

## **EDUCATION REFORM BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE COMMITTEE**

Theater  
Valley High School  
2839 Burnham Avenue  
Las Vegas, NV 89169  
September 20, 2010

Committee members present were Mrs. Elaine Wynn, Co-chair, Chancellor Daniel J. Klaich, Co-chair, Senator Barbara Cegavske, Assemblywoman Debbie Smith, Mr. DJ Allen, Mr. Ray Bacon, Dr. Jill Derby, Ms. Joyce Haldeman, Ms. Pam Hicks, Ms. Dana Lee, Ms. Cherri Luna, Mr. Ronald Montoya, Dr. Heath Morrison, Mr. Zhan Okuda-Lim, Ms. Karen Pedersen, Ms. Gina Polovina, Dr. Keith Rheault, Dr. Michele Robinson, Ms. Allison Serafin, Ms. Nancy Smith, Ms. Alison Turner, Mr. Gintas Vildzius, Mr. Chris Wallace and Ms. Lynn Warne.

Committee members present via telephone were Dr. Rob Roberts.

Others present were Mr. Christopher Cross, Mr. Fred Licon, Mr. Ah Lak Lim, Ms. Tracy Okuda Lim, Ms. Kristin McNeill, Ms. Jill Pendleton, Ms. Kim Sinatra and Ms. Nancy Sorenson.

- I. Call to Order – Mrs. Wynn called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m., with all members present except Dr. Sonya Horsford, Ms. Punam Mathur, Mr. John Soderman and Ms. Diane Sumner.
- II. Information Only-Welcome and Introductions – Mrs. Wynn thanked Valley High School and Principal Ron Montoya for hosting the meeting.

Mrs. Wynn stated that there has been innovative, creative work done by each group towards reform. There would be no reason to convene by staying at the status quo. She understood that there is governance and accountability and there are individuals within the working groups that are directly involved in their day jobs working on the reform subjects. Colleagues will be impacted by the decisions that are made, and if anyone feels that the group is not being sensitive, please mention it so the proper adjustments can be made. However, the group has to move forward for the students because that is what is important. Mrs. Wynn felt the group communicated well and sorted through difficult subjects. It is critical to keep the cohesiveness of the group on track.

Mrs. Wynn welcomed Mr. Okuda-Lim, student representative from Valley High School as a new member of the Committee.

- III. Approved-Minutes – The Committee recommended approval of the minutes from the June 23, 2010 meeting.

Ms. Turner requested that a change be made on page 9, number 4 from “Bridge the DSL gap” to “Bridge the ESL” (*English as a Second Language*) gap.”

Mr. Bacon recommended approval of the minutes, with the modification, from the June 23, 2010, meeting. Ms. Polovina seconded. Motion carried.

IV. Information Only-Race to the Top Application Review – An analysis of the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) reviewers’ comments and feedback regarding Nevada’s performance in the federal Race to the Top application process was provided.

Mr. Cross presented a PowerPoint report showing that Nevada scored 381.2 points, ranking 24<sup>th</sup> out of the 36 states that applied for Race to the Top, Phase 2 funding. Massachusetts scored the highest with 471 points. Among the ten grant recipients, Ohio was last with 440.8 points. Twelve states scored below Nevada.

Mr. Cross said that the following information represented the five individual reviewer scores that were then averaged together to generate Nevada’s final score. The final score was not a true average since two of the five reviews awarded the state all 15 points for STEM (*Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics*) and three did not. As a result, those 15 points were deducted from the scores of two reviewers.

