

**Nevada Department of Education
Nevada State Board of Education
SPECIAL MEETING**

**April 3, 2025
10:30 AM**

Office	Address	City	Meeting
Department of Education	2080 E. Flamingo	Las Vegas	Room 114
Department of Education	700 E. Fifth St.	Carson	Board Room
Department of Education	Virtual	Virtual	YouTube Link

Summary Minutes of the Board Meeting

Board Members Present

Dr. Katherine Dockweiler, President
Tim Hughes, Vice President
Tamara Hudson, Clerk
Dr. Tricia Braxton
Annette Dawson Owens
Tate Else
Danielle Ford
Michael Keyes
Angela Orr
Mike Walker

Board Members Absent Excused

None

Department Staff Present

Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Dr. Steve Canavero, Interim Superintendent of Public Instruction
Ann Marie Dickson, Deputy Superintendent for Student Achievement Office
Lisa Ford, Chief Strategy Officer
Christy McGill, Deputy Superintendent for Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement
Megan Peterson, Deputy Superintendent for Student Investment Division
Julie Bowers, Education Programs Director
Angie Castellanos, Administrative Assistant
Joan Jackson, Education Programs Professional
Shawna Jessen, Education Programs Director
Sandy Julian, Administrative Assistant
Mandy Leytham, Education Programs Professional
Krisi Taylor, Administrative Assistant

Legal Staff Present

David Gardner, Senior Deputy Attorney General

Audience in Attendance

Greg Bailer, Pathfinder Group
Anna Binder, Community Member
Shannon Brown, Douglas County School District
Greg Cole, Clark County School District
Jessica Barlow Daniels, Carson Montessori
Gideon Davis, State Purchasing
Andrea Fenly, Carson City School District
Rorie Fitzpatrick, WestEd
AJ Feuling, Carson City School District
Jeff Geihs, Nevada Association of School Administrators
Aniel Giudici, Flynn Giudici
Brad Keating, Clark County School District
Kelsey Krausen, WestEd
Glen Leavitt, Pathfinder Group
Mark Mathers, Washoe County School District
Tiffany McMaster, Washoe County School District
Amanda Morgan, Educate Nevada Now
Trevor Parrish, Government Affairs
Leslie Peters, Douglas County School District
Ryan Reeves, Academica NV
Sean Tanner, WestEd
Michaela Tonking, APA Consulting
Adam Young, White Pine County School District

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, Pledge of Allegiance, and Land Acknowledgement

Meeting called to order at 10:33 A.M. by President Dockweiler. Quorum was established. President Dockweiler led the Pledge of Allegiance and provided a land acknowledgement.

2. Public Comment #1

- a) Steve Canavero, Interim Superintendent, Nevada Department of Education
- b) Trevor Parrish, Manager, Government Affairs
- c) Dr. Jeffrey Geihs, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Administrators
- d) AJ Feuling, Superintendent, Carson City School District
- e) Brad Keating, Clark County School District
- f) Leslie Peters, Assistant Director of Educational Services Nevada, Douglas County School District
- g) Shannon Brown, Executive Director of Education Services Nevada, Douglas County School District
- h) Greg Cole, Clark County School District
- i) Ryan Reeves, Chief Operating Officer, Academica NV
- j) Adam Young, Superintendent, White Pine County School District
- k) Tiffany McMaster and Mark Mathers, Deputy Superintendent and Chief Financial Officer, Washoe County School District

(A complete copy of the statements are available in Appendix A)

3. Approval of Flexible Agenda

Member Else moved to approve a flexible agenda. Vice President Hughes seconded. Motion passed.

4. Information, Discussion, and Possible Action Regarding the Establishment of the Criteria and Process for Selecting the State Superintendent Search

The Board reviewed and discussed the criteria and process for selecting candidates for the position of State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

The motion was to approve and update the position based on the discussed criteria: committed to all students' success, visionary leadership, collaborative and approachable, strong communication skills, integrity and ethical decision making, innovative and forward-thinking, knowledgeable in education policy and practice, equity-focused, resilient and adaptable, and student-centered mindset. Host two in-person events, one in the North and one in the South. Create a digital survey to collect feedback, ensuring it is available in multiple languages. Revisit the item at the May 14th meeting. Move forward with the proposed recommendation regarding the criteria for the Superintendent's search.

The motion passed with seven votes in favor: President Dockweiler, Vice President Hughes, Member Ford, Member Hudson, Member Braxton, Member Orr, and Member Owens.

5. Information, Discussion, and Possible Action on the Recommendation for the Contract for the Read by Grade 3 Assessment

The Board received a presentation regarding the recommended vendor resulting from the [Request for Procurement \(RFP\) for the Read by Grade 3 \(RBG3\)](#) statewide assessment, authorizing staff to move forward with contract negotiations. Presented by Ann Marie Dickson, Deputy Superintendent for Student Achievement Division, Shawna Jessen, Director, Office of Teaching and Learning, Joan Jackson, Education Programs Professional, Read by Grade 3, and Mandy Leytham, Education Programs Professional, Read by Grade 3.

Director Jessen began the presentation by referencing the statutory authority for administering a uniform reading examination, directing attention to NRS 388.335. She confirmed that all statutory requirements were followed throughout the RFP process and that the Evaluation Committee had been properly formed in accordance with state law.

Director Jessen then reviewed the procurement process, referencing a slide the board had seen previously. She emphasized that the team had followed each step, and they were now at the stage of recommending a uniform assessment for board approval. She outlined the stakeholders involved in developing the selection criteria, which included various groups from across the state. Although not listed on the slide, she noted for the record that feedback was also solicited through the department's social media channels and website for full transparency. Slides six and seven listed the criteria drawn directly from the RFP, developed using the stakeholder input. A diverse review committee, composed of members from school districts across Nevada, including superintendents, district leaders, assessment coordinators, and even a student, evaluated vendor proposals based on these criteria. On slide eight, she highlighted the statewide representation of the committee, including board members who also participated. Slide nine outlined the roles and responsibilities of committee members. Director Jessen then announced that, based on the committee's thorough review, the department officially recommended Curriculum Associates as the selected vendor. She clarified that the specific tool to be used in schools is IReady. She concluded with a brief overview of next steps, which include notifying Nevada State Purchasing and collaborating with the vendor on training and implementation. She thanked the board and opened the floor for questions.

