

# Latino Leadership Council

619 S. 6th St., Las Vegas, NV 89101

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January 21, 2014

Interim Legislative Committee on Education

Dear Senator Woodhouse and members of the Interim Education Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony before this very important committee.

In 2012, the demographics of children attending K-12 was 40% Latino, 10% African American, and 6% Asian American. African American, Asian American and Latina/o children are already the majority under 18 population in Nevada. Within three years, Latino children will be the majority in CCSD, Nevada's largest school district. Today, the Chronicle of Higher Ed published a forecast that the growth of children who reach college age in the span of the next 14 years will increase most rapidly among Latino children, up 14%. By contrast, Af Am and White college age student populations will decline by 12% and 8%, respectively.

We agree with parties who have testified before the committee that closing the achievement gap is essential for the future of Nevada. According to NAEP 2013, the reading achievement gap in Nevada is **widening** between ELL and non-ELL students. A recent longitudinal study reported that in Washoe S.D. only 1% of children ever classified as ELL graduate from high school. (WESTED 2013).

The following data is contained in the draft Nevada State Improvement Plan 2013-14, submitted to the Nevada State Board of Education, showing the significant literacy gap between ELL students and the Nevada student population.

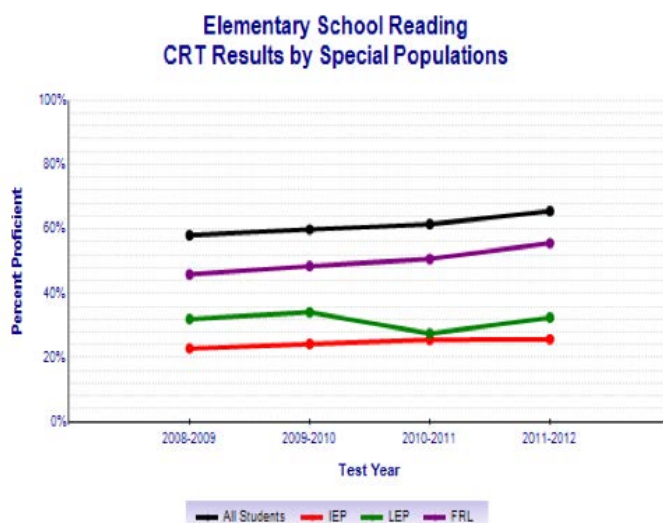


EXHIBIT G - EDUCATION  
Document consists of 4 pages.  
Entire exhibit provided.  
Meeting Date: 01-22-14

Given this data, we respectfully request that the committee to focus on the following:

**I. Policy Proposals with NO Budget impact:**

**Transparency and availability K-16 Data**

In order to continue examining what policies and interventions make the most sense for all students through the K-16 educational pipeline we need to make sure data is easily accessible for education researchers, local policy makers and community members. Specifically, disaggregated student data by race, ethnicity, special populations, and gender is needed. While many of the Nevada education organization put out standard data on students on their website, it is difficult to decipher. Also, few education researchers examine Nevada specific data because student data is difficult to obtain from education organizations. Take for example, college-going rates for our kids in CCSD. NSHE provides college-going rates by school district, but this is a rate, not real numbers. We need to be able to know how many children who start elementary school in Nevada actually go to college and graduate. Also, we don't know which schools are sending kids to college. We need better data from agencies like NSHE and Nevada Department of Education on a school-by-school level to know where policies and interventions make most sense and to be strategic about communities we can engage. This needs to be mandated by the Legislature.

**Community College Student Outcomes and Workforce Alignment**

We understand the legislative interim committee to study community college governance and funding will soon get started. We want to underscore the importance of community colleges, specifically as it relates to student outcomes and economic development, especially for certain populations. We know that CCSD is plurality Latino, and despite the abysmal high school graduation rates, there are many Latino students who successfully graduate from high school. According to NSHE data from their diversity report, fewer than half of Latino high school graduates go on to some form of higher education. This raises some questions: why? When you look at national data, we know that Latino students and their parents have high academic aspirations when it comes to college, yet that is not translating to college enrollment. Of those Latino students who do go on to college, well over half begin at the community college with the intent to transfer to a four year college. Few complete and few transfer in Nevada.

We believe that a policy change that would constitute local community college governing boards (rather than having governance located only with NSHE Board of Regents) can hold colleges more accountable to the

needs of local communities and also be more strategic about the student population needs and their academic goals. Also, local governing boards will more likely mirror the communities they serve. As it stands now, there is no Latino representation on the board of regents, nor has there ever been a Latino on the board of regents. We are concerned about students not just in K-12 but also what happens to them after high school since we know that students will need more than a high school diploma to have a good quality of life and contribute to our economy.

### **English Language Mastery Council (ELMC)**

The racial and ethnicity achievement gaps are significant and persistent. As President Obama said last week, this is in part because such a large proportion of minority populations live in poverty. Per above, the data is clear that the most pronounced achievement gap is not among races/ethnicities but between the overall population and special populations of ELL and Special Ed students.

SB504 created the ELMC, and its first meeting is today, six months after SB504 required that the Council begin its work. We are concerned that this late start might not give the ELMC opportunity to provide feedback to this committee and the Legislature for the upcoming session.

## **II. Proposals with Budget Impact:**

Federal law requires that ELL and Special Ed special populations be provided an equal opportunity to succeed, yet until last session Nevada had not devoted resources to provide services to ELL kids. Nevada's inadequate funding and ELL and Special Ed children's poor achievement clearly puts Nevada at risk for litigation compelling it to meet its constitutional and moral obligations. This legislature, to its great credit, last year began the road to equal opportunity footing. SB 504 zoom schools provide additional funds for high ELL, low performing schools, benefitting not just ELL kids but all children who attend the zoom schools throughout the state.

We do not know yet the results of the zoom school project. However, given the low performance of ELL children, and their concentration in racially segregated schools (high minority both Af Am and Latino), we believe that continuing zoom schools, and considering expansion of this project makes a great deal of sense for Nevada at this time. We look forward to providing testimony when this topic is addressed by this committee.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sylvia R Lazos'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Sylvia' and the last name 'Lazos' being the most prominent parts.

Sylvia Lazos,  
Co- Chair, Latino Leaders Coalition Education Committee  
Cc: Al Martinez, Facilitator, LLC  
Nelson Aurajo, Co-Chair Education Committee, LLC  
Members LLC Education Committee