

**NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
COMMISSION ON SCHOOL FUNDING
MEETING MINUTES SUMMARY**

November 21, 2025

9:00 AM

| Office | Address | City | Room |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Department of Education | 2080 E. Flamingo Rd. | Las Vegas | Board Room |
| Department of Education | 700 E. Fifth St. | Carson City | Silver Ore |
| Department of Education | Virtual | Virtual | YouTube |

1. Call to Order, Roll Call

- **Date & Time:** November 21, 2025, called to order at 9:04 AM.
- **Commission:** Roll call was taken by the secretary, noting a quorum.
 - Chair Hobbs (Present)
 - Vice Chair Woodhouse (Present)
 - Member Mathur (Present)
 - Member Brune (Present)
 - Member King (Present)
 - Member Reeves (Present)
 - Member Casey (Present)
 - Member Dayhoff (Present)
 - Member Mathers (Present)
 - Member Ritchie (Present)
 - Member Stahlke (Present)
- **Legal Counsel:** Deputy Attorney General Christena Georgas-Burns was noted as in attendance.

2. Public Comment Period No. 1 (Agenda Items Only)

The Chair opened the first public comment period. No comments were received from Carson City or Las Vegas in person, in writing, or via telephone.

3. Consent Agenda

Information concerning the following consent agenda items has been provided to Commission members for study prior to the meeting. Unless a Commission member has a question concerning a particular item and asks that it be withdrawn from the consent list, all items are approved in one action.

- a. Possible Approval of October 17, 2025, Commission Minutes Summary & Transcription.

The Commission reviewed the October 17, 2025, minutes.

- Motion: Moved for approval of the minutes from October 17th
- Second: Cassandra Stahlke seconded the motion.
- Vote: The motion passed by acclamation (Aye).

4. Nevada Department of Education (NDE) Update

The Commission will receive an update on the progress made by the Nevada Department of Education since the last meeting.

- Megan Peterson, Deputy Superintendent for Student Investment Division (SID), Nevada Department of Education (NDE)

Deputy Superintendent Megan Peterson thanked the Commission members for their flexibility in pivoting and moving the meeting date due to the special legislative session the previous week. She then

detailed the progress on contracts and the launch of the Commission's required work groups. The Deputy Superintendent's key points were:

- Contract Updates
 - NDE is amending existing contracts to increase the scope of work based on mandates from the 2025 83rd legislative session.
 - Contract Pending Approval: One existing contract amendment is awaiting the December Board of Examiners meeting.
 - Competency Based Education Study: The contract for this study is currently going through the evaluation committee process. NDE hopes to present it at the January Board of Examiners meeting.
 - Revenues Contract: NDE is currently negotiating the terms of a contract focused on revenues, with an anticipated result date in January.
- Working Group Coordination and Statutory Mandates (SB 460)
- The Deputy stated that NDE has begun coordinating 14 work groups to address 27 different tasks assigned to the Commission. The coordination of these groups directly addresses the Commission's legislative charges, which include a full re-evaluation of the At-risk indicator and funding model. Six of the 14 work groups have started meeting:
 - Student Outcomes
 - Reserve Analysis
 - Special Education Funding
 - Tiered Allocations
 - Weighted Funding (focused on EL, At-risk, and gifted and talented students)
 - Attendance Area work group
 - At-Risk work group
 - Expenditure Reporting work group
 - Enrollment Trends
 - NDE is supporting the groups focusing on core PCFP components:
 - Tiered Allocations/Weighted Funding: The weighted funding group is specifically focused on the three categories: English Learners (EL), At-risk, and Gifted and Talented. Their task includes evaluating the sufficiency of the weights and addressing issues like the stacking of weights.
 - At-Risk/ Graduation Related Analytic Data (GRAD) Score: This group relates to the mandate to review and recommend revisions to the method of calculating the percentage of pupils determined to be most in need.
 - Expenditure Reporting: This work is vital for providing data on how districts are using PCFP funds.
- Deputy Peterson introduced the Nevada State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Dr. Victor Wakefield to the Commission
 - Dr. Wakefield's key motivations and insights include the Focus on Funding Strategy: One of his primary motivators for taking the role was not just the infusion of funds by ensuring a "more strategic use of our funds".
 - New Political Environment: He noted that the new leadership across the state (more than half of Superintendents being in their first, second, or third year) and new commissions provide an opportunity.
 - Flexibility and Innovation: He intends to leverage "greater state flexibility to drive an agenda" and supports asking whether "the way we've always done it" must continue to be the way.
 - Dr. Wakefield expressed his deep support and enthusiasm for the work and his commitment to prioritizing leading through partnerships in his first 100 days.

5. Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education (Information and Discussion)

Pursuant to SB460 §12 (1)(k) (2025), the Commission shall, at least once each year, meet with the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education created by NRS 385.910 to discuss and review progress on any studies, research and recommendations. The Chair of the Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education will provide an update on the activities for the upcoming year to ensure alignment of both commission's activities.

- Joyce Woodhouse, Chair, Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education
- Nathan Driskell, Chief Policy Officer, National Center on Education and the Economy

Vice Chair Joyce Woodhouse requested to defer Agenda Item No. 5 to the December meeting due to scheduling conflicts. The Commission agreed to that change.

6. Presentation of the Report: Understanding the At-risk Indicator (Information and Discussion)

Pursuant to NRS 387.12463 (2), the Commission will review how funding from the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan is being used to improve the academic performance and progress of pupils. The Commission will receive a presentation on the report entitled, Understating the At-Risk Indicator.

- Dr. Sean Tanner, Senior Research Associate, WestEd

The presentation analyzed students identified as At-risk using the Graduation Related Analytic Data (GRAD) score, a learning algorithm developed by Infinite Campus that predicts a student's likelihood of not graduating with their cohort. Students with the highest risk scores (the top quintile) are designated as At-risk.

• Demographic Overlap

- Gender: Boys were found to be more likely than girls to be identified as At-risk. (This finding sparked discussion about the inclusion of gender as a factor in the proprietary algorithm and related legal and ethical concerns).
- Race/Ethnicity: 46% of Black/African American students were identified as At-risk, compared to a statewide average of 20%.
- Special Populations: The indicator shows considerable overlap with students identified via more traditional measures of need. Over half of students in foster care (56%) and 36% of students in direct certification (a measure of low-income status) were identified as At-risk.
- Targeting: While direct certification covers a much larger group of students (approximately 140,000 students), the smaller, more targeted At-risk pool (approximately 60,000 students) consists overwhelmingly of students who are also in direct certification (approximately 74%). This highlights that the GRAD score is more targeted than traditional measures like Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRL).

• Academic Performance

- Low Achievement: At-risk students generally perform significantly below average for their grade level, confirming they are students who need support.
- Test Scores (Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium - SBAC): The majority of At-risk students score at the lowest levels.
 - ELA: 60% of At-risk students scored Level 1 (the lowest level).
 - Math: 70% of At-risk students scored Level 1.

- **Stability of the At-risk Indicator (2022-2023 to 2023-2024)**

This section addressed concerns about year-to-year changes in funding at the district level, comparing the stability of the GRAD score against a hypothetical measure of Direct Certification.

- **Student Churn and Volatility**

- Statewide Stability: The net total count of At-risk eligible students at the state level remained relatively stable, decreasing by 3.6% (a drop of 2,254 students from 63,047 to 60,793).
- Significant Churn: Despite the stable net total, there was massive movement, or churn, under the surface:
 - 47% of students who were At-risk eligible in the first year left the At-risk category.
 - 43% of students who were not in the At-risk category gained at-risk status the next year.
- Sources of Change: This churn was broken down by cause:
 - Mobility: Loss of 17% due to students leaving the system vs. a gain of 12% from students entering the system.
 - Program Eligibility (IEP/EL): Loss of 3% vs. a gain of 1% (students moving between weighted categories).
 - GRAD Score Change: Loss of 27% (students' scores improved or their percentile rank changed) vs. a gain of 30% (students newly designated as At-risk).

- **District-Level Impact**

The volatility was more pronounced at the Local Education Agency (LEA) level.

- Clark County School District (CCSD): The total At-risk count change was near zero (-0.1%), but this was due to equal and opposite forces: a 7% gain due to the GRAD score canceled out by a 7% loss due to mobility/program changes.
- Washoe County School District (WCSD): Experienced a significant 36% drop in its funded At-risk count. This was driven by a 19% drop due to the GRAD score (students no longer tagged as At-risk) combined with a 17% loss due to mobility/program changes.

- **Comparison to Direct Certification (Hypothetical)**

- Volume: Using Direct Certification (DC) as the indicator would increase the funded pool from approximately 63,000 students to approximately 150,000 students.
- Stability: The DC method showed less proportional churn than the GRAD score, partly because it starts from a much larger base. The total net change was a drop of 4.0% (similar to the GRAD score's 3.6% drop), but the proportional churn was lower. For WCSD, the 36% drop would have been reduced to a 7% drop under the DC model.

- **Association with School Star Ratings**

- This section explored the relationship between school performance accountability ratings (School Star Ratings) and the performance of At-risk students, using a causal statistical method.
- At-Risk Concentration
 - One-Star Schools: Nearly one-third (33%) of students in one-star schools are identified as At-risk.
 - Five-Star Schools: Less than 5% of students in five-star schools are At-risk.
 - Conclusion: At-risk students are disproportionately clustered in the state's lowest-performing schools (one-star schools).