Vice President Hughes raised a question regarding slide six of the presentation. He stated that, upon

reviewing the data, he noted the criteria used in the evaluation process were essential, as they ultimately determined the final outcome. He expressed concern that not all feedback from stakeholders appeared to be represented on the slide. Specifically, he referenced previous discussions about the importance of longitudinal data and noted its absence from the listed criteria. He questioned what process was used to distill broad stakeholder input into the five bullet points presented on the slide.

Member Orr referenced slide four, which stated that the State Board of Education had provided input on the components they wanted included in the assessment. She asked for clarification on what specific components the board had requested and when that input was given.

Deputy Superintendent Ann Marie Dixon responded, noting for the record that she would defer to Ms. Mandy Leytham to provide further details. Ms. Leytham stated that while she did not have the specific feedback on hand, the information presented was a summarized culmination of the input received throughout the process. She offered to provide detailed feedback at a later time if requested. Ms. Leytham recalled that the board was engaged around October, when a presentation was delivered by Mr. Peter Zutz, Director of the ADAM Office. She stated that during that presentation, the procurement process was reviewed. She also mentioned that the department also reached out to board members via email to gather additional input. In addition to the board meeting, the information was posted publicly on the Nevada Department of Education website and shared through NDE's social media platforms to ensure broad stakeholder engagement, including feedback opportunities for board members.

Member Orr noted that iReady is a comprehensive platform with a wide range of resources, tools, and assessments. She asked which specific assessment would be adopted for the third-grade assessment.

Deputy Superintendent Ann Marie Dixon thanked the board for the question and, for the record, noted that Mr. Gideon Davis, Administrator for State Purchasing, was present to clarify what information could be shared. She requested that Mr. Davis confirm what could be disclosed. Upon receiving permission, Ms. Mandy Leytham stated that the selected assessment was the iReady assessment for grades K–3, which also included a K–1 screening tool designed to target foundational skills. She added that the package included multiple reporting features for teachers, schools, districts, and the state. When asked whether the assessment was diagnostic or summative, Ms. Leytham clarified that it was a benchmark assessment administered three times per year, in fall, winter, and spring. She also noted that optional tools for progress monitoring were available, along with the K–1 screener, pending board approval. At a minimum, benchmark assessment would likely be required, with additional tools available for classroom use.

Member Orr expressed concern that it appeared contract negotiations were taking place before the State Board of Education had given its approval, despite understanding that the board was required to approve the assessment before any contractual agreements were finalized. She asked for clarification on the status of the process.

Mr. Gideon Davis, Administrator of the State Purchasing Division, responded by clarifying that, according to statute, the State Board of Education is not required to approve contracts. Instead, the Department of Education is required to work with the Purchasing Division to negotiate and finalize a contract with the selected vendor. He confirmed that the contract had already been signed by Superintendent Ebert and, pending board approval of the vendor selection, it would be submitted to the Board of Examiners at their next meeting. If the State Board chose not to approve the selected vendor, the Purchasing Division would cancel the solicitation and restart the process.

Member Orr acknowledged the explanation but noted her surprise, stating she had been under the impression, based on prior information received throughout the year, that the State Board was responsible for selecting the uniform examination, as defined by statute.

Member Else asked whether the additional assessment tools mentioned, such as the K–1 screener, would come at an extra cost to school districts in the future or if they were included in the current contract.

Ms. Mandy Leytham confirmed that those additional assessments were part of the current contract and would not result in extra costs to districts. She explained that while the board would approve the uniform examination, tools like the K–1 screener, if included in the contract, could be available as optional resources for districts or teachers to use. These would not be required but would be accessible at no additional cost.

Member Else then asked for clarification on what exactly the state would be purchasing through this contract. Ms. Leytham deferred to State Purchasing for details and noted that the contract with Curriculum Associates was a matter of public record. She was surprised that the committee had not been provided with a link to the contract documentation for review.

Member Orr supported the concern, stating that a request for more information had been made earlier in the week so board members could compare different aspects of the options. She emphasized that simply being given a vendor name was insufficient for making an informed decision and reiterated that the information had been publicly available and should have been provided to the board.

Member Ford asked whether the proposed assessment relied on one-to-one student technology, such as Chromebooks. Ms. Mandy Leytham clarified that the assessment would be administered on computers but did not require a one-to-one device ratio. In cases where appropriate, a paper-and-pencil option would be available. Member Ford inquired about the other top assessment options considered during the procurement process. Ms. Leytham deferred to the State Purchasing Division due to confidentiality rules surrounding procurement. Mr. Gideon Davis, Administrator for State Purchasing, confirmed that the vendor list was public record. Deputy Attorney General David Gardner clarified that it was permissible to disclose the top three ranked vendors. Ms. Leytham then shared that the top three assessment providers were: Curriculum Associates (selected vendor), Amira Learning, and NWEA MAP Assessment.

Member Ford asked about the length of the contract. It was confirmed that the contract with Curriculum Associates would extend through May 12, 2029, with an option to extend beyond that term.

Superintendent Ebert addressed the board to clarify the process that had been followed. She noted that, in response to various questions and concerns raised during the meeting, it was important to “level set” the understanding of how the selection process had unfolded. She explained that the process began with broad input from stakeholders across the state, including teachers, students, parents, and board members. This input was used to inform the development of a Request for Proposal (RFP), which aligned with the statutory requirements for the Read by Grade 3 initiative and its emphasis on measuring student outcomes. The finalized RFP was brought before the board and approved on October 2. From that point, a review committee, of which a State Board member was part, evaluated vendor submissions based on the criteria in the RFP. The committee then ranked the proposals and selected the top vendor. Superintendent Ebert emphasized that the board was not being presented with multiple options to choose from. Instead, the board was being asked to approve or reject the top-ranked vendor as determined through the established process. She assured the board that the department had been deliberate and compliant with state procurement rules throughout the process.

