



NEVADA'S PROMISE

excellence,
rigor, and
equity

ABSTRACT

NEVADA'S PROMISE: EXCELLENCE, RIGOR, AND EQUITY

NEVADA'S CHALLENGE

At this time in the history of our country and our state, there is a critical call to action to address the education of future generations. There is consensus at all levels of our society that for America to remain vibrant as an economy and a civilization, we must assume ultimate responsibility for what our children learn and how effectively they are taught. In Nevada, it is clear we have abandoned this responsibility. By all measures we have failed our children.

Despite some isolated pockets of excellence and hope, when half of our children fail to graduate high school, when post-secondary education enrollment rates are the lowest in the nation, and when the wide achievement gap of African-American and Hispanic children continues to prevail, we have failed. Nevada's diverse student population faces challenges of mobility, poverty, and English language acquisition. As a result, Nevada is 16 points below the national average in student achievement (Quality Counts 2010, Education Research Center). The consequences this portends are obvious—a sad escalation of social needs and a dismal prognosis for our state's desperate economy.

Nevada's unemployment rate of 14.2% is already the worst in the nation and has strained state and county resources. In 2009, personal income fell more rapidly in Nevada than in any other state. The staples of our economy—gaming, tourism, and construction—are no longer sufficient to provide for our children's future. Nevada is confronting the need to overhaul its education system as the first step in transforming the economy of the state to become the renewable, green energy capital of the West by aggressively pursuing and developing geothermal, solar, and wind energy generation. To usher in this new green energy economy, Nevada must renew Pre-K–12 and post-secondary education and align efforts with economic development and industry.

Nevadans will no longer accept 51st place for a student's chance of success (Quality Counts 2010, Education Research Center), and must begin demonstrating a commitment to true reform with *Nevada's Promise: Excellence, Rigor, and Equity*. This reform agenda represents the first truly tough-minded, bold approach to changing the way we do business in education in Nevada.

Compelled by the seriousness of this challenge, more than 200 stakeholders provided input into *Nevada's Promise*, representing the Nevada Department of Education, Nevada's 17 school districts, local school boards, parents, the Regional Professional Development Programs, Nevada System for higher Education, Nevada State Education Association, state charter schools,

the State Board of Education, elected officials, business and community-based organizations, and public foundations.

These stakeholders are committed to achieving *Nevada's Promise*: every school will be led by an effective principal, every class will be taught by an effective teacher, and every student will graduate. A better educated Nevada will be a more prosperous Nevada.

NEVADA'S PROMISE

Nevada has 436,000 students who are depending on us to deliver *Nevada's Promise*—that every school will be led by an effective principal, every classroom will be led by an effective teacher and every student will graduate. Guiding this work is the Managed Performance/Empowerment (MPE) model, a theory of action based on clear goals and solid accountability that has led to success in educational systems across the country. Managed instruction and earned autonomy are the guiding principles of MPE, which requires:

- Tightly aligned standards, curriculum, instruction, intervention, assessment, and professional development;
- Selection and hiring of high-quality staff;
- Effective and equitable resource allocation based on the needs of students;
- Supportive state, district, and school structures;
- Parent/community engagement;
- Transparent accountability and communication, including holding staff responsible for meeting clear, concrete performance expectations;
- Reliance upon effective data and monitoring systems to track accountability;
- Empowerment-orientation, in which increasing levels of autonomy are granted based on increased performance; and
- Establishment of clear, rigorous goals for students, teachers, principals, schools, districts, higher education, and the state.

Nevada will achieve five specifically-targeted objectives of Nevada's Promise by 2014 (data based on 2009 results):

- Increase the graduation rate to 85% using the longitudinal cohort model;
- Reduce the achievement gap by 50% for African American-white and Hispanic-white on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP);
- Increase graduates enrolling in post-secondary institutions in- or out-of-state by 50%;

- Increase student achievement percentage of students proficient or advanced on the NAEP fourth-grade mathematics (from 32% to 50%) and eighth-grade mathematics (from 25% to 50%); and
- Increase student achievement percentage of students proficient or advanced on the NAEP fourth-grade reading (from 24% to 50%) and eighth-grade reading (from 22% to 50%).

