

**MINUTES OF THE 2015-2016 INTERIM
ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO DEVELOP A PLAN TO
REORGANIZE THE CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT**

January 8, 2016

The meeting of the Advisory Committee to Develop a Plan to Reorganize the Clark County School District was called to order by Chair Michael Roberson at 10:19 a.m. at the Nevada System of Higher Education, 4300 S. Maryland Parkway, Room 102 (Board Room), Las Vegas, Nevada and via videoconference at Western Nevada College, 2201 W. College Parkway, Reynolds Building, Room 101, Carson City, Nevada. Exhibit A is the Agenda and Exhibit B is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT (LAS VEGAS):

Senator Michael Roberson, Senatorial District No. 20, Chair
Senator Moises (Mo) Denis, Senatorial District No. 2
Senator Aaron D. Ford, Senatorial District No. 11
Senator Joseph (Joe) P. Hardy, Senatorial District No. 12
Assemblywoman Dina Neal, Assembly District No. 7
Assemblyman Stephen H. Silberkraus, Assembly District No. 29
Assemblyman Lynn D. Stewart, Assembly District No. 22

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Assemblywoman Olivia Diaz, Assembly District No. 11, Vice Chair
Senator Becky Harris, Senatorial District No. 9

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT (LAS VEGAS):

Brenda Erdoes, Legislative Counsel, Legal Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau
Risa Lang, Chief Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau
Karly O'Krent, Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT (CARSON CITY):

Julie Waller, Senior Program Analyst, Fiscal Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau
Kelly Richard, Principal Research Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau
Angela Hartzler, Secretary, Legal Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau
Linda Hiller, Interim Secretary, Legal Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jenn Blackhurst, President, Honoring Our Public Education (HOPE)
Lindsey Dalley, Chair, Moapa Valley Community Education Advisory Board Task Force
Courtney Sweeten, Mesquite Representative, Break Free CCSD
Jose Solorio
Pat Skorkowsky, Superintendent, CCSD
Mike Barton, Chief Student Achievement Officer, CCSD
Steve Canavero, Interim Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nevada Department of
Education
Jim McIntosh, Chief Financial Officer, CCSD
Jeremy Hauser, Associate Superintendent, Operational Services Division, CCSD
Nancy E. Brune, Executive Director, Guinn Center for Policy Priorities
John Vellardita, Executive Director, Clark County Education Association
Vikki Courtney, President, Clark County Education Association
Andre Long, Co-Interim Chief Human Resources Officer, Human Resources Unit,
CCSD
Michael Gentry, Co-Interim Chief Human Resources Officer, Human Resources Unit,
CCSD

Chair Roberson:

I will open this meeting at 10:19 a.m. with Item II, public comment.

Jenn Blackhurst (President, Honoring Our Public Education (HOPE)):

I am here representing HOPE, a nonprofit, nonpartisan education advocacy group. In December, we sent out a survey to our membership and the community at large to see what they know about the proposed reorganization. We presented our preliminary survey results ([Exhibit C](#)) to the Technical Advisory Committee to Create a Plan to Reorganize the Clark County School District. Since then, the participation in our survey has increased by 14 percent. However, the additional answers did not significantly change the results. I have submitted my written testimony ([Exhibit D](#)) and some comments on our updated results from Caryne Shea, the Vice President of HOPE ([Exhibit E](#)).

Lindsey Dalley (Chair, Moapa Valley Community Education Advisory Board Task Force):

I served on the Moapa Valley Community Education Advisory Board (CEAB) when empowerment was coming of age. I was excited to see this topic on today's agenda. We fought for 3 years to have our schools empowered in Moapa Valley. Two of our schools were turned down, one was even rejected twice. Finally, our high school was empowered and it was a very successful 3 years. It was so successful; it was almost an educational Camelot.

The CCSD then drifted off to the next newest and greatest plan and empowerment just died. Unfortunately, we do not have an empowerment school in Moapa Valley anymore. One of the undeniable truths of life is that no matter how good the plan, it is not possible for bureaucracy to reform itself. Therefore, as much as I would like to believe all these well-intentioned and wonderful people from CCSD who will be reporting and testifying today, none of it will result in change. This is because the undeniable truth in life is that bureaucracy is not capable of reforming itself, no matter how seductive the plan may sound.

I believe all these wonderful CCSD personnel reporting today can be a huge force for educational good if the CCSD governing structure is changed to allow community-based educational decisions while maintaining funding equity. There are two critical elements needed—smaller precincts governed by locally elected boards and educational funding that is controlled at the precinct level, with bonding excluded from that. These two elements will allow these talented CCSD personnel to achieve and maintain focus on quality education and not allow bureaucracy to consume education.

I am deathly afraid the CCSD will be allowed to testify about wonderful concepts like empowerment and flex budgeting as if they had been uninvolved and well-intentioned bystanders as our schools have declined. While single individuals may or may not be at fault, the bureaucracy they work within is at fault. Improving CCSD education means reforming public school government structure while maintaining funding equity while not attacking individuals.

Courtney Sweeten (Mesquite Representative, Break Free CCSD):

I am a business owner and parent in Mesquite with a background in education. I graduated from CCSD schools and taught for 4 years in the Jordan, Utah School District right before their split into two districts. I earned a master's in business administration (MBA) degree from the University of California, Davis and pursued education reform. I worked in Washington, D.C. for Michelle Rhee who was reforming public schools there at the time.

Having moved back to Nevada, I am very interested in what will happen with reorganizing CCSD. I joined Break Free CCSD because of two issues I am passionate about based on my experiences—one is returning control of schools to the neighborhoods. Schools and students thrive when the local community and parents are engaged and have a say in what is happening in the schools, not when everything is coming down from a central district level. Secondly, having weighted per pupil funding for schools with the dollars following the student is important. We want most of the money going to students, not to programs. That is shown to be the most effective use of funding in education. I am excited to watch this process and try to use my experience where I can to help see change in the CCSD because it is well needed and long overdue.

Jose Solorio:

I am a former member of the CCSD Board of Trustees and for or 16 years of her 17 years as a teacher, my wife has taught at Brinley Middle School, an inner city high-needs school. I am a product of the CCSD, having attended Sunrise Acres Elementary School, Jim Bridger Middle School and Rancho High School. My parents are immigrants and I was an ELL student. I went on to earn a bachelor's degree and a MBA at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR). I am passionate about equal opportunity for all students, particularly our students with the most needs.

There is one thing that can make a big change in how we deliver great education to our students in need, especially those at the three urban city schools I attended, and that is to make sure the funding follows the student. Currently, there is an average salary budgeted for each school. Let's say it is \$75,000. That number is assigned to all the schools. But in reality, looking at some of the inner city schools, there can be as many as 10 substitutes teaching for less than \$30,000 each per year. Compare that to Summerlin where I now live, where you could have 10 experienced teachers making close to \$70,000 per year.

This is the disparity in the amount of dollars we are spending at each school. That is an inequity that does not need to exist. If the funds follow the students, some of the inner city schools could get extra funding to be used for things like a longer school day, or whatever resource would work at that particular school. It is critical that we fund our schools and our students fairly—with the funds following the students.

Additionally, the difference between a long-term substitute teacher and a teacher with 25 years of experience can have a profound effect on the learning of a child. So not only is it a funding inequity, it is an educational inequity. Item VI of today's Agenda references empowerment and flexible budgeting and I think it is important that we focus on that.

Chair Roberson:

During our first meeting, we heard background information on financial issues and issues relating to equity. During the second meeting, we heard from the Education Commission of the States about efforts to consolidate and deconsolidate school districts in other states. We also discussed issues of concern relating to changes to the structure of the CCSD. Because of the large number of teacher vacancies in Clark County, we also heard information on the teacher pipeline, employment in Clark County and efforts to hire more teachers, which we will also discuss today. I will open Item V, governance of school districts and types of schools.

Pat Skorkowsky (Superintendent, CCSD):

In my presentation about district organization ([Exhibit F](#)), page 2 shows a 10-year history of CCSD. In 2005, we had a superintendent who reorganized the District into five geographic regions and added a superintendent school region. This was part of the

decentralization movement to put decisions closer to the schools and families. At that point, we had geographic regions that ranged from 38 schools to 60 schools.

In 2009, a new superintendent reorganized the District into four area service centers that were geographically organized, keeping the superintendent schools.

In 2011, yet another superintendent reorganized the District into three area service centers and 13 performance zones, one autonomous zone and one prime 6 zone. Each of the 15 zones was nestled underneath the three area service centers, each containing 100 to 112 schools.

In 2013, the next superintendent reorganized into allowing flex schools, which were part of the empowerment model and design. These schools shifted over to what we call autonomous and innovative schools. We then created 16 performance zones, which we realigned at the beginning of this year to include turnaround, zoom, victory/prime 6 and rural schools.

The District's priorities have not changed in the last 3 years. Those priorities are based on the four strategic imperatives the CCSD Board of Trustees identified. We had more than 33 public input meetings and 3,000 surveys that helped delineate those four strategic imperatives and identify the goals in the Pledge of Achievement. We are moving to implement these goals and we have seen successes. We recently presented a report on our academic success, showing data on our graduation rate increase and extreme increase in our advanced placement in our career and technology education placement programs as well as looking at our achievement gaps.

Our number one focus has always been increasing student achievement, ensuring every student has access to every program across the CCSD. We are also endeavoring to increase the engagement of everyone at our school level, including families and community members, through our Communities Engagement Services Department.

Page 4 ([Exhibit F](#)) is an illustration of the organizational chart of CCSD. It is fairly typical of most U.S. school districts, with some exceptions. When I came in as superintendent in 2013, we had strategic imperatives and organized into work streams that aligned to the goals of CCSD. At one point we had a chief of staff and chief communication officer at the end. We changed that, and many employees went on to bigger and better things. We have a Community Government Relations work stream, an Instruction Achievement work stream, Human Resources (HR) and other work streams are illustrated on the chart.

We have a linear chain of command at CCSD, with people reporting up and people serving down, page 5 ([Exhibit F](#)). We have decision making administrators, with very few decisions made in isolation.

Regarding our hiring practices, many administrators plus all teachers and staff go through a very strict hiring practice run by the CCSD HR department. We follow the federal and state guidelines when it comes to hiring. Decisions are made at different levels along the way. When we hire an administrator for a school based position, that decision is made by the building principal if it is not a principal being hired. If it is a principal being hired, the decision is made by the assistant chief student achievement officer who makes recommendations to Dr. Mike Barton, CCSD Chief Student Achievement Officer, and myself. We then sign off on that recommendation.

We have a system of checks and balances to ensure a candidate has met requirements and has no background issues. Decisions for administrators are made through a central process, but the initial decisions are made at the school or through the assistant chief student achievement officer. All hiring decisions for licensed personnel are made at the school site. All the candidates are in a pool. There is a system where administrators go in and make the determination of who will come into the building. The only exception is when there are surplus situations. Those are guided by the contract. We do have placements made based on leaves of absences, but those who come off a leave of absence are allowed to seek their job prior to any placement being made.

Support staff positions are hired based on the supervising administrators at each of the practices. We have slightly over 1,200 administrators at CCSD. Compared to the other nine large sized school districts in the nation, this is significantly lower. Twenty-seven percent of our administrators are at the central office, with the rest of the administrators at the school level. We are looking at our return on investment (ROI) issues to ensure we are maintaining an adequate administrative staff but not overstaffing administrators.

The Superintendent's Office receives direct reports from several District employees. The Chief of Staff Office (CSO) works directly with the Board Office and also with the Public Education Foundation, which is a separate entity. The CSO also works directly with the CCSD Police Department and is the liaison to the Superintendent's Office. There are 150 individuals on that police force, both site-based and on patrol. The CSO also works with our internal audit—separately, to maintain autonomy.

The Communications Office with a staff of 10 is small but mighty. By comparison, Houston Independent School District has more than 25 in their communications office.

The Board Office consists of a coordinator and administrative secretary to support the CCSD Board of Trustees.

The Employee Management Relations Dept. deals directly with employee concerns and issues, reporting to the superintendent.

The Equity and Diversity Dept. reports to the superintendent. This staff works with our cultural competency initiative as well as other issues that emerge, including transgender students, etc.

Our Legal Office handles our legal situations and the Diversity and Affirmative Action Department reports to the superintendent.

All in all, with the Superintendent's Office, there are 302 employees in all the areas on page 6 ([Exhibit F](#)).

The Community and Government Relations Department, page 7 ([Exhibit F](#)), has 24 employees. This includes our Government Affairs Department that lobbies the Legislature, among other things. We have a School-Community Partnership Program that works closely with businesses and focus schools, bringing in millions of dollars of in-kind volunteer activities as well as funds into the schools, which are monies not given through the Legislature or grants. The Family and Community Engagement Services (FACES) is also under the Community and Government Relations Department.

The Instruction Unit, page 8 ([Exhibit F](#)), has 8,305 employees with 8,004 of them in schools. The 16 Assistant Chief Student Achievement Officers supervise the principals and report directly to Chief Student Achievement Officer, Dr. Mike Barton. They work in geographic regions with the exception of victory/prime 6, turnaround and rural zone, none of which are a contiguous region. Those three are unique performance zones. We have a zoom performance zone, so it actually looks at both programming practices for supervision as well as geographic regions. One of our Assistant Chief Student Achievement Officers supervises our magnet schools, career and technical academy (CTA) schools and comprehensive campuses. Dr. Barton supervises these individuals which include our turnaround zone. He also supervises the redesign department for our leadership development, bringing back our internal program for training future administrators for initial service. Dr. Barton supervises our ELL Department and the Instructional Design and Professional Learning Department (IDPL).

The principals make decisions about specific pieces of school climate but are not allowed to make decisions on standards that are guided by the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) and incorporated at the state level. Curriculum is something that principals can have input on at their school level. In the past, we have had various levels of flexibility in curriculum. At one point, we had one basal reading series that was used in all the elementary schools. The rationale behind that was to address the large transient student population that moved from school to school.

Many of our schools are more than 50 percent transient. At the elementary school level, we have 17 schools with a 40 percent transiency rate or higher, which means that 40 percent of the students who start in a school at the beginning of the year will not be at that school by the end of the school year.

At the middle school level, our transiency rate is much lower—21 percent of those schools have a 30 percent transiency rate or higher.

At the high school level, 12 percent of our schools have a transiency rate of 40 percent or more and 42 percent of high schools have a transiency rate of 30 percent or more. This means students are in and out of our schools.

Chair Roberson:

Can we get those figures if they are not in part of your presentation today please?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Yes. One reason some of our past decisions have been made at the central level is for that very reason. We have three students who, since the beginning of the school year, have been in six different schools because of family reasons. Two are in the foster care system and have been moved from foster family to foster family. It is an extremely difficult situation for some of these students. Many schools that serve the daily and weekly rental apartments and hotels will have an extremely high transiency rate. A teacher can have a class of students at the beginning of the year and not end up with any of those original members of the class. It happens on a regular basis.

That is one of the reasons we have gone to some standardized curriculum to ensure that no matter how many times they move, transient students have continuity from school to school and can master the skills necessary to move to the next level. We also realized that we have to have some flexibility. Schools need to make curriculum decisions, but the challenge with that is our area's inherently transient community. It is difficult to ensure that every student will master every skill when moving from school to school.

Assemblywoman Neal:

You said you currently have standardized curriculum?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

No. I am just going through the history. At this time, we do not have standardized curriculum. There are schools using various instructional materials to teach the standards. Our IDPL interprets the Nevada standards and puts them into curriculum standards taught at CCSD. Those are put into what we call our Curriculum Engine (CE) program. All the material adopted by the District is incorporated into that CE and used by teachers. Other Nevada counties are also using this system. Teachers can then share lesson plans and co-plan lessons electronically through this web-based tool.

From that we provide the alignment of our curriculum to the state and federal standards. We know there are many supplemental materials used across the District to help teach the standards. One of the biggest challenges we have faced in the past few years is adopting a new series in math and English language arts. No textbook company has

been able to adapt to the new Nevada Academic Content Standards (NACS) or the Common Core. We have not seen anything that is directly aligned. Many of our textbook companies just changed pictures and covers of books and changed the standards listed in the book but they did not change any of the content and way of teaching the material. We are just finishing an adoption process for English language arts and mathematics and we believe we have materials that are aligned to the NACS.

Chair Roberson:

I know this is not about Common Core but you bring up an interesting point. I talked to people in CCSD 2 or 3 years ago and this problem was mentioned. At that time, I understood that the District would be developing its own materials to solve that problem. Have they been developed? If not, how is that affecting teachers in their efforts to teach? When will the materials be in the classrooms?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

We have been developing materials over the past 3 years. Those materials are in our Curriculum Engine in various places for teachers to access. Some teachers believe there still needs to be supplemental pieces. They are not comprehensive. It has been extremely difficult to develop a comprehensive system. Our teachers are very concerned about the available resources they have in the classroom. This is why we went to a textbook adoption system. We believe there are two programs that meet the NACS. When we talk about purchasing, that is a whole different story. One of the systems we want to purchase will cost upwards of \$29 million to provide every student with a textbook.

Many schools have gone to a linear curriculum done through the school. That flexibility is there. Some schools have used older materials they already have and combine it with materials provided by CCSD.

We are in the process of developing and finalizing an English Language Learner (ELL) mastery plan. We know both the State English Mastery Council and the Teaching and Learning Council are working on potential support to that. They are looking at adding a TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language) endorsement or requirement for recertification that will potentially come forward to the State Board of Education and the State Licensing Authority.

As you can see, the Instruction Unit has the decisions for most of our comprehensive schools—turnaround schools, zoom schools, victory schools, prime 6 schools—all except for the alternative and behavioral schools. This Unit also oversees curriculum and professional development and support of the language acquisition programs.

Our Human Resources Department is divided into three areas, page 9 ([Exhibit F](#)).

Assemblywoman Neal:

Chair Roberson brought up the Common Core and you referenced the \$29 million cost issue of adopting that curriculum. We adopted the Common Core in 2011 and that year a study paid for by CCSD explicitly stated, on pages 11-14, that number one, you needed a standardized curriculum because of CCSD's high transiency rate. At the time, it was 30 percent of students moving within schools, but now you have cited 40 percent.

The study said the direct issue of academic challenges was that the students would move from school to school because they could not follow a curriculum. One school would be studying horses and the next school was studying cows—I am being simple, but that study said the standardized curriculum should have been in place and that these educational silos existing within the curriculum were an issue. I am listening to you say these things and then you talk about money but I do not recall—and we were in an economic crisis—why there was not some kind of discussion any time between 2011 and now about the need to pay for that standardized curriculum.

Because those children that function within that system right now and before 2011, are not functioning academically. Our whole point and purpose in this discussion, for me, is to academic achievement and how all kids succeed. It just upsets me when I find out a study was paid for, recommendation was given, a flaw was stated and yet, it was never done or implemented. And then we are having this conversation in the New Year 2016.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I cannot be more blunt than saying I am not going to pay for something that is not quality material. Neither was my predecessor. The materials were not available. Ask any school district across this nation. There were no quality materials. Go back and look at the research studies. The quality materials were not there. If we spend money, we are going to spend it for an appropriate reason. We did spend money on curriculum development within CCSD. We have model lessons and example lessons available to our teachers, but we had to create those materials because they were not available in the market.

Assemblywoman Neal:

I have had the benefit—and I will not even say it is a great one—of being in the system and seeing the Curriculum Engine (CE), which is this common place where teachers put resources, lessons and different things. They are not comprehensive, and they are also not successful as any kind of, to me, foundational pieces to help teachers really supplement.

They are more like a skeleton of what teachers can do and areas in which you can expand, but they in no way—especially for a new teacher—is the CE a resource that can be in any way catalogued as something substantial that is a curriculum building tool for all of the schools. For the new teachers, it would help them by recommending they can get a certain book if they want to have additional reading or they can do this

additional essay if they want their students to do some additional extension, but it is not comprehensive in curriculum building and guiding them clearly like saying in math they need to teach A,B,C and D for the month, etc. Do you understand what I am saying?

Mr. Skorkowsky:
I understand.

Senator Hardy:
Prior comments were made and you followed up on them on empowerment and the flexible budget. Why did we lose an empowerment in Moapa Valley?

Mr. Skorkowsky:
We have information on that in the next presentation.

Senator Hardy:
We talk about parent involvement. Does the Moapa Valley Community Education Advisory Board (CEAB) still exist or did we lose it in 2001 but nobody knew about it?

