

**NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
AUGUST 27, 2020
9:00 A.M.**

Meeting Location

Due to the circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the State Board of Education met via videoconference. In accordance with Governor Sisolak's State of Emergency Directive 006, Section 1, no physical location was designated for this meeting. The meeting was livestreamed on the Nevada Department of Education's (NDE) website.

SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Via Videoconference

Alex Gallegos
Cathy McAdoo
Dawn Miller
Elaine Wynn
Felicia Ortiz
Katherine Dockweiler
Kevin Melcher
Mark Newburn
Robert Blakely
Tamara Hudson
Wayne Workman

DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT

Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Heidi Haartz, Deputy Superintendent of Business and Support Services
Dr. Jonathan Moore, Deputy Superintendent of Student Achievement
Jessica Todtman, Chief Strategy Officer
Randi Hunewill, Education Programs Supervisor
Cindi Chang, Education Programs Professional
Jayne Malorni, Education Programs Professional
Mary Holsclaw, Education Programs Professional

LEGAL STAFF PRESENT

Via Videoconference

Greg Ott, Chief Deputy Attorney General

PRESENTERS IN ATTENDANCE

Via Videoconference

Dr. Jesus Jara, Superintendent, Clark County School District
Dr. Kristen McNeill, Superintendent, Washoe County School District
Dr. Summer Stephens, Superintendent, Churchill County School District
Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director, State Public Charter School Authority
Mike Lang, Digital Engineer
Jaci McCune, Digital Engineer

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE

Via Livestream

1: CALL TO ORDER; ROLL CALL; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Meeting called to order at 9:00 A.M. by President Elaine Wynn. Quorum was established. President Wynn led the Pledge of Allegiance. President Wynn recognized the efforts and commitment of students and their families, teachers and administrators, school counselors and specialized instructional support personnel, bus drivers and janitorial staff, and facilities maintenance and information technology staff, as well as countless others, in working to begin the 2020-21 school year and continue the education of children across Nevada.

2: PUBLIC COMMENT #1

Nevada State Education Association submitted public comment regarding the Commission on School Funding. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

3: APPROVAL OF FLEXIBLE AGENDA

Vice President Mark Newburn moved to approve the flexible agenda. Member Felicia Ortiz seconded. Motion passed.

4: PRESIDENT’S REPORT

President Wynn provided an update regarding the Governor’s COVID-19 Task Force and ConnectingKidsNV.org. She noted that many students were “lost” at the end of the 2019-20 school year, as they did not have devices or connectivity. Facing the 2020-21 school year with the majority of students in distance or hybrid learning models, President Wynn and Superintendent Jhone Ebert began to work with Governor Sisolak’s COVID-19 Task Force and countless other stakeholders to address the digital divide. ConnectingKidsNV.org was launched, led by Tami Hance of Communities in Schools, Kristin Searer of the Public Education Foundation, and Punam Mathur of the Elaine P. Wynn & Family Foundation. ConnectingKidsNV’s Family Support Center is staffed by bilingual operators who work to connect students to broadband and devices. Eight of the 17 county school districts in Nevada are currently “green,” representing that all students enrolled in distance learning have the devices and connectivity they need. Philanthropic leaders have worked to reach out to families and provide access to wraparound supports, and President Wynn thanked all partners who have worked to support students and families.

5: SUPERINTENDENT’S REPORT

Superintendent Ebert seconded President Wynn’s thanks and appreciation for the incredible work of ConnectingKidsNV.org, the Governor’s COVID-19 Task Force, and all community partners. At the time of the meeting, 10 of 17 districts had begun school for the 2020-21 school year. Clark and Elko county school districts are implementing a full-time distance learning model for the first quarter of school, while Eureka, Esmeralda, Lincoln, Pershing, and White Pine county school districts providing in-person instruction. The remaining districts are facilitating hybrid models, or a mix of models based on school age or school population density.

Superintendent Ebert noted that the “green” districts are Carson, Churchill, Esmeralda, Eureka, Lincoln, Nye, Pershing, Storey, and White Pine. However, some of those districts are “green” because they are face-to-face and have no current needs. In the event they did need to close school buildings, some of the districts that are currently green would struggle to meet device and connectivity needs. Superintendent Ebert thanked Brian Mitchell, the Director of the Governor’s Office of Science, Innovation & Technology (OSIT) for his partnership and support of districts and schools in closing the digital divide.

