NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
COMMISSION ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION
AUGUST 26, 2026
2:00 PM

Office	Address	City	Meeting
Department of Education	700 E. Fifth St.	Carson City	Boardroom
Department of Education	2080 E. Flamingo Rd.	Las Vegas	Boardroom
Department of Education	1-775-321-6111 Code: 309 284 243#	Phone	Join by phone to provide public comment

DRAFT SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE COMMISSION MEETING

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:
In Person Las Vegas:
Vice Chair Beth Smith
Commissioner Dana Crowley
Commissioner Grant Hanevold
Commissioner Janelle Sazon-Valdez
Commissioner Monica Bryant

In Person Carson City:
None

Ex-Officio Members:
Dr. Lindsay Couzens (Virtual)
Jannet Vreeland (Virtual)
Bernnell Peltier-Glaz
Deputy Superintendent Christy McGill (Virtual)

Virtual Attendance:
Commissioner Alexandria Shelton
Commissioner Angie Joye
Commissioner Anna Colquitt
Commissioner Christine Hull
Commissioner Douglas Owen
Commissioner Greg Cole
Commissioner Jenny Hunt
Commissioner Misty Olmos
Commissioner Tim Logan

COMMISSION MEMBERS NOT PRESENT:
Commissioner Jackie Zavala
Dr. Joseph Morgan
Commissioner Rachel Croft

LEGAL STAFF PRESENT:
Deputy Attorney General Christena Georgas-Burns (Virtual)

DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT:
In Las Vegas:
Kellylynn Charles, Education Programs Professional, EDLiFE
Rick Derry, Administrative Assistant II, EDLiFE

In Carson City:
Emily Richarson, Administrative Assistant II, EDLiFE

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE:
In Las Vegas:
None

Carson City:
None

Virtual
Andrew Helms, CFO Teachers Health Trust
Laura Rich, Board Member, Public Employees Benefit Program

PRESENTERS:
Lisa Merrill, Senior Researcher, American Institutes for Research
Cheryl Krohn, Senior Technical Assistance Consultant, American Institutes for Research
Wrandi Czulno, Researcher, American Institutes for Research
Sarah Mae Olivar, Researcher, American Institutes for Research
David Prudente, Senior Researcher, American Institutes for Research

1. **CALL TO ORDER; ROLL CALL; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

   Vice Chair, Smith called the meeting to order at 2:03 PM. Roll call attendance was taken as reflected above and a quorum was established. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Kellylynn Charles followed by a reading of the Land Acknowledgement.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT #1**

   There were no public comments in Carson City, Las Vegas, or by phone.

   Nichole Heller provided a written public comment regarding agenda item #7. Information, Discussion, and Possible Action Regarding Work Session. *(A summary of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

3. **APPROVAL OF JULY 22, 2026, MINUTES** *(INFORMATION/DISCUSSION/FOR POSSIBLE ACTION)*

   Vice Chair Smith asked the Commission if there were any discussions regarding the July 22, 2026, meeting minutes. Commissioner Sazon-Valdez added a correction to the July 22nd meeting minutes and confirmed that she attended the July 22nd meeting virtually and not in-person. Vice Chair Smith entertained a motion to approve the July 22, 2026, meeting minutes with Commissioner Sazon-Valdez's recommended edits.

Motion: Commissioner Bryant moved to approve the July 22, 2026, meeting minutes. Commissioner Hanevold seconded the motion. Motion carried and the July 22nd meeting minutes were approved with the recommended edits.

4. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING UPDATES FROM AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH (AIR).
(INFORMATION/DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION)

The Commission heard updates on the ongoing research studies being conducted by AIR and potentially required a motion for additional research. Vice Chair Smith introduced and announced that Laura Rich from the Public Employees Benefit Program (PEBP) and Andrew Helms from the Teachers Health Trust were available on the line to answer specific questions outside of AIR's purview. The Commission was also directed to the meeting agenda for a link to the Nevada Educator Surveys results and redesign.