Member Hudson sought clarification on the board's role in the decision, asking whether they were being asked to vote on something that had already been selected. Superintendent Ebert confirmed that the board was voting on the highest-ranked vendor, as determined by the evaluation committee. The board's role was to either approve or reject the committee's recommendation.

Deputy Attorney David Gardner addressed confusion around the Board's role in the procurement process. The Department must first conduct an RFP under procurement law, after which the Board may approve or reject the top-ranked vendor. If the Board rejects the recommendation, the process restarts.

Member Dawson Owens, noting that she was new to the board, expressed discomfort with approving of a decision that seemed to be unfolding without full transparency. She stated that, in reviewing previous Read by Grade 3 meetings, she was unable to find information related to the current decision, which raised concerns for her about the clarity and accessibility of the process. She referenced public comments about the rapid rollout timeline and emphasized, from her perspective as an educator, that the transition to a new system requires significant preparation and support. She questioned the costs and logistics involved in switching platforms, including the time needed to update systems like dashboards. She suggested that a pause might be appropriate before moving forward, though she acknowledged that she was unsure what options were available and welcomed additional input.

Member Ford expressed support for moving away from MAP testing but shared concerns that the proposed assessment did not appear significantly different. As a newly elected board member representing half of Clark County, she emphasized that she had repeatedly requested the opportunity to participate in vision planning, particularly in areas such as student learning, assessment, and curriculum, but had not yet been given that opportunity. She noted that several key decisions seemed to have been made without broader board involvement, and although she had reviewed past meeting materials, she felt she lacked sufficient context. Member Ford argued that the board should be asking not which vendor to select, but rather what they want to know about student learning and how to empower educators and communities to measure it. She advocated for a shift from vendor-centered approaches to more student- and teacher-centered models. Member Ford pointed to alternative assessments used in other states, such as DIBELS, Fast Bridge, and Illuminate, as well as portfolio-based systems in Vermont, California (CPAC), and New York (Performance Standards Consortium). These models, she explained, are often developed by educators and are more community focused. She expressed concern about students being overly reliant on technology, especially for reading assessments, and stated that educators have long been capable of evaluating literacy without large-scale contracts or digital platforms. While reiterating her desire to move away from MAP testing, she concluded by urging the board to consider alternative, innovative approaches to student assessment.

Member Walker expressed agreement with Member Ford's concerns. He shared that his school currently used both MAP and iReady assessments and noted that, regardless of the tool selected, all assessments come with limitations and may not fully capture a student's reading comprehension abilities. He noted a preference for iReady, as it is skill-based, and shared that MAP had become more difficult to use in recent years due to changes in its reporting features. Member Walker emphasized the importance of enhancing assessment practices to better measure student literacy but also stressed the urgency of selecting an assessment tool. He stated that school districts needed clarity in order to begin professional development and to create their Read by Grade 3 implementation plans. He concluded by saying that the board needed to make a clear decision, either to move forward with the committee's recommendation or reopen the process, recognizing that many schools were awaiting direction.

Member Orr expressed concerns about the process and transparency, stating that they had questions but also a proposal for moving forward. They acknowledged hearing public comments from districts and noted that the tight timeline for adopting new assessments posed challenges, especially for smaller districts. While larger districts, like Washoe County and Clark County, already used iReady, others would face significant training and adjustment, especially with the new kindergarten assessment. Member Orr proposed a "hold harmless" year, allowing districts to transition without immediate pressure to purchase iReady. This would give districts time to prepare and continue using NWEA MAP for one more year. The goal was to ensure a smooth transition, honoring both teachers and districts while allowing time for future discussions about cut scores and retention.

In response, DAG Gardner explained that the procurement process was tied to existing contracts, and delaying or adjusting the timeline would require renegotiation with the vendors. Superintendent Ebert added that the cost of the assessment would be covered by the state, not the districts, and expressed concerns about how the transition would affect school districts.

Vice President Hughes raised concerns about the lack of information regarding the procurement process and the potential implications of recent legislation (AB 386), which might require approval of multiple assessments for use in literacy plans.

Member Ford suggested a more innovative approach, such as building a teacher-led assessment system rather than purchasing from external vendors, citing successful examples from other states like New Hampshire and Vermont.

After some back-and-forth, Member Orr withdrew their motion, and Member Walker concurred. The group then discussed tabling the item to allow time for further review of the materials and a more informed decision at a future meeting. There was some debate over whether tabling or moving forward without a decision was the best approach. Ultimately, the group agreed to revisit the item at a future meeting.

President Dockweiler motioned to table the item and review it at a future meeting.

6. Information, Discussion, and Possible Action Regarding the GRAD Score Analysis and the Possible Creation of a Committee to Consider Alternative Criteria

The board reviewed and discussed the GRAD Score Analysis conducted by subject matter experts, including key findings and their implications. Additionally, the board consider taking action to form a committee to explore alternative criteria for identifying "At Risk" students. The [PowerPoint](#) presentation was done by Megan Peterson, Deputy Superintendent for Student Investment Division and Dr. Sean Tanner, Senior Research Associate, WestEd.

Superintendent Jhone Ebert expressed excitement about presenting the data and conveyed gratitude to the board for requesting a deeper analysis. She noted that this was only the second year the funding had been administered in its current form, making the data particularly fresh and up to date. Superintendent Ebert acknowledged the efforts of researchers and psychometricians who contributed to the analysis, highlighting the involvement of West Ed and APA in providing valuable insights. She concluded by expressing enthusiasm for sharing the data, then introduced Dr. Sean Tanner to take over the presentation.

