultimately, we are trying to streamline those resources, so schools do not have to call several different places to find the resources they need for their student—whether it be for housing or transportation, maybe they are staying home because they have to take care of a little sibling. How can we connect them to childcare? We are trying to find a way to get it in one spot so every person who is referring out, whether it be from the community or the school, are able to get it in one place. Working together, we are able to get the information from our schools to the coalition to find out how we can help and service our families.

Dr. Barton:

I know we focused today on proactive measures, community-based, and community lens approaches. We do hear from the field, from our practicing principals and teachers, that sometimes with extreme cases of neglect there are pieces of parental accountability missing. We hear from the field that the Department of Motor Vehicles sanctions, for certain kids to get their identification, has been very helpful over the years to be a hook for kids to come to school. However, the follow up for losing a license for chronically absent students, that does not happen. The other thing with our youngest learners, we work closely with the Clark County Department of Family Services, and they are great partners. I know resources are stretched thin but sometimes with our early learners, it is not their fault they are not coming to school, it is the parents and sometimes it is a resource issue to hold the parents accountable. Finally, truancy laws, we know in Nevada, sometimes we hear from principals and discipline administrators that we do not have teeth with those laws. Again, I am talking about those extreme cases, not the areas where we can be proactive and help those families. We will be happy to take any questions.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you, that concludes our presentations so I will open it up to questions from the members. We will start with Senator Dondero Loop.

Senator Dondero Loop:

I will start with Dr. Barton and Ms. Jones since they are at the table. I had a couple of questions for several of the presenters, and one was for you. When you mentioned you had 70 schools that signed up. While we applaud those 70 schools; we know we have over 300 schools. Is it because those are our top 70 schools? Tell me how we got to that number.

Ms. Jones:

We are identifying schools that had over 40 percent chronic absenteeism. I personally invited those schools to sign up. We did open it up to the rest of the school district to participate in the program. This is really staff driven volunteer. The principals had to identify staff members who are wanting to use their outside contract time to do this program and that may have been part of the hurdle to get more schools to sign up. I am proud to say 70 of those schools have been actively engaged and wanting to do home visits for their students. It is a good mixture of elementary, middle, and high schools.

Senator Dondero Loop:

With that, I am going to go to the other side of this, you we are talking about staff having issues with maybe we do not have enough teeth. I also know we have the other problem of either chronically ill or mental health issues with kids. When they miss those 20 days, it could be a parent has changed a phone number, is not in town because they are wherever with that child, if they are chronically ill, not checking mail regularly, or they have moved frequently. Whatever it is, now we have kids at 20 days that are not in school. I realize it may not be a lot of kids, but we do have those kids we might be able to pull back in with some different guidelines. Is that part of this plan as well?

Dr. Barton:

I want to make sure I am very cautious to talk about mental health because when we talk about teeth and laws, there are kids that have extreme issues, and we need to make sure

they are wrapped in supports. You saw in our presentation the MLTs are tasked with helping our Tier 3 students who may be in that crisis and finding those resources. We have had programs like Care Solace, Inc., Hazel Health is a system to give them on the spot therapy or even push into the home. Those cases, I think, are handled in a different way where the MLT, and MTSS has been talked about today a lot, but we give support to those students and families to say your family needs mental health support through telehealth immediately. It is happening on the ground. As a system right now, because of these numbers and what you just expressed Senator, we are reanalyzing our funding because we know some of the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) cliff repercussions with the money going away. How do we continue to offer those great telehealth options that can happen in the school on the ground? We are reanalyzing to see if that can be something systemic and provided across the board.

Senator Dondero Loop:

I appreciate that because it was one of my concerns. We have a lot of mental health or touch points for students. I was a little concerned when I knew we were not going to renew the Hazel Health piece because I felt from a person's view or community's view, it may not even be mental health. It may be that a child needs help. Parents are fighting, nobody is home with them, they are taking care of their little brother, and do not know what to do. They have that immediate touch point and a visual with someone where I do not think the other programs provide that same type of touch point. I just see that as one piece of us trying to help repair this system. I 100 percent appreciate all you do Dr. Barton and Ms. Jones. Thank you for everything you are doing for these students because you are right it is not always just, "I do not want to come to school."

Superintendent Young, would you give us more information on the slide titled "So, Let's Count." I was confused about the numbers, and wanted some clarification. The numbers went from 28 percent absenteeism to 33 percent. Can you walk me through those and tell us how those numbers go?

Mr. Young:

In SY 2021–2022, Carson City's chronic absentee rate, according to the Nevada Report Card website, was 33 percent. In SY 2022–2023, according to the same website, their chronic absentee rate was 28.8 percent. The second number is two years ago, and the first number is last year. The 28.8 percent represents a 4.2 percent decrease in chronic absenteeism for Carson City School District from SY 2021–2022 to SY 2022–2023.

Senator Dondero Loop:

So it means they decreased their absenteeism, where Churchill's absenteeism is more. I am just using those first two so we can see them. I was looking at Humboldt's, for example, and they went from 34 percent to 47 percent which was a much bigger jump.

Mr. Young:

Yes, that is correct Senator. To clarify, Humboldt would have been 47.8 percent in SY 2021–2022 and a decrease of 13 percentage points to 34.7 percent in SY 2022–2023.

Senator Dondero Loop:

Thank you for the clarification. The last question I have is for PEF and Ms. Searer and Dr. Barton can jump in if you want. When we are doing these home visits—I experienced

this as a teacher and why I am asking this question—how do we know when we are getting too close? For those of you listening or in the audience, what I mean by that is sometimes when you try to help a family, if you get too close into their personal business or something that is going on, they will pull away. It is a very fine line because we always do not know what is going on in a family. How is that recognized by those door knocks? How is that addressed so you can have that conversation with professionals and say, “I think there is something going on here. I think we are getting too close, but we need to help this child get back into the school system.” If you can address that because as a thirty-year educator, I can tell you that happened to me many times—whether I bought shoes for a child, called a parent, or did my own home visits long before they were discussed in a public entity.

Ms. Searer:

Our coalition is gathering resources for Clark County TPOP who is doing the 14,000 home visits this year. I would encourage you to bring them to talk more about their strategies with the community. I know they do multiple follow-ups to check in on the student, but I do not know the answer to that question, perhaps Dr. Barton does.

Dr. Barton:

We are very explicit in our training before any pair goes out to do a home visit. Again, the keyword is pair. We funded these home visits through Title IV money. As Ms. Jones indicated, it is targeted for those schools that have higher chronic absenteeism rates. Part of that training starts with no judgment. There is no judgment. You go to the door, you are welcoming the parent, and you are not judging as you are viewing what may be happening in that home. Secondly, the training is about approaching in a nonthreatening way. It is not about titles, it is not about badges, it is about we are here to help you. If there is a discomfort felt immediately from the family, or they are starting to push back, or there is a lack of trust that may be exhibited by the family, then the pair retreats. We can go in another path with potential future visits or other resources that may be provided at the school through a counselor or social worker. We are very strategic that no one goes out cold, all those teams are trained. We have a centralized support mechanism to make sure it happens without flaw because, you are right, if we make one bad step or one bad impression the family will retreat and the likelihood of them reengaging with a school they may not trust diminishes.

Senator Dondero Loop:

I appreciate that information because, for those listening, as an educator, I had a whole family, except one child, killed in a car crash where they have to go back into school and address all those issues. Now you have that family suffering through trauma, and you have to bring those kids back in somehow. Like I said, I bought kids shoes and the family disappears. I have had parents after so many days, do not know how to say, “I need to get my kids back to school and somebody is going to say whatever.” It has been all over the place in 30 years. I know that these things have been going on, they are just exasperated by the COVID-19 shutdown and now coming back to school. I appreciate all you are doing. I probably have a few more questions, but I am going to let somebody else take the microphone.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I am going to go to Carson City. We have Assemblywoman Anderson and Assemblywoman Hansen; I know you both have questions—whoever wants to start.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you for presenting an incredibly important area. I want to echo what Senator Dondero Loop just brought up, as an educator I have lovingly harassed one of my seniors so much that now he is not coming to school. I did not see the signs and I am still trying to make my way through that right now. I have some questions for everyone that did the presentations today. I appreciate the work we are doing as adults. How many individuals have reached out to students and had the one to one conversations with students? Whether that is with focus groups or ways that work currently for our kids. Obviously, I am not expecting an answer from NCSL because they were looking more at data information. I was wondering for other individuals who have plans, how often do these plans include a student voice?

Mr. Young:

Where I think there is valuable insight on from NASS is, the districts who are involved in some of the state level, as well as district specific level, with the Portrait of a Nevada Learner and Portrait of a Graduate—that type of concept is designed to amplify the student voice around every part of the educational experience. I can speak confidently for the districts and school who have been involved in that work—not only has the student voice been a part of the discussion on chronic absenteeism and what is helpful for them, you tell us, how can we help, what needs to change? Yes, on chronic absenteeism, but on many other facets of trying to develop a more personalized and competency-based approach in line with the Portrait of a Nevada Learner.

Dr. Barton:

In CCSD, we have done a couple of things. Student voice is critical, you are right. We have done student town halls. We have targeted schools that have higher chronic absenteeism and have done town halls that include Ms. Jones and our Equity and Diversity Education Department. We facilitate conversations with students to ask, “What are those barriers to come to school?” Surprisingly, we have had positive engagements where students provide feedback and then some schools where they tell us point blank the relationships on this campus are not great—the teacher-student connections are not there. We have learned through our student town halls that some campuses have tighter adult-student relationships than others. Finally, as Ms. Jones alluded to, our student advisory group, which is made up of a representative from every high school in our district, goes back after the meeting centrally to gather information from students as far as what they are hearing. It is where they are producing the peer-to-peer videos that will include and encourage their colleagues or peers to go to school. There are a couple of examples from CCSD.

Ms. McGill:

Although we are removed from the day-to-day work of students, we try to make sure the student voice is included in our policy. We have student representation on many of our boards. Also, we do a climate survey that looks at student perception of their schools and we look at those climate survey results to see how they are feeling about coming to school. If they are feeling safe, their social and emotional and that factors heavily in our data as well.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I love the word “engagement;” it was such an important word and sounds like all of you utilized it in different ways. My question is for Dr. Kearney from UNLV. I love the triangle.

With Tier 2 and those anxiety approaches, is that an all class type of lesson or is it specific to the child that is experiencing the anxiety? Or possibly using the information Ms. McGill just brought up about the school climate surveys. How do you utilize the anxiety approach as mentioned in Tier 2 of the triangle?

Dr. Kearney:

The clinical approach is a Tier 2, that I was referencing to deal a lot with outpatient therapy for children that come to our clinic. There is a variety of different types of anxiety-based protocols for social anxiety and generalized anxiety—those are some of the more common types of anxiety. We see a lot of test-taking anxiety. A lot of kids—even if they do not have a mental health challenge—if they have been out of school for a period of time, they come back to school, and their level of anxiety is very high as they come back because they are concerned about the reactions from their peers and teachers. Our protocols are very individual specific. We focus a lot on part time attendance schedules and accommodation plans to ease the child back into school. We do a lot of somatic management techniques to help them control their physical aspects of anxiety. We do a lot of cognitive strategies to get the ways they are processing information at school and the different anxiety related thoughts we have. We work closely with the parents and especially the school counselors. It is a three-leg stool approach. Our therapeutic techniques working with the family and school counselors typically to ease the child back into school. Following the pandemic period, a lot of kids were out of school for a long period of time so when they came back to school, they even had difficulty navigating basic things like how to go to the main office to ask for help or how to approach a teacher. We had to work on a lot of those kinds of things as well. It is very much a more mental health focus aspect, but we do individualize it to a particular family. We rely on empirically based techniques that have been designed in general for anxiety related conditions.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you for the clarification. I was thinking if there was a way of possibly to do some cross-referencing items. My last question has to do with the first presentation from Ms. Rivera. On slide 7, you mentioned truancy specifically refers to unexcused and intentional absences. Would that be when a parent or guardian decides the child is going to be out for a week for vacation? I need “intentional” to be defined a little further, if possible.

Ms. Rivera:

It is without a valid excuse. I think you are saying, if a parent regarding them outside of school, taking them out for something, knowing it is going to happen makes it intentional. It is the unexcused absence but making it on purpose, not just a kid being sick and not reporting that back. Does that clarify?

Assemblywoman Anderson:

It does, because sometimes there are also cultural absences we have to be aware of and impact some of our different communities. I did not know if that would count, medical, or if somebody is planning two weeks from now—that sort of thing. You are saying that a school district can make the decision as to what the intentional absence is. Am I understanding that correctly?

Ms. Rivera:

I think it is more the intent around it. When it comes to an absent student, the parent can call and that can be for medical reasons. Where a truant excuse, it could still be for medical reasons, but there is usually a lack of communication with the school in that space. The follow up is where it can end up being a truant absence rather than a chronic absence.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you for the clarification. Chair, if there is time, I have another question for everybody, but I can wait till the end for the lightning round.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Thank you for the multiple presentations, they have been very enlightening. My questions are going to be addressed to Superintendent Young and then I will follow up with my second part with the Deputy Superintendent McGill. Thank you to Senator Dondero Loop for clarifying the slide. I think some of us had confusion over—did they go up or did they go down? You made it very clear. In regard to the slide, "So, Let's Count," we looked at each of the counties and how they either went up or down in their rates. I was pleased to see a lot of the rurals went down, this is where down is good. Many of the rural counties seem to be doing very well, I was glad to see. There were some that were not, and I will not call them out at the moment. For those that are having success, Humboldt was brought up earlier as having some pretty good movement to address the problem, are the counties talking to each other about what they are doing, what is working and sharing their ideas in general?

Mr. Young:

The short answer to the question is yes. The superintendents meet each month and have a text chain, that seems like it is never ending, that discusses a wide range of things including chronic absenteeism. Also, for the districts large enough to have folks specifically dedicated to this issue, those individuals are in constant communication talking about the types of things that are working versus the types of things that maybe are not. Frankly, that is where a lot of the information from this presentation was not hard to put together because we already had a solid understanding of the types of approaches that were working. As you heard from each of the presenters today—the multi-tiered approach, lots of social and emotional supports, home visits, frequent communication with parents and families, bringing community partners in—those are the types of things having a positive impact. If we could say what the frustration is, and this has been represented by a number of the presenters today, the progress towards getting back to where we would like to be is slower than what anybody wants to happen. While recognizing that, again, we are in a different era and there are some things that are different and might not be able to change as quickly as we want.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I will follow up with my next question to Deputy Superintendent McGill. I am going to reference the slide NCSL did where it talks about the potential factors influencing absenteeism. For Nevada, when we talk about potential factors, and they give us these different groups, health-related issues, transportation issues and so on. How do we categorize absence? When a child is absent, whether it is excused or not excused, are they being put into a category, so we know these are not just potential factors. We know this child was absent because they were sick, or this child was absent because of an academic

challenge. When we are saying we have potential factors, how do we even know? How are we tracking those absences?

Ms. Rivera:

It is a great question. As far as my presentation goes, we are sharing that it is multifaceted, it is not usually just one of those things. For example, a student has a health-related issue, it may be they are then struggling academically. It is one of those things that goes in a line. It might be useful to look into state data, if there is tracking for it in your State, that looks at whether it is health related issues and school or just school environment issues. The main point of both the factors influencing absenteeism, as well as in truancy, is they are multifaceted. It is usually not just one of these things. If a parent is not involved and a kid does not want to go to school, it might also be they do not want to go to school because the school environment is bad, not just because of the lack of parental involvement. Does that answer your question?

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Yes. I would like a little bit of input too though, like you mentioned on the state level, how we are tracking it?

Ms. McGill:

Right now that information does not roll up to the State. We do not track it at the state level, probably not at the district, and school level is very individualized. One of the things we have been working with schools and districts on is piloting some different data systems. One being an electronic health record that would help us do exactly what you said—not only track what is going on with the student on the health side, but also to see if the interventions the schools are trying are having a good positive effect. Do we have a statewide system right now that allows for that specificity and the diversification of interventions? Not at the state level.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

Since we have Superintendent Young, hopefully still on the line, maybe my question should have gone more to the districts. The districts have a certain amount of autonomy and are we doing this? If we want to do an intervention—we are seeing some red flags there are these absences, if it is the school environment a child is having trouble with, and bullying is the issue. How do we address it if we have not categorized those children into certain categories? Are we doing that or is that what AB 54 is looking to address moving forward?

Mr. Young:

I will do my best to respond in the way my district approaches this, which I believe is fairly common, whether it is Clark, Washoe, White Pine, or Esmeralda. If I am understanding the question correctly, yes, there are different types of codes a school office puts into Infinite Campus to account for a student's absence. Those codes could range from: we do not know because there has been no communication with the parent; we cannot get a hold of the parent—as referenced by one of your colleagues earlier; the student was out with COVID-19 for the last two and a half weeks; or this student was actually truant because the student missed school and it was confirmed with the parent the student ought to have been at school. Then there would be many types of codes in the middle.

As I mentioned, when I was giving my presentation for our district, when a student reaches four absences, it does not matter why the student has been gone for four days. It could be the student was truant, it could be the student was out ill and it is all legitimate. We still call a meeting with the student and family to touch base to say, "If you were sick, you have been out for the last four days, where do things stand with your makeup work? Do we need to do some tutoring?" Or if there is reading the room, which Dr. Barton talked about with the home visits in Clark, and there are potentially school-related issues or interpersonal things with other students or a teacher, then part of this discussion is to problem solve. "You did not answer the question about why you have been gone for the last four days, what are you not telling us? Is there some conflict we need to be aware of so we can advocate for you and help you advocate for yourself in order to figure out the best approach to this situation."

Besides the codes that exist and can be differentiated through reports a district can pull in Infinite Campus, it comes down to the relationships with students and families and putting in the time to find the best intervention. The interventions do not always work. Many districts are seeing declines, but in a perfect world, every time you provide an intervention, the problem would stop. We are finding this is a very labor intensive and human capital-intensive type of an endeavor. It speaks to the wicked problem where before COVID-19, it might have taken one or two interventions, now it takes four, five, or six and constant communication in order to figure out how to best address the situation. In the end it comes down to the human capital resources a school has to devote to this while all the other balls are in the air because it takes a ton of time. I hope that answers your question.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

It did and thank you so that I could get a better understanding. Again, congratulations to Clark and some of those rural counties that are seeing movement. I appreciate all the work you are doing; it is extremely overwhelming, I am sure.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Mr. Young, you mentioned something about absenteeism and student engagement, which is an interesting aspect. I am going to speak personally; my daughter had her wisdom teeth out. She got them out on a Friday and was going to go to school on Monday, but she was in too much pain. She still got all her work done. She was able to engage and communicate with her teachers. I am sure this is happening even with students who could be considered chronic absentees. Could you speak to that?

