

**NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
COMMISSION ON SCHOOL FUNDING
MARCH 18, 2022
9:00 A.M.**

Office	Mode	Platform
Department of Education	Teleconference/Livestream	Lifesize, Phone

SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE COMMISSION MEETING

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE

Dr. Nancy Brune
Dusty Casey
Andrew J. Feuling
Jason Goudie
Dr. David Jensen
Paul Johnson
Mark Mathers
Punam Mathur
Jim McIntosh, Vice Chair
Joyce Woodhouse

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT VIA TELEPHONE

Guy Hobbs, Chair

DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT

Heidi Haartz, Deputy Superintendent for Student Investment
James Kirkpatrick, State Education Funding Manager, Student Investment Division
Beau Bennett, Management Analyst IV, Student Investment Division
Jessica Todtman, Deputy Superintendent for Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement

LEGAL STAFF PRESENT

Greg Ott, Chief Deputy Attorney General

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE

Via videoconference

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Meeting called to order at 9:01 A.M. by Commission Vice Chair Jim McIntosh. Quorum was established.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT #1

Hawah Ahmad, Clark County Education Association, provided public comment regarding messaging around optimal funding. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Chris Daly, Nevada State Education Association, provided public comment regarding the impact of funding on education. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Amanda Morgan, Educate Nevada Now, provided public comment regarding the definition of At-Risk. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Sandy Earlack, Washoe County School District, provided public comment regarding optimal funding. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

3. APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Member David Jensen moved to approve the February 11, 2022 Commission Meeting Minutes. Member Paul Johnson seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

4. NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION UPDATE

Heidi Haartz, Deputy Superintendent for Student Investment, Nevada Department of Education (NDE or Department), provided an update regarding the work of the Department since the February 11, 2022 Commission meeting.

Deputy Superintendent Haartz noted that the list of recommendations that have been approved by the Commission since July 2021 has been updated on the Department's website.

In consultation with Commission Chair Guy Hobbs the Department has established a goal of having the recommendations from the Commission ready for submission to the Legislative Committee on Education in June of 2022, recognizing that specific recommendations regarding optimal funding would be completed by the Commission's final meeting of the year in September.

The Department is continuing to promulgate regulations specific to components of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP) which include; the administrative cap, which is the maximum amount of administrative funds a school district may subtract from the adjusted base per-pupil funding to support district-wide administrative costs; the definition of At-Risk as recommended by the State Board of Education; and the attendance area adjustment.

Deputy Superintendent Haartz noted that representatives from Department's PCFP team met with representatives from the State Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation to review employment data and reports to ensure common understanding and enable NDE to undertake analyses and make conclusions based upon the data.

In follow up to the Commission's request for information, the Department distributed a survey to all online charter schools and online schools supported by districts. The Department hopes to have the survey results available at the Commission's April meeting.

5. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING THE IMPACT OF FUNDING ON EDUCATION

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority; Dr. Jesus F. Jara, Superintendent, Clark County School District; Russell Klein, Superintendent, Lander County School District; and Wayne Workman, Superintendent, Lyon County School District, provided a presentation on behalf of the Nevada Association of School Superintendents (NASS) regarding [The Impact of Funding on Education](#).

Member Johnson noted the need to address the high teacher turnover rate. Member Johnson referred to the APA study that showed what adequate school staffing would look like and recommended the Commission make a commitment to provide better teacher support when additional funds become available.

Member Nancy Brune asked if NASS has discussed water bottle refilling stations as part of the maintenance of infrastructure and assets section of the proposal. Member David Jensen responded that Humboldt County has been replacing water fountains with bottle fillers and a number of other districts have been doing the same. Member Jensen stated that there would be a need for a broader implementation beyond what districts are able to do in a phased rollout. Superintendent Klein said it costs anywhere from \$2,000-\$2,500 per filling station and noted that Lander County has used federal dollars to support conversions.

Vice Chair McIntosh asked how districts are investing federal relief dollars and what concerns the districts have for when the federal dollars run out. Superintendent Jara responded that Clark County is directing funds toward technology and expanding social-emotional supports for students and staff. He noted that one concern after the federal relief funds are expended is the ability to continue to pay salaries that have been paid using those funds to date. He noted that there are additional concerns around sustaining technology and connectivity investments that were made during the pandemic.

Member Punam Mathur asked whether the list presented by NASS should be considered in rank order. Superintendent Workman responded that it is not a rank ordered list and noted that you cannot easily prioritize student opportunities because investments will impact individual children different ways.

