



NEVADA'S PROMISE

excellence,
rigor, and
equity

EDUCATION REFORM
BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE REPORT

NOVEMBER 2010

Education Reform Blue Ribbon Task Force Co-Chairs

Elaine P. Wynn
Director
Wynn Resorts, Ltd.

Daniel Klaich
Chancellor
Nevada System for Higher Education

Education Reform Blue Ribbon Task Force Members

D.J. Allen, MBA
Founder/Head Visionary
Imagine Marketing

Cherri Luna
Science Specialist
Steve Schorr Elementary

Allison Serafin
Executive Director
Teach For America

Ray Bacon
Executive Director
Nevada Manufacturers Association

Punam Mathur
Vice President,
Human Resources
NV Energy

**Assemblywoman
Debbie Smith**
Nevada Legislature
Washoe, No. 30

Senator Barbara Cegavske
Nevada Senate
Clark, No.8

Ron Montoya
Principal
Valley High School

Nancy Smith
Marketing Manager
Datanamics, Inc.

Dr. Jill Derby
Educational and
Governance Consultant
Association of Governing Boards of
Colleges and Universities

Dr. Heath E. Morrison
Superintendent
Washoe County School District

John D. Soderman
Interim Superintendent
Douglas County School District

Joyce Haldeman
Associate Superintendent,
Community and
Government Relations
Clark County School District

Zhan Okuda-Lim
Student
Valley High School

Diane Sumner
Transition Coordinator
Washoe County School District

Pamela Hicks
Administrative Trainer
Southern Nevada Regional
Professional Development Program

Karen Pedersen
National Board Certified Teacher
Yerington Intermediate School

Alison J. Turner
President
Nevada Parent Teacher Association

Dr. Sonya Douglass Horsford
Assistant Professor,
Educational Leadership
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Gina B. Polovina
Vice President,
Government Affairs
Boyd Gaming Corporation

Gintas Vildzius
General Manager,
Global Technologies
Measurement & Control Solutions
GE Energy

Dana S. Lee
President
Nevada Women's Philanthropy

Dr. Keith W. Rheault
Superintendent
Nevada Department of Education

Christopher Wallace
President
Nevada State Board of Education

Dr. William "Rob" Roberts
Superintendent
Nye County School District

Lynn Warne
President
Nevada State Education
Association

Dr. Michele Robinson
President
Charter School Association
of Nevada

Table of Contents

I.	Call to Action	6
II.	Executive Summary	9
III.	Education Reform Blue Ribbon Task Force	12
	• Description	
	• Responsibilities	
	• Meetings	
IV.	Phase One: Race to the Top	14
	• Race to the Top	
	• Sections	
	• Process	
	• Theory of Action	
	• Targeted Objectives	
V.	Race to the Top: Critique and Analysis	19
	• Critique and Analysis	
	• Race to the Top, Phase 2 Scoring Analysis	
	• Summary	
	• Scores by Section	
	• Strengths	
	• Mixed Reviews	
	• Deficiencies	
	• Conclusion	
VI.	Phase Two: Nevada’s Promise	25
	• Nevada’s Promise	
	• Recommendation Process	
VII.	Governance	27
VIII.	Legislation	44
IX.	Administration	54
X.	Conclusion	61

Call to Action

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.

State of Education in Nevada

Education has become the civil rights movement of our time. There is a need to address the issues of poverty and diversity and to ensure that every child has an opportunity to learn. The hard reality is that Nevada has consistently ranked at or near the bottom in most education-related categories across the country. Current student outcomes are not acceptable.

- Nevada has the lowest graduation rate in the nation at 41.8%, falling 42% below the graduation rate of the highest ranked state, New Jersey.ⁱ
- Higher income students in Nevada perform worse in eighth-grade math than those in any other state except Hawaii and Washington, D.C.
- A wide achievement gap for African-American and Hispanic students continues to prevail, with graduation rates at 30.7% and 29.9%, respectively.ⁱⁱ
- Post-secondary education enrollment rates of 39.2% are the second lowest in the nation.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Nevada ranks last in the nation for students graduating from college in four years.
- In 2007, per pupil spending in Nevada was \$7,845, 26% lower than the \$10,557 U.S. average.^{iv}
- The percent of taxable resources spent on education in Nevada is 2.9%, whereas the U.S. average is 3.8%, making Nevada the second lowest in the nation.^v

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 for 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 well below the national average in overall student achievement indicators.^{vi} 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 14.5% 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.