Mr. Young:

Thank you for the question, it illustrates the complexity of this issue. Yes, we have students, especially in some of our districts where this competency-based model is further along than others, where a student could be complete and have shown mastery in a content area and be chronically absent. Both of those things can happen. I do not want to minimize what has been stated by all of us in these presentations that in general, I would agree that chronic absenteeism is a big problem. I think the better thing to focus on would be how do we more accurately represent this construct of student engagement? How do we change the system, including the accountability models to allow for the different definitions of student attendance that also acknowledge a student might not have to be on campus every single day, or every single period, in order to demonstrate proficiency or a mastery in the competencies they are trying to learn. It makes your head hurt to think about that, so I do not know what the answer is. There are some discussions going on around that right now in

our State. There needs to be more, and they need to connect back to these accountability models so schools, educators, and even families are not punished for students who might be deemed chronically absent but are thriving in their academic and social and emotional pursuits.

Senator Buck:

Assemblywomen Anderson and Hansen noted that excused or unexcused all count towards the 20. Can somebody confirm it could be excused or unexcused.

Ms. Jones:

Our state reporting does require us to report both excused and unexcused absences towards our numbers.

Senator Buck:

I think that is something the Committee needs to look at because coming out of the pandemic, our society has been troubled in coming back to work and, like Superintendent Young said, there needs to be some variation. Excused or not excused, it does not matter. It still counts toward and punishes the school, family, and everyone, even though they could be potentially proficient—that was another question I wanted to ask you. Great work, I love all that you are doing. One of my questions, before you answered it, was what schools are doing well and what strategies are they using that you can cross across systems and across schools. It sounds like you are doing a great job with emulating that.

As far as with the pandemic happening and the truancy or education neglect, there has zero teeth in that. We see that. Retention could be a possible one. I know different districts have different policies with 11 days absent and then you fail the class or retention could be a possibility if they are below level. What are some things you recommend for that?

Ms. Jones:

In the CCSD, for the high school level, we have the denial of credit, but we give the families an opportunity to set appointments with the administrators, especially if the student is passing the class, to talk about the issues and get to the root cause for the individual student. We have that aspect in place. Again, as mentioned, there are other issues going on that maybe impacting a student. If they are passing a class and are engaged, we have to look at those closely and not just put a blanket policy across the board. Same with the younger levels, there are some retention and neglect packets going through. Overall, we look at it on an individual basis rather than a whole blanket policy as a punitive approach.

Senator Buck:

I like looking at attendance differently, especially with the pandemic and people being proficient with not being in the seat. Based on the NSPF, which our schools are guided by, have you noticed any schools that have high performance and high growth, they are really performing, but do not earn the attendance points. They are doing it with students not there. Then on the opposite impact, the Title I schools, the school our most vulnerable students attend. We say this problem of chronic absenteeism really hits that population. Do we have any Title I schools knocking it out of the park and performing, despite students not being there? Are there different strategies the principal or school leadership may be using—blended learning or things students can do at home.

Ms. Jones:

You are correct, those schools are seeing higher numbers in chronic absenteeism, but those are also the schools that are getting site-based supports from CIS, Boys Town Nevada, and J4NG. They are getting wrapped around with more services. I know one of our high schools does a hybrid model. On Wednesdays, students have the flexibility to come on campus to do proactive work and get some help. Some have remote learning going on that day. They also have the campus open for students to come and do enrichment classes. We are trying to pilot different programs to see what works with our different student populations, the work is there. We are slowly working towards trying to find a variety of ways to engage our students at different demographics.

Senator Buck:

I am trying to find if there is a correlation with high proficiency and high growth, but maybe students are not attending. What does that look like? Are there schools that do it well as far as the impacts to the competency base?

Ms. Jones:

Looking at the data, I do not see much of a correlation with a school that is high performing and has higher chronic absenteeism rates. You are correct in the assumption there is a connection between attendance and engagement. Most of our schools under the 20 percent mark are usually our higher achieving schools and that is something we would like to address to see how they are doing it.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Are there any other questions in Las Vegas? Not seeing any. Any questions in Carson City? Assemblywoman Anderson, I know you have another question.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I will make it quick. For the community outreaches, how many times are these done in multiple languages? I am hopeful there is a language component also there for the different programs with the community outreach.

Ms. Searer:

On our website, nvfamily.org, all the written resources can be translated into the major languages and all our videos are in both English and Spanish. We recognize there are other languages prevalently spoken in the community, so it is something on our to do list to have the videos in other languages as well.

Dr. Barton:

With the CCSD home visits, before the pair goes out, the home language survey is scrubbed to see if that child needs a Spanish speaker or another language as the home visit occurs.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I am not seeing any other questions, we will close this agenda item, move on to our next agenda item.

AGENDA ITEM V—UPDATES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION IN NEVADA

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will now hear updates on the implementation of competency-based education in Nevada from KnowledgeWorks Foundation and NDE, as well as NASS. First, we have Katie King with KnowledgeWorks and Dillon Booker with the Nevada Future of Learning Network. Please go ahead when you are ready.

Dillon Booker, CCSD Education Ambassador, Nevada Future of Learning Network, NDE:

Before we share more about the ongoing efforts to advance personalized competency-based learning in Nevada, I want to start off with a real-life example of why this approach to education is important ([Agenda Item V A](#)). We entered the fourth quarter this past Monday. As I presented my students with the beginning of a new instructional unit based in district wide curriculum, I was once more met with size of dismay, disillusionment, and overall lack of enthusiasm. This was the general tenor of my students until I noted that instead of everyone having to end the quarter with an essay, as per usual, students would have the option to do an essay—if they choose. They can also meet the performance task by way of completing a slide presentation; engaging in a group-based project—such as a podcast; completing the learning task through a Minecraft recording; or even showing me their comprehension through art. I can visibly see the emotion of the classroom shift, student perception of their own potential shift. It was evident that students showed signs of interest and engagement as a result of this opportunity to demonstrate what they know in a way that made sense to them. It is moments like this in the classroom where one sees the merit and value of personalized competency-based learning. This is why our work, elaborated upon, today is so significant and important. I will now pass it to Ms. King to share more about the work underway to make this type of learning a reality in classrooms across the State.

Katie King, Senior Director of Strategic Engagement, KnowledgeWorks Foundation:

KnowledgeWorks is a national education nonprofit. We help our partners in states and schools work together to align policy and practice towards personalized competency-based learning. We have had the pleasure to be working with the NDE and their leadership of the Nevada Future of Learning Network for the past three years. The network is a collaboration of educators and leaders from across the State who are together creating the building blocks of a transformed education system. We are grateful for the invitation to share an update on the collective work of the network and share insights based on KnowledgeWorks' national experience.

To begin with a level setting, personalized competency-based learning is an approach that fosters deep connections to academic concepts, while nurturing the development of essential skills. This student-centered system of instruction is not primarily about some students accelerating through learning faster, but rather about helping students to deepen their learning and about empowering every student to own their learning. In a personalized learning system, students will inevitably move at different paces but collectively, they will all master the rigorous academic content and life ready skills needed for future success. When each learner is able to master both content and higher-order competencies at their own pace and with personalized learning supports, we can be assured they are graduating ready for what is next. The seeds of this shift towards personalized competency-based

learning were planted in Nevada long ago, and we are grateful to be building on and integrating the great work that many individuals and groups have been engaged in for years. This is the broad overview of this type of work.

In Nevada, specifically, this systems transformation is all about supporting students in achieving the shared vision of the Portrait of a Nevada Learner. The Portrait was developed collaboratively with students, educators, caregivers, community members, and leaders and is a powerful North Star. Personalized competency-based learning offers a structure by which schools and educators can orient teaching and learning toward the Portrait. It is also a mechanism for transforming the education system to work for every learner.

In KnowledgeWorks, experience working with states and schools for almost 25 years, we have found six features to be common across learning communities where personalized competency-based education can thrive: (1) a shared vision for student success; (2) clear learning goals, also known as competencies, aligned to that vision; (3) a statewide network of support to nurture collaboration and innovation; (4) professional learning to support leaders and educators in shifting district, school, and classroom level practices; (5) a policy environment that supports those practices taking hold; and (6) sustainable funding that can allow promising approaches to thrive and grow. When we look at this list, we can see Nevada has several of these pieces already in place and is becoming a national leader in the conversation around student-centered learning.

Nevada has its Portrait, which was informed by the voices of more than 1,400 Nevadans. The Nevada Future of Learning Network has been very active this year with teams of educators, youth, administrators, and community members from around the State, designing new approaches and spreading the word about the Portrait and the need for systems change. One of those teams, the competency champions—which are educators and leaders from around the State, have developed the draft Nevada pre-K through 12 competencies or learning goals. We can see Nevada has several key elements in place to advanced personalized competency-based learning.

I want to focus on this third element, more deeply for a moment, because competencies are a critical piece of living out the vision of a portrait. They translate the high-level aspirations of the Portrait into tangible, cross-disciplinary skills and dispositions that create a foundation for lifelong learning. This slide shows an example. It says the progression of competencies aligned to one of the Portrait attributes, critical thinking. Critical thinking is one of nine attributes of the Portrait that have aligned competencies in the current draft. Critical thinking is often cited as a key skill that young people need to thrive academically and economically. This progression gives educators, students, and families clear learning goals for critical thinking and an understanding of what mastery looks like at different developmental levels. The competency champions are currently incorporating a first round of feedback on the draft competencies and will soon begin creating resources for educators around them.

Now that Nevada has its statewide Portrait, draft competencies, and a statewide network of support, exciting professional development opportunities can take place. Looking ahead starting in this next school year, the Nevada Future of Learning Network will run a two-year competency implementation pilot within which district and school level teams will receive personalized coaching and professional learning, in addition to policy and regulatory guidance and support. Those supports will enable them to activate the Portrait of a Nevada Learner in their context and deepen personalized competency-based learning practices will allow them to model for the rest of the State, classroom, school, district, and state level structures needed to transform the system. Their experiences in learning can inform future

assessment and accountability change efforts. The network is currently codesigning this pilot with participating districts—Churchill, Elko, Lincoln, Lyon, and White Pine—and are continuing conversations with additional schools and districts that have interest in this work. I will pass it back to Mr. Booker to share more about the policy opportunities on the horizon.

Mr. Booker:

I sit on the Nevada Policy Advisory Committee, part of the Nevada Future Learning Network. The Committee looks for policy opportunities and crafts recommendations that can help to advance the work of the Network. During our first few months, we identified the following three policy areas with the most potential for the Legislature to support the work.

First, it is pivotal that schools and districts have the policy flexibility to create new school structures within the competency pilot Ms. King spoke about. Too often, traditional structures—such as seat time requirements, grading requirements, school calendars, require measures of attendance, and a persistent demand on teachers to navigate ever-changing expectations pertinent to teaching—can serve as an impediment to schools looking to innovate. Across the country, many states have created opportunities for schools and districts to request flexibility from state statute and regulation for implementation of personalized competency-based learning. If we want the competency implementation pilot to have the intended impact, districts will need to be able to seek flexibility to create new and innovative learning environments. As the pilot is rolled out, the network, the policy advisory committee, and NDE will continue exploring flexibilities and opportunities for flexibility. Such exploration and may necessitate legislation down the road and we look forward to working with you at that time.

Second, innovation requires sustained support from knowledgeable individuals and financial resources over time. States from every corner of the country including, but not limited to, Arizona, Arkansas, Kentucky, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Utah have established formal and permanent structures in collaboration with their state education agencies by which the work can be sustained and are publicly funded. Nevada should consider doing the same by ensuring there is an entity, supported with public dollars, that encourages innovation, collaboration, and learning across the state. We anticipate there will likely be a funding ask related to the work of the network for the next legislative session. We hope to engage with you more on the details of this ask in the months ahead.

Third, our existing assessment system and how it feeds into our accountability system pushes schools to prioritize certain types of approaches in ways that can make it challenging to increase personalization. Standardized tests like the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), Criterion-Referenced Tests, and myPerspectives unit assessments are often used as a gauge for teacher effectiveness when these tests are not the premier way to show comprehensive student understanding of a concept. For instance, I teach resource English and a great number of my students can navigate academic standards to a collegiate degree through discourse, artistically, and with sentence stems to encourage their thoughts. However, when asked to show these understandings through writing, there is a variety of struggle often times to do so. While some of these structures are mandated under federal requirements, there are opportunities for Nevada to be a leader in making assessment and accountability shifts to support personalized competency-based learning. As the pilot unfolds, its work will include taking a closer look at Nevada's existing assessment and accountability structures to identify opportunities for them to more closely support personalized competency-based learning approaches.

In closing, each of these three areas may require a different action at different times as the work of the pilot and the network evolves. Based on what we know now, we are confident, at some point, there will likely be an opportunity for legislative action in each of these three areas. When that comes, we look forward to partnering with you on each of these areas to help advance this work in Nevada.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you, next we are going back to Mr. Young.

Mr. Young, Previously Identified:

I am a lifelong Nevada resident. I was born and raised in White Pine County. I attended UNLV for my bachelor's and master's degrees. I am speechless as I sit here and listen to the work that KnowledgeWorks has done, and I have had the great pleasure of being a part of that. This is such an exciting time for education in our State and nothing makes me happier than being able to speak with you about this today and to echo some of what has been presented by KnowledgeWorks.

Besides the work that KnowledgeWorks has been engaged in, let us talk about some other things going on ([Agenda Item V B](#)). The Nevada Association of School Superintendents has invited many state legislators, as well as our Executive Branch folks, to participate in some forums with the NCEE. The same group is facilitating work through the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education, that was established during the last legislative session. These initiatives are going on concurrently with what NDE and KnowledgeWorks described a moment ago. The idea is how do we challenge participants to envision a learning system that empowers all learners for the future and for a future we do not know what it is going to look like. This does require rethinking the measures we currently use to label students and educators in schools.

I want to share this slide. This is from the NCEE, and the research was done based on the World Economic Forum and the Future of Jobs Survey. You saw some similar ideas in the KnowledgeWorks presentation a moment ago. Notice the information ranked first through 16 is what our traditional accountability system focuses on. Look at all the things that employers value before that and it is not to say those things are not important. The idea of these cross-cutting skills that are relevant in every single discipline—critical thinking, creative thinking, resilience, empathy, leadership, and systems thinking. These are the types of skills the workforce is demanding of our graduates at this point in time.

Also courtesy of NCEE and to elaborate on what has been shared already. What does a learner-centered system look like? Number 1, thinking holistically about students and avoiding the temptation of labeling them as proficient English students, non-proficient math students, or English language learner (ELLs). Those differentiations can be helpful, but in the end, we want to look at the entire child and develop a system that engages those students in, this is key, the messy work of learning. I know there are a number of you on this Committee who are educators, have been educators, or worked closely with educators. Learning is not a linear process; it is iterative and messy. We need our learners to be co-creators of this process, not inactive subjects, they need to be agents and participating.

KnowledgeWorks and NDE talked about the Portrait of a Nevada Learner. This is a portion of Nevada's Portrait. Through this work, these are the questions Nevada educators, system designers, and policy folks heard from stakeholders, and especially students, that are important to them in their educational system. As I participated in this convening in

October 2022, there was not a single student in the room who talked about the value of their smarter balanced assessment. It did not come up one time about the scores on exams that are so prevalent in our accountability model. This is another part of the Nevada Portrait, empowering, connecting, impacting, and thriving.

Where is there tension? This holistic vision and the model we currently use to guide the schools, Senator Buck referenced it a little while ago. In the superintendents' vision of learning, we want as much alignment between this vision—the Nevada Portrait and our accountability model. If those two things are two separate bubbles, then innovation is never going to happen because people are going to attend to the things that are measured. It goes back to my slide from a previous presentation, not everything that is counted, counts. We need to work towards encouraging personalized approaches, but right now, the model punishes deviating from the norm. Innovation—we might say we value it, but we do not as a system because if you try something that does not have this deep research base, which is the definition of innovation. If there is a deep research base, you cannot call it innovation, it is just following the research.

For years, we talked about differentiation in schools. Differentiation on the input on instruction is not a new concept, yet we forbid it on testing day. Every kid takes the same test, and every kid has to show their knowledge in the same exact way as the person before. It is not student-centered. To drive the point home, the Purpose of Education Index study, by Populace, published in 2022 of parents—out of 57 attributes, standardized testing ranks 49th in importance.

I want to share this quote with you. It is important you see it because it captures a good concept. “How do you capture the wind on the water? How do you count all the stars in the sky? How can you measure the love of a mother? And how can you write down a baby's first cry?” Trying to quantify by one measure, a student's learning, is tough. It takes a lot.

Let me share a couple of examples of personalized and competency-based learning. I am proud of the David E. Norman Elementary School in my district. This is an amazing school. Students opt into tons of choice-based learning. This is agency-based. When they choose to do it, it is because they want to and we know when students want to learn, the learning goes through the roof. It is incredible. I would invite any of you to come out to the school to see one of our science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) Fridays, it is super awesome. These are my little kindergarten scientists. Lincoln County School District Superintendent Pam Teel has done a terrific job being on the forefront of competency-based learning. She has developed this shared vision, that KnowledgeWorks talked about, as the guiding principle and has worked to backwards map everything in her system to try to align and get students closer to that vision. It is incredible work. The Churchill County School District was part of the forefront in developing their own local portrait of a learner. You can see in this graphic, some of the systems that have evolved in order to line up with that vision. Again, it is not enough to have the vision, we have to align the systems in order to get us closer to the vision. Douglas County School District, again, on the forefront of this work, you can see standards-based grading has been in place there for a number of years. Priority standards with learning progressions, these are the competencies the KnowledgeWorks folks talked about. Teacher-generated authentic assessments to inform its instruction versus waiting for those summatives I was referencing. Then, coaching on the instructional side of things, something that is so important. We will close things out with Lyon County School District. Lyon has its own local portrait of a learner as well. Superintendent Wayne Workman sent me this incredible picture of kindergarten students who, in a project-based environment, wrote their narrative and then read their narrative and shared it to an audience of their peers, as well as parents. Lyon focuses heavily on CTE

and work-based learning at the secondary level in order to provide students with multiple pathways.

