

**NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NEVADA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
MEETING OF THE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION WORKGROUP
JUNE 29, 2020
1:00 P.M.**

Meeting Location

Due to the circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the State Board of Education met via videoconference. In accordance with Governor Sisolak's State of Emergency Directive 006, Section 1, no physical location was designated for this meeting. The meeting was livestreamed on the Nevada Department of Education's (NDE) website.

SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING

WORKGROUP MEMBERS PRESENT

Via Videoconference

Tamara Hudson
Cathy McAdoo
Felicia Ortiz
Elaine Wynn

DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT

In Las Vegas

Felicia Gonzales, Deputy Superintendent of Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement
Jessica Todtman, Chief Strategy Officer

In Carson City

Jhone Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction
Dr. Jonathan Moore, Deputy Superintendent of Student Achievement
Sarah Nick, Management Analyst III
Terri Hendry, Public Information Officer

LEGAL STAFF PRESENT

Via Videoconference

Greg Ott, Chief Deputy Attorney General

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE

Via Livestream

1: CALL TO ORDER; ROLL CALL; PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Meeting called to order at 1:06 P.M. by President Elaine Wynn. Quorum was established. President Wynn led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2: PUBLIC COMMENT #1

Public comment was submitted via email and distributed to Members of the Workgroup.

The Nevada Immigrant Coalition submitted public comment regarding School Reopening Plans. (A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)

3: INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING THE CHARGE OF THE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION WORKGROUP OF THE NEVADA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Superintendent Ebert thanked President Wynn and the members of the Workgroup for their policy-making leadership; she outlined several options for the charge of the Workgroup.

First was providing direction to staff and offering support to the Department regarding equity work, similar to their duties as Board members. This could also include bringing policy recommendations to the full Board. The Superintendent highlighted the opportunities around diversity, equity, and inclusion that may come up in the anticipated Special Session of the Nevada Legislature, as well as the importance of convening and collaborating with stakeholders and constituents. Specifically, focus may be directed to bridging and closing the gaps in access and opportunity exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

President Wynn asked if the Workgroup were to convey policy directives, would Superintendent Ebert be able to advance them, or would they need to be reviewed by the Board. Chief Deputy Attorney General Greg Ott noted that the Workgroup would need to make recommendations to the Board, which could then vote and provide direction to the Department.

President Wynn expressed that the issue of equity was the focus of the group, however presentations from district leaders and the Governor's Office of Science, Innovation & Technology (OSIT) at the June 4 Board meeting emphasized that the digital divide was the greatest issue to be addressed given distance learning as required by the pandemic. Access to devices is a critical issue in Nevada which, when compounded by existing risk factors, will impede learning for vulnerable students. Member Tamara Hudson agreed, and emphasized how the digital divide only widened existing opportunity and achievement gaps for vulnerable students

[Due to technical difficulties, the meeting was halted and resumed]

Member Hudson shared her experience teaching preschool at a distance, highlighting the struggle to maintain their attention, maintain their connectivity, and ensure their access, while relying on parental engagement. President Wynn asked about the ability Member Hudson had to reconnect with students if they were absent; Member Hudson responded that this was usually at the discretion of the teacher; usually it is via phone, letter, or email, but some teachers visited homes as well.

Member Felicia Ortiz expressed that she initially campaigned for the Board to serve as representation for the Latinx population in Clark County and Nevada. Member Ortiz emphasized the importance of students seeing themselves represented in their teachers, administrators, and school leadership. She attested that to this day on the Board, there are things that are said or done not in the best interest of all kids, whether in the use of language or reporting, etc. Reflecting on the COVID-19 pandemic and the Black Lives Matter movement, she felt there was an opportunity to address equity, including racism, within educational systems.

Member Cathy McAdoo expressed how rural districts struggle for resources, including broadband access. She felt this was a large contributor to the digital divide. In addition, she expressed concern about the lack of the safe and caring environment that schools provide during prolonged distance learning.

President Wynn asked Superintendent Ebert to report on the status of efforts to close the digital divide. Superintendent Ebert reported that school districts were asked to report how many devices they currently have, how many they have on order, how many they need, etc. Data has also been broken down into those students that did not have any access; those that had inadequate access – such as multiple students in a home sharing a single device or data plan - and those with adequate access (also referred to as unserved, underserved, and served). Districts should have that information to the Department no later than October 1 per Guidance Memo 20-05, which aligns with validation day for student enrollment counts. The Department is also working with OSIT to expand broadband access.

