

**NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING
JUNE 4, 2020
9:00 A.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

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Via Videoconference

Cathy McAdoo
Dawn Miller
Elaine Wynn
Felicia Ortiz
Katherine Dockweiler
Kevin Melcher
Mark Newburn
Robert Blakely
Rui Ya Wang
Tamara Hudson
Teri White

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
Heidi Haartz, Deputy Superintendent of Business and Support Services
Dr. Jonathan Moore, Deputy Superintendent of Student Achievement
Sarah Nick, Management Analyst III
Christy McGill, Director of the Office for a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment

Via Videoconference

Megan Peterson, Management Analyst III
Randi Hunewill, Education Programs Supervisor
Charles Russo, Education Programs Professional
Cindi Chang, Education Programs Professional
Mary Holsclaw, Education Programs Professional

LEGAL STAFF PRESENT

Via Videoconference

David Gardner, Deputy Attorney General

PRESENTERS IN ATTENDANCE

Via Videoconference

Brian Mitchell, Director, Governor's Office of Science, Innovation & Technology
Dr. Chelli Smith, Director, Southern Nevada RPDP

Homa Anooshepoor, Nevada Department of Agriculture
Jennifer Ott, Director, Nevada Department of Agriculture
Jerrad Barczyszyn, Assistant Director, Southern Nevada RPDP
Dr. Jesus F. Jara, Superintendent, Clark County School District
Dr. Kristen McNeill, Superintendent, Washoe County School District
Sara Cunningham, Director, Nevada's Northwest RPDP
Dr. Sarah Negrete, Director, Northeastern Nevada RPDP
Tate Else, Superintendent, Eureka County School District

AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE

Via Livestream

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

Meeting called to order at 9:01 A.M. by President Elaine Wynn. Quorum was established. President Wynn led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2: PUBLIC COMMENT #1

Stephanie Patton, President-Elect, Nevada Association of School Psychologists, submitted public comment regarding COVID-19. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Alexandra Dominguez, Director of State Government Relations, the College Board, submitted public comment regarding COVID-19. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

The Nevada State Education Association submitted public comment regarding COVID-19. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

3: APPROVAL OF FLEXIBLE AGENDA

Vice President Mark Newburn moved to approve the flexible agenda. Member Robert Blakely seconded. Motion passed.

4: PRESIDENT'S REPORT

President Wynn thanked leaders and educators for their work through the COVID-19 pandemic, acknowledging their flexibility, endurance, and good will.

Addressing the recent social unrest, President Wynn reflected that as we struggle to process these events, there is no adequate way to talk about them. Injustice of any kind, but especially racial injustice, must be more than a conversation; it must be a call to action and a willingness to learn from one another on how to respond going forward. She noted that an official statement would be forthcoming.

President Wynn congratulated the graduating class of 2020, which included Member Rui Ya Wang, the Board's student representative. Member Wang noted that the past year had been a great learning opportunity and provided her with the chance to hear from students about how they would like to improve the education system. She thanked her fellow Board Members for their kindness and asked to stay in touch.

President Wynn noted that commencement means both an end and a beginning, and the Class of 2020 has persevered through unique and trying times, which will help them endure a unique and trying future. She congratulated them and remarked that they would lead the way in building a better future.

5: SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT

Superintendent Jhone Ebert addressed the recent death of George Floyd, and reflected that as educators, our duty is to make this a teachable moment. Educators must also lead, use their voices for change, help young people understand issues of racism of implicit bias, encourage youth to use their voice, inspire their civic engagement, and provide them space to express themselves. She pledged to continue to fight for equity, celebrate diversity, and lead with love.

The Commission on School Funding have continued to work on the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan. They recently reviewed various definition for At-Risk and compared district funding between the Nevada Plan and the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan model. The next meeting of the Commission on School Funding is scheduled for June 11-12, 2020.

The Legislative Committee on Education requested a presentation on the Department's response to COVID-19. The Superintendent noted that they found there were differing understandings of implementing one-to-one devices and highlighted that it was crucial that each child have a device, not each household. The Department also presented on chronic absenteeism and the Nevada Ready! State Pre-K program.

Regarding the budget crisis, the Department has been notified that it must make recommendations regarding budget reductions. The Superintendent indicated the Department's intention to determine how best to leverage federal funds and remaining State funds to ensure students have the support they need.