State of the Economy in Nevada

Education reform is not merely an educational exercise. *Nevada's Promise* represents a plan for the state's economic health, sustainable economic development opportunities and, ultimately, an improved quality of life for Nevadans. Based on the economic indicators listed below, it is abundantly clear that the state is in a crisis situation as jobs have disappeared and the economy is simply unable to generate the revenue needed to support expected and desperately needed public services.^{vii}

- Nevada's unemployment rate is 14.5%, the highest in the country.
- There are 195,000 reported Nevadans looking for work; 220,000 estimated.
- Nevada ranks last in the nation in jobs available for college graduates.
- Nevada ranks third in the nation in employing high school drop-outs.
- In 2009, personal income fell more rapidly in Nevada than in any other state.
- Nevada's foreclosure rate is one in 17 homes (the national rate is one in 78 homes).
- Nevada's budget deficit is estimated to be \$2.9 billion, which is 42% of the \$7 billion budget.
- Nevada spends 15% more per capita than any other state on incarceration.
- In 2009, Nevada's population declined by 2.6%, marking the first population decline in the state since 1920.

Education is the Key to Nevada's Economic Future

Nevada's long-term success will be determined largely by its educational system's capacity to prepare students for success in today's world. Nevada must create a new strategy for the future if the state is to prosper, and it cannot create a new economic reality unless it has a workforce that is better educated and has the skills that will meet the needs of a workforce of the future—a workforce that will demand graduates with much greater mastery in subjects such as math and science. *Nevada's Promise* makes an unequivocal and decisive link between the state of education in Nevada and the economic distress that it faces, and the state will only solve its economic challenges through major reforms in education.

The economic benefits of improving Nevada's drop-out rates:^{viii}

- More than 23,900 students did not graduate from Nevada's high schools in 2010; the lost lifetime earnings for that class of drop-outs alone total nearly **\$6.2 billion**.
- Nevada would save more than **\$230.1 million** in health care costs over the lifetimes of each class of drop-outs had they earned their diplomas.
- If Nevada's high schools graduated all of their students ready for college, the state would save almost **\$25.8 million** a year in community college remediation costs and lost earnings.
- Nevada's economy would see a combination of crime-related savings and additional revenue of about **\$78.4 million** each year if the male high school graduation rate increased by just 5%.

In the Las Vegas metropolitan area, an estimated 13,600 students dropped out from the class of 2008. Reducing the number of dropouts by 50% for this single high school class would result in the following economic benefits to the Las Vegas region:^{ix}

- **\$70 million** in combined earnings in the average year.
- An additional **\$51 million** in increased spending, including **\$7 million** on vehicles, and an additional **\$20 million** in investments during the average year.
- This additional spending and investment would likely be enough to support **450 new jobs** and increase the gross regional product by as much as **\$91 million** by the time these new graduates reach the midpoint of their careers.
- By the midpoint of their careers, these new graduates would likely purchase homes totaling a value of as much as **\$194 million** more than what they would have spent without a diploma.
- State and local tax revenue would likely grow by as much as **\$5 million** during the average year.
- **56%** of these new graduates would likely continue to pursue some type of post-secondary education.

Nevada's Promise contains a pledge to achieve significant, positive and transformative changes for education in Nevada—**every school will be led by an effective principal, every classroom will be led by an effective teacher 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.

Education is seriously underfunded in Nevada, as shown by national data that ranks Nevada second to last in the nation in per-pupil expenditures, with 2.9% of total taxable resources spent on education. It is equally true that funding without major reform in Nevada will not lead to better results. Many of the recommendations in this report can be undertaken through statutory amendments and by changing the culture of low expectations that exists in many schools to one of success for all students. The task force recognizes that certain reforms contained in this report will require additional investment, in some cases substantial new funding. This is the reality of the state today.

The task force recommends use of this report as a blueprint for our investment in and commitment to the future. While time and circumstances will bring about some refinements, the basic plan is here and should serve to guide Nevada's progress.