Dr. Sean Tanner began his presentation by acknowledging the time constraints and promising to present the data in three digestible parts, with pauses for understanding in between. He shared that the data was part of ongoing support provided by WESTED and APA around the people-centered funding plan. The focus was

to analyze the stability of the "at-risk" indicator across two years and its relationship with student demographics and performance.

He presented data on the stability of at-risk student counts from the 2022-2023 to the 2023-2024 school years. The total number of at-risk students dropped by about 2,254, from approximately 63,000 to just under 60,000. Dr. Tanner explained that students could fall into one of four categories: 1) at-risk eligible without an IEP or EL designation, 2) at-risk with an IEP or EL, 3) not at risk, and 4) not in the public system. He discussed the movement of students between these categories and presented a Sankey graph to show how students transitioned between statuses.

Dr. Tanner pointed out that, although the overall at-risk population dropped, many students shifted categories. For example, nearly half of the students who were initially at risk in the first year became not at risk in the second year, while some moved out of the public system or gained an IEP or EL designation. On the flip side, over 20,000 students who were not at risk in the first year became at-risk eligible in the second year.

Dr. Tanner then addressed the sources of change, such as student mobility and changes in program eligibility. Mobility accounted for a net drop of about 3,067 students, while differences in program eligibility led to a further decrease of 1,250 students. He also discussed changes in grad scores, which are updated daily. He explained that 16,984 students who were at-risk eligible in the 2022-2023 school year remained eligible the following year due to changes in their grad scores. Additionally, over 19,000 students who were not at risk in the first year became eligible in the second year because of a drop in their grad scores. This resulted in a net increase of 2,071 students in the at-risk category due to grad score changes. Tanner presented a summary table quantifying the sources of change. For mobility, there was a loss of 10,422 students, and for program eligibility, a loss of 1,996 students. The changes due to grad score accounted for a loss of 16,984 students. In total, the base year's at-risk eligible population dropped by 29,408 students, or 47%. However, the population also gained 43%, resulting in a net change of a 3.6% decrease in the at-risk eligible pool in the following year.

Next, Dr. Tanner compared these findings to a hypothetical scenario where direct certification (Direct Cert) was used instead of grad scores for at-risk identification. Using Direct Cert would result in a much higher base number of at-risk students—149,000—more than double the number identified using grad scores. While Direct Cert would lead to the loss of 42,000 students, there would be a gain of 36,000 new at-risk students, resulting in a net decrease of 5,903 students, or a 4% drop. Dr. Tanner pointed out that while using Direct Cert leads to more churn, the overall net change was similar to the grad score method, with a net reduction of about 3.6% using grad scores and 4% using Direct Cert.

Dr. Tanner then addressed the demographic breakdown of at-risk students, noting that 51% of at-risk students were Hispanic/Latino, 28% were Black, 12% were White, and smaller percentages identified as Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian. Regarding gender, 59% of at-risk students were male, and 41% were female. He also noted that 74% of at-risk students were eligible for Direct Cert, 96% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 21% had limited English proficiency, 20% had an IEP, and 1.1% were in foster care.

Member Else asked for clarification regarding the Native American population, questioning why their representation among at-risk students seemed low despite having one of the highest dropout rates. Tanner explained that the representation of Native American students in the at-risk category was slightly higher than their statewide population proportion, but due to their small population size, they made up only a small

percentage of the at-risk students overall.

Dr. Tanner then transitioned to the second part of the presentation, where the focus shifted to the correlation between the at-risk indicator and student demographics and performance data. He stated that they would examine how the at-risk indicator correlated with various factors, such as demographics and performance metrics.

Dr. Tanner continued by examining the relationship between student demographics and the likelihood of being identified as at risk. He showed that of the at-risk students, 51% were Hispanic/Latino, 28% were Black, 12% were White, and smaller percentages were identified as Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian. He also highlighted the gender breakdown, where 59% of at-risk students were male and 41% were female. These figures were compared to both the non-at-risk group and the statewide population to show how each demographic group was represented in the at-risk population. Dr. Tanner then compared the two types of slides presenting the data. The first slide gave the overall breakdown of the at-risk group by demographic category. The second slide presented the proportion of each demographic category that was at risk, showing a different perspective on the data. For example, while 28% of at-risk students were Black, 46% of Black students in the state were at risk. Similarly, while 59% of at-risk students were male, the proportion of males at risk was much higher compared to their overall representation in the population. Dr. Tanner emphasized that this type of data helps in understanding the intersection of demographics and the likelihood of being at risk.

He then proceeded to provide further detail on the overlap between the at-risk category and other eligibility categories such as Direct Cert eligibility, free/reduced-price lunch (FRL), limited English proficiency (LEP), special education (IEP), and foster care. Tanner showed that 74% of at-risk students were eligible for Direct Cert, 96% were eligible for free/reduced-price lunch, 21% had limited English proficiency, 20% had an IEP, and 1.1% were in foster care. He clarified that while foster care students made up a small percentage of the at-risk group, they had a higher rate of being at risk, with 56% of foster care students classified as at-risk.

Dr. Tanner then moved to the academic performance data, showing the distribution of at-risk students across various levels of the S-BAC assessments in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science. He explained that 39% of students scoring at level 1 in ELA were at risk, 38% in Math, and 32% in Science. As performance levels increased, the percentage of at-risk students decreased significantly, with only 2-3% of students in the highest performance levels being at risk.

Dr. Tanner also presented the breakdown of how at-risk students scored in these assessments, showing that 60% of at-risk students scored at level 1 in ELA, 20% at level 2, and fewer at higher levels. Similar patterns were observed in Math and Science, where at-risk students predominated in the lower performance levels. The presentation then included data from the ACT, which followed a similar pattern: 36% of students scoring at level 1 in ACT ELA were at risk, and 28% of students scoring at level 1 in ACT Math were at risk. Again, the percentage of at-risk students decreased as performance levels increased.

