Guinn CENTER

EDUCATION POLICY REPORT

National Education Rankings: What Nevada Can Learn and a Proposal for Moving Forward

A Policy Report

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Purpose of this Report

During the second calendar quarter of 2022, the Kenny Guinn Center for Policy Priorities (Guinn Center) presented the first two parts of a three-part series of reports requested by the Nevada Commission on School Funding.[1] The report series examines widely publicized national education rankings and apparent disparities in their assessment of Nevada's K-12 education system compared to other states. In recent rankings, Nevada placed at or near the bottom of some national lists while also being ranked 18th nationally by another in K-12 educational achievement.[2,3] The Phase I and II reports explore and clarify how these widely varied assessments could simultaneously be valid.

National education rankings are considered by many to be proxies for school quality. They are frequently referenced to support various narratives about education and used in conversations and negotiations regarding education funding. Some will say that Nevada's poor performance in a ranking necessitates more funding to improve education quality. Others may use the same ranking to argue it shows that funding is not the issue.

This final phase of the three-part report further explores the value and shortcomings of existing state education rankings. It also outlines critical concepts for measuring State educational performance and proposes essential considerations for establishing a fair and robust system for state-to-state comparisons. This report concludes with a suggested approach for creating a Nevada-specific scorecard to measure the performance of the State's K-12 education system.

The Value of State Rankings

National rankings of all types attract attention because they typically offer an attractive digest of information and helpful context for how entities perform compared to their peers. They are also very effective at generating headlines and clicks. *U.S. News & World Report* has built its various rankings into the signature products of its brand. The magazine now offers rankings of the best countries in the world, the best states and healthiest communities in the U.S., and various rankings in the education space. These include the best U.S. colleges, graduate schools, online colleges, and high schools.[4,5,6,7]

Leading National K-12 education Rankings

The leading national K-12 rankings include:

KIDS COUNT Data Book **from the Annie E. Casey Foundation**. The *KIDS COUNT Data Book* presents national and state data across four domains—economic well-being, education, health, and family and community. It ranks states in overall child well-being, and the book's first annual edition was published in 1990. Past editions have examined in detail the issues

above, as well as child protective services, foster care, the juvenile justice system, and the incarceration of U.S. children and youth. Each issue includes current and historical data and comparative rankings of states. Separate editions with detailed information on individual states and an interactive online edition are also available.[8]

Quality Counts **from *Education Week***. *Quality Counts* is *Education Week's* annual report card grading the nation and individual states' performance in K-12 education. Since 1997, *Quality Counts* has provided indicators to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of state education systems. Since 2018, they have published the report card in three annual installments. The January issue features grades on the Chance-for-Success Index; in June, the report card examines state-by-state results in school finance; and in September, it focuses on the K-12 Achievement Index and provides overall grades. In 2022, *Quality Counts* was not published due to the pandemic's impact on data collection for the federal databases on which the grading relies.[9]

Best States for Education **from *U.S. News & World Report***. As a component of its *Best States* ranking, published since 2017, *U.S. News & World Report* includes a subcategory ranking of state pre-K through 12 education systems. They compile data in five categories: preschool enrollment, National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) math scores, NAEP reading scores, high school graduation rate, and college readiness.[10]

Best & Worst States for Education **from WalletHub**. Personal finance website WalletHub offers annual rankings of the states with the best and worst school systems. They present data on various academic metrics, including low-income students' high school graduation rate, projected graduation rate increases over the next ten years, dropout rate, math and reading scores, advanced placement scores, median SAT and ACT scores, and Blue Ribbon schools per capita.[11,a] The school safety metrics measured include the number of school shootings and other violent incidents, bullying and incarceration rates, students' access to illegal drugs and weapons, injuries suffered by students, and parents' perceptions of school safety. States are also placed into one of four categories related to education spending: (1) states with high spending and high quality; (2) states with low spending and high quality; (3) states with high spending and low quality; and (4) states with low spending and low quality.[12]

[a] The National Blue Ribbon Schools Program annually recognizes public and private elementary, middle, and high schools based on their overall academic excellence or their progress in closing achievement gaps among student subgroups. Through the years, the program has given more than 10,000 awards to over 9,700 schools affirming the hard work of students, educators, families, and communities in creating safe and welcoming schools where students master challenging and engaging content.