Under the CARES Act, Nevada was granted Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief, or ESSER, funding. Superintendent Ebert reported that 90% of ESSER funds - approximately \$105 million – were allocated to local education agencies. The remaining 10% were set aside for Statewide activities through a competitive grant process, focused on three priorities: wraparound services, digital instructional materials, and high-quality professional development. Organizations could apply to support the delivery of distance learning, for planning and development of the return to normal school operations, and wraparound services to support students, educators, and families in response to COVID-19.

The ESSER competitive application closed August 19, and the Department received 71 applications from 45 applicants: 33 of those applications were for wraparound services, 26 were for high-quality professional

development, and 12 were for digital instructional materials. These applications are going through an expedited review process, and the Department hopes to notify applicants in a few short weeks.

The 31st Special Session of the Nevada Legislature granted \$50 million in CARES Act funding to local education agencies through the passage of Assembly Bill (AB) 3. The streamlined application process for AB 3 was opened on August 6, and to date, four districts have completed the application and subgrant process for AB 3 funds.

The Legislative Committee on Education had a full agenda for their August meeting, and there were a number of presentations spearheaded by NDE, with topics including findings from the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force, the Adult High School Diploma Program, the Nevada Educator Performance Framework, Senate Bill 41 (2019) and related changes to licensure, School and Student Safety, and Assembly Bills 168 and 490 regarding student discipline and restorative justice.

Vice President Newburn asked about the oversight for CARES Act funding. Deputy Superintendent Heidi Haartz noted that CARES Act Funds, ESSER Funds, and GEER (Governor's Education Emergency Relief) Funds all have separate sets of allowable costs and auditing requirements. Funds awarded to municipalities from the Coronavirus Relief Fund are monitored by the Governor's Office and the Governor's Finance Office. NDE will be responsible for monitoring the Coronavirus Relief funds being granted to school districts and the State Public Charter School Authority under the authority of AB 3. The Department will review that invoices are for allowable expenses only and will audit that items were coded to one reimbursement source and the expenses were allowable under federal legislation.

6: APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Vice President Newburn moved to approve the consent agenda. Member Katherine Dockweiler seconded. Motion passed.

7: INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING DISTRICT AND SCHOOL REOPENING PLANS

District and charter school leaders provided updates to the Board regarding the implementation and status of their school reopening plans.

- **Clark County School District**

Dr. Jesus Jara, Superintendent of Clark County School District, conducted a PowerPoint presentation on the status of school reopening in [Clark County School District](#) (CCSD).

Vice President Newburn inquired about the matching of devices and connectivity to students. Superintendent Jara noted that CCSD currently has enough devices for those students that have expressed a need. However, there are students that have not yet checked in, and there are not yet enough devices for every student in the district. President Wynn clarified that, based on ConnectingKidsNV data, approximately 30,000 students in Clark County are still without devices; she further noted that technical support would also be important as students were matched with devices and connectivity. Nonprofits and the Family Support Center are providing information technology support to families and students.

Member Dockweiler asked which CCSD schools are operating face-to-face; Superintendent Jara noted they are rural schools. Member Ortiz asked how students would be caught up on missed coursework once they were connected. Superintendent Jara noted that wellness checks have been increased, and school staff have begun outreach and knocking on doors to find students, with teachers providing additional support to assist students in catching up, including accelerating their learning. Catch up will occur when teachers are able to provide one-on-one lesson planning with students, as well as Saturday tutoring opportunities and after-school support. Member Ortiz asked if there are strong social-emotional supports being provided, as well as checks to ensure that students are in safe home environments. Superintendent Jara affirmed that staff are finding ways to connect with students, support their needs, and respond to reports.

Member Wayne Workman noted that Cox Communications does not exist across all of Nevada, and that the connectivity solutions that have been discussed by the Board are wonderful, but do not reflect solutions that will work across the State. Connectivity remains a substantial issue in rural districts. He further noted that most districts are purchasing devices and hotspots for students using CARES Act and AB 3 funds, which will not be sustainable, as districts are otherwise not funded to provide devices and connectivity to students.

Superintendent Jara added that Clark was estimating a \$30 million investment per year to continue providing Chromebooks to students, not including estimates for connectivity. Including connectivity, the cost may be up to \$75 million per year. President Wynn noted that the current evaluations are due to COVID-19, and the technology needs are currently under consideration to respond to that situation. If the need for device and connectivity support becomes long-term, there will be a larger national crisis. Member Workman highlighted the leadership of President Wynn's Family Foundation and the work of OSIT in Nevada's success in closing the digital divide.