First, Lisa Merrill, Senior Researcher from AIR introduced the research team and outlined the agenda, which covered preliminary finding from three ongoing studies-statewide health insurance, mental health professional scholarships, and add-on endorsements-as well as updated survey data. Ms. Merrill presented the newly launched dashboard, Nevada Educator Voices, nveducatorvoices.org, highlighting key data points from the Exit/Transfer Survey:

- **Participation:** A substantial increase in responses was recorded, including over 600 responses from Clark County alone.
- **Reasons for Leaving:** Among voluntary departures statewide, personal life reasons ranked highest, followed by student discipline/behavior and workload expectations. Concerns over community pressure, physical environment, and commute distance ranked lowest.
- **Retention Drivers:** Survey respondents cited pay increases and reduced discipline issues as the primary factors that would encourage retention.
- **Mobility:** Slightly over one-third of departing respondents left teaching entirely, followed by retirees and internal district transfers.

Kellylynn Charles, Commission Secretary, noted that the site features authentic imagery of Nevada educators, integrates climate survey data, and groups frontier districts based on direct feedback from district leaders to maintain statistical validity.

Second, Wrandi Czulno, Researcher, with AIR, presented findings regarding the feasibility and impact of consolidating county-level school district health insurance plans into PEBP. Ms. Czulno's research was based on the following:

- Literature Scan: High premiums and low coverage quality negatively impact educator recruitment and retention, while low-cost, high-quality plans improve workforce stability.
- Comparative Analysis: PEBP PPO premiums are generally higher for individual coverage but lower for family coverage compared to district plans. PEBP's annual deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums are lower than most individual district plans.
- State Models (Georgia & Oregon):
    - Both states created separate educator health boards under their state employee benefit umbrellas.
    - In Georgia, the state funds employer health costs for certified staff ($1,885 per month per certified employee in FY2026), leading to 100% district opt-in. Districts remain responsible for non-certified staff.
    - Oregon requires districts to opt in upon collective bargaining agreement expiration (unless self-insured).

Andrew Helms, Chief Financial Officer, Teachers Health Trust emphasized that educators represent a unique workforce with distinct needs that must be carefully considered. While acknowledging the importance of managing premiums to prevent shifting costs onto members, he noted that factors beyond direct dollar amounts, such as network access, quality of care, customer service, and care management, were equally critical considerations. Mr. Helms agreed that greater leverage was necessary in the market, pointing out that their third-party administrator, UMR (a United Health subsidiary), held significant market power as a for-profit entity focused on shareholders. He state that non-profit fiduciaries like the Teachers Health Trust were essential to stand up and advocate for teachers in what he described as an upside-down local healthcare market. Mr. Helms expressed support for joining forces and pursuing these collaborative discussions.

Laura Rich, Board Member, Public Employees Benefit Program, explained that pooling resources generally maximizes value by reducing administrative costs, such as pharmacy benefit manager (PBM) or per-member-per-month fees currently paid separately by individual school districts. While healthcare costs vary significantly across Nevada, being notably lower in the Las Vegas region than in rural areas, pooling leverages overall volume. She acknowledged that consolidated purchasing creates relative trade-offs where some participating entities might win while others lose. She emphasized that overall gains could still be realized through volume discounts and stronger vendor negotiating power, recommending that actuaries crunch the numbers to evaluate the precise impact. Finally, Ms. Rich explained that unlike county plans, which often prioritize free or low-cost coverage for employees while charging significantly more to add family members, PEBP distributes costs more evenly across the board. Under PEBP's methodology, employees pay a small portion for their own coverage, which in turn keeps family add-on costs lower. She noted that this was a matter of policy strategy and mentioned that the board was actively discussion whether to update that pricing methodology.

Next, David Prudente, Senior Researcher, AIR, presented research on scholarship programs aimed at expanding the pipeline of school counselors, school psychologists, and school social workers. He highlighted that Nevada significantly exceeds recommended student-to-provider ratios across all three categories, mostly severely in school social work, at approximately 1 to 8,700 compared to the recommended 1 to 250. Mr. Prudente's research identified financial barriers from the ACA's 2024

Workforce Survey found that the average counselor student loan debt ($79,434) exceeded the average annual salary ($70,956) raising concerns about debt burden and long-term workforce sustainability. His research findings were that California utilizes a residency-based stipend model ($40,000 combined state/district) targeting existing staff via "Grow Your Own" strategies. Oregon provides flexible, year-round aid to support working adult pathways.