The Challenge with State Rankings

It is helpful to briefly revisit some of the findings of the Phase II report.

Each ranking system is unique and should not be compared to others. Because of the disparate data included in the individual rankings, each should be considered independently. Before citing any rankings, education policymakers and advocates must consider whether the underlying data reflects Nevada's vision for its K-12 education system.

The choice of data points significantly influences the rankings. This finding is most prominent when examining the results of the *Quality Counts* and *KIDS COUNT* rankings. Three of the four indicators that comprise the *KIDS COUNT* list are also included in *Quality Counts*. However, Nevada is ranked 46th in *KIDS COUNT* and 18th in *Quality Counts*. While the *KIDS COUNT* data is similar to some indicators in *Quality Counts*, the former includes a measure of early childhood education, and the latter includes several additional data points.

The rankings may be based on a sample of students or challenging-to-interpret data. Some testing regimes use a scientific sampling of students, which can be reliable and representative. In other cases, however, students participate solely on a voluntary basis. Some policymakers and advocates may not be comfortable basing national rankings on an assessment given to only a subset of students, particularly if that subset is not comparable to Nevada's participants. As will be explored in further detail below, in 2019, Nevada administered the ACT assessment to 100 percent of eligible students, while 24 other states had less than 50 percent of their students participate voluntarily.[13] This makes for an inequitable comparison.

The data used can sometimes be old. Therefore, any new programs intended to improve Nevada's national education rankings may not be quickly reflected in certain datasets. Beyond questions about what effect the COVID-19 pandemic will have on longitudinal data and national rankings, anything Nevada policymakers do to address the Silver State's education rankings will have a delayed effect, even when the enacted policy has immediate and measurable outcomes. For example, the NAEP tests students on math and writing only every two years and is currently on a 13-year hiatus between state-level science tests. When the NAEP writing test is administered in 2030, it will have been 23 years since the previous state-level writing scores were published.[14] So, Nevada may need to plan its performance measurement strategy around the expected availability of certain data.

All rankings are relative. When Nevada improves an educational outcome, it does not guarantee that the State will gain in its national ranking on a related indicator because other

states may have also improved. For example, Nevada might undertake an initiative that enhances the State's performance from 80 percent to 90 percent on a related indicator. Yet, because there was a national push to advance all states on this indicator, Nevada's ranking could fall, perhaps from 30th to 35th. In such a case, it would be misleading to only look at the change in Nevada's performance relative to other states. Equating Nevada's academic results and national rankings may be a simple procedure, but it can miss the nuances of these rankings.

National education rankings might be interesting, but they may not provide a good foundation toward a strategy for improvement—or even a logical target at which to aim. Therefore, using existing national rankings to inform Nevada's K-12 education policy may have more drawbacks than benefits.

Still, looking at other states can put Nevada's education system in context and is a beneficial endeavor on a limited basis. Given this contradiction, how can Nevada reconcile the benefits with the challenges?

Measuring State Education System Performance

Before discussing how to measure Nevada's education performance, particularly relative to other states, it is instructive to explore state-level performance measurement in general.

Internal Versus *External* Performance Measures

Internal measures of education performance compare the performance of Nevada to itself over time. An example would be comparing this year's graduation rate to last year's. Other internal measures could include the performance of subgroups within the State to one another or themselves over time. For example, the graduation rate of Hispanic students could be compared to last year or to other racial groups this year.

Conversely, external measures of state education performance compare Nevada's performance or subgroups' performance to other states. An example would be comparing this year's graduation rate to other states. A similar comparison could examine a change in the measurement over time—for example, the three-year change in Nevada's graduation rate compared to the change in other states.

There are purely internal performance measures, such as the Nevada School Performance Framework, the Nevada Educator Performance Framework, and the Nevada Growth Model.[15,16,17] These cannot be compared to other states.

