

English Mastery Council Meeting Minutes

Thursday, September 24, 2020
9:00 AM

Call to Order; Roll Call; Pledge of Allegiance

Blakely Hume called the meeting of the English Mastery Council to order at 9:00 AM on Thursday, September 24, 2020 via Lifesize videoconference.

Mindy Montoya conducted a roll call. **Quorum was established** (seven members present).

Committee Members Present:

Nancy Brune
Lorna James-Cervantes
Laurel Crossman
Gladis Diaz
Sharolyn Pollard-Durodola
Karl Wilson (Jonathan Moore's designee)
Paula Zona

Committee Members Absent:

Bettye Haysbert
Antoinette Cavanaugh
Diana Cantu
Jonathan Moore

Others Present:

Blakely Hume
Sophia Masewicz
Mindy Montoya

Blakely Hume led the group in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comments #1

Mindy Montoya stated there were no public comments via email at the time.

Approval of Flexible Agenda

Motion: Approve Flexible Agenda
By: Laurel Crossman
Second: Nancy Brune
Vote: Passed unanimously

Approval of June 25, 2020 Minutes

Motion: Approve June 25, 2020 EMC Meeting Minutes
By: Lorna James-Cervantes
Second: Laurel Crossman
Vote: Passed unanimously

Approval of June 18, 2020 Minutes

Motion: Approve June 18, 2020 EP & AA Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
By: Karl Wilson
Second: Lorna James-Cervantes
Vote: Passed unanimously

Election of English Mastery Council Chair for FY 2020-2021

Motion: Elect Lorna James-Cervantes as EMC Chair
By: Sharolyn Pollard-Durodola
Second: Laurel Crossman
Vote: Passed unanimously

Review of EMC Responsibilities

Blakely Hume presented a PowerPoint presentation on the English Mastery Council Legislative Charges and stated Senate Bill 504 was passed by the 2013 Nevada Legislature requiring the creation of a statewide English Mastery Council (EMC) in order to improve the quality of English Language Learner (ELL) education in Nevada.

Mr. Hume described the four main areas of work of the EMC which include the following: (1) Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL); (2) District Policy and Criteria Planning; (3) Standards and Curriculum; and (4) English Proficiency and Academic Achievement.

Karl Wilson stated it was the decision of the English Mastery Council with their original charge in 2013 to establish the EMC with subcommittee responsibilities. He said the EMC recommended to the State Board that the WIDA English Language Development Standards be adopted by the state, and the work of the English Language Development Standards Framework was a companion recommendation from the EMC.

Mr. Wilson stated in terms of the District Policy and Criteria Planning work group, there was specific language formulating the action they had taken as an agency to require every district have a policy plan, which is an ongoing responsibility of the EMC and the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) to annually review.

Mr. Wilson stated the restructuring of work teams instead of formal subcommittees within the EMC meeting will allow them to not have additional subcommittee meetings, which they hope is acceptable to the members.

Mr. Wilson expressed his gratitude to Ms. Cervantes for accepting the nomination and election for EMC Chair. He said they have great confidence she will provide leadership and represent the EMC in terms of the work they're doing. He thanked Dr. Durodola for her service as Chair and said they can all be very proud of how Dr. Durodola has represented them as a group.

Nevada Department of Education Update

Blakely Hume stated Dr. Durodola and Mr. Wilson are scheduled to present at the State Board of Education on October 8, which will focus on the recommendations created last year, ELL identification details and a general summary of what the EMC had done last year and as it moves forward.

Mr. Hume stated since the pandemic, there has been many challenges as well as new opportunities, such as the ability to telecommute and provide video adaptation platforms at meetings. He said for today's meeting, they are using the Lifesize platform as well as Zoom, which will allow them to break out into their discussion groups. He said they anticipate continuing with this platform but will let them know if anything changes.

Karl Wilson stated he received a report at the end of August from Terry Hendry, Chief Information Officer at NDE, COVID-19 Taskforce. He said it shows school districts have reopened under different models with some doing 100% face-to-face while some doing distance learning or a hybrid that includes some distance learning and some face-to-face.

Nevada Department of Education Update (continued)

Mr. Wilson stated from the data shared as of August 25, 80% of the students in Nevada had access to a one-on-one device to assist them if they're in a distance learning mode and 92% of the students had access to connectivity. He said there were ongoing efforts to ensure additional opportunities for Wi-Fi access, especially where high-quality internet is limited. He said some of the other agencies have been working to secure additional supports for that, including work with congress and the FCC regulations to encourage Wi-Fi providers to expand their services and the state library system to provide additional Wi-Fi hotspots in those areas that are needed across the state.

Mr. Wilson stated they have seen a number of school districts using funds from the CARES Act to provide additional Wi-Fi hotspots to allow students to engage more consistently with their teachers if they're in a distance learning model. He said as of the end of August, there were still some pockets that looked like there were significant progress across the state in ensuring students would have access if their educational experience was exclusively through a distance learning model. He said the information is not related solely to English learners but to all students across the state. He said they know that English learners are a part of that need in terms of technology and connectivity.

Mr. Wilson asked Ms. Montoya to pull up the Nevada Department of Education website and shared resources available related to COVID-19 to assist educators, which include guidance documents, policy statements, district reopening plans, educator license updates online as well as links to other resources.

Mr. Wilson asked Ms. Montoya to navigate to the Resources Related to COVID-19 site and described the resources available under Emergency Declaration, U.S. Department of Education Guidance and Nevada Department of Education Guidance. He asked Ms. Montoya to navigate to Programs, English Language Learners and explained where the COVID-19 EL guidance and resources are available.

Laurel Crossman asked is the Department of Education's website able to be translated if a parent was to come to the site and select a different language on their internet browser or are the resources available in additional languages. Mr. Wilson stated he does not believe that capacity current exists, however, they have been directed by their Superintendent to work at providing translations for documents, but that is a work in progress.