Mr. Skorkowsky:
It exists. I am meeting with a group of individuals—presidents of the Moapa Valley CEAB and Mesquite CEAB—to redevelop the policy next week. We have also invited representatives from Boulder City, Sandy Valley and Indian Springs. We reinstated the policy initially. There was no policy when they shifted from one policy format to another and brought in policy governance. That policy was not transitioned over. We had an initial notice of intent in December, 2015 and we are moving forward with reinstating that policy. They exist.

Senator Hardy:
When will the Common Core become common as opposed to now it is Uncommon?

Mr. Skorkowsky:
We are moving forward with textbook adoption. We have been teaching the Common Core. It was a gradual implementation based on the NECS and the guidelines put forth by NDE. This is our first year with end-of-course exams at the freshman and sophomore level. We are moving forward with testing using the new assessments.

Senator Hardy:
You commented on the books and the \$29 million price tag. Is that per year or a one-time capital investment?

Mr. Skorkowsky:
The example I gave was \$29 million for elementary language arts. It does not include mathematics or language arts and mathematics at the secondary level. These are one-time investments. The request for purchase (RFP) we submitted included purchase

of not only a hardback copy but digital texts as well to accommodate future developments in education. Those digital texts can be updated as updates come available. We are looking at both formats.

Senator Hardy:

What happened to the bucket for books program?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

We currently allocate textbooks to schools since the available products are not quality materials. Those materials have been used as supplemental instructional programs.

Chair Roberson:

Where you discussed the Instructional Unit (IU), you said there were 8,305 employees. I want to get a better handle on what that number consists of. I see you have Assistant Chief Student Achievement Officers; how many of them are there?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

There are 17.

Chair Roberson:

They work primarily in the schools?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Not directly. They supervise the schools and are housed in various locations but in the schools on a daily basis.

Chair Roberson:

Are those the administrators responsible for the most direct supervision of building leaders?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Yes.

Chair Roberson:

Of the 8,305 employees in the IU, can you break it down for me?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Sure. The 8,004 are specific positions through the flexible budget schools. There are 102 employees in the ELL department; 132 in instructional design and professional learning department; and 1 farmer at Moapa assigned to the IU. In the fine arts programs, we have 3 employees; 3 in career and technology education; and 3 in academic support and community service. Including the Chief Student Achievement Officers and their support staff, there are 58 employees.

Chair Roberson:

Where are the big numbers then, if you have 8,000?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Those are the flex schools. The reason they are listed is because those positions are created through the flexible budgets at the 180 schools on that program. They can be licensed—1,140 of those are support staff and 6,300 plus are licensed teachers; 534 are school-based administrators.

Chair Roberson:

So primarily we are talking about teachers.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

That is correct. Those positions have been created outside of the funding formula we use to allocate teachers.

Chair Roberson:

Can you give us a list of this breakdown so we can really drill down on these numbers?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Of course.

Assemblyman Lynn D. Stewart (Assembly District No. 22):

Earlier, you were talking about the number of administrators in CCSD and comparing it to the Houston Independent School District. Could we have those numbers comparing CCSD with the other top 10 districts in the country? I constantly hear complaints from parents saying we have too many administrators and then I hear here that we have one of the lowest percentage ratios of administrators. Could you give us a little chart?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Sure.

Assemblyman Stewart:

When I was teaching, we had groups of teachers that developed the syllabi for various disciplines. I was in one of those groups. You say we have two programs we are considering and it will cost \$29 million for textbooks. Are textbooks becoming more and more obsolete with all the technology we have? Do we still have the groups of teachers who get together with experts in the District to develop syllabi? Would it be more cost effective to continue to do this rather than buying a textbook that might become obsolete in a couple years?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

If you go to the CCSD web site, open the Open Book tab and scroll down, you can see the administrator-to-student ratio for all counties in Nevada. We are the second lowest, right above Lander County.

We do still use teacher expertise on our curriculum task forces. Yes, we could develop the materials, but I will tell you that our teachers are tired. We are working them extremely hard. To ask some of our best and brightest who are already working hard in their schools to add another thing on their plate is asking a lot. Some of them are just tired. We need to provide curriculum resources. It is one of the things we are supposed to do. We look at that as a starting point. A program does not teach the child. A teacher teaches the child. A program is used as a guide and a resource. The teacher has to make decisions.

To Assemblywoman Neal's point: yes, many of our teachers will take the frameworks and enhance them. That is what they were trained to do. They went to school to do this. We give them the framework and allow them the expertise to bring in their own teaching style. We do not have cookie cutter lessons across the valley; that is not something we do. Every teacher is different; every student is different and sometimes you have to make adjustments curriculum-wise.

Assemblyman Stewart:

So for those who complain that we have a one-size-fits-all, that is not what we do?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

No, that is not the case at all.

Chair Roberson:

How many employees are in the Human Resources Department?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

We have 167 in our central Human Resources Office within which there are 9 administrative employees and 54 support staff who work in recruitment and development for administrative, licensed and support staff.

The recruitment and development department of Human Resources is our most challenging area. We have a presentation coming up on that area.

The human capital management department helps schools hire qualified applicants. There are five Human Capital Managers, each with a team who work with the schools to cover their assigned performance zones, working directly with schools to help with staffing.

Human Resources also has contracts and compliance officers who deal with contractual issues. Substitute Services is mixed into that department, along with leave of absence staff. Currently we are looking at the system's structures and refining the day-to-day operations as we go out and look for more teachers.

Our next focus is the Educational and Operational Excellence Division which has a staff of 7,779. It includes many of our centralized operational services—food service, maintenance and transportation. The bus operation employees number 1,360 while maintenance includes 1,445 employees.

The Student Services Division is our special education department that includes wraparound services, gifted and talented (GATE), charter schools, pre-kindergarten education, health services and special schools. Special education licensed personnel account for 3,834 employees, which is heavy on the compliance and monitoring piece as required by federal and state guidelines as well as support to schools which includes occupational therapists, physical therapists, school psychologists and nurses. Those individuals may not be directly assigned to a school, but work in District schools on a daily basis.

The Innovative Learning Environments office includes magnet schools, CTAs and all the support for those schools. Those schools are under the IU, but the support has to be from the central District to ensure compliance with federal guidelines.

The Accountability, Assessment, Research and School Improvement department falls under this Division as well as the grants department.

The Educational Opportunities Division includes Education Services that oversee the alternative and behavior schools. It also included Instructional Support which oversees athletics and activities. There are 267 employees in that Division.

The Business and Finance Division includes all the departments listed on page 12 ([Exhibit F](#)). There are 440 employees in this Division. The technology department, which runs the largest local area network in the nation, has 193 employees.

Chair Roberson:

I think we will need to drill down more in many of these areas and get specific information on employees about what they do, etc.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

We can provide that. We will also provide you with our comprehensive annual report that has a detailed description of the CCSD. We will comply with any request you have on further information.

Mike Barton, (Chief Student Achievement Officer, CCSD):

I am here to present an overview of the types of schools we have at CCSD ([Exhibit G](#)), many of which are thanks to the Nevada Legislature during the last several years.

In 2013, we initiated the zoom school program with 16 elementary schools, all in one performance zone. After the 2015 Legislative Session, we expanded to two performance zones within the Instructional Unit (IU), adding more elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school.

Zoom schools are about lowering class sizes so in kindergarten we have a 21:1 ratio of students to teachers. We also extend the school year at these schools with 17 additional instruction days at each school. The reading center concept we use at these schools came out of legislation. It creates a hub in the zoom school where students who are not meeting proficiency or language proficiency in either reading or speaking can go to a reading center with a master teacher who helps them with language acquisition. We have had great success over the last few years in exiting students from our reading centers.

Victory schools are assigned to two performance zones that include 24 schools. This program also came from legislation. A school district does a needs assessment and then teams with the University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV) to see what these schools need to ensure student academic success. We also look at what programming needs to be provided after school, what we call wraparound services, to help the students succeed.

When I go to victory schools and see what is happening, the feeling is that the education does not stop at 3:30 p.m. You will see programs like Communities in Schools take over with students receiving tutoring and backpacks of food to take home so they are nourished. As a District, we are monitoring these schools monthly with a formative assessment to ensure progress is occurring academically. We are also looking at the standardized test scores at the state level. We know we need to ensure that students progress rapidly at these schools because the assignment of monies to these schools was calculated from the state level and we have to show a return on investment (ROI).

Turnaround schools started a couple years ago, (page 5, [Exhibit G](#)). Historically, we have looked at school performances in the District and if there was a 3-year trend of underperformance at a school, we have a process where we can audit a school annually with real time data to assess if that school should enter a turnaround zone. Within that zone, there is an emphasis on moving schools rapidly. There is flexible budgeting provided to the turnaround school leaders; the principals at these schools. Historically, the data shows we have had double digit gains in graduation rates. We have some schools move very rapidly, making them close to exiting the turnaround zone altogether.

When the turnaround zone first started, there was federal funding from School Improvement Grants (SIG), but some of that is no longer there. The flexible budgeting does help the principals move funds to target successes for the schools. We had a hole in the data last year at the state level with the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) assessment. Even with that data hole, the District felt it was still important to look at eight schools. Those schools' data is being looked at now by a team of seven people from central office that goes to the schools, interview teachers and do classroom observations to determine whether that school will enter the turnaround zone the next school year.

The special schools we have at CCSD often contain students who need extra support. Those are our Individual Education Plan (IEP) students. Our philosophy is to ensure students are in the least restrictive environment, which is based on federal law. However, there is a range of disabilities of our students. To meet their needs, we have four special schools in CCSD with different focus areas—Helen J. Stewart, Variety, John F. Miller and Miley Achievement Center—each serving around 120 students. This is a small portion of our special education population because most of these students are being served at regular schools. At John F. Miller School, there is a large room that looks like an emergency room. Some of our most medically fragile students are at this school. We facilitate their learning needs as well as their medical needs on that campus.

We also have alternative schools for students who do not fit into a traditional school. We have programs where students can pick up credits rapidly to graduate— Horizon for the daytime and Sunset for nighttime—so we can work with students with various family needs.

We have schools for students who enter our system at a late stage, such as from another country. They may come in at 9th or 10th grade. We have a newcomer school called Global Community High School so we can educate these students quickly to pick up language and ultimately graduate from high school.

Chair Roberson:

How many students are at that high school?

Mr. Barton:

That school is small physically; it is 32,000 square feet. We have approximately 200 students there, all newcomers to our country. There is not a zone for the school; the students come from all across the area. We could take more newcomers and we are looking at that right now.

Chair Roberson:

I ask that because I want to drill down more on the issue of the ELL and zoom schools. The latest statistics I saw were that 22 percent of CCSD students are ELL. Is that close? A couple years ago it was 19 percent.

Mr. Barton:

It has gone up for multiple reasons because the way we define ELL students has changed. It used to be a paper and pencil survey and now it is through a home language survey. With our student information system, more families are claiming they have ELL students. I can get you that exact percentage figure.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

The latest statistic I saw was that about 60,000 of our students are ELL and are either receiving services or being monitored as such. We can get you that number.

Chair Roberson:

To follow up, if we have 60,000 ELL students, how many of those are currently in zoom schools?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I would say around 23,000 or more are in zoom schools. I am averaging 800 students per elementary school, 1,250 for middle schools and 200 for the global high school.

Chair Roberson:

So, a little over a third of the 60,000 are in zoom schools. Can either of you two explain to those not familiar with the zoom school model, how is it different than how the other ELL students are currently learning English in the classroom?

Mr. Barton:

The biggest difference is the kindergarten class size reduction at the zoom schools. We also have the expansion of pre-kindergarten programming at those schools, so it is an open program for neighborhood students. We get the kids early and we get them ready for kindergarten, first grade, etc. Also at zoom schools, family engagement activities are ramped up with a greater emphasis on parent involvement. This includes teaching parents how to help their children progress academically and with language proficiency. Also, professional development, when done right, has great success. In the zoom schools, that professional development is very targeted and focused. Those teachers have learned great skills to ensure that students learn language and can have the opportunity to converse and talk.

The reading center at the zoom schools is key also. Envision a classroom with a master teacher in the center. There are multiple tutors around the perimeter of the room. That is a reading center. There is a person who knows instruction teaching the tutors how to teach our non-proficient students how to pick up language more rapidly.

Chair Roberson:

How is this different in the non-zoom classroom? How do they learn?

Mr. Barton:

We are involved in an ELL master plan. We know we need to do better with these students across the board. Within our planning, we had 52 educators observe ELL students for a 4-hour period during a school day to see what they were doing academically and how they were interacting. It showed we have a lot of work to do and probably need to think about these zoom models and programs being expanded to other schools. If you go to a zoom school, I predict you will see ELL students talking more. When we did the tracking of those non-zoom students, it showed in certain scenarios—not across the board—but it showed that there were probably in some situations only 4 minutes of speaking opportunities for some of those kids. These students are still getting instruction because we have hard working teachers, but the concept of a reading center and strong professional development could be expanded District-wide to other schools.

Chair Roberson:

If you have a typical non-zoom school with 20 students in a classroom and there is a child who cannot speak English, I assume the teacher only speaks English. Is there anything special done for that child or is he or she simply expected to learn the language through immersion over time?

Mr. Barton:

Historically in the District, it has been an immersion model where the expectation is that the student will pick up the language in that classroom. There is a strong expectation that the teacher will take on the role of differentiating instruction in that classroom. It is not an easy task. I was a first grade teacher. When you have an ELL learner who may be only a month in this country, you have to do a lot of differentiation in your classroom to ensure you are getting support for that child. I think about when I was a first grade teacher and I had multiple ELL students, if I had access to a reading center to get that other intervention, sign me up.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

In some of the classrooms, teachers use strategies where they use language development, so you will see a language objective in the classroom as well as a curriculum standard. You will see students partnered up or in small groups who are working directly with that ELL student. If there is a student who speaks the same language as the ELL student, there can be partners put into place. There are Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) strategies used also. We have students who are newcomers and students who are long-term learners who are not meeting grade level academic standards. We also have students with English as their only language who do not have academic language skills and are thus not being successful in the classroom.

One of the exciting things is that with the new teacher contract we are looking at what we can do within specific types of schools for professional growth plans for teachers. In

zoom and victory schools, there are high percentages of teachers of second language learners. We can offer professional development as part of their professional growth plans to help these teachers learn strategies to help students who are struggling the most in their classroom. We are looking at how to implement this plan for spring.

The biggest challenge with language acquisition is not at the elementary level. Even though our kindergarteners and first graders are the highest percentage of newcomers, they learn language and can assimilate quickly. The biggest challenge is with the middle school students. They struggle the most. We need to address this population and ensure they are successful in English before going into high school where that hurdle could impede them from graduating.

Chair Roberson:

I heard you say that in the non-zoom schools with students struggling with English, the strategy is to have other English-speaking students work with these students. Obviously, that is not ideal because those children are also there to learn from the teacher, is that correct?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Yes, but research shows that some of the best learning takes place from peers. This type of peer-to-peer teaching is extremely powerful. Our teachers have good skills but they need better skills. That is what we are trying to provide. It is a struggle. I have been a teacher in a classroom where students comes in the door and it is literally their first or second day in the country. There is a major culture shock. Our teachers work very hard to try and assimilate those students into the environment.

Teachers use three different methods of instructions. Schools have a response to instruction model where they teach everyone at grade level standard, which is considered Tier 1. There are small groups doing remediation or acceleration of students either below or above the standards. There is a Tier 3 intervention which can be an intervention with a tutor or volunteer working with a student. The reading skills center can also be considered a Tier 3 or Tier 2 intervention.

Is this enough? No, and that is one reason we have been going through this 6-month master plan development, using state experts, community members and people outside Nevada including WestEd, a federally-funded research and development group, as well as the Council of the Great City Schools that brings in experts from other large urban school districts.

Assemblywoman Neal:

In the victory schools, how many have reading centers? Can we also discuss the summer academy? I only know of one school that held a summer academy: Kermit R. Booker Innovative Elementary School.

Mr. Barton:

We have a total of three schools aligning the victory programming to the zoom philosophy, having a reading skills center—West Prep Elementary, Jay W. Jeffers Elementary, and I think either Matt Kelly or H.P. Fitzgerald is the third.

Assemblywoman Neal:

So the majority do not have it?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

That is correct. The 16 zoom schools all had summer academies the first year.

Assemblywoman Neal:

I was referring to victory schools.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

We are in our first year of victory implementation, it started in August.

Assemblywoman Neal:

I just wanted to make sure there was delineation between the two. I only knew of one school that started the summer academy before the Legislation began, using Las Vegas My Brother's Keeper and the City of Las Vegas to pay for their academy.

Senator Denis:

Something you did not mention with the reading center concept is that not only does the teacher in the center help the classroom tutors, they also help all the other teachers to implement those skills. If a child did not need to go to a reading center, the teacher still learns all the concepts to teach in all the grades.

Mr. Barton:

That is a critical point. Those teachers are experts helping other teachers on their campus.

Senator Denis:

If you are comparing a zoom school to a non-zoom school, the non-zoom school does not always have that extra help for each teacher.

In the first zoom school implementation, there were 1,000 kids not at grade level in those 16 schools. I am sure the number has gone up now since we have twice as many. Have you seen similar results this year, now that you have been able to work out all the kinks?

Mr. Barton:

We had great success with the exits from the reading centers during the last 2 years. In the 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 school years, we had 1,628 students exit reading

centers, meaning they were at grade level at the end of that intervention. Most of our exits will come up in the next month or two because we are just entering second semester, so we should have data for you later on the current school year.

Senator Denis:

Historically, how many of those 1,628 students would have been at grade level without intervention?

Mr. Barton:

I would have to guesstimate a number, but certainly getting kids to grade level with just that Tier 1 instruction would have been much slower.

Senator Denis:

That is important, because some of these kids would continue to struggle throughout their whole academic career because they did not get to grade level.

Senator Hardy:

People have said that 65 percent of a school district's employees should be in the classroom as opposed to in administration. You have said CCSD added administrators to help teachers directly in the classroom. How many administrators have we hired to be in the classroom? What percentage are those administrators compared to the administrators you have added to be over support staff of administration? We have improved in numbers but have we improved in the ratio or percentage in being able to move administration downward?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

In the flexible budgets there are 548 administrators, which include added assistant principals, deans of students, etc. That includes a strong focus on instructional leadership and adding support for discipline and anti-bullying initiatives. Over the past 4 years, we have increased the number of assistant principals qualified by a ratio of students in a school building. This way, we have only a handful of schools with part-time assistant principals and very few with no assistant principals. Our focus is primarily on school-based administration and school support. Our Board of School Trustees have made that support to schools one of their four Strategic Imperatives as well as increasing the number of individuals driving to schools to work with students instead of driving to a central office.

Senator Hardy:

Do you have a percentage comparison of in-school administrators now versus what we had before?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I do not have that figure but can get that for you. We have significantly increased the number of site-based administrators versus central office administrators. We have eliminated some central administrators and are continuing to do so.

Assemblyman Stewart:

Having visited some of the zoom schools, I am very impressed by the dedication of the teachers and principals and the progress they have made. I sat in the student reading centers and witnessed the one-on-one learning taking place and how the young people are improving. Some of the zoom school teachers have brought up issues including the fact that in some cases, the students assigned to the reading centers are assigned by zoom administrators instead of the classroom teacher themselves. Some were concerned they did not have the power to select students to go to reading centers.

Another concern these teachers mentioned to me, and I have this same concern, is that as a zoom school student graduates to a middle school, the environment changes drastically without the support they flourished under in the elementary school. I realize this would be a monetary issue, but it needs future attention.

Mr. Barton:

To continue with my presentation (Exhibit G, page 6), we also have consequence schools for when students make bad decisions at schools. We do not kick them to the street or send them home for extended periods of time. There are five geographically zoned schools that we call behavior schools. Students will go there for 4-9 weeks to keep up with academics and retain social skills. The goal of the behavior school is to continue a student's education and decrease the recidivism rate so they do not keep coming back to these schools.

We also have continuation schools for students who have been expelled from the District or from a comprehensive school. These students may serve a longer period of time at a continuation school. These schools have smaller enrollments.

We also have correctional schools within our prison system for inmates.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

This is our third year of the Hope Squared initiative, dealing with our behavior, continuation and correctional schools as well as an extreme focus in our comprehensive schools. This initiative is aimed at reducing the amount of expulsion or behavior school referrals so we can catch students before they get in the system. We want to keep these students in their home school and support them there.