One of the key points throughout the presentation was the lack of transparency in the weights used in the algorithm for calculating the grad scores and the at-risk designation. Dr. Tanner acknowledged that while the methodology used is based on an algorithm, the exact weights for factors like test performance, family income, race, and gender are not publicly available. This raised concerns about the fairness and effectiveness of the system, and Dr. Tanner noted that further research would be needed to understand these factors and improve the at-risk identification process.

Dr. Tanner also discussed the need for further research into the weighting of factors in the algorithm, which could potentially lead to more targeted interventions and a more transparent understanding of how students are classified as at-risk.

Vice President Hughes expressed concerns about the mechanism needed to address Member Orr's request, which had broad support from the board. Vice President Hughes asked how they could incorporate Member Orr's request into the agenda and whether it would be possible to vote to direct a subcommittee to process the request immediately or provide an answer before the next meeting.

Deputy Attorney General (DAG) David Gardner clarified that the body could indeed direct the subcommittee to start processing the request immediately or provide an answer before the next meeting. He further explained that another agenda item could be added to the next meeting to address changes to the grad score, or make other adjustments, depending on what was decided.

Member Dawson Owens raised a concern about the potential for taking action on two separate issues, one regarding the grad score analysis and another concerning changes to it. Member Dawson Owens deferred to DAG Gardner for further clarification on how to move forward. DAG Gardner responded that, based on the current presentation, the only possible action to take would concern the grad score analysis itself, not the grad score.

Vice President Hughes proposed forming a subcommittee to explore the issue in more depth and to provide a recommendation for the board's consideration at the May meeting. He suggested that Member Orr should chair the subcommittee, assuming Orr was willing, and that the subcommittee would be tasked with identifying the appropriate mechanism for addressing the grad score issue. DAG Gardner responded by asking whether the members of the subcommittee should be appointed immediately or whether that decision would be left to the chair. He noted that the chair could be given the authority to appoint members either during the meeting or by email.

Member Orr emphasized the importance of moving forward swiftly, acknowledging the time sensitivity of the issue. She highlighted that public interest and the need for districts to make timely decisions were key factors in why they should act quickly. Member Orr proposed that the subcommittee should be tasked with finding a solution as soon as possible, with the goal of providing a recommendation to the board during the May 14 meeting. She noted that efficiency was critical to ensuring that school districts could plan effectively for their funding.

Member Ford raised concerns about the timeline, and she expressed support for resolving the issue before the next meeting but sought further clarification on the expected outcome of the subcommittee's work.

DAG Gardner explained that the subcommittee's task would be to either confirm the current grad score measure or suggest a change, with the final decision to be made by the full body. The goal was to make this decision before the legislature's budget process.

Member Ford also asked about how the subcommittee members would be selected. DAG Gardner reassured that the subcommittee could be formed at that meeting, and it would be possible for the chair to appoint members, provided the actions of the subcommittee were unanimous.

Vice President Hughes seconded the motion and proposed a friendly amendment allowing the committee

chair to work with President Dockweiler to determine whether a special meeting or the regular May meeting would be the best time to present the subcommittee's findings. This amendment was accepted by Member Orr.

Member Braxton raised a concern about the number of committee members needed. He suggested that if only two members volunteered, they could still proceed by appointing the remaining members within 48 hours. DAG Gardner confirmed that the minimum number of members required for a committee was two but emphasized that any action would need to be unanimous.

Member Ford suggested including representatives from both the northern and southern regions of the state to ensure the diverse perspectives were represented in the subcommittee. This suggestion was noted, and it was agreed that such representation would be beneficial. The motion, with the friendly amendment, was put to a vote.

Member Braxton acknowledged the need for both regional representation and agreed with the appointments. The motion passed with all members in favor, and Member Orr was officially tasked with chairing the subcommittee.

Member Orr also noted that it was important to have a mix of stakeholders involved in the process. She suggested including both supporters and opponents of the grad score analysis, ensuring that a variety of perspectives would be considered in the subcommittee's work. This approach, she believed, would contribute to a more well-rounded recommendation for the board.

The board recognized the urgency of addressing the issue in alignment with the legislature's budget process.

Member Else motioned, as amended and passed, was that a subcommittee be formed, chaired by Member Orr, who will have the authority to appoint three members to serve with her on the subcommittee. Additionally, the committee chair (Member Orr) will work with President Dockweiler to determine the best time to report back to the Board, either during a special meeting or the regular May meeting. Noted preference for geographic representation (north and south) Vice President Hughes seconded the motion. Approved unanimously with no opposition or abstentions.

7. Public Comment #2

- a) Jhone Ebert, Superintendent, Nevada Department of Education
- b) Jessica Barlow Daniels, Executive Director Principal, Carson Montessori
- c) Amanda Morgan, Executive Director, Educate Nevada Now
- d) Anna Binder, Community Member
- e) Jeff Church, Community Member

(A complete copy of the statements are available in Appendix A)

8. Future Agenda Item Requests

None

9. Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 2:33 P.M.

Appendix A: Statements given during public comments

1. Dr. Steve Canavero
2. Trevor Parrish
3. Dr. Jeffrey Geihs
4. AJ Feuling
5. Dr. Brad Keating
6. Leslie Peters and Shannon Brown
7. Greg Cole
8. Ryan Reeves
9. Adam Young
10. Tiffany McMaster and Mark Mathers
11. Jhone Ebert
12. Amanda Morgan
13. Anna Binder
14. Jeff Church

Appendix A, Item 1: DR. STEVE CANAVERO

I'm speaking as a contractor, it's my second day on the job, overlapping with Superintendent Ebert and downloading gigabytes of data from her into my personal hard drive. On April 14th, I will be your interim State Superintendent, and I just wanted to introduce myself and say that I'm looking forward to working with you. I also want to echo the board's appreciation for Superintendent Ebert's leadership. The department has been in fantastic hands, and I hope to steward it well over the next few months as you all work through your recruitment and selection process. Thank you.