Nancy Brune stated it is a great website that she did not know existed and thanked Mr. Wilson for informing them about it. She said she will make sure to share it out.

Mr. Wilson concluded that some of the resources they have listed are resources that other states have gathered and NDE appreciates their willingness to share to make available to educators and Nevada's families.

Chair Cervantes thanked Mr. Wilson and Mr. Hume for sharing the information. She said it is nice to take a look at the websites from time-to-time to see how it's been updated and what other resources are available to school districts, families and educators across the State of Nevada.

Chair Cervantes stated as for the report about student connectivity and being able to access education in a distance setting, that has been a priority in Clark County since they're in full distance learning and it's been really timely work for their students. She said one thing they have noted is connectivity and having one-to-one devices impacted students who are ELs or in the lowest 25th percentile the most because very often those students may also be in a poverty situation or living in a neighborhood with limited capacity for internet or Wi-Fi. She said those are some of the struggles that they have worked on as a district.

Chair Cervantes asked if there were any questions, concerns or comments regarding the report from NDE.

Mr. Hume stated NDE has created a digital collaborative from the Office of Standards and Instructional Support (SIS) to provide supports for effective distance learning practices to educators and families throughout Nevada. He said they have entered into a two-year partnership with Discovery Education Experience and Instructure Educational Software that includes Canvas, a Learning Management System, which will provide flexible K-12 platform options.

Nevada Department of Education Update (continued)

Mr. Hume stated Canvas allows schools to build digital learning environments on their own, simplifying teaching and providing elevated learning opportunities. He said the SIS team meet weekly on digital learning and are having their first digital collaborative this Saturday with currently 500 registered participants. He said there will be more opportunities in terms of what the Digital Collaborative will do for Nevada and how they move forward.

Mr. Wilson provided more information on the Digital Collaborative Symposium and said if members are interested, they would send a link to register.

Dr. Durodola thanked them for sharing the information. She asked who the collaborators are with this organization.

Mr. Wilson stated the Nevada Digital Learning Collaborative first instituted within NDE under the SIS division. He said they've been working to enlist the expertise of local educators, focusing on primarily pre-K through grade 12. He said people who apply go through a review process and if they have the experience with recommendations from fellow educators as being effective in using distance learning, they are then identified as a Digital Engineer to assist with the project. He said the original goal was to enlist 100 educators; however, the original screening resulted in about 65 with a subsequent opportunity for others to apply.

Dr. Durodola asked if any of those applicant specialists have backgrounds in teaching English language learners because they would be ideal participants and collaborators.

Mr. Wilson stated in the initial review of the applications, they were looking for educators that would bring specific expertise in serving English learners or students with disabilities in diverse populations. He said they need to have the lens of who are the students they serve and what accommodations or modifications ought to be made in the design to ensure that they're meeting the needs of those students.

Chair Cervantes thanked Mr. Wilson and Mr. Hume for the information and asked if there was interest from the English Mastery Council to have the link for the symposium shared. Several of the members indicated they were interested. Ms. Crossman stated she would like to forward the link to her district. Chair Cervantes asked to have the link shared with the entire group.

Nevada Department of Education Update: EL Impact from COVID-19

Karl Wilson stated there are two things he would like to share and request insights from the English Mastery Council. He said the first issue is related to the process of identifying English learners, which was discussed in June. He said because Nevada uses the WIDA screener, which is the tool for measuring English language proficiency for students that are identified as potential English learners through the Home Language Survey, the WIDA screener must be administered face-to-face and cannot be done through distance or digital experience. He said that has made it a challenge for the State of Nevada and more than 30 other states across the country to conduct the screening process to determine eligibility as English learners.

Mr. Wilson stated as shared in June, Nevada has implemented a provisional identification process which has local education agencies look at the results of the Home Language Survey. He said if the family indicated the student's first language was other than English or there's a language other than English spoken in the home, then they should be administered the WIDA screener. He said because that is not possible in some cases since districts such as Clark County reopened the year with 100% distance learning, they don't have students in the school to administer the assessment. He said they have asked districts and charter schools to identify all students who may be English learners through the Home Language Survey as provisional until they can be administered the WIDA screener. He said the responsibility of local education agencies is to identify the potential English learner, ensure they have access to supports and then track those students when they participate in the WIDA screener and a determination is made. He said for school districts that are still in distance learning, they have encouraged them to reach out to families and invite them to bring their child or children to the school to be administered the WIDA screener using the social distancing criteria that are established. He said Clark County has more than 7,000 students who needs to be screened.

Nevada Department of Education Update: EL Impact from COVID-19 (continued)

Mr. Wilson stated they have already invited in and conducted the screener for more than 4,000 students, but they still have more than 3,000 left to do. He said that's an example of how that process is working. He asked if the members had any questions regarding that practice in the State of Nevada, and there was none.

Mr. Wilson stated he would like to get feedback on an issue. He said October 1 is a critical day in validating official counts in schools across the state. He said the concern is, as legislature is moving toward the pupil-centered funding model, what will happen if in 2021-22 and beyond, they tie funding to the October 1 count of 2020. He said they know there are different points in time for gathering official data, but October 1 is really important for many purposes. He said their dilemma is what could NDE do in relationship to the possibility they will have an undercount of English learners on October 1 because they have so many pending students to be screened to determine if they are English learners.

Gladis Diaz stated Washoe County's elementary schools is in person, but they are operating with only half of their students and it's not 100%. She said out of those students, they have students who are continuously changing from in person to distance learning and vice versa. She said it creates a lot of challenges to try to track their students that they do need to assess. She said her staff is working really hard to try to communicate with parents the importance. She said it is very difficult to get the parents that are doing distance learning to come in because they don't want to expose their children which is a huge concern. She said she knows that her school is not the only school with this scenario.