In the past year, we have been very successful in keeping kids out of the continuation school and reducing the amount of referrals for expulsion. Specifically, we have examined policies to reduce referrals and focus on what is required by statute. We

closed Washington Continuation Junior High School last year. We split that population into two schools and are now using that money to reinforce initiatives through the Las Vegas My Brother's Keeper program and the Hope Squared initiative. We are refocusing to prevent students at the comprehensive schools from being sent out for behavior issues.

Where are we at to-date with the reorganization of CCSD? In December, we returned 100 instructional coaches to the classroom to fill long-term substitute vacancies. We are also restructuring our Division of Instructional Design and Professional Learning, which entails keeping a small group of content experts working with NDE and curriculum taskforces to assimilate these standards into course syllabi and schedules for instruction.

The other part of that group will be to look at program evaluation as part of our return on investment (ROI) movement. They will also be looking at instructional programs being used in schools to determine if the money we are spending is giving us an academic achievement ROI. There will be a large number of individuals going back into licensed or school-based administrative positions. The money saved from the redesign of that Division will then go into the professional development program, putting it at the performance zone and school level. This way, those entities can determine the professional development needed for the success of those schools. This saved money would also be used to align directly to the read by grade three initiative, our cultural competency programs, behavior programs, climate and culture, and all content area instructional strategies. Schools and performance zones will have the flexibility to make those decisions.

We are moving forward with the flexible budget option for schools during the 2016-2017 school year.

We have a committee comprised of internal and external District members looking at restructuring our Educational Services Division. This year, we have seen a significant decrease in the expulsion referrals over the past 2 years. We have not seen it in the first quarter of this school year, 2015-2016, but we have seen a significant decrease in the African American referrals for expulsion. We know there is the potential that other schools like this may not be needed so we need to provide better support at the comprehensive school to keep students there.

All these things will be possible through the tentative agreement with the Clark County Education Association (CCEA). It will help us restructure professional development and allow teachers and schools come up with professional growth plans that align directly to our zoom schools, victory schools and turnaround schools, focusing on our ELL plan. With this agreement, that time will be used focusing in on the specific needs of those schools instead of having full-time staff development days where we pull people

together and giving them a one-size-fits-all approach. This is all part of the bigger plan to put decisions back to the schools and performance zones.

Assemblyman Stewart:

I was pleased to see that professional development in the District is becoming more specific because I have talked to teachers who complain that it is too broad right now. Going to a central District location to hear broad instruction is not as effective as keeping it at the school and having instruction that is suited to that school population's unique needs. Also, since there is no time during the normal school day for this interaction, during professional development it would be beneficial for teachers to have the opportunity to exchange ideas within their department at their individual schools. I am glad to see you doing that.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

One of the key components of the agreement with CCEA is to give time at each school for structured teacher planning time and professional learning communities. It also allows us to use that time for the read by grade three program so we can look at the response to the instruction model where we examine individual students and their progress. This can be by grade level at elementary schools or by department or content area at the high schools. That is built into our new structure with the CCEA agreement which will start this next fall. Schools will be able to guide their own learning path and focus on the specific needs of the students in that school.

Steve Canavero (Interim Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nevada Department of Education):

I am here to provide the statewide perspective. In Governor Sandoval's State of the State address he called for looking into modernizing the structure of two school districts—Esmeralda with 74 students and Clark County with more than 318,000 students at that time. I know this Committee has heard presentations about the history of the deconsolidation and consolidation efforts. But whether you are the Esmeralda School District or Clark County School District (CCSD), under the law you have the same obligations and responsibilities. The local Boards of Trustees, all 17 of them in Nevada, are empowered to administer the state system of public education.

From the statewide perspective, the school districts are uniform in how they interact with the state. Obviously, there are substantial differences between the state's school districts, but at the end of the day, those 17 Nevada school districts are led by their boards of trustees and a superintendent.

The way I interact with school districts—although we operationally work very much with our staff and the superintendents—is usually with the boards of trustees, especially when it comes to things like accountability and corrective action plans.

One difference is with the State Public Charter School Authority, which we call our 18th school district. All 17 county school districts are identified, for federal purposes, as Local Education Agencies (LEA), which is aggregating the federal law within a geographic boundary. The State Public Charter School Authority is the only statewide LEA.

Nevada school districts have a substantial amount of autonomy in administering the system of public education within their districts. There is an opportunity to staff themselves, create programs and organize schools in a way that makes sense to them and their constituents.

There are six kinds of schools identified in statute—elementary, junior high, high school special schools, charter schools and university schools for the profoundly gifted. These six schools have unique characteristics that fall into two categories. One category is how the school comes to be, a district-based school. The other category is a school identified in statute. There are myriad types of schools and their boards of trustees have the authority to administer the state system of public education and create schools when necessary.

Under Chapter 388 of *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS), the System of Public Instruction, a school board can create a school such as a magnet school, career and technical academies, signature academies, pre-kindergarten schools and turnaround schools. The turnaround school in a turnaround zone as they are called in CCSD, is called an “acceleration zone” in the Washoe County School District (WCSD)—the idea is to carve out some space, provide autonomy, more accountability and intervention.

School districts can also organize schools around various grade spans—kindergarten through 8th grade, kindergarten through 12th grade, intermediate schools serving grades 5 and 6, for example. Districts can also create special schools to exclusively serve children with disabilities, online schools and alternative schools. In Churchill County, the District offered district-wide enrollment, but due to declining enrollment this has been discontinued. Schools for adjudicated youth, or correctional schools, also exist, often in partnership with the state and the prison system.

Another category with its origin in law includes university schools for the profoundly gifted. This includes the Davidson Academy on the UNR campus, a mission-based public school. Davidson Academy is governed by a 10-member Board of Trustees in partnership with a Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE) institution.

Charter schools also have their origin in law. They are autonomous public schools and must follow the state standards and assessment system. Charter schools are accountable for performance, have a renewable 6-year contract and are governed by a board that is different from the other 17 Nevada school districts. Instead, the state Public Charter School Authority acts as the local state education agency but is not necessarily the body that oversees and makes direct decisions over the school.

Instead, the governing board of the charter school runs and oversees the school and principal on a day-to-day basis. The local school district, if they sponsor the charter school, acts as the oversight body to ensure compliance, accountability, academic performance and financial stewardship. If there is an issue with a charter school, it is not necessarily the sponsor exclusively that receives corrective action; the local charter school board would also be held accountable.

The state has now added a new type of charter school: the Achievement Charter Schools (ACS). In addition to charter schools sponsored by local education agencies or school districts and State Public Charter School Authority, this new category can be sponsored by the Achievement Charter School District. An Achievement Charter School is the LEA itself, not necessarily the sponsor. The student body served by an ACS is from a specific list of underperforming schools, whittled down through a process. There is a statewide footprint, but a very specific mission.

The empowerment schools are another type of school we find in statute. More about that later.

Blurring the line between type and designation, three of the types of schools we have already discussed bear mentioning—zoom, victory and turnaround schools. The state turnaround schools were formed under S.B. 92 from the last Legislative Session.

SENATE BILL 92: Revises provisions relating to education. (BDR 34-485)

The state turnaround schools are different than the local turnaround schools. There is also a federal designation where a school could receive a designation based on high or low achievement. Mr. Barton referenced the federal School Improvement Grants (SIG) which could be commensurate with either designation. The state turnaround program has taken a page from effective school improvement research. The law prescribes a level of autonomy for the principal of the school and the relationship with the school district's board of trustees to ensure the principal has authority over people, time and money. My belief is that we need to ensure we have a strategy for underperforming schools or for rigorous and robust school improvement work that includes absolute autonomies for the right schools and the right principals.

There is also an approach to education identified in law called school-based decision making, enacted in 1993 under NRS 386.4154. I found this piece of law while working through the empowerment history. The law states "The board of trustees of a school district may prescribe rules relating to the creation and administration of a program of school-based decision making for the public schools within the district."

There are rules stipulated in the law, including the creation of a school council that incorporates parents and community members, keeps records and has an appeal process. The law also requires a procedure for "a school to obtain a waiver of the

requirements of regulations of the board of trustees or the State Board.” I do not know of any schools currently exercising this specific statutory authority.

Chair Roberson:

You indicated that option was adopted in law in 1993. How much, if at all, has it been used in the last 22 years as far as you know?

Mr. Canavero:

I knew this question was coming and I could not find any in the literature that I looked at that leveraged this particular statute and I have been with NDE for 7 years. I reviewed the record and I did not see any. That does not mean someone did not use it, I just was not familiar with any.

Chair Roberson:

My guess is that is because the Legislature made that optional for school districts.

Mr. Canavero:

Yes, it is “may;” it is permissive.

Senator Ford:

How do you think the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) passing in Congress recently will affect the state relative to curriculum development and the CCSD?

Mr. Canavero:

I can provide the state perspective. In my heart I believe we have been preparing for the passage of the ESSA for some time. We knew it would come. We have been operating under the waiver. When they speak of tremendous autonomy or flexibility or empowering states; we took advantage of that when the Legislature approved and the Governor signed off on our exercising that authority under the waiver.

When we left the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 prescriptive and went into the waiver era, adopting rules and regulations and plans to exercise that level of authority and autonomy, we started to build the waiver. We have obviously gotten much better and clearer about where we want to go in positioning into a compliant ESSA plan.

My personal perspective is that I do not think it will change the standards or assessments significantly. In the last year, we have had a committee with a broad group of stakeholders help us identify how we could improve the framework we use to rate schools. Accountability is a big piece of this. We have gotten great feedback, which is in line with ESSA. The flexibility we have now under ESSA and the inclusion of additional measures other than just academic measures were recommendations of that committee, knowing this redesign was forthcoming.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Great things have already been looked at prior to the enactment of ESSA since we knew it was coming. It was the right way to go. Within our waiver we had actually seen what we could and could not do. One big change that will help us is the highly qualified designation and we are working with the NDE to change that so reciprocity will be reciprocity if a teacher has a state license in one state, we can hire them here. We have had issues with that in the past.

The ESSA is more than 1,000 pages and we are still exploring it. There are nuances that were changed at the last minute to get the bill passed. You know how the process works. We believe we have all been working toward that passage and are looking forward to the implementation in Nevada.

Senator Ford:

Regarding the Common Core, I have heard the Interim Superintendent say you do not contemplate changing our standards, although I know a lot of the discussion surrounding ESSA had to do with that. Why do you not think it will be necessary in view of the fact that discretion seems to be given more expressly to the states?

My second question is relating to teacher accountability and linking it to student achievement. I think that was also part of the discussion that ESSA brought out. What, if anything, does the state or CCSD intend to do about that?

Mr. Canavero:

Great questions—you have obviously been paying attention to all the deliberations in Washington D.C. as this bill went through. The reason I do not contemplate any changes is because the Nevada Council to Establish Academic Standards (NCEAS) and the State Board of Education confirmed and adopted the standards in 2010. We went through a process to roll out the English language arts and mathematics standards and the Nevada Academic Content Standards based on the Common Core. We went through a staged implementation process recognizing that English language arts was closer to modern standards than mathematics.

There have been numerous opportunities and discussions at the State Board, the NCEAS, and also during the 2015 Legislative Session related to those standards. At every point along the way, the standards were basically upheld. That is why I am not contemplating they will change. Obviously, we have our obligation to continue to review the standards and the data that comes back from our assessments as an obligation to the NCEAS. We will also continue to have a conversation about whether or not the data, instruction and standards themselves are all still in line. Obviously, it is not up to just me—these are public entities and bodies that have some role in making that decision.

Specific to teacher licensure, our teacher evaluations, the Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF) is what I think you are referencing. From the 2015 Session of the Legislature, Assembly Bill (A.B.) 447 established what I think to be a thoughtful approach to using data in addition to professional practices and observable characteristics for our teachers as our principals evaluate instructional personnel.

ASSEMBLY BILL 447: Revises provisions relating to the statewide performance evaluation system. (BDR 34-1120)

If you are acquainted with that, sorry, but we went from 10 or 20 percent in the first year to 40 percent. It is a split—it is local data so there is going to be some role for teachers, trustees, principals and superintendents to have a rigorous conversation about what does their local share mean. And then there is the state's share, and the state's share now is actually aggregated school data. Those changes were made. There is also an opportunity in A.B. 447 for districts to propose to the State Board for approval for an alternate program so long as that instrument, if you will, and tools are equivalent to the instrument and tools in the NEPF. That is another area the Legislature would have to act on to make changes.

Assemblywoman Neal:

Where are we in terms of the end-of-the-year assessment the schools will be implementing for this data alignment?

Mr. Canavero:

There are two assessments—the End of Course exam assessment and the Smarter Balanced Assessment for grades 3 through 8. We use two vendors—Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium provides the questions and Data Recognition Corporation provides the platform to interpret the data. At every State Board meeting, we have had updates and checks. We just did a stress test the end of December 2015 to demonstrate that our system could withstand 50,000 concurrent users. The report seems to indicate the bandwidth and capacity are good. The State Board asked us to create a dry run simulation where we can have students hit buttons, log on and rehearse the a test day before our actual administrated test this spring.

The End of Course exam is available now online or using paper and pencil. It consists of two exams—one in mathematics, roughly algebra, and another in more advanced mathematics, generally geometry. There are two other End of Course Exams in language arts. The NDE's plan is to merge those two English language arts into one and then add science in the future. The classes of 2018 and 2019 are required to pass these exams at a cut score. The NCEAS meets later this month to arrive at a mathematics cut score. In 2020, we add the science exam.

Assemblywoman Neal:

What is causing concern for me is that in this entire dialogue, we have learned that we do not have the standard curriculum across all schools, we have a state of flux in terms of the assessment. You are going to test the system, see if it works, and then there may be a switch if it does not work and then in 2020, I do not know what is on the table.

I recently heard that teacher evaluations in the new contract are going to be tied to their test scores. I heard this from a teacher yesterday who was concerned that the renewed contract was going to position teachers in a way they would be bound to something that was not clearly determined or actually established, such as the curriculum. The concern was they were going to be pretty much punished for something they have no control over. I am thinking through this and wondering what is really going on. It does not sound like it is completely clear and settled.

Mr. Canavero:

I can appreciate the complexity and how that appears from outside. Honestly, I have not found an easy way to communicate the various transitions that have been in place regarding our assessment system that are grounded in law.

So when the HSPE (High School Proficiency Examination) was replaced with the End of Course exam, what was not considered was when you take an exam that is administered to every 10th and 11th grade student—a census based exam—and move it to one that aligns to the course in which that student is enrolled, you completely change timelines.

The NDE advised that our students not be held accountable to a standard not yet set when they were already in high school. That is why you see some implementations that do not appear super clean and clear. They are out, they are in print and we have information on our website that should help families. Every year we produce a pamphlet and post it and send it to the school districts to help families understand what the graduation requirements are.

Specific to your teacher question, the NEPF and various scores are all situated in law. The scores and the cut scores about the distribution of how a teacher is rated across those four areas is part of the Teachers and Leaders Council (TLC). The State Board and the NDE heard regulations to create those distributions, scores and the mix of the right data consistent with A.B. 447. Then it will just move through the regulatory process to the State Board. I cannot address and specifics about the teachers' contract.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Assemblywoman Neal, that evaluation piece is not in the teachers' contract. It is required by state law. Evaluation is a contractual piece, there is an annual evaluation, but it is guided by state law. All these regulations, percentages and student accountability are taken from state law.

Assemblyman Stewart:

Mr. Canavero, let me see if I have this straight. In 2016, students who will be graduating, hopefully, in May and June still have to take the four proficiency tests and pass them. Is that correct?

Mr. Canavero:

Yes.

Assemblyman Stewart:

And then the sophomores and juniors who will graduate in 2017 and 2018 are not required to take any exit exams. Is that correct?

Mr. Canavero:

They are required to participate in the End of Course exam but do not have to pass it at any particular level.

Assemblyman Stewart:

Will they also be taking the ACT exam?

Mr. Canavero:

Participation in the ACT in 11th Grade is required in statute.

Assemblyman Stewart:

The freshman class now, that would be the Class of 2019, they will be taking the End of Course exams and having to pass them. Is that correct?

Mr. Canavero:

That is correct.

Assemblyman Stewart:

That will be an Algebra 1 and a Geometry 1?

Mr. Canavero:

Correct. Generally, algebra, geometry, 9th Grade English and 10th Grade English.

Assemblyman Stewart:

So students coming in as freshman will be taking algebra but have not yet taken geometry. Are you going to give those students a geometry test even though they have not taken it yet?

Mr. Canavero:

No, the idea of the End of Course exam is that you participate in the exam upon completion of a course aligned to the standards.

Assemblyman Stewart:

Is it your intention to have the freshman and sophomore English combined and the tests given at the end of the sophomore year?

Mr. Canavero:

Yes. When we had a group of teachers review the standards to prioritize them, it came back that the Nevada Academic Content Standards (NACS) in English language arts in high school is a matter of complexity between grades 9-10 and 11-12. Their recommendation was that it was ok to split them out now but in the future ideally we would combine them and make it a 10th Grade English language arts end of course assessment. Then we would add science to meet the statutory requirement.

Assemblyman Stewart:

So this freshman class will be taking the algebra test in May or April, which one?

Mr. Canavero:

It varies between April and June.

Assemblyman Stewart:

Also, they will be taking just the English freshman test; there will be no sophomore test given?

Mr. Canavero:

Correct. When a student is enrolled in a course aligned to the end-of-course assessment, whether it is called freshman math, Algebra 1, Algebra A or Introduction to English language arts, a school district identifies to the state. We have a list of prioritized standards that are covered in the assessment. The district says, "My course called this matches that." Then any student who completes that course would be eligible to participate in that course exam. That could mean an 11th Grade student is taking Algebra 1. When that cohort moves through, it is not always based on grade level, it is based on when they take the course

Assemblyman Stewart:

Finally, with the proficiency tests we have had, there have been special classes offered for those who have not been able to pass these tests on their first, second or third try. Is it your intent to do that also with the End of Course exams? To have follow up and special classes for those who have not been able to pass?

Mr. Canavero:

There is a remediation requirement built into the regulation. Working with CCSD and other school districts, we have modeled many of the regulations, in some way, after HSPE.

Chair Roberson:

I will open Item VI, Discussion of Empowerment Schools and Flexible Budgeting.

Mr. Canavero:

During the Interim before the 2007 Legislative Session, the Legislative Committee on Education invited Dr. William G. Ouchi to present on his article, "Power to the Principals: Decentralization in Three Large School Districts," Organization Science, April 2006. At that meeting, the Committee learned about efforts in Canada and the U.S. At that time, CCSD Superintendent Walt Rulffes presented a pilot program to implement autonomy to four District schools, calling them the "empowerment schools."

During the 2006-2007 school year, those four schools each received \$600 per student in additional funding to be used for smaller class sizes, extended school day, extended school year, discretionary dollars of around \$150,000 per year, a potential 5 percent principal salary raise, and teacher pay-for-performance of up to 2 percent if achievement targets were met.

The discussion of autonomy continued into the 2007 Legislative Session, when the Senate Committee on Human Resources and Education opened their first meeting with Senate Bill (S.B.) No. 238 of the 74th Session, which ultimately became the empowerment schools bill, and S.B. No. 304 of the 74th Session, was also about empowerment, which is providing more school-based control over key resources and subsequent decisions.

SENATE BILL 238: Provides for a program of empowerment schools. (BDR 34-112)

SENATE BILL 304: Establishes a program of local empowerment and accountability for public schools. (BDR 34-249)

It was clear from the testimony during that Committee meeting that the notion of empowerment and school-based decision making was front and center. That Session, the bills were merged and passed as S.B. 238, establishing a program of empowerment for Nevada. The program provided a framework for the control that school personnel exercise over resources. For example, an empowerment school might control 90 percent of its apportionment from state and local resources. Rural students who are not zoned to attend that school create incentive pay for all school personnel.

The Legislature approved funding of \$180,000 for the 2007-2008 school year and \$8.9 million for the 2008-2009 school year. There was an allocation of \$50,000 made to both Clark County and Washoe County and \$10,000 each to eight other Nevada school districts to apply for participation.

During the 2008-2009 school year, empowerment schools grew to 5 percent in Clark County and Washoe County. This created 15 empowerment schools for CCSD

and 5 for WCSD. Additionally, one school in each of eight other Nevada school districts was to be selected as an empowerment school. The law capped the number of empowerment schools statewide at 100. Additional funding of \$400 per pupil was to be provided.