Operating with the principles of MPE at the forefront, Nevada will sustain a tightly-aligned instructional system, balancing school and district autonomy with comprehensive state and local accountability systems.

NEVADA'S STRATEGIES

To achieve the five targeted objectives, *Nevada's Promise* has outlined four strategies to guide education reform. Each of the four reform strategies will be implemented with particular focus on improving standards and assessments, providing data systems to support instruction, recruiting great teachers and leaders, and turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

- **Strategy 1:** Improve student performance through collaboration with key stakeholders such as parents, teachers, principals, employees' associations, district administrators, state officials, community leaders, and legislators.
- **Strategy 2:** Improve classroom instruction on rigorous and relevant content including an emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).
- **Strategy 3:** Improve classroom instruction and student performance using data at all levels—student, classroom, school, district, state—to support the improvement planning process, evaluate the effectiveness of planned programs, and drive instructional decisions focused on increased student achievement.
- **Strategy 4:** Improve achievement through best practices that have been proven effective in Nevada.

For more information about *Nevada's Promise*, state of education in Nevada, and the state of Nevada Education Reform Blue Ribbon Task Force, please visit www.nevadaspromise.org.

STRATEGY 1

Improve student performance through collaboration with key stakeholders such as parents, teachers, principals, employees' associations, district administrators, state officials, community leaders, and legislators.

Key sections in *Nevada's Promise* supporting this strategy:

STANDARDS & ASSESSMENTS

- Develop a statewide professional development plan for the roll-out, training, and support of instruction for the Common Core State Standards (CCSS)
- Develop college readiness expectations for mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) with the Nevada System of Higher Education

GREAT TEACHERS & LEADERS

- Create a transparent system that measures teacher and principal effectiveness with teacher, administrator, and parent associations

DATA SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT INSTRUCTION

- Expand access to the statewide longitudinal data system to include parents and public stakeholders via Electronic Media Access to Leverage Learning (E-MALL)

TURNING AROUND THE LOWEST-ACHIEVING SCHOOLS

- Create partnerships with industry, community, and legislative leaders to ensure that existing resources can be reallocated to impact high-needs schools and ensure equity
- Hire and use a statewide Parent Engagement Specialist to ensure collaboration between the districts and parents in developing and using community resources at turn-around schools

STRATEGY 2

Improve classroom instruction on rigorous and relevant content including an emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

Key sections in *Nevada's Promise* supporting this strategy:

STANDARDS & ASSESSMENTS

- Adopt the CCSS
- Participate in the review and proposed development of the national science education standards framework
- Promote a transition from high school to post-secondary education around the Programs of Study

GREAT TEACHERS & LEADERS

- Develop an accelerated pathway to receive full teacher or administrative credentials within two years and focus on STEM subjects and special education
- Enhance existing partnerships that recruit, train, and support teacher and principal candidates in STEM subjects and special education

DATA SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT INSTRUCTION

- Develop STEM curriculum units that will be made available electronically through E-MALL
- Create a common digital library of online resources that are aligned to the CCSS available through E-MALL

TURNING AROUND THE LOWEST-ACHIEVING SCHOOLS

- Support the development of recruitment tools and systems to ensure the hiring of appropriate staff for the lowest-achieving schools

STRATEGY 3

Improve classroom instruction and student performance using data at all levels—student, classroom, school, district, state—to support the improvement planning process, evaluate the effectiveness of planned programs, and drive instructional decisions focused on increased student achievement.

Key sections in *Nevada's Promise* supporting this strategy:

STANDARDS & ASSESSMENTS

- Participate in the SMARTER Balanced Assessment Consortium to develop common summative assessments in ELA and mathematics
- Incorporate longitudinal data in reading and mathematics to implement the Nevada Growth Model for Achievement
- Produce an aligned system of statewide interim measures
- Implement Early Reading Interventions using data from Reading First schools

GREAT TEACHERS & LEADERS

- Develop the Nevada Growth Model of Achievement to ensure assessment of growth across grades and subjects for every school
- Design and implement a statewide system that differentiates teacher and principal effectiveness using multiple measures of student growth
- Develop and use the COMPASS system to analyze teacher and principal effectiveness data