Mr. Wilson thanked Ms. Diaz and stated they have heard from a number of school districts with a similar concern. He said parents are concerned with their safety and are choosing to not participate in that process at this point in time.

Chair Cervantes stated Clark County is experiencing the same thing with parents concerned with their safety. She said they're making sure they document every attempt to bring parents and students in so that children can be tested. She asked Mr. Wilson could they look at the number or percentage of pending assessments and say although they were not able to complete those assessments, they know that on average this number of students generally would qualify for EL services.

Mr. Wilson stated they don't have the data in terms of what percent of students are administered the WIDA screener actually are identified as English learners. He said the majority of students identified through the Home Language Survey when administered the WIDA screener are actually identified as ELs, but they don't have precise data on that. He said they asked WIDA if they could provide the State of Nevada that data last year, and they were not able to provide it in terms of the ones administered the screener and what was the actual percent that were identified EL. He said it would take a different methodology to find that information.

Dr. Durodola asked what the correlation is between the Home Language Survey data and the WIDA data and how flexible is the October 1st date. She said WIDA has the resources to be able to provide the information, which includes historical data with historical patterns of averages across the years. She said those averages may shift upward or downward trend by a little bit, but you have a starting point there. She asked how flexible is the state in terms of the October 1st date because it may mean it needs more time to have a plan to produce an outcome that's justifiable.

Ms. Crossman stated she wanted to echo Dr. Durodola's question about the flexibility of the state with the October 1st date. She said if that's the date they're going off of for funding, one of the concerns she has is their enrollment has significantly decreased, and a lot of students have chosen to homeschool this year. She said she believes they will be coming back next year, but they also have a high number of kindergarten and first grade students who she believes have just not enrolled. She said a lot of kindergarten parents have taken a gap year and waiting to start them. She said if this year's October 1st is the new funding formula date for determining how many ELs are in a district, she fears it is not reliable at all because in the very next year, they could have a significant increase number of students returning to public schools, and they could have a very large kindergarten/first grade class next year across the state. She said she would urge NDE to recommend funding this to be very flexible, considering this year is an anomaly.

Nevada Department of Education Update: EL Impact from COVID-19 (continued)

Chair Cervantes stated she wanted to echo what Ms. Crossman said about the October 1st date and the concerns with under-enrollment of their schools this year. She said they were at a minimum of 10,000 below what they expected to see and well below the expected enrollment for this year. She said in Clark County, a large number of those missing students are in kindergarten and first grade as well. She said they have information from families saying when they return to full in-person learning, they will re-enroll their children in their school, but right now, they're not because they don't think this is the best model of learning for their children or they are working and don't have the ability to sit next to their children and make sure they are getting what they need during distance learning while they're doing their work or because they have to be at work in-person. She recommended either not using this October 1 count for the new funding formula and using a count later in the year or taking three-year averages for the past three years, not including this year, with a standard deviation consideration for increased enrollment with population increases or decreases across the state. She said it would be a very difficult situation for districts across the entire state next year if they use only this year's data to decide on what funding should be for the State of Nevada next year.

Ms. Zona stated she had the same question Dr. Durodola had about having flexibility on the October 1 date. She asked could there be a secondary date to see how many more children they could capture over the next few months, even if it were the 1st of January just to give them another quarter. She said she loved Chair Cervantes' idea about getting an average over the past years that have been more normal for them. She said it would behoove everyone in the state if they could look at something like that.

Mr. Wilson stated thoughts and concerns are going to be very helpful as they communicate with their colleagues as advocates for English learners and for programs that serve English learners. He said there needs to be serious consideration around the data if those counts are going to be used for funding purposes in the future. He said they will make sure they pull those thoughts together and take a look at making recommendations to leadership.

Mr. Wilson transitioned to a similar but different issue related to English learners. He said one of the things they have been concerned about over the last couple of years is the official EL count in Nevada has been dropping. He said it appeared to peak in 2017-18 at 81,655 ELs for 16.8% of their student population and in 2018-19, the count went down almost 10% to 73,000. He said this past year, it went down again to just over 70,000, so there was a drop of about 11,000 over the last couple of years. He said they have some thoughts on why that might be, but they don't have hard data. He said one of the factors that came up in conversations with Clark and Washoe where they've seen some of the largest decreases is it appears there are fewer families self-identifying through the Home Language Survey. He said there is no "why" behind that but they can conjecture it's partly because of the political tone in the country. He said both Clark and Washoe have seen significant drops in the number of refugee students within their districts. He asked what might be contributing to the drop in ELs and are there families with children that would qualify but are not being identified and if so, why.

Dr. Durodola stated from conversations at UNLV from some parents who are also staff, faculty, and students, whose children are English learners, they prefer to be emerged in the mainstream general education setting without being labelled an English Language Learner (ELL). She said the climate they live in does not welcome those who are speakers of another language in the home. She said there are probably multiple factors, but she wonders if there are national trends like that or if this is just Nevada-specific. She said she is not surprised by the phenomena.

Ms. Zona stated in talking with some families, just by needing to survive, they've had to move to live with other members of their family out of state to make ends meet. She said the majority are moving to California to live with their parents and have multi-generations together in one home.

Dr. Brune stated from a report in the Las Vegas Review Journal, Clark County estimated to have lost 10,000 students. She said they know some of them have likely moved over to charters and private schools. She said Washoe County made the same presentation this week at their Board meeting and indicated they've lost 2,000 to 3,000 this year.

Nevada Department of Education Update: EL Impact from COVID-19 (continued)

Dr. Brune asked if there was data on the number of ELL students that have moved into private schools, charters, or decided to be homeschooled.

