

# Memorandum

Date: 7/15/14

To: Senator Joyce Woodhouse, Chair

& NV Legislative Interim Education Committee Members

From: Yvette Williams, Caucus Chair

& Adam Johnson, CCBC Education Committee Chair

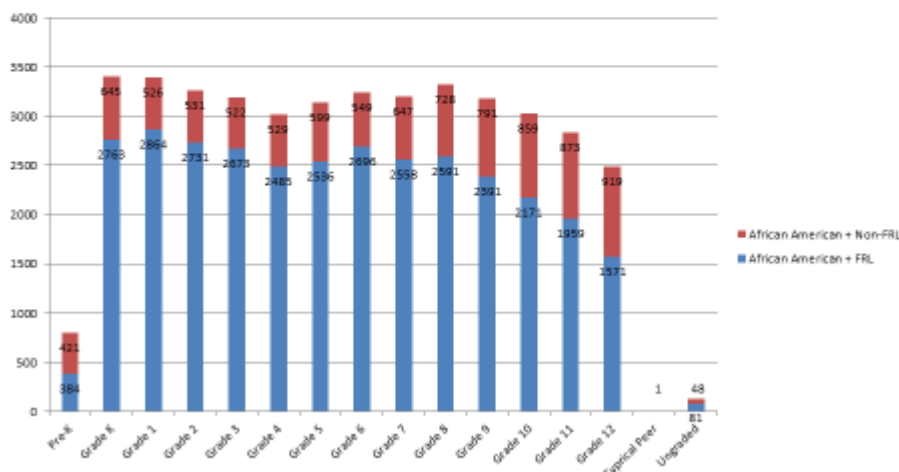
Subject: Early Childhood Literacy Programs



During the 2014 interim Nevada Legislative Education Committee meetings, the Clark County Black Caucus has presented a significant amount of data that reveals an alarming statistic. African American children in poverty and receiving free and reduced lunch at school are performing significantly lower than peers in Nevada. In fact, over 32,000 Black students, out of approximately 41,500 Black students attending CCSD, are identified as FRL (See below data from CCSD), and have some of the lowest performing literacy and math scores in the District. As Black FRL students move through the education system the gap widens and projects longer term lower student achievement. In conclusion of our series of presentations, we wanted to circle back to what we believe is one of the many root cause: A lack of early childhood education and very limited access to literacy programs at an early age for Black FRL students.

## Incidence of FRL Designation Amongst African American Population

CCSD African American Enrollment and FRL Designation by Grade  
as of 5/19/2014



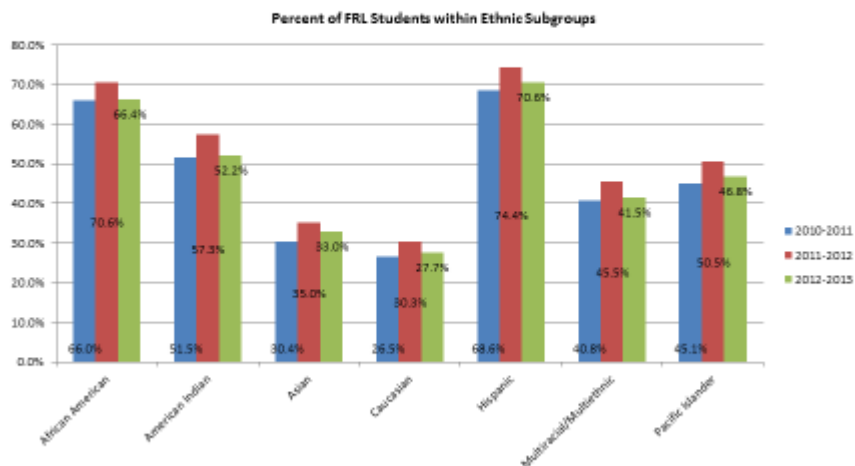
Based on annual accountability data which is enrollment as of Count Day and designations as of December 1.

We again strongly advocate for an inclusive statewide term that ensures English Language Acquisition (ELA) for all students, regardless of race, gender, language, disability, geography or economics. Our support and advocacy for NRS388.405 was intended to ensure access to literacy programs for ALL children struggling with literacy, and that each subgroup would receive the tools and resources (including funding) to succeed in English proficiency. Therefore, we again ask that the almost 33,000 Black students on FRL be identified as a specific subgroup in future data collection and policy so to address the disparity, educational needs, and resources necessary to adhere to both Federal and State law.

Currently, these students represent approximately 72% of the overall Black student population in CCSD effective May 2014 as provided by CCSD (see our previous memorandum). Under the cloak of FRL these students remain invisible to state policy and continue to be grouped with all FRL students. However, Black FRL Students, along with ESL students

tests far below other subgroups receiving FRL. Both subgroups represent a significant number of students (approx. 88,000 students). Additional testimony today from CCSD provides an update on the progress of ZOOM schools that address the literary needs of ESL students including early literacy and after school programs. These schools were strategically placed in geographic areas to serve the largest at risk ESL student populations. Given recent indications of success, the addition of elementary schools geographically identified to address the literary needs of the Black FRL students struggling to achieve must be included in future programs and state funding such as ZOOM Schools.

