

Commission on School Funding

Educator and support staff pipeline and compensation working group

Updated Report of Findings

August 16, 2024

In 2023 the Nevada Legislature passed SB98 that outlined various tasks of the Commission on School Funding (aka the “Commission”). Specifically, sections 7(1)(b-c) requires the Commission to conduct interim studies on:

- “The number of teachers graduating from institutions of higher education in this State each year relative to the number of teacher positions sought to be filled by school districts in this State each year,” and
- "The classification and compensation of teachers and support personnel at public schools in this State and whether insufficient compensation is contributing to the difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers and support personnel at public schools."

To address these, and other requirements set forth by the Legislature, the Commission formed multiple working groups. The 2 groups created to investigate these specific assignments were the ‘Teacher Pipeline’ workgroup and the ‘Teacher and Support Staff Compensation’ workgroup. The groups chose to join forces after discovering their respective subject matters overlap, forming one group to tackle both assignments. The joint working group, in conjunction with NDE staff, quickly learned of the work already being conducted by the Nevada State Teacher and Education Support Professional Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force set up in 2019 through Assembly Bill 276. Senate Bill 71 of the 2023 Legislative session revised the membership outlined in NRS 391.492 to include Education Support Professionals. The working group engaged with the Task Force in a series of meetings to learn more about their mission. This resulted in a presentation to the entire Commission on April 26, 2024, outlining the work of the Task Force already underway to address staffing in K-12 education in Nevada.

In June, 2024, the Task Force, submitted its report of findings pursuant to the directives outlined in NRS 391.496 as follows:

1. Evaluate the challenges in attracting and retaining teachers and education support professionals throughout this State;
2. Make recommendations to the Legislative Committee on Education to address the challenges in attracting and retaining teachers and education support professionals

throughout this State, including, without limitation, providing incentives to attract and retain teachers and education support professionals; and

3. Make a presentation to the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education on the fourth meeting of the Task Force, in even-numbered years, of the findings and recommendations of the Task Force made pursuant to NRS 391.496.

The report by the Task Force was previously presented to the Commission and is included again here for your reference. The joint working group committee, led by Dusty Casey and Punam Mathur, with help from Joyce Woodhouse, reviewed this report in detail to identify areas of alignment with the Commission's directives, along with potential opportunities for improvement to solidify and enhance the work of the Task Force moving forward.

Joint Working Group Summary

To summarize, the joint working group identified the following areas of concern and opportunities in conducting its research:

- Available data surrounding pipelines, compensation and vacancies is fragmented, incomplete, or absent completely, and is a clear hindrance to the work of both the Commission and the Task Force. Nevada appears to be a 'data desert' in these areas, and the Task Force needs resources to gather this data and should become a central repository for this data in order to fulfill their duties.
- Annual surveys should be conducted of current teachers and support staff, along with ALL LICENSE holders active in the State system, addressing compensation, culture and climate, and exit surveys. These surveys will provide valuable data and insight into the causes of teacher and support staff vacancies around the State, with the goal of better recruitment and retention strategies.
- Compensation studies are inconsistent, non-encompassing, or lacking altogether. In our discussions with the Task Force, it is clear that salary comparisons both internally (education geographic comparisons) and externally (vs other industries) across the western region of the US would be valuable, as Nevada is competing with other states and industries for staff. The Task Force needs resources in order to contract with a consultant to perform this work on a recurring basis (perhaps every 2-4 years), to maintain updated information.
- Coordination with the various agencies with pathways to teaching licenses is needed to centralize pipeline data.
- Standardized reporting is needed by Charters and Districts on staffing and compensation levels on at least an annual basis. The Task Force would then incorporate this information in their annual report.

- Current Task force membership and authority is limited. Redefining the Task Force through legislation could improve its ability to continuously monitor and improve education staffing pipelines in the State.

Task Force and Commission alignment

The following are specific areas from the Task Force's June report we've identified as possibly aligning with the Commissions directives.

Systemic Support and Infrastructure to Improve Working Conditions

1. Statewide minimum salary schedule. The State should require a minimum salary scale for all districts to reflect the cost of living and include an annual COLA increase to maintain or improve a teacher's standard of living. *While the Commission would need to determine its own stance on this specific recommendation, valuable information and tools are provided in this section in regard to salary data and compensation. Further resources and expertise are needed to expand this area of focus to better understand the competitive labor forces our education industry is facing.*
2. Healthcare coverage for educators. Expand the benefit enrollment umbrella to include healthcare coverage of educators under the state Public Employee Benefit Plan (PEBP).
3. Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTS) and wrap-around services. Allocate additional funding for the creation and training of student support teams (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support, wrap around services, etc.) at every school. *This has already been incorporated into the Commission's recommendations in prior meeting(s).*
6. Mentor programs. Allocate additional funding to education and prioritize the use of those funds for mentor programs, including but not limited to salaries, stipends, and training for mentor educators.
13. Work-Force data portal. The Legislature should invest state funding to sustain the educator workforce supply and demand portal that is currently being developed using federal relief funds. *Need more clarity on this item to determine alignment with the Commission.*