Mr. Wilson stated one of the things they did look at in terms of the overall count is enrollment in charter schools but not private schools or homeschool settings. He said that could be a factor in terms of are they seeing families with children who qualify as English learners choosing to move to either a private school or homeschool setting. He said that is data they currently do not have. He said the overall EL count for charter schools has been going up the last few years as enrollment in charter schools has been going up, but they don't know if it's commensurate with the same number or percent that may have been attending a particular district that have made the choice to go charter.

Chair Cervantes asked Mr. Wilson if the number he has been pulling for the EL counts include former ELs that have been exited from services. Mr. Wilson answered no and stated the counts currently identify eligible ELs. He said once they reach English proficiency and are exited, they continue to monitor them and track them for four years, but they are not included in the current EL count, which is EL actual at that point in time.

Chair Cervantes asked if they've looked at the number of students exiting EL services because they have acquired the goal set for their language acquisition and is it parallel to the decreased numbers they're seeing. Mr. Wilson stated that was one of the hypotheses he went with, so maybe they're exiting more students to qualifying exiting criteria, but he does not believe it's significant. He said the percentage each year of Nevada's English learners that are exiting is holding at about 12-15% each year, and that's been consistent for about five years. He said it's still in that range, which is pretty typical of students across the nation if they are given the supports that they need.

Chair Cervantes asked if anyone had any thoughts or questions for Mr. Wilson, and Dr. Durodola asked were there negative or positive ramifications for the state. Mr. Wilson stated they might have students who are eligible for EL services that are not getting the supports they need. He said the next part is the funding implications, which typically has been based on the local education agency's share of ELs in the state. He said although legislature has not said they are going to give x-number of dollars per EL, they've said here is x-number of dollars, please divide it equitably across the state based on how many ELs are in each of the school districts and charter schools. He said if Clark County's went down 9,000 students, it's very likely their share of the resources would be reduced more than a certain percentage because that's a larger drop than other LEAs. He said another potential ramification would be one they haven't yet seen, which is the new funding mechanisms with the student-centered funding formula. He said it might move away from the funding for Zoom to certain schools to funding for all schools based on their count of English learners.

Chair Cervantes said three or four years ago, they went to an all online registration system for their families in Clark County, and she wondered if that's had an impact on parents really understanding the need to fill out the Home Language Survey or missing that component of it. She wondered if that's a factor they should consider as a district and getting some kind of assistance from NDE to help parents get that message. She said she gets calls all the time from parents who are struggling with the online registration. She said the calls she receives are mostly from parents from underserved schools that generally serve more ELs or low-income families. She wondered if that's had an impact on the identification of ELs.

Mr. Wilson thanked Chair Cervantes for sharing her insight from the role of a district administrator working with multiple schools. He said that's one they've heard from other people saying could it be that they have parents not self-identifying because they're struggling with the Home Language Survey process itself. He said it is worth definitely looking into also. He said if families aren't identifying their child or children as potential ELs because of the Home Language Survey process, then the majority of those students aren't going to be screened. He said he appreciates very much their input on these two really important issues as they're trying to make sure that ELs are identified appropriately and their school systems are designing supports to help them be successful as they develop English language and access the core academic curriculum in ways that will help them be successful academically.

Nevada Department of Education Update: EL Impact from COVID-19 (continued)

Dr. Durodola thanked Mr. Wilson and stated she appreciates the state taking the time to consider the complexity of that issue because it shows the state cares and not just looking at numbers and reporting out increases and decreases but really trying to understand the ramifications, especially as it impacts unmet academic needs. She thanked the state for that level of concern.

Chair Cervantes thanked Mr. Wilson and the members for giving insight into those questions for Mr. Wilson.

Zoom Breakout Procedures

Chair Cervantes briefly explained the new meeting structure and stated Mr. Hume would further explain the procedures in detail.

Mr. Hume stated they are one of the largest councils in Nevada with 16 members. He said they have met 86 times out of six years where most councils meet four times a year or have some annual requirement that can vary between eight to 12 members. He said it was decided at the first meeting they moved to subcommittees which would abide by Open Meeting Law (OML) similar to the full EMC. He said they felt a need to make sure every meeting followed that structure so the work can get done, and over the past six and a half years, a lot of that work has been done; however, there's been no structure put in place. He said they are now getting to a period where some of the work is slowing down and there's now a firm base in terms of the EMC. He said the Council under AB92 is due to sunset in June 30, 2022, and between now and then, given they are now doing videoconferencing, he asked if the Council was agreeable to combining the meetings using a video platform with breakout rooms. He said rather than having 12 to 14 meetings a year, the goal would be to have four annual meetings and breakout into what was formerly their subcommittee groups during each of those meetings for 30 to 45 minutes and then come back to the full EMC to report what was discussed. He said the benefit of breakout rooms is they no longer are obligated to OML and are not required to meet quorum. He said if there were only one person on that former subcommittee present, they can now move to the EMC and report on what was stated rather than having to wait until the next time they have quorum to be established. He said if they have four meetings a year, that might be more easily achieved in terms of quorum as it's less time-burden on people's schedules and the duration of the meeting would only be slightly longer than the regular EMC meetings.

Mr. Hume went through the procedures and logistics of the breakout sessions using the Zoom platform and instructed them to keep their Lifesize meeting open since they are livestreaming. He said while they're in their breakout sessions, he would put a screen up stating they would be back at a certain time. He said there would be an NDE representative in each of the breakout rooms and because they are no longer considered a subcommittee group and are not under OML law, no voting or decisions can be made during the work group. He said voting can be made upon returning to the full EMC meeting.

Mr. Wilson asked if that would be acceptable if they talked through things and developed recommendations to bring back to the full English Mastery Council. Mr. Hume answered that it would be acceptable and clarified that if a work group had a difference in opinion, that would be fine. He said they could still come back to the full EMC and report on what they'd discuss.

