

## Portrait of a World-Class Teacher Subcommittee

### *Vision*

Our subcommittee envisions a Nevada where every student has a world-class teacher. This is a Nevada where all teachers have the resources, support, guidance, professional flexibility and autonomy they need to meet the needs of the diverse learners they serve. We want all Nevada's teachers to be leading-edge practitioners, innovators, and changemakers. Teachers sit at the heart of our strategy to transform Nevada's education system. They are responsible for enabling every learner to attain the competencies outlined in the Nevada Portrait of a Learner, and ultimately, driving us to lead the country and the world in education outcomes.

We believe that teacher preparation across Nevada should involve robust coursework in subject-specific pedagogy, significant time in practical experiences under that guidance of highly-trained mentor teachers, and well-developed induction programs that provide robust support to new teachers.

We also recognize that teachers' learning journeys do not end with preservice. In our vision, Nevada's teachers will be life-long learners who can access widely available, high-quality professional learning that continuously elevates their practice. Ongoing professional development will include collaborative work environments such as collaborative lesson planning, peer observation, and research, designed to foster a continuous improvement culture. The system will incentivize and reward teachers' professional growth, and teachers will be recognized as they grow in their leadership and contributions to their school, community, and state.

School principals and district leaders are essential to this vision. Principals and district leaders should receive common professional learning experiences that equip them with a shared understanding of how to cultivate teachers as lifelong learners, a strong commitment to supporting teacher leadership and development, and the strategies needed to nurture this professional learning architecture.

This vision is rooted in our in-depth study of how the world's leading education systems – from high-performing countries like Singapore, Canada, and Estonia to leading and rapidly innovating states such as Massachusetts, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, and Maryland – recruit, retain, and develop high-capacity and diverse educators. (NCEE, 2024; 2017; & 2013; Maryland Commission on Innovation & Excellence in Education, 2019; Stewart & Morton, 2024) Based on this evidence base, we feel confident that our vision will lead to Nevada being recognized globally as a leader in education, with a teaching workforce that is committed to creating learner-centered and future-ready learning experiences, and prepared to face the changing future.

## **Current Nevada Context**

Nevada's teachers are committed, talented, and tenacious professionals. But our subcommittee recognizes that they face significant structural and systematic challenges. These barriers stifle them from doing their best work, and stand in the way of realizing our vision for a world-class teacher for every learner in Nevada. Unfortunately, the current reality is that not all Nevada teachers are being prepared, supported, and developed to meet the challenges associated with realizing the Nevada Portrait of a Learner.

Nevada currently faces an enormously challenging and persistent teacher shortage. The system needs to fill almost 3,000 positions statewide, and 2,000 in Clark County School District alone, and leads the nation in teacher shortages (Hernandez, 2022). Addressing this shortage requires a multifaceted approach that addresses not only teachers' working conditions, but also public perceptions of teaching, and affirms the common belief across Nevada that teaching is a worthwhile career.

Many of our teacher preparation programs are doing tremendous work to continuously improve. Several are studying the learning experiences needed to prepare future teachers for a changing education landscape, and self-assessing and redesigning their offerings and programs based on the results of that analysis. But too often, these innovations are isolated. They are not being systematically shared, studied, and brought to scale. More can be done to create networks for teacher preparation providers to learn from one another, and ultimately, to incentivize teacher preparation redesign.

Some teachers have access to high-quality professional learning experiences and professional working environments to continuously learn on the job, do their very best work, and adapt to the future. Many more teachers do not. Much more work can be done to improve quality, consistency, relevance, and future focus of teacher professional learning, as well as the amount of time available for that learning.

Even in school districts with schedules that permit substantial professional learning, teachers may not know how to use that time effectively. Strong school leadership is key for ensuring that teachers are set up for success in engaging in collaborative and/or self-directed professional learning. Unfortunately, Nevada's school leaders are not being systematically prepared or incentivized to realize that vision for lifelong learning and growth in teaching. Instead, too often our school leaders are asked to enforce rigid instructional mandates that stifle ongoing learning, innovation, and adaptation to enable our teachers and schools to be future-ready.