With the election of a new governor and the convening of a new legislature, we are faced with a unique opportunity to value education reform more highly than ever before and forge a new path today for Nevada's tomorrow. Nevadans can no longer accept 51st place for a student's chance of success, and must begin demonstrating a commitment to true reform with *Nevada's Promise: Excellence, Rigor, and Equity*.^x This reform agenda represents the first truly tough-minded, bold approach to changing the way we do business in education in Nevada.

The task force now urges that citizens across the state become familiar with these proposals and that our policymakers and newly elected state leaders shape this report into the roadmap for the future of Nevada's children.

Executive Summary

Nevada's Promise: Excellence, Rigor, and Equity

On March 15, 2010, Governor Jim Gibbons signed an executive order forming the Nevada Education Reform Blue Ribbon Task Force to guide and oversee Nevada's Race to the Top application and to facilitate public and private discussion and consensus for overall reform of public education for Nevada's children.

Compelled by the seriousness of this challenge, more than 200 stakeholders provided input into *Nevada's Promise: Excellence, Rigor, and Equity*, representing the Nevada Department of Education (NDE), Nevada's 17 school districts, local school boards, parents, the Regional Professional Development Programs, the Nevada System for Higher Education (NSHE), the 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* because a better educated Nevada will be a more prosperous Nevada.

The task force's efforts in preparing the Race to the Top application sparked a wildfire of interest in and support for moving forward on an education reform agenda for the state. That agenda is now known as *Nevada's Promise*, and the next step is to lay the groundwork for the public support necessary to implement the following reforms in our state.

Governance

In order to realize a K–12 public education system wherein student achievement is paramount and the necessary reforms are readily enacted, the task force firmly believes that accountability must begin with Nevada's governor. Furthermore, to facilitate this gubernatorial empowerment, the task force proposes a realigned governance structure in which responsibility for and vision of K–12 public education may be effectively carried out. As chief executive officer of the state, the governor will rely upon his/her appointed state superintendent of public instruction to execute his/her vision and an appointed state board of education to implement the policies that will enable the state superintendent of public instruction to carry out the governor's objectives. The task force recommends the following structural reforms to the K–12 public education governance system:

- Governor acts as the single point of responsibility.
- State board of education is appointed.
- State superintendent of public instruction is appointed and serves as a member of the governor's executive cabinet.
- Standing, education-related councils and commissions are realigned to establish a simple, clear and transparent K–12 public education system.

Legislation

The pledges contained in *Nevada's Promise* were thoroughly reviewed by the U.S. Department of Education in the Race to the Top grant competition and represent the task force's concerted effort to solve the education crisis in Nevada. The pledges below correspond to specific sections of *Nevada's Promise* and are identified as either legislative or administrative items for action.

Furthermore, in an effort to estimate the overall cost of implementing Nevada's Promise, the task force, in conjunction with NDE, modified the original Race to the Top budget to reflect projected costs over the 2011 and 2013 Legislative Sessions. Nevertheless, this modified budget still represents each of the major components of the plan to preserve a cohesive, integrated reform agenda. The task force has included a copy of the budget with this plan for the governor's consideration.

Legislative Actions Required for Reform

- Revise and augment the current alternative paths to licensure for teachers and principals.
- Authorize the Accelerated Alternative Route to Licensure (A²RL) pathway to support the expansion of a teacher and principal pipeline that produces effective educators for high-poverty schools and high-need areas.
- Provide strong leadership and dedicated teams to implement *Nevada's Promise*.
- Design and implement a statewide system that differentiates teacher and principal effectiveness using multiple measures of student growth.
- Revise binary evaluation system for teachers.
- Revise binary evaluation system for administrators.
- Include teacher evaluations in determination of administrator effectiveness.
- Develop a comprehensive evaluation rubric.
- Determine career ladder opportunities for effective teachers to mentor and support teachers or relocate to serve in urban and rural high-needs schools.
- Use teacher and principal evaluations to inform key decisions (pay-for-performance).
- Use teacher and principal evaluations to inform key decisions (tenure).
- Use teacher and principal evaluations to inform key decisions (termination).
- Create the Nevada Charter School Institute.
- Fund charter schools equitably.
- Establish provision for the conversion of long-term, under-performing traditional public schools to charter schools and for the conversion of long-term, under-performing charter schools to traditional public schools.