Mr. Hume stated he was just notified the Digital Collaborative Symposium had been closed, but they have reopened it until 1:00 p.m. today. He said his goal is to get them out by 12:00 which would give them an hour to register.

Mr. Hume provided further instructions on how to proceed with joining the work group via the Zoom platform link that was previously sent.

Zoom Work Group Breakout Discussion

The meeting was paused at 11:10 a.m. while EMC members joined their Zoom work groups to discuss their goals for the year. Chair Cervantes reconvened the meeting at 11:43 p.m. after a three-minute break.

Update on EMC Work Group Progress

Chair Cervantes confirmed all members were present and stated she appreciates the work that everyone did during their small breakout groups. She asked the spokesperson from each work group shares out the work that was discussed and/or next steps.

TESL Work Group:

Mr. Hume stated the TESL Subcommittee was chaired by Dr. Diane Barone who retired this last year. He said they had several discussions over the last year about the next procedure and one of the ideas that was brought up was an evaluation process on the ELAD endorsement. He said he worked with Mr. Wilson on the ELAD regulatory proceedings, processes and procedures with the Licensure department and the last update they received was it was moving through the regulatory process and there was a work group.

Mr. Hume said Dr. Barone had wondered if there was a need for an evaluation procedure to see the effectiveness of the ELAD endorsement in the school districts with teachers who graduated from UNLV or UNR and compare them to teachers who are not coming out of UNLV or UNR. He said Dr. Barone's thought was that UNR was already doing this with their teachers, so questions emerged that asked could this be something that the institution would do, is this something a partnership between UNLV and UNR would want, is this something that would be a limited partnership with the Department of Education and who would own it.

Mr. Hume stated some of the questions that came up were, what would that look like, where would the research lie, who would need to be contacted, and who would be owning the evaluation procedure. He said if this were to move forward, this year would be a logistics year to set everything up and then next year, they would start the evaluation process, which would be looking at teachers in a 3 to 5-year process. He asked given the shortfall, time constraints, and face-to-face infeasibility from this year, is this something that should be a priority and if not, could something in its place be done to determine how ELs are functioning and are they getting their needs met in the State of Nevada. He said the ELAD endorsement is already moving through the regulatory process and there is no fear of it going away based on evaluation as it moves forward through legislation.

Mr. Hume asked Dr. Brune if he captured everything they had discussed, and she stated he did. Dr. Brune asked given they only have their charge until 2022 and most evaluations take three to five years, who would own this after the EMC no longer exists unless UNR is willing to do it as part of their ongoing evaluation work for their teachers. She said usually evaluations are very expensive and there are foundations that support evaluations, but that would require someone to put together a proposal.

Dr. Durodola said evaluations serve to see how well something is working and provide an opportunity for making changes. She said if they're using a design-based experiment, before they get to the place where they say they're done, they need to look at what they're doing and ask what's working, what's not working, tweak it so that the practices are more feasible, then they implement it again and ask those questions until they're satisfied. She said if there is no evaluation of what they're doing, then they never have the opportunity to have conversations about what needs to be modified and which part of this process is not working the way they had anticipated it would. She said the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA) will be putting out a call this fall for the National Professional Development (NPD) grants. She said those grants look at effectiveness of PD model approaches. She said they can say what they're doing is a PD model to improve instruction statewide, and if there were interested entities, this could be a funding stream to do this type of work.

Mr. Hume stated he and Dr. Brune had come up with a timeline, process and procedure, but he thinks Dr. Durodola's points are well-taken and gives him a platform to move forward on. He said given this year as a logistics year, if this is something that needs to move forward, determining the rightful owner of the evaluation would be an initial first step. Dr. Brune asked Dr. Durodola who would submit that proposal. Dr. Durodola stated there has to be an entity which could be a university, but the expectation is there are collaborations. She said they are collaborating with NDE in a grant they have now.

Update on EMC Work Group Progress (continued)

TESL Work Group (continued):

Dr. Durodola stated there are some degrees of freedom for how that rolls out, but it involves a large body of money and is a 5-year study. She said the purpose is to understand nationwide what works and does not work in preparing their teachers to provide a high-quality education for ELs. She said there would be some degrees of freedom in terms of who wants to take the PI role, but the expectation is it's collaborative in nature. She said she is working on another one where they're collaborating across ten universities, and there's one person who took the lead on it, but they all did the work in separate states.

Chair Cervantes thanked Dr. Durodola and asked were there specific asks of the TESL subcommittee that they would like the full English Mastery Council to consider or are they at a place right now where they want to move back within their small groups at the next meeting to continue to their work.

Mr. Hume said he's not on the committee, but the desire would be to know what are the dialogs that need to take place and to whom should they have these conversations with to determine if this is something that's required and needs to move forward. He said he wouldn't want December to come around and have another meeting where they have to discuss whether this would be the case.

Chair Cervantes thanked Mr. Hume and opened the floor to discussion for the group as a whole. She asked is there a belief by the EMC that they should recommend the TESL work group move forward with looking into an evaluation process for the effectiveness of the ELAD endorsement on teacher practices in the State of Nevada.

Dr. Brune stated in theory, she's all for doing an evaluation, but she worries who will own this and where is the money coming from. She said Dr. Durodola suggested there might be an opportunity, but she does not know what's the next step. She asked Dr. Durodola to let them know when the call for the proposal comes out, so folks can huddle informally to see if there's a potential with Dr. Durodola's help since she's done this successfully. She said they can put together a team that falls outside of the traditional committees or work groups, then divide and conquer to figure out how to pull the proposal all together. She said she's not the right person to ask UNR whether they could potentially conduct an evaluation with their own team without charging them, but she thinks Dr. Durodola is the best one at UNLV to do that. She said she knows there's an evaluation group at UNLV, but she doesn't know if this is something they would do. She said she was telling Mr. Hume it would be a good dissertation project for someone, but there are a lot of unknowns for her to say let's endorse this because the money is a huge issue. She said in the absence of identifying certain sources of funding, she does not know how they would move forward.