Other performance measures can serve both internal and external purposes—comparing Nevada to its own past performance or to that of other states. These hybrid tools include many standardized assessments, the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, the Event Dropout Rate, and others used by some or all states.[18,19]

The purely internal measures are helpful for accountability and comparing entities within Nevada, such as subgroups of students, teachers, schools, districts, et cetera. Hybrid measures are helpful for monitoring both internal and external performance and can help Nevada monitor its achievement and progress. These two terms—achievement and progress—may seem like a distinction without a difference, but measuring both is useful for looking at the State's education performance.

Measuring *Achievement* (which can be *absolute* or *relative*)

In various life pursuits, achievement can be measured in absolute terms. An example of this is the A through F scale often used for students' grades, where everyone can succeed or fail. Absolute achievement (success) can be measured against a pre-defined objective or one's own previous performance. The critical distinction is that the benchmark for achievement is fixed.

Achievement can also be measured in relative terms. An example is an athletic competition, where only some will succeed while others will fail. Relative achievement is measured against the performance of other participants.

In this approach to measuring achievement, the benchmark is variable and unknown in advance.

Both the absolute and relative measurement approaches are valid and can be useful depending on the circumstances. However, choosing the wrong method can result in erroneous conclusions about performance.

Case Example: Grading on a Curve

> *Imagine your child comes home with a mid-semester report of their performance in math class. It shows they rank 28th out of 30 students, and your child has a failing grade. However, you are very confused about this report because, when you recently asked your child about their math performance, they said they were doing well. How can these two facts be reconciled?*
>
> *After talking with the teacher, you learn they are experimenting with a normal distribution or "bell-curve" grading system for the class. Under this system, based on a 1 through 30 class ranking, 15 percent of students will receive A or F grades, 20 percent B or D grades, and 30 percent C grades. When you ask about your child's score in the class, the teacher says they have an 88 percent thus far in the semester.*
>
> *Thus, your child's absolute performance is outstanding, but their relative performance to other students is lagging. Apparently, the teacher is good at teaching the material, your child understands it well, and their absolute percentage score accurately reflects their performance. However, the relative grading system does not fairly contextualize these facts.*
>
> *Similar erroneous conclusions may be possible when using some national education rankings to examine individual state performance. It is essential to understand the "why" behind any ranking.*

Measuring *Progress* (which can be *absolute* or *relative*)

Progress can be absolute; for example, did the State perform better than last year? Progress can also be relative; did it make more progress than other states (or, in the case of the pandemic, did it regress less than other states)? Both measurement approaches are valid and useful, depending on the circumstances. Sometimes, absolute achievement is unrealistic as a short-term objective, so progress milestones can be established and periodically measured toward a long-term goal.

Nevada might benefit from the creation of a proprietary system, an annual statewide scorecard, for assessing the Silver State's progress and achievement.

Moving Forward

Given the benefits of interstate comparisons, the drawbacks of existing national rankings, and the various ways performance can be measured, how might Nevada proceed? The Guinn Center for Policy Priorities observes that Nevada might benefit from the creation of a proprietary system, an annual statewide scorecard, for assessing the Silver State's progress and achievement.

1. An annual statewide scorecard could use existing national or multistate datasets. Examples of possible data sources include:

   - **Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium**. The Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) is a partnership with 13 member states that has created a comprehensive testing system. Students in grades three through eight in participating member states are assessed in the areas of English Language Arts and mathematics through SBAC assessments each spring. The computer-adaptive testing format utilized by the SBAC adjusts the difficulty of questions throughout the assessment based on the student's response. Data from these assessments allows Nevada to compare test results with other states in these subject areas for students in grades three through eight.[20]

   - **ACT**. The ACT is one of the two major standardized tests used for college admissions in the U.S. (the other being the SAT or Scholastic Assessment Test) and measures college and career readiness. The ACT consists of four multiple-choice tests in English, mathematics, reading, and science, as well as an optional writing test. Nevada administers the ACT to all students in 11th grade and could compare its results to other states using a similar ACT testing approach.[21]

     While SATs are required for some college, university, or scholarship applications, they are not widely administered in Nevada. Therefore, they are excluded from our list of recommended data sources.