Member Mathur noted that the Commission's charge is very specific and is not related to facilities. The Commission is tasked with making a recommendation for a ten-year plan to achieve optimal funding and did so with its report issued in April 2021. Member Mathur suggested that the Commission articulate the revenue pathway to achieving the recommended \$2 billion annual investment and then work with NASS to explain to the State in simple terms what the investments would accomplish.

Member Andrew Feuling noted that over the past decade many NASS proposals for education investments have been brought before the Legislature with a call to fund the base. He said the reality is that, since the Great Recession, base funding has increased barely one percent per year on average. Member Feuling stated that a next step for NASS would include assigning specific costs and describing anticipated outcomes for each proposed investment. Member Mathur suggested a working group of the Commission and members of NASS to develop the message around explaining why the investments are important and what to expect from the investments. Vice Chair McIntosh agreed and suggested Member Jensen take the lead since he sits on the Commission as well as NASS. Member Mathur agreed and volunteered herself and suggested Member Feuling be a part of the work group as well.

Member Johnson acknowledged the effectiveness of prior NASS Legislative proposals. Member Johnson noted that Nevada has a sufficiency study that identifies how much the State should invest in education, but there is no study that explains how the money would be targeted for the greatest benefit. Member Johnson believes such a study would lend credibility to the Commission's proposals.

Vice Chair McIntosh thanked the members of NASS who presented and noted that the Commission looks

forward to a continued partnership.

6. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING MESAGING RELATED TO OPTIMAL FUNDING

Member Mathur provided an update on the working group tasked with messaging related to optimal funding. Member Mathur noted that the working group has acknowledged that three things need to be done well. The first is explaining clearly how the State will benefit from optimal education funding. The second is explaining clearly how optimal funding will be achieved. The third task is explaining the correlation between the investments that have been made and the positive outcomes they have produced. Member Mathur said the Guinn Center will be conducting a review of the last five editions of three major national education ranking reports. Member Mathur noted that her and Member Joyce Woodhouse have conducted meetings with private donors to pay for the cost of the Guinn Center's analysis. Member Mathur noted that next steps include identifying the primary stakeholders, external endorsers, and natural allies for optimal funding.

7. DISCUSSION REGARDING OPTIMAL FUNDING

Vice Chair McIntosh stated that the continuation of this item would be postponed to the April Commission meeting.

8. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING METHODOLOGIES FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS TO PROPOSE BUDGETARY SUPPORT FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND FOOD SERVICES AS FUNDED THROUGH THE PUPIL-CENTERED FUNDING PLAN

James Kirkpatrick, State Education Funding Manager, Student Investment Division, provided a PowerPoint presentation regarding [Auxiliary Services](#).

Vice Chair McIntosh proposed expanding the transportation working group to an auxiliary service working group and ask that they bring back recommendations to a future meeting.

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Vice Chair McIntosh enumerated future items for discussion including ongoing work regarding auxiliary services, next steps for the work group partnering with NASS, and a discussion on the anticipated impact of potential education investments. Member Mathur requested a discussion regarding the threshold for identifying an At-Risk student.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT #2

No public comment.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 11:32 A.M.

APPENDIX A: STATEMENTS GIVEN DURING PUBLIC COMMENT

1. Hawah Ahmad, Clark County Education Association, submitted public comment regarding messaging around optimal funding.
2. Chris Daly, Nevada State Education Association, provided public comment regarding the impact of funding on education.
3. Amanda Morgan, Educate Nevada Now, provided public comment regarding the definition of At-Risk.
4. Sandy Earlack, Washoe County School District, provided public comment regarding optimal funding.

APPENDIX A, ITEM 1: HAWAH AHMAD

Good morning, Chair Hobbs and Commission members,

My name is Hawah Ahmad, and I represent the Clark County Education Association (CCEA). CCEA bargains for over 18,000 licensed educators in the Clark County School District and is the largest independent teacher union in this state and the country.

CCEA is a longtime supporter of this Commission, but we must caution this Commission that the problem with education must be viewed from 30,000 feet above. We all agree that the K through 20 education delivery system must be funded to at least meet the national average, but we cannot address the issues with our declining workforce, retention issues, lack of mental health providers, and high cost of living by just throwing money at the issues, especially when we do **not** have people willing to live and work in this environment. As such, we must rethink and change the way we conduct business.