We hear a lot in the public narrative of education that schools are failing and those types of things. I have a very different view of that as a lifelong public educator and a Nevada born and bred kid. These things are going on in schools across the State. We have so many educators, families, and kids who are working hard, it may just not be represented in the way we currently measure it and that is what needs to change. We need to change the system to allow for an asset-based approach so some of these things that students and educators are doing can be celebrated and highlighted. We can understand that learning is measured in so many different ways than what is seen in the headlines of the newspapers.

These are some photos from websites across the State. I challenge you to find one of these that is not a high level of learning, even if it is not measured in the NSPF or on a standardized test. These are the things that get kids to come to school so they are not chronically absent.

This slide comes from NASS and our recommendations to go *from* in accountability *to* in accountability because when the vision lines up with the metrics, we have alignment and can focus our resources in a way that moves the needle and we are not having competing priorities.

These are the same recommendations I gave you for chronic absenteeism. We appreciate you in your service on this Committee. We invite you to come into our schools and contact us at any time to have more discussion on some of these issues we are bringing up here. With that, thank you for your time and I will await your questions.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I know we have a couple of questions. We will start with Senator Dondero Loop.

Senator Dondero Loop:

When we looked at the current core top skills, I found it fascinating that working with others was not further up on the list. Not that I disagreed with the seven before it, but highlighting what you said about the Portrait of a Learner and how students are working together to create some of the curriculum, teachers are working together to create curriculum, whatever it may be. Frankly, the job we are doing right now requires a lot of compromise. I was fascinated by the fact that working with others started at number eight and it was empathy and active listening. It surprised me.

Senator Buck:

I am always interested in how students in Nevada's K through 12 system and graduates from Nevada's system compare to other states? Are they competitive with entrances into college? Are they competitive with being proficient—as in they can count change, do math, write, and do all those things they are going to have to do in higher education or in the workforce? Remedial courses are not needed. How do we adequately assess that? Is this in addition to a Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) type format that does comparative data across the entire United States measuring if students are proficient or not proficient. Do you see this as an addition to the federally required state assessments or do you see this as a replacement? Secondly, how have you involved the business community? Inevitably, the business community in Nevada, or across the nation, are going to be

employing these students. They need students who can count change, write, do math, and all these things that, unfortunately, some of our students cannot do going into college or the workforce. I am hearing that from the business community who are eventually going to employ these students.

Mr. Young:

Thank you, Senator Buck for the question. Senator Dondero Loop to go back to your comment, I have to share that my District's version of its Portrait is based on leadership. It is a student facing leadership model. We have five pillars, one of them is leadership with others. It is one of the things that my community here in White Pine values. Number 1, I can lead myself as a graduate and Number 2 I can lead with other people, which comprises empathy, compromise, and seeking to win on all accounts as opposed to a win or lose type of a thing. I think everybody has a little different nuance on what those look like, but the recognition it is important is certainly there.

Senator Buck, I can respond to involving the community. The beauty of living in a rural community and a small district is, the process of consensus building is probably far less complicated than it is in a much larger system. I am able to visit and make presentations with the rotary club, Lions Club, city councils, county commission, power board, and all of these groups to talk about the input they have and how to better align our system collaboratively, so we generate the types of students who are able to do the things we want them to do collectively.

To answer your other question about testing, the superintendents have been working with NDE to potentially apply for an innovative waiver under the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA) program under ESSA, this is a relatively new development. It would not dramatically change what we are currently doing with high stakes testing, but it could potentially lay the groundwork for more substantive changes in the future. Senator Buck, I know you have spent many years as an educational leader as well, my own personal perspective is there could be a couple of ways, depending on ESSA law, that comparability could be addressed. One is, do we have to test every single kid when we use the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP)? These are all representative samples. If we are looking at program evaluation and state performance, my opinion is those assessments satisfy the bill. They might not meet the ESSA requirements, but if the idea is program evaluation or comparability, then we have things we can do that with. A better model for assessing every student's progress, which I think is also critical, is to allow choice in student assessment. If the goal is mastery of the English content, there are many ways a student can demonstrate mastery. It might look different from kid to kid. I would like to gather data from every student, in a holistic and meaningful way, that shows where they are on their mastery continuum, but it does not have to be a standardized test. The purpose of those assessments is to show learning and where further learning needs to go versus these other assessments for comparability. Again, that is just life according to me.

Ann Marie Dickson, Deputy Superintendent for Student Achievement, NDE:

We value the partnership we have with NASS. As we are looking through assessments, Senator Buck, you are correct. We have ESSA requirements we need to follow. We need to make sure we are assessing students in reading, math, and science. However, we are having a lot of conversations nationally about that. Superintendent Jhone Ebert has engaged in many conversations across the country with other state leaders as well as federal leaders. Those are things we are listening to in our communities. We are sharing the

work we are doing here in Nevada, and advocating to make sure we have something more aligned to the needs of our districts, our students, and our communities.

I also want to address when we are talking about the NSPF, that is something we are looking at as well. We are hearing a lot about assessment, but with that, we are talking about accountability. The last time we came together and worked on that collaboratively across the State was 2015. I was in WCSD and had the opportunity to work on that with other colleagues in Washoe County. It went out in 2017 and we have had a lot of changes in the world. Superintendent Ebert is looking at putting in some budget requests for going through and having a collaborative conversation about how we can change those while still meeting the ESSA requirements as we must. How can we add additional things, so we are valuing what, we as Nevadans, want in that system? It is work we are collaborating on with NASS as well.

Senator Buck:

A quick comment for this body to be reflective on, when students are entering the workforce or entering higher education, remedial coursework and the rates on that. We need to look at that system first, do top down, and work backwards to make sure our students are prepared for the things they will be embarking on. Because where the rubber meets the road is where it sets students up for success or not.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Before we go to Carson City, are there any other questions in Las Vegas? Not seeing any, I will turn it over to Assemblywoman Hansen and then Assemblywoman Anderson.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

For the most part, my questions have been answered, some of it will launch into the next round. I am encouraged and this is one of the reasons I am a fan of associations, with NASS in particular today. This helps us not be in silos. Having the input of the superintendents and these districts talking to one another is key to finding a way to address some of the goals you laid out. As an employer, I was extremely struck by the current core top skills from the World Economic Forum, I think it surprised a lot of us. I do not think it surprised me too much, as an employer, that analytical thinking, creative thinking, resilience, flexibility, and agility were in the top three. We have a lot to think about and analyze as we go forward. We need to balance social and emotional learning and competency-based education, but not at the extent of losing some basic core standards we need to achieve for our kids to be competitive in the workforce. The remedial portion, that Senator Buck mentioned, has been a squeaky wheel of mine. I agree, if we tackle that, it will help with some other issues as kids can get more competent in their reading and mathematics—the more basic things you need in order to be a well-functioning adult. Thank you for the time and all the analyzing you have done. I look forward to how you will work together as an association and as different school districts to address a lot of issues that are important to all of us.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you for the presentations from both of you, it was great information. If we could go back to the picture of those kids because is that not emotional blackmail? How cute were they? Also, the comment about the students and the messy work of learning, it is though.

I do have two very specific questions. My first question is from the first presentation, Mr. Booker when you spoke about the importance of the testing area, I agree with you when it comes to the project-based learning and getting the kids excited about that. Do you believe the competency-based learning should have an assessment created by the teacher or should it be a standard test that is utilized to show the competency?

Mr. Booker:

I would say it should be a conversation amongst the school team so everyone is on one accord and has implicit understanding the standards can be met through that level of competency-based assessment. It is a team-based conversation where that needs to occur. Individuals can, based on their student populations, differentiate how they go about the assessment in their classroom based on those particular students.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I appreciate the school team decision making process and it now brings up a question for NDE. I had an opportunity to speak with some principals from Washoe County last week and they brought up for our third graders there are a total of 19 tests they are taking—SBAC, MAP, and three others I did not write down. Basically, they have to take these three tests nine times. Based on the whole idea of a school team, is there a way for us to utilize or cut down the number of testing this third grade class, or possibly a tenth or twelfth grade class, is able to do? As we know from our past discussion, in that great editorial that was brought up, there is some serious test anxiety taking place. Do you believe this is a process for us to be able to cut down the number of tests a student would be forced/invited to take?

Ms. Dickson:

As a former principal and elementary educator, I understand the number of tests our third graders take. Some of our assessments are federally-mandated—our end of year assessment we currently use SBAC for. We also have the requirements through the Read by Grade 3 program we need to make sure are in place and a part of our *Nevada Administrative Code*. Then, we have districts that elect to do additional assessments. I think it is through SB 303 (2017), there was information collected on assessments. I do not have that in front of me, but I would be happy to bring back additional information. In collaboration with our colleagues at NASS, we are looking at what makes sense for students. We are also looking at things and exploring the requirements. What do they say? Are there opportunities through the innovative assessment with the federal government that we are able to look into? All those things are great opportunities, and we are exploring. We look forward to, as we have additional information, bringing it back to this Committee so we can share what those changes will be moving forward.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Superintendent Young do you want to add any other information about your experience as a superintendent, as well as a teacher, and how testing impacts your other world as a music teacher and also makes an impact on your ability to teach that same day.

Mr. Young:

Again, I have a lot of opinions that are mine alone—I want to put that disclaimer out there. In my perfect world, we would cut down dramatically on the number of tests and the grades they are given. There would be more opportunity for choice. I am not anti-assessment, in fact, one of the things I love about being a choir teacher is I have the opportunity to assess

my students 100 percent of every instructional minute I am with them. It is a constant feedback and assessment model, but it is performance-based. Imagine if I tried to test the students' music knowledge by sitting down and giving them a multiple-choice or computer adaptive test. I assess them in a way that is meaningful to them. It guides them as individuals and as a group toward our collective goals, that is what assessment needs to look like to me. Again, in my perfect world, a student could take the SBAC if they wanted to. We have students who thrive in that type of assessment model, but a student might not want to and, in the perfect world, that student would not be forced to do that. The student would need to demonstrate learning and show where they are on the scale towards mastery, but it could be in a variety of different ways. In my perfect world, that is a model of assessment that meets the needs of the learners and families and invites agency and engagement in the process that is co-created. It does not subject students to an experience that is artificial and, honestly, useless for many students—not all of them, but many of them.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Any other questions? Not seeing any. Thank you for the presentations it was very interesting. I appreciate you, Mr. Booker, your voice lifted us all up.

AGENDA ITEM VI—ANALYSIS OF GROUPS OF PUPILS WHO MAY REQUIRE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO RECEIVE A REASONABLY EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PURSUANT TO SENATE BILL 72 (2023)

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Next, we are going to Agenda Item VI, analysis of groups of pupils who may require additional resources to receive a reasonably equal education opportunity pursuant to SB 72. We have several stakeholders who will be presenting on this item. First, we have Maria Sauter and Christi Hines-Coates with NDE. Go ahead when you are ready.

Christi Hines-Coates, Assistant Director, Office of Inclusive Education, NDE:

We are excited to be here today to share information with you about our specific groups of students who require additional resources and to receive reasonably equal educational opportunities ([Agenda Item VI A](#)). Today, our objective is to promote and provide information to help the Committee to understand the educational landscape of the specific groups who are requiring additional resources to guarantee a level playing field for education and access to educational opportunities for these groups of students. We will highlight NDE's commitment to ensure that every student in Nevada has access to what they need to ensure their success. The groups we will be talking about today are students with disabilities, migrant students, English language learners, students who are in Title I schools, students who are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch (FRL) as well as students who are considered at risk.

We will begin today's presentation by discussing students with disabilities who are on individualized education programs (IEPs). As of this year, our count for Nevada was over 65,000 students with disabilities. It impacts quite a few students. The needs for this large population of students encompass various areas depending on the severity and level of the disability we are talking about. This can be from accessible facilities for a student who may have a physical disability, all the way to sensory disabilities that necessitate more of a multisensory teaching approach, as well as those students who may require braille materials, and those students who require assistive technology. Our commitment to those

students ensures there is also an understanding that our students do better when they are together. We promote an inclusive situation where students have access to the general education curriculum and those opportunities, and create disability awareness across the schools in Nevada.

We are going to start with some strategies with a secondary and postsecondary transition focus—more of our high school level, 14+ year old kids with disabilities. The initiatives NDE is implementing for these students currently, age 14+, are listed there. The American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) ESSER III CTE Paraprofessional Project is a project that ensures learners with diverse needs receive necessary educational supports and accommodations for CTE curriculum. It provides an opportunity for our students with disabilities to access more of the CTE programs. Research shows that children who participate in the CTE programs have a higher rate of graduation. This program helps to support those students who are interested in that. In the first year of implementation, there were 15 paraprofessionals hired and they were distributed amongst 12 schools, to assist 21 CTE programs. This year, we have 21 paraprofessionals across 12 schools supporting for 42 CTE programs. We have seen an increase in the number of paraprofessionals brought to the program. Those are located in Churchill County School District, CCSD, Elko, Lyon, and the State Public Charter School Authority. It is a broad range, but we would like to see it across more.

The Nevada Student Leadership Transition Summit takes place one time per year and is designed to empower students who have disabilities, enhancing their self-determination and leadership skills. It is to help support them in having a voice in the process of developing their IEP. It is not done for them. They have that skill to tell people what they need and how to do it. Currently, the goal is to foster and support a community of youth leaders who can do the work. There are 17 teams that include 110 to 115 students right now across the State. Those are student leaders who participate in the Summit and go on to do amazing things when they leave high school based on their experience with this initiative.

Our next is the Nevada Transitions Roadmap through Innovative Partnerships (Nevada TRIP). We are very excited that this year we received \$10 million from Nevada TRIP. It is a five-year grant and is intended to help provide transition services for youth with disabilities ages 10 to 24. The big part of Nevada TRIP is partnering with different providers, stakeholders, and partners to provide access to our students. The main goals of the initiative are to improve the information system for transition services—getting information to them in a way they can access it; enhancing professional learning for professionals who are providing those services—ensuring they have those skills; and boosting availability of resources for students to prepare for integrated employment. In our office, Jennifer Kane, Educations Program Professional, Office of Inclusive Education, NDE, and Ashley Price, Educations Program Professional, Office of Inclusive Education, NDE, are doing amazing work right now to get this grant off and running. We are in the beginning stages, but this is an exciting opportunity for our older kids in the State.

Last but not least, I have Virtual Job Shadow or Pathful Explorer. This platform is supported by the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, Rehabilitation Division, Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR), and provides an online career exploration opportunity for students with disabilities. It enables them look at a job and see what is required and expected of them in that job, rather than looking at something written. It is a nice opportunity for those students. Those are the strategies for those kids.

Next, I would like to talk about the strategies aimed to improve academic results for our younger populations of students with disabilities. The State Personnel Development Grant

(SPDG) is a federal grant awarded to state educational agencies. This award is given to help reform and improve state systems for personnel preparation and professional learning for those teachers and individuals who are providing resources and teaching our students with disabilities. The SPDG funds two initiatives, the first is Assess-Plan-Teach (APT). This is an intervention program initially launched in CCSD in 2015. Its primary goal is to increase proficiency of Nevada's third grade students with disabilities in statewide reading assessments and promote more inclusive settings. It also provides professional learning opportunities for educators to improve their literacy teaching skills and ensure intervention is effectively implemented in schools. Our third graders are almost back up to prepandemic achievement scores in reading, and a lot of this is due to the work our teachers have been doing to APT and the good work that is out there.

The next initiative supported by SPDG is Project Achieve. Project Achieve is currently being implemented in Carson City and Lyon County school districts. The objective of Project Achieve includes increasing proficiency rates for students with our most significant disabilities, increase inclusion by ensuring they have access to general education classrooms, and improving the instructional competencies of the educators who teach this population of students. If we had more time, I would share with you a video they put together to highlight what the teachers and students are doing.

Last is our long-term strategies that we, at NDE, are looking to advocate for the continuation of because we know they are improving the outcomes for our students. We advocate for the continuation of ARPA ESSER III CTE Paraprofessional Project and the Nevada Student Leadership Transition Summit; the continuation and expansion of Project Achieve to support academic outcomes and inclusionary opportunities for students with significant cognitive disabilities; and APT to increase reading proficiency in students with disabilities in the third grade. I am going to pass this over to Ms. Sauter.

Maria Sauter, Director, Office of Student and School Supports, NDE:

I am going to start with our ELLs and migratory students. These students are often clumped together, but they are very separate with separate needs. Starting with the school year numbers our ELLs were just over 67,000 and immigrant students, which are a part of that number, is 6,461 this current year. Our main focus over the last two years is that our English language students have access to high-quality academic English language instruction in the content classroom—not being in pull-out programs, but in the classroom with the core standards. We would like a focus to be on more ELL students participating in our CTE courses, honors courses, advanced placement, and dual credit courses. We do not want their lack of English language mastery to be a reason not to push their academic focus and career choices as they move through school. Right now, based on CTE data from 2022–2023, only one in ten ELLs participate in the CTE coursework.

The next slide shows the work we began, in collaboration with WestEd in 2019, to improve student access to research-based academic English language development, professional learning—that is designed to prepare content teachers to meet the diverse needs of the ELLs in their classroom. The Department is committed to the social and academic success of its multilingual learners. This vision includes goals to create and implement high-quality, professional learning for simultaneous content and language instruction; partner with districts and school leaders to promote an assets-based learning environment; and build the capacity for continuous improvement of systems and instruction for our language learners.

Some of the policies and strategies—NDE's current strategies align with the identified needs and further support educators and students in meeting their goals. I want to highlight

AB 219 (2019), the corrective action plans. The lowest 30 percent of public schools in academic achievement, both in math and English language arts (ELA), for current ELLs are identified as needing a corrective action plan. They work with our English language team at the Department and create a plan that must include root causes. It must include achievement goals and plans to address the root causes, including action steps and professional learning that specifically targets those content areas. Currently, we have approximately 150 schools on those corrective action plans.

The last strategy—the design of pre-K English language development standards, is not quite accurate. I want to clarify; it is actually redesigning the Nevada English language support documents so they align with the new language assessment tasks that will go live in schools in SY 2025–2026. It does include the kindergarten level, but not pre-K.

Long-term funding strategies for this work—Title III A funds, we get approximately \$8 million annually. The Pupil-Centered Funding Plan ELL Weighted funds, the state investment is significantly more than our federal programs and we are appreciative. It allows our districts to focus on our ELLs more directly. The last one is our ARPA Statewide Activity English Language Development Standards Framework Professional Learning Initiative. This includes development of four courses, available virtually, that all educators across the State can take in order to learn best practices in instructing ELLs in the classroom and is offered through Truckee Meadows Community College.