6: APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Member Blakely moved to approve the consent agenda. Vice President Newburn seconded. Motion passed.

7: INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION REGARDING STATEWIDE RESPONSE AND RECOVERY EFFORTS RELATED TO COVID-19

a. AN UPDATE ON THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS COMMITTEE

Felicia Gonzales, Deputy Superintendent of Educator Effectiveness and Family Engagement; Christy McGill, Director of the Office for a Safe and Respectful Learning Environment; and Dr. Charles Russo, Education Programs Professional, conducted a PowerPoint presentation regarding the draft [Framework for a Safe, Efficient, and Equitable Return to School Buildings](#).

Vice President Newburn expressed that he hoped that this series of presentations would give the public a sense of where we are and where we may go. President Wynn referred to page 12 of the Framework, which highlighted that public health was the driving force of the Framework. She noted that this document should be proliferated throughout the State, and that communication was critical.

Member Felicia Ortiz asked for district updates regarding their engagement or current status within the Framework; she also asked if these guidelines would be strict or flexible depending upon budget cuts.

b. AN UPDATE ON THE NEVADA DIGITAL LEARNING COLLABORATIVE

Dr. Jonathan Moore, Deputy Superintendent of Student Achievement, provided an update regarding the Nevada Digital Learning Collaborative.

The U.S. Department of Education recently released guidelines for the Rethink K-12 Education Models Grant, a funding opportunity for which the Department applied. The award had three priorities, of which applicants were required to select one: NDE selected Statewide virtual learning and course access programs. One of the factors contributing to decisions regarding grant awards is coronavirus impact; the U.S. Department of Education has created a measure to determine a State's impact; based on this metric, Nevada would receive 4 of 20 possible points. Other indicators include broadband access, students in rural schools, and the percentage of COVID-19 cases per capita.

In April, the Department issued a needs assessment survey to all 17 school districts and the State Public Charter School Authority regarding access to connectivity, professional development, and the need for high-quality content. The survey found that school districts were using an array of learning management systems. It was determined NDE would host a statewide learning management system which would be filled with high-quality content to support professional development and digital learning. Across our State, many teachers have access to high-quality content; this would enhance their access as well as provide access to those who do not.

Fourteen of the 17 districts reported that they felt their educators needed additional professional development regarding digital learning. The Collaborative's work includes the launch of the Digital Engineers, currently a cohort of 59, who were recruited through an application process. They are charged with providing professional resources, professional content, and professional

development opportunities across the State, with work groups focusing on platforms, curriculum, professional learning, and marketing and communications.

Dr. Moore also shared an update regarding READ Nevada, a partnership with the Nevada State Library, Archives, and Public Records, local public libraries, and Renaissance to provide reading opportunities for all students, Pre-K through 12. Students and teachers will have unlimited access, free of charge, to MyON Reader, which includes enhanced digital materials at a variety of reading levels. The platform also connects readers with their instructors to discuss issues they may be having with the reading.

Responding to President Wynn, Dr. Moore noted that the Digital Engineers would have their first training on June 10th. Regarding the Rethink K-12 Education Models Grant, the coronavirus impact metric applies to all three priorities equally. Funding of the learning management system would be leveraged from the CARES Act and would enable a two-year subscription.

Member Ortiz asked how the Digital Engineers were selected, and whether the program was new or built from previous supports. Dr. Moore responded that applications were solicited for Digital Engineers, and applicants were reviewed based upon a rubric. The selected Digital Engineers represent six districts, as well as charter and private schools. Member Ortiz asked for their demographic information and whether they would be outside of the classroom for the work. Dr. Moore noted that the application did not request demographic information, only their proficiency in providing distance learning. Digital Engineers will receive a stipend but will continue to work in a full-time capacity in their current school-based roles. The application was solicited via the NDE Biweekly Update as well as an email to educators. Member Ortiz asked that the Digital Engineers be asked to provide their demographic information. Dr. Moore noted that equity and diversity go beyond demographics to include years of experience, geography, and school setting. He noted that he would work with the cohort to respond with race and ethnicity data. Member Tamara Hudson emphasized the importance of diversity in leadership in order to meet the needs of all students.