The economic downturn eliminated the 2008-2009 funding. In 2009, The 75th Session of the Nevada Legislature did not fund the program for the 2009-2011 biennium. In 2011, the cap and the sunset were removed from the law, which had been initially established with that cap and sunset.

I did a significant amount of research in an attempt to determine the numbers and performance of empowerment schools. In short, there is little to no information about empowerment schools since 2011. The most recent data I was able to find is published in the 2011 Nevada Education Data Book, where details on the empowerment schools are summarized. At that time, CCSD had 30 empowerment schools that included 23 elementary schools, 3 middle schools and 4 high schools.

In the 2006-2007 school year, CCSD had four empowerment schools and the next year there were eight. By the 2008-2009 school year, there were 14 empowerment schools and the next year there were 17. In the 2010-2011 school year there were 30 empowerment schools.

Based on the 2007-2008 school year data, student performance analysis showed empowerment schools increased the percentage of students proficient in math by 9.7 percent and increased the percentage of students proficient in English language arts by 5.5 percent compared to the school's pre-empowerment status. Based on a parent survey parent satisfaction went up at the empowerment schools.

Where are we now in relation to the passage of S.B. 238? I put this question to the district superintendents to find out if any empowerment schools are still operating. Those that responded reported no empowerment schools in their school districts.

Chair Roberson:

Correct me if I am wrong, but is there a requirement under Nevada law that at least 5 percent of schools must be empowerment schools?

Mr. Canavero:

For school districts of more than 100,000 pupils, it is a requirement. It is permissive for districts under that population.

Chair Roberson:

So for Clark County, there is a requirement, under law, that at least 5 percent of schools be empowerment schools.

Mr. Canavero:

Yes, that is the way I read the law.

Chair Roberson:

But what I am hearing from you is that the 5 percent requirement is not occurring.

Mr. Canavero:

Also in the law, we receive a notification in September each year of those schools that are empowerment. I was not able to find that in the records of the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) going back a number of years. I can go into more detail, or we can stop there and we can move on.

Chair Roberson:

If you think more detail is merited, we would love to hear it. I have to tell you that I specifically asked for this topic of empowerment be on the agenda today because I have heard anecdotally from many people in the community that they liked empowerment schools. Parents like empowerment schools, teachers like empowerment schools and achievement went up in empowerment schools. What I have heard at every meeting of these Interim committees—at both this advisory meeting and the technical advisory meetings—is a real desire by many in the community for decentralization. They want more parent input and more control at the school level.

It seems to me that we had something that tried to get at those goals with empowerment schools. Yet, for reasons that I do not know, we have gotten away from that. I hope we hear more about it today; I am open to the school district's side of it. But if the law says you have to have 5 percent of schools be empowerment schools, how can anyone say we do not have 5 percent of schools as empowerment schools. I do not get that. How can that be?

Mr. Canavero:

I can cover a few key aspects of the law so we can understand how empowerment schools are contemplated in law. As you mentioned, it is permissive in school districts under 100,000 pupils. It is the CCSD Board of School Trustees that approves the empowerment schools and makes a design team to advise the boards on policies and procedures. The composition of the design team is broad and includes parents, teachers, community representatives, members of the Board of School Trustees and others.

Empowerment schools and their individual empowerment plans follow the policies and procedures promulgated by the Board of School Trustees. The intent and language of the law is to allow for principal autonomy on school operation, schedule, governance, incentives, staffing, budgeting and instruction. Further autonomy allows alternative schedules such as longer school days, longer school years and any other matters deemed necessary by the CCSD's Board of School Trustees.

Empowerment plans are reviewed and schools are held accountable. The plans may be revoked or renewed. There are provisions related to attendance and ordering of pupil enrollment. There is prioritization, so there is an element of choice to zone students and then to allow entrance by way of lottery if space is available.

Specific to principals wanting to convert to an empowerment school, that principal must establish an empowerment team and develop an empowerment plan. The composition of the empowerment team is broad, including the principal, teachers, employees, parents and community members. There is additional criteria related to expertise of those individuals. The empowerment team's duties include assisting in the development of the plan, the budget and oversight.

The empowerment plan contains requirements in terms and content, including the manner by which the school be governed, setting forth the budget, prescribing the academic plan and measures of achievement, incentive pay, how teachers and other licensed personnel will be selected and hired. This must be negotiated pursuant to Chapter 288 of *Nevada Revised Statutes*.

The empowerment plan may request a waiver from statute contained in the title or regulations of the State Board of Education or Department. The plan is to be approved or denied by the Board of School Trustees based on those factors. On factors other than money, the plan is within the limits of total apportionment. Financially, the school has discretion over 90 percent of the amount of money from the state financial aid and local funds that the district apportions to the school. The plan must contain the services of the school district to which the school wishes to receive. If the school wishes to buy services from the district, the district may deduct the cost of those services from the total apportionment sent to the school.

The only role for the NDE is accepting the notifications of schools that are empowerment, and the State Board's role in the review, approval or denial of any waiver of regulation or statute. The State Board carries the additional responsibility to review charter empowerment plans from the State Public Charter School Authority or the Nevada System of Higher Education should a charter school wish to convert to an empowerment school that is not district sponsored.

Senator Aaron D. Ford (Senatorial District No. 11):

Every once in a while, the Chair and I agree on something. I am not delighted to say, frankly, that we agree on this. I am disappointed to hear that the empowerment model has not been employed pursuant to statute. You mentioned the word waiver. Is there a record of CCSD requesting waivers to get outside the 5 percent requirement?

Mr. Canavero:

Not to my knowledge, but then again, I have not been serving in this capacity for very long. I can say that in the last 3 years, we have not had any waivers for the 5 percent, or

any waivers coming to the State Board seeking relief from a specific regulation or statute pursuant to this law.

Senator Ford:

In 2013, I sponsored a bill that we passed out of the Senate and unfortunately it fell in the Assembly. It would have allowed for the empowerment model to have even more teeth for a school choice approach to parental involvement. I recall specifically that the teacher's union, the Clark County Education Association (CCEA), supported that portion of the bill and the District supported that component also.

When we lived in Henderson, my kids attended Shirley and Bill Wallin Elementary School, an empowerment school. It was a fantastic school that I hear is still fantastic. I am dismayed we have not been able to capitalize on that opportunity. Maybe if that opportunity had been capitalized on, we would not be here today. But as we discuss more local control and parental involvement, the empowerment model seemed to be one that was appropriate to address those issues.

I know we have CCSD Trustees in the room today. Mr. Canavero has said that the Board of School Trustees has a responsibility in that regard, so maybe it is less about the Superintendent and more about the Trustees. I do not know, but I would love to hear from people in this room who can express to us why we have not, at a minimum, gotten to the 5 percent mark of empowerment schools in Clark County.

Chair Roberson:

On the very rare occasions where Senator Ford and I agree on an issue, you know something is up. Not to make light of this, but we would like some answers.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

We have many tenets to the empowerment model that are used in more than 5 percent of our CCSD schools.

Senator Ford:

Can you answer the question of whether or not we have a designation of at least 5 percent of our schools in Clark County as empowerment schools?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

No, we do not call them empowerment schools any more, we call them autonomous schools. Those autonomous schools have many of the components and tenets of the empowerment model built into them, including structures and flexibility.

Senator Ford:

So you are not using the word "empowerment," you are now using the word "autonomous." I have heard you say there are elements of the empowerment program in the autonomous schools. I am not certain that satisfies my question. What I really

want to know is—whether you call it autonomous, whether you call it empowerment or whether you call it just public—do we have 5 percent of the schools that follow the statutory model contemplated when we talked about the empowerment approach?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

When you look at the statutory model and all the tenets, if the tenets are requirements, then no. If they are not all required, then yes.

Senator Joseph (Joe) P. Hardy (Senatorial District No. 12):

Is the Moapa Valley school that was empowerment now an autonomous school?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

They are a flex budget school and they have autonomy to make decisions over staffing, so yes, they are. They have that concept. Same thing with Wallin Elementary School. Many of these schools utilize the flexibility such as extra time. All of our turnaround schools have this concept of using extra time. They are changing their instructional schedule. So all 14 of those schools, and then the 3 that we just took off turnaround are included in that. We have 180 schools using that strategic flexible budgeting to make decisions about how their instructional program is done.

Senator Hardy:

I appreciate that. I was under the impression with testimony in public comment that we used to have empowerment but we don't now, and that changed how we do things. What was the change that happened that they do not understand they are just as good as empowerment?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

When principal Dave Wilson left that school, I do not know if the structure stayed intact or not. That was the structure he used to run that school. I cannot speak to that piece of information right now, but I can get it for you.

Chair Roberson:

We are going to hear everyone out. There may be good explanations for why the law is not technically being followed, if it is not technically being followed. But to the extent that the law is not technically being followed, I am just wondering why the CCSD or the lobbyists for the District, did not come to the Legislature over the last couple of sessions and say, "Hey, we need to tweak this, it is not working out exactly how it should be working, let us change it to a more flexible model." I do not recall anyone from the District ever approaching me with regard to those concerns. You can see that a lot of us here are concerned about this.

Jim McIntosh (Chief Financial Officer, CCSD):

We have two principals responsible for flexible budget schools in the audience—Nathan Miller from Durango High School and Reece Oswalt from Charles & Phyllis Frias

Elementary School. Sometimes you ask District finance people questions about these programs, but we thought it would be helpful to have the principals who have actually been involved in these programs to be here in case there are questions regarding the benefit of a flexible budget to their schools.

The next speaker has the most experience when it comes to the empowerment budget and how it has ultimately transitioned to the flexible budget program. We have to be careful how we define our terms. I know that statutorily, there was a very specific definition for empowerment. We use various terms like autonomy, flexible and strategic and even though we use those terms, sometimes they mean something different to everybody. Depending on where you are coming from, when we talk about decentralizing and decision making in schools, which we think is a great idea, we need to understand what that means. When we say it at a very high level, if we are going to have a real dialogue on this, we need to be very clear about what those terms mean.

Senator Ford:

I agree that the words we use matter. If we are conflating empowerment with autonomy and with flex, then that is a problem. I need to know that is what we are doing. I would much rather stick to the verbiage we used in the statute—empowerment—so we can get a clear and concise answer as to whether we have been able to achieve the goals required in statute, at least in CCSD.

It begs another question I have for Superintendent Skorkowsky, and it is nothing personal, but is it your contention that all of the requirements mentioned in the statutes are not requirements? That some are “may” versus “shall”?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

No, that is not what I was saying at all.

Senator Ford:

Okay. It would be clearer if we stick with the terminology that we all know of, empowerment. If you want to talk about autonomous schools, that is fine, but I would consider it separate and apart from an empowerment school as defined in the statute.

Jeremy Hauser (Associate Superintendent, Operational Services Division, CCSD):

Prior to working in the Operational Services Division which oversees transportation, food service, maintenance operations and the ombudsman office, I dealt with the development of the empowerment program and the implementation of it. We ultimately included 30 schools. I want to give a little history on the empowerment model, ([Exhibit H](#)), how CCSD viewed the empowerment development and how the interaction happened within District schools. The nature of empowerment is that it can be different to different people, like the old story of five blind people each feeling a different part of an elephant. One person thinks it is a tree, another thinks it is a snake and another person thinks it is a rope. All very different.

Empowerment was a complete system with some site-based management, some resources, some restructuring of how you look at schools and it interacted between schools and central office change. There are many elements that made up the complete empowerment model. Some had various levels of success or problems. It is important to look at the model in its entirety, not just cherry pick the parts.

In the 2006-2007 school year which was the first year of empowerment schools, we began with the first four empowerment schools which were each reconstituted, meaning the entire staff of those schools had to reapply for their positions (page 1, [Exhibit H](#)). That was one reform in itself, reconstituting the school. At the time, we were working with Superintendent Walt Rulffes, who had a core belief that additional resources plus autonomy would lead to increased achievement.

In the original four schools, the central District determined how those additional resources going to the school would be utilized. Those schools were provided a collection of additional resources, including smaller class sizes, longer school days and longer school years. An additional discretionary amount of \$150,000 was provided, as was extra money for the principal for extra duties and pay-for-performance monies. There was also a 3-year commitment of \$50,000 per year for each school through the Public Education Foundation.

In school year 2007-2008, we added four schools, making a total of eight empowerment schools. Those schools applied and were selected through an anonymous application process that only analyzed data. We converted the initial monies allotted to the first four schools to a per pupil amount, which amounted to \$400. We spread this across the eight schools. Each school then had additional resources and more control over how to spend those resources. At that time, we had our central design team which included the empowerment elements mentioned in statute and the site-based empowerment teams managing the school empowerment plans.

The third year, school year 2008-2009 saw the addition of six empowerment schools, making the total 14 (page 3, [Exhibit H](#)). We were still operating under Superintendent Ruffe's idea that additional resources plus autonomy equals increased student achievement. That year, before we added the six schools, we were unsure whether empowerment would expand because the additional state funding had stopped. There was a long pause before we expanded. The Lincy Foundation came to our rescue with monies, \$14 million, I believe, to put toward the empowerment reform effort. We then had \$600 extra per student at those 14 empowerment schools. When it came to flex budgets, schools were still operating at a trading of resources.

Traditionally, non-empowerment schools budget with a currency of full-time equivalent (FTE) position allotments, meaning that so many positions for administrators, teachers and staff are allocated to the school which is converted to a dollar value based on

average salaries. At these empowerment schools we were starting to convert the FTE allotment to a dollar value.

In the fourth year, school year 2009-2010, we added three schools, making a total of 17. We added a smaller amount of schools that year to make the per pupil funding worthwhile to all the schools. It came to \$350 per pupil in each school. Any reform reaches a tipping point and we were looking for enough schools to make the system responsive to the change that was underway.

That year, we implemented a budget workbook, which gave autonomy to the schools. Autonomy comes with money, because if you do not have control over the dollars, you really do not have autonomy. There had to be a mechanism for these schools to start having control over the District's available resources related to their responsibilities. The budget workbook started to translate into trying to get a per pupil funding formula that provided a school a total dollar amount that could inspire creativity and insight into solving problems with those monies. When you budget with that same amount and it is categorized into locked in requirements, you tend to be limited because you only think of the dollar amounts in those little categories. The budget workbook was intended to start the transition of getting resources from a central source and moving them to the school sites.

We also implemented the Keys to Empowerment that year, which is the rulebook. The schools got the budget and the rulebook at the start of the year and each school developed a plan based on those two guides. There was no more telling school administrators when they can and cannot use their money. They would implement that budget and during the year they would look at development work and how to get more money into the site-based budget and what flexibilities they had related to District responsibilities. That gets locked in during the course of a year. Schools are then planning in advance and not making last minute course corrections based on personalities or other factors. Instead, they are doing it by thinking ahead about what is the academic need of that school going forward.

We looked at an innovation grant with the federal government; the Investing in Innovation Fund (i3). We included empowerment elements into it. We also used the first School Improvement Grant (SIG) with the turnaround schools and built some of the same thinking used to run the reforms of empowerment into the SIG as well. The elements of success are the same throughout all these elements—asking how can we get more local control and autonomy to the school site and get employees engaged in the decision process and how do you get communities to feel like they have some input and control over which direction the schools are going.

In the case of a SIG, those fundamentals of empowerment hold true even if the school is failing academically because you are looking to create a condition that will allow a failing school and the staff at that school to come up with success in a unique way. That

same thing works at an innovative school which is already successful, but administrators wonder how can they use their funds to get more, or to push their students farther in achievement. The fundamentals of those initiatives are all similar.

In year 5, school year 2010-2011, we added 13 schools bringing us to a total of 30 empowerment schools. We were able to add those schools without additional funding. Up to that point, the addition and growth of schools was based on whether we had additional per pupil funding to provide to the schools in addition to the autonomy. We thought what we had—the model structure, the staff and community involvement and the budgeting process—was enough to support the empowerment schools. Many of the schools wanted on board even without the promise of additional funding. We had plenty of applications from schools wanting to be part of the reform and have flexible funding.

Assemblywoman Dina Neal (Assembly District No. 7):

What analysis did you do from 2006 to 2011 in terms of what were the changes or success, or trend data you were able to identify? Each year, something new was added, but some things stayed the same. What were the success or failures each year in terms of the add-ons that made it successful or did not make it successful when you reviewed this model?

Mr. Hauser:

That is an interesting question because part of what makes a system successful is its ability to respond to changes quickly. Bureaucracies tend to get locked into a set way of thinking, regardless of results. This makes it very difficult for them to respond to a new situation. When we started the work with empowerment, each year was a learning year in terms of what we found successful and not successful. Part of that learning has been in relation to student achievement and maybe a larger part at first was in relation to the ability of those principals and their staffs to navigate the system of the District as a whole.

Changes were made to help make granting autonomies to the schools easier to implement. We always thought autonomy was a good idea; the question was how can we make the execution of it easier. For example, what is the autonomous school's interaction with Human Resources, what is it with Curriculum Development, with the Grounds and Maintenance Department and can we smooth those relationships to make it easier for a school to use that funding or respond to changing situations quicker? You are changing the field the game is being played on and hoping it leads to a better game. At the same time, there is a political reality happening. Like an equalizer, things can change so that one year the community input part is louder, then another time the site-based part is stronger, but you are trying to find a balance.

Assemblywoman Neal:

When did you get to the consistency, where all the pieces fell together like a well-oiled machine, meaning they were able to execute and navigate the system and produce academic achievement?

Mr. Hauser:

In the fifth year we got as close as possible to that moment of success. We still had some elements that were not as effective as they could be, but by year 5 we had a pretty tight package—between the student funding formulas, the budget workbook, the keys to empowerment and the outline of what were the accountability measures we were going to use. The book, *Empowerment: Operational Keys*, a CCSD internal document, outlined the system and became our empowerment playbook.

Assemblywoman Neal:

What happened between year 5 and year 6? If you are at the point where you declare that the theory is now working and being effectively implemented, why flex it out when the whole point of its creation was to provide more choice and autonomy within the system to make people happy with the ability to make decisions? Why move away from what is almost a good thing?

Mr. Hauser:

In year 6, we changed superintendents again. When leadership changes, so do some of the priorities. Like that equalizer, different priorities become louder than others every time leadership changes.

By year 5, there were a few empowerment elements that created issues. When the first four schools started, there was the ability for a teacher to opt out of an empowerment school. That was created because when we added that extra 29 minutes to the school day, it altered contracts. Teachers had to have the ability to not participate if they did not want to change their contract.

In the next 2 years, teachers and administrators had the ability to opt out, even for philosophical reasons. The thinking implemented in year 1 was being used for a different reason which potentially impacted peer schools negatively. When you are defining empowerment as the ability to opt out a teacher from my school to your school, the feeling about empowerment by some people changes because they are defining it by this one little barnacle that got added to this basically good system. As leadership changes, they see these barnacles and think they need to readjust to fix that. In year 6, the energy went to earned autonomy.

Chair Roberson:

That seems to be the point where the CCSD decided to ignore the law and go in another direction. I know it was Superintendent Dwight D. Jones who was here for a short time. Many people in this room were in CCSD at that time. Correct me if I am

wrong. I understand what you are saying about this may have caused problems in theory because some teachers did not want to be part of an empowerment school, but to change course in year 6 seems problematic.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

In 2011, remember what was happening in the economy. The Legislature withdrew all funding for empowerment and all support for empowerment. The CCSD had to make massive cuts to our District, including the money the state took to help balance the budget out of our capital program. At that point in time, there was a severe economic crisis in Nevada. The CCSD Board of School Trustees made a decision not to fund empowerment as part of the cuts. I was not there, but the history of that piece is important, because that is when Nevada's economy fell apart and the District had to make serious cuts. They made the cuts and they made the choices.

Chair Roberson:

I was there in 2011, and I know we made a lot of cuts. We made more cuts in our state government than any state in the country on a percentage basis. Are you suggesting that the Legislature specifically determined there should be no more empowerment schools or was that a discretionary decision made by the District?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I am not assuming or making any statements about the legislative process at that time. I was not involved nor can I speak to what was going on at the Legislature. What I do know from the history is that at that point in time, a decision was made to cut all the additional funding support to empowerment so the District could maintain a balanced budget.