Moving to our migrant students. In the news, migrant and immigrant are often used interchangeably and it causes some confusion in the education realm. They are two very different programs funded by two different federal programs. Migrant students are described in Title I C as students whose families move to follow agricultural or fishing work due to the economic necessity. Immigrant students are defined by Title III as students who are not born in the United States, who have been in the United States schools for under three years. Title III defines ELLs as students who may or may not have been born in the United States, but whose families have identified there is a language other than English spoken in the home and who demonstrate a need for additional English language development support. I wanted to make those three definitions clear for when we speak about migrant students.

Moving to their needs—because migrant students and families move so frequently, they sometimes experience gaps in schooling and often are not connected with local agencies and support systems. Also, the parents sometimes move without the student at first and then the student follows at a later time. This leads to housing instability and a greater need for social and emotional supports. Agriculture and fishing work tends to be located in our most remote areas which can create barriers to accessing the Internet and other technology needs.

Some of the policies and strategies we have are surrounding the training and support for the recruiters and this is important. The recruiters are classified staff, who are paid by the migrant program, are called recruiters, and are the heart of every migrant education program. The recruiters connect with the previous schools when students come to their school and with the next school as families move on. They connect families and students to local resources, offering tutoring, family literacy nights, and are often the primary point of contact for families. Last spring, our migrant recruiter in Humboldt County School District, Claudia Means, took several students and their families to visit the UNR campus and The Terry Lee Wells Nevada Discovery Museum in Reno. None of them had ever been on a college campus before and they all reported having a wonderful day.

We offer annual identification and recruitment training, as required by Title I C, because identifying who qualifies as a migrant student can be tricky. It includes determining who the child has lived with, who has moved for what kind of work and when, when the child lived with that person, the child's age, and whether the child is still in school. Family stories are often complicated and determining if a student qualifies can be tricky. This annual training is vital.

The long-term funding strategies—federal Title I C funding is an annual amount at \$72,000 for the State. We also have the federal Migrant Consortium Incentive Grant; it is a matching fund, and we also received \$72,000 under that grant. Nevada is a member of the Migratory Parent Empowerment Consortium Plus (MPEC+) and MPEC+ was awarded a new four-year grant in 2023. It is a consortium of eight states including Hawaii, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah—is our lead state, Virginia, and Washington. It is common states with common needs and common populations.

At this time, I am going to move to students who qualify for FRL, at-risk youth, and Title I students. Many of the strategies, goals, and funding opportunities are the same across these three groups. Many students need access to additional scientifically researched learning materials and programs to help close the achievement gaps they have from the lack of access to certain experiences that many of their peers from affluent families have had access to while growing up. Sometimes the resources they need extend beyond the classroom and they need supplemental nutrition and health programs for their physical development as well as academic development. Similarly, many of these students do not have the same access to counseling services, mentorship programs, and positive peer groups that other student groups may have.

Some strategies for Nevada—as Nevada is a local control state, much of the work on behalf of the at-risk students is advising on best practices and building the local capacity on items such as expanding meal programs to ensure students have access to nutritional meals—not only during school hours, but also on weekends, holidays, and extended breaks; developing personalized plans for students with specific academic, social and emotional, or behavioral needs to ensure tailored support and accommodations; and establishing mentoring or tutoring initiatives where at-risk students can receive one on one support from educators, older students, or community volunteers. Integrating social and emotional learning curricula is another focus we have for the program. We partnered with WestEd on a universal pre-K implementation plan, change management plan for the funding formula to ensure services are accurately being defined within our statutes, and preschool access in the mixed delivery system—it is a cost and equity study. Those are three things contributing to our knowledge of the needs and some strategies we can do in the future.

Continuously implementing programs that identify at-risk students is also important—the earlier, the better. If they have the need in elementary school and we wait until middle school—we all know the data on what that could do. If students are not reading by third grade and they have slipped through the cracks, we know their chances of graduating is much lower. The earlier the identification, the better with the students who need these supports. We identify that often through screening assessments, monitoring systems, early warning systems and then following up with supports. The last is integrating the four pillars of a community school that support the conditions for teaching and learning found in high-quality schools.

Our ongoing funding—Title I A is our largest contributor to this work. We also seek out grants from different agencies, the U.S. Department of Education has many additional discretionary grants that are available. We look for those, such as the innovation research

grant, that allows for both research and implementation of a strategy with help from an outside research organization. We are also looking at applying for the comprehensive literacy state development program grant, which will help with those early literacy grades. The Legislature took a leap of faith in providing for the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan with the at-risk weighted formulas. We can always do more. We collaborate with local businesses and nonprofits to provide resources to families and grant funding to meet the specific needs of our students and communities across Nevada. With that, we welcome any questions.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We are going to hold off on questions and go to Mr. Young from NASS. Please go ahead.

Mr. Young, Previously Identified:

Thank you, Chair for this opportunity to amplify the feedback we can provide to this Committee as it grapples with some of these messy and wicked problems as they have been described so far today. I want to thank the NDE team for the information they shared. As one of the many rural school districts in our State, we depend on Ms. Sauter and the others at NDE to provide us with guidance and expertise on the populations we are talking about today because many of the rural school districts are limited with the personnel, everybody wears many different hats, so drilling down to have a deep knowledge on these ideas can be a challenge. We acknowledge and appreciate the guidance NDE provides for all of us and especially the rural districts.

You heard several of the categories our NDE partners described, I am going to call out some of those same ones with special education, migrants, immigrants, ELL, and at-risk. We also have, in the weighted funding formula, the gifted and talented weight that is included in some of those special populations. When I share the information you asked for this presentation, they are going to be addressing most of those groups together. As we have looked at this, acknowledging each of these populations have different needs, but as NDE elaborated, many of the ways to address those needs are overlapping and common.

Under the list of needs we have is access to world class educators, that is first and foremost—great teachers, principals, and support staff. Those are the folks that, together with our students, make up great schools. We have a teacher shortage; I do not think it is a shock in our State and across the country. The primary need we have is to attract, retain, and then train and coach these world class educators.

Expansions of differentiated supports in core academic skills within an inclusionary environment. I appreciate NDEs emphasis on that. We too believe students are best able to access grade level content in a regular classroom environment but supports are going to look very different for each student depending on the student's needs. It goes along with the previous agenda item, the expansion of a more personalized learning experience for all students with the caveat of there being high quality Tier 1 instruction, intervention, acceleration, and most of all deep learning. It was mentioned in one of the other topics that sometimes people view intervention and acceleration as, "Let us just check the box and work our way to the end of the content." When we talk about personalized learning for all students, especially for the students who fall within these categories, we are talking about making learning meaningful, helping them to make meaning of their learning and connecting it to their lives outside of high school. It includes access to CTE—music, foreign language, advanced placement, and leadership opportunities—some of these college and career ready types of experiences that students who fall within these groups need. We need to focus on helping provide them with equitable opportunities to access those learning

experiences that sometimes other students take for granted. It also includes the permission for flexible, meaningful, authentic, and holistic methods of assessment. If we want to honor the learning experience of students in these different groups, we have to recognize they might demonstrate their learning in ways that are not typical, and support and celebrate that.

Transition opportunities for what comes after high school, I appreciate NDE's discussion on the transition work going on within special education. This is hugely important for students who traditionally and typically get left out of postsecondary planning. Wrap around services were also mentioned, whether those are academic, social services, mental health, nutrition, and especially when school is not in session. Then last, access to early and robust early childhood learning. Those are what NASS sees as some of the needs for these groups of students.

Talking about policies and strategies—investing in the concept of belonging we find to be critically important to improving school culture. If you examine the statewide social and emotional learning data collected by NDE, it is not hard to see that some of the groups we are talking about experience lower degrees of belonging and affiliation with their school environments. Those investments need to continue to be made. How do we bring them to the table and include and honor the experiences of each and every student? Second, investments in school mental health supports. This was one of the premises of the "Investing in Nevada's Education, Students, and Teachers" publication last year for NASS—mental health supports, educator and leader pipeline, and curricular offerings that allow each student to have a more personalized learning experience. Those are all investments, as long-term strategies, we feel need to continue being made at the State level. Continued expansion of early childhood education seats, that has been a focus at the State level for the last several years. We have taken advantage of that in White Pine, and I know almost every other district has as well. There is still a need for the expansion of access to students and families at those youngest learning levels. Again, as you heard me say multiple times today, recrafting of the accountability frameworks to honor students as individuals. This is important to our students who are diverse. Standards—they have their place. We want every student to master contents, but we have to recognize that is going to look different for every student. Until we recraft those accountability systems, it is probably not going to look as differently as it needs to. Last, investing in professional learning and educator preparation—there is huge opportunity for growth here. Besides the recruitment and retention, once our teachers are in the door, it is a harder job than it ever has been in the history of the field. Providing learning opportunities for educators is critically important.

The last part of what I will talk about today is the long-term funding concept that was asked for feedback on. We would encourage the Committee to review and update the Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates study, as well as the Commission on School Funding's recommendations concerning adequate, optimal, and such, not only for the base but for the weights. We know Nevada has made a huge investment in public education last year. We thank this body as well as the Legislature as a whole, while also acknowledging there is probably still work to be done in order to get us to our ideas of adequate and optimal. The Commission is still working on this monthly and we understand they are going to have additional recommendations coming up soon. Among those, I believe, one of them will be ideas, questions, or recommendations perhaps around revisiting the property tax cap and the abatement concept that exists in our current tax code. I am one of many who is eagerly awaiting the Commission's recommendations. If there are recommendations on those concepts, I think it is worth considering. In addition, I think there are questions about last session's investments in education, again, substantial, helpful, and life changing perhaps. Are those going to continue or are we going to be subject to some economic fluctuations

that could make for some challenging discussions? Maybe not in this session but in the next session. We would encourage this body and other committees in the Legislature to consider the long-term tax code adjustments that might need to be made in order to sustain the revenue invested last session. I speak for every district in the State, as well as the charter authority, when I say special education funding, the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funding, has never been funded at a level that allows districts and states to meet the needs of our special education students. We recognize it is unlikely it will ever be fully funded. We have to advocate with our federal legislators for an increase in IDEA funding if we ever want that program to do what it was intended to do when it was launched.

The last recommendation has been implicit, if not formally stated in some of my comments for earlier presentations. We urge every individual in our State, but especially this Committee, our legislators, and our Executive Branch. We have to celebrate public education and the role it plays in our State. It is noble and a worthwhile endeavor. Public schools embrace and welcome each and every student who shows up on their campus, including students in each one of these groups. We know we are always going to have work to do. The idea of that hammer, I mentioned earlier, as well as the disdain that is sometimes part of the public narrative are not helpful in the educator pipeline. This is one of the reasons teachers leave the profession. It is one of the reasons we have vacancies we cannot fill and principal shifts. Nobody wants to do the job, not because they do not care and do not want to try hard, but because they are tired of not feeling supported through some of the public narrative that exists. If we could change that, then I believe a lot of these other things would follow. From NASS, we encourage you to lead out in that and, of course, review the other things we have talked about today. We appreciate the partnership and look forward to questions at the end of this session.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Next, we will move on to Dr. Marianno from UNLV, welcome.

Bradley Marianno, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Educational Policy and Leadership, and Faculty Director, Center for Research, Evaluation, and Assessment, College of Education, UNLV:

Madam Chair and members of the Committee, this is a part of some work we did with NDE over the last year ([Agenda Item VI B](#)). This is my project team and a quick slide on our research center. We have worked up and down the State on education-related issues. It was hard to boil down, into a very brief presentation, some of the work we have been doing, but I want to focus on one common narrative we have heard today, especially in regard to when we talk about our SBAC. We have heard this narrative before.

These are the proficiency rates, as available in the Nevada Report Card, for our different student demographic groups across the State. We hear in popular media, and we bemoan the low proficiency rates for some of our demographic groups. This is in math specifically. Then ELA, statewide 41 percent proficient and some of our subgroups are lower and others are above.

I want to briefly highlight today there are some weaknesses when we rely simply on proficiency rates to tell the story of our education system in Nevada. The way those proficiency rates are set are based on a committee that got together to decide what college and career readiness looks like. They are not grade level proficiency cutoffs by any stretch of the imagination. In fact, often they are set above grade level. When our students are

performing below proficient, it does not necessarily mean they are below grade level; they are below what the committee recommended in terms of college and career readiness. They are also less precise than our raw scale scores that we get from the SBAC. The other thing with proficiency rates is they reflect a combination of new learning and what a student knew and was able to do prior to any instruction. Those are the two components when we think about proficiency.

There are some important benefits of proficiency rates, but for this presentation, we will focus on another side, which is growth in our SBAC scores over time. With my team, we estimated a series of cross classified linear growth models. It is a little more sophisticated than just taking a student's scale score from this year and subtracting it from their scale score from last year on the SBAC. What we find here is several of our student subgroups are making marked growth on the SBAC year over year. This is 2016–2017 through 2021–2022, which is the last year we had of data. It also reflects the COVID-19 period. Our students are making growth, notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic. What you see there is their average growth in terms of scale units, 13.5 points was the average growth in math across all grades and all schools in Nevada. Then, you can see some of our student subgroups made a higher growth than that. For example, our Asian student population was at 22.5 points. To put those point changes in perspective, if you were a student who was scoring at the developing level, Level 2, and you were in the middle of that band we use to decide developing, to get too proficient, you would need to score 28 points year over year. Across the State, they are making about half of that growth towards the proficient band. Some of our subgroups are lower. What is remarkable here in ELA, there are similar scores across all our student subgroups. All student subgroups are making growth, and they were all similar.

As a team, we scoured the research literature to talk about how we can better support our student subgroups, in particular our racial student subgroups. We discovered that these are some of the most promising research-based efforts in recent years to support our student subgroups. The first one we recommend is focusing on non-teacher staffing. The teacher labor market is tight right now and the UNLV College of Education has done some nice work in terms of preparing programs that take paraprofessionals and other non-teaching positions to move them towards that teacher credential. There is some good evidence and research lately, especially with how teaching assistants can have a substantial impact on student achievement, particularly for our students of color. We recommend creating pathways from these non-teaching positions, teaching assistant positions, to full-time certified positions.

We have done substantial work and have presented to the legislative committee before on the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. We were in Baltimore at research conference last week presenting some of those initial results when we looked at the first-year impacts of the Pupil-Center Funding Plan and particularly the positive impacts for our students. As was already mentioned, we continue to recommend monitoring the implementation of the new funding formula and ensure the weights are established appropriately to meet student needs. I know after that first year of implementation, substantial changes have been made to those weights particularly for at-risk students, and we view it as a positive development.

High dose tutoring is in the research literature a lot lately as a mechanism for helping our students to manage some of the missed learning opportunities during COVID-19. It has showed positive results for our students of color. Some of the best practices are if the student tutoring is done by a paraprofessional or certified teacher, held during the school day versus after the school day, and least three times a week. If we are looking at high

dose tutoring as a mechanism to raise student performance, those are some of the best practices.

Potentially, two other reforms—I am less optimistic about these, as the research literature is still growing. Right now there are some opportunities to study this within the State and see how it is helping our students. For example, we could study the dual language immersion pilot programs in Clark and Washoe. The research literature has been positive so far on dual immersion as a way to help with ELL student reclassification and raise the performance of our ELL students particularly in ELA. We should continue to study that to make sure dual language immersion works for our students. Finally, there has been some initial positive results on co-requisite coursework. I know the Nevada System of Higher Education has done some work in this area. We should strive to continue to understand whether this co-requisite coursework model helps with the transition for our high school students into the system. There are ways we can study that there.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you and stay close because I am sure we will have some questions for you. Next, we will have Nicole Willis-Grimes with CIS.

Nicole Willis-Grimes, Executive Director, CIS:

We are part of a national evidence-based school dropout program here in Nevada, we have been around almost 20 years ([Agenda Item VI C](#)). We have three affiliates across the State, one in Clark County, one serving WCSD, and one in Northeastern Nevada, which serves Humboldt and Elko counties. We have demonstrated we can do what we do in the urban areas, in the suburban and less urban areas, and then in the rural communities as well. Our program is based on a three-tier system similar to the MTSS pyramid you saw. We provide a Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 levels of support. Tier 1 being schoolwide, Tier 2 is serving small groups of students. I know some of you may ask what that looks like, and it is a smaller group of students who may not necessarily do well or thrive in the larger group setting. These go into our case managed students in Tier 2. Tier 3 is the individualized one on one. In the SY 2022–2023, we served over 90,000 students throughout the State of Nevada in 92 Title I or Title I eligible schools.

Our focus areas—some of these were discussed in the first section of this hearing as far as some of the hindrances or red flags of whether a student is going to drop out later. Attendance or chronic absenteeism is one of those major ones that was mentioned, as early as sixth grade. Depending on the number of school days missed in a particular school year can be an early warning sign for students who are likely to drop out later in high school. It is one of the main reasons we also serve K through 12 students. We are not just in the high schools because we know the things that happen early in childhood have an impact in high school, especially if those barriers continue throughout their school years. Our areas of attendance, behavior, course performance, and social and emotional learning—otherwise known as how you get along with people, how you show up in a group setting, how you work together, how you can self-regulate, and how you manage your own anger. These are tools that are developed and honed while you are in school settings.

About our students—in SY 2022–2023, we served over 90,000 students across 57 elementary schools, 18 middle schools, and 17 high schools. The majority of students live at or near the federal poverty line; disproportionately, they are students of color. You can see some of our other stats, 89 percent qualify for free or reduced lunch. Then the breakdown on Black/African American students, multiracial, White/Caucasian, and Hispanic or Latinx

populations. We primarily go into Title I or Title I eligible schools. These are where we have pockets of students and their families who live in communities that are resource deserts, if you will, or the accessibility to resources to help them are difficult to access.

One of the things I want to highlight, we talk about the living conditions and the environments and neighborhoods that our students live in. There is another piece to the puzzle and it is the impact of poverty on brain development. In 2015, the National Institutes of Health and other research agencies across the country—both private and within the federal government, created the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) Study. It is one of the largest, long-term studies of brain development in child's health in the country. Through the brain scans of participating children, they were starting to recognize that the gray matter developed in early childhood, especially among children living in poverty, grew at a slower rate or was less developed. You are seeing an impact on brain development and the conditions under which our children are living impacts their ability to learn and retain information. Not to mention the emotional stresses that go on in the classroom and everything else. Poverty is tied to structural differences in several areas of the brain associated with school readiness. The Annie E. Casey Foundation had done a study to determine that child poverty in the United States more than doubled in 2022.

When we are talking about equality of education, we can have stellar education, we can have all the tools and resources available, but until you provide the resources, tools, and supports, that other folks spoke about previously, to create a more equitable approach to education, the quality of education should be equal across the board. How we support our students, lift them up, and work in partnership with our school districts, the State, legislators, and community partners is where we get to the crux of the issue and the challenges our students and their families are facing on a regular basis.

