



NEVADA LEGISLATURE
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO DEVELOP A PLAN
TO REORGANIZE THE CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT
(Section 26 of Assembly Bill 394 [Chapter 543, *Statutes of Nevada* 2015])

SUMMARY MINUTES AND ACTION REPORT

The seventh meeting of the Nevada Legislature's Technical Advisory Committee to Develop a Plan to Reorganize the Clark County School District was held on Wednesday, April 13, 2016, at 10 a.m. in Room 4401, Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 3137, Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. A copy of this set of "Summary Minutes and Action Report," including the "Meeting Notice and Agenda" ([Exhibit A](#)) and other substantive exhibits, is available on the Nevada Legislature's website at <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/interim/78th2015/committee/>. In addition, copies of the audio or video record are available through the Legislative Counsel Bureau's Publications Office (e-mail: publications@lcb.state.nv.us; telephone: 775/684-6835) and may be available online at <http://www.leg.state.nv.us/Granicus/>.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT IN LAS VEGAS:

Senator Becky Harris, Chair
Marsha Irvin, Vice Chair
Senator Michael Roberson
Assemblyman David M. Gardner
Hannah Brown
Vikki Courtney
Carolyn G. Goodman, Mayor, Las Vegas
Andy Hafen, Mayor, City of Henderson
Kraig Hafen, Council Member, Mesquite City Council
Brent Husson
Brian Knudsen
Ashok "Ash" Mirchandani
Larry Moses, Ed.D.
Tom Rodriguez
Mary Beth Scow, Commissioner, Board of Clark County Commissioners
Pat Skorkowsky, Superintendent, Clark County School District

Daniel Stewart
John Vellardita
Linda E. Young, Ed.D., President, Board of Trustees, Clark County School District

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Duncan R. Lee
John J. Lee, Mayor, City of North Las Vegas
Allison Serafin
Rich Shuman, Council Member, Boulder City Council

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL BUREAU STAFF PRESENT:

Kelly S. Richard, Principal Research Analyst, Research Division
Karly O’Krent, Deputy Legislative Counsel, Legal Division
Julie Waller, Senior Program Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division
Jaimarie Dagdagan, Program Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division
Adam Drost, Program Analyst, Fiscal Analysis Division
Janet Coons, Principal Administrative Assistant, Research Division

Items taken out of sequence during the meeting have been placed in agenda order.

AGENDA ITEM I—CALL TO ORDER

Chair Harris called the meeting to order.

AGENDA ITEM II—OPENING REMARKS

Chair Harris stated each group has 1 hour to speak with 30 minutes for questions at the end of the presentation.

AGENDA ITEM III—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Harris called for public comment.

Dennis Hutson, Pastor, Advent United Methodist Church, Las Vegas, Nevada, submitted written comments regarding the lack of support of public education in Nevada ([Exhibit B](#)).

Annette Dawson Owens, representing Break Free Clark County School District (CCSD), testified the focus of the Committee should be the students.

Irel Price, Eighth-grade Student and President, Discovery Charter School (DCS), CCSD, presented a video depicting a collection of testimonials from DCS students.

AGENDA ITEM IV—PRESENTATION REGARDING EDUCATORS' EXPERIENCES WITH EMPOWERMENT SCHOOLS IN CLARK COUNTY

Vikki Courtney, President, Clark County Education Association, provided an overview of the empowerment model presentation. The following educators from the CCSD shared their first-hand experiences with shared decision-making and student outcomes:

- Grant Hanevold, Ed.D., Assistant Chief Student Achievement Officer, Performance Zone 9;
- Karen Egger, National Board Certified Teacher, Librarian, Fay Herron Elementary School;
- Emily Poeltler, Teacher, Jay W. Jeffers Elementary School;
- Mark Nacinovich, Computer and Technology Coordinator, Paul E. Culley Elementary School; and
- Teri Mann, Teacher, Ethel W. Staton Elementary School ([Exhibit C](#)).

In order for the empowerment model to work, the presenters stressed the importance of the following ideas: (1) supervisors must understand the process; (2) schools should select the services that meet the needs of their communities; (3) the central office should provide services not just direction; (4) the entire school community, including administrators, must embrace the model and demonstrate flexibility; (5) effective training of the School Empowerment Team (SET); and (6) empowerment is a philosophy, not a designation ([Exhibit C](#)).

Mr. Hanevold explained the five autonomies of empowerment schools: (1) governance; (2) staffing; (3) instruction; (4) budget; and (5) time ([Exhibit C](#)).

Responding to questions by Committee members, Mr. Hanevold further discussed the following: (1) preparing principals for the necessary mind shift to the empowerment model; (2) keeping certain decisions, such as those regarding background checks and special education, with the central office; (3) creating a menu of services from which the schools can choose; (4) embracing the model by the entire district, starting with the superintendent; and (5) planning budgets.

Ms. Poeltler remarked how empowerment enriched everyone in her building; there was a sense of community, and the teachers were invested in all classrooms, not just their own.

Mr. Nacinovich contrasted the involvement of parents under the empowerment model with those of a traditional model. He commented that his school has difficulty getting parents to attend the empowerment meetings, but once they do, they feel they are part of the school rather than just a “customer.”

Assemblyman Gardner asked the presenters to discuss what to avoid when moving to the empowerment model. Ms. Poeltler cautioned that the model will not work if administrators are not trained effectively or willing to embrace the model; Ms. Mann reinforced that appropriate training and mentors are critical; and Mr. Nacinovich commented that making decisions via the SET can take longer and be stressful for the principal.