Vice President Newburn asked what training was being provided to parents in the event of ongoing distance education. Member Katherine Dockweiler commended the efforts and success of the READ Nevada program.

c. AN UPDATE FROM SCHOOL DISTRICT LEADERS REGARDING THEIR RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THEIR EFFORT TO SUPPORT EDUCATORS, STAFF, STUDENTS, AND FAMILIES

i. CLARK COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dr. Jesus Jara, Superintendent of Clark County School District, conducted a PowerPoint presentation regarding the [COVID-19 Response and Recovery Efforts](#) of Clark County School District.

President Wynn acknowledged that students' learning loss was inevitable and unfortunate, and education in the fall would need to remediate that loss. Member Kevin Melcher asked for further information on Clark County School District's (CCSD) implicit bias training; Superintendent Jara responded that it was provided by National Equity Partners.

Member Ortiz asked when the results of the CCSD community survey would be released; Superintendent Jara responded it would be June 11. Member Ortiz asked what the district was doing to support the social-emotional needs of teachers and staff, and how many were planning to return in the fall. Superintendent Jara noted that he had held several roundtables with staff and the number of vacancies in the fall was currently unclear.

Vice President Newburn asked when decisions regarding reopening would be made. Superintendent Jara responded that he had promised to provide information to his Board of Trustees by June 30.

ii. WASHOE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dr. Kristen McNeill, Superintendent of Washoe County School District, conducted a PowerPoint presentation regarding the [COVID-19 Response and Recovery](#) Efforts of the Washoe County School District.

Superintendent McNeill emphasized the work going into preparing and reviewing concerns regarding reopening plans and how the District has striven to include parents and teachers in the planning process.

iii. DOUGLAS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Member Teri White, in her capacity as Superintendent of Douglas County School District, conducted a PowerPoint presentation regarding the [COVID-19 Response and Recovery](#) Efforts of Douglas County School District.

Responding to President Wynn, Superintendent White noted that Douglas County School District has just over 5700 students. Vice President Newburn asked Superintendent White what the Board could be doing to assist. Superintendent White expressed that the guidance from Superintendent Ebert had been cohesive and consistent; the struggle for districts were the unknowns and preparing for three potential reopening scenarios: blended, closed, and open. Superintendent White indicated that the Board's continued support of Superintendent Ebert would in turn provide support to districts.

Member Ortiz asked how Superintendent White felt about State-mandated requirements for the 2020-21 school year, including assessments and testing. Superintendent White expressed that there had been rich conversation around it, as virtual teaching provided an opportunity to sit in on classrooms at any time. Once teachers understood the changing paradigm, the expectation must still be on standards and instruction, although there are concerns around assessment results.

Member Melcher asked if smaller districts were working together to respond to COVID-19. Superintendent White responded that superintendents are in constant conversation, and there is a standing weekly meeting in which all superintendents, including Superintendent Ebert, meet and discuss topics of concern.

iv. EUREKA COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Tate Else, Superintendent of Eureka County School District, conducted a PowerPoint presentation regarding the [COVID-19 Response and Recovery Efforts](#) of Eureka County School District.

Responding to President Wynn, Superintendent Else noted that Eureka County has not had any COVID-19 cases to date, and they hope to return to school provided they may do so safely. Member Ortiz asked why education was receiving and accepting budget cuts. Superintendent Else responded that Nevada revenues have had a shortfall, and it is unclear what economic cuts are necessary at this point. All superintendents would advocate for more K-12 funding, but they are realistic that there are challenging scenarios moving forward.

[Convenience Break]

d. AN UPDATE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE REGARDING FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES TO STUDENTS AND FAMILIES THROUGHOUT NEVADA

Jennifer Ott, Director of the Nevada Department of Agriculture, conducted a PowerPoint regarding [Food and Nutrition Services](#) being provided to students and families throughout Nevada.

President Wynn inquired about variances in the normal distribution of meals during a typical school year versus current distribution as a result of school building closures and community hardship. She inquired whether access issues have led to less food being available. Director Ott responded that there has not been a reduction in food; currently, the only irregularities have been when a distribution point has to close due to a possible illness or exposure to COVID-19. Regarding funding, Director Ott noted that there has not been an issue with federal funding to date; there has been additional funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to provide nutrition services which her team has been leveraging to fill gaps.