- Reviewer 1 – 469
- Reviewer 2 – 369
- Reviewer 3 – 353
- Reviewer 4 – 342
- Reviewer 5 – 403

Nevada Average – 381.2

Mr. Cross continued with the scores by section:

- Section A: State Success Factors – Nevada had 87% of the points; the average was 77%. No winning state had fewer than 89%.
- Section B: Standards and Assessments – Nevada earned 95% of the points; the average was 92%. All of the winning states were at 97% or higher.
- Section C: Data System to Improve Instruction – Nevada had 81% of the points; the average was 80%. Only the District of Columbia and Ohio were below 80%, whereas all the others were above 86%.
- Section D: Great Teachers and Leaders – Nevada had 61% of the points; the average was 71%. All of the winners were above 84%. This area was consistently penalized and critiqued.

- Section E: Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools – Nevada had 90%; the average was 85%. The lowest winning score had 90% of the points.
- Section F: General Selection Criteria – Nevada had 70%; the average was 72%. Maryland and North Carolina were below 80%, whereas the others were above 82%. Some said Nevada’s plan was not clear. Mr. Cross indicated that there may not have been enough past momentum.
- Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM – Nevada had zero points; 75% of the states had all 15 points. All the winning states had all 15 points.

Mr. Cross reported that the total for Nevada was 75% of all points while the average was 78%. Among the winners, it was 90.4%.

Mr. Cross pointed out that participation in Phase 1 provided a significant competitive advantage for consideration in Phase 2. Eighteen of the 19 states that were chosen as finalists in Phase 2 had the advantage of having submitted applications in Phase 1. Fourteen of those 18 finalists were also finalists in Phase 1. Mr. Cross said that of the ten winning states in Phase 2, only Maryland was not a Phase 1 applicant. Between Phase 1 and Phase 2, the gains among the winners ranged from 13 (Georgia) to 78 (Hawaii) points. While Arizona was not a winner, its score improved by 190 points.

Mr. Cross stated that the scores and comments varied considerably. The following comments represent what elements of *Nevada’s Promise* were compelling, what facets received mixed reviews and what components require further and/or clarification.

Mr. Cross reported the strengths of *Nevada’s Promise* were: 1) 100% LEA (*Local Education Agencies*) support and commitment, 2) the sustainability of *Nevada’s Promise*, 3) Section A: State Success Factors received praise for being comprehensive, coherent, clearly articulated, reasonable, powerful and of high quality, 4) Section B: Standards and Assessments outperformed any other section of the application, and 5) Section E: Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools received consistently high marks and praise from each reviewer.

Mr. Cross continued that Section A: State Success Factors had mixed comments. Some reviewers criticized the broad consensus because it came at the expense of bold, meaningful reform. They felt this was reflected throughout the evaluation by way of the state’s lack of ambitious, yet achievable performance measures and/or high-quality implementation plans. The state did not demonstrate an understanding as to what led to its previous reform shortcomings and ultimately how past reforms inform present and future reform goals. There were also mixed reviews to the proposed management / organizational structure to implement *Nevada’s Promise*. Section C: Data

Systems to Support Instruction seemed to be basic, limited in scope and lacked description and cohesiveness about how the various systems will operate and interface with one another.

Mr. Cross pointed out that there were deficiencies in Section D: Great Teachers and Leaders, which was consistently penalized in the areas of: a) providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals, b) improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance, c) ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals, d) improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs and e) providing effective support to teachers and principals. He felt that effective principals and teachers relate to high poverty and Nevada does not have the provisions for equitable distribution to do enough in areas like special education and English as a Second Language. The preparation programs did not have the system that linked K-12 to higher education. Mr. Cross believed that teachers and principals must have effective support.

Mr. Cross said there was not enough progress or momentum shown in Section F: General Selection Criteria, specifically: a) ensuring successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools, and b) Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM.

Mr. Cross continued that in order to fulfill *Nevada's Promise*, there are a set of legislative actions grounded in the application that should be recommended to the new governor and the incoming Legislature. Other actions can be taken by the State Board, the Nevada Department of Education (*NDE*) and by the 17 school districts in the state, often through discussions with their respective teacher associations. Mr. Wallace added the State Board will meet on the standards in December 2010.