   - **National Assessment of Educational Progress**. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is an ongoing, nationwide assessment program that

evaluates students' academic performance in various subjects by testing a sampling of students who are representative of each state's population. Often referred to as the "Nation's Report Card," NAEP is designed to provide a comprehensive and consistent measure of student achievement across states and over longer periods. It tests math, science, and reading achievement regularly and seven other subjects less frequently. While NAEP is not a valuable measure of short-term changes in student progress, Nevada could use NAEP results to compare the long-term arc of student progress and achievement to that of other states.[22]

- **World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment**. World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) is an organization that supports English language learners and multilingual students in their education. It provides resources, assessments, and professional development to help educators create effective instruction and assessment strategies for students learning English as an additional language. The WIDA Consortium provides Nevada's English proficiency examination required for students identified as English Learners as outlined in the federal Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA). There are 41 member states in the WIDA consortium, which enables Nevada to compare test results with other states.[23]
- **College Board's Advanced Placement program**. Advanced Placement (AP) offers college-level courses and exams to high school students in a wide range of subjects, including mathematics, science, social studies, humanities, and foreign languages. Depending on their exam performance, AP students may be eligible to earn college credit or advanced placement at many colleges and universities.[24]
- **The International Baccalaureate**. International Baccalaureate (IB) is an internationally recognized educational framework that offers a challenging and comprehensive curriculum for students aged 3 to 19. The program is known for its emphasis on academic rigor, global perspective, and holistic development. It is recognized by universities worldwide, and IB Diploma Programme graduates may receive advanced standing, college credit, or other benefits at many institutions.[25]
- **National Center for Education Statistics**. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) is a branch of the U.S. Department of Education responsible for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data related to education in the United States, much of which is reported at the State or even school district level. It may be an excellent source of information to facilitate comparisons between Nevada and other states on specific performance or demographic metrics.[26]
- **Education Commission of the States**. Education Commission of the States (ECS) is a national organization that serves as a nonpartisan policy resource for state education

leaders. Its policy database, reports and publications, and data analysis documents may be a resource for comparing Nevada to other states, particularly in education policy.[27]

- **National Conference of State Legislatures.** The National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) is the membership organization for the nation's state legislators and their staff. It provides nonpartisan research and support to every U.S. state legislature and routinely compiles information across states covering many public policy topics. Like ECS, the NCSL education section may be a resource for data comparing Nevada to other states, particularly in policy.[28]
- **United States Census Bureau.** The Census Bureau is a federal agency responsible for collecting and disseminating a wide range of demographic, economic, and social data about the United States and its population, most of which is reported by state. It conducts various surveys and censuses to gather information that helps policymakers, researchers, businesses, and the public make informed decisions. While it likely does not offer much education performance data, the Census Bureau's education section may be a source of longitudinal demographic information to supplement other data.[29]

2. An annual statewide scorecard should consider the performance of other states in ways that enable meaningful comparisons.
    - Depending on the dataset, Nevada might be compared to:
        - **All other states.** Generally, having a larger universe of states for comparison is better because it can reduce the effect of statistical anomalies in the data. However, many states are very different from Nevada in their size, population distribution, demographics, spending, or other key profile components that might materially affect a particular data point.
        - **Other states with similar demographics.** There are states that, at least at a glance, look more like Nevada than others. They might be generally rural, have one or two larger cities, include mostly smaller towns, and reflect a growing Hispanic population. Further analysis would be necessary to determine which states to include.
        - **States in the western region.** Nevada tends to have more in common with its nearby neighbors regarding competition for teachers and possibly in terms of culture, climate, economy, and other metrics.
        - **Some other subset of states.**

- The choice of which states to use for comparing to Nevada should depend only on data relevance for each dataset and not on whether the states make Nevada's performance appear better or worse.

