

**MINUTES OF THE
NEVADA LEGISLATURE'S INTERIM FINANCE COMMITTEE'S
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ACCOUNTABILITY
Assembly Bill 399, 82nd (2023) Legislative Session
May 1, 2024**

The first meeting of the Nevada Legislature's Interim Finance Committee's Subcommittee on Education Accountability was called to order at 9:01 a.m. on May 1, 2024, in Room 4401 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4100 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblyman Steve Yeager, Chair
Senator Nicole Cannizzaro, Vice Chair
Senator Marilyn Dondero Loop
Senator Robin Titus
Assemblywoman Natha Anderson for Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno
Assemblyman Ken Gray
Assemblywoman Sandra Jauregui

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU STAFF PRESENT:

Sarah Coffman, Assembly Fiscal Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division
Wayne Thorley, Senate Fiscal Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division
Brody Leiser, Chief Principal Deputy Fiscal Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division
Jessica Dummer, Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division
Basia Thomas, Committee Secretary, Fiscal Analysis Division
Carla Ulrych, Committee Secretary, Fiscal Analysis Division

EXHIBITS:

- [Exhibit A:](#) Agenda
- [Exhibit B:](#) Public Comment – Adrienne Santiago, Executive Director, Northern Nevada Literacy Council
- [Exhibit C:](#) Public Comment – Meredith Helmick, Executive Director, Storied, Inc.
- [Exhibit D:](#) Nevada Department of Education – Nevada School Performance Framework
- [Exhibit E:](#) Nevada Department of Education – Review of Executive Order 23-005 Interim Finance Subcommittee on Education Accountability
- [Exhibit F:](#) Nevada Department of Education – Read by Grade 3 Presentation to the Interim Finance Subcommittee on Education Accountability
- [Exhibit G:](#) Nevada Department of Education – Interim Finance Committee Subcommittee on Education Accountability
- [Exhibit H:](#) Nevada Department of Education – Office of Early Learning and Development Presentation to the Interim Finance Subcommittee on the Early Childhood Literacy and Readiness Account

- Exhibit I: Nevada Department of Education – Office of Early Learning and Development Presentation to the Interim Finance Subcommittee on the Early Childhood Literacy and Readiness Account
- Exhibit J: Clark County School District Presentation
- Exhibit K: Washoe County School District Presentation
- Exhibit L: White Pine County School District Presentation

I. ROLL CALL.

BASIA THOMAS (Secretary, Fiscal Analysis Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau [LCB]), called the roll; all members were present except Assemblywoman Monroe-Moreno and Assemblyman O’Neill, who were excused.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

This is the first time in the history of the State of Nevada that the Interim Finance Committee’s Subcommittee on Education Accountability meeting is taking place. This Subcommittee was established under Assembly Bill (A.B.) 399 (82nd [2023] Legislative Session). I will highlight the mission of the Subcommittee by reading an excerpt from page 2 of A.B. 399: “The general objectives and functions of the Subcommittee are to discuss, evaluate and make recommendations relating to accountability in public education in this State to improve the educational achievements and outcomes for pupils.” Then the bill goes on to discuss things the Subcommittee can review. I wanted to remind everybody that this is part of ongoing legislative efforts to be more knowledgeable about education in the state, with the aim of partnering with the Nevada Department of Education and the school districts. Nothing that happens today is meant to be confrontational. This meeting is meant to continue a discussion that started during the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session about where things are with the various school districts.

The statute requires that the Subcommittee meet two times per year. Therefore, there will be another meeting sometime in the fall of 2024 after the 2024-2025 school year begins.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT.

ADRIENNE SANTIAGO (Executive Director, Northern Nevada Literacy Council) provided public comment for the record ([Exhibit B](#)).

MEREDITH HELMICK (Executive Director, Storied, Inc.) provided public comment for the record ([Exhibit C](#)).

III. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION REGARDING:

JHONE EBERT (Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nevada Department of Education [NDE]):

There are two main functions of the NDE. The first function is to make sure that federal policies and state regulations are implemented and followed. The second function is support. The first presentation will look at federal requirements as well as the supports that are provided to the school districts and the State Public Charter School Authority, which together consist of about 700 schools and almost 500,000 students.

1. The Department of Education's accountability system and Nevada's school performance framework.

PETER ZUTZ (Administrator, Office of Assessment, Data, and Accountability Management [ADAM], Nevada Department of Education [NDE]):

Agenda Item III.1 is an overview of the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF). The NSPF is necessary because it is mandated in *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 385A.600 and under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The NDE is required to maintain an accountability system that meaningfully differentiates school performance and that reports publicly on school performance relative to student growth, proficiency, student group performance gaps, graduation rates, and college and career readiness on an annual basis.

Under the ESSA and the United States Department of Education (USDE), there are five indicators that are required to be included in a state's accountability system. However, the ESSA provides state's latitude to determine how those five indicators are measured and weighted. In just a moment, I will show the Subcommittee each school's indicators and measures. Before looking at those, it is important to remember that the NSPF is not just a compliance-based framework, but it was devised from the ground up to be in service to Nevada schools and districts. The NSPF uses a star rating system and is designed to summarize the performance of a school based on specific indicators and measures unique to each school level. The performance indicators are used in the designation of schools for targeted support.

Page 6 of the handout shows an overview of the structure of the NSPF with its measures and indicators ([Exhibit D](#)). At its highest level, the NSPF uses this structure for all schools to earn points for any number of the measures. The points earned in each measure roll up into a performance indicator or indicator score. The indicator scores are then added together to produce a total index score. The index score is then mapped to a performance level.

The measures and indicators are customized for elementary, middle, and high school levels. Points available for each measure and indicator may vary between school level frameworks; however, each framework has a total of 100 possible points.

First, I will explain the elementary school framework (page 7, [Exhibit D](#)). As previously mentioned, the elementary school framework has five indicators: academic achievement, growth, English language proficiency, opportunity gaps, and student engagement. Each indicator has a point value for elementary school, and that growth is the most highly weighted component of the framework at 35 points. Shown below each indicator are the measures that earn points for that indicator (page 7, [Exhibit D](#)). For example, for the student engagement indicator, a total of 10 points are available to earn by reducing chronic absenteeism rates. Again, each level's rating system has five indicators, which are made up of different academic and non-academic measures. Schools receive points based on their students' performance in these measures. Points are then added together to produce an overall index score which is translated into a star rating.

Page 8 shows the individual measures for elementary school and their maximum point value ([Exhibit D](#)). Elementary schools use the Smarter Balanced assessment system for math and English Language Arts, and the science assessment in grade 5. Read by Grade 3 is an additional measure used for elementary school with the pooled proficiency rate.

Next is the middle school framework, which is very similar to the elementary framework, it includes academic achievement, growth, English language proficiency, opportunity gaps, and student engagement (page 9, [Exhibit D](#)). Growth is the most highly weighted component of the framework, but five points less than the elementary framework. Those five points are now applied to student engagement for academic learning plans and 8th grade credit requirements, per *Nevada Administrative Code* (NAC) 389.

Page 10 shows the point values for the middle school framework ([Exhibit D](#)). They are very similar to the elementary framework except for the distribution of points across the framework in the student engagement indicator, which, includes academic learning plans and 8th grade credit sufficiency in the middle school framework.

Page 11 shows the high school framework ([Exhibit D](#)). The high school's indicators are academic achievement, graduation rates, English language proficiency, college and career readiness, and student engagement. This page provides the point distribution of the high school framework. The high school framework includes a couple of indicators specific to high school that were not used in either the elementary or the middle school framework. These two indicators are graduation rates and college and career readiness, which are both measures under the student engagement indicator.

I will close by providing a sample report. All the information that was just presented to the Subcommittee, such as the high-level architecture of the NSPF and its point earning values, are available to all Nevada stakeholders 24/7. This is very valuable because everything that was discussed, including the detailed points and weights for each one of the measures under each indicator at each school level, is available to see for any one of the schools.

I will walk through the website at www.NevadaReportCard.nv.gov/di. At the top of the webpage, select district and schools. I will select Washoe County School District, and then Reno High School and then press Go. Now I will scroll up and it will show the school rating report, which I can click on. This is fully downloadable, but it is also dynamic online. When scrolling down a little bit, all the indicators I spoke about are shown, and under each one of those indicators are the points earned for each one of the measures at this specific school. It is possible to click on any one of the measures and there will be a complete breakdown for that school disaggregated by different student populations with charts. All of this is downloadable in PDF form. The NDE encourages everyone to visit this website.

There is one other functionality of the NSPF which is believed to be unique across the nation. Clicking up in the top right, it says “En Español,” which translates the webpage into Spanish. This is a very powerful communication tool.

MARIA SAUTER (Director, Office of Student and School Supports, NDE):

This next part of the presentation will show how the NDE utilizes the framework and how that data is used to support schools. The performance indicators are combined to create a school index score of 100 points. The index score is translated into a star rating of one through five based on pre-determined thresholds indicated in the ESSA. A one-star indicates standards are not being met and a five-star indicates standards are being exceeded.

Page 16 explains how the one-star and two-star schools are distributed across Nevada ([Exhibit D](#)). I want to point out an unintended error. The page shows there are 419 three-star schools; however, that number should be 179. The table on the left represents the current number of schools in each star rating. Most school improvement efforts are focused on one-star and two-star schools. The table on the right shows a year over year number of schools at each rating within each district including the State Public Charter School Authority. Nevada accepted the flexibilities afforded the states due to incomplete data during the 2019-2022 school years during the COVID-19 pandemic. Star ratings were carried over until the 2022-2023 school year.

Once each school is evaluated within the framework indicators and given a total index score, schools are ranked, ordered, and given federal designation in accordance with the ESSA. The most focused on designations for the department are additional targeted supports and interventions (ATSI), comprehensive support and interventions (CSI), and a new additional designation for CSI schools that do not exit status within three years. These are labeled CSI with a More Rigorous Intervention, or MRI, schools. Targeted supports and interventions (TSI) are identified by the department and then supported by the districts.

The table on page 18 illustrates the number of ATSI, CSI, and TSI schools that have been designated over the past four years ([Exhibit D](#)). There was a drop in CSI schools in the 2022-2023 school year due to a change in the ESSA business rules for designating CSI schools in 2022. It removed non-Title I schools from the list. The NDE gave designations during the 2021-2022 school year; the department did not give star ratings during those years. Data related to CSI, ATSI, and TSI data for the 2021-2022 school year is available.

The graph on page 19 illustrates that data tells many stories ([Exhibit D](#)). The blue line shows index scores of CSI schools in school year 2018-2019, the gold line is the same school's index scores in school year 2021-2022. The gray line represents index scores in school year 2022-2023. Whenever the gray line exceeds the gold, it demonstrates the school's ability to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic effects. A comparison of the blue and gray line illustrates the achievement gap that still exists in CSI schools.

Page 20 shows each federally designated category with the current school counts and percentage of total schools represented across Nevada ([Exhibit D](#)). The bottom layer of the pyramid represents the universal or tier-one supports that include all non-designated schools. The school count of 561 in the universal category also includes 51 non-titled one-star and two-star schools that are not federally designated. The supports for the designated schools in the top three tiers are funded mainly through federal funding. Federal, state, and local funds are used for the lower two tiers. The NDE is combining federal and state fundings to create a coherent system of support for all of Nevada's underperforming schools.

The department utilizes evidence-based supports as reviewed by What Works Clearinghouse and Evidence for ESSA data banks. Coherence and clarity are the first steps to improving educational systems. These three systems will assist districts and states to better track interventions, funding, and impact. The NDE's lowest federally designated schools that have not exited status in three years, or MRI schools, are required to incorporate these six essentials into their improvement plans. Other schools are highly encouraged to use these as guides to improvement. By utilizing the six essentials, each school

will be supported on looking at their data and aligning high quality, culturally responsive programs, practices, and policies to meet the full range of school improvement and student needs. The supports listed on this page are available to all one-star and two-star schools including the federally designated schools of MRI, CSI, and ATSI. These topics have been focused on due to results from internal data analysis, focus groups with parents and educators, and alignment to the Governor's Acing Accountability initiative.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

There is some historical data from 2018-2019 about one-star and two-star schools. Was the same framework that is currently used in place in 2018-2019? Or have there been changes to the categories and subcategories in terms of the way that the schools are scored?

MR. ZUTZ:

The framework is the same, with just slight changes. Early on, under the student engagement indicator, the NDE conducted a school climate survey for a single year and gave a bonus point to any school in any district for completing the survey. Otherwise, all the indicators and measures that have been talked about today are still in place. The 2023-2024 school year will mark the fourth year of all three school levels being rated under the same framework.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Over the years there has been a lot of discussion about the star rating system. Has there been discussion to transition either within the system and make it more complete, or transition out of the system completely? There are schools that are very productive, and for whatever reason, lose points within this system. Therefore, these schools could have higher ratings than were given.

MR. ZUTZ:

I want to make it clear that the NSPF is both in compliance and in service to Nevada schools and districts. When the ESSA was passed in December 2015, the NDE engaged immediately as per federal law to create a framework. At that time, the department engaged, at a significant level, stakeholders throughout the state, specifically district-level employees who work in the accountability, assessment, and system areas with their district and school data. The data released on September 15, 2024, will be the fourth year of rating schools under the same framework, was the output of that engagement.

That is not to say that what was agreed upon and devised together in Nevada is etched in stone and perpetuity. The NDE is currently engaged in several conversations on individual measures within the framework, specifically chronic absenteeism. For example, other aspects of the framework are measures of interim progress and long-term goals. Think of the long-term goal as a multi-year, in the NDE's case it was set at six years, with the measures of interim progress being one-year goals. The NDE is also examining those, which expire this year. Both of those conversations are happening in an environment that engages districts in a meaningful conversation to produce recommendations to be brought to department leadership and the USDE. These conversations have a significant impact on school ratings. In conclusion, the framework itself, as with any measure, is open to modifications at any time to better serve Nevada stakeholders and education professionals.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I know Nevada has some schools with low ratings that need help and there are schools that are doing a good job but are being rated incorrectly due to absenteeism or other issues. It would be beneficial for the NDE to have a framework that weighs schools so that there can be an accurate performance. This would not only be for the teachers at those low-performing schools, but also for the schools that may be doing well. Parents also use this star system when selecting housing locations. They base their decision on whether the local school has a five-star rating or a two-star rating. I hope the NDE can make sure that what is being reported to the community and to educators, is accurate and worth the time that is put into it.

SENATOR CANNIZZARO:

I agree with Senator Dondero Loop in terms of star-ratings. In the presentation on page 16, where one- and two-star schools by state and district are shown, I was taken aback by the numbers displayed ([Exhibit D](#)). I know how these metrics are utilized and I understand some of the learning loss pieces associated with the COVID-19 pandemic but the increase in one-star ratings across the state from 95 to 233 is significant. In looking at Clark County School District, the number of one-star ratings increased from 54 to 125, which is staggering. Is the NDE researching what is causing such an extreme movement into the increase of one-star schools? Are there certain primary factors in this framework? Are all the schools centered on the same metrics in that framework? Is the NDE planning to do an analysis into some of the causes? This is quite an increase statewide and in almost every one of the individual districts, as well as the SPCSA.

MR. ZUTZ:

The NDE will take a closer look after the rating information is released on September 15, 2024, because then there will be four years of trend data that can be analyzed. However, even with the 2023 data release, there was still an impact from the COVID-19 pandemic on a number of different levels. As seen in the framework on page 17, academic achievement is highly weighted per the USDE. In turn, that impacts the growth measure, which is very highly rated, the most highly rated measure in elementary school ([Exhibit D](#)). However, as was mentioned, chronic absenteeism also has a significant impact. The NDE looks forward to doing an analysis after the September 2024 release and providing information if requested.

JHONE EBERT (Superintendent of Public Instruction):

I would like to add to the conversation by mentioning all the work that transpired during the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session, as well as the continued work, making sure that Nevada's earliest learners have the support that is needed. There will be a presentation later today regarding the \$70 million each year for Nevada's youngest students. As mentioned, the pandemic has had a huge impact, working alongside the school districts to make those determinations a huge piece as well. Chronic absenteeism, when students are not in the classrooms, means those students do not have that opportunity to gain the learning, which affects the scores that is in front of the Subcommittee.

The NDE presented to the Interim Commission on Education, and that slide deck and data can be provided to the Subcommittee as well. A lot of work has been done at the department level and in the individual school districts.

SENATOR CANNIZZARO:

Is it mostly chronic absenteeism that is affecting the significant increase in ratings or is it a myriad of factors?

MS. EBERT:

There are a myriad of factors impacting the star-ratings; it is a multifaceted system. Coming out of the pandemic, there is teacher recruitment retention that the NDE is handling, as well as including other pieces, and tracking those together. Therefore, it is not just a single indicator.

SENATOR CANNIZZARO:

I appreciate that answer. Chronic absenteeism was mentioned several times; however, I would venture to guess that it is probably several factors impacting the star-ratings. I think it would be important for the Subcommittee to be able to see that and maybe even do a deeper dive to determine what can be done to help some of those metrics.

Are there comparisons with income levels and star ratings and how the two overlap? I would guess there are probably a lot of significant correlations between geographical areas throughout the state, the income levels that are associated in those areas, and how those schools are being rated. This is an important piece to look at because it is heard quite frequently that there are several correlations such as chronic absenteeism, higher and lower income communities, unstable housing, or lack of family and community support. I am curious if there is a map or another format that could show the Subcommittee, geographically speaking, where those income levels are meeting those star ratings, so that research can be done into some of those other aspects that might be outside of the rating. This speaks to Senator Dondero Loop's point that other things should be considered as well, not just solely star ratings, because I think there are other factors that play into that.

MS. EBERT:

I completely agree. There are many factors and there is not currently a heat map regarding socioeconomic status and the star ratings, but that is something the NDE can produce. All those components that were mentioned are a piece of it. I would also include that the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan is developed to address some of the items that were mentioned. For example, students that are at risk or students that are multi-lingual learners. It is important to make sure that the resources are made available for those students that have the steepest climb to graduation.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

My question relates to page 19 and very specific schools mentioned such as Marvin Picollo School (Picollo) and Helen J. Stewart School ([Exhibit D](#)). Both are incredible special needs schools for students who academically will never get beyond the age of about three. Residing in Washoe County, I am familiar with the schools there, especially Picollo. On the Comprehensive Support and Intervention Schools Index Scores, is it also graded in the same framework for the star ratings? If so, does it utilize the exact same cut scores in other areas when it comes to the testing? Or is there a different fashion that is used for the stars when it comes to specialized schools such as Picollo or other alternative schools?