Administration

Administrative Actions Required for Reform

- Adopt the Common Core State Standards.
- 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.
- Comply with the twelfth, and remaining, element prescribed in the America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education and Science Act (America COMPETES Act)—student-level college readiness test scores.
- Establish a Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) coalition to effect long-term impacts in STEM, P–20 education and job training for Nevada.
- Improve the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs.
- Promote early childhood outcomes.
- Expand the Nevada Growth Model for Achievement to all students K–12.
- Improve student performance through collaboration with key stakeholders such as parents, teachers, principals, employee associations, district administrators, state officials, community leaders and legislators.

Educational opportunity is a moral imperative and 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. 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’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. Nevada must create and maintain an educated, well-prepared workforce. More than 436,000 students are depending on Nevada’s 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.

Education Reform Blue Ribbon Task Force

Description

On March 15, 2010, Governor Jim Gibbons signed an executive order forming the Nevada Education Reform Blue Ribbon Task Force to guide and oversee Nevada's Race to the Top application and to facilitate public and private discussion and consensus for overall reform of public education for Nevada's children.

Responsibilities

The task force was charged with the following:

- Provide state leadership and coordination of the federal Race to the Top grant application, which was delivered to the governor on May 21, 2010.
- Review Nevada's education infrastructure and recommend long-term P-20 reform designed to improve student achievement by November 19, 2010.
- Facilitate discussion and consensus among public and private stakeholders in building a knowledge base of "lessons learned" from the Race to the Top grant competition.
- Encourage public and private involvement in a review of Nevada's education infrastructure and recommend measures designed to ensure that Nevada is providing a fair and appropriate education that will support the future of the state and diversification of the economy.
- Facilitate a statewide dialogue on reform of the public education delivery system.
- Consult with relevant stakeholders to develop a plan to improve the results of the state's public education system, from K-12 through higher education.
- Develop legislative and regulatory recommendations supporting the mission that may address, among other matters, governance, academic standards, teacher performance and resource allocation.

Meetings

Since its inception, the task force has met numerous times and has held meetings in both northern and southern Nevada. Following the planning meeting on March 19, 2010, these meetings were open to the public and conducted in compliance with Nevada's Open Meeting Law.

- November 11, 2010 - Las Vegas
Wynn Las Vegas
- September 20, 2010 - Las Vegas
Valley High School
- June 23, 2010 - Las Vegas
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- May 11, 2010 - Las Vegas
Grant Sawyer State Office Building
- April 23, 2010 - Reno
Desert Research Institute
- April 9, 2010 - Las Vegas
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
- March 19, 2010 - Las Vegas
Wynn Las Vegas

Phase One: Race to the Top

Race to the Top

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), historic legislation designed to stimulate the economy, support job creation and invest in critical sectors, including education. ARRA lays the foundation for education reform by supporting investments in innovative strategies that are most likely to lead to improved results for students, long-term gains in school and school system capacity and increased productivity and effectiveness.

ARRA provided \$4.35 billion for the Race to the Top Fund, a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward states that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform; achieving significant improvement in student outcomes, including making substantial gains in student achievement; closing achievement gaps; improving high school graduation rates; ensuring student preparation for success in college and careers; and implementing ambitious plans in four core education reform areas:

- Adopting standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy;
- Building data systems that measure student growth and success, and informing teachers and principals how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most; and
- Turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

Race to the Top was launched to reward states that have demonstrated success in raising student achievement and have the best plans to accelerate their reforms in the future. These states will offer models for others to follow and will spread the best reform ideas across their states, and across the country.

Race to the Top – Sections

The Race to the Top application was divided into six sections, each requiring the applicant to provide information on the applicant's reform plans related to:

Section A: State Success Factors

- A(1) – Articulate state's education reform agenda and local education agency participation in it.
- A(2) – Build strong statewide capacity to implement, scale up and sustain proposed plans.
- A(3) – Demonstrate significant progress in raising achievement and closing gaps.

Section B: Standards and Assessments

- B(1) – Develop and adopt common standards.
- B(2) – Develop and implement common, high-quality assessments.
- B(3) – Support the transition to enhanced standards and high quality assessments.