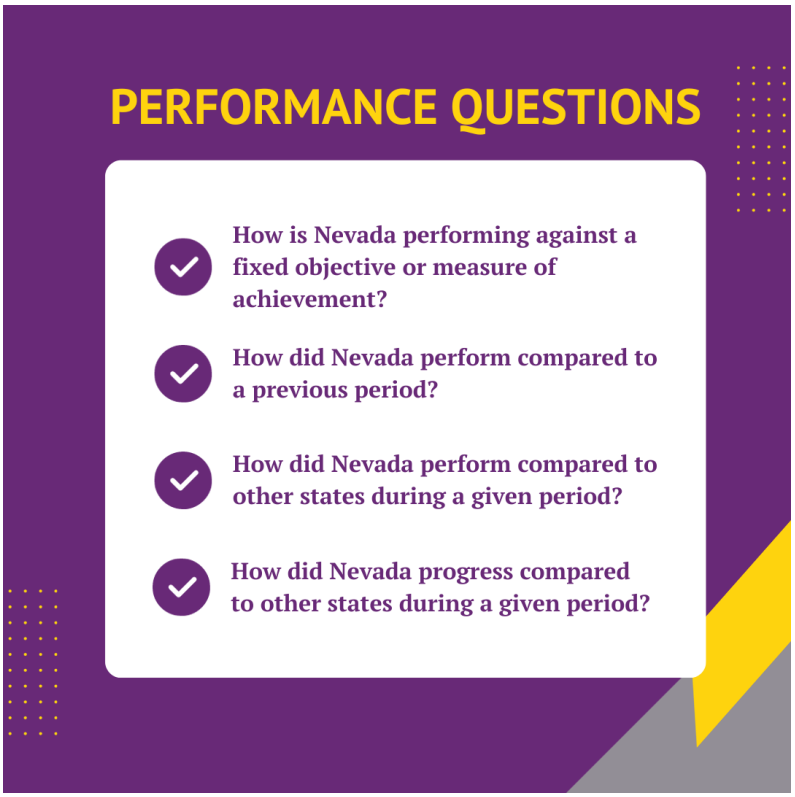
Case Example: ACT scores

In many states, the ACT college and career readiness test is taken only by students who plan to go to college, so these tend to be better-performing, test-ready students. Nevada administers the ACT to all 11th-graders, so it is at a competitive disadvantage when comparing scores with those states that do not administer the test to all students.

For example, in 2019, the average score among the 15 states administering the ACT to 100 percent of students was 19.1, while the national average ACT score was 20.7, which is 8.4 percent higher. Furthermore, the average score in the 14 states testing 25 percent or fewer of their students (only those who were likely college-bound) was 24.5, a 28.3 percent higher average score.[30]

Therefore, if Nevada decided to use ACT scores as a performance measure for college and career readiness, the benchmark should probably compare Nevada only to those states that require all students to take the ACT.

3. An annual statewide scorecard should consider whether a given data point will be used to measure achievement or progress on an absolute or relative basis, as is appropriate and meaningful. A given performance measure might seek to answer one or more of these questions:



- How is Nevada performing against a fixed objective or measure of achievement?
- How did Nevada perform compared to a previous period?
- How did Nevada perform compared to other states during a given period?
- How did Nevada progress compared to other states during a given period?

In any case, it is imperative the dataset being used logically supports the answer being sought.

4. As mentioned above, Nevada already has robust systems for internally measuring education performance. These include:

   - **Nevada School Performance Framework.** The Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) is a stakeholder-developed roadmap for rating Nevada schools on a 1 through 5 Star rating based on multiple Performance Indicators and Measures of student and school performance. Guided by requirements outlined in the ESSA, this accountability system assesses schools based on academic proficiency on State assessments, English Language Proficiency, and high school graduation rates (among other measures/indicators). Elementary, Middle, and High Schools are rated using this framework. The NSPF implements a compensatory accountability system, meaning that low performance in one indicator or measure can be "made up for" by high performance in another.[31]