The Board expressed that food and nutrition services are critical and thanked the Department of Agriculture and all of their staff for their work.

e. AN UPDATE FROM THE REGIONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS REGARDING THE SUPPORT AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES THEY ARE PROVIDING TO EDUCATORS AND STAFF

Sara Cunningham, Director of Nevada's Northwest Regional Professional Development Program; Dr. Sarah Negrete, Director of Northeast Nevada Regional Professional Development Program; Dr. Chelli Smith, Director of Southern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program; and Jerrad Barczynsyn, Assistant Director of Southern Nevada Regional Professional Program, conducted a PowerPoint presentation regarding the [Support and Learning Opportunities](#) they have provided to educators and staff throughout the COVID-19-related school building closures.

Member Ortiz asked if the virtual model would continue in the future, and whether it has been successful enough to inform the model. Dr. Negrete noted that some online learning was in process prior to the pandemic, and the platform had some promise, which the RPDs would continue to improve upon in the future. Specifically, Dr. Negrete noted that virtual offerings improved equity, as rather than singling out the rural professionals, everyone on a virtual platform was "alone" and the interactions were consistent. President Wynn expressed the importance of improving digital models, specifically the efficacy of practice. Dr. Negrete agreed, and expressed that the digital learning of the spring was not what digital learning could be, and improving the model is the focus.

Dr. Smith outlined that recent work has been focused on gap analysis and remediation models, observing the gap between where students left off, and where they need to be, what may be missing, and addressing how teachers may address that in the classroom, including online. Dr. Smith hoped that information would be shared online by June 30.

f. **AN UPDATE FROM THE GOVERNOR’S OFFICE OF SCIENCE, INNOVATION & TECHNOLOGY**

Brian Mitchell, Director of the Governor’s Office of Science, Innovation & Technology, conducted a PowerPoint presentation regarding efforts to provide [Broadband and Technology](#) to students and educators.

Responding to Vice President Newburn, Director Mitchell noted that while using federal funds to provide connectivity to schools, if there is an opportunity to provide connectivity for businesses and community members, they strive to do so. Member Melcher asked which devices are the right devices, regarding compatibility and security for connectivity, and whether there needs to be further coordination. Director Mitchell responded that the Office of Science, Innovation & Technology (OSIT) works to provide connectivity for school buildings, and the Department of Education determines devices that students may use and how teachers are receiving professional development on devices. Devices are chosen by districts, but the standards are set by the Nevada Ready 21 program, under the Nevada Department of Education.

Member Ortiz asked if OSIT was a service provider; Director Mitchell responded that OSIT was a free service, with no charge to the districts. Member Katherine Dockweiler asked when further information would be available regarding additional funding; Director Mitchell responded that federal timelines are in flux; if a relief package passes, the timeline for disbursement would most likely be similar to that of the CARES Act. Member Tamara Hudson asked how many districts were using OSIT’s services; Member Mitchell noted that all 17 districts and charter schools, as well as most of Nevada’s tribal Nations and libraries work with OSIT. OSIT also works to aggregate demand in rural counties to provide better services for lower costs.

President Wynn asked how many devices were still needed in Nevada. Superintendent Ebert noted that a survey had been sent out in the beginning of the pandemic and, as of mid-May, districts still needed approximately 100,000 devices; additional surveys were being sent out to reassess current need. Approximately 80% of students have devices. President Wynn noted that this illustrates the digital divide, depriving 20% of Nevada students of access to a teacher.

8: INFORMATION, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING THE 2020 STATEWIDE PLAN FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF PUPILS

Jhone M. Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction; Jessica Todtman, Chief Strategy Officer; and Sarah Nick, Management Analyst to the Superintendent, conducted a PowerPoint presentation regarding the [2020 Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils](#).

Superintendent Ebert introduced the 2020 Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils (STIP), which was informed by the Department’s Statewide Listening Tour; it engaged with over 1000 district and school leaders, educators, students, parents, and community members. This was the fourth time that the STIP was presented to the Board. The STIP is informed by goals and values; goals are an ambitious vision of where the Department would like Nevada education to benchmark by 2025, with values focusing on equity and services to *all* students. Strategies, inputs, outputs, and outcomes outline how these goals will be accomplished. However, when the STIP was drafted the Department could not have imagined that the school year would be concluding with students learning at a distance. Moving forward

through the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department's focus will be on values: equity, access to quality, success, inclusivity, community, and transparency. Superintendent Ebert further noted that the STIP is centered on equity and provided an example: the STIP refers to opportunity gaps rather than achievement gaps; opportunity gaps refer to the ways that factors contribute or perpetuate lower educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment for students.