Looking to equitable education and students' ability to access what is available for them. It depends on what is going on in the family, in their neighborhoods, outside of the school building, whether it is trauma, lack of basic needs, learning loss, and access to timely and appropriate medical and mental health. Areas at the school that are affected by these barriers—we go back to, because we are in education, CIS likes to have our ABCs, which are attendance, behavior, course performance, and social and emotional learning.

Going through our tools, I know some of you are familiar with our program, but I do not want to under or overestimate your knowledge. The way we work comes down to relationships. It is the crux of our program. We have talked about the students' ability to get along with others and their relationships with education, the school building, teachers, and support staff. At the very least for CIS, what we can provide is a well-trained, culturally competent, and caring adult on the school campuses where we work. We have a fantastic partnership with our school principals and school districts in which we operate. It is a team effort. Our site coordinators work hand-in-hand with our principals and support staff, like school social workers, school counselors, and even the teachers to identify those challenges based on the ABC areas and provide programming that affects or can help to provide support across the board to all students at that school. Then on a more individualized basis with a Tier 2 group setting or Tier 3 one-on-one encounters. Again, trusted relationships. It is trying to be in a listening mode both to our students and our families of what the needs are and not being prescriptive.

Our integrated student support model is a fancy way of saying wrap around services. They are co-located resource center rooms on school campuses so students have a place they can go. A lot of times we will work with teachers if they have a student who might be having issues getting along with kids in the classroom or paying attention, we can pull

them, disengage, talk through the issues, see what we can do to help provide support in the moment, make note of what we can do later on, and then reintegrate them back into the classroom. The resource rooms are on an individualized based need for the school, of what has been identified as the needs. In the resource rooms, we have available a co-located food pantry; clothing, including uniforms; school supplies; and hygiene products. It is available to not just the students, but their families and anyone living around that school.

Community partners, again, we cannot do it alone. We have “communities” in our name. If we cannot provide it on our own through our site coordinators, we look to the partners we work with throughout the community to see how we can double our efforts and connect to have a more integrated and streamlined approach in doing a soft hand off to services the student or family might need. Then through our site coordinator, we do follow up as well.

Bill Milliken is our founder; this is my favorite quote from him. He has a book called *The Last Drop Out*, and it is the defining statement, I believe, of our program. “It is relationships, not programs that change children.” If there is not trust in the people who are providing the services or trying to connect with the families, you cannot get very far. It is trying to dive in, be a good listener, and show we are there to support, not be punitive, and helping to empower our families to get access and the resources they need so their kids can be successful.

One of the tools we use in the training for our site coordinators was developed by the Search Institute, going back to that relationship piece, is the Developmental Relationship Framework. This is something we utilize with our students and families. We have been providing the training, based upon need and desire, to some of our schools on how the teachers can integrate these practices when they are interacting with students. Kids learn when they like the teacher. They want to be there because they have a relationship with the teacher and somebody they trust on campus. Through the Developmental Relationship Framework, we start in creating an unbiased shared power environment where we can get more information about what those needs are and attend to those needs to the extent we can. If not, again, with our partners.

Going back to the integrated student support model and meeting ESSA. These are the key areas we look into when implementing our program and knowing it is evidence-based.

This is a fancy diagram of our model. Again, when we go into a school, we work closely with the principal, school leadership, and school support staff knowing it is a team approach. We do not want to go where we are not wanted so if there is something the school administration, teachers, or support staff say we have covered, but this is where we need you, that is where we dive in a little deeper. This is the model that we have, but how it is implemented at each school site depends on the level of need, the resources already available at the school site, and then we help to fill in the gaps to the extent we are able to.

Academy is another piece of the programming we provide in the high school levels. It is to the extent that high schools already have it. Again, we do not want to duplicate efforts already happening, but we have a few high schools throughout the State utilizing Academy, which is essentially a junior or senior seminar. We focus primarily on students who are credit deficient. It is to give them extra one on one and smaller group setting boosts to get back on track so they can graduate on time. It is led by a school faculty member and supported by CIS. We have curriculum that focuses on modules. Such as how students can tap into their strengths as opposed to being a product of where they come from. As a student, they have a lot of gifts, a lot of resources, and trying to elevate that and get them to see they have these gifts they can use further on post graduation. College career

readiness is another piece. Life skills—I like to call it Adulting 101. Just because we get a student across the graduation stage does not mean all those barriers cease to exist and everything is rainbows and roses. Rather, sometimes there are more challenges. One of the things we have been doing in addition to Academy is having an alumni association. Having a community of support for those students CIS has touched during their K through 12 career. Service learning, it is important for our kids to learn to give back, regardless of their station in life. How they can be a member of their community and give back because they all have certain gifts. It is our work to try and highlight those and get them to believe in themselves. Then of course, credit recovery.

This is a high-level view of all our data from SY 2022–2023. As you can see, 61 percent met or made progress on their attendance goals. This is probably one of the lower percentages we have in our data, but as we discussed earlier, this is a national epidemic. It is not just Nevada, it is not just your individual school district. I believe it was Superintendent Young who mentioned, we are finding kids who are able to make the grades and graduate, but they are not necessarily attending school. It is the soft skills that were highlighted that employers and universities are looking for. Those resiliency components that make you successful later on in life that you learn, practice, and hone while you are in the school setting. We are excited about our graduation rate, 95 percent of our case managed seniors graduated.

All in for kids, as far as it working and the policy work moving forward, it takes a team approach. It takes the research. It takes the boots on the ground, the teachers in the schools. It takes NDE. It takes our community too, including for profit and nonprofit organizations. It takes all of us. There are community-based approaches, including the full-service community school model, it is similar and not to confuse it with CIS. It is a model being implemented across the country in several school districts where it takes a broader look on the community writ large and listening to what the community needs, the parents need, and giving power to their voice and listening to them, following through with what they are asking for. Then, there are components between nonprofits, community-based organizations, health care, mental health services, and the school that come together to try and create a hub within the school for the community to access these services and supports.

Again, all hands on deck for funding and coordinated services from state and local governments including our school districts, and the coordination of local/regional/statewide service providers. We all love what we do but when we coordinate our efforts, it is more effective and efficient in the end. Getting support from the private sector and continuing funding for the integrated student support program similar to CIS. I included abcdstudy.org in mdrc.org, which are two of the research sites cited in the presentation. With that, I will conclude my presentation. Thank you for having us here, we really appreciate it.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for the presentation. Stay close because this is our last presentation and then we will open it up to members for questions. Without further ado, we have Dr. Cantú with J4NG, welcome.

René Cantú, Ph.D., Executive Director, J4NG:

Let me express my sincere gratitude on behalf of our whole team and our students for the opportunity to be here and present to you ([Agenda Item VI D](#)). I know you have had a long day, and we appreciate you making time for this and caring for what so many people are

doing across the State to help our young people. Jobs for Nevada's Graduates has been in Nevada for ten years. We have served over 20,000 students at this point in time. We were created so we could help with not only the unacceptably high dropout rate our State has suffered from, but also to prepare young people for the workforce, that has been our focus, to make them college and career ready. The approach I took in putting together this presentation was to look at the barriers our students in J4NG had. We identified the top five barriers. We talk about needs and solutions and I wanted to focus on why those barriers are so important.

One of the issues we have identified, that is huge for this Committee to address, is the college and career readiness crisis our students face. According to the Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities, one of the biggest challenges facing Nevada's long-term economic expansion is the lack of career and college readiness for adults and K through 12 students. Jobs for Nevada's Graduates lives in the education to workforce space. We believe finding life-changing employment and education is the key not only to students' lives and families' lives, but also to the wellbeing of our State and our community.

I have a slide about multigenerational poverty. You have heard so much today about poverty, I am not going to go over it in detail except to say the longer you experience poverty in childhood, the more likely you are to remain in poverty as you reach the age of 20, 25, 30, and 35. These outcomes are exacerbated if you happen to be African American or the member of another minority or at-risk group. Fighting multigenerational poverty is essential.

I went to our data folks, and I asked them to tell me what the top five barriers are. The top barrier we identified is economically disadvantaged students. Why is economic disadvantage so important? First of all, low socioeconomic status (SES) students lack access to college and career information. If your family does not know about college, they are less likely to tell you about it. With schools and counselors being overwhelmed, it is more difficult to provide college and career readiness information to young people who do not have that tradition in their home. Students who are economically disadvantaged are also more likely to take on higher student loan debt over time, which becomes an added weight, weighing them down economically into their adulthood. Low SES students will drop out from high school, almost four times higher than their higher SES classmates—11.6 percent versus 2.8 percent according to the National Center for Education Statistics data. Family economic stress creates higher depression and stress and lowers academic outcomes, that is why poverty is an important negative factor in the lives of our kids. Low SES students have lower career self-efficacy and lower or no career aspirations—we see this when we talk to our kids every day. The conclusion is low SES students are bound to continue the cycle of multigenerational poverty and need intensive intervention to break this vicious cycle.

We serve eighth grade through twelfth grade and follow up for 12 to 24 months after graduation. We are dealing with young people who are ages 13 or 14 to ages 19 or 20. The second barrier is when young people have inadequate or no work experience and no work readiness skills, they face employment uncertainty and limitations because they do not have the skills to get or keep a job, and jobs are important. College is important, training is important, but so is the ability to find and keep employment. Most of the young people we work with, who have graduated or want to attend postsecondary education, are working and going to school because in the economic reality today, it is hard for anyone to just go to school without having also to work. Our youths have fewer economic resources to help them in their job search. If you do not have the resources to look for work, you are less likely to access jobs with a higher career trajectory. They also have far less information about how to find work. Students need work-related skills to learn, find, keep, and advance in the

workplace. Our 87 competencies focus on work readiness skills—how to get a job, keep a job, leave a job, resumes, cover letters, interviews, communication skills, and working with others. These skills are so essential. Everything we talked about this morning about what employers are looking for, are the types of skills J4NG teaches every day. They need economic and informational resources, mentoring and support to be successful in job search and career attainment. One of the things I would say is, if young people cannot see it, they cannot be it. When you ask high school kids, what is your top career choice? You will hear athlete, influencer, cosmetology, and barber. They are in the top five all the time. You do not hear information technology technicians much. You do hear medical and education, but there are so many career pathways. There are so many industries that need people. We need to do a better job providing the career literacy they need so we can connect a talented young person with a job out there that will provide a good salary for their life and upward trajectory—that is why inadequate or no work experience is important.

Barrier three, they lack marketable occupational skills and demand in the local labor market. The skills employers are looking for, we have gone through before, they are the things in the J4NG curriculum. Things like being coachable and teachable, being resilient, collaborative, a good communicator, empathetic, creative, problem-solving, and so on. These are the skills young people need in addition to reading, writing, arithmetic, history, and everything else they learn.

Barrier four, a lot of our young people lack the motivation or maturity to pursue education or career goals. I spend a lot of time in schools, and I am not in the trenches like our licensed specialists assigned to the high schools. Students do not see the value or relevance of what is taught in school or how it is taught. They will tell you, “What is this for?” They are demoralized by the structure and allocation of rewards in schools. In a sense, there is a school hierarchy, some students sit higher on that hierarchy than others. The ones who are not seen in high regard or value do not receive the same quality or validation they need to stay in school. Students do not feel the classroom and their teachers are supportive. We hear this all the time. I know our teachers are doing the best they can, they are excellent. I know that they are overworked. One of the areas I think we need to look at is class size reduction. We have too many kids. When you have 40 or 45 kids in front of a teacher, the teacher is using a microphone, and you have a young person who has an IEP or 504 Plan, or who did not sleep the night before, they are not going to learn much. They are going to wither in that environment. Students may suffer from physical, mental, emotional, or interpersonal problems; struggles with identity; isolation; and feelings of depression. It touches back to the mental health concerns we were talking about earlier. All of these contribute to a feeling of lack of motivation, such as, “What is the point of all this?” Students believe other things in their life are more important than school. School content needs to be relevant. It needs to be practical. Students desire practical skills—things they can use, and they see value for. Students need the support of at least one adult who they believe cares and has the time to help them and pay attention to their needs. It is important because there are many people in the building who care for young people, but the perception of young people very often is these people do not care for me. They need at least one person they feel is checking in on them, that they are in school, that kind of thing. There is a great need for mental and emotional support for our young people.

Barrier five is transportation; this came up earlier as well. The lack of transportation contributes to stress and anxiety. Students worry about how they are going to get there, that affects academic achievement. The lack of transportation can also contribute to financial strain if people are having to take an Uber or Lyft here and there, or if they have to take a bus for two or three hours to get anywhere, it becomes a huge barrier for our young people. Students may drop out or not pursue college. Young adults miss out on

employment and educational opportunities because they cannot get around. Try to get a young person to a place like the One Stop Career Center or EmployNV Career Hub; transportation becomes a huge barrier to help them get into any sort of college, training, or employment.

These are the five barriers we identified in the individual development plans we develop for every young person in the J4NG program.

In terms of what J4NG does, we have a solution that works. It is a scalable solution. We have a 42-year track record in 40 states. We have changed the lives of over 1.6 million historically underserved students. Here in Nevada, we have served 20,000 kids and every student in our program receives 130 hours of contact per student per year. All students in are case managed. Our numbers are not massive, but the kids we have helped are the ones most in need. We are in urban, rural, and tribal communities. Our mission is we empower Nevada's young people with the skills, mentoring, and resources to enter life-changing employment and careers. We are about education to employment.

This slide talks about, "Why J4NG?" Too many kids fall through the cracks. These former students quickly joined the ranks of Nevada's disconnected youth. We talked about the 42,000 young people who were part of the disconnected youth initiative to try to reach out to more young people. We place a caring adult, a licensed J4NG specialist in a kid's life who teaches a class, who provides mentoring, tutoring, and supportive services so they can stay in school, raise their grades, and lower their absenteeism—attend more, and be on track to graduate. A lot of what it takes is helping young people become self-motivated. A lot of that is inside work, it is not outside work, it is not complying with tests and requirements. It is when you can light a spark in a young person's life, and that is what educators do. When you start doing life-changing work.

We are in 14 Nevada counties. We serve Esmeralda, a 15th county, through Tonopah High School. We have 53 programs across the State. We are in tribal communities, urban, and rural—an intervention that is highly effective. Our graduation rate is 97.74 percent. I wish I could say 98 percent and I hope to next year. Our job placement rate is more than twice the job placement rate for other 18- and 19-year-olds in Nevada, it is 67.44 percent. After our kids graduate, they are working at more than twice the rate of their peers. Eighty-five percent of those working, are working full time. Eighty percent of our students in follow-up, experience some sort of positive outcome—work, promotion, college entry, scholarship—something good is happening in their life. Finally, 48.63 percent of our students go on to some form of further education. When we talk about further education in J4NG, we do not just mean UNLV, UNR, or the College of Southern Nevada (CSN). We are talking about if they are in short or midterm training through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), if they enter an apprenticeship through the Carpenters Union or the Tesla Manufacturing Development Program. It is some form of education beyond high school. About one in two of our kids pursue some form of education after high school. Our kids achieve stellar outcomes. Thirty-eight percent come from the bottom quartile. Their average grade point average is just under 2.2. In terms of absences, the average number of absences is 18, they are chronically absent when they come into the program. Ninety-two percent are FRL. On average, we identify 8.12 barriers in our IDP, that number has risen this year to over 10 barriers per student.

This tells you a little bit about what we are doing. This body has so much to do. We appreciate being part of the safety net for young people. We are laser focused on getting young people ready for the workforce and life-changing employment and hope you will consider, not only supporting programs like us and others, but also think about class size

reduction. Our class is considered an elective class. One of the things I would say in closing, consider taking classes like J4NG and classifying them as a flex credit. A flex credit is a credit that prepares young people for future workforce readiness. Most flex classes focus on college readiness, but not on workplace and workforce readiness. With that, I will conclude my presentation with a photo of our kids welding, nursing, or putting out fires, we have kids working in every key industry in Nevada. Thank you for the opportunity.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

With that, we will conclude our presentations and I will open it up to questions from members. We will go Assemblywoman Hansen and Assemblywoman Anderson, whichever one of you would like to go first, please go ahead.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

My question is probably directed to NDE. Great information. At this time, how much is the federal government putting towards funding—IDEA in particular? Then, is it the State that is then having to pick up whatever is not funded? Or is it the individual districts? Or is it, for lack of a better term, a quilt of trying to get that money together of the required services?

Ms. Hines-Coates:

As far as the federal funding or Part B funding from IDEA, I do not have that number exactly, but I can get the information for the Committee. Then, your other question, could you repeat?

Assemblywoman Anderson:

The Superintendent brought up that it was something like 26 percent, currently, of what is required from the IDEA law. If it is only 26 percent or 30 percent or 53 percent, where exactly does the money come from? If it is not being funded from the federal government, where do we get that other— How are we making those other payments so the programs you just advocated for and spoke about are being a reality?

Ms. Hines-Coates:

Our districts utilize local funds to help support all their students. Whatever Part B funds they do not receive, they supplement with their other funds. Regarding the initiatives I talked about today, those are currently grant funded programs and you know how grants go. We will continue to apply for grants to help support those, but as I said in my presentation, we would love to see them go statewide. Currently, just talking about the SPDG, it is approximately \$700,000 that is used over five years, so it is hard to take statewide when you have that amount of money. People think that is a lot, but it is not.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

When it comes to the grant funding done through NDE, I know sometimes you are also pass throughs, when it is grant funding for the districts, how much is left with NDE? Is it 100 percent that is a pass through to the individual districts or 90 percent, for example?

Ms. Hines-Coates:

Again, I do not have that information with me, so I do not want to misspeak, but I can get that information to you.

Ms. Sauter:

I cannot answer on multiple programs that were discussed today on the federal level. We have very specific set asides that we can use for state work or state personnel. Each grant, such as Title I, it is dictated by the federal government how much of the percentage we can set aside for the state work. It can range from 2 percent to 7 percent and some grants can be up to 10 percent. Each one fluctuates a little bit, but that is the only amount we can set aside for any type of our state work, including personnel costs.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I have a couple of questions. My first one is for Ms. Hines-Coates regarding the Nevada TRIP program. You said you received a \$10 million 5-year grant? I was curious when that came through. I am assuming it is more recent and not a few years ago. Does the Nevada TRIP program take into consideration autistic kids? I had a lot of concerns, when I was first elected and served in 2019, about high school students who were on the autism spectrum and were severe, but able to go to school, and their parents worrying about how they are going to transition them to any sort of independent living or job. How are we working towards helping these autistic students to prepare for adapting in regular work life?