   - **Alternative Performance Framework.** Nevada's Alternative Performance Framework (APF) is an accountability and reporting system tailored to meet the needs of alternative schools and their students. These alternative schools serve high-needs student populations and typically fall into one of four categories: schools offering credit recovery programs, schools with behavioral or continuation programs, juvenile detention facilities serving adjudicated youth, or special education schools serving students with identified disabilities. Like the NSPF, the APF comprises several performance indicators and measures and is guided by stakeholder engagement.[32]

   - **Nevada Growth Model.** The Nevada Growth Model (NGM) measures the change in students' academic performance compared to their peers over time. The model determines student growth by calculating Student Growth Percentiles (SGPs). Median Growth Percentiles (MPGs)—the median SGP for students at a particular school—are calculated for each school to measure school accountability. The NGM compares schools within the State and specified districts using measures including the MPG, the percentage of proficient students, and the percentage of students meeting their Adequate Growth Percentiles (AGPs) on the State's mathematics, English Language Arts, and English language proficiency assessments. Student growth is measured using annual SBAC assessments and WIDA assessments for English Learners.[33,b]

[b] Since student-level information on this website (such as individual SGPs and AGPs) are provided as tools for educators, access to the Nevada Growth Model is currently limited to state education professionals with a Bighorn account.

- **Nevada Report Card.** In compliance with data collection required by federal and State law, the Nevada Report Card provides State, district, and school-level reporting data to the public in a user-friendly format. Achievement data is available for State-approved Criterion Referenced Tests (CRTs), College and Career Ready Assessments (CCRs), and Nevada Alternative Assessments (NAAs). The SBAC assessment is Nevada's CRT for English Language Arts and mathematics, and the ACT is Nevada's CCR. A summary of the State's results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress is also available via the Nevada Report Card.[34]

The Nevada K-12 Scorecard

A statewide scorecard could be designed using the principles and guidelines outlined in this report, but there are many other items for consideration:

General Scorecard Contents

- The scorecard could be external only, meaning the intent is to replace other national K12 ranking systems that compare Nevada to other states and not to report on internal performance measures. This approach would mean, for example, that the scorecard would not report the percentage of schools in each star category under the NSPF because that is an internal performance measure.
- Comparisons with other states would be interstate, not necessarily national, though some comparisons may be made to all other states.
- Other national K-12 ranking systems often arrive at a single score and ranking. This approach makes a broad data collection more consumable for the public but tends to eliminate or conceal nuances. Nevada may be better served by only compiling rankings for individual data points or in limited categories that include a few data points such as "elementary school achievement," "college and career readiness," et cetera.
- The scorecard could have a core set of performance measures used perpetually to show Nevada's evolving performance over time.
- In addition to the core performance measures, there could be an annual addendum to the scorecard highlighting either core or additional performance measures related to recent areas of emphasis in State funding or policy. Items in the addendum may or may not compare Nevada to other states.

- It will be important to consider the primary and secondary audiences for the scorecard and their information needs. This may include, but is not limited to, the Commission on School Funding, the State Board of Education, the Nevada Department of Education, and other interested groups such as policymakers and parents.

Questions to Consider

- What do we want to measure, in general?
    - Student academic performance (mostly assessment scores and how they change over time);
    - Long-term student outcomes (graduation rate, dropout rate, post-graduation outcomes, et cetera);
    - Education professional qualifications and performance (college credentials, professional certifications, NEPF scores, et cetera);
    - School climate (surveys of students, parents, or education professionals); and/or
    - Other factors.

    Of course, if the scorecard is external only, there will need to be multistate datasets available for the chosen metrics.
- What sources of data are available to measure the desired metrics?
- Where interstate comparisons are made, which states make sense for inclusion in the comparison and why? The rationale should be documented and included as a footnote in the scorecard.
- Will a data point be used to measure achievement or progress against a predetermined benchmark, performance against a relative benchmark, or both?
- Will any measures also be broken out into subgroups for informational or scoring purposes? If so, which subgroups will be included?