Member Ortiz asked if the Workgroup could draft a letter to Nevada’s federal representatives requesting that connectivity be made a funding priority to provide access to students in their homes. Just as federal funding is provided to provide nutrition services, students now need broadband services. She asked that training for teachers, suggested by Member Hudson, also be included.

Superintendent Ebert noted that the Digital Engineers would be launched within the next few weeks and would serve as a resource for professional development and training of teachers in delivering digital learning and distance education. Responding to Member Ortiz regarding CARES Act funding, the Superintendent noted that 90% of CARES funding went directly via a formulaic allocation to local education agencies – districts – and that some school districts did intend to use a portion of those funds to address the digital divide. CARES funding available to the State, including GEER funds, are being reviewed to address needs including for hotspots, devices, etc.

Superintendent Ebert clarified that school districts have been reporting the number of devices they have available and have deployed; the issue is understanding connectivity in the home. In devices, Superintendent Ebert approximated a Statewide deficit between 80-90,000 devices. However, there is data that approximately 30,000 students in Nevada have absolutely zero access to broadband; additional issues of connectivity are still being researched. The Department is currently working with Cox Communications, as well as T-Mobile, in coordination with OSIT to provide access to broadband.

Responding to Member Ortiz, Superintendent Ebert noted that funding is based upon enrollment – not attendance – and that families who may decide to enroll their children in private schools or switch to homeschooling are still reported to the district; those children would not be “lost.” Large variations in enrollment may affect budgets; districts are aware of the possibility and it is a consideration.

President Wynn asked that Brian Mitchell, Director of the Governor’s Office of Science, Innovation & Technology be invited to present again at the July 23, 2020 Board meeting.

President Wynn emphasized the importance of communication and dialogue, especially in equity work and the improvement of systems.

Member McAdoo mentioned the work Nevada Gold Mines was doing for broadband in Elko; she also thanked Superintendent Ebert for the work she was doing.

4: INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING THE 2020 STATEWIDE PLAN FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF PUPILS

Member Ortiz noted that she reviewed the 2020 Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils (STIP) with an equity lens and had sent her comments so far to Superintendent Ebert. She asked that “access” be defined, as it was used in two of the STIP’s goals. To Member Ortiz, the STIP’s use of access read as the presence of, rather than the ability to engage with. Member Ortiz also expressed apprehension with the phrase “families in poverty,” as families do not choose to live in poverty; she prefers the term “low-income.” She felt this illustrated the larger issue of language use. She also emphasized the importance of using “multilingual” where possible, as Nevada is multilingual, not monolingual. Member Hudson supported Member Ortiz’s emphasis on language use.

Member Ortiz finally reflected on the need for a summary of the STIP which was in more accessible language, such as 8th grade reading level English and Spanish.

5: FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Member Ortiz noted that the largest items for the next meeting would include the budget, as well as barriers to technology and barriers created by technology, and how best to support them. She also supported further reviewing equity lenses.

6: PUBLIC COMMENT #2

No public comment.

7: ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 2:48 P.M.

Appendix A: Statements Given During Public Comment

1. The Nevada Immigrant Coalition submitted public comment regarding School Reopening Plans.

Item A1, Nevada Immigrant Coalition

June 29, 2020

Nevada State Board of Education

Re: NDE REVIEW OF SCHOOL REOPENING PLANS

Dear President Wynn, State Board of Education members and Superintendent Ebert,

We ask that NDE review school reopening plans with a focus on equity and the unevenness of educational opportunities that many of the state’s school reopening plans do not yet address.

1. Reopening PLANS SHOULD DEAL WITH UNEQUAL ACCESS TO BROADBAND.

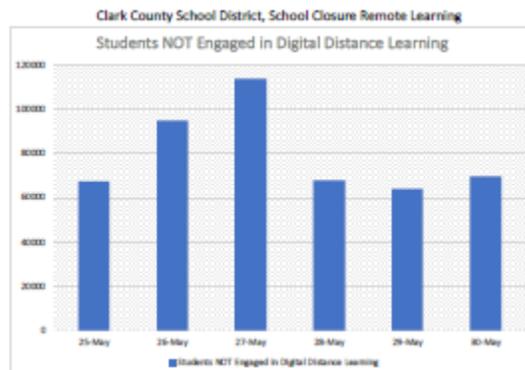
Principals in Title I communities who have reached out to their “no contact” students have discovered that many families cannot get broadband access. Cox will not allow access to special digital \$9.95 student deal if a family owes money on their bill. Many apartment complexes don’t have WIFI wiring. Families who live in weekly rentals have to pay for WIFI at very high rates.