Member Ortiz asked about the timeline for feedback on the STIP, as she had edits regarding language. Superintendent Ebert noted that it was on the agenda for adoption today. Ms. Todtman noted that the STIP was circulated for review in advance of the April 30, 2020 Board meeting; no substantive changes had been made since that time; only design edits.

Member Blakely suggested that a motion be made, and votes determine the matter. Deputy Attorney General David Gardner noted that they did not require a second at this time to continue the conversation.

President Wynn noted that the approval of the STIP had previously been delayed. She asked if there was time sensitivity to approving the STIP prior to the July 23, 2020 Board meeting. Superintendent Ebert clarified that the annual plan is to be approved to the Board every March, and it had been delayed by the Board due to the pandemic.

Member Blakely said that the STIP needed to be implemented and moved to approve; there was no second. Member Melcher suggested approving the STIP but discussing the document further at future meetings; Member McAdoo supported this suggestion.

President Wynn requested a greater focus by the Board on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work. The STIP addresses equity, but President Wynn had concerns that it was not the fundamental drive. President Wynn suggested that the Board create a subgroup, which she would be willing to chair or participate in, to regularly create an agenda item for the Board similar to the President's or Superintendent's report, that provides a status update on equity and DEI work in Nevada education. President Wynn made a call to action to provide greater focus on DEI work and equity accountability. She reflected that education is the great equalizer, and generations have been deprived equal opportunity and equal access to education. President Wynn noted that she was not taking issue with the work of the Department and the current STIP presented; she instead asked that DEI work become the foundational purpose for *all* work moving forward.

Members McAdoo, Hudson, Dockweiler, Ortiz, Melcher, and Blakely each voiced support for President Wynn's request for greater DEI focus and equity action.

Members Hudson and Ortiz did not feel comfortable with approving the STIP without further review. Member Ortiz disagreed with the language of the STIP and asked if school districts had reviewed the documents. Member Melcher asked what the Department needed to move forward.

Superintendent Ebert noted that the current leadership team at the Department are the first to visit all 17 school districts in 12 years; not only does listening to all voices matter to Department leadership—all voices were heard before building the STIP. As discussed at the January Board meeting, the STIP was reviewed and workshopped by district superintendents at the Nevada Association of School Superintendents conference in January 2020. Regarding metrics, several school districts have gone through Silver State Governance training, which the Board directed the Superintendent to lead; this training shifted metrics to the inputs, outputs, and outcomes model in the STIP, aligning metrics with training across school districts. Superintendent Ebert emphasized that she and the Department encourage listening to voices for feedback, engagement, and how to do their work differently. She reflected that she heard that the Board would like an opportunity to review further, and the Department would accept additional feedback.

President Wynn reiterated that the Board was not suggesting that they were not pleased with the report, the extensive work put into it, or the desire to make it as inclusive as it could be. However, she noted that

circumstances were different when the STIP was drafted. She stated it was incumbent on the Board to use their recent experiences; she noted that they should strive for *best*, rather than better in their intentions.

Members McAdoo, Hudson, and Ortiz agreed to join the proposed equity group. President Wynn assured that the STIP would be acted upon at the July meeting.

9: FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Member Ortiz requested information from the Commission on School Funding regarding budget comparisons between the Nevada Plan and the Pupil-Centered Funding Plan.

Member Hudson requested information on the recruitment and retention of Teachers of Color, acknowledging that budget cuts often disproportionately affect people of color. Teach Plus and Opportunity 180 also recently released a report reflecting educators' perspectives on COVID-19; Member Hudson requested a presentation regarding that collaboration. She also highlighted the work that Teach Plus Nevada has done regarding retention and support for teachers and Teachers of Color and requested a presentation from them on the topic.

Member Newburn asked that updates regarding COVID-19 response remain a standing item throughout the pandemic in order to keep the public updated regarding the reopening of schools, and the status of public education.

10: PUBLIC COMMENT #2

Stacy Regenhart submitted public comment regarding the return to school. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

11: ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 2:01 P.M.