Dr. Durodola said there are several ways they can operationalize the word evaluation because there are costs and time issues involved before the Council has to figure out what comes next. She said the first option is doing informal evaluations where stakeholders come together to discuss what's working and what's not working. She said one of the big issues that have come up in the field is how do they make the practicum work for in-service teachers who want to be certified with the ELAD endorsement. She said the second option is a formal evaluation which can be very expensive. She said the third option is utilizing grant funds. She said the window of opportunity is small, and people who are going to apply for the NPD are already talking right now with strategies of what to do. She said the idea is collaboration, which could be with an outside evaluator from Harvard or any other institution. She said they could utilize the networks already in existence within NDE and then the next steps would be to brainstorm what are the different ways they can operationalize evaluations and then figure out which of those they might want to move forward on. She said they don't want to pass up on the opportunity, even if it's just one year, looking at some follow-up discussions with opportunities to make some changes in ways of practices at universities.

Mr. Wilson asked are those practices already in place within Nevada's System of Higher Education where there is a review process that the colleges go through and it wouldn't take the EMC developing something new.

Update on EMC Work Group Progress (continued)

TESL Work Group (continued):

Dr. Durodola stated they have an assessment process within the University of Nevada they just finished within their English Language program where they have TESOL goals. She said they have to evaluate how their courses and student outcomes are meeting those goals and the evaluations can be in-house and external. She said in-house means creating their own evaluative framework and she knows UNR has one. She said she's talked with her colleagues in the ELL program about how they're going to look at data they can collect. She said maybe the EMC can make recommendations and present them with the dimensions they might want to evaluate within their university to see if students are producing the outcomes they would hope to see.

Dr. Durodola said when she and Mr. Hume had conversations with the Dean from UNR, he said what is missing are quality indicators to determine the quality of the practice that they are putting in place around these ELAD courses so they understand are students producing the outcomes they want to see. She said it could be the EMC makes recommendations for internal evaluations and studies using qualitative/quantitative data to understand if they're meeting the needs of students and accomplishing the original goals of the ELAD endorsement. She said looking at the university within their own system would be a great starting point. She said the only obstacle she foresees is the internal evaluations are all dependent upon resources, and resources at UNLV and UNR may be different than other places. She said if the EMC can come up with some recommendations for how they should do this inter-look within their own university settings, that would be helpful.

Chair Cervantes said what she's hearing is maybe they do a recommendation from the TESL subcommittee group along the lines of how they evaluate the ELAD endorsement effectiveness on teacher practices and think about a list of qualitative outcomes they could look for in teacher practices and then make a recommendation to the NSHE institutions that they use those quality indicators to self-assess the outcomes of their own programs in their school. She said maybe in their December meeting, the committee could start thinking about what quality indicators they would like to see in teachers who have been through a quality, teacher-preparation course.

Mr. Hume said just as a reminder, since there are no longer subcommittees, there is freedom to exchange and share emails, feedback, thoughts and ideas without having to worry about breaking quorum. He said emails can be exchanged regarding a qualitative list and brought back in December, or if someone was going to contact an NSHE representative. He said they don't have the same meeting structure anymore, so they can have a little more freedom in their communications.

Chair Cervantes stated if there's nothing else, then she asked for a commitment on the part of individuals within the work group to start working on the list and others on the Council to provide Dr. Brune with some of the qualities they would like to see in teachers who are coming out of their university system that will prepare them to meet the needs of ELs in their classrooms.

Dr. Durodola stated it would be a powerful way to move forward because several states now have moved towards mandating TESOL/ELL certifications. She said there are publications now about how people are trying to evaluate these kinds of programs. She said she can make a commitment from her end with the team at UNLV. She said they've already started trying to figure how they measure quality, so they don't mind making a contribution in terms of what those indicators might be. She said whether they're on a school board, a parent, or a teacher, they all have some expectations for what they would hope to see in the field. She said from these different vantage points, they are all stakeholders that have some expectations for what they want to see, so she thinks they are all in a unique position to make a contribution around this conversation.

Chair Cervantes thanked Dr. Durodola for the recommendation and asked members to commit to thinking about what quality indicators they would like to see coming out of a quality institution ready to meet the needs of students in their classrooms. She said if they can come back with those lists or send them ahead to Mr. Hume or Dr. Brune, so they have the list for their discussion in the next small group work session, they would appreciate that.

District Policy and Criteria Planning Work Group:

Laurel Crossman stated they discussed a review of what they did last year, which was that the EMC approved five recommendations to take to the State Board of Education at the October 8th meeting. She said they are going to provide support from data provided by the districts. She said they reviewed data in 2018, so where they noted under or over-identification of ELs in GATE and SPED may have been updated and changed as districts have made adjustments. She said they are also going to look at best practices for assessments as well as at the National Association for Gifted Children as a resource and the need for bi-lingual psychologists within the state to help with the identification and assessment of students. She said when they met in February, they started reviewing the new statutory charge to make recommendations for students in the lowest 25th percentile of ELA proficiency. She said at that time, Ms. Zona and Ms. Diaz were both elementary school principals, so they did not feel there was a need for a district policy on those students because there's already the Read by Grade 3 legislation and every student in K-6 is required to have an Individual Language Plan. She said they wanted to examine some of the additional supports for students in the lowest 25th percentile and look at what systems of support are in place for students in grades 7-12 since they do not have the Read by Grade 3 legislation.