Appendix A, Item 2: TREVOR PARRISH

Hi, thank you, and good morning, Superintendent Ebert and members of the Board. For the record, my name is Trevor Parish, and I'm here with the Vegas Chamber. The Chamber is here in support of the proposal in Action Item Six. The proposed committee is a recommendation from the Commission on School Funding and will help our education system better serve all students in our community. Thank you for your time and consideration of Action Item Six.

Appendix A, Item 3: DR. JEFFREY GEIHS

President Dockweiler, Superintendent Ebert, members of the Board, my name is Dr. Jeffrey G. Geihs, Executive Director of the Nevada Association of School Administrators (NASA). It's a pleasure to be here this morning. Like Trevor, NASA agrees with the Commission on School Funding that we should keep the GRAD score, continue to analyze it, and stay the course. We encourage the State Board to do the same. My other comment is a deep and heartfelt congratulations to Superintendent Ebert. I know many of my colleagues in the Clark County School District are eagerly awaiting your leadership, and at NASA, we believe you're going to do a fantastic job. Congratulations, Superintendent.

Appendix A, Item 4: DR. BRAD KEATING

Good morning, all. Brad Keating, for the record, representing the Clark County School District. We appreciate you all moving forward today on Item Six. As we've said numerous times, not only here, but at the State Legislature as well, it is incredibly important to follow the recommendations of the Commission on School Funding. We hope you'll continue to do that here with Item Six, and we appreciate your support in analyzing the GRAD score. The only other thing, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention it, is this, Superintendent Ebert, congratulations. We are excited, and I'm personally excited, to continue having the opportunity to work with you at the greatest district in the state, CCSD. Thank you.

Appendix A, Item 5: AJ FEULING

Two topics today of issue. One, regarding the Read by 3 contracts being considered, first, the outcome of, I think it's Curriculum Associates, is not really a concern. I don't know anything about the company. Given what is happening at the federal level, changes here, as have been mentioned, at the Department of Education, there's already a great deal of change for districts, charters, and the state that are happening without even considering changes with Read by Grade 3. We know that there are likely changes to come with what is expected for literacy instruction in our schools, and having the consistent set of data that we have going back would be potentially very helpful, instead of changing some of that here in the near future. The timing of this is also important. We have a new kindergarten assessment rolling out starting next year, and we are working to get people trained and prepped in a very compressed timeline. It's now April, and we have administrators and teachers that would have to do a lot of work in the very near future to try to make another change happen. NWEA has been a good partner for us over the past number of years, and really, just for the sake of consistency, potentially not making a change would be incredibly helpful. On the at-risk side, and I think this is well established, the concerns around at-risk funding ultimately come down to transparency. The whole reason the Nevada Plan changed was to move toward the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. We were looking for something that was more transparent. I think we understand that the GRAD score is a useful indicator, but maybe it's just being used in the wrong place. The funding stability around it is a real problem for school districts. If we're going to have consistent programs, we need to have consistent funding. We definitely support the idea of looking at alternative criteria, and if it's a committee to vet that, that is fine. In the interim, Washoe County Schools and Carson City Schools have made suggestions on alternatives or, just to get us through this interim, to potentially allocate those funds out as a percentage of total K-12 district enrollment, so everyone understands what's happening. That will give us time, going into the next biennium, to hopefully come up with a different solution. That is all. Thank you so much.

Appendix A, Item 6: LESLIE PETERS AND SHANNON BROWN

Leslie Peters, Assistant Director of Education Services for Douglas County School District. Here with Shannon Brown, the Director of Education Services. We are here to share our thoughts about the selection of the company for the Read by Grade Three universal screening—being iReady, basically. We feel that the state as a whole, and I know our district specifically, is in a place where a lot of training has been provided through NWEA this year for our literacy specialists working directly with teachers and students. Our teachers have attended trainings, and I think we're at a place where we've been using MAP for a long time. I remember using the ALT paper-pencil version when I was in the classroom years and years ago in Lyon County, and we've come a long way. I think we're finally to a place where teachers are really able to dive in and use the data, and I share Superintendent Feuling's concerns: we have a new kindergarten entry assessment rolling out, and now we're going to ask those same teachers to learn a new platform for administering a screener in the winter to students. So I would just ask that we consider teachers and what we're asking them to do. I know that education is always changing and we need to be responsive, but I'm not sure that, other than the contract running out with NWEA, it was really broken. Our district is also piloting the summative MAP, and so it seems a bit strange to be piloting something like that if we're then moving away from MAP for a pretty big initiative in our state. Thank you.

Appendix A, Item 7: GREG COLE

Good morning. My name is Greg Cole. I'm the principal at Mojave High School in the Clark County School District, and I'm here to testify this morning on Item Number Six in support of the Commission on School Funding as it relates to the GRAD score analysis. We feel that this is the most equitable way to meet the needs of all students and continue the work that is currently being done, and we are in full support of it. Thank you for your time.

Appendix A, Item 8: RYAN REEVES

For the record, I'm Brian Reeves, the Chief Operating Officer of Academica Nevada. We support 35,000 students in Nevada State Public Charter Schools. I'm also on the board of the Charter School Association of Nevada, and I am here to strongly encourage you to end the harmful policy of utilizing the GRAD score for funding. It was never meant for that purpose; it is not intended for that, and it is a wrong usage of an illegal tool for an illegal purpose. The history of this item is that I have been speaking on this to the Commission on School Funding and to this Board now for over a year. The schools that I work with have been patiently waiting for something to change. It has gone through multiple agenda items and has been the subject of a work session. Out of that work session, this Board specifically directed staff to bring back exact numbers of students who meet certain criteria and exact numbers of students who would be dual counted, from those criteria to ELL and special education, so that a change could be made at this meeting. That was the specific instruction of this Board, and that is what staff must do to honor the elected members of this Board and the power you have been given statutorily. I hope and expect to see that happen at Agenda Item Six. As I've already mentioned, you cannot use a tool that changes in the back rooms of private companies, and this one already has. They have already announced in a Commission on School Funding hearing that they have removed three to four factors from when it was first used. There was no notice to this Board. There was no presentation to this Board. There was no notice to the public. If any school says, "Oh, my student has a GRAD score of 85, I disagree, I think it's a GRAD score of 76," please check. Please show us.