MS. SAUTER:

The USDE has declared in the ESSA that all schools that are defined as a school must receive a rating and then will be eligible for federal designations. There is an alternative performance framework that Mr. Zutz will discuss. Nevada is not the only state that has these concerns and the NDE is working with the USDE to consider possible waivers to allow these schools to be exempt because of the cultural ramifications that occur on their campuses from this and the fact that the students will not achieve. Nevada's correctional schools are also listed on the chart on page 19 but should be rated differently because correctional schools do not have the same student body throughout the year ([Exhibit D](#)). The NDE is aware of these issues in these special circumstances and are working with USDE on getting a waiver for the specialty schools.

MR. ZUTZ:

I would like to underscore two things that Ms. Sauter said; that all schools must be rated and that it is a federal mandate. Therefore, there is not a lot of flexibility. There is a lot of conversation nationally around this, but again, it is a federal requirement that all schools must be rated.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

There is also a virtual high school on the Comprehensive Support and Intervention Schools Index Scores chart (page 19, [Exhibit D](#)), and I know there have been discussions about how some of these high schools are not actually located in Nevada. The students are in Nevada; however, the schools themselves are all over the country. Are those virtual schools also rated the same way because of the federal guidelines? Has there been discussion around how virtual schools are utilized when it comes to the frameworks?

MR. ZUTZ:

If the virtual school is out of state, but does have students from Nevada attending, that school is not rated under the NSPF.

SENATOR TITUS:

I have served in the Legislature for five legislative sessions and every year more money is given to education. I share Senator Cannizzaro's comments and concerns that despite more funding, outcomes have worsened. I understand that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact as shown in the data. It is still very disappointing; more money does not necessarily equate to better outcomes.

I think it is the Subcommittee's obligation to determine causes and solutions. On the Nevada Report Card website (<https://nevadareportcard.nv.gov/di/>), it appears to show only the number of students enrolled. For example, looking at Douglas County, it shows the schools and the number of teachers. Is there a metric for student/teacher ratio and does that reflect the outcome? Does that data also include the ratio of long-term substitutes? I do not think the current measurements are adequate; they need to be improved. I know that a lot of students do not attend class if they have a long-term substitute because they feel they are not learning anything. I want to make sure the NDE is monitoring this data and that there are solutions for my concerns and recognizing that this is one of the root causes for absenteeism and poor outcomes. Where can I find this data?

MR. ZUTZ:

All federally reported data points are reported on the Nevada Report Card website (<https://nevadareportcard.nv.gov/di/>). To view a specific metric, such as student/teacher ratio, select the applicable district and school at the top of the webpage and then scroll to the bottom to view the metric.

SENATOR TITUS:

Is it broken down by class, the age of the class, high schools, junior highs, and those kinds of information, because there are different requirements?

MR. ZUTZ:

It will be broken down by school or at the state level.

SENATOR TITUS:

This web page provides total per pupil expenditures. Does that include all forms of funding for that school district, including federal, state, county, and possible grants that the district might receive?

MR. ZUTZ:

Local and federal funding are included.

SENATOR TITUS:

Are you referring to the state as "local"?

Ms. SAUTER:

The breakdown on the Nevada Report Card is the district's per pupil allocations along with any federal dollars.

SENATOR TITUS:

When I am looking at the \$12,882 per pupil expenditures for Douglas County School District for the 2022-2023 school year, is that the total funding that the district received? Were grants included in that amount?

Ms. EBERT:

I do not believe the grants are included, but I will provide the Subcommittee with that correct information.

SENATOR TITUS:

I would appreciate that because that information is important. I do not know if there is other funding available or if districts have private donors or fundraising or other things to support sports or other activities. Was that the total amount included in the district's budget for the 2022-2023 school year per pupil funding? In the interest of time, where can I find this information myself?

Ms. EBERT:

I know the Subcommittee is also going to be speaking with the school district superintendents today. I believe that at the local level, some of those donor's pieces would be incorporated, but I do not want to speak on their behalf. I would like to flag that as a question when the superintendents are presenting later.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I think it is important for the Subcommittee to understand that each school district is allocated a different amount of funding. The funding is not just a blanket amount that is divided equally among the districts. The amount of funding is based on a per pupil amount and the county also reflects some of that money per the geographic makeup.

There was no further discussion on this item.

2. Progress made in implementing recommendations made by the Division of Internal Audits of the Office of Finance in the Office of the Governor in its December 29, 2023, audit report 2023-005 “Review of 17 Public School Districts and the State Public Charter School Authority.”

MEGAN PETERSON (Deputy Superintendent, Student Investment Division, NDE):

Agenda Item III.2 gives a brief overview of the Governor’s Executive Order 23-005 audit ([Exhibit E](#)). Within this audit, there were five chapters, four of which were within the scope of the NDE. Within the audit, 16 findings were identified within the scope of the department. Part V has items that are related to the Department of Agriculture, and I will not be addressing those at this time.

Part I consists of four findings related to the current state of accountability within the State of Nevada and education (page 2, [Exhibit E](#)). Finding 1.1 is related to a recommendation of a unified statewide system of accountability that will support the pre-K through 12th grade public education system. The Commission on School Funding is currently reviewing a list of existing reports to make recommendations on the alignment of information and data in support of this. Additionally, it was requested as part of the work under Assembly Bill 400 (82nd [2023] Legislative Session). Through the Commission on School Funding’s work, the commission has identified approximately 450 different reports that school districts are required to provide throughout a year.

While this work is occurring, the department will also be proposing potential legislation to align this data and support implementation of a single system that aligns all this data and reduce duplication and redundancies. This system also aims to recommend data-driven policy solutions that will enhance the quality of education and ensure equitable outcomes for students. The targeted timeline is July 2025 because it includes recommendations that will go before the 83rd (2025) Legislature in the form of a bill draft request (BDR). As of today, May 1, 2024, this project is currently on track.

Finding 1.2 identifies the need for a more focused policy and improvement effort that will target resources to critical achievement gaps in reading and mathematics, setting conditions for academic success through a student’s public school experience. To support this effort, the department has developed an intermediate framework referred to as Acing Accountability. The Acing Accountability framework utilizes existing baseline metrics for all districts. Benchmarks are in development and will be finalized within the next few months, making the project on track for a July 2024 implementation date.

Recommendation 1.3 focuses on improving chronically low performing schools, which are a persisting challenge in many states across the country. Low performing schools often serve high poverty communities and face a range of challenges including high teacher turnover, lack of resources, and low student achievement. More robust intervention tools are needed to support state educational professionals in their efforts to improve performance in these schools. Throughout the 2023-2024 school year, the department has been developing a system of supports to assist districts and schools in improving performance. This framework, called the Six Essentials, was discussed in the previous presentation. As the namesake says, it contains six evidence-based practices, that when implemented, have been proven to provide rapid improvements.

The NDE has also provided professional learning, which includes evidence-based providers that offer specific coaching and support to build capacity of leaders and educators. Because there may be statutory impacts, these recommendations will be presented as BDRs during the 83rd (2025) Legislative Session. The project is currently on track for a targeted solution date of July 2025.

Recommendation 1.4 highlights the department's responsibility for implementing accountability, oversight, and technical assistance to schools and districts throughout the state. The recommendation highlights that additional resources would allow the department to meet and enhance its efforts in these areas and ultimately ensure that the department has sufficient budgetary and human capacity to perform as envisioned by the Governor and Legislature. To facilitate this, the department is reviewing current staffing levels, realigning workload, and identifying additional support that is needed to fill gaps that have been identified. Given the agency request budget, the department's timeline is the September 1, 2024, deadline, and is on track.

Part II relates to profiles, performance, and accountability (page 4, [Exhibit E](#)). There is only one recommendation in this part, and it relates to making informed funding decisions based on profile and performance data that can address educational inequities and improve education quality. In this context, the NDE is referring to profile data that includes budget information, staffing levels, disciplinary actions, teacher compensation, and class sizes.

Informed funding decisions provide greater transparencies in school district and charter school finances and addresses achievement gaps. That also includes savings and reallocation opportunities and teacher compensation priorities. Because this work is related to the recommendations that were identified in findings 1.1 and 1.2 of the unified statewide system of reporting, it is tied to BDR requests that will be coming forward. This project has a July 2025 implementation target date. The department is working on the language for those BDRs now and working on standardizing reporting, updating and aligning chart of accounts, and similar type activities. This work is currently on track.

Part III relates to fiscal accountability and has four findings (page 5, [Exhibit E](#)). Finding 3.1 focuses on complying with the statute for public reporting requirements. This ensures school districts are meeting the legislative intent of providing transparency for school district expenditures. In this context, it relates to a quarterly report of their financials being posted in the local newspaper. Finding 3.1 identifies whether this requirement to post was being met. The NDE has reached out and worked with all school districts, which are now aware of the requirement and are posting within the newspaper accordingly. This activity has been completed as of January 2024.

Finding 3.2 relates to the challenges as to posting within a print newspaper. The department is working on BDR language that will align and make opportunities available to use other platforms like the school district's website. Work is currently on track for a July 2025 implementation date.

Recommendation 3.3 relates to reconciling financial reports required by the department to be audited, specifically the charter school reports 387.303 or 388A.345. It is the Annual Financial Expenditure Report that was previously used to develop the equity allocation model for the Distributive School Account in reconciling those data points to the school district's annual consolidated financial reports. Due to the timing of when both reports are due, there were conflicts in being able to reconcile them. The 387.303 report was due before the Annual Comprehensive Financial Reports (ACFR); therefore, the reconciliation challenge created several discrepancies as the NDE tried to work through those. This request will be put forward as a BDR, changing the date of the 387.303 report to January to align with the availability of the ACFR data. Since legislative action is required, there is a December 2024 timeline for the department to submit the language for session consideration. The work is currently on track.

Finding 3.4 is related to charter schools that operate independently of a local school district. Charter schools are held to different standards in terms of their reporting. Currently, charter schools are not required to transfer their ending fund balances the way school districts are in terms of funding the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. With this request, I asked the department to

do analysis on the impact if those funds were to be transferred from charter schools ending fund balances in the same manner as the school districts. The NDE is currently reviewing that impact. The department has reconciliation work occurring with the charter schools to align with the methodology used by school districts. Given the potential impact on statutory changes, this project has a timeline of July 2025 and is currently on track.

Finding 3.5 identifies opportunities for clarifying requirements for financial statement preparation that are outlined in Charter School Audit Guides. The additional clarification that is needed to ensure alignment with this chart of accounts ensures consistency among charter school financial reports, improves comparability of financial results, and results in a more effective analysis of excess education funds. This work is on track for a July 2024 completion date.

Finding 3.6 highlights opportunities to review the current pupil attendance audit process and the methodology used by the department. This analysis includes determining whether extrapolating an error rate based on a sampling methodology of enrollment and adjusting enrollment accordingly is applicable and an appropriate use of methodology for adjusting enrollment. Given the potential impacts and statutory changes, the project has a September 2025 implementation date and is currently on track.

Finding 3.7 identifies an opportunity to align financial reporting dates to ensure alignment of data when reconciling reports. This activity is on track for an implementation date of July 2025.

Part IV focuses on instructional accountability (page 7, [Exhibit E](#)). Finding 4.1 highlights opportunities for increased adherence to guidelines for literacy resources in public schools, which is essential for the Read by Grade 3 proficiency targets. These guidelines ensure that public schools have necessary resources to provide students with the tools that are needed to develop strong reading skills that have been proven to provide lifelong benefits. The department is working on refining these guidelines. That work is on track to be completed by July 2024.

Finding 4.2 identifies an opportunity to evaluate the adequacy of the Read by Grade 3 goals. Setting a higher proficiency expectation would ensure that students would need to demonstrate deeper understanding of reading and comprehension skills, which would align with national standards. This would help students to succeed through their academic careers. The goal should be based on research showing that students who are not proficient readers by the end of grade 3 are more likely to struggle academically; therefore, the goal needs additional refinement. This project is on track for a July 2024 completion date.

Finding 4.3 identifies opportunities to strengthen compliance with the Read by Grade 3 reporting requirements across all school districts. Benefits include assessment of pupil reading proficiency, identification of schools requiring assistance, increased accountability for educational institutions, and compliance with state legislative intents. This project is on track for a July 2024 completion date.

Finding 4.4 recommends revising the statute to provide the NDE with the authority to hire and provide professional learning for literacy specialists for school districts that receive a three-star rating or below. School districts with a four- or five-star rating would be allowed to coordinate and retain the authority to hire learning specialists. This would allow for coordinated efforts among different schools as all elementary schools would have access to literacy specialists. Given the intersection with the legislative actions, this project has a July 2025 implementation date and is currently on track.

Finding 4.5 highlights opportunities to improve current strategies for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) program and focuses on technical assistance activities. There are opportunities to improve the effectiveness of reporting to focus on program performance and student outcomes. The department is currently developing a revised strategy that will improve both effectiveness of idea program technical assistance activities and reporting. This activity is on track for completion in July 2024.

CHAIR YEAGER:

It is encouraging to see that everything is either complete or on track for an on-time completion. I understand that a number of these items are going to require legislative action in the 83rd (2025) Legislative Session. Please keep the Subcommittee updated in terms of what the legislation will look like.

Finding 3.2 discussed updating NRS to expand the acceptable public notice platforms. What kind of notices are utilized in this rubric of fiscal accountability?

MS. PETERSON:

School districts are currently required to post their budget expenditure data within a print newspaper. The NDE would like to expand that to the school district's website or an online version of a newspaper.

We heard a similar bill during the 81st (2021) Legislative Session, which discussed posting of public notices. The reason I continue to believe these notices should be in a public newspaper (notwithstanding that other forms of public notices could be utilized) is because there are individuals who do not receive a newspaper at home, do not have a computer, and go to the library

to obtain information. I think it is important to remember that not everyone is fortunate enough to have an electronic device with which to obtain information.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

Regarding finding 3.4, what is the impact on the state and charter schools to require this and their balances moving forward?

MS. PETERSON:

The NDE is evaluating both impacts, including what the impact would be to the individual charter school as well as the state in terms of what the additional anticipated revenue would be for charter schools if their ending fund balance were to exceed the 16.6% threshold that is currently identified for school districts.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

To confirm, is this for specific charter schools or for all public entities of the charter schools?

MS. PETERSON:

This would apply to all charter schools in the state.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

Regarding finding 4.5, what is the current federal funding for the IDEA program? Who is responsible for the rest of that funding if it is not funded at the federal level?

MS. PETERSON:

I do not have the current federal level of funding available at the moment, but I will provide that to the Subcommittee. Nevada has \$244 million in state special education funding in FY 2024. Between the federal and state contributions and a transfer from the entities' local funds, there are three pots of funding available. If a student has disabilities that exceed a district's typical capacity to assist, the NDE has the special education contingency fund that is available to supplement.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

I recognize where the department is coming from when it comes to effective IDEA programs; however, I also recognize that many of the school districts have to contribute a larger amount of money into special education than what is provided by the federal government and the state, which means services cannot be provided as often as needed. I hope next time the Subcommittee will be provided the exact percentage of what the federal government is providing to fund the IDEA.

There was no further discussion on this item.

3. Read by Grade 3 program.

JOAN JACKSON (Education Programs Professional, Office of Teaching and Learning, Read by Grade 3, NDE):

There are a few assessments for which data is collected for students in kindergarten through 3rd grade, and there are two sets of data that are looked at in the Read by Grade 3 program. One set of data is from the MAP Growth Reading Assessment and the other is from the Smarter Balanced English Language Arts (ELA) Assessment ([Exhibit F](#)).

The MAP Growth Reading Assessment measures student's achievement and growth percentiles in relation to their Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) determined growth goals. The MAP Growth Reading data is a measure for the Governor's Acing Accountability plan, which is the student academic proficiency measure that was implemented in the 2023-2024 school year. It measures the number and percentage of students scoring at or above the 65th percentile on the MAP Growth Reading Assessment. Spring 2023 data shows that 33.3% of the students performed at this level, which is set as at or above the 65th percentile. Prior to the current school year, this data would have been reported to the state board annually, often from NWEA staff. This would not have been data that was shared as part of the school accountability framework. Previously, this data would have gone directly to schools and districts and the department's teams would have used this data internally. Now, these measures are reported publicly through the Nevada Report Card website.

For Read by Grade 3 purposes, the MAP Growth Reading Assessment data is the Read by Grade 3 indicator. This data in conjunction with teacher observation is used to identify students for Read by Grade 3 intervention and intensive instruction services in kindergarten through 3rd grade. This indicator has previously been determined by the State Board of Education and is set as at or below the 40th percentile on the MAP Growth Reading Assessment. The spring 2023 assessment results demonstrated that out of approximately 132,076 students that were tested, 56% of Nevada's kindergarten through 3rd grade students scored at or above the 40th percentile on that assessment.

The second data set for Read by Grade 3 purposes is the Smarter Balanced ELA assessment (page 4, [Exhibit F](#)). The chart provides the percentage of students in grades 3, 4, and 5 who demonstrated proficiency. Proficiency is a level three meets standards or a level four exceeds standards on that Smarter Balanced assessment. The maroon bar represents students in grade 3, the green bar represents students in grade 4, and the purple bar represents students in grade 5. The blue bar represents the results for all students cumulative in the three grades.

The data on the chart begins with the 2015-2016 school year, which was the initial planning year for the Read by Grade 3 program. This may be considered baseline prior to the start of implementation of the Read by Grade 3 program at district and school levels. Looking at the data, there are increases through the 2018-2019 school year. The department recognizes the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with the absence of data for the 2020-2021 school year due to the suspension of the Smarter Balanced assessment during that time. Recovery statistics are noted with the 2021-2022 school year.

For the 2022-23 school year, the data exhibits that the overall combined percentage of students demonstrating proficiency in grades 3, 4, and 5, is 41.0%. In the spring of 2023, 40.9% of 3rd graders, 41.7% of 4th graders, and 43.7% of 5th graders successfully performed at a level three or four on the Smarter Balanced assessment. The gray dotted line representing 63.1% indicates the long-term goal for all students meeting ELA proficiency by spring 2024 (page 4, [Exhibit F](#)). Currently, the department is working with all Nevada school districts to reexamine and set new long-term goals.

Read by Grade 3 provides program management oversight to districts and charter schools such as providing a school implementation guide annually, conducting meetings with Read by Grade 3 literacy leads quarterly, and providing technical assistance and feedback regarding Read by Grade 3 local literacy plans. Read by Grade 3 also provides professional learning to Read by Grade 3 literacy leads and literacy specialists through the Read by Grade 3 literacy summits, collaborating with the NWEA on the statewide professional learning program, and facilitating a community

connection offering to help Read by Grade 3 literacy leads and specialists to build a network with their colleagues across the state. Additionally, the Read by Grade 3 team is providing oversight on four projects related to the expansion of the Science of Reading across Nevada through the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funding (ESSER).

