Measuring What Matters Subcommittee

Vision

Our subcommittee envisions a Nevada where students, educators, parents, communities, policymakers and taxpayers understand what our students are learning – including the skills, competencies, and dispositions they are acquiring – and how our schools are helping students to attain those skills and helping to prepare all Nevadans for the demands of the future.

Achieving this vision will require a dashboard that not only helps schools and districts to chart their progress, but also helps individual students to track their learning journey, set goals, and take ownership for their competencies. This dashboard will measure attainment of foundational skills (mathematics and literacy), future-ready skills (such as critical thinking and collaboration), progress and growth, as well as indicators that our communities say are valuable to them, such as student wellbeing.

This system will need to move beyond rigid rankings. Instead, it should focus on highlighting areas of excellence and growth through multiple measures of success. In our proposed system, schools and students can choose metrics from a bank of options and show areas of success and opportunities for growth. The dashboard must communicate clearly to many stakeholders inside and outside education. It must be transparent, easily accessible, and intuitively navigable.

Developing such a dashboard and ensuring that Nevada's schools have the capacity to implement it is no small task. But it is essential to empower students, teachers, and schools to take ownership of their learning journeys. It will enable all of us to realize the potential of the Nevada Portrait of a Learner, while also ensuring that all students graduate ready to pursue a range of meaningful and rewarding options for higher learning and careers.

This vision is rooted in our in-depth study of both the great work being done in Nevada, and our comparative analysis of the world's leading education systems, from high-performing countries like Singapore, Canada, and Estonia to leading and rapidly innovating states such as Massachusetts, Utah, and Maryland. These diverse places share a common commitment to developing shared strategic visions and clear and aligned goals and roles, and building system capacity to support schools in achieving these goals. In these systems, accountability is designed in service of continuous improvement, and support for struggling schools and educators is embedded throughout. (NCEE, 2014 & 2024; Utah Accountability Redesign Advisory Committee, 2022; Van Der Ark, 2020) We can use insights from these approaches to enrich the great work already underway in our state.

A dashboard that supports all our schools, educators, and students to chart the acquisition of a wide range of skills, continuously improve, and communicate progress and milestones to parents and the public, will be key to our state achieving global excellence.

Current Nevada Context

Nevada's current school accountability system, the School Performance Framework (SPF), came about as a result of a widespread consensus that Nevada needed a way to transparently communicate how schools were performing, and to measure how schools were growing, for the benefit of students, parents, educators, and community members. The SPF uses a weighted point model where academic achievement, growth, EL proficiency, gap closing, and chronic absenteeism are combined into a total score (Nevada Department of Education, 2023).

Subcommittee members recognize that the SPF provides public transparency on performance as well as year-on-year growth measures. These are crucial for building common understanding about the health of the education system and public will for sustaining investments in it. At the same time, all recognize that there is considerable room to build on the SPF's foundations. We have concerns about the feasibility and technical validity of the SPF, as well as the mindsets underpinning the model. We think the SPF can do much more to support schools to improve and incentivize growth. Some members have raised concerns that the model has exacerbated the current teacher shortage by contributing to stress and negative narratives about Nevada education. Others have noted that it does not measure the durable, future-ready skills underpinning the Portrait of a Learner, and much of NCEE's global research on what high-performing systems value and measure. All of these areas for improvement must be taken into account as we work to redesign a more future-forward accountability model.

Several recently passed bills will lead to ongoing changes to the system, and our Subcommittee will need to account for their requirements in the phasing-in of our own plan. Specifically, SB 98 (2023) articulates the framework for a statewide vision for accountability, with flexibility and opportunity for locally determined metrics and opportunities for students to provide input on what they want. More specifically, it requires the development of metrics to assess "(1) the growth and proficiency of pupils in literacy, mathematics, and science; (2) the engagement and proficiency of pupils in courses for college and career readiness; and (3) the retention and recruitment of teachers and education support professionals," with additional metrics that may be developed by each district or charter school. AB 241 (2023) establishes new requirements for all students in Nevada to be on track for College and Career Readiness diplomas. SB 72 (2023) and AB 285 (2023) list requirements for school safety measures, with SB 72 specifically requiring a study of the safety and well-being of staff, and AB 285 adding data requirements that seek to connect school staffing levels with student behavior.