Ms. Hines-Coates:

It is a great question. We have initiatives for all levels of students no matter their disability, from a specific learning disability to a more cognitive, significant disability. The Nevada TRIP grant—we were funded in October. They are doing the leg work right now, doing memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and things right now. It does support all students with disabilities, not specific to any one. Also, part of the grant, and even before this grant, we partnered with the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, DETR, in providing supports to help transition students to postgraduate opportunities. There are many opportunities put forth to help support those students after they graduate from high school. We are doing a lot of work on other things to help bump up the transition process and making sure we have strong transitions for all students.

Assemblywoman Hansen:

I would like to switch over to Dr. Marianno. I had a couple of questions regarding the study they worked on. Thank you for the study you have done. This has been my squeaky wheel. I am always talking about graduation rates and proficiency rates and there is this divergence. I was excited to see what we might have found out. You mentioned on slide 6, “The proficiency cutoffs are often established above grade level. They are less precise than scaled scores and they reflect a combination of new learning and what a student knew and was able to do prior to any instruction.” I also like slide 7, which shows the average growth. I understand we had some debate over proficiency versus at grade level. Like it was said earlier, sometimes you cannot measure certain things, but there has been growth. I appreciate there has been average growth on the math scale you reflected in the slide, but I still do not have an understanding of— If we go back and look at, when did these graduation rates start to go up but proficiency rates— We could argue about proficiency and what does that mean? In 2013, I think it was AB 288 that went into place to remove the high school proficiency test required for graduation and it did not go into effect until the graduates of, I think, June 2017. When we look at the Nevada Report Card, before that was taken away, math high school rates were at 56 percent. Then, pre-COVID-19 for math is 26 percent. But the graduation rate went up—it went from 74 percent when we had proficiency testing to 80 percent. Yet, we fall almost in half with math, and we fall about a third in ELA. Do we rely on the Nevada Report Card data, was that part of the study? Having

been around a lot of youth and taught youth myself in different capacities, I have seen a diminished ability in reading and mathematics across the board. Do we have any solutions? In your experience, do you think implementing a proficiency test requirement for graduation—do we go back to that even if it means the graduation rates come down? Maybe we have students who are more proficient because our remediation rates also show 50 percent of students in the State need remediation if they are going on to college, 60 percent in Clark County. I am seeing the figures supported on both sides even though your report said you are concerned the proficiency cutoffs are above grade level.

Dr. Marianno:

I want to be cautious in how I approach that because graduation rates were not a part of this study. When we look at the way proficiency is used, pre-2015, when we switched over to the SBAC, those proficiency levels are not comparable to the Criterion-Referenced Tests used pre-2015 because the proficiency rates with SBAC are established in relation to the Common Core State Standards. We have to be very careful when we compare proficiency post switch to the SBAC relative to before because the proficiency levels do not equate. Nationally, we did see a drop in proficiency when we moved to the SBAC exam. It is largely a function of the switch in the way those proficiency cutoffs were made. It is more of an artificial function of the switch in the exam relative to an actual drop in what students know and are able to do. The SBAC proficiency levels are much higher than what was done previously. When we are measuring anything, you prefer to have the cut-off set more stringent than too low. It is one reason why I do not use graduation rates in any of our research when we are trying to measure the effectiveness of programming. When our graduation rates are as high as they are, which we can celebrate, they do not tell us much about how students are doing. It is the same thing when we studied the Nevada Educator Performance Framework. When most of our educators are rated as highly effective, that measure is telling us nothing anymore. It is not very useful to us. At the Center, we shy away from using graduation rates for that very reason; they do not actually tell us much. I will be a strong advocate for maintaining those standardized exams for this reason because they can actually tell us something about what students know and are able to do. We have also talked about competency-based education today and our Center has done some work on the Nevada Portrait of a Learner. I think it is an important direction to move to. We need multiple measures of student performance. The SBAC is one, competency-based education, or any assessment you might implement as a result of that reform, would be another. I also think there are important conversations about removing the excess exams we have for our students as well so we just have a few that can tell us what students know and are able to do. I know that does not speak to why we might be seeing higher graduation rates but lower proficiency trends over time. I am hesitant to discuss that today because I did not come prepared for that. I will also say, it is a national trend, we see it everywhere and there are educators all over talking about why that might be.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will let my colleague know that part of SB 72 also requires the study of the graduation rates compared to achievement rates. We will be discussing that later in the interim. We may have you back or you can tune in and see what we find because it was a part of the bill. Next, we will go to Assemblyman D'Silva.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

Thank you everybody for your informative presentations today. I saw we also have the libraries present here; we have to remember the libraries are also a very important part of our public education infrastructure in our State.

I have a two-part question, the first one will probably be for the NDE and the second one is for anyone who feels they can answer it. The first question is pertaining to Senate Bill 72 and students who have the additional resources they may require in order to graduate. How many students in the State are in the high-risk, low-income category? Out of the statewide number, how many of those students are in Clark County?

My second question is pertaining to college and career readiness. We know there is a forecasted burgeoning of our economy, particularly with the new economic development taking place in our State. We have thriving and growing sports economy. Technology is now supposed to be one of our main driving forces in our local economy. As Senator Lange will attest to, she can speak in more detail about this, Las Vegas may become a Hollywood 2.0. We had a fascinating conversation with the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance and they had tremendous insights into the battery and renewable energy sectors in Las Vegas and in Nevada. This is not happening over the next ten years. This is happening now and will probably be in place over the next three to five years. What preparatory programs do we need to start implementing in our K through 12 system to get our students prepared to thrive in those economies aside from just the service sector, gaming, entertainment, and so forth. What ideas do have to for us to implement in our classrooms?

Ms. Sauter:

At this time, we do not have a student count for at risk. We would have to get back to you. I will open it up for anyone else because I do not want to share my opinion on the second part.

Dr. Cantú:

On the second question, in terms of what young people might need with regard to career literacy, I can only share some of my observations. Young people currently take all types of career inventories, every young person does and our people do. Despite the fact that is taking place and they are getting reports saying you should enter this field or that field, we still find that high school students do not have an understanding of what is out there or how to get there. My conversations with people like Cecil Fielder, Strategic Initiatives Manager, Workforce Connections, folks from Workforce Connections, folks in industry, and folks in the Disconnected Youth Coalition have been around career literacy. We need to find a way to educate young people in high school about what is out there in our community in terms of work and how to get there. Our young people could walk out tomorrow, graduate, go to the Carpenters Union, and begin learning and earning. There are so many opportunities they could pursue—educational opportunities through WIOA and other sources—without having to get into a student debt burden and yet they are not aware of it. My observation is there is an acute lack of sophistication and awareness. We are working on it in the trenches to address through J4NG, but it is something that needs to be addressed on a much larger basis in our State.

Ms. Sauter:

If I may add, we have implemented, for four or five years, Nevada Pathways. It is part of the Pathful Connect program. The platform is available for all students in middle school and

high school. We are working on piloting in some elementary schools, especially in Lyon County. This platform offers exactly what was just described. It allows for real life interactions with industry partners. We have over 600 industry partners across Nevada that are part of the platform where they can create virtual field trips. They can speak to what the job entails. A lot of times students will hear about jobs, but they do not know what skills are needed. What does it take? What does a day in the life look like? This is offering both live interaction and virtual interactions with multiple industries. It is available across the country as well, but we are trying to focus on Nevada industry mostly at this time.

Ms. Willis-Grimes:

To piggyback on that and work we are doing in coordination with NDE on the ground. A lot of times, at least for us, it is on a school-by-school basis, but it is through our community partnerships. I would agree with the comment of it is that fluency. It is how they understand what it means to get a job, what the process is, and what the resources are out there. It is in that collaborative, coordinated approach between the community-based organizations that are doing a lot of job development work and getting our high school kids more well versed in what is out there. We talk about the gaming industry, for example. It is not just the traditional top of mind careers and that is the other thing too. It is helping to train and almost rewire our students' mindset of, it is not just a job but a career and the difference between the two. A lot of our communities and the students living in those communities are in survival mode, they are living paycheck to paycheck, and they cannot see past, especially that generational poverty piece. With additional outreach within the schools, what is going on nationally, what is going on throughout the State of Nevada, and then programmatic wise at individual schools and making sure our students have that understanding. In addition to the career pathways piece, there is also the higher education piece. We have students who are making fantastic grades, they are brilliant, but they do not fully understand what it means to be on a college campus. Even with our university system, having these programs to help bridge that gap between high school and now university. There are students who might come into university without that experience, while they are in high school, of what it looks like to be on a college campus. What office hours means, something as basic as that. Some students might read that as, that is the time when the professors are in their office, and they cannot meet with me. It is creating fluency and understanding at an earlier age, and particularly in high school. I love the conversations of even going as early as elementary school. What do you want to be when you grow up? What does that actually mean? What does it take to get there?

Assemblywoman Hardy:

This has been enlightening for me. I have learned a lot from all these presentations, and I can see how all of this works together. I am grateful for the organizations such as CIS and J4NG that are able to identify the barriers and problems that exist and then not just continually talk about it. "Well, this is what is wrong." You are putting things into action of how to address those and find the solutions. I thank you for that and for other organizations that do it as well. I think we can all agree, the goal of education and all that we are doing here is to produce kids, and generations to follow, who can come out of school and have marketable skills, all these skills we have talked about, whether it is resiliency, being able to be empathetic, or think critically in addition to being able to read, write, and do math. These kids will come out and be self sufficient, contribute to their communities, have families, or whatever their goals are, they will be able to achieve those because they have an education, that is the whole basis of a successful life. I think we all agree, that is the goal of what we are trying to do here.

I appreciate Dr. Marianno from UNLV laying out the proficiency scores and what those are based on, because like my colleague Assemblywoman Hansen, you look at the graduation rates and proficiency scores and they do not seem to correlate well. I appreciate you explaining what those are measuring and including the perspective of growth because I think that is key. Every student, everybody grows at a different level in a different way. It is important to know that is happening. If there is growth, that is success and that is good. I want to focus a little on the growth. When we are looking at teachers and schools, for instance Title I schools, that are working with diverse student populations that are having successful growth rates and then looking at schools that are stagnant or going backwards in growth. I assume there is an effort to look at what is working and then how to replicate it in another school? Is that being done? Instead of always trying to reinvent what we are doing, if something is working, are we trying that somewhere else to get to the end goal we are trying to achieve?

Ms. McGill, Previously Identified:

It is the work we are involved in with UNR on MTSS—to look at the data on what is working, what is not working, progress monitoring, and then sharing the work between districts or schools that are doing it. If a district or school is having success in one area, to make sure it becomes a model for others. The MTSS process helps us do just that.

Dr. Marianno:

As a part of the report we provided to NDE, we did isolate high growth schools or schools that were moving student performance for these student subgroups above and beyond the average. We went in and talked to those leaders. One of the challenges is they did not point to any—implement this program and you are going to see high growth. They did emphasize, what we have heard today already, relationships. These principles were amazing relationship builders. They emphasized building relationships with community, building relationships with students. They emphasized having high academic standards, but also ensuring they were embedding a cultural relevancy according to the student populations at their school. In the report, we put together that framework. The reforms, I mentioned earlier in my presentation, should be overlaid with that. In short, you need a building leader, who is building relationships while implementing things like high dose tutoring and whatnot. Those will be the most effective for our students.

Assemblywoman Hardy:

Thank you and I appreciate that. I agree with what you said earlier, I am understanding more about this competency-based learning. I also think it is important to have, what you just said, a standard or some kind of benchmark that we are able to measure and assess this. I appreciate that you said it is a combination of both. We do not completely get rid of this or that, we need both of them so we can measure the growth and see if we are making progress. How do you do that if you are not measuring or assessing it somehow?

AGENDA ITEM VII—PRESENTATIONS ON NEVADA’S SYSTEM OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE, INCLUDING CHALLENGES, GOVERNANCE, AND PROGRAMS

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We are going to move on to our second to last agenda item. Agenda Item VII is the presentation on Nevada's system of early childhood education and care including challenges,

governance, and programs. We will hear from a few stakeholders. First, we have Patti Oya with NDE. Thank you for being here and go ahead when you are ready, Ms. Oya.

Patti Oya, Director, Office of Early Learning Development, NDE:

Good afternoon, thank you for having us here to talk about early childhood. Today we will be talking about the state of pre-K and our early literacy grant we ran this year from AB 400 (2023) funds ([Agenda Item VII A](#)).

If you were around a couple of years ago, you may remember our graphic of the Sam Boyd Stadium and our story of inviting all the 4-year-olds to a UNLV UNR game. We thought we would be overflowing; we were going to pack the stadium. Then, in 2022, we barely filled one quarter of the stadium. Now, our goal is universal pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds, we need a bigger stadium. We switched our graphic over to Allegiant Stadium and thought, are we filling up the stadium now? Can we send them all to the Super Bowl? You can see who showed up there. The colors on the bottom are the 4-year-olds and we have one small new section of 3-year-olds with our early literacy grant. We are excited. We are taking a step towards universal pre-K. When we talk about our ask of increasing the seat cost for inflation, when I make the recommendation, keep in mind the average cost for Super Bowl tickets was \$12,000. Pre-K might seem like a bargain at that point.

We now have two funding sources for pre-K out of the Office of Early Learning. There are others—there are federal funded pre-K and there are local pre-Ks. These are just the two run out of our office. The Nevada Ready! State Pre-K (NR!PK) program, which has been around a long time. It has been our traditional pre-K. We serve only 4-year-olds whose families are at or below the 200 percent federal poverty limit (FPL). In this current school year, we enrolled 2,807 children, it is not a lot of kids. We serve those children with 14 subrecipients in ten counties. It is an increase of 13 percent of children from the previous year.

With the AB 400 dollars we received last session, we were able to use some of it to open more pre-K seats. We called that grant the Early Childhood Innovative Literacy program. People could apply for either more seats for pre-K or innovative literacy programming. We firmly believe pre-K is part of being ready to read by grade three. It was not a big stretch. We expanded the eligibility with these seats because the 4-year-olds at 200 percent FPL is in Chapter 387 of NRS. We wanted to take advantage of the new funds to expand eligibility because over the last few years we heard we needed to serve more families and increase the FPL—we increased it up to 250 percent for this group. If you think that sounds like a lot, keep in mind, an average family of four at 200 percent FPL is about \$60,000 a year. If you are thinking two parents, or one parent with three kids, that is not a lot of money. Up to 250 percent FPL is only \$75,000. We are not talking about the wealthy here. Communities In Schools did a great job reminding us about the effect of poverty on brain development as well. We still want to focus on the children who need us most until we can get to that place of universal pre-K. The projected seats we are serving out of the AB 400 dollars—these are projected because they started a little later and could not get them into our December 1 count—is 1,230 seats. We were able to add new subrecipients in Lander and Lyon school districts because of the new eligibility and opportunities. They had not participated in a while. We are excited to add more recipients. We still have the United Way of Northern and Southern Nevada, the community service agencies, and Great Basin College also serving seats. They are not always in school districts and that is important to note as well.

Under NR!PK, we require a comprehensive assessment for all children. The subrecipients are allowed to pick their tool. They have a choice. They have narrowed it down to about four

they use across all the programs. Not quite an apples to apples comparison, but we did not mandate one particular assessment tool. You generally see children arriving at school in the fall with under 50 percent of students meeting or exceeding but by the time they leave in the spring, you see they are well exceeding the expectations. This chart shows the domains of learning across the bottom, that is the fall assessment. Then the top green line is the spring assessment against those same domains of learning. You can see the growth they are making. This chart is CCSD, but we do see this average growth across all our programs. High-quality programs, as we always say, it is not about any seat for a child, it is about a high-quality pre-K seat.

Two years ago, we were asked to work with WestEd to do a study on the cost of pre-K and how we might look at funding pre-K. They finished that study, and we did a presentation, I believe, at the Interim Finance Committee. If we remember, \$8,410 was our ask and we came to that by taking all the expenditures and averaging it out across all programs. It is not the best way to come up with, "How do you fund pre-K?" After the study, they saw out of the five counties studied, four of them said it is still not enough. They are still braiding funding. When you braid funding, you always get the choice of the district, "We do not have it this year; we need to braid with special ed or something else." It is a difficult way to run a pre-K program. We tried to follow what the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan did using the Consumer Price Index. Pre-K is not part of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan, but we tried to align. We came up with an ask of \$9,318 per seat for this next biennium. It is a much better way to get to that seat cost. We might come to the table every two years to say we need to adjust, but at least it is based on more than just, "What was spent? What could you find for expenditures?" You see the cost difference. If we use the \$9,318 for the 3,000 allocated seats in NR!PK or the seats in the literacy grant, coming to \$39 million, if we want to serve the same amount of children. There is a link to the WestEd Report, if you would like to read the full report.

The literacy grant through AB 400, there were two opportunities. One was the seats and the other was an opportunity to fund innovative programs. We had 45 applicants and 74 applications; 54 of those were funded. There was \$46 million awarded. Unfortunately, the timing made it difficult to get all the money out the door, but we just closed off another round of applications. If there was a project they could do between now and June 30th, we did open another round. We are working very hard, and it was a quick timeline to turn around and get \$70 million out the door. We are proud of the team.

One way to think about it—it was a lot of money, a lot of different projects. It was not just seats; it was not just giving books to children. There were a lot of different things funded. It was about five different categories—paraprofessionals, direct services, books for families, professional development. Our team came up with a dashboard to make this accountable. You can search by grantee, the seats, or by opportunity. You can see exactly where that funding is going. You can see how quickly the grantees are spending their money. There is a link to the dashboard, and it is available on our website. We are trying to be very transparent about where that funding is going and how appreciative we were of that funding.

When we think about barriers, of course, there are still barriers when we talk about early childhood. We know it is an important piece. All the presentations earlier focused on the older children, but it really starts in pre-K—career choices, social and emotional, especially when you think about children with behavioral issues. Helping a child at the age of four with a temper tantrum is easier than helping a child who is 12, 15, or 18. We want to get in there early and make sure children have access. One of the barriers we looked at was the timing for the NR!PK funding. Every two years, we asked for funding, either the same or a

slight increase for more seats, but what is happening at the district end is they have to let go of their pre-K teachers because they are not on contract like the K through 12 teachers. Then we tell them, we got the money, or we got an increase of seats—like we did this past year, and we ask who wants those seats? Now they have to scramble and get those teachers back and hope they did not go to the K through 12 system. Again, the current funding for NR!PK does not account for inflation and it was insufficient for most of our subrecipients.