Ms. Crossman stated they plan on working on the statutory obligation charge in the fall, which is to annually review the district's ELL policies and plans. She said they completed a review last year and sent back recommendations to the individual districts. She said in their breakout session, they discussed if it was timely and appropriate to ask the school districts to give them more updated information on their EL plans and policies this year. She said in each of their districts, she thinks staff is holding on by the tips of their fingernails. She said challenges they've experienced in the north are the multiple educational platforms they're working with during full remote or hybrid and the smoke closures with the hazardous air quality. She said one of the thoughts of the work group was delaying the review of the EL policies and plans for this year since they just completed a review, and they know all of the districts updated their District policies to match the new guidelines that were approved by the Department of Education.

Ms. Crossman stated they had a good discussion about the different educational platforms districts are using and would like to review how these platforms are serving EL students and students in the lowest quartile of proficiency. She said they noted a large percentage of students that selected the full remote option are of the different subpopulations which include a lot of EL students, so getting families to come in have been difficult. She said Ms. Zona noted 29% of the students at her elementary school have chosen the full remote and it includes a lot of the subpopulations, such as EL learners, McKinney-Vento students and Special Education students. She said those are the students that need the services they can provide the few days that they are in school if they're doing a hybrid.

Ms. Crossman said they also noted students are marking themselves as attended, but they're not completing the assignments or turning them in. She said she has a 5th grader this year, and she had to learn Google Classroom and how to work it, so one of the concerns she has is his to-do list for his remote days. She wondered if there's a way in Google Classroom it can be translated for parents who aren't fluent in reading English because the assignments are given in Google Classroom and that can be an extra challenge.

Ms. Crossman asked if the 20% of the students within the state who are identified as having no access to a device for remote learning have any correlation between those students who don't have a device and those who are in the lower quartile of proficiency. She said teachers, parents and kids are all concerned about SBAC testing this year. She said teachers are worried about getting kids caught up with their learning gap after last year's shutdown and having a very long summer. She said at their last school board meeting, they were told NDE and the federal government had not yet issued waivers for those required testing and that is a concern that teachers are feeling which also relates to their teacher evaluation.

Ms. Crossman asked Ms. Zona and Ms. Diaz if she missed anything, and Ms. Zona said she provided a good summary of their discussion. Ms. Diaz stated she did a nice job expressing their concerns and where they are right now with their EL students.

Update on EMC Work Group Progress (continued)

District Policy and Criteria Planning Work Group (continued):

Ms. Diaz stated she has 150 students currently in distance learning and in Washoe County, elementary is in person, so families do have that option. She said almost every elementary school principal has about half the population at school and half in distance learning. She said they're seeing most students that need the most supports academically or with language are distance learners.

Chair Cervantes thanked the District Policy and Criteria Planning work group for their update. She said there is one action item the full Council can consider and that was the request by the committee to delay the review of district plans this year until next year. She said she would open that up to the floor first to see if there are any concerns with them giving districts a waiver this year with everything that is going on.

Mr. Wilson stated statute says one of the responsibilities of the EMC is to review that policy annually. He said if the EMC were to request an exemption, that may take a legal interpretation of that requirement. He said there is rationale behind the recommendation and one of the things the work group might consider is wait until the spring to do the review if things improve and districts are more on track. Mr. Hume said the annual review also could take place at the end of the year, so the Council could request changes by May of 2021, which gives districts a little more time.

Mr. Wilson said the law is not specific in terms of what the annual review would entail. He said the work group might consider a scope of that annual review to look at specific pieces instead of the whole plan since there was a recent review of the whole plan. He said if there have been some areas of LEA/EL policies that have been of concern, the annual review could say they want to look specifically at those areas, such as over and under-representation. He said there may be some latitude for an annual review to be conducted but have a slightly different look and feel about it.

Ms. Zona asked would all 17 counties have to be looked at with the same guidelines or could they look at the plans again based on what their recommendations were for each county from when they submitted last year to see if they've incorporated the changes in the specific area. Mr. Wilson said the work group could propose a scope that would be brought back to the full EMC for review and consideration.

Ms. Crossman asked Mr. Hume has the feedback been given to the districts, and Mr. Hume responded that some of the feedback had not been given to the districts due to COVID. He said within the next month, feedback can be provided to all the districts which will give the work group until late spring the opportunity to review what's been implemented in terms of Mr. Wilson's suggestion with the scope of work. He said he can do some further research on that. Ms. Crossman said she would be in favor of limiting the scope of what they review and pushing it back well past January. She said it's important work that they need to do, but she really feels the districts and staff are so stretched thin she doesn't want to burden them at this time.

Mr. Hume suggested giving the districts the year to update the sections that need updating and then doing a review as a work group in April or right before the last EMC meeting. He said that would provide them the opportunity to put those plans in place until next year when there can be a full review of all the districts to make sure they're in compliance.

Chair Cervantes asked if there was a motion to bring to the floor from the committee or would they like to go back to their work group and do that. She said it sounds like they have a plan or an idea they can bring forward in a motion.

Ms. Crossman said she's not sure if they need a motion because it's part of what they are doing. She said they were originally saying let's not do it this year, but they've shifted to do a focused review. She asked if they needed a motion to delay it. She said it would be part of their work group and their plan going forward.

Chair Cervantes stated she saw Mr. Hume shake his head indicating they didn't need a motion, so she is fine with that. She said it would be acceptable if they want to make that the work of the work group going forward.

Update on EMC Work Group Progress (continued)

District Policy and Criteria Planning Work Group (continued):

Chair Cervantes stated NDE can make sure the school districts receive the feedback that was provided by the work group last year, then they can do a review of that work by late spring and bring it back to the EMC at the end of the year to report where they are.

Chair Cervantes stated they had a couple of other good action steps to bring forward. She said there's a way for parents to translate messages through the teacher, so she thinks there may be the reverse and suggested reaching out to their tech people or EL department for assistance. She said they had a teacher who videotaped how to translate their messages for their teachers in Google Classroom, so they should have the opposite capability as well.