ANNE MARIE DICKSON (Deputy Superintendent, Student Achievement Division, NDE):

The Read by Grade 3 team received \$6 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) ESSER funds to educate, promote, and support the Science of Reading across Nevada. The \$6 million was divided into four projects to support pre-kindergarten (pre-K) through 12th grade educators, site-based elementary literacy specialists, administrators, district leaders, substitutes, and paraprofessionals.

The first project is the Path to Reading Excellence at School Sites (PRESS) project, which is a continuation of a project that took place during the 2022-2023 school year (page 8, [Exhibit F](#)). The department partnered with the University of Minnesota's Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement through its PRESS project. The PRESS project is a framework for literacy achievement in grades kindergarten through 5th grade that supports the implementation of evidence-based practices using the Science of Reading and multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) to improve instruction and intervention with students. This framework can be used in conjunction with any curriculum to ensure students are receiving high-quality and meaningful instruction that is grounded in reading research. There are cohorts specifically designed for elementary school educators and site-based literacy specialists, as well as a cohort specifically designed for elementary administrators and those serving in district leadership capacities.

The second project is the Modified Reading Endorsement and School Administrator Course Development project. Through this project, the NDE is working to modify the endorsement to teach reading to include the Science of Reading. The department is working with the Regional Professional Development Program (RPDP) to revise the 16 semester hours of courses, which will meet the requirement for the revised endorsement. An additional course, separate from the Endorsement to Teach reading course, is being created specifically on the Science of Reading for administrators and will be included with this project.

The third project is the 2024 Pre-K through Grade 12 Summer Literacy Institute (page 9, [Exhibit F](#)). The department is partnering with the University of Nevada, Reno for a three-day institute from July 25, 2024, through July 27, 2024, on the Science of Reading. The theme is entitled *Integrating the Science of Reading into the Theory and Practice of Reading Instruction*.

The final project is the Nevada Substitute and Paraprofessional Educators Skill Development program. The NDE is working with six Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) institutions to bridge the gaps in understanding the Science of Reading for elementary substitutes, paraprofessionals, and other novice educators who are providing critically needed services to support students. Depending on the NSHE institute, paraprofessionals and substitutes will receive free tuition for 18 to 21 undergraduate credit hours as well as the cost of books and a stipend for their time taking the courses, which are often conducted outside of the workday. These courses lead to a pathway for paraprofessionals and substitutes to become teachers. The NDE is partnering with the College of Southern Nevada, Great Basin College, Truckee Meadows Community College, University of Nevada, Reno, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and Western Nevada College on this innovative project.

As Ms. Peterson previously discussed, the Governor's audit found the need to provide more oversight for Read by Grade 3 literacy specialists. Currently, the department does not have data on the impact of literacy specialist roles in elementary schools. The NDE has allocated \$50,000 in FY 2025 to conduct a longitudinal study on the Read by Grade 3 program to measure the impact on administrators and teacher efficacy and student outcomes at the state, district, and school levels. A collection of survey data from Read by Grade 3 literacy specialists across the state is available where specialists have anecdotally outlined their efforts and responsibilities in this role. Once there is data from the MAP Growth Reading and Smarter Balanced ELA Assessments from spring 2024, the department will conduct an analysis to identify schools where positive trends are seen and will look at the responses from the literacy specialist surveys to see if there is a correlation between student outcomes and the effort of the literacy specialists.

MS. JACKSON:

The Read by Grade 3 team has worked with the Office of Student and School Supports so that the Read by Grade 3 local literacy plan will be included as part of the district performance plan. The goal was to streamline the reporting collection and make the work less duplicative for districts and charter organizations. This new template will be distributed to Read by Grade 3 program leads tomorrow, May 2, 2024, with a technical assistance meeting scheduled for later in May, where the Read by Grade 3 team will explain the submission process and answer any questions from the field.

Page 12 provides a look at the initial page of the revised template for the 2024-2025 school year local literacy plan ([Exhibit F](#)). The Read by Grade 3 team gathered feedback from the field and made modifications to streamline the document for both completion and usability. The goal is to provide elementary schools with a living document that can be used to guide implementation of the Read by Grade 3 program throughout the school year.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

On page 4, it was indicated that the 63.1% perforated gray line at the top was a target that was set in terms of the percentage of students the NDE wanted to be at proficiency ([Exhibit F](#)). How was 63.1% being determined? It was also noted that the NDE was considering revising that percentage. If the percentage were to be adjusted, will it be increased or decreased? How is the proficiency level that should be the goal for students being determined?

MS. DICKSON:

The determinations are made in collaboration with the school districts. As Mr. Zutz stated earlier, the NDE is looking at those goals. I would note that my belief is that the department will make sure there is a higher expectation for the students; the 63.1% was developed a very long time ago. There is a very large focus within Nevada on Read by Grade 3, as well as the funding that is going into pre-K and early childhood; therefore, the expectation is better outcomes and results for students.

PETER ZUTZ (Administrator, Office of Assessment, Data, and Accountability Management, NDE):

I want to underscore what Ms. Dickson said, that as mentioned in the initial presentation today, the NDE is engaged with school districts to look at those measures of interim progress and long-term goals and to reset them, hopefully before the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

For the local literacy plan on page 12, is every school in Nevada required to complete this form ([Exhibit F](#))?

MANDY LEYTHAM (Education Programs Professional, Office of Teaching and Learning, Read by Grade 3, NDE):

Per Nevada state law, every district and charter organization must complete the local literacy plan form. If a charter organization has five school sites under its umbrella, it would only complete one form. However, there are also single site charter organizations that would be required to fill out and submit a plan.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Page 10 states that the NDE does not currently have statutory authority to enforce the provisions of *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 388.159, which states that a literacy specialist must be designated at each public elementary school ([Exhibit F](#)). Do most schools have school literacy specialists? Certain schools, such as schools in rural areas, may have someone on staff that can fill the role of a literacy specialist, but they may not have that designation. I am trying to consider all avenues, because while the larger school districts are mostly discussed, it is important to remember the smaller districts like Esmeralda County School District, which only has about 80 students.

MS. DICKSON:

Every school must make sure that the expectations of the law are met by having somebody at that school site who is qualified. However, it does not have to be a literacy specialist that is a full-time specialist. The NDE believes in looking at the intent of the law as much as possible, that there should be a person dedicated to supporting teachers, students, and this very complicated work in which teachers need additional support. The NDE conducted a survey through which it learned that because of teacher vacancies and other circumstances, not all schools have literacy specialists in place and the impact of that will be seen in the outcomes.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I have multiple certifications, but I do not know if I returned to teaching tomorrow if I would have a Read by Grade 3 literacy specialist designation. Would that mean I would have to go back to school? I always want what is best for students and I to ensure the right person is in front of them; however, I also do not want to get in their way. In my case, I might need additional courses, but I am capable of working as a literacy specialist. This is why I am

asking questions. As previously mentioned, I am concerned about some schools that may not have a literacy specialist but may have somebody in that school who is capable but does not have that designation.

MS. LEYTHAM:

By law, there is not a special endorsement for a literacy specialist. A literacy specialist is a licensed teacher who is designated by the principal of the school to fulfill that role. In some cases, that may be a classroom teacher who demonstrates the ability to improve student reading outcomes. Therefore, it is not just any licensed teacher that the principal should be designating. To underscore what Ms. Dickson said, when there are substitutes coming into a school or if a school is short staffed, oftentimes it is the literacy specialist that is pulled from their duties and responsibilities, so it is hard for them to be consistent in that role. The NDE would like to delve into what is happening with those site-based literacy specialists, so the department can provide better support and address any issues.

ASSEMBLYMAN GRAY:

I am not an educator, and I am unfamiliar with the Read by Grade 3 program. It is difficult to make sense of this if I do not have an understanding of this program. Does it include picture books or beginner chapter books?

DR. KEVIN MARIE LAXALT (Literacy Coordinator, NDE):

The Read by Grade 3 program adheres to the Read by Grade 3 Act of 2015, which was updated in 2019. During the act, there are specific requirements required within this law for implementation. The literacy specialist is just one of the requirements. There is also an assessment component, a local literacy plan component, etc.

In short, students are identified through an assessment that the state board has approved, which is currently the NWEA MAP Growth Reading Assessment. If students are scoring at the 40th percentile level or below, those students qualify for Read by Grade 3 services. Those students are then given regular and intensive intervention and support that typically occurs in a small group setting, which is much easier for students than a classroom setting. Students also identified for tier two and tier three services will receive those services as well, which are very intense services.

A great deal of Read by Grade 3 effort is now going into the tier one level, which is a regular classroom level, because if there are so many students identified, there is not enough capacity. The PRESS project has been successful nationally with identifying students. It has helped regular classroom teachers identify students in their classroom that are in need of

additional services and define ways to include those services as a classroom teacher. The instructors teach to the majority of the students, which means that some students learn it again, but they are teaching those interventions at that time. Those students who are identified are monitored through a regular monitoring process. Therefore, someone can go to any school district or charter school in the state to identify the progress of a student. There is a significant effort toward maintaining students' growth.

The great part of the 2019 updates to the law, is that the law changed the reading goals to the entirety of elementary school. The name as it reads, Read by Grade 3, does not really fit anymore because the program is now occurring from kindergarten through grade 5. The bottom line is that the students who need these services the most are now receiving services.

ASSEMBLYMAN GRAY:

I appreciate the administrative overview, but I really wanted to see an example of what students are expected to be reading. One of my questions might have been answered, that students do not get called out by ability, such as advanced and remedial reading groups. Instead, everybody is working together, which can have negative consequences for students of varying levels.

DR. LAXALT:

The teaching of reading today is not what many of us grew up with, with those levels of reading groups. It is more diverse now and teachers are learning methods for working with students across grade levels. Struggling readers will have small group reading experiences and will receive services according to the level at which they are reporting. It is fine-tuned and specific, and it is directed by that professional. The students read actual books, which vary, but there is a wonderful array of books in the country that adhere to those students' reading levels. I will provide the Subcommittee some examples.

ASSEMBLYMAN GRAY:

I would really appreciate seeing examples because I want to see the quality of the materials.

Regarding page 2, on the percentile at or above the 65th percentile, which is 33.3% ([Exhibit F](#)). It appears that only about one-third of the students being tested are meeting the mark. This means 66.7% are not meeting the mark. Is this correct?

DR. LAXALT:

The NDE would like to remind the Subcommittee that the 65th percentile is a new target. Historically, Read by Grade 3 has predominantly used the 40th percentile on the MAP Growth Reading Assessment to indicate whether those students need services. It was never used as a proficiency measure. Looking at the new Acing Accountability, the 65th percentile is reflective of Acing Accountability, which is a large difference. You are correct regarding the 65th percentile, during 2023, only 33.3% are making the mark.

MS. DICKSON:

The 65th percentile has been developed by the NWEA, which is the group that does the MAP Growth Reading Assessment. As a former elementary school principal and a turnaround principal, I looked at that mark to see where students needed to be for proficiency to make sure that they were going to be successful. The job of an elementary school principal and teachers is to ensure that students have a reading ability, so when students go into middle and high school, they are successful. There is a correlation study specifically for Nevada students that states that that 65th percentile means that a student will score at proficiency at a 3 or 4.

MS. LEYTHAM:

I would like to provide clarification on the Read by Grade 3 program. Read by Grade 3 is the identification of students who are at risk or not proficient in reading, and those specifically who are at high risk, and providing of supports and services. What that might look like at the school or district level or a charter organization will vary. The law allows some flexibility because the needs of a school vary depending on whether the school is in an urban or a rural area. That is why local literacy plans are submitted to the NDE; school districts and charter organizations provide an explanation of their Read by Grade 3 program and services within the realm of the law.

MS. JACKSON:

I want to address the question that Assemblyman Gray had about students being put into one group and receiving whole-group instruction instead of individual instruction. When students are identified at the 40th percentile and below, the NDE looks at what skills are needed to bring that student up to grade level. For example, if a student is in 2nd grade, that student is receiving instruction from their teacher at the 2nd grade level. The teacher is providing whole group lessons so that a bigger gap is not inadvertently created. Then, the student is assessed to make sure the student can access that curriculum and provided those services to fill in that instruction. Therefore, not only is the student receiving grade-level exposure, but they are also receiving intensive instruction and intervention to provide that assistance.

ASSEMBLYMAN GRAY:

I fully support the NDE in this effort. It goes back to the old saying, reading is fundamental. Math is not quite as critical in society. If someone can do basic addition and subtraction, they will be fine, but without reading, it is difficult to be successful at anything. Everyone has heard horror stories about students graduating from high school without being able to read, which is not right.

Is there a comparison on charter schools and private schools as to how they are doing in this arena?

MS. LEYTHAM:

It is difficult to compare private school data because private schools are not required to take the same assessments as public schools because they do not receive federal funding. The NDE will provide information on public school and charter school data; however, I believe that information can also be found on the Nevada Report Card.

SENATOR TITUS:

I would like to return to the discussion regarding regulations and certifications of literary specialists. It has been a long time since my children have been in school, but my son, while in the 1st or 2nd grade, was reading below grade level. There was no literacy specialist at the Smith Valley High School, but there were volunteers who would read with the students. This was effective for my son. I am concerned about over regulation with requiring certifications of the teachers when there are other resources that could be used. Does the statute prohibit other resources for assistance in reading, such as library volunteers? Is there a streamlined way to use resources and not just somebody that has to have multiple certificates or be a licensed teacher? Is there a way to avoid some of these hurdles?

DR. LAXALT:

No part of the Read by Grade 3 legislation prohibits uncertified adults from helping students learn to read. There are multiple volunteer activities across school districts, such as United Way in the Reno and Carson City areas. United Way has some great volunteers coming to schools and offering exactly to what you are speaking. United Way has a whole tutoring program. Read by Grade 3 does not get in the way of volunteers.

I also want to clarify the perception that the literacy specialist role requires a special certification. It does not require an extra certification; it only requires that the individual be a certified teacher. Many people are not aware that in 2017, the International Literacy Association (ILA) created a whole new title of Literacy Specialist. What is nice about the standards development is that the criteria are laid out and that is where the states followed through. The states began creating programs around that role.

To reiterate, it is not prohibited in Nevada to have any volunteer or extra services come to a school to help students learn to read.

SENATOR TITUS:

Where can more information on each school's local literacy plan be found?

MS. LEYTHAM:

Local literacy plans are submitted to the NDE and there is no requirement to make those plans public because the plans are internal documents, not necessarily public facing documents. However, there are requirements for educators to be trained on their local literacy plan as part of the Read by Grade 3 regulations.

Adding to your previous question, the premise of having a licensed teacher is having the most qualified person to work with those who need the most support and help. Again, there is no prohibition on having a volunteer come in and work with those students as well. However, it is important to make sure that any volunteers working with children and students who are at risk of not being proficient have a licensed teacher providing those intensive instruction and support services. It is important for those who are truly trained in teaching reading are working with those students that need the most support.

SENATOR TITUS:

I would certainly not expect the volunteers to preempt a literacy specialist; however, I see no reason why a literacy specialist could not look at a program, determine the student's needs, and utilize other resources to ensure those needs are met if there is not a literacy specialist in that school. I think there is more effort to be done using community resources in the schools.

Why are the local literacy plans not made public?

DR. LAXALT:

As Ms. Leytham stated, the Read by Grade 3 law does not require local literacy plans to be made public. The plans are housed at the NDE on an electronic record keeping system, but I can see about sharing some samples with the Subcommittee. My team just reviewed a set with the districts. The local literacy plans are fascinating and wonderful to read.

I would note that the requirement of the local literacy plan in A.B. 289 (80th [2019] Legislative Session) is in the first sentence. Hence, the plan by the writers of this law is designed to be a working document at the schools and not remain stagnant. That is emphasized every time a new layer is rolled out. It is nice to see how the schools are diving down and implementing these plans. The local literacy plans also show the diversity across Nevada, and educators meeting the needs of their local students.

SENATOR TITUS:

I would like to see a bill draft request mandating that local literacy plans become public documents.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

As an educator, I would note that things are not being done in schools the same way as they were done in the 1940s, 1950s, etc. Teaching methods are constantly evolving. There are many volunteer groups in the communities

such as After-School-All-Stars Las Vegas, United Way, Boys and Girls Club, etc. I do not want it to be misconstrued that volunteers and community organizations are not utilized in the schools.

Literacy plans change because children change grade to grade. It is no different from the medical or dental field; the treatment varies by patient. The plan for each child is very individualized, just as when an individual visits a doctor. This individual attention has evolved over the years. It is very important to make sure that each child is educated on an individual level. I do not want anybody to think that educators with certain criteria are not needed and that just because something is not displayed on the NDE website, that things are not being done that need to be done.

SENATOR CANNIZZARO:

I agree with Senator Dondero Loop. I have two children at home and what worked with my first child does not work with my second child.

In looking at page 2, it would be expected that 33.3% of students should be above the 65th percentile. Is that 65th percentile for all the students being tested, in which case it is to be expected that 33.3% are above that because that is just math, or is that 65th percentile marker not based on the students that are being tested, but rather a different metric?

MR. ZUTZ:

As stated by Ms. Dickson, the 65th percentile represents a correlation study carried out by the assessment vendor NWEA. The intent of the study was to understand where the correlation point would exist between performance on the Smarter Balanced ELA Assessment and the NWEA MAP Growth Reading Assessment, which is the assessment administered to kindergarten through grade 3 students for the Read by Grade 3 program in Nevada. The results of that study showed students who were proficient on the Smarter Balanced assessment. Being proficient means having performance levels of three and four on the Smarter Balanced assessment levels, four being the highest level. Understanding the performance of students at or above the third performance level on the Smarter Balanced would help determine what the NWEA Map Growth Reading assessment results would look like. The outcome was the 65th percentile for the NWEA Map Growth Reading Assessment. It is the cut from a performance level of three and above on the Smarter Balanced assessment.

SENATOR CANNIZZARO:

When discussing the students that are in all these different schools, it is important to keep in mind that students who are in public schools come from different socioeconomic statuses, geographic regions, family makeups, supports, and income. When the decision to go to a charter school or private school is discussed, there is an embedded support for that child in the environment that they are growing up in where someone has allowed and given them that opportunity to make that choice.

I think it is important to note that comparing students in private and charter schools to students in public schools cannot be done without first recognizing that a lot of children in public schools are there because this is their parents, caregivers, or foster parents only option for schooling. Those children go to that school because they are school-aged and expect to receive an education. However, there may be other issues for those children—they might be tired or hungry, they might not have a bed—so to make those comparisons and draw a summary conclusion that other types of schools have a better system or students in public schools are failing even though they are offered a similar education, overlooks the fact that students in private and charter schools are likely coming from a very supportive background where they have transportation and funding; their parents are engaged and watching to see if their child is struggling; and their parents ensure their child goes to school every day. Those students may not be arriving at school hungry because there is food at home.

