

Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force

Report – June 11, 2020



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I. Executive Summary

The 80th Session of the Nevada Legislature passed Assembly Bill (AB) 276, creating the Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force (Task Force). Pursuant to the bill, the Task Force must address the challenges with attracting and retaining teachers throughout Nevada. During even numbered years the Task Force must meet and report its findings and recommendations to the Legislative Committee on Education (LCE).

The application for Task Force membership was released by the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) in November of 2019. Candidates submitted applications until January 2020. LCE members reviewed and appointed members from each school district located in a county during their January and February 2020 meetings.

The Task Force met four times between April 2020 and June 2020. Due to the COVID-19 social distancing guidelines, and in accordance with the Governor's State of Emergency Directives, all meetings of the Task Force were held virtually, with livestreaming for public viewing. Public comment was accepted at each meeting via email and read into the record as applicable. During these meetings members reviewed research, data, and other pertinent information provided by the experts at WestEd, TEACH Plus Fellows, educator preparation programs, districts, and NDE personnel.

The Task Force proposes a total of 15 recommendations:

- **3 Recruitment Recommendations** requesting the Legislature to invest in efforts that promote the teaching profession and provide systemic supports to improve transparency and access for educators seeking employment in Nevada.
- **6 Retention Recommendations** designed to improve working conditions and provide supports to teachers throughout the state.
- **6 General Recommendations** that encompass more than one category. These include actions that would provide additional information on which to base future recommendations.

II. Introduction and Overview

Assembly Bill 276 (AB276) passed during the 2019 Legislative Session, created the Nevada State Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force. The Task Force is required to meet a minimum of four times per year for the purpose of addressing the challenges associated with attracting and retaining teachers throughout this State.

On or before February 1, 2020, the LCE shall select one or more teachers, as applicable, to serve as a member of the Task Force.

A) Roles/Responsibilities

As directed by AB 276 (2019), the Task Force shall:

- Evaluate the challenges in attracting and retaining teachers throughout this state.

- Make recommendations to the LCE to address the challenges in attracting and retaining teachers throughout this state, including without limitation, providing incentives to attract and retain teachers; and
- On or before February 1 of each odd-numbered year, submit a report to the Director of the Legislative Council Bureau for transmission to the Legislature describing the findings and recommendations of the Task Force.

B) Task Force Membership

Per Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) 391.494 to qualify for membership eligible teachers must:

- Be a licensed teacher with at least five consecutive years of teaching experience in a public school in this state;
- Be currently employed as a teacher and actively teaching in a public school in this state, and remain employed as a teacher in a public school in this state for the duration of the member's term; and
- Not be currently serving on any other education-related board, commission, task force, or similar governmental entity.
- On or before December 1, 2019, the Department shall prescribe a uniform application for a teacher to use to apply to serve on the Task Force.
- A teacher who wishes to serve on the Task Force must submit an application to the Legislative Committee on Education on or before January 15 of an even-numbered year. On or before February 1 of each even-numbered year, the Legislative Committee on Education shall select one or more teachers, as applicable, to serve as a member of the Task Force.

In accordance with NRS 391.492:

(a), One licensed teacher employed by each school district located in a county whose population is less than 100,000, was appointed by the LCE, as follows:

- Carson – Sarah Santos
- Churchill – Lance Lattin
- Douglas – Elizabeth Rechs
- Elko – Tammie Smithburg
- Esmeralda – Elizabeth Vessels
- Eureka – Meridon Fortune
- Humboldt – Tamara McCord
- Lander – William Cox
- Lincoln – Kathleen Keene
- Lyon – LaResa Darrington
- Mineral – Vici Cooper
- Nye – Dana Boam
- Pershing – Thomas Brooks
- Storey – Allison Brolsma
- White Pine – Kristina Ernest

(b) Two licensed teachers employed by each school district located in a county whose population is 100,000 or more but less than 700,000, were appointed by the LCE:

- Washoe – Maria Cristy Fernandez
- Washoe – Laurie Henderson

(c) Three licensed teachers employed by each school district located in a county whose population is 700,000 or more, were appointed by the LCE:

- Clark – David Navarette
- Clark – Magdaline Wells
- Clark – Eleanor Williams

The work of the Task Force was supported by the following personnel and educational partners:

WestEd

- Mary Peterson, Co-Director, Region 15 Comprehensive Center at WestEd
- Alex B. Jacobson, Senior Research Associate, Region 15 Comprehensive Center at WestEd
- Andrew F. Morrill, Senior Program Associate, Region 15 Comprehensive Center at WestEd

Attorney General’s Office

- David Gardner, Senior Deputy Attorney General

Nevada Department of Education (NDE)

- Felicia Gonzales, Deputy Superintendent of Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement
- Jason Dietrich, Director, Educator Development and Family Engagement (EDLiFE)
- Kathleen Galland-Collins, Assistant Director, EDLiFE
- Jeff Briske, Education Programs Professional, EDLiFE
- Kellylynn Charles, Education Programs Professional, EDLiFE
- Michael Arakawa, Program Officer III, EDLiFE
- Arina Kazemi, Administrative Assistant II, EDLiFE

C) Task Force Meetings

The Task Force held four virtual meetings via video conference. Agendas, minutes, and supporting documents are located on the [Advisory Task Force Meeting Materials webpage](#).