- **Washoe County School District**

Dr. Kristen McNeill, Superintendent of Washoe County School District, conducted a PowerPoint presentation on the status of school reopening in [Washoe County School District](#) (WCSD).

Vice President Newburn asked about device needs in Washoe; Superintendent McNeill noted that Washoe has 33,000 devices, and each week they receive an update regarding how many students have expressed a need for a device.

President Wynn inquired about Washoe's enrollment; Superintendent McNeill responded they currently had 27,463 elementary school students, with elementary school students doing face-to-face instruction. Of those elementary school students, 8,557 elected to do distance learning. President Wynn clarified whether a device order had been placed; Superintendent McNeill noted that devices would be ordered using AB 3 funds; once those funds were received, they would place the order, with expected delivery in December. President Wynn asked what the delay was in placing the order; she emphasized not to let funding delay the ordering of needed devices.

Member Tamara Hudson asked how many COVID-19 cases there were in the district. Superintendent McNeill responded that eight schools have had a staff member or student with a positive case, and due to the district's approach to excluding affected students and staff in consultation with public health officials, there are upwards of 600 students excluded currently. Superintendent McNeill emphasized the importance of contact tracing.

- **Churchill County School District**

Dr. Summer Stephens, Superintendent of Churchill County School District, conducted a PowerPoint presentation on the status of school reopening in [Churchill County School District](#).

President Wynn commended Superintendent Stephens on the efforts and innovations of Churchill County School District, which Member Kevin Melcher seconded. Member Ortiz asked how positions were being repurposed due to budget cuts and restrictions. Superintendent Stephens responded that Churchill has had successive budget cuts over the last ten years, and attempts were made this year to maintain the current staff and add staff for intervention and support. Once the district has assessed gaps, they will assign staff to supporting students in a variety of means.

[Convenience Break]

- **State Public Charter School Authority**

Rebecca Feiden, Executive Director of the State Public Charter School Authority, conducted a PowerPoint presentation on the status of school reopening across charters in under [the State Public Charter School Authority](#) (SPCSA).

Responding to President Wynn, Director Feiden noted that each charter school purchases devices and hotspots individually as they understand their needs at the local level, however the SPCSA is tracking their requests and working to coordinate connectivity. President Wynn asked if the SPCSA could apply for AB 3 funds as a block grant, or if individual charter schools would need to apply for AB 3 funds. Director Feiden responded that dollar amounts are allocated at a school level.

8: INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING THE COMMISSION ON SCHOOL FUNDING AND THE DEFINITION OF AT-RISK

Heidi Haartz, Deputy Superintendent of Business and Support Services, provided an update to the Board regarding the work of the Commission on School Funding (Commission). She noted that the Commission had recently recommended that the State Board of Education develop an alternative definition for At-Risk in the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan (PCFP), as allowed in Senate Bill (SB) 543 (2019).

The Commission on School Funding was established to assist in the development and review of the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan as prescribed in Senate Bill 543. The Commission finalized their recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor and submitted them on July 15, 2020. Part of their work included an evaluation of the definition of At-Risk within SB 543. SB 543 defines “At-Risk” as a pupil who is eligible for free-or-reduced-price lunch (FRL) or an alternative set by the State Board of Education. The Commission recommended that the Board adopt an alternative definition for At-Risk. The Department will return at the Board’s October meeting with additional details regarding the Commission’s recommendations on the definition of At-Risk for the Board’s consideration.

Deputy Superintendent Haartz reported that the Commission identified concerns with the use of FRL as the definition for At-Risk, including confidentiality issues in using it as an indicator in the PCFP. In the PCFP, money follows the student to the school they are attending; FRL confidentiality would make it difficult to track those funds with the student. Additionally, some schools qualify all of their students for FRL under the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). This would provide additional confusion with regard to determining which students would meet the definition of At-Risk included in SB 543 versus those students receiving FRL as part of a larger community-based effort. Furthermore, many families do not apply for FRL status because there is a stigma associated with it.

The Commission has explored several options for alternative definitions of At-Risk. They currently favor a method through Infinite Campus, a student information system being used State-wide. The Infinite Campus model is complex, as it uses 75 indicators to evaluate At-Risk. Those indicators fall into broad categories, which include academic risk, attendance, behavior, home and enrollment stability, and other. The Department is currently evaluating if the Infinite Campus model could be applied to Nevada’s needs and the nuances of the PCFP.