Mr. Cross stated that there is a memo in the materials provided in a previous e-mail and on the DOE website containing data in terms of the scores and the fine detail.

Ms. Pedersen requested that the state be asked that no students are overlooked and that all students be included and prepared for advanced study and careers in STEM.

Mrs. Wynn indicated that an action plan was created as a result of the analysis. She requested that the action items be bulleted. It would help if Nevada chose to enter Phase 3. Mr. Cross agreed – if there is a next phase. He wondered if the criteria would be different for the next round.

Dr. Derby said that Mrs. Beth Wells, wife of Dr. Stephen Wells, President, Desert Research Institute, is heading a STEM Coalition. The group called Gathering Genius will take on the responsibility of advancing the STEM effort. It is a group

of leaders in business, industry and academia to host the Intel Science & Engineering Fair in Reno involving 1,500 people. The first project will be to have a STEM Summit, state-wide. Mrs. Wynn requested that someone from the group be part of this effort.

Mr. Wallace was encouraged by the number of lawmakers who looked favorably on this work, which will be critical when facing the legislative session in February 2011. He was pleased that Nevada did not come in dead last and got the majority of points where possible.

- V. Information Only-Race to the Top Section Leader Reports – Working group leaders for each working group of *Nevada's Promise* presented an update of their findings to date in relation to their review of Nevada's education infrastructure, and long-term K-12 and higher education reform.

Ms. Lee presented a PowerPoint on behalf of the Public Will & Communication (PWC) working group. She stated that the group met and worked actively since Nevada's Race to the Top application, entitled *Nevada's Promise: Excellence, Rigor and Equity* was submitted. Ms. Lee explained that the group's task is to promote the Race to the Top application, *Nevada's Promise*. More than 200 stakeholders throughout Nevada provided input to *Nevada's Promise* and are committed to achieving its overarching goal of education reform. The group seeks to continue this commitment by engendering broad based/mass support and awareness of *Nevada's Promise* platform.

Ms. Lee said the PWC's initial tasks were in support of publicizing and disseminating the *Nevada's Promise* document with such actions as creating a master stakeholder list of recipients to receive the document and producing condensed versions of it in the form of the Executive Summary, Abstract and PowerPoint presentation. A master communication and media plan, stationery system and a collection of quotes, facts, figures and call to actions have also been completed.

Ms. Lee reported that the next PWC effort will be the creation of a *Nevada's Promise* master calendar. She requested that the Committee recommend events at which goals and an agenda may be presented. Speakers will be required to participate in media training to speak on behalf of the task force.

Ms. Lee demonstrated the website [www.nevadaspromise.org](http://www.nevadaspromise.org), launched on September 16, 2010, which took the place of the Nevada Race to the Top website. It serves as a platform to educate Nevadans about the comprehensive and bold solution to our state's education crisis. It features news from the task force, education successes, and progress updates. Public dialogue will be encouraged through the Facebook page.

Ms. Lee pointed out that the homepage uses succinct and bulleted points to drive home why education is important and how *Nevada's Promise* is a call to action to change current outcomes. The task force's recommendations to the DOE led to a collaboration of diverse stakeholders, a blueprint for reform and a prescription for progress.

Mrs. Wynn requested volunteers for speaking engagements. She suggested having a communications plan or strategy as the legislative session gets closer. Ms. Lee said a distinct message will be in place and she encouraged everyone to speak about *Nevada's Promise*. Mrs. Wynn said once the action steps and process of identifying where the most significant focus can occur, it will help target the energy.

Dr. Derby distributed information on state education governance models across the country which also contained a chart of all general governance structures. She pointed out that the arrows are aimed in all directions with no single point of accountability at the top. In terms of the process, the group decided to look at the design or guiding principles that could direct the effort.

Dr. Derby continued that the group decided on four design principles: 1) a single point of responsibility; one place where responsibility rests for the effectiveness and progress of the educational system, 2) functional alignment; a guiding principle to see the chain of command, 3) to make it simple, clear, transparent, efficient, and 4) the use of academic standards and data to guide decision making in the new governance structure that will be recommended to the group.