Guiding Principles for Policy Recommendations

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

1. **Promote Student Agency & Honor Students' Voice and Choice**
   Students must be engaged as meaningful partners in the development of the dashboard. Their guidance and feedback will be essential to ensuring that metrics measure and emphasize what they find relevant and impactful for their long-term success. The dashboard itself should promote student agency and choice by allowing them to show their own learning throughout the process.

2. **Honor Educators' Perspectives and Partner with Them Meaningfully:**
   Educators, too, should be engaged as meaningful partners in the development of the dashboard, and their perspectives should be surfaced throughout the change management process. They will have insights and innovations that will allow Nevada to maximize the dashboard's effectiveness.

3. **Recognize that the System is Accountable to the Public:**
   Our parents, communities, and taxpayers are the consumers of our public schools. Whatever we produce needs to be not only innovative, but also clearly interpretable by a broad public audience. This means creating a system that can eliminate education jargon wherever possible.

4. **Incentivize Continuous Improvement, Rather than Mandates**
   Our policy recommendations should not take the form of "one-size-fits-all" mandates that stifle innovation and prevent educators and schools from meeting the needs of diverse learners.

5. **Promote Cycles of Ongoing Action Learning**
   Nevada's new accountability system should be piloted, refined, and improved continually, based on evidence gathered both on the impact of the dashboard itself, and of the broader impacts of the Commission's policies. Whatever recommendations the Commission makes regarding ongoing systems evaluation in Q1 2025 should be aligned with how we think about rolling out and refining our accountability system.

6. **Remove Inconsistent or Restrictive Policies:**
   Our recommendations should identify and challenge existing policies that inhibit innovation and continuous learning and growth.

7. **Focus on Sustainability and Scalability:**
   Design the system with flexibility in mind, allowing it to adapt to future trends and evolving student needs. This includes building the capacity for ongoing updates to the metrics and user interface, and ensuring scalability across all districts and schools in Nevada.

Policy Recommendations

1. **Develop and Implement a Dashboard System that Measures Individual Student, School, District, and State Performance:**
   a. Transition from the existing Star rating system to a Portrait of a Nevada Learner-aligned, student-centered dashboard that students and families can use to set goals, monitor their progress towards goals, attain "badges" indicating their accomplishments, and chart their attainment and journey, from PreK-postsecondary.
   b. Individual student performance and attainment should be anonymized and "roll up" into school and district performance dashboards. This dashboard will provide a transparent view of areas where schools excel and areas needing improvement, without relying on rankings.
   c. In addition to foundational skills acquisition, schools and districts can select relevant metrics from a set of key indicators. Schools will have the option to showcase their strengths in categories such as literacy, STEM, arts, military-dependent, and ELL (English Language Learners).
   d. We recommend that the legislature fund the development of this dashboard, including the costs for developing, piloting, and refining it, and project-managing the overall efforts. Educators, students, parents, and policymakers will need to partner with a world-class development firm in order to make this tool transparent, actionable, and meaningful.
2. **Create a Menu Holistic and Growth-Focused Metrics to Support this Dashboard:**
   a. Develop new metrics that measure progress and success at the student, school, and system levels, for schools to choose from. These should include growth-based measurements of student learning outcomes, and holistic indicators such as student well-being, social capital, and civic engagement.
      i. Aim to have six metrics developed by Q3.
      ii. Once new metrics are developed and stakeholders have been trained in their purpose and use, begin to roll out in partnership with educators, and in a way that invites feedback, reflection, and continuous improvement
   b. Nevada should leverage opportunities within the federal waiver process to ensure our rollout of this new system complies with federal requirements while also serving as a model for a next generation accountability regime.
3. **Build in Ongoing Cycles of Piloting, Learning, and Refining through Action Learning and Stakeholder Feedback Loops:**
   a. Pilot, refine, and improve the transparency, and accessibility, and navigability of the dashboard. This system will provide real-time data, available to all stakeholders, on school and district performance, allowing families and communities to track progress, so it is essential that diverse stakeholders across our state can access and interpret it.
   b. Involve students, educators, and other key stakeholders in the development and continuous improvement of the accountability system. Engage communities

through listening sessions, surveys, and stakeholder meetings to gather input on the design and implementation of new metrics. Ensure that the system reflects the voices of those it impacts the most—students and educators.

