



National Education Rankings: What Nevada Can Learn and a Proposal for Moving Forward

May 15, 2024

Anna Colquitt and Todd Butterworth

Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities

acolquitt@guinncenter.org toddbutterworth@guinncenter.org



Three Phases of Our Research

- **Phase I, 2022**

- What makes up three national K-12 education rankings?
 - Education Week's *Quality Counts* rankings
 - Annie E. Casey Foundation's *Kids Count* rankings
 - Fordham Institute's *America's Best and Worst Metro Areas for School Quality*

- **Phase II, 2022**

- How has Nevada performed in recent history?

- **Phase III, 2023**

- Given the findings from Phases I and II, how should Nevada respond or proceed?



The Purpose of Phase III

- Phase III builds upon Phases I and II by:
 - Further exploring **the value and shortcomings** of existing state education rankings;
 - Outlining **critical concepts** for measuring State educational performance; and
 - Proposing **essential considerations** for establishing a fair and robust system for state-to-state comparisons.
- The report concludes with a suggested approach for creating a **Nevada-specific scorecard** to measure the performance of the State's K-12 education system.



The Value of State Rankings

- Provide a helpful **digest** of complex information.
- Offer **context** for comparing the performance of various entities.
- But are sometimes more about generating **headlines and clicks**.
- Leading Rankings Include:
 - KIDS COUNT
 - Quality Counts
 - Best States for Education
 - Best & Worst States for Education



The Challenge with State Rankings

- Revisiting some of the findings from Phases I and II of this report:
 - Each ranking system is **unique** and should not be compared to others.
 - The **choice of data points** significantly influences the rankings.
 - The rankings may be based on a sample of students or **challenging-to-interpret data**.
 - The data used can sometimes be **old**.
 - All rankings are **relative**.
- Relying on existing national rankings has more drawbacks than benefits.
- Still, interstate comparisons can be beneficial.



Moving Forward (1)

Given the benefits and drawbacks, how might Nevada proceed?

- Use **existing** multi-state data sets.
- Seek out **meaningful comparisons** with groups of states that might vary.
- The ACT as an example.



Moving Forward (2)

Essential questions:

- How is Nevada performing against a fixed objective or measure of achievement?
- How did the State perform compared to a previous period? OR
- How did Nevada perform or progress compared to other states during a given period?



Moving Forward (3)

- Nevada already has tools to internally measure performance:
 - Nevada School Performance Framework
 - Alternative Performance Framework
 - Nevada Growth Model
 - Nevada Report Card
- So, how do we externally measure the State's performance?
- By contemplating and thoughtfully answering a lot of questions...



The Nevada K-12 Scorecard

- These considerations are covered in greater depth in our full Phase III report:
 - General contents;
 - Performance metrics to measure;
 - Data considerations;
 - Scoring format; and
 - Additional questions to consider.
- AB 400 and SB 98 provide a mandate and an opportunity for the CSF through an expanded mission and greater authority.



Concluding Remarks

- Nevada would benefit from a **more thoughtful and relevant process** for comparing its K-12 education system to other states.
- Our Phase III report explores existing rankings' **value and shortcomings**.
- It also highlights **critical concepts** for measuring State-level performance and establishing a fair and robust system for state-to-state comparisons.
- The Guinn Center welcomes the opportunity to serve in any capacity that is helpful.



Thank you!

Anna Colquitt and Todd Butterworth

Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities

acolquitt@guinncenter.org toddbutterworth@guinncenter.org