Appendix A: Statements Given During Public Comment

1. Stephanie Patton, President-Elect, Nevada Association of School Psychologists, submitted public comment regarding COVID-19.
2. Alexandra Dominguez, Director of State Government Relations, the College Board, submitted public comment regarding COVID-19.
3. Nevada State Education Association submitted public comment regarding COVID-19.
4. Stacy Regenhard submitted public comment regarding the return to schools.

Item A1, Stephanie Patton

Good morning madam president and members of the board. For the record, my name is Stephanie Patton and I am the president-elect of the Nevada Association of School Psychologists. First, I would like to genuinely thank you all for your support in creating appropriate recommended ratios for school mental health providers in Nevada. Nevada is truly a trailblazer in this regard, and we are hopeful that our students will see incredible benefits.

I would also like to thank you for your ongoing commitment to students and the safety of our schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. As mental health providers, we understand the significance of these times and realize there will be an unprecedented impact on children, staff, parents, and community members. As always, we want to ensure that our students' physical and mental well-being are considered and protected, and we would like to offer our support to provide expertise and guidance as it relates to student social, emotional, and behavioral care. We ask that the state and each local school district use our expertise in creating reopening plans and make an effort to include the Nevada Association of School Psychologists, the Nevada School Counselor Association, and the Nevada School Social Work Association on any working groups created for this purpose.

Each of our professions can assist staff and students as we all cope with the impact of COVID-19 upon returning to school. We can also help create systemic mental and behavioral health prevention and response systems to help identify those students with the greatest needs and offer triage to those with acute needs.

We understand that these are incredibly trying and difficult times for you all and that there are no easy solutions to the problems we face. However, we believe we are always stronger when we work collectively and we are ready to provide the support and expertise our school districts will need moving forward.

Thank you for your time, and we look forward to continuing our work with you.

Item A2, Alexandra Dominguez

June 4, 2020

Testimony to the Nevada State Board of Education regarding Agenda Item 7, Information and Discussion regarding Statewide response and recovery efforts related to COVID-19

Dear President Wynn and Members of the Board,

For the record, my name is Alexandra Dominguez, Director of State Government Relations for Nevada at The College Board. As a partner working with students, districts, and education leaders across Nevada to provide Advanced Placement (AP) coursework, the PSAT and SAT, and other initiatives that prepare students to be college and career ready, we want to thank you for the actions you have taken to ensure students continue to learn in these difficult times. We would like to share some recommendations that we believe are critical to ensure students stay on track and don't lose progress on college readiness and completion.

First, we would like to express our support for investing in universal high-speed connectivity and devices for students to continue their learning and commend Superintendent Ebert and the Department for making this a statewide priority in their Path Forward Plan. Providing access to reliable internet and devices allows students to keep up with their coursework and ensure learning continues throughout the fall. The Federal Communications Commission estimates that more than 21 million Americans live in areas without a broadband provider and over a quarter of adults in low-income households rely on cell service to get online.

We would also like to encourage the state to invest in expanding access to high-quality advanced coursework that can be done anywhere. Before COVID-19, there were already significant gaps in access to AP across the state. For example, 47 public schools in Nevada do not offer any AP courses, and of the 48 rural and small-town high schools in the state, only 26 have AP courses available.

Students and teachers are facing unprecedented situations amid disruptions in traditional learning. Teachers need online course materials, video instructional resources, through-course online assessments to measure learning, and training so they can teach effectively in blended and virtual environments. To help support this, the AP Program provides these tools free of charge to students and educators--motivating students to do their best for a chance to get college credit. These tools can help both strengthen and support existing AP instruction and make AP courses available in underserved schools where students may be lacking access.

Finally, NDE has been a great partner in supporting low-income AP students by subsidizing their exam fees as one of the allowable uses of College and Career Readiness (CCR) Grants. But as this pandemic has created historic unemployment numbers and many families are struggling now more than ever, we fear that low-income students are being most adversely affected across the board and there will be an unprecedented need for this assistance in 2021. We encourage the state to continue its support by dedicating CARES Act funds to cover these exam fees to meet the increased demand of students on their path to earn college credit while in high school.

The College Board stands ready to be a partner and resource to the state as you navigate these difficult challenges, and we look forward to working together for Nevada students.

Thank you for your time.