Member Ortiz asked for clarification regarding weights in the PCFP. Deputy Superintendent Haartz responded that the PCFP may only apply one weighted category to a student, and should they fall into multiple categories, the category with the highest weight is selected. In the Infinite Campus method, it is important that there be a method that students already identified in a higher weighted category are not designed At-Risk.

President Wynn asked if the Commission was reviewing exemplars regarding weighted funding and At-Risk. Deputy Superintendent Haartz noted that other states use FRL, but the PCFP is providing a unique context in which using FRL as the indicator for At-Risk would potentially fail to identify or fail to associate funds with a student. A review of Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) further showed that At-Risk is defined inconsistently, and the Board had an opportunity to develop a uniform definition.

Member Ortiz asked if the Commission had submitted the recommended base per-pupil funding or target weights in their recommendation letter on July 15. Deputy Superintendent Haartz noted that per SB 543, the recommendation letter consisted of recommendations for the successful implementation of the PCFP and are policy-based; it did not include target weights.

Outside of the recommendations per SB 543 and regarding target weights, the Commission did identify aspirational weights should funding become available during the course of their regular Commission meetings; information regarding weights is available in the meeting minutes of the Commission.

9: INFORMATION, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION WORKGROUP OF THE NEVADA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Member Tamara Hudson provided an update to the Board regarding the work of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Workgroup of the Nevada State Board of Education, which met on August 20, 2020.

The Workgroup received an update from Superintendent Ebert regarding the digital divide in Nevada related to connectivity and devices.

The Workgroup received a presentation regarding Indian Education in Nevada, with representatives from the Department's Office of Inclusive Education, the Nevada Indian Commission, and the Native Youth Community Project. They presented on services provided, community partnerships, the digital divide, and challenges and highlights. A bright spot in the presentation included classes that are available in Washoe County School District for Great Basin Native Languages, and the efforts of other districts to provide this opportunity. The Native Youth Community Project is a highly successful program that provides programming and services for Native youth grades 7-12 for college and career readiness. In response to the program, discipline rates dropped, and grade point averages rose.

President Wynn expressed that the DEI Workgroup was an opportunity to drill down on student groups, and she appreciated the opportunity to learn more about Indian Education. Member Hudson will Chair the DEI Workgroup moving forward.

10: INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING THE NEVADA DIGITAL LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

Cindi Chang, Education Programs Professional, Standards and Instructional Support; Jayne Malorni, Education Programs Professional; Standards and Instructional Support; Mike Lang, Digital Engineer, Clark County School District; and Jaci McCune, Digital Engineer, Northwest Regional Professional Development Program, conducted a PowerPoint presentation regarding [the Nevada Digital Learning Collaborative](#) (NvDLC).

Member Ortiz asked if there were any major challenges that the Board could assist with, and if teachers were receiving continuing education units (CEUs) for their participation in NvDLC trainings. Ms. Chang responded that spreading the word is crucial and Ms. Malorni affirmed that teachers receive CEUs. President Wynn suggested a marketing approach to support entry to their work for those that may be new to the materials and concepts, and supported greater inter-agency collaboration, such as between ConnectingKidsNV and NvDLC. Mr. Lang did a walk-through for how to navigate the NvDLC website, highlighting the search page as a starting point. The Board commended the NvDLC on their work.

11: FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Vice President Newburn asked for continued updates regarding the digital divide and the opening of schools.

12: PUBLIC COMMENT #2

Natha Anderson, Washoe Education Association, submitted public comment regarding the reopening of schools. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

13: ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 12:51 P.M.

Appendix A: Statements Given During Public Comment

1. The Nevada State Education Association submitted public comment regarding the Commission on School Funding.
2. Natha Anderson, Washoe Education Association, submitted public comment regarding the reopening of schools.

Item A1, Nevada State Education Association

The Nevada State Education Association has been the voice of Nevada educators for over 100 years.

These comments are in reference to item #8 on today's calendar regarding the Commission on School Funding. At its July meeting, the Funding Commission made recommendations which, while not surprising, were profoundly disappointing. Commissions like the one on School Funding should value the voices of educators, school equity advocates, and other education stakeholders, who over the past year have shown up, and since March, written in. Educators and community members have consistently expressed our concern about the well-being of Zoom and Victory Schools, the lack of new resources to address chronic education underfunding, the specter of years-long budget freezes in most school districts, a multi-million dollar giveaway to charter schools, anti-worker end fund balance provisions, and the broken process that has left us at this point.