All these issues have such an enormous impact on a child's ability to succeed in school that I wanted to lay that out as this Subcommittee discusses not just Read by Grade 3, but also comparisons, metrics, and accountability in public education and how those funds are expended. The Subcommittee and everyone in this arena should keep these things in mind because that makes a significant difference on how students are able to succeed. This is important to keep in mind when looking at the data and things are siphoned off that might not be accounted for when determining whether a child can read. Some children who are struggling to read do not have someone at home who has been reading to them since they were born. This is something important to me. I fundamentally believe that regardless of the amount of support at home, every child should be able to receive a good education, and that is what the focus should be.

DR. LAXALT:

My entire career in Arizona was with those unsupported students to which you are referring. The reason I am so entrenched and involved with literacy in Nevada is because Read by Grade 3 is about equity. Read by Grade 3 pulls those students up, and as a former reading specialist, this is an opportunity

that did not occur in Nevada before 2015. Now, these students have an opportunity to receive this intensive instruction and interventions, thereby creating equity.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

It is not only important to have accountability in terms of what is happening in the classrooms, but it is also important for state leaders to be held accountable, so that Nevada is built to be a state where every student is given the opportunity to succeed, whether that is through supports or likewise. I think sometimes the Legislature gets a little siloed and wants to see numbers and results, which is important, but the Legislature is also responsible for ensuring that when students go to school, they have every opportunity to succeed. The state will continue to work on those social policies to make sure that Nevada has the system that is desired. I think the comments today have been well stated and are well received.

There was no further discussion on this item.

4. Competency-based education pilot program pursuant to NRS 389.210.

CINDI CHANG (Director, Office of Teaching and Learning, NDE):

The Competency-Based Education (CBE) pilot program was established pursuant to *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 389.210 ([Exhibit G](#)). As defined in NRS 389.200, the CBE is a system of instruction by which a pupil advances to a higher level of learning when the pupil demonstrates mastery of a concept or skill, regardless of the time, place, or pace at which the pupil progresses.

Page 3 shows a brief overview of the CBE work timeline from the law's inception in 2017 to 2024 ([Exhibit G](#)). After the establishment in 2017, staff was identified, and implementation of the processes began. The work was moving forward; however, there was a pause during the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 when other priorities like student well-being took precedence. The work is once again continuing through partnerships Nevada has with KnowledgeWorks and ed.Xtraordinary, both of which are working with committees involving policy considerations, sustainability recommendations, research on other state examples of CBE systems, and an examination of current state systems. From 2022 to 2024, Nevada has established the Portrait of a Nevada Learner and Nevada Draft PK-12 Competencies that will support this future CBE work.

Page 4 shows the districts and schools that were early adopters of this work, participating at inception ([Exhibit G](#)). Several on this list are no longer participating due to leadership changes and other priorities but are still interested. Currently, Churchill County Middle School and Lahontan Elementary School are actively participating and engaged as school design teams focusing on project work to bring the Portrait of a Nevada Learner to life by working on relationships, experiences, and environments to support this work towards CBE.

During a meeting between the NDE and KnowledgeWorks on April 30, 2024, it was conveyed that Elko County School District and White Pine County School District are showing interest. There are some public schools and charter schools in Clark County School District, Washoe County School District, Storey County School District, and Douglas County School District that are interested in the CBE program. They are working with their leadership on approval to move forward.

Page 5 lists several ways that CBE accountability is measured ([Exhibit G](#)). The first bullet point is the study of approaches. The NDE has a task force made up of district and charter representatives who are reviewing current regulations and guidelines such as waivers, seat time requirements, and what demonstration of mastery options look like. This will allow needed revisions to enable CBE work to proceed in the school districts. The NDE is also meeting with several states, such as Kentucky and North Dakota, to discuss their approaches.

Bullets 4 and 7 discuss strategies, barriers, and solutions for improving CBE. As previously mentioned, the NDE is working with KnowledgeWorks to gather comparative data from other states that are doing CBE work around lessons learned, challenges, and strategies to support Nevada and the effective implementation of CBE. Having this data helps to avoid some of the pitfalls that other states have encountered in the process. This data also provides areas with which to build upon.

Bullet 5 addresses professional development opportunities. There is currently a Canvas professional learning course that is under development. It will assist educators in transition to CBE systems. The course should be available in the department's course catalog within the Canvas structure soon. KnowledgeWorks and ed.Xtraordinary are also helping to facilitate and support the professional development areas.

Page 6 outlines the upcoming accountability metrics and their availability ([Exhibit G](#)). I would note that once the official CBE implementation pilot ends after the 2025-2026 school year, there will be two years of CBE and non-CBE participating data to compare.

Lastly, regulatory work is currently in progress. There are regulations that need to be revised to keep districts and charters in compliance with the law while making their transition to CBE. These regulations include seat time, what defines the demonstration of mastery, waivers, and other items necessary, and will all be a part of the NDE's proposed bill draft requests for the 83rd (2025) Legislative Session.

CHAIR YEAGER:

I think everyone is anxiously awaiting the metrics and comparisons. I think it is helpful to have a timeline as part of the official record of this Subcommittee.

There was no further discussion on this item.

5. Grants awarded from the Early Childhood Literacy and Readiness Account (Assembly Bill 400 of the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session).

PATTI OYA (Director, Office of Early Learning and Development, NDE):

Assembly Bill (A.B.) 400 (82nd [2023] Legislative Session) established the Early Childhood Literacy and Readiness Account, which was funded at \$70 million per year for each year of the 2023-25 Biennium. The grants awarded from the account are called the Early Childhood Innovative Literacy Program (ECILP) grants, which were awarded through the competitive process in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. The application process was opened for three rounds of funding and awardees were notified in September 2023, November 2023, and April 2024, making this a year-long process of awarding funds. Local education agencies, sponsors of charter schools, and nonprofit organizations were eligible to apply. The grants must target improving literacy skills for children less than six years of age. Assembly Bill 400 requires a November 1 annual report, and the first report has been submitted by the department. Over the course of the three rounds, \$47.4 million of the \$70.0 million was allocated. Subrecipients could apply for funding for two different opportunities.

To get the biggest return on investment, the department increased access to high-quality pre-kindergarten (pre-K) by expanding the eligibility requirements for families and aligning the program requirements to the Nevada Ready! state pre-K (NR!PK) program. The NR!PK programs are high quality and support literacy and overall kindergarten-readiness skills. This expansion of pre-K is referred to as Opportunity 1. The expanded eligibility for these seats awarded through this funding was expanding the income eligibility from 200% to 250% of the federal poverty level, although families with the most needs are prioritized. There is no income eligibility requirement for children with individualized education plans or behavioral plans to encourage fully inclusive classrooms.

Lyon County School District and Lander County School District are two new subrecipients that have been recently added to the rural areas. There were 570 allocated seats for four year olds under this funding in addition to the 2,807 children currently served in the NR!PK program, bringing the total to 3,377 four-year-olds. The department is also now able to serve three-year-olds with this funding, including 660 children from low-income families who will receive two years of high-quality pre-K. The expanded criteria recommendations came from the current Nevada subrecipients to best serve those communities.

Opportunity 2 allows school districts, charter schools, and nonprofits the ability to apply for funding that would support new or existing literacy programs. The program areas awarded have been divided into five categories: Books to Children, Professional Development, Direct Service, Support Staff, and Family and Community Engagement. Professional Development and Family and Community Engagement were each awarded \$12 million. This shows that teachers need support in the classroom to improve literacy skills and the desire from families to learn more about their role in improving their child's literacy skills. Families do not always know how reading and literacy can be added into children's daily lives and the importance of reading to their children.

Page 6 includes two screenshots from the ECILP dashboard ([Exhibit H](#)). I am proud of my team, which in a short amount of time was able to learn the Tableau website and open this dashboard to the public. This website allows the department to be transparent in the use of funding. The home page shows the funding totals listed and specific information for Opportunities 1 and 2. Since there were so many varied programs awarded in Opportunity 2, it is possible to sort and obtain information on specific awardees. The link to the ECILP dashboard is provided on the slide; I encourage the Subcommittee to explore and see the types of programs and the initial outcomes that have already started to be collected.

Year two of the 2023-25 Biennium is quickly approaching, which begin a new round of funding. For those who received funding in year one, the application process was shortened for year two. Returning recipients did not have to complete the whole competitive process, but data was collected regarding things that were going well, barriers, and their initial outcomes and successes. This was done because there were concerns from school districts about continuing the programs and staff retention.

There is approximately \$15 million in new projects. The NDE is hoping to have this process open again on May 6, 2024, and closed by May 30, 2024. Applications will be reviewed the first two weeks of June 2024 and then funding will start July 1, 2024.

Year two will also include Opportunity 3. When discussing pre-K, infrastructure also needs to be considered, whether that is new classrooms, teacher support, or teachers. Pre-K classrooms are not just tables, chairs, and bookcases, the classrooms also need smaller toilets, appropriate playground equipment, and more things that were not really funded in the first year. With this additional funding opportunity, the NDE is hopeful that more providers, nonprofits, and school districts can open more classrooms and provide that opportunity to children.

I would like to take a moment to address some of the barriers and complications, such as the timing and release of the funds. As mentioned previously, there were three rounds of applications and those rewards were awarded in September 2023, November 2023, and some as late as April 2024. Those that were only just awarded in April 2024 are already being asked to prepare for year two because the funding ends June 30, 2024.

In the very beginning, the Office of Early Learning and Development needed time to develop the processes and application documents, and to review and allocate them. Since this was a new grant, there was a lot of discussion around what was allowable, which also impacted the ability to allocate quickly.

The NDE would like to consider ramp-up time when awarding new programs. Once the subrecipients are awarded, they often must obtain approval from their boards or grant teams, hire new staff, and purchase materials and equipment, which cannot happen until the official award is in hand.

Carrying over funds from year one to year two would have been a solution for an easier transition for these programs to continue more quickly. Another solution would be to hire a Grants Manager. For funding this large, a Grants Manager is necessary to set up all the documents, run the competitive process, collect outcomes, and handle all the reporting. Since a Grants Manager is a full-time job, I did not have anyone on staff that could take on those additional duties. However, the NDE was able to use ESSER funding to hire someone who quickly took charge of the whole process from the start. For the future, the NDE would like to have a full-time Grants Manager position be considered.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

This is a good example of when Read by Grade 3 was discussed during the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session. Of course, everyone is in favor of students being up to competency, but it was incumbent upon the Legislature to provide resources and supports because things cannot be changed without investing. Teachers and schools are already asked to do so much. I want to point out to Senator Cannizzaro's point that I think this was a good example of trying

to determine the funding amount. I will acknowledge that the funding came in very late. I believe this funding was added to A.B. 400 in the last days of the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session.

Of the \$140 million, how much will be reverted? Also, is the NDE able to offer an opinion on how things went and whether \$140 million was adequate to meet the needs of the program?

Ms. OYA:

Of the \$70.0 million available in FY 2024, \$47.4 million was allocated, which left \$22.6 million remaining. It is certain there will be more funding requests by the end of FY 2024; however, as of this morning, May 1, 2024, only \$8.5 million was expended so far in requests for funds. I am aware this is low and disappointing to hear, but the reason was due to the late ramp-up and some awardees did not receive funding until September 2023 or April 2024. Despite having excellent plans, it is difficult to spend so much money in such a short amount of time.

The NDE believes that the pre-K seats are part of this literacy program and goes hand in hand with the Read by Grade 3 program. Since pre-K is a part of the Read by Grade 3 program and the scores that are assessed, the NDE hopes to see those scores improve with more investment in pre-K. It is important to remember that the NDE serves less than 22.0% of all eligible four-year-olds and less than 8.4% of all four-year-olds. When considering the steps to universal pre-K, movement should be seen with Read by Grade 3 and this funding combined since there is only a very small impact of four-year-olds who need those skills. Most of the grantees, such as the Northern Nevada Literacy Council, came out in support, but even so, it was a timing issue and having adequate capacity.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

I would like to note that I received a letter from the Boys and Girls Clubs thanking the Legislature for the funding that provided programming for over 170,000 pre-K students per quarter. I am aware it is not a large number in terms of the need, but it is a starting point. As the 83rd (2025) Legislative Session approaches, if the NDE has thoughts about how this program could be better structured from the state level or opinions on staggered funding or positions, please share the feedback with the Legislature. I think it would be very helpful for legislators to try to figure out how to provide support to as many students as possible. I do not want the fact that a lot of money has not been spent to be an obstacle. I think there are some real challenges to the fact that this funding came about so late in the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session. The NDE was essentially asked to stand up a new grant program without any support. The Subcommittee is aware of that and asks for a continued dialogue on what more can be done state side.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN JAUREGUI:

I agree that pre-K is essential to Read by Grade 3. Page 4 of the presentation states that approximately \$9.1 million in funding was awarded for Opportunity 1 and page 5 states \$38.3 million was awarded to Opportunity 2 ([Exhibit H](#)). Then, it was mentioned that another funding option would be introduced through Opportunity 3 with about \$22.0 million. By introducing another opportunity bucket, does that mean there will be no more chances for more funding for Opportunity 1? I would like to see that funding increased. I am assuming some people did not apply because of how late the program got started, but how did the NDE decide on how the funding would be distributed? Was it based on applications or set percentages for Opportunity 1, Opportunity 2, and Opportunity 3?

Ms. OYA:

The competitive application process was opened at the same time for Opportunities 1 and 2. The majority of the seats from the \$9.1 million are going to the current NR!PK recipients; therefore, it was well known exactly how many seats could be expanded. The NDE was able to get two new districts to offer seats as well, which makes it important to think about Opportunity 3. There could be some classroom space or other nonprofits that want to offer seats. However, if the recipients lack infrastructure and support to get smaller playground equipment, smaller toilets, and all else that goes along with opening seats, pre-K seats could not be expanded by much. The money was prioritized there, and then once the NDE saw what was left, the department went through the applications for Opportunity 2. This was all a competitive application.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

I am not seeing any language relating to indigenous communities. Has there been any outreach to Nevada's tribal communities, especially those that are run by the federal Native American schools?

Ms. OYA:

Specific outreach has not been made. Assembly Bill 400 specifically says the funding is for local education agencies, nonprofits, and sponsors of charter schools. Therefore, individual schools could not apply. I am not sure tribal communities would qualify and each case would need to be considered separately. Information was distributed on the department's listserv and its partners, so the tribal communities most likely received information. The grant process was quite extensive; therefore, sometimes smaller community programs could not submit their application on time, which created another barrier.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

I wanted to note that I am happy that Classroom on Wheels received funding. It is a great program.

There was no further discussion on this item.

IV. OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION FROM THE COMMISSION ON SCHOOL FUNDING REGARDING:

1. The ten-year plan to meet optimal funding for K-12 education.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

Before beginning Agenda Item IV.1, I wanted to note that the work of the Commission on School Funding is important. I have carried around the executive summary from November 15, 2022, which was a guidepost for the Legislature during the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session in terms of policy and funding. I would like to read and discuss one part from the executive summary because I want to ask what was done during the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session regarding funding. In terms of getting Nevada to the national average of per pupil funding, there is a recommendation that says to get to that level, Nevada would need to invest between \$2.2 billion and \$2.7 billion in FY 2022. The Legislature invested close to \$2.0 billion during the 2021-23 Biennium. Also, in the iNVEST document from the Nevada Association of School Superintendents, an increase of \$270.8 million in new funding was recommended for FY 2024 (https://lcsdnv.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/5465.23-FLYER_iNVEST-in-Ed-2023-Final-1-1.pdf). Luckily, the state was in a fortunate circumstance to be able to meet those funding levels.

I know that per pupil funding is complicated and there is a lot going on in the country and the state, but what is the status of the investments that were made in the 2021-23 biennium? What will the State of Nevada have to do in the future to reach the national average?

GUY HOBBS (Chair, Commission on School Funding):

The report that includes the executive summary to which you referred was filed in November 2022; however, it will be re-drafted to update a lot of information. The commission is waiting for the updated funding statistics from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), which are expected to be released in May 2024, and then the report will be updated.

In preparing that report, two targets were used to compare Nevada's per pupil funding, one of which was the national average, and the other was the professional judgment amount that was provided by subject matter experts and is higher than the national average. That would explain the range in funding that was mentioned earlier.

Regarding the NCES statistics, I imagine that Nevada is not the only state that faced some of the positive and negative financial issues with respect to federal funding, COVID-19 dollars, etc. It will be interesting to see how the national average has changed and how Nevada has changed relative to the national average. I would expect that the commission would have the target calculations completed in May 2024 with the arrival of the NCES statistics. A re-draft of the entire report should be available by June or July 2024. This report is important because the original charge of the commission was to identify optimal funding, as difficult as that may have been to define, where Nevada sits as it relates to optimal funding, and the delta between optimal funding and where Nevada currently funds and identify methods of funding that gap over a ten-year period. This is just one of the many homework assignments the commission was given after the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

The IFC Subcommittee on Education Accountability will meet again towards the end of 2024 and the commission will be invited back to discuss the updated report when it is available. I wanted to recognize the commission because the report the commission released in 2022 was immensely helpful for myself, Senator Cannizzaro, and the chairs of the money committees to determine where to begin. I think the point is well taken that other states have invested in education as well. I saw a report that indicated that Nevada had the highest percentage increase of education spending of any of the 50 states and the territories. Hopefully that will have an impact, but the updated report will provide additional information.

SENATOR TITUS:

Chair Yeager mentioned that Nevada had the highest percentage increase in funding of any state. However, as I mentioned, despite increased education funding, the outcomes are not improving. I would hope the commission is not just looking at what other states are doing in relation to funding. I want to know what has been done with the money that has already been given and comparisons of programs that have and have not worked. Has there been any conversation about withdrawing funds from failing programs to fund successful programs?

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

I believe those questions are better suited for the next presentation on Agenda Item IV.2, which includes some additional requirements on the Commission on School Funding. Mr. Hobbs will address those questions during that presentation.

There was no further discussion on this item.

2. Progress toward meeting the requirements of Senate Bill 98 of the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session and Assembly Bill 400 of the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session.

GUY HOBBS (Chair, Commission on School Funding):

The key item for the Commission on School Funding during the 2023-24 Interim is helping to develop a system of accountability, reporting, measurement, and essentially something that would allow those that make investments over time to get a sense of return on investment. This will be central to completing all the tasks that the commission was given and the reports that need to be filed by the November 2024 deadline. I am currently trying to get many of the unrelated items that are on the task sheet completed so that the entire focus of the commission will be the accountability, reporting, and return on investment part of the assignment.

The commission was provided \$500,000 in General Fund appropriations by Senate Bill (S.B.) 98 (82nd [2023] Legislative Session). As of May 1, 2024, the commission, in collaboration with the NDE, is in the process of procuring two subject matter expert contracts for \$213,000 of the \$500,000 to carry out various studies outlined in S.B. 98, Section 7. The procurement process has taken awhile, and I would like to thank the NDE for its steadfastness in helping navigate the state's procurement process. The commission has secured Augenblick, Palaich and Associates (APA) to do applied analysis and additional work on the commission's behalf. It is important to remember that there are several subtopics, and APA is not necessarily working on the same topic.