- **Causal Impact of Interventions**

- The presentation used a Regression Discontinuity Design (RDD) to compare the outcomes of schools that just barely received a one-star rating (and the interventions that come with it) versus schools that just barely received a two-star rating.
- Overall Positive Effect: The analysis found a positive and statistically significant effect of the one-star designation and the resulting interventions.
- For all students in CCSD, the effect was a marked increase of 0.33 standard deviations in math scores, comparable to the effect size seen in high dosage tutoring or decades of adequacy funding reforms elsewhere in the country.

- **At-Risk Student Effect:** For students identified as At-risk in CCSD, the effect of the one-star intervention was positive but more muted. This led to speculation that At-risk students, who are struggling the most may be harder to move with general whole-school interventions.
- **Policy Trade-Offs and Future Work.** Dr. Tanner concluded by emphasizing the inherent trade-off the Commission faces:
 - **Precision vs. Stability:** Greater funding precision (fewer identified students) leads to greater funding instability. Identifying a larger group (using DC) creates stability but reduces the per-pupil funding amount if the per pupil remains fixed.
 - **Next Steps:** Future analysis would include a more comprehensive look at:
 - Stacked or blended weights
 - National policy comparisons
 - The impact of PCFP resources specifically on identified students (EL and At-risk), linking student outcomes with spending data
- **Commission Discussion and Next Steps**
 The presentation generated significant debate over the fixed 20% quintile threshold, the volatility for budget planning, and the need for smoothing techniques to mitigate year-to-year swings in funding. The Commission agreed to revisit the recommendation for a variable funding threshold and asked for historical data over multiple years.

7. **Working Group Updates (Information, Discussion, and Possible Action)**

The Working Group Lead will provide an update and if possible, identify what research, information, and/or presentations would be needed by NDE or researchers. The Commission may discuss and make possible recommendations based on information shared by the working groups.

- Guy Hobbs, Chair, Commission on School Funding

This item was deferred and not presented. Chair Hobbs, noted that given the length of the prior agenda item (Item 6, the WestEd presentation) and the expected lack of lengthy updates from the work groups, the item would be moved to the next meeting.

- **December Meeting:** Working group updates will officially begin at the December 12th meeting.
- **Guidance for Future Working Group Updates**
 The Chair provided essential guidance and clarification for all future working group presentations. These updates will begin at the December 12th meeting.
 - **Update Content:** Each working group coordinator must provide an update on their group's progress and the work that has been done.
 - **Key Deliverable:** Coordinators must state the projected date of delivery of their findings or materials to the full Commission.
 - **Procedural Authority:** The Chair reiterated that working groups cannot make recommendations. Their role is to bring supporting material back to the full Commission to facilitate the final recommendation process.

- 8. Future Agenda Items (Information and Discussion)** Items not appearing on the agenda may be considered possible topics for the Commission to hear at the next meeting.
- Guy Hobbs, Chair, Commission on School Funding

Requests were made under this agenda item focusing on follow-up work related to the At-risk funding model and the overall funding formula. The requests were primarily directed toward the research team (Dr. Tanner, WestEd) and the NDE staff for the Commission's subsequent meetings.

- **At-Risk Indicator and Volatility**

The primary goal was to address the volatility and transparency concerns highlighted by the WestEd presentation.

- Fixed Quintile Recommendation: Revisit the recommendation to make the fixed 20% quintile threshold variable rather than fixed, to allow for adjustment by the State Board of Education.
- Funding Stability/Smoothing Techniques: Explore using statistical methods to employ a smoothing technique to mitigate the year-to-year funding volatility ("roller coaster effect") experienced by districts like Washoe and Clark County.
- Multi-Year Data Analysis: Extend the analysis of At-risk funding volatility and stability (churn) over multiple years to confirm the observed trends, rather than just the two years presented.
- Grade-Level/Cohort Data: Analyze the churn data by individual grade level (not just school structure) to examine incoming student cohorts and the persistence of need.
- Programmatic/Alternative Measures: Continue to examine alternatives to the GRAD score and explore work on creating a stable index using fewer variables that simulates the GRAD score's accuracy for transparency.

- **New NCEI Study Approach**

The Chair requested a formal presentation to initiate a study on the National Center for Education Index (NCEI).

- NCEI Methodology Review: Schedule an agenda item for the next meeting (December 12th) for the consultant, Applied Analysis, to present and discuss the approach and methodology for a new NCEI study.
- Review of Prior Work: The consultant was asked to review prior work done by APA and the two sets of recommendations previously adopted by the Commission.

- **Next Meeting**

A discussion on the approach and methodology for the NCEI study with Applied Analysis will be added to the next meeting agenda.

9. Public Comment Period No. 2

The Chair opened the second public comment period. No comments were received from Carson City or Las Vegas in person, in writing, or via telephone.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:27 PM.

The next meeting is scheduled for **December 12th**.