DATA SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT INSTRUCTION

- Enhance and expand the statewide longitudinal data system to include student achievement growth data, indicators of teacher and principal effectiveness, and links to teacher preparation programs from post-secondary institutions
- Develop and use the Comprehensive Oversight for Managing Performance to Achieve Student Success (COMPASS) system to monitor teacher and principal effectiveness

TURNING AROUND THE LOWEST-ACHIEVING SCHOOLS

- Develop and use focused school profiles to determine appropriate interventions for school improvement
- Develop and use the E-MALL online system to provide templates and online resources for longitudinal school and district improvement planning

STRATEGY 4

Improve achievement through best practices that have been proven effective in Nevada.

Key sections in *Nevada's Promise* supporting this strategy:

STANDARDS & ASSESSMENTS

- Develop the Nevada Curricular Frameworks that are aligned to the CCSS
- Develop a statewide pre-service teacher course of study that is aligned with the CCSS
- Use technology and advanced items to assess complex thinking, with a focus on STEM
- Develop targeted technical assistance for all high-needs schools and districts
- Provide professional development to empower teachers and principals to make data-based instructional decisions
- Conduct statewide professional development on CCSS using E-MALL

TURNING AROUND THE LOWEST-ACHIEVING SCHOOLS

- Build capacity at the state, district, and regional level to turn around schools that might otherwise decline into needs improvement status
- Provide support, mentoring, and guidance to district leaders in the implementation of the chosen intervention model relative to evaluation, facilitative administrative support, and systems interventions
- Gather and share data on the impact of early learning initiatives to help leverage stakeholders to commit to the adoption and sustain Pre-K programs
- Connect schools and districts with comprehensive support programs

DATA SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT INSTRUCTION

- Conduct statewide professional development using the newly developed E-MALL with a focus on building on-line tools for peer-to-peer collaboration
- Develop and use the COMPASS system to create individualized development plans for principals and teachers
- Monitor the effectiveness of professional development through the COMPASS system

GREAT TEACHERS & LEADERS

- Create teacher and principal standards to increase instructional effectiveness
- Establish and use individualized development plans for teachers and principals to help enhance knowledge, skills, and/or abilities
- Use the State Professional Development Standards to guide teacher and principal training
- Use the COMPASS system to guide professional development that is content-based, comprehensive, and rigorous
- Expand on successful programs and develop a statewide infrastructure of peer-supported, job-embedded professional development
- Establish measures that evaluate and enable continuous improvement of the effectiveness of professional development offerings and access through the COMPASS system

NEVADA'S RESPONSIBILITY

Educational opportunity is now a moral imperative and a quality of life issue for Nevadans. Since the emergence of the current tourist-based economy 50 years ago, Nevada has prospered without much attention to the changing nature of educational systems in the rest of the nation and the world. While Nevada's primary industries have been gaming, tourism, and most recently construction, college readiness has not been a high priority for the student population. For the future of Nevada, this must change.

Nevada must create and maintain an educated, well-prepared workforce. More than 436,000 students are depending on Nevada leaders to establish new attitudes and expectations. The work begins today, and the effort to implement *Nevada's Promise* must be a unanimous commitment to statewide reform. We received unprecedented collaboration during the development phase of the reform agenda, and it will require that same diversity of perspectives and representation to fulfill our promise.

Nevada's Promise contains a pledge to achieve significant, positive, and transformative changes for education in Nevada—every school will be led by effective principals, every classroom will be led by effective teachers and every student will graduate. *Nevada's Promise* is not only a blueprint for education reform in the state, but also a call to action for the continued support of all sectors in implementing this agenda.

This is not merely an educational exercise. Nevada's economic health and, ultimately, Nevadans' quality of life, is reliant on our ability to produce young people with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to succeed. *Nevada's Promise* makes a clear and decisive link between the state of education in Nevada and the economic distress that it faces, and we will only solve the problem through major reforms in education.

Reform is a process, not an event. We do not underestimate the enormity of this task, nor the dire consequences if left unaddressed. We are prepared to make our case beginning with you.