One of our solutions was to think about if we could expand the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan to include pre-K to make it as stable as the K through 12 system? When we talked about if that was a possibility, we started to look at it. We went down the path of what would it mean to add 4-year-olds into the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. One thing we would have to look at is funding can only go to districts and charter schools. We would take that and start there, 4-year-olds in districts and charter schools. It would be a great start to a universal pre-K plan. Then, we would ask for the \$9,318 for all the seats for 3-year-olds with our community partners so we could keep those separate. I think it could work and be an exciting step to serve more children in a more equitable way and less confusing way.

One of our other barriers is because we were so excited about the AB 400 money and the seats for pre-K, we expanded eligibility. Now we have the problem of collecting information, having families enroll, and trying to figure out their enrollment. Are they 200 percent or 250 percent? We also said, under the literacy seats, they have a child with an IEP or behavioral plan, and we would not look at their income eligibility because we know there are less opportunities for those children and we want inclusive programs. As much as we think it is a good thing that we expanded that eligibility, we made it more confusing for families to figure out where they should go and what they qualify for. We made it difficult for our subrecipients to figure out. We have to collect in a whole different way. We would like to change NRS to align those two things and expand it for good.

Again, we are truly grateful for trying to increase literacy and the funding we received through AB 400. Thinking about the timing, we got the money in July, we had to come up with an application process because it was a competitive process. We had to get it out and give people time to apply. By the time we got it out and ready, then they had to turn around and hire people, space, equipment, and materials. They could not get started before September or October and now the money ends, it reverts back on June 30. It made it difficult. If the money did not revert back, it would have been easier to say, "Now that you are just getting going, you have to reapply." We would hope that is a consideration, if we can get the funding again next time, that it does carry forward and easier to award. This was a huge project to get out the application and collect outcomes. Again, 54 different types of applications. It was a huge project and there was no staff with that. Luckily, we had one staff person who we could fund through some federal relief dollars ending on September 30. In consideration of the work it took and then to get it onto the dashboard, it was huge. I am appreciative we found someone who could take that on. We were lucky to have that funding, but to think about that.

Our last recommendation is about—yes, we are asking for money. Yes, we asked for more seats. Thinking about how we could spend that money, if we do not have capital costs that are allowable, it makes it difficult. The teacher pipeline, everyone is aware of the teacher shortage but also space shortage. A lot of times with these funds, we cannot say buy a portable, use extra space, convert a classroom from an older child to a younger child—where you need little bathrooms, little tables and chairs, and the different playground equipment. Without those capital costs, sometimes districts want to expand, but they just cannot do it because they do not have the space. The lack of qualified teachers, we want to

be a part of any workforce development programs, but we also need a comprehensive data system. When we think about the data across teachers, NDE has the licensure system called Opal for childcare. We have a program called the Nevada Registry. Neither system can talk to each other. It also has a lot of blanks. Opal looks at the birth to second grade license, but we have no idea which teachers are in pre-K, are they qualified, or are they long-term subs? We do not have a handle on the workforce to even make a recommendation to you about what we need, other than we just need more people, and that is not a great recommendation. Looking at a comprehensive way to collect data across early childhood would be helpful. You have our contact information, and we will stick around for questions.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you, Ms. Oya. We gave that money, and it is exciting to see it happening.

Next, we will go to Michael Stewart, Anna Colquitt, and Todd Butterworth from the Guinn Center. Begin when you are ready.

Michael Stewart, Research Director, Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities:

Before we get started, I would love to tell you a little bit about the Guinn Center ([Agenda Item VII B](#)). We were founded in 2013 as a nonprofit independent nonpartisan research policy center that seeks data driven policy solutions and well researched best practices in numerous topic areas. These topic areas include education policy, economic and fiscal policy, health and social policy, governance and elections, and we will eventually be building out into natural resources, land, and water. Of these five policy buckets, education is one area in which we have significant involvement with multiple projects ranging from early childhood to education finance to behavioral and mental health in schools. Our informed research results in concise, practical, and sound policy options and recommendations to the public policymakers, such as yourself, and government agencies. Before we close out our presentation today, Ms. Colquitt will summarize some of those efforts in our education policy areas and give you a sense of what we are working on between now and the 2025 Legislative Session. In the meantime, I am excited to share we have partnered with The Children's Cabinet (TCC) on a study relating to early childhood governance in Nevada. I am pleased to turn it over first to Todd Butterworth, who will discuss the project in more detail.

Todd Butterworth, Senior Education Researcher, Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities:

About a decade ago, NCSL assembled a bipartisan group of 28 veteran legislators and legislative staff to undertake an in-depth study of high performing education systems worldwide. Nevada was one of only two states with both a legislator and legislative staff participating. The study group chose eight countries, and for three years closely studied what makes them successful in K through 12 education. They even visited several countries. Their report is titled, *No Time to Lose: How to Build a World-Class Education System State by State*. At the time, it was the most requested research study in the 40-year history of NCSL. Why do I give you this background? *No Time to Lose* reported four things that high performing nations are doing better than the United States. One of those things has nothing to do with K through 12 education. In nations with strong K through 12 systems, their children enter the school system prepared to learn. These nations do well in K through 12 because they first do well in early childhood.

Anna Colquitt, Director of Education Policy, Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities:

The Guinn Center is working with TCC through a federal grant to conduct a study on early childhood comprehensive systems in Nevada, with an emphasis on its governance and financing structures. This project includes a literature review that considers academic research in addition to state and international models for best practices, a review of the current Nevada governance systems and key entities in early childhood, interviews with Nevada stakeholders and representatives from other states, and a list of recommendations based on our findings.

Mr. Butterworth:

One of the first tasks undertaken in our project was a deep examination of the key entities operating in Nevada's early childhood system. We did not just compile a list, we researched their governing statutes and funding streams, their accountability relationships and reporting responsibilities, as well as their regulatory authority. We hope this document is going to be a useful tool in the hands of those who will be restructuring and later governing Nevada's early childhood systems. You probably heard it said that early childhood programs have evolved in a siloed manner. Data from our key entities survey bears this out. So far, we have found 18 Nevada programs and organizations operating exclusively in the early childhood space on a statewide basis plus an additional 45 that serve in early childhood but also help other populations. These entities are governed by 15 different chapters of the federal statutes or code and 26 different chapters of the NRS, and their funding exists in 40 different state budget accounts. You can imagine that systems coordination under these circumstances is a challenge.

Ms. Colquitt:

Our findings from the literature review emphasize the importance of a strong early childhood foundation for a child's K through 12 education drawing from extensive research on brain development, vocabulary acquisition, physical health, and social and emotional skills. Many of the things we have discussed today. One major finding of improved early childhood systems is the economic benefits which range from reducing future academic costs to increasing labor force participation. Our review focused on Education Commission of the States (ECS) governance, specifically utilizing examples from other states such as California, North Carolina, Utah, and Vermont, as well as insights from international models. Our findings from the literature review consistently point to the need for a developed foundation and support for early childhood systems that allow enough flexibility for local innovation and specific needs to be met.

Mr. Butterworth:

One thing I can say with certainty is that early childhood, in Nevada and international, [Inaudible] has been intensely studied and documented. With this information already available, the Guinn Center is compiling governance recommendations and will continue throughout the remaining months of the project. I would like to briefly highlight three preliminary recommendations today. One each related to planning, funding, and data management. Because of all the players and funding streams in Nevada's early childhood systems, determining and implementing the necessary governance changes will be a complex task with many options and challenges to consider. The research shows it may be best to initiate this process from a neutral entity in Nevada's Executive Branch. Similar to AB 113 (2023), Nevada might consider creating an interim Office of Early Childhood Services within the Office of the Governor as a vehicle for convening stakeholders and

planning a long term organizational and funding structure that eventually exists outside the Governor's office. Related to funding, early childhood systems in America have tended to grow top down in response to funding mandates mostly from the federal government. As a result, programs have not necessarily been designed to meet varying family and community needs. Experience elsewhere suggests Nevada should consider a comprehensive examination of local needs and then identify funding pathways and policy changes necessary to meet those needs. Nevada could also establish an annual process to review all funding available through the complex web of federal ECS programming and report on the funding received and not received in Nevada. In the area of data management, it is vital that Nevada use a robust data system to enable evidence-based data driven decisions in governance and resource allocation at both the state and program levels. The empower longitudinal data system provides a great foundation for building this capacity in early childhood.

Ms. Colquitt:

What lies ahead for us and our next steps? We are currently strategizing and conducting stakeholder interviews with early childhood stakeholders in Nevada as well as representatives from other states. Our goal with these interviews in Nevada is to introduce some of the recommendations we have gathered from the literature and best practices and explore their perspectives on how those might play out in our State. The goal for the out-of-state interviews is to learn more about how other states have transformed their early childhood systems to see if there are any best practices we can draw from with these experiences. Our final report will be published in September, and we look forward to sharing all our recommendations and findings. In addition, as Mr. Stewart shared earlier, we are working on several other projects in the education space. I thought I would quickly recap some of those with you. We are working on a report on the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan and statewide how that has played out. We are working with NDE on that project. We are also working on a school-based behavioral health project as well as competency-based education. A lot of the things we have talked about today. There is a lot of crossover and I thought it was relevant to share. Here is our contact information and thank you for this opportunity today.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you and stay close, we will have questions at the end.

Next, we will go to Marty Elquist from TCC. Begin when you are ready.

Marty Elquist, Department Director, TCC:

The Children's Cabinet is a statewide nonprofit agency ([Agenda Item VII C-1](#)) ([Agenda Item VII C-2](#)) ([Agenda Item VII C-3](#)). We focus on services for children and families. In the department I had, we focus on early childhood programming, and we do those services throughout our great State. All the work of TCC is grounded in the developmental brain science. We know 90 percent of neural connections happen before children enter kindergarten. It is critical in what we have heard today and the impact of poverty on children's development. We know that early child experiences are critical for school readiness and lifelong success.

Some of the work TCC has been doing over the last 10 years is focusing on our early childhood system and looking at this phenomenon. We take two steps forward, one step back. It is aligned to the grant funding we get and far too often, it is federal funding that

comes through our State. One of these grants fulfilled one of our primary roles of TCC to fill gaps—filling the gap to do some comprehensive early childhood systems work. We are honored to have a five-year grant from the Human Resources and Services Administration through the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems: Health Integration Prenatal-to-Three Grant to look at the early childhood comprehensive systems in our State. We do not do anything in a bubble. This effort was a collaboration with multiple state partners and built upon many years of work from the Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council and previous efforts from the Pritzker Children's Initiative Prenatal-to-Three grant. Through this work, we did a comprehensive systems asset and gap analysis. We completed that work in 2022. The research and analysis have been shared with our partners at the Guinn Center and is being used as some of the research for the report.

The systems asset and gap analysis confirm, what most of us already know, our State, programming, and infrastructure in early childhood has not kept pace with our population growth. We have far too few programs and services available based on the needs of our families. Of those programs, we are serving a fraction of those who are eligible. We have plenty of evidence-based effective early childhood programs and services, but in order to see the results, we need to scale those programs. We have to go deeper and wider and serve more of the population with the need for these evidence-based highly effective early childhood programs.

It is not just investing in the programs. Do we have the system, structure, and support—the governance? Our partners at the Guinn Center briefly mentioned the number of funding streams, departments, statutes, and policies that drive the requirements for these programs. Nevada has an early childhood system, but the system we have today is a system based on relationships. It is not a formal structure. It is a structure based on the relationships of those in seats and how well they know the partners and other programs to collaborate. Nevada needs a comprehensive early childhood system. We need a well-organized network of programs, services, and resources strategically designed to support children, prenatally through the early years, and to serve children and their families with a holistic approach to child development across early care and education, health and mental health, nutrition, family supports, and economic wellbeing. Again, pointing out how impactful poverty is to children's development. In that system and the roles, we need to address workforce shortages, workforce pay, leadership, and government where policies are aligned throughout programming that touch young children and their families. Laws, policy, and standards are aligned, and we have integrated technology. We have a need for early childhood integrated systems. Personally, I enter childcare provider data into seven different systems. Think of how many times you touch data and data cleanliness. Nothing is talking to each other, and the efficiencies are all funded by different mandates and sources for different programmatic purposes.

We need partner engagement. We need a beneficiary voice. We need parent engagement and parents at the table to help make policy decisions on the programs that impact them and their families. It would be a well-functioning early childhood system and every single young child in Nevada deserves that.

We must have a climate of support for early childhood. We must have a cultural shift in our State with an understanding of the critical role this developmental period plays for children's success in school and in life. If not, we all continue to pay for it. All those functioning skills you saw—the top skills for employers—those are developed in early childhood, in a fractured system we have today. We can do better for our children.

I wanted to wrap up by saying, we appreciate the work of all our early childhood partners across the State, including the presenters you have next from UNLV and Family 2 Family Connection (F2FC). If there are any questions, we will stay close. Thank you for your time.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Next, we will go to Jennifer Fox with F2FC and Claire Tredwell with the UNLV Preschool, where my daughter was a proud graduate.

Jennifer Fox, M.A., Executive Director, F2FC:

For those of you who do not know about F2FC, we are small but mighty. We provide evidence-based quality family engagement and preschool readiness for children zero to five and their caregivers ([Agenda Item VII D](#)). The goal of F2FC is to not only get the children ready for school—ready to learn day one—but also to get their caregiver ready and empowered to support the child through their K through 12 career and beyond and to be an advocate for their child and engaged in their education.

This is our logic model. I am not going to go too much into it because it is very in depth. You can see the resources F2FC is able to engage, and we utilize those inputs to create our programming to achieve our outcomes and impact. Again, it is about helping the family through the education process. Children who have adults who are engaged in their education and recognize once their kids get to school, their job is not done as a parent or caregiver. Those children are more likely to continue with their education, graduate high school, and achieve whatever their potential could be—whether it is college bound, trades, or what have you.

The next slide shows the list of the community partners F2FC does leverage. We are located in southern Nevada right now, but you can see we have an extensive list of community partners that come into our space to present programming to our families. We also go to them, one of which is the UNLV preschool. You can see the Las Vegas-Clark County Library District, Vegas PBS, The Smith Center for Performing Arts, and more.

Family to Family Connection was initially spearheaded by then First Lady of Nevada, Sandy Miller. It was initially throughout the State and focused on the child's first year with an emphasis on brain development and breastfeeding. Over time, we have moved beyond the first year and focus on the first five as some of the most critical in the child's development, socially, emotionally, and academically. We structure our program so we are meeting the State of Nevada's pre-K benchmarks. We strive to stay abreast of the latest research into child development and because we are small but mighty, we are able to create new programming based on the latest development. We are an optimal pilot site for new interventions and innovations in the early childhood space.

For the future for F2FC, right now, we are focusing on constantly staying on top of our current model to make sure we are the most effective family engagement and utilizing best practices in these areas. Right now we only have one location. We are located in the Cambridge Community Center, which is close to UNLV, but our goal is to have this kind of space available for all southern Nevada, and hopefully, all Nevada families who wish to participate in this program. We offer this program completely free to all of our families. We want to create those opportunities so we can expand into other neighborhoods within southern Nevada and beyond. Ideally, they would be in a similar space to where we are now, in the Cambridge Community Center, because there are a lot of wraparound services in there. The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program is located in the building and

there is a health clinic as well. People can be in the building, getting services in other areas, but then also coming with their families.

***Claire Tredwell, Ph.D., Director, Consolidated Students University of Nevada
Preschool, Lynn Bennett Early Childhood Education Center, UNLV:***

We would like the committee to look at how we are seeding the field of knowledge. At the university and with our community partners, we have also been doing research on student/parent success and understanding the needs of families—which has been brought about throughout today, professional development for our teachers, addressing equity and diversity in early childhood classrooms, and parent empowerment. What are their needs in schools moving forward?

For the preschool itself, a little bit of background. We have an established mission and vision since 1972. It includes providing a high-quality, inclusive early childhood program and curriculum that is literacy rich and individualized through an assessment portfolio for children, along with some standardized assessments. We promote the professional development and training for our future educators serving anywhere from 30 to 60 students from the College of Education, UNLV, coming through our program for coursework. We also conduct research in the early childhood field to support any State and national early childhood initiatives and best practices, looking, in addition, to the innovative next best practices based on the needs of our children, families, and staff. For example, in this fiscal year, we served 135 children. We are on a 90 percent self-supporting budget operating about \$1.3 million. It is very fluid. We have families who attend part time or full time for our community members. For the past five years, we have had over 250 children on the waitlist. This year alone, 309 children are on the waitlist. It includes university students and staff members who work there, but 140 of these members are now from the general public community, which is stating this childcare crisis we have for space. We are a nationally accredited preschool program since the 1990s. We have been participating in the Nevada Quality Rating and Improvement System since it started probably about ten years ago. Also, a unique part about our program is we have interagency agreements with CCSD for Special Education Services for our children ages three to five. It is an intense program we are proud to have. We promote it when we do conference presentations on how schools in early childhood collaborate with school districts, whether they are university based or private entities. We also work with early intervention—that is our birth to three children who have individual family service plans. We do weekly playgroups with them as well.

When we are looking at these perspectives and challenges we would like to be considered, number one is the limited availability of quality care. Quality care that is research-based for young children. What does that mean? It means we need more spots for children. We need expansion of the current programs, and we need infrastructure costs. It is very expensive with the modifications you must do to buildings, whether they are existing or new. Staff shortages—identifying, hiring, and sustaining quality staff is a concern. Rising operating costs for our staff, materials, food, and the overall environmental materials needed. Another challenge we face in this community is affordability for our families. Our subsidy programs are great, but do we realize that Nevada is one of the highest costs for childcare tuition in the United States? For a family who has an income of \$65,000 to \$70,000 a year, 30 percent of that income is going to go for childcare costs. Another challenge we face is the on-site assessment data collection systems that support and validate our funding sources. Streamlining our grant reporting processes for these government grants we are getting, specifically for accounting and data reporting and particularly for nonprofit community groups, such as F2FC. The next slide shows you the Nevada Childcare Market Rate Survey for the weekly and daily costs for families.

Ms. Fox:

What are the solutions? Dr. Tredwell and I put our heads together and were thinking about this. As you can see, we need to prioritize the needs, plans, and funds for additional programs. It seems like we are singing the same tune over and over again. Obviously, there is a huge need for space to accommodate this particular age group and making sure we have a strong foundation, not just for our existing community State partners, like UNLV, but also the small nonprofits that can work in this space as well.