Data Considerations

- Is the chosen data available from a reliable and credible source?
- Is the data provided at least annually or less often, and what are the implications for an annual scorecard?
- Is the data based on sampling, and what are the implications?
- Is the data standardized between states? For example, before the Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate, this metric was measured differently in various states.

- Is there a lag time in the reported data, and what are the implications?
- If there is a desire to maintain a real-time data dashboard as data becomes available, tracking the release dates and timeframes for each data point might be helpful.

Historical data should be available for most items in the scorecard, so retroactive scores might also be reported for prior years when creating the initial version. A challenge in this will be the unusual data generated during the pandemic. Another option would be to use a year like 2018-19 as a baseline for comparison to post-pandemic data.

Scoring Format

What type of scoring rubric is best for the scorecard? Whatever format is chosen, it should be nuanced enough to show minor progress over time.

- The system could use numbers (0-100 or 1-10), letters (A-F), colors (green, yellow, red), stars (1-5), Federal Tiers of Support (comprehensive, targeted, additional, etc.) or another approach that communicates Nevada's status clearly and concisely. Education Commission of the States has compiled a 50-state comparison of states' school accountability systems.[35]
- What items will be included in the long-term scoring system, recognizing the intent is to monitor Nevada's progress over time? Will certain items be included in the scorecard for informational purposes only?

  For example, there are existing national rankings that give points simply for spending more on education. If two states have the same academic outcomes, but one spends more, it receives a higher score. If reporting on spending in the scorecard, Nevada would need to decide whether spending is a success factor or if it should be an informational item on a scorecard.
- Will scored items be weighted to emphasize their relative importance or reported individually without weighting? It should be noted that combining and weighting performance metrics can add a level of nuance that may detract from the core message of each metric.
- As suggested above, will there be separate scores to show the State's progress against fixed objectives versus its performance compared to other states? Or, will the scorecard solely act as a tool to compare Nevada to other states?

Performance Metrics to Measure

Assembly Bill 400 (2023) prescribes an extensive list of performance metrics to be tracked and reported by the Nevada Commission on School Funding. This list, as follows, would be an excellent starting point for determining which metrics to include in the scorecard.[36]

Beginning on page 19 of the bill, AB 400 requires the Commission to:

Use metrics to measure the academic achievement of pupils, which include, without limitation:

- The rate of graduation of pupils from high school by type of diploma;
- The performance of pupils on standardized examinations in math, reading, and science;

  NOTE: Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium scores are a good example of how there may be multiple options for using one type of data. The scores could be used to compare the State's performance to a fixed objective it hopes to achieve, how its performance compared to the previous year, how it compared to other states this year, or how scores changed over time compared to other states.
- The number of credentials or other certifications in fields of career and technical education earned by pupils;
- The number of pupils who earn a passing score on an advanced placement examination;
- The number of pupils who earn a passing score on an international baccalaureate examination;
- The percentage of pupils in each school who lack a sufficient number of credits to graduate by the end of their 12th-grade year;
- The percentage of pupils in each school who drop out;
- The number of pupils who enroll in higher education upon graduation;
- The number of pupils who enroll in a vocational or technical school or apprenticeship training program;
- The attendance rate for pupils;
- The number of violent acts by pupils and disciplinary actions against pupils; and
- Any other metric prescribed by the Commission.

Use metrics to measure the improvement of pupils enrolled in elementary school in literacy, which include, without limitation:

- The literacy rate for pupils in first, third, and fifth grades;
- The number of pupils in elementary school who were promoted to the next grade after testing below proficient in reading in the immediately preceding school year, separated by grade level and by level of performance on the relevant test;
- The number of schools that employ a licensed teacher designated to serve as a literacy specialist pursuant to NRS 388.159 and the number of schools that fail to employ and designate such a licensed teacher; and
- Any other metric prescribed by the Commission.