Instead of valuing our voices and incorporating our concerns in their recommendations, the Commission completely ignored our input.

Since March, the COVID-19 global pandemic has ravaged Nevada and changed everything. Everything, that is, with the possible exception being the limited scope and imagination of the Funding Commission. This summer, as legislators were convened in Carson City at the 31st Special Session, making \$156 million in painful cuts to K-12 education funding, the Funding Commission continued as if literally nothing had changed. Instead of tinkering with the minutiae of a broken funding proposal, the Commission, the Board of Education, and the Legislature should be asking the tough questions.

- How does the \$70 million in cuts to SB178 funding for English learners and at-risk students impact the transition to student weights contemplated in the new funding plan?
- What would be the impact on the transition to the new funding plan with further state budget cuts to K-12 education?
- Why are most major education stakeholder groups opposed to making this shift in funding plans in the first place?
- How completely irresponsible would it be to implement the radical shift of the school funding plan in the middle of a global pandemic?

While the new funding plan was unworkable before with no new revenue, implementation with decreased revenue and painful budget cuts, including wiping out student weights, would be completely irresponsible. SB543 will not help safely reopen schools. SB543 will not bring greater transparency. SB543 will not deliver greater education equity. SB543 is not truly centered on the student, 90% of whom attend our neighborhood public schools. And SB543 is not inclusive of the voices of education stakeholders

Item A2, Natha Anderson

Good morning President Wynn, Superintendent Ebert and Board of Education Members,

My name is Natha Anderson and it is my honor to be the president of the Washoe Education Association, the collective bargaining unit for the certified educators in the Washoe County School District. Thank you for the opportunity to provide a small emotional snapshot of the beginning of the school year from the educators, counselors, Speech Language Pathologists, school nurses, and school librarians of the WCSD. To get straight to the point – the majority of educators are overwhelmed with unanswerable questions, anxiety over possible exposure to a dangerous disease and exhausted by the increase of continually changing expectation being placed on us.

The beginning of the school year is always full of excitement, anxiety and questions. A few of those beginning of the year jitters could include “how will the students learn this year? What are the new discoveries, will they like me the educator AND will they respect all members of the school community? How will I get through all the standards and items? How can I help my kids grow as educated people? How can I make sure the students are safe – both physically as well as mentally?

This year the safety question had numerous layers and concerns. The different options of how to open schools for our students (in person, hybrid, distance), how to make sure it was safe with the large amount of PPE needed, the amount of time for cleaning, how to notify people when a possible positive case has occurred at a school site have now been added to our list of questions. WEA has voiced concerns over how safe it is for students and educators in WCSD and now we have almost a dozen schools, after only four days, with positive COVID-19 cases. We have asked for clarification, for reconsideration of the hybrid and in person models as the concerns continue. We need help and resources to help our school community.

In a related note, the amount of work expected goes far beyond our contract day, something we have accepted as teachers. Sadly, however, there are many leaving our profession because they are being forced to choose between the students in their classroom and their own families as they attempt to complete everything being placed on our shoulders. Our counselors are being pulled to be substitutes instead of being able to counsel. One educator attempted to list out all the expectations not including teaching the students which went on for almost a page and half, a comparison of the circus act of spinning plates has been used often. When you add in the need for the Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) for the evaluation, a process which takes up a large amount of time for the data gathering instead of concentrating on the students’ emotional and educational needs, it is exhausting. As a 3rd year teacher explained to me, “I just don’t know if I can continue this job.”

I could go on about the numerous issues we are facing as educators in this new COVID-19 world, however, as an educator it is important to celebrate the positives as well. I spoke with a 30-year Special Education teacher yesterday. Initially the conversation was about the PPE being provided as her program is for our kids who are still in needs of diapering services. She was using garbage bags as the PPE, but yesterday she was delivered 30 disposable gowns (her eight kids need to be changed about three times a day so the disposable gowns will be helpful for about a week). As we talked, however, she was so excited about one of her students and the growth he has experiencing in just four days. On day one he had to be reminded to wear his mask 44 times, on day four it was down to 12 times. This is a huge victory and significant progress.

Respectfully submitted,
Natha Anderson