Commissioner Bryant and Commissioner Crowley noted that while scholarships address candidate supply, district administrative autonomy over building budgets often leads to counseling positions being cut during deficits. The emphasized the need for position stability alongside candidate pipelines. Deputy Superintendent, Christy McGill discussed potential strategies including Medicaid billing leverage, university partnerships, and telehealth supervision models for rural districts. Mr. Prudente concluded the presentation, and noted financial assistance is necessary but insufficient on its own to expand school-based mental health support in Nevada. A successful approach requires linking funding with institutional partnerships, flexible pathways, targeted placements, participant support, and clear impact metrics.

Finally, Sarah Mae Oliver, Researcher, AIR, shared findings on state financial assistance policies for add-on endorsements aimed at addressing qualification gaps and out-of-field teaching assignments. She explained the state models examined were:

- Arizona's GETSET add-on endorsement program offers up to $20,000 per year for general education teachers transitioning to special education, noting strong persistence among educators with prior classroom experience.
- Colorado's Rural Inservice Educator Stipend (RICE) endorsement provides $6,000 stipends for rural educators, yielding a 91% three-year rural retention rate.
- Washington's Educator Retooling Conditional Scholarship provides up to $3,000 directly to teachers for high-need endorsements on a first come, first served basis.

Vice Chair Smith and several other Commissioners discussed local context, including past district experiences reassigning teachers to special education roles and the out-of-pocket costs required to obtain full credentials. Commissioner Hanevold requested that AIR update the out-of-field and substitute metrics using the most recent data released by the state. Ms. Merrill confirmed that updated figures would be provided to the Commission. Commissioners discussed higher education partnerships, tuition cost barriers, and legislative opportunities to fund high-need subject endorsements.

Presenting the final slide, Lisa Merrill explained that the AIR team would continue conducting interviews, seeking out answers to remaining questions, synthesizing their findings, and creating deliverables ahead of the report due in the coming months. She added that they would continue refining these deliverables for the Commission, legislators, and other stakeholders even after the report's release, concluding by thanking the Commission for the opportunity to welcome further feedback. Vice Chair Smith thanked the AIR presenters, Andrew Helm, and Laura Rich for their work and concluded agenda item number four.

4. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT'S STUDENT WORK PROGRAM. *(INFORMATION/DISCUSSION)*

Vice Chair Smith pulled this agenda item from the agenda to be discussed at a future meeting.

5. INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING NEVADA DEPARTMEN OF EDUCATION UPDATES ON RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION INFORMATION REQUESTS. *(INFORMATION/DISCUSSION)*

Vice Chair Smith opened agenda item 6 which focused on updates from Commission Secretary, Kellylynn Charles regarding recruitment and retention information requests. Ms. Charles led the discussion and noted that the updated exit survey had been handed over to AIR. Ms. Charles addressed requested data concerning licensed educational personnel and teachers covering the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years, noting that current school year data is typically finalized in October. Ms. Charles outlined specific personnel transitions:

- Out of approximately 2,020 other licensed educational personnel (OLEPs), 11 transitioned into teaching positions, moving from roles such as counselor, psychologist, or social worker.
- Fifteen OLEPs moved to non-teaching positions, such as administrators, consultants, facilitators, or project coordinators at the district level.
- One hundred twenty-nine OLEPs retired, resigned, or left positions in Nevada by 2025.

Ms. Charles noted that tracking teachers moving into OLEP roles was still in progress due to the larger volume of teachers, approximately 25,000 compared to 2,020 OLEPs, with those results planned for the subsequent meeting. She mentioned that upgrades were underway to make the data system more efficient for complex requests. Ms. Charles confirmed that the Clark County, "Grow Your Own" support staff program presentation and the Commission on School Funding update, both previously postponed, were scheduled to be presented at the September meeting to provide updates and answer questions.