They will not show you, it is proprietary. It is public. How do you distribute public funds on a matter like that? You don't have an option to do nothing because you've never approved the GRAD score permanently. A temporary regulation expires after six months automatically. To continue using the GRAD score without a vote to say, "Yes, we're doing it," is something that could be immediately handled by a lawsuit and ended. Without any discovery whatsoever, they can see, just from the public record, that you can't do it. Voting for it just isn't justified by good policy or good logic. You don't fund failure. You don't fund failure. Academic failure is not what we fund. We look at the conditions of the student, the specific socioeconomic statuses of the student, and we fund that. If a school is spending extra money to provide additional resources to get great academic results, that funding should stay, not immediately be pulled away to another source. I am looking forward to hopefully what should have happened two years ago happening today, a good and fair at-risk funding mechanism being put in place by this Board. Thank you.

Appendix A, Item 9: ADAM YOUNG

Dear State Board of Education,

I am writing on your potential selection of the Read by Grade 3 Assessment contract. I want to be clear that I am not opposed to I Ready. Nor am I writing to advocate specifically for another particular vendor or contract, although I believe NWEA MAP has been an excellent partner to Nevada and Nevada school districts. Rather, I am writing to first express deep concern about the timeline of implementation. We ask so much of our teachers in this state. Even if this decision had been made in January or February, it would have been difficult to get all of the training and roll out done before next school year. Now it's April. Expecting teachers to have a meaningful understanding of this product before they're supposed to administer it for students next fall is unrealistic. Second, I want to reiterate the concern I have outlined in multiple presentations to this body. Our assessment system in Nevada is not conducive to promoting the types of authentic and meaningful learning experiences that actually cause students to learn. Now, on a very condensed timeline, we are looking at a new assessment for state purposes all while there is mass chaos at the federal level. Who knows what will be required or could possibly be changed specific to assessment with the daily updates from USED? Rather than jumping into something new, we ought to wait to see what whole system changes can be made to create more optimal conditions for students and ways to measure learning, thus creating a more aligned and coherent system rather than the fragmented one we have now.

Sincerely,
Adam Young, Ed.D.
Superintendent
White Pine County School District

Appendix A, Item 10: TIFANY MCMASTER AND MARK MATHERS

We understand that the Board of Education ("Board") has convened a special meeting to include discussion of At-Risk funding. We appreciate that the Board of Education recognizes this is a significant issue facing all school districts and a significant portion of our school community and District staff. Washoe County School District shares concerns about the current methodology for counting "At Risk" students and for allocating At-Risk funding to school districts and charter schools. We previously provided public comment to the Board in November and at its most recent regulatory hearing and consider this issue of paramount importance.

In reviewing materials for the meeting, we would point out that the analysis prepared by WestEd and APA only compared two years, FY 2022-23 to FY 2023-24, and therefore does not consider the current fiscal year or the allocations of At-Risk funding for FY 2025-26 in the recommended State budget. In the recommended budget for FY 2025-26, funding for At-Risk declines more than \$35 million, or 18%, due largely to a greater number of At-Risk students falling into the Special Education or English Learners category. We are greatly concerned that funding for At-Risk supports would so dramatically be reduced.

In addition, the analysis considers only statewide aggregate totals and does not consider the issue of funding volatility at the school district level. As we've testified previously, Washoe has seen swings in At-Risk funding of more than 33% both up and down, when comparing annual allocations from FY 2023-24 through FY 2025-26. Our district is not unique in that regard.

There are two major recommendations that we made at the regulatory hearing.

Metric for Determining At-Risk Status

We previously conveyed our concerns about the State's use of the proprietary GRAD score.

The Commission on School Funding ("Commission") previously voted to continue the use of the GRAD score, while a study of the issue was being prepared. There was confusion among some members of the Commission on when this study would be completed, with some members believing that the study would be completed in time to make a recommendation to replace the GRAD score before the 2025 legislative session. Since that is not the case, we believe a different interim metric for "At Risk" should be considered for the upcoming biennium, so that the controversy and confusion surrounding the GRAD score can cease.

Although poverty is not the only factor influencing whether students graduate, there is strong evidence that poverty remains the largest single factor in this equation. Therefore, as an interim solution, we support the use of Direct Certification as the basis for determining "At Risk" eligibility. Direct certification is a process conducted by the states and by local educational agencies (LEAs) to certify eligible children for free meals without the need for household applications. The use of Direct Certification would also address the concern that middle- and upper-class families were mistakenly included as qualifying for Free and Reduced Lunch (FRL), the prior At-Risk measure used in Nevada, if those students attended schools that participated in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program, which provides free breakfast and lunch for all students at eligible schools.

Allocation Formula for Distribution of At-Risk Students

Presently, State law sets eligibility for At-Risk students as the 20th percentile of GRAD scores on a statewide basis. In addition, State law only provides weighted funding for one weight when a student qualifies for two or more weights. This has resulted in far fewer than the 20th percentile of Nevada students, or even 20 percent of Nevada students, receiving At-Risk funding. For the Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget, At-Risk funding is decreasing more than \$43 million. The Department of Education has stated that the reason for that is that more At-Risk students are also now in the Special Education or English Learners categories. This isn't how At-Risk funding is supposed to work. At-Risk funding to school districts and charters to support these students shouldn't decline because of this fact.