It is important to mention that the commission also receives significant pro bono contributions from the members of the commission, many of whom have technical expertise and backgrounds and are providing that, in addition to that which is being paid for by appropriations.

About \$990,000 of the \$1 million that was appropriated in Assembly Bill (A.B.) 400 (82nd [2023] Legislative Session) has been allocated to the procurement of WestEd, APA, internal project management, etc. As noted, those are all being supplemented by pro bono contributions from the technical members of the commission.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

To answer Senator Titus' question earlier, there should be additional information by November 2024 when the reports will be due by the commission. I would anticipate the next meeting of this Subcommittee will be after November 2024 so the Subcommittee will have an opportunity to review those reports and ask questions of the commission.

I have a question on the topic of funding. Earlier in the meeting, the NDE discussed the executive audit that was conducted and presented. I read some commentary on the audit that I did not think was in line with what the audit itself, and I would like your opinion. The headline indicated that the outcome of the audit was that money does not matter, and more money should not be spent on education. However, when I read the audit for myself, I did not understand it in that way. Please explain how the narrative could lead to a conclusion that money does not make a difference.

GUY HOBBS:

Upon reading some of the coverage of what the audit contained, there was an agenda item at the March 2023 meeting of the Commission on School Funding to discuss the commission's take on the audit versus that which was read in the media reports. The media reports contrasted what was actually stated in the audit. There were statements in the audit that said that money does matter and investment in education does provide return. Now, of course, it is additionally qualified by how that is done. After reviewing the audit and getting the comments from the other members of the commission, I crafted a letter to Governor Joe Lombardo providing him with my thoughts about the outcome of the audit. I would be happy to share that letter with the Subcommittee if that would be of any interest.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

Yes, please submit that letter to the Subcommittee. These audits are very long and involved, and it can be difficult for people to read hundreds of pages, and oftentimes the media narrative gets out to the public first. I am glad that the commission took this up and delved into the audit. I would encourage members of the Subcommittee to go directly to the source rather than relying on the media. What I understood, and what everyone knows, is that money alone will not necessarily make a difference, it is how that money is invested. I think that is why the Subcommittee and the commission are here today working together to be efficient, such as having legislative auditors look at education to be able to determine if appropriate investments are being made.

There was no further discussion on this item.

3. Progress made on studying the impact of transitioning the methodology used to identify at-risk pupils.

GUY HOBBS (Chair, Commission on School Funding):

The transitioning of methodology used to identify at-risk pupils has shifted from a system of identification of at-risk using the former metric of free and reduced priced lunch, to the graduation score metric. One of the most common reactions was that using free and reduced-price lunch as the singular metric cast a very wide net on one metric, which was about half of the students in Nevada enrolled in public schools. That seemed rather unusual and made the commission focus on the definition of at-risk, which means at risk of graduating. This is logical if a system of education is making sure that the students have success to move out of that system with all the tools necessary to be a productive member of society. Many people were defining at-risk in much broader terms than at risk of graduating, but at risk of graduating is the sensible way to look at it.

Instead of using a singular metric like eligibility for free and reduced-price lunch, the graduation score approach was built around 75 different metrics that were weighted differently. It was an algorithm designed to be predictive of graduation, which sounds like a better fit than a single metric. There are people that would argue and raise the point that Nevada does not have a lot of historical experience using these alternate metrics. When choosing between an algorithm designed to focus on the target population versus one that overshot the mark, the commission's recommendation would be to continue with the graduation score. The graduation score metric should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that it is performing as intended.

Another recommendation is that the graduation score be set at the 20th percentile. Time will tell whether that is the appropriate percentile, but the fact that the 20th percentile was hardcoded into the *Nevada Revised Statutes* is something that the commission is recommending be a floating value and be determined biannually based on data. The State Board of Education should make that determination with appropriate input, and then be considered by the Legislature. Instead of being a strict value at 20% with no empirical data to suggest that is the right percentile, the commission would suggest that be a floating percentage based on supporting data.

The final recommendation is replacing the term "at-risk" with a new term "student success support." A change in term is necessary because of all the misunderstandings around the original term and the non-desirable stigma attached to the term. The new term is more descriptive in that there is a tie between success in terms of graduating and providing the students some level of support so they can be successful at graduating.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

During the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session, some legislators had concerns about the difference between the number of students that were formally at risk, and how few students it seemed like would be at risk under the new definition. I have heard concerns that students that were similarly situated, sometimes one student would be considered at risk under the old definition and another student would not be considered at risk. Has the commission discussed these issues and provided feedback to the vendor about trying to make sure that similarly situated students are treated in the same way?

MR. HOBBS:

The commission has had these discussions with the vendor and provided feedback. There was some sensitivity. As previously mentioned, there are 75 different metrics that are being used with different weights to run through the algorithm and make a determination about graduation for those with a higher propensity to not graduate, allowing services to be targeted toward those students. Whether the weighting on all those metrics is correct at this point, it is intended to be predictive. However, history may say that those weights need to change over time. This is something that requires constant monitoring to ensure that it is performing as designed. There is not enough history and experience behind its use yet to give a complete answer.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

That is understandable. During the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session, the Legislature was provided with the breakdown of all the factors. Part of the difficulty for the Legislature was that it came so late in the legislative session, it was difficult to do a deep dive. Looking at the data in the future will make sure that this is a tool that works for Nevada. In some sense, it is predictive. Currently, there is not a track record to make that determination now, but long term, asking the commission to review this in the future. This will ensure that new legislators have many years of data to help determine if something should be changed. I appreciate that Nevada is at the beginning of that process.

MR. HOBBS:

The Commission on School Funding was established for a reason and on an ongoing basis; the Legislature gives the commission homework assignments. I think an ongoing monitoring of the performance of this is something that is certainly a good fit since the commission is already tasked with monitoring the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

With the idea of floating data, would mental health be considered? I ask because there were some alarming statistics released recently that stressed the need for mental health professionals in schools.

MR. HOBBS:

To clarify, earlier I was referring to the use of the 20th percentile, where students who are below that percentile are categorized as at-risk and those above it would not be. Whether the 20th percentile is the correct percentile is really a function of the statistics. For example, if there were a cluster of students at the 21st and 22nd percentiles, and the cut off was the 20th percentile, that would be reason to take another look to ensure that everything is being captured. This is what I was suggesting as a floating statistic, that data will be largely suggestive as to where that should be from biennium to biennium. It did not have anything to do with the specific services provided to students that qualify, as much as making sure Nevada is capturing those that should.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

As I understand it, the floating statistic is more about the cut off and not necessarily what would be considered for the data.

Returning to my previous question, has there been discussion about adding other information, such as mental health. Mental health is a concerning issue that is interfering with students' ability to graduate. Has that been a part of the discussion within the commission or is that a topic for the NDE to discuss?

MR. HOBBS:

The commission would most likely not shy away from any challenge; however, I would defer to the NDE since it has more data and experience. I believe as time goes on, and I can have this discussion with the NDE and the vendor, that the metrics that are being used and how those are weighted over time would be informative about why students are also qualifying under whatever the set percentile. With time and experience, a lot of information could be obtained from the statistics, and that might address part of your question. It may give more of a sense of the characteristics of those that qualify under the percentile.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

How is the commission organizing and completing the large number of assignments in A.B. 400 and S.B. 98? I know there is a finite amount of time to complete these assignments and the Subcommittee wants to ensure the commission is successful in completing those tasks.

MR. HOBBS:

Not only are there new assignments from A.B. 400 and S.B. 98, but there is also carryover from S.B. 543 (80nd [2019] Legislative Session) and legislative memorandum to be sorted and completed. For the past few months, the commission has been divided into a series of working groups to better help with organization. Each of these topics is very important on its own, and some of them are not linked to the core assignment during the 2023-24 Interim, which includes accountability reporting, return on investment, etc.

For example, teacher recruitment and retention and teacher pipeline are separate subjects that are put into a working group that is headed by one of the members of the commission. There was also a working group that addressed small school capital, particularly in the rural areas. I headed that working group because of my knowledge in that area. The working group brought closure to that topic on April 26, 2024. I would note that closure comes in the form of recommendations and information that the commission provides to the Subcommittee.

Optimal funding is another working group that I am heading, which is another familiar topic to me given what I have done for the past 40 years.

Senator Woodhouse is heading a working group that is generally about the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan and whether it is working as intended. My understanding is at the next meeting at the end of May 2024, there should be closure to the questions surrounding that topic.

There is a work group that involves accessibility within public schools, which is more often termed "open zoning." A member of the commission is heading that group. There should be closure on that topic by June 2024.

There are also three working groups that are focused on different elements of the reporting and accountability. One of them is on all the reporting that is currently done. The testimony that was heard earlier said that in taking an inventory of all current reporting, there are 459 reports. I then added one by asking for a report on the reporting, bringing the total to 460. There is belief there is a lot of duplicative data being provided and the commission would like to reduce that redundancy wherever possible because it requires a lot of work assembling all those reports.

The commission also wants to clearly understand the disposition and final value of all those reports and if some of them could be combined. The commission's main interests are not only reducing duplicative workload, but also isolating the data that will be necessary for making determinations about reporting. The commission would like to determine the most salient data to include that would provide the Legislature the ability to make judgements about the effectiveness of certain programs and their outcomes, which is commonly measured. The commission has working groups assigned to that topic as well.

Although the commission has brought closure to several items thus far, there is still a lot of work to do between May and November 2024.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I appreciate the efforts of the Commission on School Funding. I understand it can be overwhelming and education is an important topic.

There was no further discussion on this item.

4. Progress on developing recommendations related to a target weight for funding the State Special Education program.

GUY HOBBS (Chair, Commission on School Funding):

WestEd is currently working to finalize its report and recommendations. Once the department has had an opportunity to review the report and recommendations, a presentation will be shared with the Commission on School Funding for final recommendations. This is part of the overall workload and the background work that is in progress.

CHAIR YEAGER:

The Subcommittee appreciates the work of the Commission on School Funding. As legislators, we are all busy during the interim and could not prepare for the 83rd (2025) Legislative Session without the help of the commission. The upcoming commission reports will be a helpful roadmap for the upcoming legislative session.

There was no further discussion on this item.

Chair Yeager called a recess at 12:14 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 12:50 p.m.

V. PRESENTATIONS FROM SCHOOL DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES ON THE IMPACT ON K-12 EDUCATION, AS WELL AS PUPILS, TEACHERS, AND EDUCATION SUPPORT STAFF, RESULTING FROM INCREASED FUNDING APPROVED DURING THE 82nd (2023) LEGISLATIVE SESSION.

Dr. Brenda Larsen-Mitchell, Interim Superintendent, Clark County School District

BRENDA LARSEN-MITCHELL (Interim Superintendent, Clark County School District [CCSD]):

The CCSD extends its continued appreciation to the Legislature and Governor Joe Lombardo for the historic increase in public education funding to enable further significant investments in the dedicated and very deserving employees of the CCSD.

The district is committed to working together with the entire community for the children and the district is grateful for the Legislature's partnership in educating Nevada's children. The Legislature's commitment to public education is clear and evident in the historic increase in public education funding. The effect for CCSD students has been drastic with resources allocated for students significantly increasing, especially since the implementation of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP).

JASON GOUDIE (Chief Financial Officer, CCSD):

Agenda Item V discusses the increase in historic funding for the PCFP for the district. Page 4 of the presentation shows a \$1.08 billion increase in PCFP funding related to the base auxiliary and special education increase for the 2023-25 Biennium ([Exhibit J](#)). Additionally, there was a weighted funding increase of \$437.0 million that was allocated to the CCSD. To fund the expenditures that were required over the 2023-25 Biennium, some additional funds were pulled from previous reserves. These were assigned funds for things of this nature; it was not unanticipated. In addition, consistent with any budget, there were one-time expenditures in the 2021-23 Biennium that did not recur, so that also freed up some funds. The total funding was \$1.59 billion.

Page 5 discusses additional funding that was approved and provided by the Interim Finance Committee related to Senate Bill (S.B.) 231 (82nd [2023] Legislative Session) funds ([Exhibit J](#)). The district was allocated \$174 million that will be used for employee recruitment and retention. There will be pay increases for all licensed professionals, support professionals, and school police. There will also be differential pay for special education and critical hard-to-fill positions.

Page 6 shows a summary of the increased budgeted expenditures and how they were spent ([Exhibit J](#)). The compensation and benefit increase of \$993.0 million is broken down as follows: \$684.0 million for licensed professionals, \$226.0 million for support professionals, \$73.0 million for administrators, and \$10.0 million for school police. The increase in compensation and benefits essentially funded with the PCFP increases. Additionally, of the \$437.0 million that went into weighted funding increases, approximately \$397.0 million was related to increases in funding either for new positions and/or increases in their pay. This shows that approximately \$1.39 billion of the \$1.5 billion was spent on increased compensation and benefits.

In addition, there was an increase in the CCSD's portion of the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) related to rate increases and substitutes being qualified to receive PERS benefits. There were also increases anticipated in utilities and inflation related to normal price increases on the contracts of about \$31.0 million. The district has dedicated \$15.0 million to instructional materials that were previously funded with ESSER funds that will expire in September 2024. There was also some technology and one-to-one device sustainability that was previously funded with ESSER funds, which was approximately \$30.0 million. These two components equal \$45.0 million, which shows the \$1.5 billion expenditure over the 2023-25 Biennium.

MS. LARSEN-MITCHELL:

Most of the CCSD's additional investments have gone to increase compensation for support professionals, licensed professionals, and administrators because of the challenges in filling vacancies. It is known that improved salaries lead to improved recruitment and retention, which leads to safe positive learning environments for students and employees. The number one school-based variable for student success is the teacher in the classroom. The essential support that all educators provide is critical to promote the achievement of students. Having high-quality educators increases student outcomes and decreases dropout rates.

The core work that is being implemented in the CCSD supplements the increases in compensation. Some of the current initiatives can be categorized into three areas: making sure the core function of instruction is solid; increasing access for all students; and strengthening social/emotional support and wraparound services. Instructionally, the CCSD is making sure its teachers have high-quality curriculum and instructional materials aligned with the Nevada academic content standards consistent at a level not seen in decades. The district has implemented tiered support that allows to better serve students and schools at multiple levels and with a wide variety of needs. It allows the CCSD to identify and respond to specific academic behavioral and social/ emotional needs of students including English language learners and students receiving special education services. The CCSD has implemented

and emphasized collaborative planning and professional learning and is aware of the impacts that have been caused from them. The district has surrounded schools with the most needs with additional supports and resources. Consistent implementation of these efforts together allows integration using common materials, language, and goals.

The district is also committed to increasing access for students, especially those who experience barriers to access. For example, children who receive high-quality pre-K have better attendance and an increased chance of reading by 3rd grade. There has been a 42% increase in pre-K enrollment in 2024 and the district is continually working on raising enrollment numbers. The district has also increased access to advanced coursework at the high school level by formally changing expectations for student scheduling. There have been major successes in this area, such as increases in advanced placement participation and performance, dual enrollment, and Career and Technical Education.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of mental health for adults and children. The CCSD has been continually adapting systems around social/emotional support and wraparound services. The district will continue to provide mental health supports for the 2024-2025 school year. Interventions for chronic absenteeism are helping as there has been a 7% percentage point reduction from the first semester of school in 2023 to the first semester in 2024. Every school has a multi-disciplinary leadership team to support students and the Acceleration Academy provides a blended learning model that allows students to work in person and at home year-round, which has helped support students that would have traditionally been lost toward the end of their high school career.

Using the increased PCFP and weighted funds allocated to schools, principals are making decisions to invest in solutions that impact individual school and student needs. As Mr. Goudie shared earlier, a significant proportion of that increase at the school level is going to salary increases for additional positions funded at the school level. In addition, schools are implementing tiered supports to promote student learning. For example, many elementary schools hire certified temporary tutors to provide tier two and tier three instruction for students needing additional support. Secondary schools also purchase teachers' preparation periods for additional classes to support students' mastery in mathematics and English language arts (ELA). Schools are implementing reading skills centers, after school programs, and summer learning opportunities for students. Schools are also investing in attendance, wraparound supports, educators, and staff. For example, schools are providing targeted staffing to reduce class sizes, provide additional support, and improve campus safety. Schools are also providing collaboration time and professional learning for their staff. Schools are also investing in their facilities, including facility maintenance and modernization safety features and facility projects to improve facilities.

The CCSD looks forward to sharing the initial impact of these increased funds as data cycles close out. Proficiency data will be released for the 2023-2024 school year in September 2024, and teacher retention and recruitment data will be available at the end of each school year. These cycles will continue into the 2024-2025 school year to close out the biennium.

Pages 7 through 10 show the status of the CCSD's current student outcomes ([Exhibit J](#)). These results are a baseline for the increased investment in the 2023-25 Biennium with results expected to surface through the 2025-27 Biennium. This data will prove that the CCSD is not where it wants to be.

There are signs of recovery from the pandemic and evidence that some of the earliest recovery efforts are impacting student outcome data and moving in the right direction. There is specific progress in mathematics since the CCSD first implemented new curriculum districtwide three years ago. The progress shows an increase in elementary and middle school levels, both districtwide and in Title I schools. Every student group in grades 3 through 8 made gains.

Unfortunately, that trend is not continuing at the high school level as American College Testing (ACT) math scores have gone down. For context, 230 schools in the CCSD have a Title I designation. There are known significant proficiency gaps with these results. These results are certainly not where the CCSD wants them to be, but the district is headed in the right direction. The district's educators and school leaders have been working extremely hard to implement the new math curriculum.

Students participate in an interim assessment called the MAP Growth Reading Assessment, which provides teachers with information that allows them to adjust instruction and provide projections for future proficiency rates. This year's interim assessments are projecting a continued increase in elementary and middle school mathematics proficiency. The educators are continuing to press forward, and the CCSD is eager to see the results in September 2024.

The district's progress in literacy is mixed. The ELA curriculum was implemented during the 2023-2024 school year. Since returning from the pandemic, there has been an overall but inconsistent increase in elementary school literacy proficiency rates in all schools and when isolating Title I schools. The results for the middle school level are mixed results, and ACT high school literacy proficiency scores are increasing. It is important to mention that there are significant proficiency gaps within these numbers with some student groups severely underperforming when compared to other student groups. The district's interim assessments are projecting similar elementary proficiency rates and an increase in middle school proficiency rates for the 2023-2024 school year.

Science proficiency has been a challenge as the CCSD is observing historically low science proficiency through slight increases in elementary and middle schools, both districtwide and in Title I schools. The district is observing a decrease in high school science proficiency over the last three years and there are significant proficiency gaps that exist within these results.