## ***Guiding Principles for Policy Recommendations***

As we discuss, align, and refine our policy recommendations, we want to consistently stress-test whether they meet the following guiding principles:

- 1. Create the Conditions to Attract New Teachers Across Nevada:**  
Our policy recommendations should reverse Nevada's persistent teacher shortage, and make teaching a highly sought-after career. Our policy recommendations should help to attract talent into the profession across the state, from rural areas to population hubs.
- 2. Provide Incentives, Guidance, and Supports, Not Mandates:**  
One of our key goals is for teachers to create equitable, inclusive, and accessible learning opportunities for all students. Meeting this goal will require that teachers be given considerably more resources, guidance, and learning opportunities. Our policy recommendations should not take the form of "one-size-fits-all" mandates that stifle innovation and prevent teachers from meeting the needs of diverse learners.
- 3. Remove Inconsistent or Restrictive Policies:**  
Our recommendations should identify and challenge existing policies that inhibit innovation and continuous learning and growth.
- 4. Provide High-Quality Lifelong Learning Experiences for Educators:**  
Ensure robust, high-quality professional learning and mentorship opportunities for educators, fostering collaboration and continuous professional growth.
- 5. Promote Collaboration Between Districts, the State, and Higher Education:**  
State incentives should encourage collaboration across higher education institutions, between higher education and school districts, and between districts and the state to create time, space, and conditions that support lifelong professional learning for educators.
- 6. Align Teacher Preparation to Changing Practices:**  
Provide incentives for teacher preparation programs that focus on practical experiences. Create networks for teacher preparation providers to share best practices with one another, collaborate, and collectively improve.
- 7. Develop, Recognize, and Reward Strong Teacher and School Leadership:**  
We believe that strong, committed school leaders are key to incentivizing teachers to do their best work. School Leaders need development and support just as teachers do. At the same time, we also believe that leadership in schools goes far beyond the principal. Experienced and talented teachers can and should exercise leadership - in developing and supporting their peers, advocating for their students, and taking responsibility for the growth of their school, district, and state.

## Policy Recommendations

### 1. Enhance Teacher Preparation Programs:

Nevada must ensure that teacher preparation programs align with the global standards of high-performing education systems. This includes extensive preparation in subject-specific pedagogy and structured practical experiences under well-trained mentors. Teacher candidates should learn how to diagnose student needs and apply research-based strategies effectively. Professors who teach aspiring teachers should be uniformly well-prepared and have ongoing professional learning opportunities that enable them to reflect on the changing nature of classroom practice.

We propose a four-stage approach to this recommendation, to build stronger understanding, broad-based support across teacher preparation providers, and build capacity while incentivizing change:

- a. *Learning*: Continue collaboration between state policymakers and leading preparation programs' deans to surface leading-edge practices across the state, consider ways to better align course requirements and practical experience with the current and future demands of teaching, and consider what more is needed to create the conditions necessary for all of Nevada's young people to fully develop the competencies articulated in the Portrait.
- b. *Networking and Sharing*: Create networks for innovation and practice sharing across preparation programs. Fund learning collaboratives where leading-edge programs can share their best practices and approaches with peers, pose problems of practice and receive feedback and support, and coach peer institutions to implement new practices.
- c. *Incentivizing and Piloting*: Provide incentive grants to support preparation program providers in piloting and refining new, future-ready designs for teacher preparation that:
  - i. Prepare students in subject-specific pedagogy, content, craft, and the changing demands of the career
  - ii. Embed action research throughout the course sequence to produce teachers who are adept in piloting and refining new techniques and learning for life
  - iii. Promote subject specialization, including for elementary teachers
  - iv. Ensure that school-based practicum is meaningfully embedded and scaffolded throughout preparation to produce candidates who are well-prepared for the realities of teaching in Nevada's public schools by:
    1. Increasing the number of hours of practical experience required across each of the 2-4 years