Chair Roberson:

It sounds like it was probably a decision made at the local level by the school district to not put money from the budget toward empowerment schools. I am trying to understand, though. If you go back to year 5 (page 5, [Exhibit H](#)), the policy was autonomy equals achievement. That year, schools applied without the promise of additional funding. Fair point if the District decided—not making judgement whether it was the right decision at the time—there was not money to give additional funds to these empowerment schools. But why would you not have continued to let the schools that wanted the autonomy continue with the program? I am just going off your presentation, (page 6, [Exhibit H](#)), where now autonomy has to be earned.

Mr. Hauser:

At this point with the new superintendent, the feeling was that results equal earned autonomy. Superintendent Jones created a Blue Ribbon Task Force on Empowerment to assess where empowerment had been over those previous 5 years, looking at what elements needed to be shaped or reshaped and how to move forward. There were additional elements becoming more formalized—for one, a school report card which

was part of the empowerment program. A school performance framework took priority and the superintendent's growth model became an initiative, so other elements come to the surface which overshadow it.

Superintendent Jones was thinking with the Blue Ribbon Task Force, how do you move forward? Given these other initiatives I am doing with the growth model, school performance framework, changing of evaluations, how does empowerment move forward from this point? It was a moment of reassessment of how it would move on from that time.

Senator Ford:

I came on the scene in 2013 and this conversation was ongoing. I know Superintendent Jones and it is easy to throw people under the bus who are not here. I know you are not doing that, but I heard Mr. Canavero say there was a statutory out, which was to request a waiver. Unless I am misunderstanding the law. Maybe in school year 2011-2012, there was a reassessment and realignment. I remember the growth model being very top-of-mind on all of that. Do you recall if there was a waiver requested or contemplated? Why would we not look at the law and see what was required and what it allowed us to do if we were going to step back from what we had been doing? I understand that you could not just get to 5 percent of empowerment schools all at once, so I appreciate the progression over the years. The question I have is that in year 6, why was there no waiver request to backtrack?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I do not know that anyone in this room can answer that question.

Senator Ford:

I am not sure about that. There are CCSD Board of School Trustees here that were around during that time. You were around. I am not going to say you can answer it, but you were around because you were elevated through the interim position after Mr. Jones left.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I was an associate superintendent at that time and cannot speak to the conversations that were happening. I was not at the executive cabinet level at that time. As a part of the system, to us it was an evolvment of empowerment as it went forward. All the schools initially involved in the empowerment process—there may be a couple of exceptions—but they were using the basic tenets of empowerment and still using the flexible budget process and getting their budget workbooks. There are still schools today using the extended time, 29 minutes as was prescribed, through their own budgets, including most of our turnaround schools. To us in the District, it was an evolvment, a changing process.

Mr. Hauser:

After year 6, we saw two things happen. One was the use of the flexible budget, which became one of the primary focuses. Of all the parts of empowerment, that was the one part that was teased out to be the catalyst to further change. A lot of focus after school year 2011-2012 went into strategic budgeting. That expanded over the last 2 years. We now have 180 schools utilizing workbook budget templates. The other factor that got teased out was the innovation office.

Mr. McIntosh:

I want to talk about the flexible budget program since 2013. We are calling it the strategic budget rather than flexible budget. I know changing the name does not always change behavior, but we want to change the perception about what we are trying to do with these budgets. It is not just about providing additional flexibility for how you spend your dollars. We want to make sure principals and school administrators understand we expect this spending to be strategic. There is a strategic use of how you are provided resources. We believe local decision making is critical to the success of CCSD and that the best instructional decisions are made closest to the school level.

Our mission for the flexible budget program is stated on page 8 ([Exhibit H](#)). The four Strategic Imperatives listed on this page—academic excellence, engagement, school support, clarity and focus on fiscal transparency and accountability—have been passed down from the Board and are expected to be aligned with every budget item in the CCSD. This way, we can be assured that dollars are being spent appropriately towards student achievement.

Below that, the six items illustrated are the superintendent's focus areas—the Pledge of Achievement. It is the goal of the flexible budget to support all the work carried out as part of the Pledge of Achievement.

Traditional line-item budgets in a school district are limited. The line-item budget uses a staffing model with certain line items provided to schools for dollars that must be spent on instructional materials, textbooks, software, etc. Schools are allotted those funds usually based on student enrollment in the school. A larger school will have a bigger budget and vice versa.

Here is what line-item budgeting does not do (page 9, [Exhibit H](#)). When you are looking at a school's budget, you cannot encapsulate what sort of programs are being run at those schools, who is involved, and the total cost of the program. The dollars are being spent on various line items and not necessarily delineated into separate program expenditures. In many cases, dollars are allocated to schools based on the enrollment metric and not necessarily justified toward any one line item. There are not necessarily meaningful links created between achievement and spending to give performance information to staff. Dollars are spent in the schools as they are allocated but there are very few links between those expenditures and the resultant achievement of students.

One of the goals of CCSD in the flexible budget model starting with the empowerment program was to solve these issues and answer the question of how we can empower our principals for greater local decision making, hold them accountable and justify the expenditures and rationale for how those monies are spent.

Page 10, Exhibit H, shows our theory of action behind flexible budgets which I will read. We currently have approximately 180 CCSD schools on flexible budgets. We believe in pushing the decision making and authority for making spending decisions down to the schools. There is a lot of talk about decentralization, autonomy and empowerment and each of those terms need to be defined, not conflated. When we say empowerment, what exactly are we empowering schools to do with funding?

There must be communication between three District Divisions—Instruction, Business & Finance and Human Resources. The Instruction Division is allotted a budget worksheet and instead of receiving the usual staffing formula, that money is converted into dollars and then decisions must be made on how to spend that money. This involves communication with the District's Business & Finance Division and Human Resources Division. We have an Assistant Superintendent for Strategic Resources, Dr. Eva White, who currently oversees the flexible budget program. She makes sure all the details for converting schools to flexible budgets involve good decisions.

There are no longer additional funds provided for empowerment. There are certain limits to flexible budgets because certain courses need to be taught.

Chair Roberson:

What did you mean by your statement that there are no longer dollars allocated for empowerment?

Mr. McIntosh:

Previously, there were supplemental dollars provided for empowerment schools. It was an additional per pupil amount.

Chair Roberson:

From the Legislature?

Mr. McIntosh:

I believe at one point the dollars were provided from the Legislature. Once that funding ended, we received monies from outside sources including The Lincy Foundation. All those dollars are gone now.

Chair Roberson:

When did that stop and why?

Mr. McIntosh:

In year 4, we received \$350 per pupil for school discretionary dollars and in year 5, that was gone. In year 6, we added 13 schools but there was no discretionary dollar amount for those schools. So there were no longer any supplemental dollars provided for empowerment schools.

Chair Roberson:

I am trying to understand what you mean by supplemental dollars. Where would that decision for funding have been made? There is the government funding and then there is private funding. Are you telling me that the spigot was turned off at a specific time and there was just no more private money? Or, was it a gradual tapering off?

Mr. McIntosh:

There was an amount of funds provided by The Lincy Foundation that was converted to a per pupil amount. As those dollars were spent, there were no additional dollars provided by that Foundation.

Chair Roberson:

It was nice to have that, but it was never a requirement for an empowerment school to obtain those private funds.

Mr. McIntosh:

You do not necessarily need additional dollars to empower a principal to make decisions. In our elementary schools there are so many fixed costs and not a lot of additional dollars available to provide for that flexibility to really move the needle on student achievement.

Chair Roberson:

Back to my question on the supplemental funding, who made that decision? Was it at the state level or was it a local decision that there would not be supplemental funds allocated to empowerment schools?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

The initial cease in funding for empowerment happened at the state level. The District continued on past that with the additional funds from outside sources.

Chair Roberson:

Are you sure that is true? Was there a specific funding stream that got cut off, or was it simply a reduction in total education dollars?

Mr. Canavero:

During the economic downturn, it was either the 2008 or 2009 budget, there was a cut of \$8.9 million that the state pulled back. It was specific dollars that were categorical to the empowerment program.

Chair Roberson:

You are talking about 2008 or 2009, but that is not what we are talking about. Clearly, the empowerment model escalated after that, so it is difficult to say that the elimination of categorical funding at that time required a change or elimination of the empowerment school model. Talk about 2011.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Remember that Mr. Hauser said at that point in time, the potential decision was to not add more schools or cease the program because the funding ended. He said the only reason they continued with empowerment and added schools was because of the \$14 million donation from The Lincy Foundation.

Chair Roberson:

I am trying to determine what happened in year 6 when the decision was made to change the empowerment model, arguably, to get rid of it. What I am hearing is that it was the result of the Legislature making a decision to cut off categorical funding, but it does not sound like that is the case. It sounds like that occurred in 2008-2009. Why was there a change in year 6? I understand what you are saying, Mr. Hauser and Mr. McIntosh, but what you are describing to me does not sound like an empowerment school model.

We are all Legislators; we go up to Carson City; we work with the executive branch; we pass laws. It is expected that those laws are going to be followed. I am trying hard to listen to your perspective, but it seems to me that there was a decision made to not follow the law.

Senator Hardy:

I have been in a few Legislative sessions and as I looked at the distributive school account (DSA), what did we do with the DSA in the 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015 sessions? Did we take a dip in one of those years when the Legislature decreased the DSA from which we put it in a barrel and the school district takes it out and distributes it out as they will?

Mr. McIntosh:

During that period, there were no drops in the per pupil amount provided to the CCSD. However, the gains were limited. In one year in particular, there was only a \$4 per pupil increase in the DSA amount. On top of that, what the Legislature did during that period to subsidize the DSA was that they required CCSD to supplement the DSA over a 4-year period with \$85 million of its capital fund to keep afloat.

Senator Hardy:

We never really did drop in the DSA and require a certain amount of money to be put in from the capital improvement so that would backfill something that could be discretionarily budgeted or used. That gets to the Chair's point that the Legislature

never said, "By the way, you do not have to do empowerment in that funding." I do not think we ever had those discussions where we said you do not have to do empowerment.

My other question is about the 180 flexible budget schools. Are all of the former empowerment schools within that group?

Mr. Hauser:

Those 30 empowerment schools continued on with the strategic budgets.

Senator Hardy:

Do those 30 schools feel they lost something when they "took the strategic budgeting," or do they say "we used to be empowerment schools and now we are not and this is what we lost." Are we going to talk to any of those? The person behind you is shaking his head saying no, we feel wonderful. Is that why you brought him?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I would say not any of them feel that way. You can ask them. There are two outstanding principals right here in the room.

Senator Hardy:

That is what I am getting at. Is the feeling that the strategic budget schools, the flexible budget schools, have every bit as much as they had before when they were "defined as empowerment schools?" Did they lose anything in that philosophic transition?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I do not believe so. I will tell you the challenge comes with this type of model with no additional funds at the elementary level. Those original 14 empowerment schools that had additional funds may definitely feel like they lost something with the cessation of those additional funds. We allowed them to stay on the flexible budget. One principal, Michael O'Dowd at Wallin Elementary School, has been on that budget forever. They have built into their budget some additional time and unique scheduling. That school still functions as if it were an empowerment school.

Senator Hardy:

So we never did decrease our funding per pupil from the Legislative standpoint. Did we decrease the per pupil funding from the CCSD to a school, whether that be empowerment or flex spending? With the notable exception of the extra money given, did we ever decrease the funding per pupil other than the one exception of the extra money that empowerment schools received when they were one of the 14 first schools?

Mr. McIntosh:

Yes, at a certain point during the recession, the per pupil guaranteed amounts that were legislatively approved were reduced. There was a Special Session in called to reduce that previously approved per pupil funding when the Legislature recognized it was not

going to be able to fund school districts at those amounts. The Special Session was called and at that point, textbook funding, instructional materials, computer hardware and software funding was all cut by 50 percent. These were allocations to the schools.

Senator Hardy:

Having been the author of that particular bill which fenced off the funding for books, was that not in the fenced off area of books because we said we wanted, I think, about \$70 to \$80 million when we said we wanted to get the books back so people did not come to me and say, "I do not have a book for my kid?" We put that in the budget. It was in the 2003 statute. All of a sudden we got twice as much money in the book fund; money that could not be used unless the Legislature said "Yes you may use that half of that money because you do not actually use it because it has been fenced off." Was that not the case?

Mr. McIntosh:

The allocations that were cut to the schools were part of what we call the MER, the minimum expenditure requirement that we had to hold. It was a fenced off amount of funds for textbooks, instructional supplies and computer hardware and software. Those were the dollars reduced at that time.

I believe your question is whether or not reducing that expenditure was because we did not need to spend as much in those categories. That is possible, but the District did rely on receiving those funds.

Chair Roberson:

We can all go back and talk about what happened in the last 5 to 10 years with the recession and funding for education. My biggest frustration today is that it does not appear to me that the school district either applied for waivers or came to the Legislature and said, "Hey, we do not have enough money to do this, we need to tweak the law." From a process standpoint, that is what is concerning to me.

Mr. McIntosh:

Back to the presentation ([Exhibit H](#)) we have to have a process for converting the staffing formulas to dollars which is the budget worksheet Mr. Hauser referred to.

What do we mean by decentralizing? It is important to ask what items would be decentralized from a central office to give schools more authority, flexibility and local control over their spending? We have been looking at our professional development department, an area highly centralized at CCSD. We have been working on a process to say, "Let us decentralize the mission of this department and push these professional development dollars out locally." We do not know exactly what that looks like yet, but it will provide additional dollars to the schools and allow them to have some funds to spend toward student achievement.

We provide a per pupil allocation for schools, trying to convert staffing models into dollars. We convert at the average teacher's salary level. The devil is in the details, though, when we talk about decentralizing dollars. Certain programs cost more. Magnet schools, small rural schools, career and technical academies and class-size reduction schools all affect the dollars we include to each school. We do provide a base per pupil amount (page 12, [Exhibit H](#)).

There are several areas of function the District needs to have as non-negotiables for decentralizing. We call these areas boundaries. This is when I get to my point about defining the term empowerment and what is a school empowered to do, or defining terms like autonomy, flexible and strategic. Due to efficiencies in the District, security issues, various contractual obligations or state law, there have to be some boundaries when we talk about decentralizing. There is a list of those boundaries (page 13, [Exhibit H](#)), which are functions or departments that will generally stay central. Every school district that has decentralized funding has to make this decision and decide what will be decentralized to the schools for autonomy and what will not be decentralized.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Transportation has some exceptions. Some turnaround schools have paid additional monies to allow for schedule changes to accommodate flexibility in their schedule.

Mr. McIntosh:

Any of the programs could be augmented with flexible funds. I am talking about the general services provided by transportation, food services, custodial, etc. If at any time a school wants to use flexible funds to augment these services, it certainly could. For example, certain schools are allocated a police officer. We do not allow schools to touch those funds, but if they want to augment with additional campus monitors, that is certainly allowed.

When we talk about decentralizing, we are not talking about turning everything over to a school principal. There are efficiencies that make some things better done centrally, like transportation and food services. Some school districts have allowed for the total decentralization where they allocate funds for these services, but CCSD is not doing that.

A famous example of decentralized spending is the Baltimore City Public Schools that went to a concept called bounded autonomy. This meant principals would be given autonomy over their funds but there would be some boundaries. When they first did this, there was lots of flexibility provided to the principals. On the first snow day, the principals were shocked when they came in to work and their parking lots had not been plowed. The response from the central office was that it was their responsibility. Some principals were not prepared to handle that aspect of their school. That is why the training and development for anyone operating a flexible school budget is so important.

Right now in our 180 schools with flexible budgets, their administrations can use their funds within limits. Our goal is to have all our schools on a flex budget by the 2016-2017 school year. We think going through the budget work sheet is a valuable exercise for every school administrator, but we do not want to force anyone to do it before he or she is ready.

Page 15 ([Exhibit H](#)) shows the transition we want to make from flexible budgets to strategic budgets. The District receives categorical and supplemental funds and one of the great things the Legislature did this past Session is to provide for many more categorical programs, including zoom schools, victory schools, the read by grade three program and more. Various programs received in these categorical buckets are viewed as separate and apart from what schools receive in their general operating funds. We would like everyone to view all these funds holistically. There are exceptions to this, but if there is an achievement issue you are trying to address at your school, the expectation is that you would use your general fund strategic budget and think of the issue enterprise-wide and how you could use the dollars and direct those monies more strategically to solve your achievement issues.

Page 16 ([Exhibit H](#)) shows our lofty future goals of strategic budgeting. We have begun laying in the groundwork and every time a school creates a plan for a flexible budget, the first requirement is to provide rationale. We need to begin creating and measuring program metrics so we can adequately capture data to ensure the programs are doing what we want them to do so we can begin measuring against those metrics and holding principals accountable.

The second goal is to link the dollars spent to achievement and the third goal is to evaluate the academic return on investment (ROI), which is the bang for our buck on how dollars are spent. It allows us to continue what is working and eliminate programs that are not working. We need appropriate data to measure the ROI, so getting robust data collecting infrastructures in place is important to the success of every school in the District.

Many of these processes are already happening through the Pledge of Achievement and the Superintendent's initiative; Ensuring Every Dollar Counts which includes ROI committees at the school level, department level and at the school initiative level. Through these committees we can begin measuring the ROI in different areas including instructional programs, department programs or viewing each school as a whole. We look at how a school is spending their dollars on a per pupil basis correlated to the school's student achievement. This has been a 2-year process getting structures in place involving the business community, leaders in the community, parents, teachers and school administrators on all these committees to help us begin to accurately capture our academic ROI.

Page 17 ([Exhibit H](#)) illustrates our timeline for getting all CCSD schools on a strategic budget. The budget workbooks will be provided to school principals in February when we will begin training, which is critical. The budget workbooks will be returned to the Strategic Budget Office and the Human Resources Office in March so we can make staffing determinations if there are changes. All these plans must be incorporated into the tentative District budget which will be submitted to the state on April 15.

We are working outside our antiquated system when it comes to human resources, so to double the number of schools on a strategic budget is a challenge. Our final budget will be adopted in May and then school starts in August.

Strategic budgeting is not a silver bullet; it is simply an allocation method that allows for better decision making. If there were another methodology allowing for an equally good outcome, that is what we would use. We believe allowing fiscal decisions to be made at the school level makes sense and studies show this to be true.

The driver for decision making should always be student achievement. We believe the strategic budget will help us to provide this for our students.

Transitioning from staffing budgets to per pupil budgets requires technology upgrades to information systems. There is a cost to this and our systems are simply not built to handle what we want to do in moving from a staffing model to a per pupil model. There will have to be some investment made into these systems and having an administration to run the programs.

Clear roles, responsibilities and expectations must be defined up front. We need to define what we mean by flexible budgeting versus strategic budgeting. Everyone needs to clearly understand their role and responsibility in the process or it will not work.

Decisions surrounding decentralizing any central funding, outside of professional development, are yet to be made. Any additional funds we can provide to schools from the central office are still up in the air.

Training, monitoring, and reviewing the strategic budget process requires administrative resources. Dr. Eva White oversees this program with a staff of one. We are hoping to get her one more staff member. It is managed outside the current system right now.

Senator Ford:

I want repeat what I understand about the definition of empowerment. For me, it is what was contemplated in statute. In 2007, the Legislature mandated that school districts institute an empowerment program for at least 5 percent of their schools. Money was allocated to that effect. I understand you have said that money is not required to inspire principals, but it is a key component.

We gave you money, we took it back because it dried up at the State level, and if it were not for the Lincy Institute, you would not have had additional money to offer to schools as they became empowerment schools. That money ran out and at some point a new superintendent came in with a different view on empowerment—otherwise I cannot understand why he would have instituted a Blue Ribbon Task Force on Empowerment.

It looks like the empowerment process has—you say evolved, I say devolved—from there. I want to know where we are relative to the actual empowerment program that we put into statute. I understand Dr. White is here who will be dealing with the strategic budgeting process. I would imagine that if you have an intention as CCSD to reinstitute or revive an empowerment program, she will be the one to help do that from a funding perspective. Am I correct about historically where we are right now?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Yes, schools have the ability to apply for waivers. Conceptually, all the pieces of empowerment are there but we do not call them empowerment.

Senator Ford:

Do you have an intention of commencing an empowerment program pursuant to the statute we have outlined?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

We will adapt our current thinking to incorporate the empowerment concept if that is what we are going to call it. Then we will call it empowerment with strategic budgeting.

Senator Ford:

And part of your request, I suppose, to the 2017 Legislature is going to be money you need to help effectuate a good empowerment program. Is that right? That is an invitation, by the way.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

That is correct.