The district's graduation rate is increasing, and Title I schools are outpacing the overall district rate. Similarly, the district rate is outpacing the state four-year graduation rate.

Regarding recruitment retention and vacancy data, the CCSD hired 1,112 new licensed professionals and 1,886 new support professionals for the 2023-2024 school year. The district experienced a 93% licensed professional retention rate and a 91% support professional retention rate in the 2022-2023 school year. There are 1,470 licensed professional vacancies and 903 support professional vacancies for the 2024-2025 school year.

Immediately after I was appointed interim superintendent, I selected RoAnn Triana to serve as the Chief Human Resources Officer for the district. She was born and raised in Clark County, has served as an elementary, middle, and high school principal, and was most recently a region one superintendent. I have worked with Ms. Triana over the years, and she has always led with a sense of urgency putting the needs of students and educators first. In human resources, the focus is to quickly analyze systems and structures to enhance the experience for candidates and building leaders who are actively hiring educators for their schools. The CCSD is working with a sense of urgency with high-quality customer service.

As anticipated financial related challenges and recommendations are discussed, the CCSD is concerned about the expiring ESSER funds and the sustainability of revenue sources. The district anticipates continued expenditure concerns including inflation, PERS, maintaining facilities and equipment, maintaining curriculum and instructional materials, and mental health supports for students. In alignment with these challenges, the CCSD recommends prioritizing legislation to support sustained education funding; continue progress toward optimal school funding, working with the Commission on School Funding; and working together to solve challenges focused on education funding.

The district is grateful for the opportunity to operationalize the funds that the Legislature has invested in children. The CCSD recognizes it is a significant piece, but just one piece of a much larger machine working for the future of children. I do not take the district's part in that responsibility lightly. I look forward to continuing to work with the Subcommittee, other leaders, and the rest of the community to improve outcomes for all students.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

The theme I noticed throughout the CCSD presentation was the prioritization of compensation for education and support professionals, which is critically important. With the new salary schedule, it appears that the CCSD is at least competitive with the western United States and particularly Southern California. What efforts are currently underway to recruit teachers? Did the CCSD hire any other organizations to help with recruitment?

MS. LARSEN-MITCHELL:

On April 30, 2024, the CCSD launched a recruitment campaign targeting Southern California, where many teachers are being laid off. The district now has benefits that are desirable like compensation that is comparable with Nevada's cost of living, PERS, and the lack of state income tax. Therefore, the CCSD also launched an extensive recruitment campaign targeting local colleges and universities. The district will be campaigning via virtual job fairs, education job fairs, online job boards, social media, and streamlining platforms. That campaign kicked off yesterday at Aggie Roberts Elementary School.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

Is that entirely an internal campaign or are there outside vendors that are helping in the process?

MS. LARSEN-MITCHELL:

The district contracted with someone to help with the marketing piece.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

I am aware that there has been some discussion about whether raises were given only to new employees or seasoned employees as well. Recruiting new employees is important, but what is the CCSD doing to retain current educators?

MS. LARSEN-MITCHELL:

To retain the CCSD's current employees, schools can provide incentives for their employees at the school level. The district provides a lot of professional learning for its educators of which they are compensated at the new \$50 an hour rate. The district is also working extremely hard on climate and culture to make sure that there are strong working conditions for staff and showing staff they are valued and appreciated. I am starting off with some listening sessions this week and will continue those sessions into the upcoming 2024-2025 school year with all employees and students.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

It was previously mentioned that ESSER funds were being used to make sure that the CCSD was continuing its obligations for areas such as mental health support. Is there a plan to continue those support services once the ESSER dollars expire?

MS. LARSEN-MITCHELL:

The CCSD did use ESSER funding to purchase mental health supports for its students. The district also purchased the program Panorama Education, which is a screener that students can use to identify that they need help. The plan is to continue purchasing Panorama Education for the 2024-2025 school year. The district found money to purchase Hazel Health and Care Solace, which is pending approval; however, approval should be received by mid-May 2024.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

I noticed that nothing was mentioned in the presentation about the dollars that schools can carry over. I would like to know how much money in the aggregate among schools in the districts would potentially be carry over dollars. I am aware that it is a school site decision about how to use those funds, but is the administrative level of the district involved in working with the schools to determine how to use that money to improve student outcomes?

MR. GOUDIE:

As of the 2022-2023 school year, there was approximately \$260 million of school carry over as allocated through *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 388G. The amount varies in that some schools have nothing to carry over and other have several million dollars, so that is the overall component. Additionally, with the approval of S.B. 282 (82nd [2023] Legislative Session), the CCSD is working on how that will affect and require schools to develop plans and then spend on a specific set of targeted items within a two-year period to ensure that the fund balance gets down below the 5% threshold. Furthermore, the CCSD is continuing to analyze the data related to how the ESSER funds were spent in the last couple of years. The district has central teams that are working with principals and other groups within the district to identify the programs that were most effective for different schools that could then be translated into the additional funds that the schools have and continue with those pieces.

MS. LARSEN-MITCHELL:

The district's principal supervisors work very closely and collaboratively with the principals. Protocol tools have been built as those budget cycles come around and the CCSD works with them on how they will be spending their

money. Of course, they also work closely with their school organizational teams. The CCSD is also providing tiered supports for students and whatever resources that are needed. Schools also submit plans on how their carry over funds will be spent.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

The graphs that are provided for mathematics, literacy, and science are sobering but not surprising numbers for members of the Subcommittee that saw this information during the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session (pages 11 through 13, [Exhibit J](#)). The student achievements for mathematics are a little higher in grades 3 through 5 and then starts to decline in grades 6 through 11 in terms of the percentage efficiency. However, the other areas are not necessarily like math. Literacy tends to be flat across the board. Science is interesting because the student achievement is low in grade 5, it improves in grade 8, but then in some of the high school instances, it declines again.

Because the last three years of these charts are after the COVID-19 pandemic, what conclusions can be made in terms of mathematics, literacy, and science? What do those trends mean and how should the trends be looked at? Is the pandemic to be blamed or teacher vacancies? What should the Subcommittee be taking away from the story that is being told in these three areas?

MS. LARSEN-MITCHELL:

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted education and student outcomes significantly. Some research suggests that the average student will require 4.1 months of additional schooling to catch up with the pre-COVID levels in reading and 4.5 months to catch up in math. Students who are demonstrating gaps will need even more time to get to pre-COVID levels. Although the CCSD's teachers work extremely hard, but there are a lot of vacancies in the district, which impacts education.

There have also been some challenges with climate and culture recently which has been a factor. Tier one instruction is what all students receive, and with high-quality, tier one instruction, 80% of the CCSD's students should be proficient. Therefore, the data reveals there is a tier one instruction problem, and that is why as a district, the CCSD has invested in tier one instructional materials to make sure that students have equitable opportunities to engage in instructional materials that are aligned to the standards. Since having those tier one instructional materials for three years, the district is now seeing gains in math.

The district has also built out specific, explicit expectations for tier two students, who were not successful in tier one. Tier two includes providing students with additional time. Also, approximately 73 schools in the district will be

implementing reading skills centers, which provides tier two and tier three instruction in ELA. Schools will also be providing after school and summer learning opportunities. There are a variety of indicators for the data.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

The graphs on pages 11 through 13 are encouraging because the 2022-2023 school year shows either the same percentages as the year before or a small amount of improvement ([Exhibit J](#)). Things do not change overnight, and I would have been surprised if the graphs for 2022-2023 showed drastic improvements, especially since the S.B. 231 funds were only just approved during the April 2024 IFC meeting. It will take time to see that improvement and it will take a couple more cycles of data for a true picture. However, I would expect with the investments that have been made, improvements will be seen in the next update.

The Subcommittee has learned about many statistics and proficiency levels today. For example, there is a 19.2% proficiency level in math for grade 11, 10.1% for Title I schools. Has the CCSD thought about the district's long-term goals? What are the goals for those three categories and what is a realistic proficiency rate? I would like to know what to expect over the next couple biennia. Funding is going to continue to be an issue; however, the Legislature is committed to doing everything possible to continue or augment this level of funding.

MS. LARSEN-MITCHELL:

My team and I are working extremely hard at building trust and relationships with the community to improve culture and climate. The CCSD has worked very hard on building systems and structures within the teaching and learning unit in the last three years. When I walked into the Deputy Superintendent's office in the midst of COVID-19 in July 2020, we flipped the fifth largest district in the nation upside down. Upon return, the district has been working hard to implement instructional systems and structures, there was a blank slate. Immediately coming out of COVID-19, the CCSD implemented expectations for high-quality tier one instruction that was consistent across the district. The district is now moving into the explicit tier two instruction expectations and then the district will work on tier three.

The district has also built out explicit systems instructions for professional learning communities, which is collaborative time in which teachers work together to plan instruction and analyze data and then respond to student's needs. With building systems and structures and providing and implementing professional learning in the past three years, I expect for student outcomes to improve by 3% to 5% each year.

The district must do better for its students. I appreciate the acknowledgment that it is going to take time, because it will, despite the students being unable to wait. The district is working diligently to put the right systems and structures in place for student achievement levels to grow.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Thank you for acknowledging that Nevada needs to do better for the students, because the last few years have been painful to watch for many reasons.

Regarding climate and culture, I am glad that Ms. Larsen-Mitchell is going to conduct some listening tours. I hope that the CCSD listens to the public. It is important to hear the negative comments and what people are thinking because a problem cannot be fixed until it is acknowledged as a problem.

Regarding the mental health piece, are Hazel Health, Care Solace, and Panorama Education only available online?

MIKE BARTON (Chief Student Achievement Officer, CCSD):

Care Solace is a referral service that is available virtually or telephonically where parents and community members can call to get a referral to a therapist. Hazel Health is telehealth, which is done virtually, but it is real time where the students are on a campus receiving that telehealth service. Lastly, Panorama Education is administered as a universal screener in person at the schools to help determine which students are the most in need.

The CCSD recently added Hope Squad, which is an in-person, peer-to-peer mental health tool. In this program, students help other students to make sure that suicide ideation is being dealt with in real time to prevent tragedies.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Online mental health services are beneficial; however, the in-person piece can be very important for certain children. The online option is beneficial because it makes it more accessible for families and work schedules. I believe that direct eye contact is more likely to occur during in-person meetings so I would not want to eliminate that option because mental health of students is too important.

In terms of curriculum, there has been some growth and decline. Has there been any discussion about moving teachers or students around based on the population of the school? For example, a reading program can vary between a one-star school and a five-star school because the students can be at different levels. Therefore, using the same program for all schools may not fit the needs. I see then that teachers can use some of their own creativity;

however, I have heard they must do things in a structured format. Has there been any discussion about how the CCSD might move forward with that to have those programs lend themselves to different schools and their needs?

MS. LARSEN-MITCHELL:

With having consistent tier one instructional materials, teachers can provide intense professional learning. A benefit that teachers and administrators are appreciating is that when a student moves from one school to another, they are familiar with the instructional materials. The district has implemented pacing guides so even when a student moves from one school to the next, the student is being taught the same standards at about the same time. This is also beneficial for teachers that move and can use the same instructional materials.

This was the first year for the ELA program, which was HMH Education, at the elementary and middle school level. Anytime a new curriculum is implemented, it is a challenge, and the CCSD's teachers and administrators are working extremely hard. The district has tier one monitoring tools and have looked for tools to help provide coaching for teachers and administrators to implement. The CCSD is implementing consistently across the district to make sure there are equitable opportunities for all students.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I agree, it is important with the transiency that is seen in Nevada. Is the professional development learning in person or online?

MS. LARSEN-MITCHELL:

It is a combination of both.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

Are all high school teachers using the same curriculum, regardless of subject matter, or are they allowed to adjust their curriculums?

MS. LARSEN-MITCHELL:

The district purchased consistent tier one instructional materials in ELA, mathematics, and social studies at the high school level.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

There are many people that want to invest in public education, but they want to ensure that the money also goes into the classrooms, transportation, etc. What percentage of the budget is used for the operations of school district headquarters.

MR. GOUDIE:

There are several ways to answer that question because of which pieces are central, which pieces are supports to school, etc., so I will try and put the overall numbers in context. In the 2024 and 2025 tentative budget there are operating revenues of around \$3.5 billion. This includes local sources, which is primarily consistent of interest income, and the state sources, which is primarily the PCFP, and the special education account. When that is broken down into the major components, there is about \$2.3 billion that is dedicated to strategic budgets. These are the local school precincts that were created under Assembly Bill 469 (81st [2021] Legislative Session), which became NRS 388G, and those are the school funds which then carry over and are directly funded into schools. Additionally, there is \$669.0 million in special education services that are provided directly. Of that \$669.0 million, there is approximately \$66.0 million which would not be essentially in the classroom or transportation for special education. This adds up to 90% of those dollars essentially being within the schools.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

To confirm, \$2.3 billion of the operating budget is dedicated to the school budgets that go to the schools on their own, but the additional \$1.1 billion is going towards district personnel that may be running different programs or making sure transportation is being utilized correctly. Is that correct?

MR. GOUDIE:

That is correct; however, of the \$3.4 billion, it is split into spendings of \$1.1 billion and \$2.3 billion that are spent in schools. From these amounts, \$669.0 million was related to the special education component, and of that, around \$600.0 million is directly in the classroom. Adding the \$2.3 billion plus the \$600.0 million, there is about \$2.9 billion that is essentially directly in schools or classrooms. Additionally, most of the other services that are in the remaining \$400.0 million include transportation for general education students, maintenance of schools, which includes facilities and schools, and the central services staff.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

I appreciate the explanation and I will be asking the other school districts the same question. Please provide the Subcommittee with the percentage of the budget that is utilized for central staff. This is an issue of concern for people, especially they see alarming headlines. The Subcommittee would appreciate clarification of what percentage of the budget funds the central office, excluding transportation and special education.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

I have a document that was provided by the CCSD in March 2024 called, *At A Glance 2022-2023*." The back of the document includes a picture of a dollar bill with a breakdown of ten units of funding. The *At A Glance* document is published annually by the Communications Unit, with the last revision being December 2022. I am hoping is an updated version and that there will be another updated version in December 2024. This may help with Assemblywoman Anderson's questions, and it is helpful to see these different buckets of money. Please provide the Subcommittee with an updated version, if available, as well as an updated version in December 2024. This pamphlet was helpful to get a sense of what was going on in the district, so I applaud whoever created this graphic.

SENATOR TITUS:

Page 8 of the presentation lists some of the things that have been or will be improved by increased compensation such as social/emotional support, wraparound services, and chronic absenteeism ([Exhibit J](#)). During the 82nd (2023) Legislative Session, there was a presentation by the State Superintendent regarding the number of children that were essentially lost after the COVID-19 pandemic. It is unknown whether the students moved away or are now homeschooled. As I gathered information on the data interaction from the Nevada Accountability portal and looked at the percentage of chronic absenteeism for the CCSD, the numbers have changed drastically since 2018. During the 2018-2019 school year, the percentage was 21.9%, there is a high point of 40.6% in 2021-2022, and 38.3% in the 2022-2023 school year. Based on the criteria of absenteeism, by listing a percent of students absent, it must be known that these students exist. Is the number of students lost included in these statistics? If so, how is that measured?

MS. LARSEN-MITCHELL:

The district's chronic absenteeism includes students who are enrolled in the district.

SENATOR TITUS:

According to that enrollment, compared to pre-COVID enrollment, have the numbers increased or decreased? Having initially heard that the CCSD lost 10,000 students who never returned is very bothering. What do you think that figure might be now, and where would that data be found?

GREG MANZI (Assistant Superintendent, Assessment, Accountability, Research, and School Improvement Division, CCSD):

The district's enrollment has slightly declined from pre-COVID, with the current enrollment at about 300,000 students; however, that number is stable. This information is readily available on the Nevada Report Card website where the CCSD's annual enrollment information is reported by grade level for disaggregation.

SENATOR TITUS:

To confirm, the numbers have decreased, but are stable. My question about those 10,000 lost students was not answered. I would like to request more information on that topic. Does that number include children who are homeschooled? If so, how many children are homeschooled now compared to pre-COVID in the district?

MR. MANZI:

The enrollment number for the district does not include homeschool students. Homeschool students are processed as a withdrawal since those students are not actively enrolled in the district; therefore, not included in the enrollment number. That is processed through the homeschool office where parents file that information. There was an increase in homeschool applications during the pandemic. Since homeschool applications are submitted only once, the district does not track that beyond the one-time submission.

SENATOR TITUS:

What are the comparisons between homeschool enrollment numbers pre- and post-COVID in the district?

MR. MANZI:

I will provide that information to the Subcommittee.

SENATOR TITUS:

That would be appreciated because the Subcommittee is trying to represent all Nevada children. I have been reading some articles about the increase in the number of homeschoolers and I am wondering where those are in the mix. I am concerned about the decrease in enrollment in the CCSD. I would appreciate more data input on some of these numbers because I think the state has lost a lot of students.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

To add onto Senator Titus' discussion, many homeschool families may not even know they need to register, so children may have been lost due to that reason. Also, a family could move to another state or country, and if that new school does not request the records from the previous school, then the district cannot account for that child. Similarly, if a child changes from a public to a private school, records might not be requested by the private school. It is not against the law to not request records, so depending on the situation, it could just be that these students have been lost due to the pandemic and the movement and transiency that happened during that time. This has been an issue for decades, not just due to the pandemic. In the end, if schools and districts do not communicate with each other, there is no way to know where a student has gone.

I think it is important to listen to teachers, students, and parents, but also principals and administrators that are working with these children. Although oversight is necessary, I am concerned about micromanagement. These are professional staff and should be trusted to do their jobs.

There was no further discussion on this item.

Dr. Kristen McNeill, Interim Superintendent, Washoe County School District

DR. KRISTEN MCNEILL (Interim Superintendent, Washoe County School District [WCSD]):

This presentation will go through a summary of the WCSD's increased funding that was received thanks to Senate Bill (S.B.) 231 (82nd [2023] Legislative Session). There will be updates on how that additional funding is being used, including updates with how it is being utilized to improve graduation rates and student outcomes. Funding challenges that the district continues to have will be discussed as well as recruitment, retention, and current vacancy rates.

MARK MATHERS (Chief Financial Officer, WCSD):

Page 4 of the presentation shows a summary of the increased funding the WCSD received as part of the \$1 billion per year increased funding statewide for kindergarten (K) through grade 12 ([Exhibit K](#)). That translated to increased funding, in terms of state funding of \$124.6 million in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 budget. For FY 2025, the WCSD anticipates an increase of \$12.7 million, or about 2%. The increased funding that was received this fiscal year was amazing and made a lot of life-changing impacts. The district appreciates the state's support for K-12 education and what it means for employees and students.