3/28/2020 Cancelled	4/25/2020 Meeting 1	5/16/2020 Meeting 2	6/6/2020 Meeting 3	6/11/2020 Meeting 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •State of Emergency due to Covid-19 Pandemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Intro to Nevada context •Determine information needs •Review of research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Review additional data from educator preparation, district induction programs, and TEACH Plus •Organize key findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Root cause analysis •Draft recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Review and finalize Task Force Report

III. Recommendations

NRS 391.496 clearly states that the primary responsibility of this Task Force is to make recommendations to LCE to address the challenges in attracting and retaining teachers in Nevada. To do this, the Task Force divided the topic of recruitment into two categories, recruitment to the profession and recruitment to employment. “Recruitment to the profession” refers to efforts made to attract people to the field of education as a career choice. “Recruitment to employment” means attracting educators to accept teaching positions in a district in Nevada. Once a teacher is employed in a school district in Nevada, it is imperative that efforts be made to develop, support, and retain high quality teachers. Therefore, “retention” is the third category of recommendations. However, during the review of research, data, and robust discussions, the Task Force discovered gaps in available information. An additional category was created to address these gaps and provide recommendations with the potential to positively impact multiple aspects of recruitment and retention efforts. These have been labeled General Recommendations.

All recommendations are numbered and sorted into the previously described categories. Each recommendation may also include a brief description of its purpose and/or rationale. These descriptions serve to provide additional information or context that clarifies intent.

A) Recruitment to the Profession

The Task Force identified several challenges associated with recruitment to the profession in Nevada. Members are of the opinion that the general attractiveness of the profession is low and that there is a perceived lack of respect shown to teachers by the public, including the media. Often, those in the field do not recommend to others the choice of education as a profession. Many schools hold career fairs that neglect to include educators promoting the profession of teaching. Along with insufficient compensation, a stressful work environment and inadequate preparation may contribute to the reasons why more people do not choose education as their number one career choice. The recommendation below addresses these challenges by asking educators, the media, and the public to find and express the positive aspects of being an educator. The Task Force recommends that:

1. ***The Legislature fund the implementation of an advertising campaign to promote the education profession in Nevada.***
 - a. *Purpose: Highlight positive impact of educators, illustrate the positive aspects of the profession, and create opportunities for students and educators to provide testimony and otherwise advocate for the profession.*
 - b. *Rationale: Nevada’s in-state educator preparation programs produce approximately 700 – 900 teachers per year in a state in which the largest district alone usually hires over 1000 teachers each year. The in-state supply of teachers is woefully short of the demand.*

B) Recruitment to Employment

Recruitment to the profession and recruitment to employment are inextricably linked and often involve similar challenges. The Task Force identified several challenges in recruiting teacher candidates to employment. These include an insufficient supply of teachers, effectiveness of recruitment efforts, attractiveness of certain districts as perceived by teacher spouses or families, insufficient compensation, and limited resources available in a specific school or community. The Task Force recommends that:

2. LCE write a letter to district superintendents requesting districts ensure that potential employees are provided with information such as:

- *specific benefits to serving in their community*
- *community services/resources*
- *practicalities such as housing, pay schedules, resources etc.*
 - a. *Purpose: Ensure candidates for employment are provided information that will make the transition to the community less burdensome.*
 - b. *Rationale: Potential employees have the information necessary to make an informed decision regarding the realities of living and working in that location.*

3. The Legislature fund the development of a statewide education specific job openings website/repository

- a. *Purpose: Support educators seeking positions with access to a list of education position openings from across the state.*
- b. *Rationale: Currently, candidates for employment must search each district website for openings. A repository of teaching positions would provide one user-friendly, virtual location on which all districts post openings and provide district-specific information to help candidates select the location that best fits their needs.*

C) Retention

Of the three categories, teacher retention is the topic that had the most research available for members to review. It is also a topic on which the Task Force developed the most recommendations. State retention data show that Nevada does not retain teachers at a sufficient rate to meet demand. Newly prepared teachers from in-state educator preparation programs are one source of supply to address this challenge. However, retention is low enough in some parts of the state to make it infeasible for newly prepared teachers to fully address the issue. For example, retention data from the two largest school districts shows similarly high separation rates. Specifically, after five years approximately 50 percent of teachers hired separate from employment in Clark County. Even though this is below the 55 percent average separation rate for large urban districts, the Task Force believes that there is room for significant improvement. The Task Force recommends that:

4. LCE write a letter to school district superintendents asking them to ensure that training/professional development on new programs/practices occurs prior to the implementation of those practices.