AGENDA ITEM V—PRESENTATION REGARDING ADMINISTRATORS' EXPERIENCES WITH EMPOWERMENT SCHOOLS IN CLARK COUNTY

Stephen Augspurger, Executive Director, Clark County Association of School Administrators and Professional-Technical Employees, expressed his support of the Advisory Committee to Develop a Plan to Reorganize the CCSD's decision to hire Michael A. Strembitsky, International Consultant, Former Superintendent of Schools for Edmonton Public Schools, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He introduced Rebecca A. Johnson, Principal, Robert L. Taylor Elementary School, CCSD, and Kathleen L. Decker, Principal, Howard E. Hollingsworth Elementary School, Walter Bracken Elementary School, and Walter V. Long Elementary School, CCSD.

Ms. Johnson shared her experience when she was principal of Kirk L. Adams Elementary School, CCSD, one of the first empowerment schools selected in 2006. She said the school received additional funding per student; days and minutes were added; class sizes were reduced; a business partner donated \$150,000 in community support; and salaries were increased 5 percent. Ms. Johnson stated the school focused on data, assessment, collaboration, time, and professional development, and it was held accountable for the outcome of the selected autonomies. Under the empowerment model, she said the school was able to do the following:

- Create a position for a business manager;
- Hire a response to intervention strategist;
- Add instructional assistants at every grade level;
- Create a computer technical position, which has since been adopted districtwide;
- Remove grades from the report card and use a standards-based report card where students monitor their own progress; and
- Offer electives selected by the students on Fridays.

Ms. Johnson reinforced that the SET made all school decisions; she was a member with one vote. She concluded by stating the empowerment model is a mindset, giving autonomy to the people who make the decisions work.

Ms. Decker shared her empowerment experiences at Walter Bracken Elementary School, a magnet school in 2001 with only 5.6 percent of the students proficient in math, which was the lowest in the district. She said the school focused on a new theme of innovation and enthusiasm for instruction; hitting a plateau with achievement in 2005, the school applied for the empowerment program. Ms. Decker discussed: (1) how the SET worked together to develop solutions to be implemented with integrity; (2) special instructional days; (3) a new reading program; and (4) teacher involvement in the budget process.

Ms. Johnson identified the following obstacles: (1) functioning as a system within a system; (2) too many supervisors with different philosophies; (3) district misconceptions of the “haves” and “have nots”; (4) poor decision-making and misuse of autonomies; (5) a lack of training in the later years; (6) flex budgeting; and (7) restrictions placed on guidelines.

Ms. Decker echoed the obstacles identified by Ms. Johnson. She stated not all leaders have the skills to fight for their schools; the system is not easy to navigate for new educators.

In order for empowerment to be successful, Ms. Johnson recommended: (1) transparency and communication; (2) preparation and planning; (3) leadership training; (4) innovation from

outside the school districts; (5) a review of other models; (6) entire district rollout; (7) differentiation based on school needs; (8) a menu of services; and (9) accountability.

Ms. Decker agreed with Ms. Johnson's recommendations. She stressed that leaders will rise to the challenge if they are held accountable for the decisions they make.

Responding to questions from Committee members, Ms. Decker and Ms. Johnson discussed the following topics: (1) accountability; (2) parental involvement; (3) the impact of additional resources; (4) strength of the model's philosophy; (5) the power of flexibility; (6) cultural diversity; (7) adequate leadership training; (8) the opportunity to purchase services; (9) handling special programs; and (10) the maintenance of buildings.

AGENDA ITEM VI—PRESENTATION CONCERNING EMPOWERMENT SCHOOLS

Chair Harris reported the Advisory Committee voted unanimously to hire Michael A. Strembitsky, previously identified, as a consultant to perform a study and assist the Advisory Committee in developing a plan to reorganize CCSD. She provided a short biography of Mr. Strembitsky ([Exhibit D](#)).

Stating he is a strong proponent of the empowerment model, Mr. Strembitsky shared his experiences with the model. His comments focused on the following issues: (1) transparency; (2) patience; (3) self-evaluation; (4) due process and tenure; and (5) establishing a culture of accountability.

Responding to questions from the Committee, Mr. Strembitsky discussed: (1) how the model mitigates teaching vacancies; (2) the equal distribution of resources and quality; (3) district support for principals; and (4) the representation of diversity in the model.

Chair Harris explained Mr. Strembitsky will draft the plan in an open and collaborative process, and the Technical Advisory Committee will review the plan.

AGENDA ITEM VII—PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Harris called for public comment; however, no testimony was presented.

She announced the next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for May 10, 2016.

AGENDA ITEM VIII—ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Committee, the meeting was adjourned at 1:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Coons
Principal Administrative Assistant

Kelly S. Richard
Principal Research Analyst

APPROVED BY:

Senator Becky Harris, Chair

Date: _____

EXHIBITS

EXHIBIT	WITNESS/ENTITY	DESCRIPTION
Exhibit A	Kelly S. Richard, Principal Research Analyst, Research Division, Legislative Counsel Bureau	Agenda
Exhibit B	Dennis Hutson, Pastor, Advent United Methodist Church, Las Vegas, Nevada	Written comments
Exhibit C	Vikki Courtney, President, Clark County Education Association	“An Educator’s Perspective: A.B. 394 Presentation on Empowerment Schools to the Technical Advisory Committee”
Exhibit D	Michael A. Strembitsky, International Consultant, Former Superintendent of Schools for Edmonton Public Schools, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada	Revised proposal for consultant

This set of “Summary Minutes and Action Report” is supplied as an informational service. Exhibits in electronic format may not be complete. Copies of the complete exhibits and other materials distributed at the meeting are on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, Carson City, Nevada. You may contact the Library online at www.leg.state.nv.us/lcb/research/library/feedbackmail.cfm or telephone: (775) 684-6827.