Section C: Data Systems to Support Instruction

- C(1) – Fully implement a statewide longitudinal data system.
- C(2) – Access and use state data.
- C(3) – Use data to improve instruction.

Section D: Great Teachers and Leaders

- D(1) – Provide alternative pathways for aspiring teachers and principals.
- D(2) – Improve teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance.
- D(3) – Ensure equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals.
- D(4) – Improve the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs.
- D(5) – Provide effective support to teachers and principals.

Section E: Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

- E(1) – Intervene in the lowest-achieving schools and local education agencies.
- E(2) – Turn around the lowest-achieving schools.

Section F: General Selection Criteria

- F(1) – Make education funding a priority.
- F(2) – Ensure successful condition for high-performing charters and other innovative schools.
- F(3) – Demonstrate other significant reform conditions.

Priority 2: Competitive Preference Priority – Emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

Priority 3: Invitational Priority – Innovations for Improving Early Learning Outcomes

Race to the Top – Process

Nevada was precluded from competing in Phase 1 of the Race to the Top federal grant competition due to statutory prohibition. During the 2010 Special Session, the state's teacher evaluation law was rewritten, striking language that barred teachers from being evaluated based on student performance so that work could begin to apply for Phase 2 funding.

Consequently, NDE mobilized with the Washoe and Clark County School Districts and followed with the 15 rural superintendents. Next, NDE created stakeholder groups comprised of a broad cross section of Nevadans to address the four reform areas within the application. These stakeholders represented NDE, local school boards, parents, the Regional Professional Development Programs, higher education, Nevada State Education Association, community organizations and public foundations. The working groups reviewed research and cutting-edge practices from other applications and analyzed the current infrastructure in Nevada to determine the existing gaps within the infrastructure. The stakeholder group's findings were then submitted to NDE and shared with the task force to further aid the development of the application.

The task force proceeded with a practical way to assess the work done to this point by assigning each task force member to work on a specific section of the application. Additionally, section

leaders for each section were designated by the co-chairs. Before proceeding with substantive discussions and analysis, each section leader arranged a briefing with NDE staff to be brought up to speed on the work NDE had completed to this point. The task force members were assigned to each section, as follows:

Section A: State Success Factors

- Dr. Heath Morrison, Section Leader
- Punam Mathur
- Dr. Keith Rheault
- Assemblywoman Debbie Smith
- Alison Turner

Section B: Standards and Assessments

- Dr. Jill Derby, Section Leader
- Cherri Luna
- Karen Pedersen
- Dr. Rob Roberts

Section C: Data Systems to Support Instruction

- Gintas Vildzius, Section Leader
- D.J. Allen
- Ray Bacon
- Nancy Smith

Section D: Great Teachers and Leaders

- Allison Serafin, Section Leader
- Pam Hicks
- Dana Lee
- Diane Sumner
- Lynn Warne

Section E: Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools

- Ron Montoya, Section Leader
- Joyce Haldeman
- Dr. Sonya Horsford
- John Soderman

Section F: General Selection Criteria

- Chris Wallace, Section Leader
- Senator Barbara Cegavske
- Gina Polovina
- Dr. Michele Robinson

With the sections assigned, the task force members commenced addressing their respective sections of the application by gathering for a series of work meetings with a focus on:

- Collecting and analyzing data to gain a better understanding of the current education processes used in Nevada to determine what is working, and what is not;

- Researching innovative and best-practices found in research and other states;
- Performing a needs assessment using gap analyses data; and
- Developing progressive strategies that comprise a comprehensive reform agenda.

As a result of their informed discussions and research, each section produced a conceptual plan that each section leader presented before the task force at the April 9, 2010 meeting. The conceptual plans provided each section working group with a standardized framework to ensure they began with vision setting and “big picture thinking” exercises before delving into the granular details of the proposed reforms. Each section’s outline consisted of the following material, which was then compiled and integrated into the application:

- Executive summary encapsulating the takeaways from the coordination with NDE on the work that had already been completed;
- Current efforts or best practices that had or had not yet been applied in a systematic way to yield improvement;
- Proposed theory of action;
- Vision statement outlining the desired outcomes and proposed strategies for reform;
- Research data available bolstering the case for each identified gap and proposed solution; and
- List of prioritized next steps, given the context contained in the conceptual plan.