There was a small decline of funding for auxiliary services, or transportation services. This funding is based on historical average cost, and since COVID-19 saw transportation costs to decline, the district is still feeling those effects. The local special education dollars decreased slightly as well in FY 2024. Special education will be covered more in depth later in the presentation with funding challenges.

Page 6 focuses on the general fund and the base per pupil funding the WCSD receives ([Exhibit K](#)). The district's base per pupil funding increased by almost \$2,000, going from \$7,318 per pupil in base per pupil funding to a little over \$9,200 per pupil funding. The chart on page 6 breaks out how that was utilized in FY 2024. There were non-discretionary costs such as merit increases for employees, health insurance cost increases, and increases to electricity and other utility costs totaling to \$20.9 million, leaving an increase in the general fund of approximately \$71.0 million.

Of the \$71.0 million, \$61.0 million was used for employee compensation. This money and the S.B. 231 funding funded a 14.0% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for teachers during FY 2024, another 4.0% raise, and then an additional 2.0% in FY 2025. This totals a 20.0% increase in salaries in two years. All other units including the leadership team, classified professional, technical staff, and school administrators received slightly less, at 13.2% in FY 2024 and then 2.0% in FY 2025. The remaining \$10.0 million in additional funding will be used to implement the WCSD's new strategic plan, which would include new positions and programs, retention of positions that were funded by federal stimulus dollars, etc.

Page 7 shows the tremendous increases in FY 2024 in weighted funding ([Exhibit K](#)). The funding from the 82nd (2023) Legislature allowed the weighted funding to increase by 2.5 to 3 times in these three categories. In FY 2025, funding for at-risk students will drop by a third. This is a real funding challenge the district will discuss more with the Subcommittee later in the presentation. Despite this concern, it is still a positive change for students. The district is investing heavily in new programs and additional staffing in those areas.

DR. MCNEILL:

The district is currently in the first year of its three-year strategic plan for which the board invested an additional \$10 million. Page 9 shows the five strategic plan goals ([Exhibit K](#)). The plans begin with Strong Start for Every Child, where the importance of early learning is discussed with a strong investment within pre-K programs and making sure that children can start school.

The next goal is Student Voice and Advocacy, where the WCSD makes sure that its students have that support. Moving on to Safety and Belonging, this goal will include a strong investment in mental health supports with counselors and social workers. The next goal, Academic Growth and Achievement, received a bulk of the funding. Finally, the last goal is Empowering All Learners for their Future. This assures every graduate will have the skills needed for the world, whether that is serving in the military, starting a career, or entering post-secondary education.

The summary of the FY 2025 budget approvals on page 10 shows the total costs of the goals that I just mentioned ([Exhibit K](#)). It is important to note that the WCSD board and leadership made an emphasis to make an impact around people over programs in the district. The district hiring 243 positions (242.5 FTE) is a strong impact when talking about what is going to make the most impact within schools. It is not necessarily the programs, but the people that are implementing those programs.

There are approximately 12 schools that the WCSD has in its collaborative schools that will be receiving additional resources and supports. Most of these schools are Title I and one- and two-star schools. As heard in prior presentations today, mathematics is a concern across Nevada, especially in the WCSD, so there is an emphasis on this in the middle schools.

Importantly, the WCSD board took the bold step into reducing 4th and 5th grade class sizes at one- and two-star schools. The intervention budgets at high schools, including graduation advocates that track every child. When officials walk into the high schools to do graduation monitoring visits, the principals, counselors, and teachers know the exact status of each student as it relates to graduation as well as the necessary interventions.

The district will be increasing the amount of English learner (EL) teachers so that schools with high populations of EL will have that support. When additional supports for academic achievement are discussed, the elimination of barriers is important. To help with this, the board has eliminated fees for Career and Technical Education, International Baccalaureate, advanced placement classes, and dual enrollment. Students in the WCSD will no longer have the barriers of not being able to afford those programs because the board is paying those fees. The district is also adding ten additional hours to the Educational Technology Specialist positions in elementary schools to make it a benefited position.

As previously mentioned, current expansions will be occurring. Pre-K programs will be expanded, along with new pre-K programs, teacher aides and assistants, and the stabilization of grant funding in programs.

For the support around student engagement and belonging, there will be expansion of the student voice program, with more clubs and activities added. This helps prevent chronic absenteeism in schools because children want to show up to schools when there are engaging in activities like clubs and activities with which they have a connection. Sixth grade sports will also be added. Students entering middle school will now be able to play athletics just as high schoolers do, just not at the same competition level. The district's nationally recognized parent-teacher home visit program will also be expanded. Lastly, systemwide improvements will be implemented.

To make all these things happen, the district needs to have the sinew to make these connection points. The district will be investing in program evaluation to make sure that these dollars are effective. Page 13 shows a summary of where these additional costs are going ([Exhibit K](#)). Of the \$25.2 million in improved costs, 88% of those costs are dedicated to personnel through new positions, funding shifts to stabilize funding of positions, and maintaining positions that are set to expire.

JOE ERNST (Chief Continuous Improvement Officer, WCSD):

I will be presenting some of the baseline data in terms of how the district determined to use the funds. Page 15 shows the Smarter Balance assessment results in English language arts (ELA) for the last four school years, 2018-2019 to 2022-2023 ([Exhibit K](#)). The multilingual and special education students both declined in 2022-2023 along with the rest of the school district.

Page 16 shows the Smarter Balanced assessment results in mathematics for the last four school years, 2018-2019 to 2022-2023 ([Exhibit K](#)) for grades 3 through 8. The data shows that both special education and multilingual students improved proficiency while the district held steadily as a whole. Like most other districts nationally, the WCSD is not yet back to pre-pandemic levels of performance. There was a question earlier today about where there have been areas of getting back to those pre-pandemic levels of academic performance and the WCSD is excited that in certain grade levels, mostly in elementary school, there has been performance that is consistent with the pre-pandemic performance levels. This gives the district some optimism.

Page 17 shows the Smarter Balanced assessment results in science for the last four school years, 2018-2019 to 2022-2023 ([Exhibit K](#)). As shown, this is a real area of need for special education and multilingual students. This is an area that really emphasizes the need for a particular investment with the multilingual population. The district is excited to be adding nearly 50 additional

EL staff, which should have significant support towards teaching language acquisition. One of the keys in science achievement is a strong understanding of the academic language, which can be a particular barrier for multilingual students who are still developing their language skill.

The new per pupil investment in EL teachers will specifically support multilingual populations with this rich academic language. The district is excited to see how the large-scale investment support of science achievement for students, particularly for multilingual students, helps over the coming years. It is obvious how the weighted funding formula is really helping support an identified need within the school district. The 2023-2024 Smarter Balanced test results should be out by September 15, 2024.

Pages 18 and 19 show iReady diagnostic exam results, which are interim measures ([Exhibit K](#)). This investment is an assessment that is supporting educators and students with more frequent data to help drive their instructional needs and decisions so that the district can make more immediate course corrections with funding investments instead of waiting until Smarter Balanced data arrives after the school year concludes. One of the district's efforts with iReady is that it is a comprehensive evaluation to look at the implementation of the first year of programming. There have been encouraging results from teachers and administrators in terms of the first year of implementation. From this evaluation, the district receives insights as to how it can improve going forward. The graphs on page 18 and 19 both show some growth with multilingual and special education students for ELA and mathematics. The WCSD has taken a substantive step forward in terms of projecting math proficiency towards this year's test.

Page 20 shows the WCSD's graduation rates from 2013 to 2023 ([Exhibit K](#)). Although there have been some declines post-pandemic, mainly because of changes to how diplomas are factored into the graduation calculation, the WCSD is still proud to remain above the 80% threshold. What I would really like to draw the Subcommittee's attention to, is that the district has never sacrificed rigor. Nearly half of all students in the past decade have gone beyond the standard diploma and earned an Advanced, Honors, or College and Career Ready (CCR) diploma, which prepares them for post-secondary options.

The WCSD is dedicated to continuing support by removing some barriers of access. Page 21 shows that nearly 70% of graduates earn credit in advanced coursework, which is impressive ([Exhibit K](#)). However, there are achievement gaps, and this is where the district can see how the weighted funding really supports the school's need. The district has dedicated a substantial portion of its new per pupil funding to intentionally closing these opportunity gaps at a rapid pace by eliminating the financial access that was previously mentioned. The district has also committed funding to removing all fees for these courses

and is building a new Career and Technical Education (CTE) school that will allow over 850 students to participate in CTE and dual credit coursework. The district has also partnered with the University of Nevada, Reno, where college-level instructors will teach courses at the high school sites to grow the district's dual credit.

Page 22 compares Title I versus non-Title I schools ([Exhibit K](#)). There are sizable achievement gaps between those at the elementary and middle school levels; however, the gaps have reduced over time so that by graduation the gaps are reduced substantially.

Page 23 discusses the WCSD's Acing Accountability innovative goals ([Exhibit K](#)). The district has worked to align its monitoring processes to where these new per pupil funds pay the highest dividends. The NDE asked each school district to select two areas to feature its progress publicly through Acing Accountability. The WCSD selected ELA performance and language acquisition specifically, as well as gains in advanced course completion amongst the district's free and reduced-price lunch students. These goals demonstrate good alignment with using funds to support the areas of most need.

This is just the beginning of these investments, but I want to convey how important these funds will be for addressing the district's greatest needs. The district looks forward to sharing the positive impact they are going to have in the coming years.

MR. MATHERS:

There is much appreciation for the magnitude of dollars the WCSD received in both general education base per pupil funding and weighted funding during the 2023-25 Biennium. The LCB Fiscal staff asked the district to speak to the district's funding challenges. Page 25 covers at-risk funding, which I would like to discuss ([Exhibit K](#)). I share the CCSD's concerns overall for some of the cost trends. There are greater retirement costs and inflation quickly spends the dollars, but more specifically, one of the areas of concern is at-risk funding. I sit on the Commission on School Funding, and this has been a focus in terms of fine-tuning how to measure at-risk children and ensuring it is done equitably and transparently, and that work will continue. I am sure the WCSD will have recommendations for the 83rd (2025) Legislature.

For the next fiscal year, there was a concerning trend with the decline of at-risk students as calculated using Infinite Campus' graduation score of one-third. From October 2022 to October 2023, the number of at-risk students in the WCSD decreased from 4,912 to 3,147. It is hard to believe that there could be that kind of transformation in one year and the district is trying to understand how that could happen, but that is a significant drop in funding to support these

students. That kind of volatility and funding makes it incredibly hard to budget the staff personnel needed to support those students. In the district's view, it penalizes districts that do a good job with these students if funding is taken away immediately from students when there is progression, and they rise above the 20th percentile of students, that is not good public policy. Again, the Commission on School Funding is looking at this and will return to the Legislature with thoughts and recommendations, which I know is concerned about this area as well.

Special education funding is the second area of funding challenges. This was originally a weighted-funding category and all the studies that prepped the implementation of the new PCFP. It has been taken out of weighted funding in the waterfall of funding in the plan. These are students with the most significant, serious needs. Since the WCSD was able to offer a significant COLA for its special education staff, there have been cost increases there; however, funding for special education has remained unchanged. Currently, the WCSD contributes the most dollars towards special education services versus the state or federal government. As a result of the COLA and the compensation increases for staff, there is a burden on the WCSD to fund special education services, increasing \$16 million this fiscal year net of any additional state special education funding. That comes from the district's general education dollars and general fund budget. The WCSD needs to keep up with special education funding to support those students as the district sees cost increases and a rising number of special education students.

KATIE WEIR (Interim Chief Human Resources Officer, WCSD):

Page 28 discusses an update on recruitment, retention, and vacancy rates in WCSD ([Exhibit K](#)). Like the CCSD, it is a little early to say the exact rates. With some slight increase in positions this year, from November 2022 to April 2024, the vacancy rate has decreased from 4.51% to 3.31%. It is expected there will be significant increase in positions next year. The vacancy rate for education support professionals has decreased from 12.36% in November 2022 to 6.45% in April 2024.

I am also excited to announce that most likely relative to the COLAs that were mentioned earlier, there has been a significant reduction in retirements for teachers and administrators. It is still a little early to give those exact numbers, but for example, out of 103 principals, none are planning to retire at the end of the 2023-2024 school year. That is significant considering 24 new principals were onboarded last year.

DR. MCNEILL:

I would like to take a moment to show my appreciation and recap what was able to be provided with the additional funding, including the 13% to 14% COLA for all of employee groups, and the implementation of the new strategic plan. Supports for at-risk students were expanded from weighted funding, and

concerns were discussed. Pre-K programs were expanded as well. In addition, the S.B. 231 funds provided an additional 4% COLA for those employees that were able to get additional funding.

Lastly, the increased funding has assisted in reducing vacancy rates. The WCSD has great hope that the allocation of these funds will help increase student performance. The district looks forward to sharing the results in the future.

ASSEMBLYMAN GRAY:

Regarding the parent teacher home visit program, what is the purpose? Are there any reports or notes generated from these visits? Have any of these home visits resulted in Child Protective Services (CPS) referrals?

DR. MCNEILL:

I do not have the data on the CPS. The purpose of the parent teacher home visits is adding additional layers of support for families. A teacher, administrator, sometimes a counselor or social worker, will make an outreach and welcome the family. Just recently, the new Chief of Police even offered to have the school police involved.

When I have gone on parent teacher home visits, sometimes the families go to great lengths for the meeting, like having meals prepared. The idea is determining what the family needs to make their child successful. The onus is on the district to make sure that the outreach is getting done and finding out what families need—whether families have access, require assistance completing the application for free and reduced-price lunches, transportation issues, parents' access to employment, etc. The district will go to great lengths to get them the necessary services. The WCSD follows a national model that originated from Sacramento. I appreciate Delisa Crane, the Director of Family School Partnerships in the WCSD, for getting this program up and running. Since additional funding was received, the district was able to expand the program to several more schools in the 2024-2025 school year.

ASSEMBLYMAN GRAY:

Does every student receive a parent teacher home visit or only select students? What are the criteria for reaching out to the family?

DR. MCNEILL:

It depends on if a family has requested a parent teacher home visit or if the teacher has a concern, but it is not always around a family that is struggling. The district handles the outreach for the family, but there is not a set criterion.

If there is a concern around chronic absenteeism or a child exhibits some additional behaviors or something such as that, then a different route will be chosen, as this is meant to be a positive visit for the family.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

What percentage of the district's budget is for administrative services that do not have direct contact with students?

MR. MATHERS:

The WCSD budgets, per state law, by function and there are two functions that relate to the question, general and central administration. Those functions would encompass not only the superintendent and leadership team salaries, but also the business office, human resources office, information technology department, and various other overhead services. Per state regulation, there are caps on how much the district can spend for general and central administration that vary by number of students in districts. The WCSD's cap is 7.5% per state regulation; however, the district spends less than that amount. The district's percentage of total expenses is 6.1%, which covers not just salaries and benefits of staff, but things like Microsoft contracts.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

Regarding the information that was provided about the student's reading and mathematics scores with the iReady exam, there have been different discussions about utilizing iReady in addition to the state-mandated test. Has there been any discussion at the district level with the NDE of being able to utilize just one test as opposed to multiple? This seems especially important for 3rd graders who appear to be going through too many tests throughout the school year.

MR. ERNST:

This is an important concern for K-3 students. The district has engaged in many conversations with a request to substitute iReady in replacement of the MAP Growth Reading Assessment, but unfortunately at this point, it is not possible despite there being a great deal of comparability when looking at the two tests because the district is mandated to have students take both tests. One of the things that might be interesting to note about iReady is that it provides a terrific personalized educational pathway with the resources needed for whatever specific area the students are working on. Even though it is an assessment, it is also a very helpful instructional resource for K-8 teachers.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

What mental health services are offered to students and families in the WCSD?

DR. MCNEILL:

Within the WCSD, there is social/emotional learning that continues to be developed. There is also a full component of counselors and social workers. The district has done an enormous amount of work around mental health services including suicide prevention. The district is also contracted with the Children's Cabinet, where there is a deep relationship that will be continuing with this additional funding to contract for suicide screeners within middle schools to make sure that those services are available.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

The WCSD has not contracted with any online or outside services for students, correct? I go back to a very unfortunate time in the WCSD, in 2021, when there were several completed suicides. Is there any online help for students who may not be able to see a counselor?

DR. MCNEILL:

The district is currently contracted; however, will not be continuing with that vendor going into the 2024-2025 school year. There have been conversations at the district level about finding additional resources for the students.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I hope that all students are offered services because many students are alone at night, and it is important that students have that lifeline available to them.

Regarding curriculum, is it consistent across the district or does each school select their own?

DR. MCNEILL:

The WCSD selects curriculum from the list provided by the NDE. It is then presented to the board. There is a board policy pertaining to textbook and curriculum selection. Therefore, curriculum is selected at the district level, not at the site level.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

When will the WCSD get a new superintendent?

Ms. WEIR:

I am leading the search for a new superintendent. Currently, the district is engaging in a community feedback process. The finalists just finished engaging in multiple interview activities with the community and the board. There is a community survey that is currently open and closes on May 3, 2024. Those results will post to the public and to the Board of Trustees on May 8, 2024, and then during the regularly scheduled board meeting on May 14, 2024, the board should be selecting the WCSD's new superintendent.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

I understand things take time, so I was not expecting to see drastic improvement over the last 2023-2024 school year given that investments were only just made. The CCSD indicated a 3% to 5% improvement per year was a realistic target. Is that also realistic for the WCSD? If not, what should be looked at in terms of continued improvement in the proficiency numbers that were seen today?

DR. MCNEILL:

On an annual rate, 3% to 5% is typically what the district looks for as far as growth year-over-year.

There was no further discussion on this item.

Adam Young, Superintendent, White Pine County School District

ADAM YOUNG (Superintendent, White Pine County School District [WPCSD]):

I will begin by introducing a couple of symbols on page 2 of the presentation ([Exhibit L](#)). The one on the left is of White Pine County and was designed by a student. White Pine County is not in the middle of nowhere, it is the middle of everywhere. Many exciting things are happening in the WPCSD right now and these roads represent some of the values and positive change nexus that is right there in the center. The image on the right is a lot deeper than that because it embodies the WPCSD's approach to organizational leadership. The district believes it needs to have the technical skill to do the job as a leader well. The hands represent that it is important to learn how to be good at things that might be uncomfortable. This is obviously an evolving skill set because education, students, and families are constantly changing. The soil is the most important part and it is representative of the hearts of educators—fertile ground yields growth. One can have a lot of technical skill, but without the fertile ground and the will within to give it everything possible, then the magic will not happen. Lastly, the plant represents the students and learning that is aspired to in the district's world class educational vision.