Alexandra Dominguez
Director, State Government Relations
The College Board
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Item A3, Nevada State Education Association

JUNE 4, 2020

The Nevada State Education Association has been the voice of Nevada educators for over 100 years. In our history, there have been few more challenging times than the one we find ourselves in right now, with the global COVID-19 pandemic. Since March 16th, our members who are classroom teachers have quickly transitioned, engaging their students in distance learning, while food service workers have been on the front lines, providing meals to families in our districts.

There are already many lessons to glean from the last two months, but the top takeaway is distance education is no replacement for in-person, classroom learning. Over the past month, the National Education Association conducted a nationwide survey of parents and educators. The good news is, as NEA President Lily Eskelsen Garcia said, “Never have our nation’s educators been more appreciated and seen— even as they work with students from a distance.” The survey found 88% of parents approve of how their children’s teachers are handling the coronavirus pandemic. They also overwhelmingly approve of education support professionals – a higher rating than they gave the CDC, their governor, and their mayor or local government. At the same time, parents are struggling with coronavirus pandemic. 81% express serious concerns with keeping their children’s education on track, the second highest concern after getting sick.

We also know the COVID-19 crisis is increasing education inequity. Educators’ top concerns are providing the same level of education for all students, the complexity of teaching students with disabilities, and absenteeism among students. Educators who work in schools with higher percentages of students receiving free and reduced lunch report lower class attendance and feel distance learning is less effective for their students. A plurality of educators say they now have a bigger workload than they did before coronavirus, with a pronounced increase for special education teachers. And educators with kids at home are struggling with the daunting task of balancing their distance teaching responsibilities with their role as parents whose children are at home.

This is why the work of reopening our schools, in the safest and most responsible way is so important. We appreciate Deputy Superintendent Felicia Gonzales for her work coordinating the development of “Nevada’s Path Forward: A Framework for a Safe, Efficient, and Equitable Return to School Buildings”. NSEA believes this framework presents strong guidance to school districts, that if followed would help facilitate a safe reopening next school year. However, NSEA is concerned that districts may not implement important recommendations in the framework, including health screenings, social distancing in classrooms and transportation, and accommodation for vulnerable or sick educators, due to a lack of funding.

NSEA is further concerned current policy on student assessments, teacher evaluations, and school star ratings will compromise the recommendations in the framework. With a continued emphasis on these old accountability mechanisms, students and educators will have counter-incentives to come to school when sick; to teach to tests instead of teaching and reinforcing health and safety; and to maximize numbers and time in classrooms, even when that may be outside of the guidelines. To maintain the priority of health and safety next school year, we believe the old accountability mechanisms need to be discarded. Thank you.

Item A4, Stacy Regenhard

Thank you board for all your efforts in these extremely trying times. As to the return to schools. I would like to express my deepest desire for our children and teachers to have options when we return to school. We all know that with funding issues it will be very difficult to return to school following guidelines that are not realistic and too strict. I believe those parents, children and teachers wanting to continue distance learning should be able to. Those parents, teachers and students wishing to return to school in a more normal setting with increased focus on hygiene, sanitizing and testing should be able to have that opportunity too. The risks and benefits of each option can and should be given to the parents, teachers and children as our choice. Distance learning is not feasible for many parents, those children will end up at home unsupervised or at daycare therefore pushing off the responsibility of learning to anyone or no one at all. Furthermore, the emotional and social health of our students needs to be considered as a health and safety issue. Many students have become depressed, suicidal and their emotional health is suffering due to lack of interactions with other children. Many parents believe their child's social emotional health is just as important as physical health. This summer many students and families will be engaging in social activities all over Clark county with minimal to no social distancing. If the trend of decrease in cases and deaths from COVID continues there would be no reasonable reason to not open schools giving the option to return to those that want to, even if there is risk. Finally, every year we send our students and teachers to school knowing the risk of harm from the flu, pneumonia, pertussis amongst many other diseases that are fatal to many children, but we still take the risk, because our children NEED a VALUABLE EDUCATION!!

Thank you for your time and consideration!

Stacy Regenhard

Appendix B: Documents Submitted for Board Review in Addition to Public Comment

1. National Education Association COVID-19 Educator Survey, submitted by Nevada State Education Association
2. National Education Association COVID-19 Parent Survey, submitted by Nevada State Education Association