Ms. Crossman said their district adopted the Parent Square notification which is another platform similar to Class Dojo where they can communicate with parents by having a parent direct message a teacher in their language and it will translate it into the teacher's language. Chair Cervantes said she had not heard of that, but it is a great tool to know about, and she will take that information back to her district. She said it is great to learn from one another. Ms. Diaz said she just checked that there is a way to translate conversations for families in Google Classroom and suggested they check with their IT.

Ms. Crossman said her remote days as a parent is hard to do, and she keeps thinking as she's struggling to keep her son focused, kids who have parents who are working during their remote days or kids who are at home supervising younger siblings. She said it's a struggle on the kids and the families and she worries about those kids.

English Proficiency and Academic Achievement Work Group:

Karl Wilson stated the work that was done last year was centered around researching the populations in the lowest 25th percentile in terms of reading achievement and gathering information about support and practices that are already in place. He said there was a Read by Grade 3 presentation to the group that talked about requirements and supports for students who are behind in their reading skills. He said when they take a look at next steps, the conversation largely focused on looking to identify root causes and specific recommendations that would address those root causes. He said they've highlighted three specific goals with homework attached to each one of those goals for the December meeting. He said the first recommendation was building work group member capacity by watching videos that demonstrate effective instruction. He said the second recommendation was to identify schools that are beating the odds in terms of achieving higher levels of student performance and what are they doing. He said they will share before their next meeting in December some of the characteristics or efforts they're implementing in those schools. He said the third recommendation was for researching and identifying what they are doing in other states to address low performance in reading and share what is happening in those states in terms of effective strategies to address those concerns.

Mr. Wilson stated their homework is threefold along those goals that they've identified. He said they didn't have all members of their work group present today, but one of the issues related to low performance that was highlighted in the spring was the problem of low expectations in many of their schools that seems to tie directly to low student performance, looking at root causes and ways to address that. He stated Dr. Durodola highlighted one of the things they need to look at is if there are strategies being implemented, what is the fidelity of implementation with those strategies. He said they might have the very best strategies being implemented in a school, but if they're not implemented with fidelity, they won't see the kind of improvements evidence would demonstrate in areas that are being implemented consistently in accordance with the designs.

Mr. Wilson stated he would like to invite Chair Cervantes and Dr. Durodola to share any additional insights. Chair Cervantes stated Mr. Wilson hit on the main points they had discussed, and they have some actions moving forward, so she does not have anything additional to add. She asked if there were any recommendations or discussions around the points that Mr. Wilson shared from the whole group and there was none.

Discussion on Next Steps and Progress of the Council

Chair Cervantes stated she feels the next agenda item has already been presented and discussed, but she would like to open up the floor if there were any further discussions on next steps and progress of the Council or if there were any deliverables that have not been discussed, this would be the time to bring it forward. Dr. Durodola asked moving into the next legislative year, were there any initiatives that will be brought forward or are being discussed that center around ELLs or those students who are the least proficient. She said those discussions usually occur in the fall before the session actually begins.

Chair Cervantes stated in the last session, they adopted the new formula for funding education in the State of Nevada, but they did not fund it, so there will be a lot of discussion around the funding of the weighted funding formula as well as removing or reducing categorical funds, such as Victory, Zoom or SB 178 grants in order to fully fund the weighted funding formula across the entire State of Nevada. She said up until now, those categorical funds have been in place in order to meet the needs of students in each of those student groups. She said that was the purpose of the categorical funding up through the last legislative session, so there may be discussion on whether those categorical funding sources should remain in place or do they need to be fully removed in order to fully fund the new weighted funding formula.

Ms. Crossman stated there should also be a discussion about the budget shortfall for the state and how that impacts education. She said there's a motion to have school board members appointed within the state, and the Nevada Association of School Board is looking into how that might affect the function of the school board. Dr. Brune said she heard there's two bills looking at appointed school boards. Dr. Durodola asked Dr. Brune if she knew of any other initiatives that are being discussed that might impact the student population they serve on their Council. Dr. Brune answered nothing beyond what's been mentioned by the Council thus far.

Chair Cervantes stated based on what's going in the legislative session, she asked they be aware of their role in the EMC and be prepared when asked for recommendations regarding these bills and the impact they have on ELLs and students in the lowest 25th percentile in addition to discussion around the budget shortfall. She said if they are the representative for the school board or a district to be aware of their district's or institution's policies or beliefs as they come back together and always keep the best interest of students as the basis for all of their recommendations.

Mr. Hume said in terms of logistics, he asked if members were opposed to moving the meeting to an earlier time, such as 8:00 or 8:30. Ms. Zona said she wouldn't mind starting earlier because she missed lunch duty today, and Mr. Wilson asked if that was a bad thing. Ms. Zona said it's a good time to connect with kids. Dr. Durodola said she's fine with starting earlier as long as they don't mind her sipping her coffee. Mr. Hume said that's the great value of Zoom now as they expect everyone to drink water and have coffee during the meeting. Chair Cervantes said she does not see any concerns about moving the meeting to an earlier time. She said 8:00-8:30 should probably be the earliest out of respect to others being able to get to work on time if they are joining the meeting from work.

Mr. Hume asked members to block their calendars for the following EMC meeting dates: 12/3/20, 2/15/21 and 5/6/21. He asked members to email him if there's any conflict and he will try to find another date. He said the meetings should all be on a Thursday, and Ms. Crossman said February 15 is a Monday. Ms. Diaz said it is also Presidents' day. Mr. Hume apologized for the mistake. Chair Cervantes stated February 18 would be a Thursday.

Public Comments #2

Mindy Montoya stated there were no public comments via email at the time.

Adjournment

Chair Cervantes thanked everyone for their participation and joining them in the new year. She said it was a long meeting, so she appreciates everyone hanging in there as they go through all of the work. She said she looks forward to seeing them all again in December. The meeting adjourned at 12:52 PM.