4. **Fund Professional Development for Educators on How to Interpret and Use the System for Continuous Improvement**
   a. Educators must have the tools and training necessary to understand and effectively use the new dashboard and assessment systems. This professional learning should focus on data-driven decision-making, flexible instructional strategies, and innovative assessment practices.
   b. This additional professional learning should align with the new opportunities for professional learning proposed by the Portrait of a World-Class Teacher Subcommittee (all under the umbrella of helping educators to better understand the shifts required to realize the Portrait of a Nevada Learner.)

5. **Promote Alignment from PK-12 to Career Pathways Programs and Higher Education**
   a. Ensure that students' data dashboard includes measures of success and competencies that are meaningful to their ability to enroll in and attain career-ready credentials and higher education.
   b. Align with the recommendations advanced by the Next Gen Career Pathways Subcommittee.

6. **Invest in Showcase "Bright Spots" Through Innovative Communications:**
   a. Storytelling around the bright spots and opportunities in Nevada schools is crucial. This kind of a campaign would help Nevada communities (including business leaders, parents, policymakers, and the public) to begin to see how the world is changing for our schools, communities, and workplaces, and how schools in Nevada are beginning to transform to create stronger, competency-based learning opportunities for our learners.
   b. Host community forums, parent focus groups, and student advisory panels to gather input and build support for the CBE model. Demonstrate how the CBE system builds the future-ready skills businesses value. Ensure ongoing communication with these groups as the system evolves.
   c. Engage communities in championing the work in Nevada's schools that is going well, while building a groundswell of support for needed changes.
   d. This storytelling campaign is needed to ensure that the public understands how and why we may change what we measure, why those changes will ultimately benefit our learners and all of Nevada.
   e. This campaign should include:
      i. Video Testimonials: Produce short videos of students, teachers, and parents sharing their positive experiences with CBE.
      ii. Social Media: Use Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to run campaigns focused on storytelling. Use the hashtag (e.g., #NevadaCBE) to create a digital community.

      iii. Infographics: Create visually engaging infographics that explain key milestones in the pilot, student progression, and community impact.

      iv. Podcasts/Webinars: Launch a series of podcasts or webinars where participants share their journeys, and experts discuss CBE's benefits.

      v. School Websites: Dedicate a section of school or district websites to CBE updates, stories, and student progress showcases.

      vi. Television/News: Invite the media to attend events and provide informative PR

Outstanding Questions and Implementation Considerations

1. The transition to a new accountability system will require time and careful planning. We have set a clear deadline for drafting six key metrics by the end of the third quarter. We will pilot the dashboard in select districts before statewide implementation to gather feedback and refine the system. How can we move this conversation forward?

2. What current policy enables our vision? What existing policy is standing in the way of our vision? What is our phase-in process for removing restrictive or outdated policies, creating enabling conditions for pilots, and then scaling pilots to systems-level impact?

3. How can ensure that student voice is included meaningfully in the policymaking process, so what they want out of the education system is taken into account as metrics are developed?

4. How can we empower schools to innovate while maintaining alignment with state and workforce priorities, such as those outlined in the Portrait of a Learner?

5. How can we balance the need for common high standards with locally determined priorities, and chosen metrics? What guardrails are appropriate around this "menu" of metrics?

6. How can the new dashboard be used to create a culture shift, incentivizing collaboration, peer-to-peer support, and continuous improvement, rather than reverting to another way to sort and judge? What change management strategies can be leveraged to accomplish this shift?

7. Investments in new development costs will be necessary, including to pilot, gather feedback, and refine? What are the funding mechanisms available to us? Where can money be allocated or reallocated?