Dr. Tredwell:

Prioritizing those needs too. What would be a plan that schools and agencies can look at? The logic model Ms. Fox presented is a great model to look at when you are looking at individual sites and individual programs. Also, the State support for recognition of a very important title, early childhood educator—not babysitters or daycare workers. After three years of committee work, I do not know if the Committee knows about this, we now have with the Nevada System of Higher Education, State positions that are stated as early childhood educators; this will raise their classified State grades and pay. We felt this was the first place we needed to start as State representatives to show early childhood educators are important and valued in this State. We are very pleased we have that, and we want to continue State support for recognition.

How else can we do this? Through education. Our paid apprenticeship programs that encourage interest in securing this higher education will support our programs as a whole and encourage folks to continue in the field. We would like to see more stipends for conferences and continued professional development, whether they be state or national conferences. We glean a lot of information from those conferences that are attended. Then ensuring the competitive wages and the fiscal support we are getting does continue for training and education.

The apprenticeship program we have at UNLV was started in 2021 with the College of Education. This was established as the Nevada Forward program in collaboration with the Nevada public schools. Since 2021, Nevada Forward has had 63 early childhood teaching professionals that have come from the paraprofessional program. It was forwarded to teacher assistants to get into this program. Then our Alternative Route to Licensure program is also for teacher licensing for graduate work. Coming this summer, we are looking at a youth Rebel start academy. This would be a pre-apprenticeship program for recruiting students from high schools for their interest in possibly going into the early childhood workforce. It is something we have now.

Ms. Fox:

Additionally, data collection and technology support for streamlining site information. For example, within F2FC, because we are so small, obtaining the hardware and software to track our data in an efficient and a meaningful, user-friendly way. Then, also the development of those data systems and streamlining applications for sites, such as myself and others, to collect this information and assessment data for children and families on a longitudinal scale. We would like to see, specifically for my program and other programs, kids and families that have gone through this program, what are their outcomes once they get to kindergarten, middle school, high school, and beyond.

Dr. Treadwell:

Recognizing the school and community program is the center of our family trust, our care, and our education. Funding for a family needs assessment and collaboration of those community resources on site locations generalizing, for example, child assessment processes and having those available on site.

How can we work with this? Continuing our grants that include collaboration with community organizations for our family and our provider supports so we can attain our high-quality environment and instructional methods. We can embed that professional development, encourage our family engagement and these wraparound services that are critical on site. Also, work for a quality assessment and data support system. Altogether, with the additional support of funding, we can work together to resolve these issues and problems of space, quality teachers, and ultimately a quality learning environment and curriculum that is a literacy rich based curriculum program for our children.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you for the presentation and stay close. We have one more presentation and then we will open it for questions.

Next, we have Holly Welborn with the Children's Advocacy Alliance of Nevada (CAA). Begin when you are ready.

Holly Welborn, Executive Director, CAA:

The CAA is an independent voice for Nevada children, advancing systemic change in the areas of early childhood education, children's health, and child welfare ([Agenda Item VII E](#)). We accomplish our goals through a number of strategies and tactics. Most notably educating our community on issues impacting children, things like civic engagement and governmental and policy advocacy. We operate under three primary policy pillars: (1) children's health; (2) our topic today, school readiness—early childhood development, getting children prepared; and (2) child safety, which encompasses child welfare issues and preventing children from entering the child welfare system.

Our work in the early childhood space is supported by our Strong Start coalition. The first three years of life have a powerful impact on the future wellbeing of every person. Families can benefit from a strong early childhood system of care. Strong Start started as a community outreach campaign aimed at mobilizing educators, advocates, community, and business leaders to make quality early childhood experiences a priority in the State. The Strong Start Prenatal to Three initiative is supported by many State and national partners, but CAA serves as the backbone organization for the work of the coalition. At one point, we had around 80 individuals and organizations who are part of the Strong Start coalition. We have a strong leadership team of 12 leaders. The priority areas of Strong Start are many of the things we talked about today. We look at systems, mainly governance structure, the funding streams of that structure and our existing systems, integrated data, and those types of issues. We advocate within the sector areas of the early childhood system, which include early care and education, health, and economic wellbeing.

Some of our recommendations for your consideration today. At the core of this is systems alignment, which is referring to the oversight and governance of early care and early education as critical to supporting the developmental needs of young children and families. Since state agencies involved in this support are often siloed, this can lead to less than

optimal and often an inequitable coordination, alignment, and delivery of services. National best practices tell us about the importance of elevating early childhood programs and services to the State executive level. This governance structure can enhance program delivery, data collection, and data sharing. Last session, we worked with Assemblywoman Thomas on her bill AB 113, which would have established an Office of Early Childhood Systems in the Executive Branch. Although the bill did not pass, it started a crucial conversation about what Nevada can do to course correct and improve long-term outcomes for children. We are working to advance this legislation again in 2025 but with some improvements. Some of those improvements will include: ensuring this is a cabinet level position to bring it to that level like in other states throughout this country; sunset dates to hold stakeholders accountable and produce achievable recommendations for aligning agencies; appropriate staffing classifications—clarifying the roles, functions, and purpose at the outset in the preamble of the legislation; and aligning the office more closely with the Early Childhood Advisory Council to provide oversight and develop recommendations. This office can handle solutions for integrated data systems, alignment of funding streams, accountability, and make long term recommendations for the early childhood system.

Our recommendations for early care and education have to do with investing in childcare and investing in pre-K. The COVID-19 pandemic taught us a crucial yet distressing lesson about the childcare industry's flawed business model. This was marked by exorbitant costs for families and insufficient wages for workers. The business community got a clear view for the first time of how much our economy depends on childcare. This is an issue of global proportions. As nations like China, Poland, and Singapore make significant investments in early care and education—positioning themselves ahead of the United States in terms of economic growth, educational advancement, the wellbeing of their citizens, and national security—the United States remains behind. It will take federal, state, and a local approach to solve this crisis. Our recommendations in this area include a general fund investment in the Childcare Development Fund to support wage increases and expand access. We have seen several states across the country make those new investments as we wait patiently for there to be action at the federal level, for new investments. It is crucial for the State to make those investments. Tax credits for businesses providing childcare is a solution. Those businesses need help and assistance too in providing care to their employees. Reduce barriers to community-based childcare, including Homeowners' Association (HOA) restriction reform and waiving business license fees. As our children start to prepare for school, pre-K is crucial. Of course, our goal is to move toward the universal pre-K system. Right now with budget surpluses and the way our economy is moving, we know we are in a position to start moving the needle toward universal pre-K. We need to invest in building the infrastructure necessary to carry this out and recruiting and training instructors to support the expansion of pre-K seats. We can do this by evaluating funding streams for the expansion of those seats, as presented by Ms. Oya earlier today.

Moving into some of the other areas of early childhood. They may not be the most germane topics for this Committee, but I think they are important to bring up when talking about the system as a whole. We also have several recommendations in the area of health, such as Medicaid reimbursement for group prenatal care, increased access to developmental screenings and early intervention services, expansion of WIC access through the integration of enrollment with other support systems, and expansion of home visiting to include postpartum checkups for parent and baby.

Finally, this has been a crucial topic throughout this day. We talked about poverty and its impact on this system with the very first presentation that started this morning. I want to make it clear that child poverty is a policy choice, it is not jargon. We know this is clear when we look at the federal Child Tax Credit. The tax credit cut child poverty by 30 percent.

When it was not renewed at the same level, we have seen a cliff and that is what is driving the poverty level rates throughout our country today. There is a lot of bipartisan movement at the federal level on the issue and on the childcare issue, but there have been interesting things happening across the country. One thing we are looking to study is something similar to the Working Families Tax Credit that came out of Washington State. They are very similar to us where they do not have a state income tax. Paid family leave, affordable housing, and rent stabilization are crucial for families to afford to take care of their children. To be stabilized—be able to get their kids to and from school and be stable in their community so their children can focus, learn, grow, and develop.

One thing I failed to add to this list was baby bonds. We have seen creative proposals, in this very building, last legislative session. Unfortunately, this did not pass. Baby bonds provide a seed deposit account established at birth that will grow over time for people to access when they enter adulthood. With that, I want to thank everyone for your service to our State and giving me the opportunity to present. I will stand by to answer questions.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I will open it up to the committee for questions. Senator Dondero Loop.

Senator Dondero Loop:

Thank you to the Guinn Center for your presentation on the *No Time to Lose* report. I would encourage you to look at the second part called *The Time is Now*, which followed the original report. I happened to be on that study group. The study group studied, not knowing the pandemic would hit—The whole study took a different look at education and the disruption that happened because of the pandemic.

Then, I would thank UNLV for having creative ways to find more early childhood educators. As somebody who holds a minor in early childhood, I appreciate all you do and that you are providing an area by the university where those students can come and learn. I think it is important when, as a student, you can see it firsthand. I love that you are involving high school students because we know a lot of those high school students may not know what they want to do. If they get that experience, they can say, this is exciting or maybe I want to do this. I appreciate all of you and your information as someone who is deeply interested in this subject and taught kindergarten for a lot of years. Keep going. Thank you and I am here if you need to reach out.

Assemblyman D'Silva:

I have a question for Ms. Welborn from CAA. You mentioned there were some issues with HOAs and access to childcare. Can you explain that further and let us know what kind of problems we have in that specific sector?

Ms. Welborn:

Currently, there are no prohibitions on HOAs to allow someone to utilize their home to provide childcare services in their community. We know the childcare center model does not work for all families. We know for a lot of families, there is more convenience in being able to leave your child with someone you trust who lives in your own community. There are home-based childcare services provided. Those providers are able to get licensed. They have to work within appropriate ratios within statute in order to legitimately operate and to have that essential oversight. Right now, especially throughout Clark County, there are

several HOAs that prohibit homeowners from being able to do this. Our recommendation would be to not allow those prohibitions.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you to everybody for presenting this incredibly important information. My question is specific to Dr. Tredwell and Executive Director Fox. When it comes to the direct care providers, have you been working with the CCSD on being engaged with the academies that will now be coming into every high school? I know it is taking some time to roll out, but there is supposed to be an education academy or specialized school in many of the Clark County schools at this time. Have there been discussions around possibly working together in a partnership to get some of our high school students involved earlier with early childhood careers?

Dr. Tredwell:

I cannot answer that specifically, but I know with the Nevada Forward program, they are working with CCSD for these apprenticeship programs. I can get you further information.

Ms. Fox:

This is the first I am hearing of this program. I want to explore that. Again, we are very small, our hours are truncated but we are open in the summertime. If there are high school students interested in exploring that space with us, we can accommodate that over the summer. I think it is something I want to look further into because we would love to take advantage of that.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

I am sure there are three people in that room who were very active in that legislative language.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Ms. Fox, you mentioned the data collection being a barrier. What does the solution look like for an organization like yours?

Ms. Fox:

Specifically for us, which is what I can speak to, is having the technology available for our families to utilize to complete any sort of data collection that we are offering. For example, when the Library District or Vegas PBS comes to see us, they will come with iPads, so families are able to fill out a survey prior to taking the Library District or PBS class. They complete the class and then take a post survey, so they can measure the efficacy of that particular class. We do not have that kind of technology, nor do we have the budget for that kind of technology. The second part is to identify software programs that will help us collect the data. I have a staff of five, including myself, and we are all part time. I do not have staff hours to be able to collect and collate data, nor do I have the budget to purchase a software program that can do that. Those kinds of technologies are imperative for us to show the success and effectiveness of the work we are doing. We can see it anecdotally on a daily basis over time, but to collect it in an objective manner—those are things we need, and I would imagine in any other small organization, that is a barrier for them.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

I am guessing that barrier would continue if you were trying to go for federal grants because that is the information they would want.

Ms. Fox:

Yes, 100 percent. When we have gone for more government grants, we are not able to show the data in the way they want because we do not have the technology or capability. All of us are educators, none of us are accountants or grant writers by trade. If you have ever written a grant, you know it is a very specialized thing. It is something that is a barrier for us in order to get more funding in general.

Dr. Tredwell:

We are partnering together, looking at grants, so we can support each other in these efforts. The technology, day to day, would be something smaller organizations would need to have to keep that longitudinal data going.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Do you have any idea what that type of software would cost?

Dr. Tredwell:

I do not. I will get back to you.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will go back to Assemblywoman Anderson; I know you had a question for the Guinn Center.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

My question is for Mr. Butterworth and Director Stewart. When it came to the *No Time to Lose* report, especially the high-performing K through 12 systems around the nation, how many times were those preschool teachers licensed educators who have gone to school to get a degree in it?

Mr. Butterworth:

I do not have that specific data, but the models varied significantly from nation to nation. In some cases, there was no public system of early childhood education. It was part of the culture that families rallied the troops and had their kids ready for school. In other places, there were massive systems of early childhood education, in particular, that were publicly funded. There was a broad spectrum of services offered. What we found though, that was key, is when kids arrived at the kindergarten doorstep, they were ready to roll. There was not a lot of remedial work the school system had to do.

Assemblywoman Anderson:

Thank you for the clarification. I am looking forward to having more conversations around this issue because it is fascinating.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Were there any other questions? Not seeing any.

AGENDA ITEM VIII—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

We will move on to our final agenda item, which is public comment. Is there anyone in Las Vegas wishing to make public comment? Not seeing anyone.

Is there anyone in Carson City wishing to make public comment? It does not look like anyone is coming to the table.

BPS, is there anyone on the phone line wishing to make public comment?

BPS:

If you would like to provide public comment, please press *9 now to take your place in the queue.

Dora Martinez, Nevada Disability Peer Action Coalition:

Good afternoon, Madam Chair, and the rest of the hardworking Committee. I want to let you know, especially the intervention and transition group, the Nevada education department and vocational rehab are doing a blind camp in July for students aged 16 to 21 who have low vision, are blind or have any type of vision impairment. It is free to the students and family. I would encourage— I did submit an email to your secretary, but I want to put this on the record. If they are interested, reach out to the vocational rehab transition person to get more information. I hope we get the blind students in. Thank you for all you do.

[Written public comment was not received by the Committee Secretary.]

Sarah Adler, Silver State Government Relations:

Good afternoon, Madam Chair, and members of the Committee. I am speaking today on behalf of a consortium of independent, self-managed public charter schools located in Washoe County and Carson City. Among these schools are Title I schools and schools with strong ELL and FRL enrollment and three of them offer pre-K, thanks to the work of Patti Oya and those folks. On behalf of the schools, we applaud and appreciate the commitment of you as Committee members and your presenters today. We wanted to share, these schools are deeply engaged in the approaches you heard described today including personalized learning, competency-based learning, a holistic education approach, and school culture based upon relationships with students and their parents. Public charters appreciate that Chapter 388A of NRS enables them to fulfill these missions, all while being held accountable to proficiency, the other measures within the Nevada School Performance Framework and additional accountability measures as well. Public charters are a strong leg of the public education school in Nevada and the independent charters I work with are honored to be part of the success of Nevada students. We want to make one specific note in that we agree with the statement of Director Maria Sauter of NDE that at-risk students need to be identified and provided with resources, including the at-risk weight, as early as possible in their school years. We have a concern the at-risk formula currently being used

over-identifies high school students relative to the need within elementary schools. Again, we thank you for all the hard work today and this opportunity to speak with you.

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you, Ms. Adler. BPS, are there any more callers?

BPS:

Chair, there are no other callers to participate at this time.

[Subsequent to the meeting, Darlene Anderson ([Agenda Item IX A](#)) and Gabriel Lither ([Agenda Item IX B](#)) submitted written public comment for the record.]

Chair Bilbray-Axelrod:

Thank you to the members and everyone present. An archived version of today's meeting is available online and you can access it through the Nevada Legislature's website. Our next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, April 18, 2024, at 9 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM IX—ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 4:07 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	Lillian Aguirre, Nevada Resident	Written Remarks
Agenda Item IV A	Autumn Rivera, Policy Specialist, Education Program, National Conference of State Legislatures	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item IV B	Christopher A. Kearney, Ph.D., Director, Child School Refusal and Anxiety Disorders Clinic, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV)	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item IV C	Christy McGill, Deputy Superintendent for Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement, Nevada's Department of Education (NDE); and Kirsten Searer, President, Public Education Foundation	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item IV D	Adam Young, Vice President, Nevada Association of School Superintendents (NASS) and Superintendent, White Pine County School District	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item IV E	Mike Barton, Ed.D., Chief College, Career, Equity, and School Choice Officer, Clark County School District (CCSD); and Danielle Jones, Director of Chronic Absenteeism, Education Services Division, CCSD	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item V A	Dillon Booker, CCSD Education Ambassador, Nevada Future of Learning Network, NDE; and Katie King, Senior Director of Strategic Engagement,	PowerPoint Presentation

AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER/ENTITY	DESCRIPTION
	KnowledgeWorks Foundation	
Agenda Item V B	Adam Young, Vice President, NASS, and Superintendent, White Pine County School District	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI A	Christi Hines-Coates, Assistant Director, Office of Inclusive Education, NDE; and Maria Sauter, Director, Office of Student and School Supports, NDE	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI B	Bradley Marianno, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Educational Policy and Leadership, and Faculty Director, Center for Research, Evaluation, and Assessment, College of Education, UNLV	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI C	Nicole Willis-Grimes, Executive Director, Communities In Schools of Nevada	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VI D	René Cantú, Ph.D., Executive Director, Jobs for Nevada's Graduates	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VII A	Patti Oya , Director, Office of Early Learning Development, NDE	PowerPoint Presentation
Agenda Item VII B	Michael Stewart, Research Director, Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities; Todd Butterworth, Senior Education Researcher, Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities; and Anna Colquitt, Director of Education Policy, Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities	PowerPoint Presentation

AGENDA ITEM	PRESENTER/ENTITY	DESCRIPTION
<u>Agenda Item VII C-1</u>	Marty Elquist, Department Director, The Children's Cabinet (TCC)	PowerPoint Presentation
<u>Agenda Item VII C-2</u>	Marty Elquist, Department Director, TCC	Handout
<u>Agenda Item VII C-3</u>	Marty Elquist, Department Director, TCC	Handout
<u>Agenda Item VII D</u>	Jennifer Fox, M.A., Executive Director, Family 2 Family Connection; and Claire Tredwell, Ph.D., Director, Consolidated Students University of Nevada Preschool, Lynn Bennett Early Childhood Education Center, UNLV	PowerPoint Presentation
<u>Agenda Item VII E</u>	Holly Welborn, Executive Director, Children's Advocacy Alliance of Nevada	PowerPoint Presentation
<u>Agenda Item IX A</u>	Darlene Anderson	Written Remarks
<u>Agenda Item IX B</u>	Gabriel Lithier	Written Remarks

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