Mrs. Wynn believed that if the design principles are valid the work will describe itself. She asked the group to focus on the design principles for the ultimate recommendations. This will be the heavy-duty piece that will rouse the system.

Dr. Rheault said the A.C.R. 2 recommendations are that the State Board of Education would be a combination of appointed and elected officials. The board would still appoint the superintendent.

Ms. Turner asked if there was an alignment with one model in conjunction with the states that have the higher achieving schools. Mr. Cross said it points to a single point of responsibility at producing better student achievement because of the accountability achievements it contains. Dr. Rheault said the School Board Association has looked at the different models, but it is really what is set up in the state concerning commissions, boards, desired accomplishments and so forth. The elected superintendents tend to serve longer. Dr. Derby said the governor in Nevada does not play a major role in terms of accountability and neither does the governor's cabinet.

Senator Cegavske said there are some issues that should be discussed. One is the procedure for recruiting teachers and the other is not linking to the governor.

Chancellor Klaich asked if integrations of the organization chart goals were more for points or for a traditional peer middle-type structure. Dr. Derby replied that it was to show that a single point of responsibility was lacking and the point of alignment that indicates who reports to whom.

Ms. Pedersen felt there was a lack of communication across the state and is one of its downfalls.

Mr. Okuda-Lim expressed appreciation for the work that Dr. Derby has done on the organizational flow chart, especially regarding the single point of responsibility.

Mrs. Wynn said there are key states with enormous challenges that seem to gravitate to a Model 1 form. She thought it was important to launch for reform. The hybrid does not seem to make sense to anyone and it is advancing its way to the Legislature. If this group wants to make an impact, it has to move quickly to make a presentation to the Legislature. The Governance group is on track and she encouraged them to be aggressive and innovative. Mr. Cross added that the student achievement data research has yet to be presented. Those systems have to be in place in order to tie them to the models.

Assemblywoman Smith reported that the Legislation group made some initial decisions. It was felt that the three areas needing help were 1) alternative routes to licensure, 2) teacher and principal evaluations and 3) charter schools. Sub-committees were formed for the alternative routes to licensure and teacher and principal evaluations.

The alternative routes to licensure sub-committee came back with alternate routes. Dr. Rheault said that three of the five regulations were addressed. The suggestion is to meet the criteria and have legislation include regulations expected in the Race to the Top by revising NRS 391.011. He recommended that the group's proposal be attached to the bill draft request.

Dr. Robinson said they recognize and appreciate the support concerning the charter schools and the development of legislation in that regard. She suggested removing barriers regarding the charter schools and conversion of traditionally underperforming public schools to charter schools as well as looking at sponsorship, which is on the state department right now.

Ms. Warne was part of the Legislation sub-committee group that discussed teacher and principal evaluations. They looked at a North Carolina effort of accountability and curriculum, which resembled Nevada's Race to the Top application regarding the teachers and leaders council. This entailed putting together a great many pieces that are factored into a principal's and teacher's evaluation as well as bringing in aspects of performance pay and incentivizing

the equitable distribution of veteran educators. Ms. Warne continued that the information is still in review so there is no recommendation at this time.

Assemblywoman Smith said there was discussion to streamline the A.C.R. 2 recommendations. One problem is that more work is being created, which has to be looked at seriously. There other things going on with STEM including the organization of a state wide conference.

Mrs. Wynn stated there were some areas that might be unclear. She went on to say that the Committee was originally charged with relinquishing its recommendations to the governor in November 2010. The timing is awkward because of the elections. The report is being transferred to a governor who will no longer be in office when the legislative session begins. We are also working on legislative recommendations the receiving governor may not support, and is questionable by the incoming governor. Our expanded role is to continue education reform. Our own identity and legitimacy is somewhat nebulous, but there is no choice but to move forward as appointed. The information is valid and correct and will always be a valuable resource. Mrs. Wynn wants to have a sense that the group is feeling the same way. She requested that if anyone was feeling uncomfortable that it be addressed now.