Chair Roberson:

It sounds like in the last 30 seconds, you agreed to go back to the empowerment school model. Because everything I heard Mr. McIntosh talk about is not the statutory empowerment model. We do not want to be told what we want to hear, but it felt like that exchange was you saying, “Ok, you want the empowerment model, we will ask for more money and we will go forward with the empowerment model.” That seems to be in contrast to the last 45 minutes outlined by Mr. McIntosh.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I do not have the statute in front of me so I do not know the specific components of the empowerment model there. But I will tell you that CCSD has allowed schools the

flexibility to do every one of those components of the empowerment model. They have been allowed to apply for waivers, they have been allowed to add additional time, they have been allowed to do every aspect of the law itself while not being called empowerment. I understand that the perception and the construction went away, but we feel we can get back to the empowerment model. I personally feel we can get back to that empowerment model and include those components so it is evident to not only us, but to you as well, as the Legislature. That exchange was not just to appease.

Chair Roberson:

I am not making accusations; I am trying to understand. This is all a little frustrating to a few of us on this Committee, maybe to all of us, because you are talking about allowing schools to obtain these different empowerment functions, but the law requires that a minimum of 5 percent of schools in the CCSD be empowerment schools.

I appreciate your presentation, Mr. McIntosh. It sounds like you and the District will be spending a lot of time in the coming months to refine the strategic budgeting. I would caution you that this Committee is going to approve a CCSD reorganization plan and it may be at odds with what you are working on right now. We want to work with you; that is what we are all here to do, but keep that in mind.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

What I keep trying to say is that anything included in the strategic budgeting process is not at odds with empowerment at all. It is actually in alignment with empowerment. Obviously, we did not make that clear. We will bring an alignment to you that shows you how it is aligned to that concept and utilize the terms if that is needed. We can outline that. We will come back to you with that specifically, which will show that direct alignment from strategic budgeting to empowerment.

Assemblywoman Neal:

Superintendent Skorkowsky, you said you strongly believe you can return to the law. I am a history person and my mind works like a puzzle piece, so try to put in pieces. I went back to 2011 to see what Superintendent Jones said in the Assembly Committee on Ways and Means regarding empowerment schools so I could get my mind wrapped around the sweep, the \$300 million, it came from the capital fund. Now that we put money back into your capital fund through this bonding we just had, is this the reason there may be potentially freed up money somewhere in the mystical space to then have these supplemental dollars returned to the model?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I did not say there would be additional dollars. We do not have additional dollars. What I said is that the flexibility under the strategic budgeting, which includes the concepts of empowerment, will return. The additional funding is the piece that really takes schools to the next level. I have some school principals here who can tell you how they used this process in their schools to change and impact what they needed for their community.

It is the process of having those additional strategic dollars that gave us the extra 29 minutes in a school day, the 5 percent salary increase for the principal and the pay for performance for teachers. Those are what the additional dollars paid for; things the District did not fund. What schools are doing now is using their dollars to impact the instructional decisions and programming; the staffing models and more.

Assemblywoman Neal:

That makes sense, but what I am trying to get clear in my mind is the idea that we are going to return to empowerment, but it will not be the greatness it was in the past with the supplemental components. We are not going to have extra money, which is what makes it great.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I would say that we have greatness in these schools. There is greatness now in these schools with the capabilities they had all these years. I would not say we are returning.

Mr. Oswalt was the principal at Sue H. Morrow Elementary School prior to being principal at Charles & Phyllis Frias Elementary School, which was just named a Blue Ribbon School. That did not happen overnight. Wilbur & Theresa Faiss Middle School was a 3-Star school that went to a 5-Star school within a year because they utilized their strategic budgeting process to do what they needed to do to make it happen. We have greatness here and it is happening all over the District.

Chair Roberson:

This discussion will continue but we need to move on.

Nancy E. Brune (Executive Director, Guinn Center for Policy Priorities):

My goal is to provide you with some context and comparative analysis for a higher perspective on this issue.

As Senator Roberson mentioned, in the course of the last meetings of this Committee and the Technical Committee, the idea of decentralization has come up frequently. This is not a new idea. Many past reforms that have focused on decentralization. Think back to the 1960s and 1970s where there was an effort to decentralize control to get more parents and community members engaged in schools.

In the late 1980s, school districts looked at decentralization again with site-based management and decision models. Research shows those models were not linked to improved student achievement, partly because school districts that adopted site-based management models focused on just governance. They forgot to think about teaching, academic programming or how to build capacity at the schools. So the increase in performance did not happen.

Fast forward to the 2000s and up to today, there have been a new set of reforms focusing on decentralizing authority. These are known as autonomous, empowerment or innovation schools. These reforms have attempted to draw on lessons learned from the site-based decision models that occurred in the 1980s.

It is important to remember that when Superintendent Dwight D. Jones was here, he set up the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Empowerment, which Jeremy Hauser referenced. That group sort of redefined the concept of empowerment, not focusing so much on issues like longer school days or years, or pay for performance, but it was thinking at a higher level, allowing more flexibility in defining what is empowerment. That way, the whole system could ultimately be thought of as an empowerment zone and really create innovation.

The three recommendations the Blue Ribbon group agreed on to define empowerment were: reward for high performance, a way to become a high performing school, and an operating system for all schools once the system matured and the infrastructure could support flexible budgeting for all schools. That concept of empowerment has carried over into the idea of strategic budgeting.

Senator Ford:

I want to make sure we are using the same terminology. When I say empowerment, I mean what is in the statute. Is the empowerment you described through Superintendent Jones comparable to what we are requiring in statute?

Ms. Brune:

It does. I think the idea was to not make it so prescriptive and thus allow more schools to participate.

Senator Ford:

So it was not at odds with the statute?

Ms. Brune:

Not at all.

Chair Roberson:

The statute says that at least 5 percent of schools need to be empowerment schools. It does not put a cap on that. It did initially, but I do not think it does now.

Ms. Brune:

That is correct. I am not saying there was a cap or that it should be restrictive.

Senator Ford:

I want to make certain that I understand the differences in what you say Superintendent Jones contemplated as empowerment relative to what we as a

Legislature contemplated as empowerment schools. Apparently there was a disconnect, as you heard through the last long testimony. I am just trying to see where the disconnect was. Could you expound on the differences between the empowerment model recommendations from the Blue Ribbon group and how we are defining empowerment in our statutes?

Ms. Brune:

I do not know the specifics so I would hate to comment and be incorrect. Superintendent Jones did change the term to autonomous schools. If you look at page 4 of my handout ([Exhibit I](#)), there are at least a dozen school districts listed with data on their own empowerment efforts. Across the nation, a core element of autonomous or innovative schools is the flex budgeting.

Listening to Mr. McIntosh talk from CCSD, you can almost think about this as Empowerment 2.0. We have 50 percent of our schools now doing flex budgeting with the goal to have 100 percent of them on board by school year 2016-2017.

Chair Roberson:

My belief was that you were going to testify as to the empowerment school model with your perspective on why it is not being used today, if there were problems with it, and whether it was successful when it was in place.

Ms. Brune:

I believe we heard that it was successful. I talked to a number of principals who really appreciated being in an empowerment school. When I talked to them, yes, there were different elements of the empowerment schools as we know them—pay for performance, flexibility for a longer school day, etc. All of the principals pointed to the flexible budgeting as what it meant to them to be an empowerment school. Many schools had a school empowerment team and thought they were interesting and useful, but not critical to the success of their day-to-day job and academic performance.

When we look at the list of cities with empowerment models in their school districts, it is important to remember that empowerment schools are not a magic bullet. There are mixed results. You may see higher test scores, but then you could see slower academic growth. It is important to also remember that many of these other school districts had other things happening at the same time—for example, open enrollment systems, weighted student formulas or the end of principal and teacher tenure.

The empowerment schools as originally conceived in state statute only required 5 percent participation in CCSD. Many of the country's high performing districts, especially Seattle and Houston, have all autonomous schools with the flexible budgeting. One has to ask if you are really trying to change the culture of a school district, should every school be included in the empowerment or autonomous model? I think the strategic budgeting is trying to get us there.

There are elements of success with school districts reaching autonomy within their empowerment models, (page 5, [Exhibit I](#)). It is important that school leaders have autonomy over budgeting, staffing, curriculum and scheduling. The second important factor is treating every principal as an entrepreneur and giving each one the resources to behave like one. The third factor is ensuring that every school controls its own budget, which is what Mr. McIntosh has said is the goal for CCSD. The fourth important change is moving the central school district office away from supervising to instead facilitating successful implementation.

Accountability is an important element of success as well, (page 6, [Exhibit I](#)). There should be accountability for student performance and success, making that information transparent to everyone. Systems should provide real-time data for quick responses. One of the things with the implementation of empowerment schools in CCSD was that principals had to provide real-time data on how they were doing. If they were falling short, there would be visits from administrators. If they were meeting achievement goals, they were essentially left alone. Another element of success is that there should be a commitment to build school capacity. Research shows that parent community councils are helpful but not necessary for empowerment success.

A focus on learning and teaching is the final element of success we have seen with successful empowerment models on a larger scale, (page 7, [Exhibit I](#)). Educators and teachers need to receive structured support and feedback on the effectiveness of their efforts. Collaborative teaching and professional learning are allowed for during the school day in a collaborative, supportive school culture.

Of all these factors that foster success in an empowerment school, two emerge in the data as the most important. The first factor is strong leadership from the principal. There is a growing body of research showing that strong school principal leadership is critical to any single program or effort, whether it be teacher retention or improving academic success.

Page 9 ([Exhibit I](#)) outlines just how critical principal leadership is to academic success. They need resources and autonomy to act as entrepreneurs and be successful. In talking to principals at empowerment schools, I learned they particularly appreciate the autonomy.

In thinking of the future of the District, it is important to address the current system of hiring principals, removing ineffective principals and holding them all accountable. We currently have 17 Assistant Chief Student Achievement Officers in the District and none are held accountable through the Nevada Educational Performance Framework (NEPF). If a principal is not performing, who is accountable for that poor performance? What is the chain of command? We need to know what percentage of principals are highly effective versus those that are low performing and if there are supports that can be implemented for both categories.

The second most important emerging factor that fosters success in empowerment schools is autonomy over budgets. Schools must also have autonomy over staffing, curriculum and scheduling to be successful. As Mr. McIntosh indicated, we are moving away from the FTE staffing model toward a system of currency and dollars. We need to have an honest conversation about who gets control over what.

While I applaud the efforts of CCSD, if you look at other school districts, two critical questions emerge: what percentage of funds does the school have? Looking at the research of best practices, principal or teachers at every school should be able to say they have ownership or control over 60 percent of their school's budget. Mr. McIntosh spoke of the boundaries or non-negotiables that should remain centrally distributed (page 13, [Exhibit H](#)) such as food service and transportation, etc. I understand the rationale for that, but looking at what other school districts are doing, everything is on the table or at least there has to be a conversation about what is off the table versus what can be negotiated. We need a candid conversation about this.

We also need a candid conversation about how we hold schools and principals accountable and how we measure outcomes. Whether we expand empowerment or revisit the concept, we need to specify the criteria used to evaluate the successes and failures of future reform.

We also need to strengthen the I.T. system in the District to give schools a seamless path to exchanging data between HR and the financial systems when we fully implement the strategic budget model. The weighted funding formula will facilitate greater autonomy. Many of the districts that have implemented autonomous schools use weighted funding formulas. According to best practice, the District will need to facilitate the implementation and monitor the effects of the reform. As we heard Mr. McIntosh say, CCSD is prepared and committed to do that.

Finally, what is the overall aim of autonomy or empowerment as we talk about decentralization? Is it to enhance student academic success? To expand choice so empowerment schools are one more program along with magnet schools and career and technical academies (CTAs)? Are we wanting to expand control and if so to whom? Parents? Principals? Unions? The community? Or, are we wanting to expand the access to a high quality education?

Another question to ask is who will get autonomy and be empowered? The original four empowerment schools at CCSD were a mixture of underperforming schools and over performing schools. During the empowerment school rollout, we changed the qualifications. Some of the original 30 empowerment schools were underperforming and some were performing better than the District average.

We need to ask how well the CCSD is positioned to implement a highly effective autonomous school model, what challenges remain and what resources are needed. Autonomy, as I said before, is not a silver bullet. It is one option in a portfolio of options.

Senator Moises (Mo) Denis (Senatorial District No. 2):

Earlier we talked about the high transiency in some of our more at-risk schools. If you have kids switching schools all the time, how would it play with empowerment schools?

Ms. Brune:

If you look at what other school districts are doing, with the exception of Boston, most have designated all schools as autonomous schools. Looking at Houston, schools may specialize—there might be one school focusing on health science, another one for kids from unstable backgrounds who have moved a lot, for example.

Senator Denis:

That is something I am interested in. It is a challenge if I have kids moving from school to school. Now, many of the kids in my district might be moving from one zoom school to another zoom school since they all seem to be in the same area. But if we do not have that, any gains kids have made at one school could find them behind at another school.

Ms. Brune:

The goal would be to expand the number of empowerment or autonomous schools. Of those districts that have adopted those school models, not all of them have provided extra resources to the schools. Some have, but it is not necessarily the case that you need additional resources to do empowerment schools well and effectively.

Assemblywoman Neal:

On page 4 of your handout ([Exhibit I](#)), you listed the school districts under the heading “Performance is mixed.” What do you know in terms of the budgetary autonomy of these districts? You spoke of what is controlled and what is not controlled. Do you know what is controlled within each one of these districts that determines the success or lack thereof?

Ms. Brune:

Not offhand. In Seattle or Houston, I believe, school districts have to opt in to receiving any central district services. The default there is that you are out of the central district and you have to opt back in. A UCLA Professor said the benchmark was to have more than 50 percent of the resources controlled at the school. It would be great to ask whether once the flex budgeting/strategic budgeting process is rolled out, how much of those resources will each school have autonomy over.

Senator Hardy:

If we were a committee to look at the functioning of CCSD and make recommendations for the next Legislative Session, how does this discussion relate to taking the school district and breaking it into smaller pieces in some way?

Ms. Brune:

There is no correlation between autonomous schools and district size. Houston has achieved success with converting to all autonomous schools and they are only slightly smaller than us. In contrast, New York City and Chicago are slightly bigger than us and they have also made all their schools autonomous. Their results have been mixed. The research does not show that district size correlates to how well autonomous schools in that model function.

Senator Hardy:

So there has not been a wheel created yet that is just like us, considering breaking up the CCSD vis-a-vis the empowerment school model?

Ms. Brune:

Right. School districts of all sizes have adopted the autonomous school model.

Senator Hardy:

So this would not help or hinder that process?

Ms. Brune:

It would not. It goes back to those two critical factors of having effective flex budgeting which is candid about what resources schools can control, and also having the focus on principal leadership. Those two elements combined with stronger accountability systems do seem linked to higher success with this autonomous school model. You need both.

Senator Ford:

You have highlighted Seattle and Houston as districts where the schools have to opt in to central services because they are declared autonomous as a default. Clearly, in Houston, there is a higher graduation rate. We could use that. We could use in Clark County higher test scores and money to schools like in Seattle, but the growing achievement gap is noted in both those cities (page 4, [Exhibit I](#)). That is obviously not something we would countenance here. What can you tell us about Seattle and Houston and their models that we could avoid were we to break up the District into, say, 357 different autonomous school districts?

Ms. Brune:

I do not know, but in San Francisco they also have autonomous schools and the district there decided to cancel a physical education program and hired a student achievement officer focused specifically on the achievement gap for African Americans because it is

pretty high there. Many of these school districts adopted several different reforms at the same time, so it is difficult to point to a direct correlation between success or failure with the autonomous schools. Seattle and Houston did away with principal tenure and Houston, I believe, also revisited the teacher tenure system.

Senator Ford:

I would appreciate your expertise on the achievement gap issue. You highlighted San Francisco, and they also have a growing achievement gap according to your handout (page 4, [Exhibit I](#)) with their autonomous school system.

Ms. Brune:

We have a pretty big achievement gap as well here in Clark County.

Senator Ford:

I know. We want to try to not only fix that but certainly not exacerbate it by going to an autonomous or empowerment school approach. I like empowerment schools, but I do not want to adopt it at the expense of an achievement gap.

Chair Roberson:

I will now open Item VII, a presentation on site-based budgeting for schools by the Clark County Education Association (CCEA).

Senator Ford:

I would like to hear the teacher's perspective on the empowerment model. In the 2013 Legislative Session when I presented a bill related to parental involvement, the CCEA endorsed that component of the bill. I want to hear if you think we are on the right track with the empowerment model approach and if not, what we need to do to get back on track.

John Vellardita (Executive Director, CCEA):

When we embraced the discussion that this piece of Legislation tried to take on, it was really about asking how we improve the education delivery system in the 5th largest school district in the country. It was about delivery of education that should first and foremost have a discussion take place before we start talking about the form it takes organizationally.

When we talk about empowerment models and what is in statute in Nevada, as well as what empowerment models are elsewhere in the country, we look at it in the context of a delivery system model. For example, in New York State, an empowerment model does not have flexible budgeting. An empowerment model has site-based budgeting. That means 86 percent of that budget in that building with an empowerment model is controlled by the building. Fourteen percent is controlled by the central district.

The difference is: central says “here is what you can have and in that context, here is the flexibility to help you decide;” versus the school determining what they need and having the empowerment to act on that need. That is a fundamental difference. Do we have it in CCSD? Absolutely not. Do we believe the school district under the leadership of Superintendent Skorkowsky is trying to work toward a direction where there is more control in the buildings so where the money goes there is an alignment with objectives and vision? We think so. But what we are presenting today shows a body of evidence in this country that is overwhelming and which demonstrates a different kind of model that can be employed on the scale we are talking about with the 5th largest school district in the country. Because it exists out there.

We have Article 39 in our collective bargaining agreement that specifically says empowerment. But with anything in a collective bargaining agreement, it takes two to tango. We are not the employer. We do not have the authority to move in that direction. But if we did, we have language in that contract that says this is what we would like. The experience we had historically with the 5-plus year run of empowerment was good.

Senator Ford:

I want to be clear on this. You represent the teachers and in their contract you have an empowerment clause. Is that clause referencing empowerment in the classroom?

Mr. Vellardita:

The empowerment model was introduced in CCSD before statute was passed in the state. Once statute was passed and became a law, it defined what empowerment was.

The collective bargaining agreement we have with the provision that spells out empowerment is about the building that becomes an empowerment model. That ended in 2010-2011 after it peaked and then there was the blue ribbon commission by the superintendent. The architect for a new model called innovation was Ken Turner, who introduced the innovation model that ultimately the CCSD adopted, replacing the empowerment model. I would argue vehemently that it was not transitioning to a different form of empowerment because one of the fundamental shifts in the innovation model was a shift back to the site administrator, the principal, with authority and control. Whereas, the empowerment model tried to develop a more collaborative model of cooperation and input from staff.

Senator Hardy:

In the 5-plus years we had with empowerment, what was gained, what was lost, what did the teachers feel in the transition from empowerment to flex or strategic budgeting?

Vikki Courtney (President, CCEA):

I would have to go back and tell you why we put it into the contract. We decided to do interspace bargaining with the District; it was a very collaborative time. We decided you accomplish more together than you do separately. Coming up with that model brought

everyone to the table. The empowerment design team was made up of the administrators' union, the central office, the support staff—everyone who was involved at a school. The idea was that it would take the whole school to improve education for students.

We started out with four schools. Two were reorganized and brought in a staff that was 50 percent new employees. The other two schools were existing schools. One was a model already running pretty effectively as an empowerment school with a principal who had the system down pat.

I worked on the negotiations team helping negotiate the contract that year. I worked with Paul E. Culley Elementary School in the role to help them become an empowerment school. I was the liaison between the union and the school. It was interesting because teachers who liked the philosophy could come back and apply and were rehired. Everyone was asked to reapply.

Lisa Primas was the principal at Culley, coming in as a new principal. When I met her, she was a “power over” person instead of a “power with” person. As we talked about what empowerment meant, she changed because she learned that she could give decision making to the teachers through the process we put out which included having a leadership team with teachers, parents and a community partner that provided some funding.

It was hard for her to let go, but we train them in the interspaced bargaining process which we called the interspaced decision making, so people could see there was a proper way to make decisions so everyone gets their interests heard. Everyone learned a lot. It took time and an investment, though. Getting the extra money and time was good. They made the decision to give all the time to the students. So the extra 29 minutes went to the kids; it was very focused on them.