- a. *Purpose: Ensure that employees are fully trained on and knowledgeable of new programs/practices to ensure fidelity of implementation, reduce stress, allow time for strategic planning, and minimize resistance.*
- 5. *The Legislature explore and fund a variety of evidence-based options and best practices, including mentoring programs, to support new and experienced teachers.***
 - a. *Purpose: Provide guidance and/or set statewide criteria for the supports to meet the unique/specific needs of new teachers (e.g., mentoring program components/criteria, reduced workload), and experienced teachers (e.g., peer assistance/coaching) to increase the retention of educators in Nevada.*
- 6. *The Legislature fund the implementation of a teacher hotline.***
 - a. *Purpose: Provide an avenue for educators to receive timely supports for immediate issues and concerns from experienced teachers to promote best practices.*
- 7. *Require student teacher ratio calculations be reported at the school level and not as an average at the district level***
 - a. *Purpose: Ensure that the ratio of students per licensed teacher are reported in a manner that is transparent, provides data to inform decisions that are equitable, and accurately reflects class sizes at each school.*
 - b. *Rationale: Members believe that districts are reporting a district wide average of students per licensed teacher while the actual class sizes vary greatly from school to school. This practice lacks transparency.*
- 8. *The legislature fund the implementation of a study of class size/student teacher ratios that also includes data on the equitable distribution of high-needs students.***
 - a. *Purpose: Increase transparency regarding the equitable distribution of high needs students (e.g. special needs – including, but not limited to intellectual, language and behavioral needs)*
 - b. *Rationale: Teachers report that in some schools an overwhelming number of high-needs students are placed into one classroom rather than being distributed more evenly among teachers in the same subject/grade level. A study of this would reveal to what extent this is happening and provide data on which to base policy recommendations.*
- 9. *The Legislature fund and implement a statewide school loan forgiveness program that prioritizes repayment of school loans for teachers in rural or traditionally hard to staff schools.***
 - a. *Purpose: Provide an alternative way for educators to find relief from school loans.*
 - b. *Rationale: Federal Student Loan Forgiveness programs are very difficult to successfully acquire, and school loan debt becomes overwhelming.*

D) General Recommendations

The Task Force developed several recommendations that encompass more than one category of challenges. These include actions that would provide additional information on which to base future recommendations. The Task Force recommends that:

10. Legislative changes to education policies/practices are funded adequately and the start dates of the new statutory requirements are implemented on January 1 immediately following a legislative session to ensure that training/professional development on new programs/practices occurs prior to the implementation of those policies/practices.

- a. *Purpose: Ensure that educators are fully trained on new programs/practices to ensure fidelity of implementation, reduce stress, allow time for strategic planning, and minimize resistance.*

11. The Legislature work with appropriate entities/developers to conduct a feasibility study and cost analysis for providing affordable or subsidized housing to educators in all areas across the state including, but not limited to rural and urban settings.

- a. *Rationale: housing can be difficult to find in remote areas of the state and/or may be very expensive in other urban/suburban areas. This is a barrier to recruiting and retaining teachers in those schools.*

12. LCE select and fund third-party to develop, implement, and analyze the results of a statewide educator exit survey in consultation with the Task Force and districts.

- a. *Rationale: Nevada does not have consistent data regarding why teachers leave schools/districts. A statewide survey developed in collaboration with education stakeholders and implemented by a third party would provide a consistent source of data for districts, policy makers, and other education partners for the purposes of informing continuous improvement efforts. Retention cannot be effectively addressed without knowing why educators leave.*

13. LCE select and fund a third-party to develop, implement, and analyze (in consultation with the Task Force) a statewide climate/working conditions survey of current employees.

- a. *Rationale: One data gap identified by Task Force members is statewide data from educators regarding working conditions and school climate. A statewide survey developed with education stakeholders and administered by a third party will provide a consistent source of data for districts, policy makers, and other education partners for the purposes of informing continuous improvement efforts. It is the position of this Task Force that this data should in no way be used punitively against educational personnel, schools, or districts.*

14. The Legislature fund and require evaluators of teachers to receive Inter-Rater Reliability training on the Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF).

- a. *Rationale: Members report inconsistent scoring of teacher performance by evaluators. Additional supports are needed to ensure consistent implementation of the NEPF.*

15. The Legislature fund and create a task force to study the implementation of the NEPF.

- a. *Rationale: Members believe that a study of the NEPF is necessary to determine the challenges and successes of NEPF implementation. To provide additional guidance and support.*

IV. Conclusion

Pursuant to AB 276 the Nevada Teacher Recruitment and Retention Advisory Task Force submits this report in fulfillment of its charge to identify challenges and develop recommendations regarding the recruitment and retention of teachers in Nevada. The 15 recommendations included in this report represent the collective input of Task Force members following four meetings and an in-depth analysis of research, data, and current practices to support teacher recruitment and retention. The members of the Task Force acknowledge the support of staff from the Nevada Department of Education in developing this report.

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