Use metrics to measure the ability of public schools to hire and retain sufficient staff to meet the needs of the public schools, which include, without limitation:

- The rate of vacancies in positions for teachers, support staff, and administrators;
- The attendance rate for teachers;
- The retention rate for teachers;
- The number of schools and classrooms within each school in which the number of pupils in attendance exceeds the designed capacity for the school or classroom;
- The number of classes taught by a substitute teacher for more than 25 percent of the school year; and
- Any other metric prescribed by the Commission.

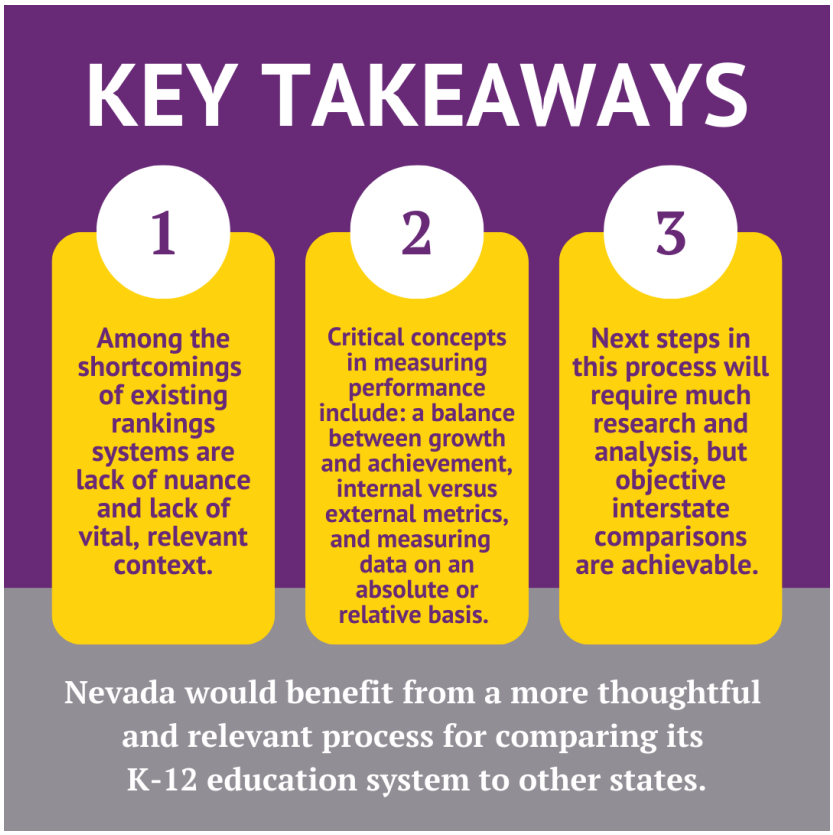
Use metrics to measure the extent to which schools meet the needs and expectations of pupils, parents or legal guardians of pupils, teachers and administrators, which include, without limitation:

- The results of an annual survey of satisfaction of school employees;
- The results of an annual survey of satisfaction of pupils, parents, or legal guardians of pupils and graduates; and
- Any other metric prescribed by the Commission.

Senate Bill 98 (2023) includes the same list of metrics and, together with Assembly Bill 400, expands the authority and mission of the Commission on School Funding. The bills' emphasis on measuring both student progress and achievement supports the recommendations offered in this report.

Conclusion

Based on the Phase I and II findings, Nevada would benefit from a more thoughtful and relevant process for comparing its K-12 education system to other states. This Phase III report explores existing rankings' value and shortcomings and how they lack context and nuance. It also highlights critical concepts for measuring State-level performance, especially the need to find a balance between growth and achievement, internal versus external performance metrics and measuring these things on an absolute or relative basis.



This report also suggests essential considerations for establishing a fair and robust system for state-to-state comparisons. It offers an approach for creating a Nevada-specific scorecard to measure the performance of the statewide K-12 education system.

The next steps in this process will require much research and analysis, but the Guinn Center believes objective interstate comparisons are achievable. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Commission on School Funding or any appropriate entity, in a lead or support role, to create and annually maintain a Nevada scorecard.

References

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Our mission is to advance evidence-based policy solutions for Nevada through research, public engagement, and partnerships.

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