Mrs. Wynn recommended bearing down with the assignments and to be mindful of the calendar. The clock is ticking to meet deadlines.

Mr. Bacon believed that great leaders make great schools. As the Legislation group moves forward, if we do not include something to create the great leaders in the report, then the opportunity will be missed. We are woefully short as far as having good programs to bring the greatest leaders to the majority of the schools. It is the one area that we cannot afford to miss.

Mrs. Wynn requested the staff to go over the bullets of the *Nevada's Promise* action items to be certain there are no voids and if there are, to assign them to the proper group.

Dr. Morrison said that as the work is finalized for Carson City in February 2011, to understand that the three major topics there will be the budget, economic development and redistricting. Through *Nevada's Promise* there is a lot to say about the budget and economic development. There has to be more messaging about *Nevada's Promise* – to make a connection between education and the economy. We will need recommendations from all three groups so we will not miss our opportunity.

Ms. Turner felt the missing link in *Nevada's Promise* information is parental involvement. The strongest correlation in the data is between effective parental engagement and student success. Mrs. Wynn thought that parent involvement

was implied in the work, but would appreciate if Ms. Turner brought recommendations to the Legislative group.

- VI. New Business – Mrs. Wynn said that the Committee would be notified when the next meeting date is scheduled.

Ms. Hicks asked about the logistics of the recommendations as far as consensus and voting. Will the recommendations be distributed before the meeting and will those recommendations be voted on? Mrs. Wynn suggested that the path would be patterned after the Race to the Top application. It is incumbent to do homework and critiques should be submitted to the working groups. At the final meeting our comments and recommendations will be on record as a consensus. Ms. Sinatra advocated for a timeline to insure everyone has two to three business days for materials to be reviewed. Assemblywoman Smith proposed a longer workshop for the last meeting.

Senator Cegavske commented that the parents should be involved, but it is the responsibility of each individual school to bring those parents in. How can we help? Taking seven layers to get to the superintendent is too much trouble for the parent.

Ms. Smith asked what makes great teachers and leaders and what would be the next step to help accomplish this. Is the message being delivered? Mrs. Wynn replied that it is a prominent thought and it is one area where Nevada fell down.

- VII. Public Comment – Ms. Nancy Sorenson, concerned citizen, said one piece that is not addressed is the emotional development of our students. She felt this goes hand-in-hand with acknowledging and addressing student education. Mrs. Wynn offered that Communities in Schools Nevada is an organization focusing on addressing the target population that serves the emotional and physical needs of students to help them learn.
- VIII. Good and Welfare – Chancellor Klaich thanked Mr. Montoya, Ms. Nancy Stone and the Wynn staff for their assistance.

Ms. Turner expressed kudos to Dr. Morrison and the Washoe County School District for their impressive movement upward in the high school graduation rate.

Ms. Pedersen thanked the DOE for adopting the Common Core Standards.

Mr. Zhan is proud to be a representative for students. He serves on the State Board representing students at their schools and will attempt to get the word about *Nevada's Promise* out to student councils.

Mr. Wynn is gratified by the work performed by all the groups and by the passion everyone has.

Chancellor Klaich echoed Mrs. Wynn's comments. He understood that the task is not resource oriented and after the case is made it is supposed to sell itself. However, the reality is we have tried the experiment of not funding higher education and public schools in this state for many years and it is time to declare that as a failure. I hope the case will sell itself because we are about to hit a cross-roads and there has never been a more critical time for Nevada. He hoped that everyone steps up to the plate. Chancellor Klaich encouraged the Committee to go big or go home.

IX. Adjournment – The meeting adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

Prepared by: Nancy Stone  
Nevada System of Higher Education