Currently, our tax structure does not allow for tax base expansion, and we will not obtain the services we need unless we expand our economic base of revenue or find new revenue, which we cannot have until we have a diverse economy. As such, we must do everything in our power to align K through 12 with post-secondary education and the current workforce and future workforce to strategically invest in skills training that is attractive for high skilled, high paying businesses.

Today's discussions regarding messaging around optimal funding and discussion regarding external subject matter, expert support will be important to identify potential funding sources to support giving our students every opportunity to succeed, whether that is directly to gainful employment or post-secondary education to employment options. Equally important we must be able to demonstrate to legislators and the community where there has been an investment in more funding for a student's education-it has resulted in achievement.

CCEA stands ready to support this Commission's recommendations because we know that there cannot be economic diversification and development without workforce development, and we cannot have workforce development without a top-notch K-20 education delivery system. CCEA thanks each of you for your hard work, and we look forward to working together to continue investments in the pupil centered funding plan that are tied to improving workforce development and alignment with expanding and emerging industries to diversify our economy.

Respectfully,
Hawah Ahmad
Clark County Education Association, Lobbyist

APPENDIX A, ITEM 2: CHRIS DALY

The Nevada State Education Association has been the voice of Nevada educators for over 120 years. Today our comments relate to your item on the impact of funding on education. Unfortunately, there is no sugarcoating it. The state of public education is dire. For decades, Nevada has ranked near the bottom of states in education funding and quality, and many districts, especially in Clark County, have long had a shortage of teachers and other educators. Now with the additional challenges of the last two years, we are amidst an unprecedented shortage of educators to teach our kids and make our schools run. CCSD alone lists nearly 2000 vacant positions, with over 1400 of those licensed.

Nevada needs bold action to address the crisis in public schools. It's time to adequately fund public education in Nevada. It's *Time for 20*.

Time for 20 means a 20% increase in educator pay and at least \$20/hour for the workers who make our school run. *Time for 20* means reaching an average class size of 20 students in core academic subjects.

Let's consider the severity of the situation for Nevada educators.

- The Economic Policy Institute reports public school teachers are paid 19.2% less than similar workers in other occupations.
- According to the National Education Association's Ranking of the States, Nevada public school teachers make nearly \$7500 below the national average and \$27,000 less than neighboring California.
- Nevada has some of the largest class sizes in the country, with some of the highest concentrations of at-risk students and English learners.
- Meanwhile a substitute teacher shortage has left countless classrooms with no teacher at all, forcing remaining staff, or even our Lt. Governor, to cover additional classes.
- A chronic bus driver shortage has caused serious delays, sometimes stranding students for hours. Multiple districts have canceled routes and adjusted schedules to mitigate the issue.
- Thousands of education support professionals across the state earn significantly below a living wage, with starting salaries as low as \$10 to \$11 per hour.
- The latest inflation data shows prices are climbing at the fastest pace in 40 years, with CPI now at 8.1%. Home and rent prices have skyrocketed across Nevada, with average rents up over 20% over the last year alone.

There are efforts across the country right now to raise educator pay to address the educator shortage. In recent weeks, New Mexico increased educator pay by an average of 20%. Nevada's school crisis requires a response of this magnitude. We can no longer expect Massachusetts results while spending Mississippi money. It's Time for 20 to invest in our educators, and to truly meet this moment of crisis in Nevada schools.

APPENDIX A, ITEM 3: AMANDA MORGAN

Dear Chair Hobbs and members of the Commission,

My name is Amanda Morgan, Executive Director of Educate Nevada Now. Though I was unable to call in this morning, I sincerely appreciate having my testimony added to the record.

A positive aspect of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP) was its transition to weighted funding, so every student with unique needs received additional support. Previously, only about 20% of low-income and English learner (EL) students received additional state funding through Zoom, Victory, and SB 178 categorical programs. These programs were successful and illustrated that additional money, spent effectively, can positively impact student achievement. But the problem with these programs rested in their scale - only students at certain schools received these additional resources. About 80% of students with similar needs were underserved. The PCFP aimed to correct this through a true weighted funding model, creating more equity and serving more students.

Back in 2020, ENN testified to its concerns regarding the redefinition of “at-risk” for the purpose of determining eligibility for the newly created weight. We were concerned that the new definition would prioritize reducing the number of students eligible for the weight in an effort to essentially “back into” inadequate funding levels previously allocated under the limited, categorical programs.