2. Considering universities are partnered with school districts and specific schools that are structured to offer quality learning experiences for candidates
        3. Improving process by which mentors of teachers-in-training are: (1) recruited, (2) selected, (3) trained, (4) incentivized, and (5) developed professionally to nurture young professionals
      - d. *Aligning*: Once lessons learned have been gathered from pilot programs and providers have had time to pilot, reflect, and build capacity, revise the teacher preparation accreditation regulations to align and systematize best practice across the state. Develop analogous accreditation for alternative pathways to ensure that mid-career changers and others have experiences that are comparable in quality if not duration.
2. **Expand Professional Learning for School Leaders:**
  - a. Invest in comprehensive professional development for school principals, ensuring they are prepared to lead schools that foster teacher growth, innovation, and collaborative learning.
    - i. Principals should be developed to share the Commission’s vision for high-performance education systems.
    - ii. They should develop the capacity to redesign schools as learner-centered higher-performance organizations, leverage data-driven decision-making, improve school culture, and create the conditions for teachers to continually improve their practice in service of student learning.
  - b. Create awards that recognize and reward school leaders who demonstrate exemplary practices in fostering teacher leadership, creating school environments that are conducive to learner-centered, future-ready practices, and embed the Nevada Portrait of a Learner into their school’s culture.
3. **Implement Structured Induction to Support New Teachers in the Profession:**
  - a. Require that mentors for induction programs are highly competent teachers selected by the district to instill in the next generation of teachers the kinds of skills, attitudes, values and knowledge they want in the people they hope to attract to teaching in their district.
  - b. Develop training and upskilling modules for induction program mentors and require them to participate in order to continually be selected as mentors.
  - c. Ensure that provisionally certified teachers have the time and space necessary to participate in induction programs.
4. **Cultivate Teacher Leadership and Provide Models and Incentives for Career Pathways**
  - a. Provide districts with funding, time, professional learning opportunities, and models for teacher leadership development.

- i. Showcase examples of how teacher leaders can grow new skills throughout their careers, drive continuous improvement through an explicit coaching/mentoring model, improve the structure and consistency of teacher induction.
    - ii. Spotlight schools and districts where robust teacher leadership structures have retained and developed staff in professional and rewarding work environments.
    - iii. Enlist the unions as allies in highlighting the power and potential of this approach.
  - b. Create models of career pathways structures that provide opportunities for teachers to advance professionally without leaving the classroom, incentivizing them to remain in the profession while developing new skills, and provide funding and guidance on how districts can implement these new approaches.
  - c. Ensure that the professional learning requirements for licensure renewal reflect skills and dispositions that will enable teachers to teach all students to be future-ready. These may include familiarity and skill with emerging technologies like generative AI, cultural competence, and a deep understanding of the durable skills embedded in the Nevada Portrait of a Learner.
- 5. **Create More Time in the School Day for Professional Collaboration, by Sharing Models of Innovative Uses of Time and Staffing that Can Create:**
  - a. Document the time allocated for teacher collaboration across Nevada districts.
  - b. Provide Incentives for districts to dedicate more time for collaborative professional learning.
  - c. Showcase examples of innovative uses of time and staffing.
- 6. **Support Teachers with Emerging Technologies:**
  - a. Provide training and resources that enable teachers to effectively integrate emerging technologies into their classrooms. This includes enhancing digital literacy and supporting teachers in using technology to meet diverse student needs.
  - b. Reduce the digital divide by ensuring equitable access to digital tools across all districts.
  - c. Invest in technology tools that can support teachers in doing their jobs well, while ensuring that teachers have access to the support they need to use those technologies effectively in their practice.

## *Outstanding Questions and Implementation Considerations*

1. How can we empower educators to innovate in the classroom while maintaining alignment with state and workforce priorities, such as those outlined in the Portrait of a Learner?
2. How can we balance the need for consistency in teacher preparation programs across institutions while also allowing for innovation and flexibility that meets the diverse needs of Nevada's schools?
3. How can Nevada ensure that all teachers have access to sufficient time for collaborative professional learning without negatively impacting classroom instruction time?
4. What role can technology play in supporting teacher development and student learning, and how can we ensure equitable access to these technologies across all districts?
5. How can Nevada better support teacher well-being, particularly in terms of mental health, and what impact would school-based mental health professionals have on improving teacher retention?
6. Collaboration between higher education institutions, school districts, and policymakers with the unions will be key. Engaging teacher unions and professional organizations will help secure buy-in for changes to professional learning requirements. How can we ensure our recommendations are done with teachers and in support of the profession, not "done to" them?
7. Investments in both teacher preparation programs and ongoing professional development will be necessary. Additionally, funding should support the implementation of structured induction programs and incentives for districts that promote teacher autonomy and collaborative learning time. What are the funding mechanisms available to us? Where can money be allocated or reallocated?
8. What existing policy is standing in the way of our vision?