Teachers need to learn too; they need to be given professional development if they want to improve. They ended up being very successful. They looked at their data and were very data-driven. They had determined together what they had to do to get better. They were still able to offer the kids extra stuff and to offer the community things they had not had.

The counselor did a lot of work bringing in parents. Because it was a high Hispanic population, they used some of the community partner funds to have sewing machines and get material. Parents made costumes so they could do traditional training in Mexican culture and dancing. Everyone felt like they were a part of it. They owned it. They became proud of their school and community. Mrs. Primas would go around to the neighbors and get them involved. They came to the school. Many had not previously liked the school because of the traffic. The principal changed the culture completely.

Was it perfect? No it was not perfect. The opt-in, opt-out part of the earlier discussion was also part of our conversation. We were looking at peer assistance and review, which was the next step for that school. I went with another teacher, Dr. George Ann Rice, who was the head of negotiations at the time, to Ohio to look at their model of peer assistance and review. Since then, we have thought of that model.

I am so appreciative of the legislation so now we have been afforded the opportunity to have peer assistance and review. Empowerment was about support. It was how do we support each other to make good decisions and ones that everyone can agree to at some level. It was not about personnel issues. It was about teaching and learning, curriculum, data is important, paying attention to kids and if they are failing how do we help catch them up.

Senator Hardy:

What happened from the transition of empowerment to flex budgeting? Did we lose a step or lose something in the transition? Or, are we improving what we did? What is the feel of the teacher and the staff? Are the teachers now able to say “I am not afraid of having a principal with autonomy, knowing there is accountability?” What is it now that happened where we transitioned away from empowerment to flex budgeting? Is there an equal sign or is there a less than or greater than sign?

Ms. Courtney:

I think it is about culture and climate and how you work with people. You have to own that you want to go through that process. It is not easy. One discussion we had when I was involved is what do you do with a principal or administrator who is “power over” instead of “power with.” I think it is about what you believe in. Do you want to work with people that way? I think we should insist that people work that way and that we all have skin in the game to help kids do better. If we do not, there is a breakdown. I cannot just stay in my classroom and not be part of what is happening. I have to care that the other kids in the other classrooms are doing well too.

Senator Hardy:

What does the teacher feel when and if this Committee decides to break up CCSD?

Mr. Vellardita:

Teachers like to teach and they like to see success. They are solution finders and they collaborate. They want that kind of environment. Some call that environment empowerment, which it is if it is acted on. We think the recommendation of this body should be what is the best student-centered delivery system. At the hub of that is the relationship of the educator with the student and a connection with the parent as well, working with the rest of the staff in the building.

We know what we have. We know what it has done. We are here to talk about something different. If you look at page 2 of my presentation handout ([Exhibit J](#)), you

can see the pyramid of how the CCSD is now, with money from the state going first to the central district and lastly, to the students and families. It is a top-down system.

Page 3 ([Exhibit J](#)) shows that the reorganization proposal shifting to Instructional Precincts is basically the same thing from our perspective. It does not pass the test of difference, so it is still a top-down delivery system.

We propose that to think outside the box, we need to reverse the triangle with money going directly to the students, the upside-down pyramid (page 4, [Exhibit J](#)).

To improve the quality of the education delivery system in the District, we should move to a decentralized school-based model of budgeting and decision making. We have heard discussion about decentralization and about budgeting and we think there is a profound difference between what we are proposing versus what has been discussed up until now.

We first need to examine the difference is between de-centralized and centralized (page 6, [Exhibit J](#)). It is important to frame the discussion with a clear understanding of what these two terms mean.

The bill that created this Committee, [A.B. 394](#), also references deconsolidation.

ASSEMBLY BILL 394: Creates an advisory committee and a technical committee to develop a plan to reorganize the Clark County School District and revises certain provisions related to collective bargaining. (BDR 22-900)

If we were in a Legislative Session today, given what we have learned through this hearing process, we would be hearing that deconsolidation is not the term. It should be decentralization. Deconsolidation of a large school district has rarely been attempted. This Committee solicited research and an expert to make a presentation on examples of deconsolidation, specifically on the scale we are talking about. What we saw from Michael Griffith from the Education Commission of the States was that there is not a baseline to draw from; there are not examples for us to follow.

It made us kind of think that if we are talking about changing and improving our education delivery system, we have landed on a concept of decentralization where there is a significant amount of research. We believe CCSD is position to realize quality gains from a decentralized model. I do not think there are a lot of people who disagree with this concept.

For a little history, in 1974, the Edmonton Public School District in Alberta, Canada was the first to develop a decentralized system where schools defined their relationship with the central district as a delivery service for their needs.

In 2006, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) made the largest gains in student performance among California's seven largest school district by decentralizing. To Senator Ford's question, there is research out there that clearly shows a correlation between this kind of model with gains in student achievement. The SFUSD uses School Site Councils to drive policy changes at the individual school level.

Page 10 ([Exhibit J](#)) illustrates how these School Site Councils function in California. A couple of years ago, an important development occurred in California where voters passed a proposition to fund education in that state. The flow of money had some accountability requirements with it. The School Site Councils were already in place, but are now used even more. On the chart, you can see the composition of the Councils, which included one principal, one other staff, three classroom teachers and five parents or community members. This is a fundamental, philosophical position that there has to be parental and community input.

The School Site Councils' responsibilities are seen on page 10 ([Exhibit J](#)). One of the objectives includes helping develop a Balanced Scorecard/Single Plan for Student Achievement. The Balanced Scorecard is a business practice that aligns strategic vision and objectives with resources. It has accountability measures and determined outcomes which have to be achieved. The entire State of California is using this approach for budget development. The Single Plan for Student Achievement is developing a plan for student achievement.

Senator Ford:

Can you re-explain the Balanced Scorecard? Also, can you dovetail that to the question on San Francisco's use of School Site Councils? We heard from the last testifier that SFUSD has a growing achievement gap.

Mr. Vellardita:

On the research, it would be beneficial for this Committee to have the people who did the research—and it is extensive—rather than a third party like me reporting on it.

The Balanced Scorecard is a strategic planning and management system extensively used in business and government. It aligns what the strategic vision or objectives of an organization is with its resources. It is the plan and the capacity to implement the plan. It is a practice; a method.

Everybody goes through training to learn how to implement it. For example, if we want to turn over a school building to develop the plans for that building to educate students and manage a budget, we are not talking about just giving them a bucket of money and saying "Go use it." You have to set up a system with structure, education and training. This way everyone in the building is equipped with the resources and knowledge to effectively implement that model.

Senator Ford:

I understand we should go to the researchers for the answers on the SFUSD, but I am still wondering if any of you know anything about contrary research that would counter the contention that there is an increased achievement gap there?

There is talk on social media that autonomy leads to more positive results in more affluent communities more quickly. This speaks to the achievement gap issue, which I would like to be able to avoid if we are going to an approach such as autonomous or empowerment schools. Do you have any comments?

Mr. Vellardita:

Absolutely. The school districts in New York City and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) represent the first and second largest districts in the U.S. and have urban and diverse populations like CCSD. I am not sure about the social media reference, but the research is out there and we can get it for the Committee.

Assemblywoman Neal:

What is the role of the parents and other community members in these School Site Councils? I read a New York Times article that basically said the rich kids are the ones excelling. Although there was growth with the communities of color—it grew by 57 percent in terms of the resources they put in—there is a distinct difference in what that component allows because the model is built around you taking your personal financial resources and investing in programs or extensions within the school, so it favors the wealthier families.

So of course income gaps create that inequity that then creates the issue of what type of program is being offered at the various schools in San Francisco. They cannot provide the same level because there is an income disparity which then creates the academic achievement disparity because the resource allocation is different. If you look at number 5 on the pie chart, where parents and community members are, that is a huge chunk in the model. Generically, what do you know about the differences within family structure and income?

Mr. Vellardita:

This is an excellent question. This is just one variation of those School Site Councils, others can be different. It is a more challenging situation for students and families that are poor. They have challenges that more affluent communities do not have and those challenges can essentially displace them from involvement in their schools. Poor families can get involved in the school. The research is out there that shows how you can get these families involved in their schools. They need to be involved.

Chair Roberson:

Maybe we should make a distinction between more parent involvement versus resources. Both Assemblywoman Neal and Senator Ford have talked about a lack of resources. I think this is more focused on parental involvement.

Senator Ford:

I am only focused on the achievement gap issue, regardless of parental involvement versus resources. I want to ensure we can minimize that.

Mr. Vellardita:

The statement on page 11 ([Exhibit J](#)) represents a significant development in decentralization in the largest school district in the country, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE), which governs the city's public school system. When that occurred, others started to follow, including LAUSD in 2009 (page 12) and Denver Public Schools (page 13).

These examples show that the decentralized approach means, first and foremost, shifting resources directly to the buildings with the authority of those buildings to determine the need and the allocation of that need to accomplish achievement.

Senator Ford:

Specific to this point related to schools buying their own curriculum and school-based testing programs in the Denver Public Schools statement, is this in line with the Colorado state rules?

Mr. Vellardita:

I would assume that every school district has to be in compliance with what is under statute in their state.

Senator Ford:

So where we have the Nevada state standards, if we were to decentralize by allowing each principal to pick a curriculum, it would have to be in alignment with the standards and the testing would also have to be in alignment. That way, we could compare apples to apples between schools as opposed to apples to oranges.

Mr. Vellardita:

Correct. One of the experts on school district models, Dr. William G. Ouchi, who was mentioned earlier, has said there are seven key things necessary to making a successful decentralized school model (pp. 15-19, [Exhibit J](#)).

First, give schools the authority in budgeting, personnel and instructional planning.

Second, have a weighted funding formula where dollars follow the student. This allows the unique needs of a student population to be addressed.

Third, have the ability to gather and process great data on demographics and academic outcomes.

Fourth, develop leaders with the capacity to support school-level planning. This is not necessarily just the administrators, but a team of leaders. Like we talked about with the Balanced Scorecard, you have to adequately train staff and provide them with the resources for success. You do not just become a great leader overnight.

Fifth, schools create more participatory decision-making structures at the school level. You heard Vikki share her experience of empowerment and the team building that occurred.

Sixth, there must be accountability measures. You have to own the performance and be held accountable.

Seventh, the school system needs to develop a system-wide culture that supports school decision making and improvement.

We believe the CCSD should move toward a decentralized school-based model of budgeting and decision making. That is fundamentally different than what we have heard up to this point. We think the evidence is out there that school districts on the scale that CCSD represents have gone in that direction and have years of experience we can draw from. We are not suggesting there is not a Nevada difference. We are not suggesting a cookie-cutter approach where what is good in one area should be automatically and unconditionally applied here. We are saying there is enough experience out there to draw from to determine what is good for Nevada.

How do we redefine an education delivery system that is student-centered and outcome-based while taking into account funding adequacy and our unique student population? We believe the decentralized approach with site-based ability to develop a budget and make decisions is the direction this Committee should consider.

Senator Ford:

I am glad to hear the conversation is progressing from deconsolidation to decentralization. I was concerned with the onset of this Committee that the ultimate angle had to be deconsolidation. I do not think many of us believe that at this juncture. Hearing more people talk about how we get to where we want to be through the dictates of the statute might just be decentralization. I have not heard anything different from CCSD or the Trustees regarding the need for decentralization, so we are aligned in that regard.

We began by questioning you about your thoughts on empowerment schools. What I have heard today sounds like it contains many components of empowerment schools as we discussed them in the statutes. I want to confirm on the record whether my

understanding is right or wrong. Clearly, there might be a handful of things in your presentation that may be outside the scope of empowerment, but as a general matter, it sounds like the empowerment school approach that we discussed might fit the bill for what you are suggesting. Is this correct?

Mr. Vellardita:

Yes, we support empowerment, the statute, the collective bargaining agreement provision we have and we support the concept. We also now know that there are some very successful models out there that have embraced the empowerment model with site-based budget development and decision making.

Senator Ford:

Then my excitement is justified.

Assemblywoman Neal:

I have a question on your pyramid (page 4, [Exhibit J](#)). You have CCSD administration servicing the schools and the schools servicing the families. This is different than the model that says CCSD services the schools and then CCSD schools service the administration on the precinct model (page 3).

What would you take out in your upside-down pyramid where CCSD administration is at the bottom? What are you expecting to be rearranged when you think about the presentation the District gave us with its broad administrative structure? Are we looking at the instructional unit and then the accountability piece that is under the centralized structure being moved and taken out, then allowed to be controlled by the schools? I do not know what moves and what does not move with this pyramid.

Everything you listed in the presentation comes from elements of Dr. Brune's presentation about autonomy, from the student-based strategic budgets where you put kids first and when you are thinking about measuring your program in relation to the budget based on student achievement. I am trying to figure out what it is you would want to rearrange from CCSD if you had the option to take out blocks from their chart?

Mr. Vellardita:

I get lost in their chart, just for the record. It is hard to follow. That is what happens when you have a large organization. I am not saying there is anything wrong with that.

In a past meeting of either this Committee or the companion Technical Committee, there was a presentation by Mr. McIntosh about the budgeting model that CCSD applies when building a budget system-wide and then for a building. That model, to my understanding, is based on assets not dollars. It says you have X amount of kids, so here is the formula for the staff structure related to it.

If you told that building to build the budget, it starts first with that student population—what do they need, what is the objective in terms of their advancement in education, and then asking what is the system and resources we have to build around that to effectuate that outcome. That may not look like a formula where you count up 753 kids and determine you need 6 teachers, three aides, etc. It may end up with you saying instead that you need 9 teachers but not three aides.

The more licensed professionals you put back into these classrooms, you are taking away from the District's central office in some capacity. It does not mean it is costing money. It is just repurposing it into instruction into the school sites. The schools still do not supply some of the services from central office like transportation, for example, but you trim down centralization to the basic delivery service they provide to the hub, which are the sites. The budget is then build around the sites.

Assemblywoman Neal:

I think it was the human resources presentation we had at this Committee where we saw the formula. Would you suggest that, taking everything we heard today, we sit down with that model and try to puzzle together what is the best education delivery model that puts the student first? Because it sounds like the center is the student.

Then there is this autonomy, but everyone is debating what that looks like. That seems to be what we are really arguing about—who should have what, how much of a role should the principal have in determining what type of school he or she is going to run or make decisions over, etc. The parents and the community are the extra external pieces that get to have at least an opinion that is valued.

That is what I keep hearing in 14 different ways. We are debating and going round and round about what kind of power to keep and what to give away and who should be the ultimate decision maker for that power. That is ultimately what I keep hearing, every time we have a meeting. I just see it in a different slide with a different definition or code or word. I feel like I am on a hamster wheel and everyone keeps saying the same thing but because we cannot get along, we are just saying the same thing differently.

This is not really a question. I will try to piece all this together and figure out what I need to examine because it sounds like there is an element here, and an element there and we could just come up with a decision and move on with our lives.

Mr. Vellardita:

I do think this hearing process is increasingly delivering some clarity on an outcome. I do not think the discussion any longer is about breaking up a school district. Initially, that idea was out there. Then we heard a presentation on the part of CCSD on a model they thought would be in context of what A.B. 394 intended. As we progress, what we are hearing is that there is more of an interest in having more control in the school

building to answer the question of how we best serve the primary customer, which is the student.

One of the attractions of the model of charter schools is the autonomy concept. Parents like that; those who are there like that. We do not have that choice. When we describe empowering, the most important aspect of that is controlling resources. Then, you train and educate the people in the building more about how to deploy those resources so it is a student-centered outcome. That is genuine autonomy. I think the discussions are starting to bring clarity. We presented a particular model related to decentralization and ask the Committee to look at some of the related research.

Chair Roberson:

Do you recommend any specific national expert on decentralization who we could bring in to give us more details?

Mr. Vellardita:

Yes, we think the premier researcher with a significant body of work and evidence is Dr. William G. Ouchi from University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). I talked to Superintendent Skorkowsky about this. I want to say for the record that we want to work with the school district on an outcome we have absolute agreement on. I had asked him to think about what we presented and if he had heard of Dr. Ouchi and he said he has.

Chair Roberson:

For the record, we need to see if we can bring Dr. Ouchi out here. From your research, what has been the effect on the central administration from this kind of model? Is it reduced? Obviously, more resources are going to the school site versus the central administration. Is there a cost or can it be revenue neutral?

Mr. Vellardita:

It depends on the model and the experience. There is a reduction of central administration, so there is a repurposing of the resources. Forty percent of that savings from the downsizing of some of the services central provided went right back into the schools.

Chair Roberson:

On page 10 ([Exhibit J](#)) the pie chart shows the breakdown of the School Site Council. Is that breakdown typical or what you are suggesting. I like this increased parental and community involvement in the schools and the decision making. I hear people at every meeting talk about why we need more of that in the schools.

Mr. Vellardita:

That is an example of one composition, yes.

Chair Roberson:

Would the idea be that the School Site Councils are basically the management that makes the final decisions for the school on budgeting and curriculum, etc.?

Mr. Vellardita:

As they related to that building, yes.

Senator Ford:

On page 13 of the CCSD presentation ([Exhibit H](#)), are you saying the school would determine the amount of budget that it needs? Or would it determine the funds that are allocated to it?

Mr. Vellardita:

It would be need-based determined by the site. Does that mean that in the end if a site says they need a certain amount, they get that? Not necessarily. The resources are limited and they are part of a school system. The discussion starts with the need from the site, not from central giving them a bucket of money they need to decide how to spend. Those are two fundamentally different approaches.

Senator Ford:

I agree. I can see a scenario where a west side school says I need twice as much as a suburban school because it has issues that are much different. Regardless of which approach you take, would you agree that those boundaries on page 13 ([Exhibit H](#)) are all things not delegated to the school site?

Mr. Vellardita:

Some but not all. I understand the concept of boundaries. Those are central to the building. The central district does have a role and needs resources to execute that role. Do all the ones listed there need to remain central? Some are pretty obvious but I am not sure about others. I would defer to the body of research out there. That could be helpful to the Committee. I think Mr. McIntosh alluded to that also.

Senator Denis:

Can you talk about the savings that would come from decentralization? You touched on that. There has to be someone to oversee all this. We have seen situations where a principal picks teachers and parents he or she wants on an oversight council and then he basically does what he or she wants. Under a decentralized plan, who would oversee that local group?

Mr. Vellardita:

We are not embracing a model where the principal has absolute authority. We are presenting a model of a collaborative team.

Senator Denis:

I understand that, but we did not talk about who gets to pick the people to be on that School Site Council?

Mr. Vellardita:

We have research we can give the Committee on how they did it in California. They have a model on how they build their site council.

Chair Roberson:

My question is on the issue of need versus available money. It makes sense to have student weighted funding where the money follows the child. We know this does not happen now. Every school is going to say they need lots of money. I am not sure how that would work.

Mr. McIntosh made a presentation in an earlier meeting about the teacher shortage and how using permanent substitute teachers that cost less than licensed teachers saves money but the savings do not go back to that school. It goes back into the budget. That needs to change.

Within this model or some similar model where the money follows the child, it would make sense to me that a school could make decisions where to spend their money. It is different than saying school X says they get this much money, therefore they get that amount. I am not sure how that would work.

Mr. Vellardita:

If the scenario of using substitutes at a lesser cost leads to repurposing that attrition savings to somewhere besides the school where the savings were made, that would not happen under this model. It would stay in that building because that money stays with the student. It would be repurposed somewhere in the building, perhaps hiring a licensed teacher or for some other need in the school.

On the issue of setting up a criterion system for how to fairly allocate monies to each schools, each with different budget requests and requirements, is that what you were asking?

Chair Roberson:

Well, we do not have an unlimited amount of money. I am on board with the concept that the money should follow the child and stay with the school and that the school and the community should be able to spend that money on what a School Site Council deems important. But there is only so much money, so when school A says we need this much money, therefore we get this much money, I am not sure how that would work.

Mr. Vellardita:

It would be great to bring in someone with experience in decentralizing. It starts with the student and it ends with the student. The weighted formula helps address the equity issue. If school A has a student population with X, Y and Z needs requiring additional resources and school C is asking for the same amount of money but the student population does not have the same needs, that is the starting point of how you make a decision.