## FRL Incidence Within Ethnic Subgroups



Based on annual accountability data which is enrollment as of Count Day and designations as of December 1.

If we expect to see significant changes in our student performance, we must provide literacy programs for our most at risk students at an early age. Students often face a long waiting list for programs such as Head Start, which have limited availability in Clark County. Additionally, parents in poverty often rely on public transportation and are limited to school programs in their geographic area. In 2010, NV Pre-k enrollment for 3-year olds was an astonishing 1% and 2.1% for 4 year-olds – some of the lowest enrollment percentages in the United States. Studies show that test scores for third grade students are better when they are enrolled in both quality Pre-K and full-day kindergarten. However, due to economics many districts and communities are forced to offer one or the other.

Research is limited when comparing full day kindergarten ONLY compared to student performance of pre-K and half-day kindergarten. A report published November 2011 and updated February 2012 written and researched by Jim Hull, Senior Policy Analyst at Center for Public Education titled **“Starting Out Right/Pre-K and Kindergarten – Full Report”** (see attachment 1) reiterates what we already know... *“Research has consistently shown that quality pre-kindergarten programs benefit not only individual students, but school districts and communities. A national study of children who attended a center-based pre-k program scored significantly higher on reading and math tests than children who were in the care of their parents (Magnuson, et al. 2004). The benefits were even more pronounced for minority and low-income children who typically start kindergarten 12 to 14 months behind their peers, highlighting the value high-quality pre-k has for efforts to close achievement gaps (Stark 2009).*

*Benefits of full-day kindergarten are clear. Research consistently shows that students who attend full-day kindergarten make greater academic gains and are less likely to be retained in the early grades than students who attend half-day kindergarten. For example, a nationwide analysis of kindergarteners who began at the same achievement level found that students who attended full-day programs outperformed half-day students in both math and reading (Votruba-Drzal, Li-Grining and Maldonado-Carreno 2008). Furthermore, a meta-analysis of research found that full-day students*

*outperformed half-day students on various achievement tests at the end of the year (Cooper, et al. 2010). And in a study of 17,000 in Philadelphia, researchers found that students who attended full-day kindergarten had better attendance records, higher grade point averages, and were more likely to be on grade level by third grade than half-day students (Weiss and Offenbergl 2003).*

*However, it is not clear how long those benefits last. Unlike pre-k, where researchers have determined that attending a high-quality pre-k program can impact students well into high school and even beyond, the results are less certain when it comes to full-day kindergarten as compared to half-day kindergarten alone. Some researchers have found that the impact lasts until at least the 3rd grade (Weiss and Offenbergl 2003). Others found that the benefits disappear well before the 3rd grade (Cannon, Jacknowitz and Painter, Wolgemuth, et al. 2006). Please note that the topic has also been less studied than pre-k.”*

Since students would benefit most from attending high-quality pre-kindergarten, and then going on to full-day kindergarten students from these high risk subgroups should have access to both programs. However, what we found interesting was students attending both pre-k and only half-day kindergarten outperformed students that attended only full day kindergarten. This report focused on half-day kindergarten combined with pre-k due to state budget cuts as a result of the economic downturn in recent years to help determine the best use of limited school funds. See Attachment 1 for the full report.

#### **Key findings:**

*“Students who attend pre-k and half-day kindergarten are more likely to have higher reading skills by the third grade than students who **only** attend full-day kindergarten alone.*

- Students’ chances of reaching the basic third-grade reading level, “Comprehension of words in context,” increased slightly (3 percent) if they attended pre-k and half-day kindergarten instead of full-day kindergarten alone.*
- The chances of a third-grader reaching the more advanced “Literal inference” reading level increased at a much greater rate (11 percent) when students attended pre-k and half-day kindergarten rather than full-day kindergarten alone.*
- The chances of a third-grader reaching the advanced “Extrapolation” reading level increased by a substantial 18 percent if students attended pre-k and half-day kindergarten rather than full-day kindergarten alone.*
- The chances of Hispanic students and students below the poverty line reaching the basic third-grade reading level, “Comprehension of words in context,” increases by 7percent if they attend pre-k and half-day kindergarten instead of full-day kindergarten alone. Similar results were found for black students (6 percent).*
- For both Hispanic students and students below the poverty line, chances of reaching the more advanced, “literal inference” level increased by 16 percent by attending pre-k and half day kindergarten rather than full-day kindergarten. Black students’ chances were increased by 15 percent. ELL students saw the greatest increase at 21 percent.*
- At the “Extrapolation” reading level, the increase is even greater. Hispanic students’ chances of reaching this level increase by 24 percent, and poor students increase by 20 percent, if they attend a combination of pre-k and half-day kindergarten rather than full-day kindergarten alone. Black students chances increased by 17 percent while ELL students’ chances increased by 25 percent.”*