In an effort to further advance Nevada’s competitiveness, the task force sent a representative to the U.S. Department of Education Technical Assistance Planning Workshop. The workshop, hosted in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on April 21, 2010, was held for potential Race to the Top applicants to review technical and logistical aspects of the competition. Based on the feedback received from the workshop, the task force learned that the application must highlight Nevada’s strengths, not just in the K–12 sector, but also the commitment to education reform and role played by the post-secondary educational institutions. Furthermore, the workshop reiterated the need for high quality and coherent plans that seamlessly integrate vision, mission, goals, timelines objectives, responsible parties, strategy, tactics and expected outcomes.

At the May 11 task force meeting in Reno, encouraged by the reports provided by the working groups, the conceptual plans presented by the task force sections and the status report and timetable of anticipated activities concerning Nevada’s Race to the Top application provided by NDE, the task force determined a process and assembled a team, commonly referred to as the “War Room,” of NDE personnel, external grant writers and task force and NSHE support staff to integrate the various contributions into a cohesive document with a unified theme and vision.

With a commitment of resources from the governor’s office, an external search was quickly conducted in which Sylvia McMullen, a consultant with a background in law, education policy and communications, was identified to lead the “War Room” effort, provide technical assistance and ensure that a competitive grant application be provided to the governor for submission to the U.S. Department of Education. Based at NDE offices in Carson City, the Race to the Top grant writing team worked in concert with the six task force working groups and external reviewers to produce an application for review and consideration that reflected Nevada’s vision, innovations and commitment to education reform.

Following the final task force approval of the application—*Nevada’s Promise: Excellence, Rigor, and Equity*—was submitted to the state board of education, attorney general and governor’s office for review and approval. The deadline for submission to the U.S. Department of Education was met on June 1, 2010. Nevada was not amongst the finalists announced in July; however, the state did receive a detailed critique from its five reviewers. For a copy of the full-length version of the application submitted to the federal government, visit www.nevadaspromise.org.

Race to the Top – Theory of Action

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.

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.

Race to the Top – Targeted Objectives

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 and Hispanic students on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP);
- Increase graduates enrolling in post-secondary institutions in- or out-of-state by 50%;
- Increase the 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 the percentage of students proficient or advanced on the NAEP fourth-grade reading (from 24% to 50%) and eighth-grade reading (from 22% to 50%).

Race to the Top: Critique and Analysis

Critique and Analysis

While Nevada was not a grant recipient in the federal competition, the task force's efforts in preparing the application sparked a wildfire of interest in and support for moving forward on an education reform agenda for the state. That agenda is now known as *Nevada's Promise: Excellence, Rigor, and Equity*.

Based on the analysis conducted by the federal reviewers, it was clear that there were a set of legislative actions grounded in the application that should be recommended to the new governor and the incoming legislature. Other administrative actions are recommended to be undertaken by the state board, NDE and by the 17 school districts in the state, often through discussions with their respective teacher associations. Furthermore, there are additional actions that should be accomplished in the event of another round of Race to the Top funding and, more importantly, to serve as the basis for improving outcomes for Nevada's children, regardless of future federal funding.

Race to the Top, Phase 2 Scoring Analysis

On Tuesday, August 24, 2010, the U.S. Department of Education announced the following ten states as recipients of the Race to the Top Phase 2 grant competition, joining Phase 1 recipients Delaware and Tennessee:

- District of Columbia
- Florida
- Georgia
- Hawaii
- Massachusetts
- Maryland
- New York
- North Carolina
- Ohio
- Rhode Island

As a result, the task force was provided with further information about how Nevada fared in the overall competition as well as detailed reviewer comments about *Nevada's Promise*. For the Phase 2 applications, scores and comments, visit <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/phase2-applications/index.html>.

Summary

Nevada's final score of 381.2 ranked 24 out of the 36 states that applied for Race to the Top Phase 2 funding. Among the ten grant recipients, Massachusetts scored the highest with 471 points and Ohio was last with 440.8 points. Twelve states scored below Nevada.