Recruitment

2. Scholarships for specialized instructional support personnel. Allocate additional funding for scholarships to increase the number of qualified specialized instructional support personnel (counselors, social workers, psychologists, etc.) to ensure students have equitable access to qualified service providers.

Retention

2. Teacher advancement scholarships. Funding should be provided for teacher advancement scholarships to those who would like to become counselors, psychologists, social workers, or other support professionals to ensure qualified service providers are in our schools in hard-to-staff positions.
4. Endorsements in district or state designated critical shortage areas. Districts should be provided funding dedicated to covering the costs associated with gaining an endorsement in a district- or state-identified critical shortage areas.
6. Loan forgiveness program. Funding should be provided to support student loan forgiveness to current Nevada teachers who have been teaching for at least 5 years and who are not eligible for loan forgiveness through other funding sources.

Task Force areas of Opportunity

In Nevada, a large percentage of operating funds for public schools are allocated to staff compensation and benefits. In recent years, high vacancy rates amongst all categories of education have persisted and, in many instances, worsened. Given the fact that personnel pipelines can be complex with ever changing variables, consistent monitoring and analysis is needed. Redefining the Task Force through legislation could create a more permanent entity with broader expertise responsible for creating a long-term strategy to address the many issues affecting educator workforce pipelines. Although we recognize this could be accomplished in many ways, examples of similar entities already exist in Nevada, such as the *Commission on School Funding* and the *Commission on Innovation and Excellence*. Utilizing these entities as a roadmap, one example of a new structure is as follows:

Entity name. *Nevada Commission on Educator Recruitment and Retention*

Structure. The Nevada Commission on Educator Recruitment and Retention will consist of five ex-officio members and 15 voting members. They are as follows and are appointed as indicated:

Ex-Officio Members:

- Nevada Superintendent of Public Instruction, or designee
- Nevada System of Higher Education Chancellor, or designee
- Deans of the Colleges of Education at UNLV, UNR, and NSU.

Voting Members:

- 2 members appointed by the Governor: one a Human Resources professional and one a business leader.
- 4 members appointed (one each) by the Majority Leader of the Senate, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Minority Leader of the Senate, and the Minority Leader of the Assembly. Two of these members will be appointed from the

category of ‘human resources’ professional and ‘business leader’ professional. The elected officials and the Governor will work in concert to identify their appointees. The elected officials will ensure that a Human Resource professional will be identified from one of the state’s school districts.

- 2 teachers will be appointed, one by the Nevada State Education Association and one by the Clark County Education Association. The two organizations will coordinate to ensure that one teacher will be from an urban county and one from a rural county. Of the two teachers, one will be an elementary teacher and one a secondary teacher.
- 2 support personnel individuals will be appointed, one by the Clark County Education Association and one by the Nevada State Education Association. NSEA and CCEA will also coordinate with the Education Support Employees Association on these appointees. As above, the organizations will ensure that one support employee will be from an urban and one from a rural county. Also, one will represent employees in an urban district and one in a rural district.
- 1 school superintendent, appointed by the Nevada Association of School Superintendents.
- 2 school administrators, appointed by the Nevada Association of School Administrators. NASA is to ensure that one of the two school administrators represents urban and one represents a rural district. Of these two, one must be an elementary administrator and the other a secondary administrator.
- 1 member appointed by the Nevada State Charter School Authority.
- 1 parent or guardian appointed by the Nevada Parent Teachers Association.
- Chair and Vice Chair of Commission: The Governor will appoint the Chair of the Commission from the list of 15 members appointed to the Commission. The Vice Chair will be elected by Commission members at its first meeting.

Funding. The Legislature will provide funding to cover meeting expenses (travel, meals, and per diem). In addition, funding will be provided to contract with organizations for expert research. The Nevada Department of Education will serve as the facilitating organization for the Commission.

Existing Task Force. The Nevada State Teacher and Education Support Professional Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force will be dissolved with the adoption of the Nevada Commission on Educator Recruitment and Retention.

Reports. The Commission will provide an annual report of its findings on November 15th of each year to the Governor, the Nevada Legislative Commission, the Nevada Department of Education, the Nevada System of Higher Education, and to the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education.