See more at <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org>

In America’s history Black children once learned to read and write at the risk of death, and to date the System has failed them, often forcing them to remain “invisible” when establishing policy for student achievement under the cloak of FRL (Free and Reduced Lunch). The data previously submitted to this committee shows that Black students identified as FRL underperform their FRL peers (and in some cases ELL) students, and further demonstrating this failure Black students are REMOVED from the classroom at disproportionate rates based on racial bias. Until Nevada provides programs and

sufficiently funds English proficiency programs specific to the needs of this sub-group Black students will continue to struggle, and the intent of NRS388.405 for high quality education will remain out of reach with little exception to this specific group of students of color. This sub-group represents a significant number of students and should warrant the necessity to track their academic performance under a new term reflected more appropriately in all future state education policy.

The data shows that when programs are in place that assess student proficiency early on, provide regular monitoring, while focusing on four domains (Speaking, Listening, Reading, and Writing) students achieve. The current success of ZOOM schools, reading centers, and ELL programs in CCSD, ELL students completing the program outperform their peers (never identified as ELL) consistently year after year. Today, Black students and other students least proficient do NOT receive an early proficiency assessment currently mandated for ELL and IEP students. Given these outcomes and the over representation of Black students underachieving in Nevada schools, we are proposing that the State Legislature adopt a term to identify this specific subgroup so to address the specific needs of “Under Performing Free and Reduced Lunch” students.

It is important to remind this committee that FRL student populations include all ethnicities and overall are less likely to be limited in English proficiency than Black and ESL students in this same group. We do not have the data that identifies student populations by ethnicities underperforming in FRL. However, we do know that Black students identified as FRL have lower proficiency rates statistically and need additional resources such as early proficiency assessments/monitoring, professional development, tutoring, parent engagement, etc. such as the current ELL programs adjusted to address specific learning needs of this underperforming student population. We believe these students need additional help than that of FRL students. We respectfully submit the following early learning recommendations:

- Recognize the approximately 33,000 Black FRL students as a disenfranchised sub-group and identify them in future data collection with a specific designation, i.e. FRL, ELL, IEP
- Provide weighted funds to this specific subgroup in the Nevada Plan for education so that school districts can adhere to the law and protect civil rights of all students.
- Provide specific resources and funding to help this sub-group perform at grade level in elementary school, i.e. ZOOM Schools, Reading Centers, etc.
- Require **early assessment** of English Language Acquisition of all students when entering the education system for the first time
- Require English Language Acquisition/literacy programs for all students not yet proficient in English (including FRL, ESL, IEP and any other student not proficient at grade level
- Provide access to high quality pre-k programs geographically located to these targeted high risk students, include an early literacy program aligned to later grades, small teacher-to-child ratios, and an age-appropriate and integrated curriculum
- Provide full day kindergarten to these targeted high risk students
- Require that early childhood programs set clear goals for the developmental progress of children participating in early-childhood programs. Monitor student progress, regularly evaluate results, and follow students as they move up in grades
- Require staff be early-childhood certified; have adequate training in child development and cultural competency and understand the effects of negative stereotyping and bias; and standards for staff development and performance
- Ensure there is a robust program in place for parent engagement
- Stronger enforcement of NRS388.405 which states *“that children who are limited English proficient be provided with services and instruction which is designed to address the academic needs of such children so that those children attain proficiency in the English language and improve their overall academic and linguistic achievement and proficiency.”*

**NRS 388.405** Legislative declaration; duty of State Board to adopt regulations and submit certain evaluations required by federal law.

**1. The Legislature finds and declares that:**

*(a) It is the public policy of this State to provide every child enrolled in a public school with high-quality instruction.*

*(b) Children who are limited English proficient benefit from instruction that is designed to address the academic and linguistic needs of those children.*

*(c) It is the intent of the Legislature that children who are limited English proficient be provided with services and instruction which is designed to address the academic needs of such children so that those children attain proficiency in the English language and improve their overall academic and linguistic achievement and proficiency.*

**2. The State Board shall:**

*(a) Adopt regulations prescribing criteria for a policy for the instruction to teach English to pupils who are limited English proficient which is developed by the board of trustees of each school district pursuant to [NRS 388.407](#). The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall monitor each school district's compliance with the criteria prescribed by the State Board pursuant to this paragraph.*

*(b) Submit all evaluations required pursuant to 20 U.S.C. §§ 6801 et seq. and the regulations adopted pursuant thereto regarding the programs for pupils who are limited English proficient carried out pursuant to that provision of federal law...*

NOTE: All data charts graciously provided by CCSD

Attachments:

Attachment 1 - Starting Out Right: Pre-K and Kindergarten: full report