By using the most common proxy for at-risk, free and reduced-price lunch eligibility (FRL), about 272,000 students would qualify for the at-risk weight when excluding those that qualify for another, higher weight. This number is substantial but accurately reflects the difficult economic situation of families across the state.

However, transitioning limited categorical program dollars into a weight for *all* FRL students would significantly dilute the funds. It would both harm schools currently relying on categorical dollars while also making very little impact on other schools receiving the new, abysmal weight. **Put simply, big investments are needed to effectively implement the weight.**

In response, the Commission has recommended the Infinite Campus Model, which identifies select characteristics from a larger list of factors to limit eligibility for the at-risk weight. Under the proposed model, 67,000 students would be served compared to the 272,000 identified in previous models and by the APA study. This means the state will exclude 75% of students previously identified as needing support.

As a temporary measure, a limited definition focused on students with the greatest need is understandable. The Commission’s charge is to develop recommendations under current funding levels, as inadequate as they might be. Much like the base per-pupil support, our state will need to commit and grow into appropriate funding levels for weights as well.

But we are not confident that this extremely limited definition of at-risk *is* temporary, as that has not been made explicit by state officials or this Commission. We fear this will send a message to lawmakers and the public that the state is “fully funding” the at-risk weight, when in fact eligibility was simply reduced to fit existing funding levels. We are concerned that this new model implicitly rejects the recommended funding levels determined by APA’s professional judgement study. Most of all, we have deep concerns about any effort to permanently exclude 75% of low-income students when, for example, **only 18% of FRL students in grades three through eight are proficient in Math**, and **only 15% proficient by high school**. Establishing a weighted funding model that excludes the obvious need is antithetical to the purpose of the PCFP and how it garnered support during its passage.

We are not opposed to transitioning to a new model. For a variety of reasons, using FRL as a proxy for at-risk manages to be both under and over-inclusive of the need. However, we *do* expect the eligibility factors used in the new model to reflect the actual needs of our state, a state where the majority of students are not proficient in core subjects.

We recommend the following:

1. **The Commission should explicitly clarify that the recommended at-risk definition and limited application is a flexible starting point, rather than a rigid, permanent definition.** Additional or expanded factors should broaden eligibility over time, until all students that are struggling academically and not supported by another weight are served by the definition.
2. **The Commission should recommend a ten-year plan to fund the incremental expansion of at-risk eligibility.** Much like the base per-pupil targets, the expansion of the definition over time and its associated costs should be developed now and acknowledged. This will help avoid legislative or public complacency around the actual need for academically at-risk students. It makes clear that the current definition is only the beginning, and our state will have to take incremental steps if it wants the realize the promises of the PCFP.

The aim should be to ensure every student that would benefit from additional support, such as those in low-income, volatile, transient, or otherwise at-risk households, and those struggling with achievement, get the additional help they need.

We sincerely appreciate your commitment to improving Nevada's education system and all the hard work of the Commission. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Best regards,
Amanda Morgan
Executive Director, Educate Nevada Now

APPENDIX A, ITEM 4: SANDY EARLACK

My name is Sandy Earlack and I am a fourth grade teacher in the Washoe County School District. I have been watching the meeting online, so I think what I'm going to say is a lot of what you've been hearing. I have been working in Washoe County School District for three years. Prior to that I taught in Colorado for seven. Prior to that I worked in the corporate world for twenty. I have twenty-eight kids in my classroom all deserving an education. You look out there and it is a sea of potential and I personally cannot meet their needs. I've got students who read well below grade level, I've got students who don't speak English, students struggling in math and as an individual trying to meet the needs of these twenty-eight students, I'm not able to do it. So, I'd like to advocate for direct support in the classroom that could be interventionists that help with reading. We used to have one, but it was a grant funded position, and we don't have that grant anymore. It is my understanding, more ELL teachers to pull out students who have very, very limited English, paraprofessionals that could help with setting up science projects or supporting kids in the class during writing project or even just doing recess duties, so the teachers get a break. Three days a week my only break is a half hour for lunch and that leads to a couple different issues. One is not enough planning time to teach reading, writing, math, science, and social studies in a super engaging manner. And also, to be honest it leads to plane out exhaustion. I work ten-hour days and usually five days on weekend ant it's not a sustainable job right now. So, I would just as many of the others have said ask for whatever funding we can find to make this one, a sustainable job and two, meet the potential that as teachers we're seeing right there in front of us and we cannot work fast enough to meet their potential and help all the students be successful. I thank you for all the work that you do. I know it's a heavy lift and I certainly appreciate your time and your effort.