6. INFORMATION, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING WORK SESSION. *(INFORMATION/DISCUSSION)*

Ms. Charles guided the Commission through draft language for the biennial report due to the Legislative Council Bureau (LCB) on or before **Friday, November 13, 2026** (in advance of the statutory November 15 deadline). The final report will be agendized for formal approval in September. The following is a summary of the work session and notes taken on specific recommendation areas of the Commission:

- Area A – Minimum Salary Schedule: maintained as pending further study, not assigned to AIR.
- Area B – Health Insurance through PEBP:
    - *Findings/Specifics*: Propose an optional opt-in model for school districts and public charter schools; permit districts to contribute additional subsidies to maintain lower individual employee premiums; request that the state provide funding to cover baseline employer costs; expand the PEBP Board under NRS 287.041 to add three designated education seats-urban, rural, charter.
    - *Legal & Structural Clarifications*: Commissioner Owen and Commissioner Cole noted that statutes already permit districts to join PEBP, specifically following 2011

amendments preventing groups from enrolling only retirees, but financial barriers prevent participation, which state funding would resolve.

- Area C – Mentorship Programs:
    - Propose state funding to contract with a third party to develop a standardized statewide mentorship toolkit, best practices, and resources to curb early-career turnover prior to the three-year mark.
- Area D – Mental Health Professional Scholarships & Staffing Ratios:
    - Align with the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Education's recommendation to expand scholarship funding (Teach Nevada, Incentivizing Pathways, etc.) to specialized instructional support personnel.
    - *Staffing Ratios*: Commissioner Owen, Commissioner Bryant, and Commissioner Joy recommended establishing and funding explicit ratios, such as the national 1:250 ratio for counselors, rather than maintaining unfunded or vague single-person requirements. Recommended ensuring behavioral health personnel practice at the top of their scope rather than being assigned administrative/substitute duties.
- Area E – Teacher Advancement Scholarship:
    - Revisit at the September meeting to align with Joint Interim Committee recommendations expanding funding for licensed educators seeking master's degrees.
- Area F – Funding for Add-On Endorsements:
    - Propose targeted funding to help licensed educators acquire high-need endorsements, especially special education.
    - Commissioner Crowley requested NDE track Interim Route to Certification (IRC) data to prevent candidate drop-off.
    - Commissioner Hull suggested giving first priority for endorsement funding to teachers who have been displaced or surplused due to enrollment shifts.
- Area G – Student Loan Forgiveness:
    - Supported the Joint Interim Committee's BDR establishing a state loan forgiveness program; tiered forgiveness for educators with 7+ years of service and effective evaluations after Year 3.
    - *Definitions Section*: In response to Commissioner Bryant, the Commission agreed to add an explicit definitions section to the report clarifying that "educator" encompasses support staff, paraprofessionals, and student-facing personnel, while "teacher" designates classroom instructional staff.

Ms. Charles concluded her presentation with additional recommendations to propose funding for NDE to contract with a third party to develop, train, implement, and analyze annual statewide educator stay interviews to collect empirical data on workforce retention. Vice Chair Smith asked the Commission if there were any further thoughts or comments and closed agenda item 7 by confirming that no formal votes were taken as the full text will be presented for formal adoption at the September meeting.

7. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS *(INFORMATION/DISCUSSION)*

- Follow-up data and presentations from AIR on workforce vacancy data, health plan follow-ups.
- NDE update from Kellylynn Charles regarding teacher-to-OLEP transition figures.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT #2

There were no public comments in Carson City, Las Vegas, email, or by phone.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Seeing no objections from the Commission, Vice Chair Smith adjourned the meeting at 5:21 P.M.

APPENDIX A: STATEMENT GIVEN DURING PUBLIC COMMENT

Nicole Heller, CCSD Licensed Teacher-RBG3 Strategist, Ulis Newton Elementary School, provided public comment.

Summary of Public Comment:

Dear Members of the Nevada Commission on Recruitment and Retention:

My name is Nichole Heller, and I am a current Clark County School District licensed teacher and RBG3 Strategist. I am asking the Commission to examine how CCSD's salary placement practices have affected the recruitment and retention of experienced educators.

Some veteran teachers were not placed on the salary schedule according to their education, experience, and years of service. As a result, newly hired teachers may earn more than veteran teachers with comparable or greater qualifications.

I support competitive starting salaries for new teachers. This is not about taking anything away from them. It is about ensuring that experience, education, and loyalty are not financially penalized.