The district is a builder of leaders and has been working hard to develop a program called *Portrait of a Leader*, not to be confused with a Portrait of a Learner that was discussed earlier today. The district's vision is to collaboratively grow leaders who will change the world. Every community member, teacher, educator, and student are viewed as a current and future leader. I will share the competencies, which are currently in draft form, in the future since that is not on the agenda for today, but this is what the district values.

Page 4 shows the board of trustee's strategic framework ([Exhibit L](#)). The bubbles represent the theories of action that have been identified together with the community. As they are focused on and invested in using the funds provided by the Legislature, movement towards the vision that I just mentioned will occur. Everything that I will discuss today has been aligned with one of those four bubbles that are in that funnel on the page.

Page 5 shows a clip from a spreadsheet provided by Chief Financial Officer, Paul Johnson, on how the district is using its proportion ([Exhibit L](#)). Column one is the FY 2023 budget aggregated together in the total PCFP general revenue. That increases from about \$16.1 million to \$19.7 million for FY 2024, representing a 22.5% increase. Column eight shows the projection to go into FY 2024 of another increase of about \$1.0 million representing about 4.6%. It is broken down in the categories of the PCFP, with the EL and at-risk categories. The WPCSD does not receive funds for Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) but the district does provide those services. To be eligible for those funds, a district must have an individual who carries the GATE license.

Page 6 shows a clip from another spreadsheet ([Exhibit L](#)). The first column on the left shows Theory of Action (TOA), which was in the board's framework that emphasizes which goals in the district performance plan that expenditure is aligned with. The first column with dollar figures includes approximate expenditures for FY 2024 that represent the way the increase of approximately \$3.6 million was spent. The \$272,000 in bold type is the approximate remainder of unspent funds for FY 2024. The next column represents the additional approximate \$1.0 million for FY 2025, which has been spent.

I would like to highlight that inflation is a real thing, and it immediately consumed \$600,000 of the \$3.6 million for FY 2024. Previous presentations celebrated the fact that schools such as David E. Norman Elementary had exited from comprehensive support and improvements (CSI) status. However, the reward for exiting that status is that the money goes away. The money that helped the district strategically move students to where they needed to be to exit that status, now had to be absorbed into the district's general fund. That total was approximately \$420,000. The district's budget had to absorb the cost of ESSER-funded positions as well as professional learning, which used to be grant funded.

Fortunately, the WPCSD was able to increase its instructional staff by a total of seven positions, which is a lot for such a small district. I will discuss more later in the presentation.

I would like to elaborate on some of the metrics that were requested. The table on page 7 shows reports of the Smarter Balanced literacy aggregated districtwide ([Exhibit L](#)). The WPCSD is a Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) MAP district, so the district administers that assessment in kindergarten through grade 9.

I would like to discuss the importance of focusing on the right types of measures to quantify learning. The Smarter Balanced assessment is a test that is administered once per year. It is unfair that very important decisions are based on this one test. It is currently testing season, with 3rd through 5th graders currently in the middle of about 18 straight days of testing, for at least two hours a day. Long periods of testing like this are not good for children. Students are not actually showing what they have learned on these tests, it is only a requirement that is being fulfilled. Every year there are more students who opt out of these tests because their families are disgusted by them. And as a state, and with the beauty of the Portrait of a Learner model and looking at authentic measures, there are other opportunities to assess students learning in more meaningful ways. This is why there is a *Multiple Authentic Measures* column (page 7, [Exhibit L](#)), because the WPCSD is so small, it is easy to do this. A skeptic could say a teacher is teaching to the test and giving students too many chances to show their proficiency, but that is not the case. Any teacher can tell you that a classroom assessment is going to be more rigorous and meaningful than a state test. Therefore, I would argue that the *Multiple Authentic Measures* column is the more accurate measure of learning in the WPCSD.

I would like to briefly discuss operationalizing the vision that I previously outlined for the Subcommittee. The current slide is not in the presentation, but I will provide it to the Subcommittee. Part of what these funds have allowed districts to do is to truly operationalize the strategic plans that have been in place for decades, but there has never been enough money to get the work done. The links shown are pages of work that instructional staff, principals, and the community have engaged in to try to define what world class literacy looks like in the WPCSD, and what things need to be done to make that happen. I want to highlight that it is important that some of the funds that have been dedicated towards education have gone to pay increases salaries and operationalizing strategic plans that the district has had for years but has not had the resources to bring them to pass.

Regarding the use of the funding and its impact on student populations, the district has increased the number of Licensed Clinicals Social Worker (LCSW) positions, added special education positions, provided additional Friday

learning opportunities for all students throughout the school year, added in-school intervention during the school day for students grades K through 8. The 21st Century funds are spent in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club so that wraparound services are offered before and after school, at lunch, on Friday, and during the summer.

The district is excited about the special education innovation grant that is going to help hire a person who is dedicated to transitioning Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) students from life in high school to work-based learning experiences and other types of authentic ways to show they are learning while still in school. The funds will also help pay for an expansion of work-based learning personnel.

Page 9 shows progressive and regressive updates on how the additional funding impacts graduation rates ([Exhibit L](#)). The graduation rate is not quite at 100% but is decent. Looking at the *Dual Credit Completion* column, 72% of students who graduate in 2024 will have earned some type of dual college credit. Advanced diplomas are at about half of the student graduation rate. The College and Career Ready (CCR) diplomas have not had much traction yet, but the WPCSD is working with students to determine barriers to pursuing that pathway. Data from the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) is in the first two columns. The first column is post-secondary preparation participation, which refers to the percentage of students in high schools who participate in either dual enrollment or some type of CTE program. The second column is the post-secondary preparation completion column, which means that 65% of students will have some type of CTE skills certificate that tells an employer they do can do the job. The district is proud of these things.

The WPCSD has metrics that could inform the Subcommittee more about the district's efforts than just the traditional ones (page 10, [Exhibit L](#)). The district values fine and performing arts in the authentic learning model. I am in the classroom every day as a choir teacher, and there have been years when I have had 85 kids in my choir class; nothing makes me happier. My goal is for every student who graduates participate in some type of fine and performing arts.

David E. Norman Elementary School has a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEAM) Academy. Since there is only a four-day school week, about one-third of students willing come in on Fridays to engage in hands-on learning experiences.

All graduates participate in service-based learning where they plan something that will be meaningful to the community. All graduates also administer a senior portfolio presentation.

The district is working on student-led conferences. As students authentically show their families and communities what they have learned, they begin to own that unless a state-imposed test. About half of the WPCSD students are doing this yearly, which is one of the district's Acing Accountability goals that will increase as the years progress.

As previously mentioned, seven instructional positions have been added. The WPCSD is very proud of its CTE offerings, especially being such a small school district. The CTE offerings include law enforcement/public safety, culinary, welding, agriculture, computer science, robotics, diesel tech, future teachers, auto technology, and health science. This is all in a school district that only has 1,300 students. The district works hard on this, and the community loves it. The district also focuses on enhancing fine and performing art programs.

There is a large focus in the district on transitioning students into and out of high school. Seniors are required to take a class called Senior Achievement, which is a senior seminar where students learn how to do their taxes, participate in mock interviews with employers, balance a budget, learn about credit cards, etc. Students also gather authentic learning artifacts that are presented to their committee at the end of the semester. It is a common complaint that people never learn these adult tasks in school, but if a student attends the WPCSD, those useful tasks will be learned.

Regarding financial-related challenges and potential recommendations, the WPCSD is concerned about the revenue forecast and what that will look like going into the 83rd (2025) Legislative Session. The WPCSD is hoping the funding will be there to sustain the district's efforts.

Regarding the APA studies and the Commission on School Funding's work related to optimal funding, despite the amazing infusion of dollars provided by the 82nd (2023) Legislature, the funding is still far from optimal. The challenge is determining how to reach the optimal funding levels to see these incredible visions come to pass.

The weights in the PCFP are based on the state base, not on each district's base. Therefore, that benefits school districts whose funding is on the low end of the state-based average; however, it is not beneficial to school district that are on the higher end of the state average. I am not saying it is right or wrong, it is just something that the Commission on School Funding should assess.

Special education transfers and the definition of at-risk were discussed earlier today. Mr. Hobbs discussed the many factors that go into the "at-risk" definition and the appropriate percentile. The Commission on School Funding will continue to grapple with that issue.

The final financial concern is school construction. There are schools in the WPCSD built as early as 1909 and 1913. The White Pine Middle School, built in 1913, is the main concern because it is not Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible. The challenge is that construction cannot be done on the building until it is brought up to code, which would cost millions of dollars. In 2023, I brought a group of students to testify before the Senate Committee on Finance. One student wrote an essay that said she is on her last leg, and so is her school, and she literally has one leg. She hikes up these stairs every day to go to school. The fact that the WPCSD nor the State of Nevada has been sued on this issue yet is something that needs to be considered.

With the general fund increases through the PCFP and working together with the district's partners, we negotiated a 10.0% increase for all staff in year one of the 2023-25 Biennium and a 5.0% increase on top of that in year two. Senate Bill 231 added to those increases, with a 6.5% increase in year one and another 1.5% increase in year two. Over the course of the biennium, there was close to 20% in wage increases. The district employees are hardworking and deserve that and more. I am thankful to the Legislature, and I know it has meant so much to my team and been life changing.

Recognizing that a percentage increase is more beneficial to those who make more money, the WPCSD offers signing and retention incentives for employees. The district has tried to incentivize the younger and less seasoned employees by offering signing incentives and then retention incentives to offset those lower end salaries as employees stay working within the district. It starts at \$4,000 during the first year, \$3,000 prior to year two, \$2,000 prior to year three, and \$1,000 prior to year four.

The WPCSD is proud to have a four-day school week, which means never having to take professional learning days away from instruction. All professional learning occurs on Fridays. Because that is outside of contract time, teachers are compensated \$296 per day.

The district has 115 licensed positions with only 5 vacancies. There is still turnover, and I expect several more resignations before the school year ends. The district has a great group of teachers who are mentors and do a fabulous job of working with and supporting new hires throughout the year. Consequently, the attrition level stays as low as possible. Upon doing surveys for employees that are leaving the district, even though these educators love and believe in the promise of education, interactions with parents and students can be very tense and challenging. This is the leading cause of current resignations.

I think it is important for the Subcommittee to realize that counting everything is not always possible. Albert Einstein once said, "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." Since the Subcommittee is a subcommittee of the Interim Finance Committee, which is

concerned with money, I know that counting things and looking at these metrics is very important. I am not suggesting it is not important, but my message is that sometimes there are things that systems do that cannot be quantified. White Pine County is four hours from Las Vegas and five hours from Reno, it cannot be quantified what it means to the district's middle schoolers that they are taken to visit Nevada State College or Truckee Meadows Community College. The impact that is going to have on a student cannot be quantified. Page 16 of the presentation has some meaningful visuals ([Exhibit L](#)). Recently, 11 WPCSD students were published in a scientific journal. Being that these students were published in a scholarly peer reviewed research journal, I personally feel that it is unnecessary to require those students to take the Smarter Balanced assessment. If the goal of a student is to get a thesis or dissertation published, and at 14 years old, that was already accomplished. Those types of students should be exempt from mandated assessments.

On page 16 is a photo of the David E. Norman Elementary School's kindergarten STEAM students who are learning to be scientists ([Exhibit L](#)). That cannot be quantified; no test will measure the impact that this program has on these future scientists as they show up in their lab coats and rip things apart and blow things up. The same goes for robotics students who are currently in Dallas, Texas participating at the World Robotic Conference. The teams justify their reasoning, problem solve, and work with other students they have never met in as a team. These are authentic learning experiences that every student in the State of Nevada deserves access to and can have access to as the state continues to move forward with this funding. There are better ways to show what these students have learned than some of the traditional metrics.

The WPCSD community has recently had a hard time with the deaths of several students and parents. This relates to one of the theories of actions that I mentioned earlier, which is partnering with families and communities. A second theory of action is investing in student and staff safety and wellbeing. Those are two of the district's big theories of action, but it is hard to quantify those things. On April 26, 2024, the WPCSD hosted an event with the juvenile probation office, the seventh judicial court district judge, and mental health professionals. It was a chance for people to come together and celebrate the idea of belonging, to take a pledge, celebrate student art, understand the various resources in rural Nevada that are available for people who are struggling with their mental health, and to say that all these organizations are doing this together. It is not the county, school district, nor a family's job to solve this, it is everyone's job. The flyer on page 17 has a couple of murals that students created and were commissioned ([Exhibit L](#)). The one with a heart on it was the winning mural and that is going to be commissioned by a professional artist on Economy Drug pharmacy's eastern side of the building. This will be done in response to some of the tragedies. There is no way to quantify the impact that these events have had on the community and students. Education changes lives and cannot always be counted.

Page 18 shows a few thoughts on accountability ([Exhibit L](#)). I speak and share these thoughts through extensive conversations with my colleagues and other people around the state since I am involved in multiple associations. I am currently the Vice President of the Nevada Association of Superintendents, and I will be the President in 2025. I am pleased and honored to also serve on the Commission for Innovation and Excellence in Education, which is also working on this topic along with the Commission on School Funding.

The current model, the NSPF, is commonly known as the star rating system. It could be substituted for other models that only look at the numbers because it does limit in breadth and depth of what schools are able to focus on. As leaders, when the word “accountability” is heard, it is automatic to think about the star rating and test results. By default, leaders and communities expect that leaders focus on those narrow metrics. Therefore, years are spent investing in test preparation, teaching to the test, and tutoring. I do not think these are the most important things. Yes, schools exist for literacy, math, and science, and I would never say otherwise. However, if those things are only measured in those few ways, then the system will not give the desired outcome. There is a saying that the system is perfectly designed to get the results that it gets, and I think that is where the state is right now. To achieve the specific things in the accountability model is a struggle with those measures, but that is what people are going to focus on if that is what is continued to be expected.

The Portrait of a Learner is a much broader, deeper, meaningful, and authentic vision of learning. I completely support what Superintendent Ebert and the KnowledgeWorks crew are doing with it. The challenge is going to be operationalizing it so that the state can focus on the right things and liberate schools from focusing on some of these more archaic things that just maybe are not that helpful.

In a 2018 study, Jeremy Glazer discusses the concept of ‘invested leavers’ who are “experienced, competent teachers quitting the profession as their resistance to testing policies and their intrusion on effective learning practices” ([Exhibit L](#)).

I would suggest that the state change the way outputs are measured. Earlier today, Senator Cannizzaro mentioned how each individual child is different and is going to show learning in a different way. Teachers do a great job of differentiating the input, which is the method of instruction, but the way that learning is measured is never differentiated. It is measured in one way and that is by test. Testing days make schools look like factories with surrendering student’s phones, filing in alphabetical order, and being maneuvered from place to place. There is no flexibility, students cannot even use the bathroom. The public does not want schools to be factories anymore and this must change. Learning must be allowed to be measured in a different way.

The purpose of the Education Index, 1,010 respondents and 57 attributes, standardized testing is ranked 49th in importance (page 20, [Exhibit L](#)). This page shows all the other ways that were higher in ranking than standardized tests according to families across the country: teacher-administrated exams, performance in real-world applications, and class-based projects. Parents value all those things more than test scores.

The National Center on Education and the Economy is facilitating the Commission on Innovation and Excellence for Education. This is the worldwide research about the types of things that employers value in graduates. However, what schools are primarily responsible for, reading, writing, and mathematics, is low on the list. This is not to say that those subjects are unimportant, but the systems are being asked to do a lot of different things so how those are measured must become a big part of the discussion.

Acting rather than being acted upon is when the state can give students agency. Students that are involved in work-based learning in the WPCSD love coming to school. That does not mean just the four walls of the school, class might be until noon and then the student spends the rest of the day in their work-based learning. Superintendent Workman has shared his turkey farm, which is a phenomenal type of learning that can never be measured or counted in the normal way.

Page 24 shows a quote from Zhao in 2012 that says, “So by any account, what policy makers have put in place in American schools is precisely what is needed to cancel out their desire for creative and entrepreneurial talents” ([Exhibit L](#)). This resonates with me a lot because I was born and raised in Nevada and attended the WPCSD. I believed in public education in Nevada. It is not a job for me, it is my passion. I urge this Subcommittee, all the leaders, and everyone, to work as a team to make the system better, to expand what is possible for the system, and to empower schools and leaders to innovate in some of the ways that I have described today. People will run with that compared to feeling like they are in a box and will be held accountable for their Smarter Balanced scores. Unfortunately, even my job relies on those test scores. Again, I am not saying that literacy is not important, it just needs to be measured in a different way.

ASSEMBLYMAN YEAGER:

In line with what was discussed, I attended an artificial intelligence conference over the weekend at Stanford University. Someone asked an executive at Google what should be taught in schools right now to prepare for the future. The Google executive said to be careful because ten years ago, he would have said coding, but now machines do the coding and much faster than a person. He said the top ten current core skills include analytical thinking, creative thinking, the ability to adapt, self-awareness, attention to detail, and active listening. I think that is certainly timely as we look forward to what is a very interesting and technological future.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN ANDERSON:

I realize that the WPCSD's central office is smaller, but what percentage of the district's budget is utilized for the central office for services provided that are not directly related to helping students?

MR. YOUNG:

The recommendation from the APA for a 1,000 to 7,500 student school district like WPCSD, the cap in statute is 10.0% of the budget. The CFO, Mr. Johnson, has verified that the WPCSD's percentage is about 4.95%.

SENATOR TITUS:

I want to thank you for your passion and being dedicated to the state, community, and the students. If you would like to see an old school, come down to Smith Valley. There is a school there that was built in 1898 for my grandmother. It is currently used as a museum. I am sorry that your students are going to a school that should probably be a museum.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

What products or support does the WPCSD have in place for mental health?

MR. YOUNG:

The district has invested in highly trained and local LCSWs. Despite the small county, there are three fully licensed and certified LCSWs. I know there are larger districts that are having difficulty hiring one LCSW.

The district also has a partnership with www.ParentGuidance.org, which is a service that helps in a couple of ways. The website provides virtual, interactive webinars on screen time and anxiety, processing grief, depression, etc. These are offered to parents or anyone in the community that is interested.

Coaching is also available for parents through the website. The coaching service is anonymous. Through this service, parents are partnered with a coach to help them learn how to work with their child. The district pays for the website, so it is free to the family no matter how many sessions are completed. This service is important in a small community like White Pine County. There is a stigma associated with mental health, but it is even more present in a small community where someone is more likely to run into their therapist in town. Because the two main employers in White Pine County are mining and law enforcement, that stigma is even more prevalent. Therefore, an anonymous service is very important.

SENATOR DONDERO LOOP:

I appreciate you being involved in the Commission on Innovation and Excellent for Education and the other projects. I appreciate your representing superintendents as well as small counties.

There was no further discussion on this item.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT.

There was no public comment.

VII. ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:28 p.m.

Basia Thomas, Secretary

APPROVED:

Assemblyman Steve Yeager, Chair

Date: _____