The reopening plan for school districts must address broadband access since remote learning is now more than half of the learning week for CCSD and Washoe. School districts should not assume that children in our poorest communities will somehow be able to figure out how to connect to broadband. See below graphic prepared by Mi Familia Vota based on Census data that shows that in Las Vegas Metro inner city area as few as 30% have access to broadband, and in the suburbs, about 90% have access to broadband. The lighter the color, the less access to broadband.

[Graphic can be found on the following page]

2. PLANS SHOULD CONTAIN MEASURES TO REENGAGE “NO CONTACT” and UNENGAGED STUDENTS.

Reaching out to students who were not engaged during remote learning the last quarter of Spring 2020 should be part of reopening. In CCSD “contact” merely means that a teacher established some kind of communication. (Eg. Teacher, “are you OK?” Student “yes.”) Our analysis of CCSD data is that students who did not engage in LEARNING may be as high as 70,000 students, or 22%, which would be in line with national surveys of “chronically absent” children during remote learning (30%) (EdWeek, 2020).



This “unengaged” group is disproportionately children of color, FRL and ELL according to our analysis of CCSD “no contact” demographic data for a one-week period in April.

Demographics of CCSD General Ed Students NOT engaged in Remote Learning, April 13-19, 2020

	REGION 1			REGION 2			REGION 3		
	Enrollment	NO Contact	Difference	Enrollment	NO Contact	Difference	Enrollment	NO Contact	Difference
Hispanic	44.6%	48.3%	+3.7%	44.2%	49.3%	+5.1%	51.1%	56.4%	+5.3%
Caucasian	23.6%	18.8%	-4.8	22.1%	17.5%	-4.6	25.6%	19.5%	-6.1%
Black	20.2%	22.8%	+2.6	13.8%	15.5%	+1.7	10.6%	12.5%	+1.9%
Multiracial	6.9%	5.9%	-1.0	7.7%	6.8%	-0.9	6.3%	5.5%	-0.8
Native American	0.3%	0.4%	+0.1	0.2%	0.3%	+0.1	0.2%	0.3%	+0.1
Asian-Pacific Islander	4.5%	3.7%	-0.8	12.1%	10.5%	-1.6%	6.2	5.8	-0.4%

3. REMOTE LEARNING PLAN SHOULD ADDRESS IMPLEMENTATION OF ELL and SPECIAL ED LEARNING STRATEGIES SO THAT TEACHERS CAN SUPPORT ELLs and Special Ed IN A VIRTUAL SETTING.

CCSD draft plan contains no provisions for ELL or Special Ed students at this time, so ELL and Special ED supports will be “add ons.” We note that CCSD budget contains no monies allocated to these groups.

In CoVID19 school closure, the CCSD ELL department offered ELL learning platform for teachers to support ELL students. According to our data, at the beginning of the school closures, about 20 teachers accessed the ELL Remote Learning platform, and at the end, about 2000. That still leaves 16,000 teachers who did not avail themselves of ELL remote learning supports. We ask that all plans address implementation and accountability around ELL and Special Ed learning.

4. CCSD PLAN ASSUMES THAT CHILDREN CAN DO A YEAR’S WORTH OF LEARNING IN ONE SEMSTER IN A HYBRID MODEL.

The CCSD plan assumes that every student has the capacity to learn one full semester of content in one semester under hybrid schedule. However, we note that by 8th grade, ELL students are two grades behind in both Math and ELA. Is there any research that supports this? What additional supports might need to be in place?

5. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT. Families are ready to help their students, however, every district needs to “up” its family engagement efforts.
 - a. The plan should teach families how to use a computer and access remote learning
 - b. Family remote learning should be accessible in Spanish. According to Guinn Center, in about half of Southern Nevada’s K12 families, at least one parent does not speak English well. Our group worked hard with CCSD to fix their remote learning Spanish webpage, but districts need to start by thinking that not all parents speak English well.
 - c. Provide training/workshops for parents on how to use/navigate/supporting kids with distance learning
 - d. Put effort in up-to-date emails and contact data NOW, not in August.

Plans should not assume equity will somehow take care of itself. It is critical to reach all students and not just make assumptions in order to avoid a lost generation who de facto “dropped out” from learning.

With respect,
 Sylvia Lazos
 Ed Committee, Nevada Immigrant Coalition

Cc: Nevada Superintendent of Education
Cecia Alvarado, Mi Familia Vota;
Erika Castro, NIC;
Gil Lopez, Nevada Latino Education