The volatility of the At-Risk funding received by districts makes it extremely challenging to budget positions and stably provide the necessary programming for students who need greater support. We have seen our At-Risk funding bounce from \$15 million to \$10 million to \$14 million from FY24 to FY26.

The Commission's motion on the At-Risk issue included a recommendation that the 20th percentile ranking that's currently encoded into law of fixed value be changed to a value to be determined each biennium by the Nevada Board of Education. One of the ideas discussed by the Commission and among school CFOs is to allocate funding to each district for the 20th percentile of students in each district, rather than performing the calculation on a statewide basis. This would help ensure stability of funding and ensure that we don't take away funding as soon as a child no longer qualifies as At-Risk. The allocation to charter schools should also be based on the 20th percentile collectively for all charters and then distributed to each charter based on the metric used to determine "At Risk." Thank you for your attention and consideration of these issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Tiffany McMaster

Deputy Superintendent

Mark Mathers

Chief Financial Officer

Appendix A, Item 11: JHONE EBERT

Thank you, Superintendent Ebert, for the record. First and foremost, I want to thank everyone on this board for your service. We know the paychecks that you receive are not very large, zero. But you come each and every day with passion for our children and those that you were either appointed by or elected officials. You know, hundreds of thousands of people across our great state depend on you each and every day to make wonderful decisions. I know you'll do a great job selecting the next Superintendent, and I look forward to working with that person as well. This is my last State Board of Education meeting, and I could not do my job without the amazing deputies that I have, that I have had the honor to work alongside. Right now, they are in the midst of the legislative session, along with serving all of you. And they work 24/7 with the information that was provided, sorry, I don't mean to get a little chokey here, but as you know, the information that came out this last Friday, which we had to enact on top of all of the other work that we do, they worked all weekend tirelessly to make sure that we could provide accurate information to all seventeen school districts, as well as the State Public Charter School Authority, on how to move forward on actions that people had planned on. The memo came in on Friday night that said the funding ended right then and there. And how does that translate? Whether we agree with what transpired or not is not the point. The point is that the staff here at the Nevada Department of Education went into action to support our school districts right away, to make sure that they had the information to take action. I share that specific example because, as noted by one of our speakers, there is still a lot of change. And my hope for everyone, not only the staff, and you know I recognize the deputies; I see them every single day, and on the weekend, but there are two hundred staff members that come to work for children. And that's one of the things that, when we even do our own staff surveys to find out what's happening, how do you feel, all of those things, the top thing they always list is that the department is focused on children, and we know what we want to do each and every day. We disagree sometimes on how we do our work, that's OK. But we're not disagreeing on where we want to go and who we want to serve. So I'm honored to have served this board, to serve all of you, and to serve the children. But it doesn't happen without grace, and passion, and compassion as well. I wish all of you the best moving forward.

Appendix A, Item 12: AMANDA MORGAN

My name is Amanda Morgan.

I'm the Executive Director of Educate Nevada Now. I just wanted to say thank you so much for your work on the at-risk issue. Really pleased with the discussion today and the fact that this board is thinking critically about this really important issue. I just wanted to add a little bit of context because early in the meeting there was some public comment geared around what the Commission on School Funding wanted. And so, I, you know, went back and looked at the motion that they actually passed. This was over a year ago, and they did say that

they voted to continue the use of the grad score subject to certain conditions, and one of those conditions was that a qualified third party would both examine the efficacy of the grad score and review other methods to ensure if there's a better method of doing this. Let me read the language exactly: This review should include research into whether there are more accurate or effective methods of identifying the pupils in need of support to ensure graduation with their cohort. That was supposed to be completed by September first, prior to the legislative session. So here we are over a year later, that has not happened. I was kind of waiting for this presentation to see if we, if that did happen and that was being presented today. It was not. So, I hope folks understand the frustration with those in the community that have really been hoping to find the correct method and make sure that this works and that it's stable, not just at the statewide level, but at the school level. So again, I just want to say thank you so much for all that you do. Thank you.

Appendix A, Item 13: ANNA BINDER

Good afternoon.

Madam President, Members of the Board, so today, while we were all meeting, our K–12 schools have to sign certification against DEI to receive federal money within ten days. And so, what I was going to say this morning is a little different than what has transpired now this afternoon. But, I want to thank you, all of you, today, because with so much uncertainty at the federal level, now more than ever, we need leaders who are brave enough to stand firm in protecting public education, our children, our teachers, and our school staff. The decisions that you make impact lives, and we rely on you to continue being exactly what we need: champions for strong, well-funded, and equitable public schools. Public education is under constant threat from privatization and resource diversion. But Nevada students deserve leaders who will fight for them, advocate for their futures, and ensure that public schools remain places of opportunity, growth, and excellence. You are all here in these positions because we trust you to do what's right for everybody. So we continue to urge you to be bold, be brave, and do the work that we need you to do. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Appendix A, Item 14: JEFF CHURCH

1. Please do a nationwide search for the best possible Superintendent of State Education.
2. Congratulations to the new interim director
3. Please follow the Federal DoE Directives and Presidential Orders. They are not “letters” as has been stated, they are orders. Now add in the new NIAA policy on gender sports. I sympathize with the Nevada Constitutional issues and various court orders nationwide that are not generally binding on Nevada/ 9th Circuit. Do not risk losing federal dollars.

<https://www.ed.gov/media/document/title-ix-enforcement-directive-dcl-109477.pdf>

4. Please support Charters and ESAs- private schools as an option. Competition is good. Do not support trying to make Charters like regular public school. Independence and innovation are their essence.
5. If you want a good example of a failed school district look at Mineral- it should be taken over by the state. Hawthorne was my home of record in my military days. My parents were there and my wife & sister (not one ad the same) were “Serpents” in the Mineral School System.



6. My website: www.WatchdogJeff.com was recently updated and has articles on education you may want to read even if you disagree- they present a valid point of view.

Sincerely,
Jeff Church
WatchdogJeff.com