The current Salary Review and Adjustment Process does not fully resolve the problem. Adjustments are not retroactive. Funding may not correct every eligible teacher. Some prior teaching experience is excluded. There is no standard independent appeal process. Former and retired teachers may be excluded. CCSD and CCEA have also not publicly disclosed comprehensive data showing how many teachers applied, were approved, were denied, received adjustments, or remain underplaced.

My personal experience illustrates why this is a teacher retention issue.

I began working for CCSD as a long term substitute teacher and was hired as a licensed teacher in 2018. Altogether, I have approximately 11 years of service to CCSD. I have earned a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction, completed additional coursework for salary column advancement, and currently serve as an RBG3 Strategist supporting and coaching teachers at my school.

In 2022, despite already being an experienced CCSD teacher, I was earning less than newly hired first year teachers. I believe I should have qualified for a Tier I SRAP adjustment because I was directly affected by salary compression. I was initially identified as eligible for Tier III and was later informed that I was not eligible for any SRAP adjustment. I have repeatedly contacted CCSD requesting clarification and have been told that the determination is final and cannot be appealed.

I also questioned whether my four years of service at a Title I school were considered because employees with fewer years of CCSD service were prioritized for adjustments based on their current Title I placement.

I have documentation that I believe contradicts CCSD's determination.

Most concerning, another CCSD teacher with no prior teaching experience, three fewer years of CCSD licensed service, and no additional coursework submitted for column advancement qualified for an SRAP increase equivalent to two salary columns, while I was denied. That teacher currently earns approximately $1,200 more per month than I do despite having less seniority and fewer submitted Contact Units for column advancement.

*Based on my current salary placement, I estimate that I am losing approximately **$24,436 per year in compensation**, not including potential retroactive losses from the previous three school years.*

This type of disparity sends a troubling message to veteran educators. Teachers are being asked to remain in Nevada classrooms, take on leadership responsibilities, pursue advanced education, mentor and coach other educators, and dedicate their careers to this district while potentially earning substantially less than colleagues with fewer years of service.

*Salary compression is therefore not simply a compensation issue. It is a **teacher recruitment, morale, and retention issue.***

The financial consequences may also follow educators into retirement. If an educator's salary is incorrectly or inequitably placed during the years used to calculate retirement benefits, the effects of salary under placement may extend beyond employment with the district.

I respectfully ask the Commission to:

1. *Place CCSD veteran teacher salary compression and under placement on an upcoming Commission meeting agenda.*
2. *Invite current, former, and retired CCSD teachers to provide testimony regarding their experiences.*
3. *Request complete Salary Review and Adjustment Process data from CCSD and CCEA, including applications, approvals, denials, adjustments issued, denial reasons, and the number of educators who remain under placed.*
4. *Study how salary compression and salary placement inequities affect teacher morale, recruitment, and retention in Nevada.*
5. *Recommend legislation requiring an independent audit of CCSD teacher salary placement, transparent public reporting, complete correction of verified salary placement errors, and an independent appeal process.*
6. *Recommend that former and retired educators be included in the review, including an examination of potential impacts on Nevada PERS retirement benefits.*
7. *Examine whether the funding allocated or requested for salary adjustments is sufficient to correct every verified case rather than requiring affected teachers to compete for limited funding.*

Nevada cannot solve its teacher retention problem while experienced educators are paid less than newly hired employees with comparable or fewer qualifications. Veteran teachers should not be financially disadvantaged because they chose to remain in Nevada classrooms.

I was raised in this school district, chose to build my career here, continued my education, and now serve in a leadership role supporting other educators. After approximately 11 years of service to CCSD, I should not be questioning whether remaining loyal to this district has cost me tens of thousands of dollars in compensation.

Please distribute this letter to the members of the Nevada Commission on Recruitment and Retention and include it as written public comment for the Commission's next meeting. I would also appreciate information regarding how affected current, former, and retired teachers can provide testimony directly to the Commission.

Thank you for your consideration and for examining an issue that directly affects Nevada's ability to retain experienced educators.

Sincerely,

Nichole Heller
Henderson, Nevada
CCSD Licensed Teacher / RBG3 Strategist
Ulis Newton Elementary School
Approximately 11 Years of Service to CCSD
702-267-7621
Hellerhitched@gmail.com