I know we made progress in the last Legislative Session to try and fix the Distributive School Account (DSA) funding formula and I know there is legislation that incrementally will try to address the unique needs of certain student populations. I would argue that the charge of this Committee, which cannot ignore the equity of funding issue, should be to try and think of what is that organizational model that embraces a delivery system which is centered on the student with a focus on an outcome of student achievement that emphasizes, whatever our recommendation is, how we adequately fund students. I do not think, given the charge of this legislation, that it is beyond the scope of this Committee to not try to address that.

So if the Committee says “Here is what we think it should be—decentralized, site-based with more autonomy, authority, choice and empowerment at the school site, parents involved, etc.,” it starts with the kid and it ends with the kid and that means there has to be an assessment of those needs. That means if the organizational recommendation is that the assessment of needs recommends a weighted funding formula, you have to go there. Otherwise, you will be creating a shell that will be set up for failure.

Chair Roberson:

That makes sense to me.

Senator Denis:

Getting back to the Council and the overseeing, there would still be a cost at the central level. Somebody at the District’s central office will still have to oversee, right?

Mr. Vellardita:

Absolutely.

Senator Denis:

What about the continuity? If you have one school that wants to do one thing and another does something different, how do you have continuity given the high transiency rate in CCSD?

Mr. Vellardita:

That is one of the roles of the central office. There is a balance and central needs to make sure there is coordination and a standard of delivery which takes into account the uniqueness of a particular student population that the site cannot do. The site’s world is

that student population as they have it. They do not have the student population districtwide. That is central's role.

Assemblywoman Neal:

In the 2011 study done by the Gibbons group for CCSD, it talked about how to deal with transiency. It also gave a solution that was wrapped around the existing reorganization that took place in 2011 with the performance zones and how they could successfully do that. We need to relook at what a consultant suggested after reviewing the system. They said we were not operating under one particular philosophy where, in terms of curriculum, we could standardize across the board so no matter where a student moved, there would be some kind of continuity. We need to read what other people have already written or told us what to do.

You mentioned this Committee should look the adequacy funding. What I thought was interesting was that one of our actual staff persons, Cindy Jones, was a part of the Rutgers University study on public school funding that included Nevada. One thing cited in the 2012 study, which we did in 2015 under categorical spending, was the horizontal and vertical alignment of money. Mr. McIntosh brought that up in a past meeting to educate us. We've never funded that way. If we actually looked at the whole child and used this method of funding, we would meet the need of adequacy versus having a one-size-fits-all dollar that went with the child.

Every time I read these big thick studies, I find out something we should have done but did not do. We did it with categorical funds but not across the board. It was not adopted under the Legislature although it was cited in the 2006 study and brought up again in 2012. Sometimes it is a matter of reading the document that has already studied the issue and implementing what it is. It is being willing to sit with a big study like that and highlighting the part that looks like it is the thing that will make us better. We are not doing a good job of that, which is reading the big thick document we paid for.

Chair Roberson:

I recall that report. To my knowledge, the school district never did anything with it. I see the superintendent in the audience disagreeing with me.

Mr. Vellardita:

The District will have to speak on that.

Senator Ford:

Back to the School Site Councils, who would be accountable for the decisions they make?

Mr. Vellardita:

Ultimately the principal is accountable, but the model we are suggesting is that there be a more collaborative system.

Senator Ford:

I heard the Chair say the decision making process is with the School Site Council, but I am hearing you say that at the end of the day the final decision is to be made in consultation with the Council, but it comes from the principal.

Mr. Vellardita:

What I am saying is that at the end of the day, the principal is accountable for outcomes. So that principal has to own the decision making. Again, it is a fair game discussion to look at how that takes place. We are not suggesting a particular thing. We just think there is enough evidence and experience out there to give us some best practices.

Senator Ford:

We have to look into that, because I have a little heartburn trying to hold someone accountable who does not have the final decision-making authority. It is the same thing I said about teachers being held accountable for student achievement when they do not govern and control every single aspect of a student who comes into your classroom.

My second question is about the budgeting process. For example, Boulder City has a lot of veteran teachers who are probably a bit more expensive than east side and west side teachers in Las Vegas. Are schools going to be responsible for paying for their own teachers when developing their budgets? You are talking about a fundamental shift in how schools are funded—from FTEs to student-centered. If you are talking about student-centered, you are not really taking into consideration the level and credential of a teacher at a school that might be more expensive than a teacher at another school. Can you speak to that?

Mr. Vellardita:

That is one of the challenges. You could have a building with licensed teachers on a higher end of the salary schedule, so that needs to be taken into account. It does not take away from developing the needs that are student-centered. At the end of the day, there has to be an accounting of the fact that there is a limitation on resources. That might be one of those places where it intersects.

Senator Ford:

So does the school present a budget that includes the cost of the teachers?

Mr. Vellardita:

Yes.

Senator Ford:

So when it comes to the central office, they will have to make a decision about whether to give the school that amount or reduce it based on the fact that other schools in the District have greater needs, albeit with less experienced and/or or veteran teachers.

This will leave the other school with less money than they requested and likely less of an ability to accomplish the goals they wanted to accomplish based on their site-based plan.

Mr. Vellardita:

You are describing the fact that there is a limitation of resources. Within that context, buildings are not necessarily going to get everything they need. That is the balance.

Chair Roberson:

I am curious how that has developed with other cities that have successfully implemented this model. What is the effect on affluent schools and less affluent schools? We need an expert to come in and talk to us. Do you have any idea how this issue has been dealt with? Having more expensive teachers and then transitioning to a model where the money follows the child, can those schools in those areas with experienced teachers afford to keep those teachers?

Mr. Vellardita:

I think the two largest school districts in the country, LAUSD and NYCDOE, have successfully tackled that issue. Not without pain, not without error, but we have the evidence out there to draw from.

Finally, I do not think we are on a gerbil wheel. We are on a road and I think it is getting clear. This process is a real opportunity to put all ideas on the table. We presented a model today. Because the challenge here is on a large scale with around 357 schools and 320,000 kids in a very diverse urban population with lots of poverty, whatever we decide, whatever this Committee recommends, cannot be based on 10 percent of the schools and 16 percent of the student population. If the model employed cannot be applicable system-wide, then it is a flawed recommendation.

Chair Roberson:

To clarify, in accordance with the mandates of A.B. 394, if we are tasked with creating precincts effectively, we would be creating 357 precincts. We would not be redrawing lines, but we would be decentralizing a lot of core functions from the central administration to each of these schools.

Mr. Vellardita:

I was part of that legislation. I think you have liberty to define what a precinct is.

Assemblywoman Neal:

I actually appreciate these long, crazy meetings we keep having. I just want us to be able to go deep when we have the conversations. I do not want the generic PowerPoint. I want to have the research so we can have those deep discussions. I appreciate that the Chair has the patience to go these seven hours that we sometimes go. There is already information out there, and I do not want to see anything from 1960, but if we go

deep and put the hard issues on the table, we can get off the hamster wheel and learn. If we can talk about what was not done because the Legislature took away money, or why only five of the 20 recommended actions were completed, no one is going to get mad. We are talking around the elephant and it is why we had such a long conversation about whether or not the District is following the law or not on empowerment. Ultimately, we could have had a 5 minute conversation about it.

Chair Roberson:

We have one final report, Item VII, a report on human resources and teacher recruitment. I would also like an update or correction about what I said about the Gibson report.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

We will get that to you.

Chair Roberson:

Are you telling me the CCSD has implemented some of the recommendations?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

Yes, we have. We are going to have one recruiting piece, that is due to our tentative agreement with the CCEA, and that will be a starting salary of \$40,000 for new teachers.

Andre Long (Co-Interim Chief Human Resources Officer, Human Resources Unit, CCSD):

This school year we have hired close to 2,000 teachers. We started the school year with approximately 794 vacancies and there are currently 698 vacancies—585 are in Title I schools and 113 are in other schools. Of those 698 vacancies, there are 91 in victory schools, 93 in zoom schools and 514 in other schools, mostly in Title I schools.

We can break down teacher vacancies by our Star ranking system (page 4, [Exhibit K](#)). Of the 1-Star schools, the highest at-risk schools, there is a 9.4 percent vacancy rate, and as the Star rating goes up, the vacancies go down. There is only a 1.2 percent vacancy rate in our highest rated schools, the 5-Star schools.

The good news about the teachers we have hired this year is that they are pretty evenly divided between experienced teachers and first-year teachers. We hired 81 teachers from our Critical Labor Shortage program that brought back some experienced former teachers.

Where do we get most of our teachers (page 6, [Exhibit K](#))? We hired 89 from Teach for America (TFA), 246 from UNLV, 362 from our Alternative Routes to Licensure (ARL) program, and 1296 from other sources including universities throughout the country. Regarding our teacher pipeline, we know there are approximately 500-600 teachers that

will come through ARL while TFA and the teacher network will each provide around 100 teachers. Because of the new salary schedule starting new teachers at \$40,000, we hope to attract more veteran teachers.

We also look to S.B. 511. That bonus money was turned and we were able to advertise in July, but that was at the end of our major recruiting season.

SENATE BILL 511: Establishes the Teach Nevada Scholarship Program and incentives for new teachers in certain schools. (BDR 34-1277)

As we begin our recruiting season this year, we will be able to use that \$5,000 bonus to entice teachers into the 1-Star, 2-Star and Title I schools. That combined with the \$40,000 starting salary will offer \$45,000 to those teachers, which puts us competitive with school districts like Houston where teachers start at \$50,000. We still have a heavy lift for recruiting because there is still a vacancy crisis at CCSD.

Michael Gentry (Co-Interim Chief Human Resources Officer, Human Resources Unit, Clark County School District):

Andre is dealing with processes and internal for the HR unit and I am focusing on recruitment. The first thing I did over the last few weeks was to look at how we currently find our teachers (page 7, [Exhibit K](#)). We have a website like all other employers, job boards, billboards, magazines in airlines, all the bells and whistles associated with Teach Vegas; we go to job fairs and we have a strong college relationship program, and we have our ARL program.

When I compare all the things we do to what we have done in private industry, which is where my background is, there is not a lot of difference. With two exceptions—the Teach Vegas campaign is impressive and not many private industries have something similar, and the ARL program is also unique. So in reality, CCSD is probably doing more than most private employers. But even though we hired 2,000 teachers last year, we still have a demand that exceeds our supply. What do we do about that?

Those typical advertising venues I just described are passive. Our new plan is to continue all the aforementioned techniques that yielded us those 2,000 hires this year and on top of that we will add a more active campaign; a direct recruitment effort. This is where you identify by name highly qualified individuals you would like to hire. You seek them out, get them on the phone and convince them that the best career move of their life is to come work for CCSD.

Who is the target audience (page 8, [Exhibit K](#))? We know there are 3.8 million teachers in the U.S. with 137,000 of them known as movers who are those prone to moving. We have to subtract approximately 2 million teachers from that 3.8 million because they are between the ages of 30 and 50 and may not be interested because they have too much invested in their current retirement plan. This leaves 1.8 million teachers in our targeted

group, which includes around 600,000 teachers under 30 and 1.2 million older than 50. We thought about it and feel we would get the highest interest in teachers who had taught for 1-3 years, or more than 29 years of experience.

We then want to look at locales where the cost of living is higher than the Las Vegas area. For example, if you were a beginning teacher in Orange County, California, you would probably be making about \$42,000 per year. By moving to Las Vegas, you would get a sizeable increase in disposable income because you would not be paying state income tax, and into other California programs and you would have a 27 percent cost of living savings between living here and living in Orange County. This could amount to a 43 percent increase in disposable income, which turns a good offer into a great offer.

Many of those teachers would have, for the first time, a realistic opportunity to purchase a price. The median home price in Orange County is \$610,000 while the median home price in Las Vegas is \$217,000. You could get a 2-bedroom house here for around \$135,000 or a condominium for around \$80,000. So this could be the first time a teacher could actually own a home without help from others. Rent is accordingly lower in Las Vegas, also, around \$450 per month less for a 2-bedroom apartment than Orange County.

This pitch works as well with a teacher with 30 years of experience, many of whom may want to retire and work a little longer and move to a location where they could afford a home without going into too much debt. The high income areas are all in the west coast and the entire northeastern U.S., Florida, Colorado, Illinois and Minnesota. There are enough people out there who we have a compelling offer for if we can just find them.

How do we do that? The fastest way to find our target teachers is by using some database direct marketing companies. For a price, we can buy a list of names and then begin contacting them one by one. I already have a list of about 7,000 people. For a little more money, I can get 10,000 more names. That is when the fun starts—tracking these people down, emailing them, calling them and sending mailers—whatever works. In my experience, I have seen campaigns like this typically result in a 2-3 percent success rate, which would yield us between 2,200-3,300 willing, qualified and capable individuals. We will still have the original recruitment tools in place (page 7, [Exhibit K](#)), so there is no reason to suspect we will not again achieve 2,000 hires like before.

I have every confidence in the world that we will not only be able to fill our teacher shortage positions but we will also be able to handle the normal attrition factors like retirements in the future. Speaking of attrition, we made these projections based on the previous contract. I suspect the attrition rate may go down this year because of the better contract. It will have an effect on some people's decisions.

Assemblywoman Neal:

During this Committee's Nov. 23, 2015 meeting, we had a presentation from Staci Vesneske, the Chief Human Resources Officer for the District. During her presentation, she had a slide illustrating the overall attrition rates that included people who came here to teach and chose not to stay. I believe around 30 percent of the teachers who left gave no reason. There is something happening in our District where we recruit and then they exit. This cherry picking plan is interesting to me because overall, what Ms. Vesneske also stated was that there is a reduction in the number of new teachers in the 1-3 years of experience group available, period. Can you address this please?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

When you look at the number of teachers in that 1-3 years of teaching group, it is a national crisis when it comes to the number of teachers being produced by colleges and universities with teaching degrees. We are talking about a different approach now, which is targeting existing teachers to ask them to come teach here. With our current contract, we believe even those 30 percent who said they left for no reason might drop off now because of the fact that we are valuing teachers more with our new aggressive salary schedule. We are also seeing that sometimes it is a good thing that some people left. They may not have been the best hire. We believe this direct campaign will start pulling out teachers from other districts who may be looking for a new experience and opportunity.

Assemblywoman Neal:

There did the money come from for the \$40,000 starting salary? The last time we met, we were talking about the attrition savings and all the money that was not in existence.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

The money came from cuts. It is a 2-year plan. We made cuts in some areas, realizing we had to do what we have to do to get teachers in the door.

Senator Hardy:

Every teacher knows another teacher. You have already figured out networking. Can we give teachers a headhunter fee if they bring in a new hire?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

We did offer that last year. I do not know the results of that, it was a nominal amount of \$100. I do not know how many teachers we paid \$100 to, but I can get that information for you.

Senator Hardy:

I appreciate that. If someone asked me what we did for teachers as Legislators, I would say we gave them a raise.

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I would say I gave them a raise.

Senator Hardy:

Knowing that everything you do I take credit for, what percentage raise did we give teachers?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

We are literally finishing up the financials and posting the contract information today. I know that one piece included in the new agreement is a 2.25 percent increase starting next year, which makes up for the Public Employees' Retirement System of Nevada (PERS) piece that came across. We have different teachers coming to different pay levels with the new salary structure. For the first and second year teachers, maybe third and fourth year teachers, too, going to \$40,000 will be significant.

For existing teachers, it is the opportunity to have more opportunity. We are no longer just accepting master's degrees or bachelor's degrees plus 16 credits, etc. It is changing so we talking about the professional development plan for that teacher in the school where they teach so they can specifically meet the needs of that student population.

For some of our new teachers, the raise is 15 percent. Existing teachers now have more pathways to move up on the salary schedule and move over with more professional development. Topped out teachers have the opportunity for 2 or 3 more years to climb instead of being topped out this year.

Mr. Long:

About 1,200 new teachers took advantage of S.B 511 to work in Title I schools and earn the \$5,000 bonus. That was with limited advertising. We will increase that number this year since that is one of our recruiting tools.

Chair Roberson:

That is good news. Are you saying that of the 2,000 new teachers hired this year, 60 percent of them opted to teach in Title I schools? If that is the case, I assume that without S.B. 511 that number would have been much lower.

Mr. Long:

I would be my guess as well.

Chair Roberson:

This direct recruiting, are you about to start it?

Mr. Gentry:

We are just about ready to start it. One thing we have not decided yet whether it is wise to start to communicate the salary schedule before it is completely approved.

Chair Roberson:

When will that contract go before the Board of School Trustees for approval?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

It will be heard next Thursday, January 14. To clarify, when we talk about the raises, it is 2 percent to 15 percent, depending where each teacher is on the salary schedule. We are banking on that attrition savings also to help pay for the raise.

Chair Roberson:

Is there a cost for the direct recruitment campaign?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

When we put the instructional coaches back into the classroom, part of that money was Title II money, which is for teacher enhancement and recruitment. We were able to recoup some of that money, plus we had some carryover we are using to add approximately \$1.4 million to recruiting for this next year.

Chair Roberson:

Not to put any of you on the spot, but we have a teacher shortage of 698 teachers. Do you believe there is a realistic possibility that with this direct recruitment campaign we could no longer have a teacher shortage next year?

Mr. Skorkowsky:

I am cautiously optimistic.

Mr. Gentry:

I am kind of betting my reputation on it.

Chair Roberson:

I will open Item X, public comment.

Ms. Brune:

William Ouchi, who Mr. Vellardita mentioned, came out here during the 2005-2006 Interim and presented before the Legislative Committee on Education. His presentation informed the discussion around empowerment schools. Dr. Ouchi highlights Seattle and Houston as positive examples where autonomous schools have worked well.

To Senator Denis' point, his concern is that principals need to have autonomy to make decisions at the school. As a result, Dr. Ouchi suggested there be community councils, but he did not stipulate how many people or who should sit on those councils. In the

districts where the autonomous schools have worked well, the principals tailored the site-based councils to their own needs.

In Houston, when a principal wanted to focus on allied health sciences, she had a lot of folks with health science backgrounds on her governing council. I want to caution about being too prescriptive. You can say let us have a site-based council, but in terms of saying there should be five parents and three teachers, one business person and one principal, for example, it is taking away some of the autonomy from the principal to determine what he or she needs for the school.

Senator Ford:

I looked up Dr. Ouchi and he is in the management school at UCLA, not education. He is apparently touted and believed in by educators. Do you recall his comments on the achievement gap issue Seattle and Houston have encountered?

Ms. Brune:

He simply mentions that we have to pay attention to that. Even though there have been successes with higher graduation rates, we cannot ignore the fact that there have been achievement gaps. He said the principals need to keep working on it.

Senator Ford:

Does he have any recommendations?

Ms. Brune:

To my knowledge, no. He is not about the achievement gaps, but that would be a great question to ask him when he comes out.

Senator Hardy:

I was there when he came and I remember the weighting of the student was the key. So if somebody had an English deficiency, more money followed that kid. Right now, we have principals who would prefer not to spend more money, but one of his pillars of thought was that if you had a student with more needs, more money should follow that student. Pretty soon you have principals who are in essence bidding for students with more needs. He wrote a book.

Ms. Brune:

And as I mentioned in my presentation, those districts that have successfully implemented autonomous schools, most of the time they do have a weighted student formula.

Chair Roberson:

Seeing no one wanting to make public comment, we are adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Linda Hiller, Interim Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Michael Roberson, Chair

Date: _____

Advisory Committee to Develop a Plan to
 Reorganize the Clark County School District
 January 8, 2016
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Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
A		Agenda
B		Attendance Roster
C	Jenn Blackhurst, President Honoring Our Public Education (HOPE)	Survey results
D	Jenn Blackhurst, President, HOPE	Written testimony
E	Jenn Blackhurst, President, HOPE	Letter from Caryne Shea, Vice President, HOPE
F	Pat Skorkowsky, Superintendent, CCSD	District Organization, PowerPoint
G	Mike Barton, Chief Student Achievement Officer, CCSD	Types of Schools PowerPoint
H	Jim McIntosh, CFO, CCSD	Empowerment and Flexible Budgets, PowerPoint
I	Nancy E. Brune, Guinn Center for Policy Priorities	School-Based Governance Models: An Overview PowerPoint
J	John Vellardita Clark County Education Association	Presentation to the Nevada Legislative Committee to Develop a Plan to Reorganize the Clark County School District, PowerPoint
K	Andre Long and Michael Gentry, Co-Interim Chief Human Resources Officer, Human Resources Unit, CCSD	Teacher Recruitment Update, PowerPoint