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. Of the ten recipients in Phase 2, only Maryland was not a Phase 1 applicant. Between Phase 1 and Phase 2, the gains among the recipients ranged from 13 (Georgia) to 78 (Hawaii) points. While Arizona was not a recipient, its score improved by 190 points.

The following information represents the five individual reviewer scores that were then averaged together to generate Nevada's final score. The final score is not a true average since two of the five reviews awarded the state all 15 points for STEM and three did not. As a result, those 15 points were deducted from the scores of those two reviewers.

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

Nevada Average – 381.2

Attached are charts that show the scores of all applicant states. Some of the highlights are listed below.

Scores by Section

- **Section A: State Success Factors** – Nevada had 87% of the points; the average was 77%. No recipient had fewer than 89%.
- **Section B: Standards and Assessments** – Nevada earned 95% of the points; the average was 92%. All of the recipients were at 97% or higher.
- **Section C: Data Systems 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 others were above 86%.
- **Section D: Great Teachers and Leaders** – Nevada had 61% of the points; the average was 71%. All of the recipients were above 84%.
- **Section E: Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools** – Nevada had 90%; the average was 85%. The lowest recipient 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%.
- **Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM** – Nevada had zero points, 75% of states had all 15 points. All recipients had all 15 points.

The total for Nevada was 76% of all points while the average was 78%. Among the recipients, it was 90.4%.

The scores and comments varied considerably, thus the following represents what elements of *Nevada's Promise* were compelling, what facets received mixed reviews and what components require further attention and/or clarification.

Nevada's Promise – Strengths

- The 100% LEA participation as well as wide support and deep commitments were regularly heralded as a good sign that *Nevada's Promise* would translate into broad statewide impact, allowing the state the potential to reach its ambitious yet achievable goals.
- Reviewers were convinced of the sustainability of *Nevada's Promise*, even after the end of the grant period. The comments cite sound grant management procedures to monitor expenditures and ensure timely draw downs of funds; the level of transparency in the fiscal and program reporting; and the clear budget indicating one-time investments in building its infrastructure and capacity to support long-term reforms, with only 10% of the proposed budget used to support salaries and fringe benefits.
- **Section A: State Success Factors** received praise for being “a comprehensive and coherent agenda,” “clearly articulated,” “reasonable,” “clear and credible,” “powerful in its simplicity,” “a new vision for transforming education,” “a smart approach to situate education reform in the broader context of economic and workforce development,” “clear and compelling” and “a high quality plan.”
- **Section B: Standards and Assessments** outperformed any other section of *Nevada's Promise*. Nevada's consortium-signing commitment was well received by the reviewers and consistent with the Race to the Top reform goals. Furthermore, the semantics discussion surrounding the adoption of the Common Core State Standards never came to fruition because this section received the highest marks.
- **Section E: Turning Around the Lowest-Achieving Schools** received consistently high marks and praise from each reviewer, prompting one reviewer to write: “the state seems to have a high-quality plan for identifying its lowest-achieving school and its dropout factories.” While not flawless, Section E performed very well across the board and received the fewest amount of constructive remarks.

Nevada's Promise – Mixed Reviews

- Overall, *Nevada's Promise*, as indicated by the comments for Section A listed above, were positive, but certain reviewers actually criticized the broad consensus because it came at the expense of bold, meaningful reform. Reviews asserted that 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. Furthermore, the credibility of the proposal was criticized on account of the lack of honest self-reflection and self-awareness, as evidenced by the fact that *Nevada's Promise* fails to clearly articulate why it has done a poor job educating students, graduating students and enrolling students in college. That is, the state did not incorporate past lessons, which could then be used to determine to what extent the state demonstrates an understanding as to what led to its previous reform shortcomings and ultimately how past reforms inform present and future reform goals.
- The proposed management/organizational structure to implement *Nevada's Promise* received mixed reviews because, while some viewed it as a strong, stabilizing implementation infrastructure that sufficiently cross-walks to ensure strong communication both internally and externally, others interpreted the seeming overreliance on the to-be-created five councils as a punt, and thus not a high-quality plan. The role of the five councils as well as the accountability task force, while applauded by some, appeared unwieldy to others since their role is to develop guidelines and policy recommendations rather than provide comment and feedback to the NDE.
- **Section C: Data Systems to Support Instruction** received mixed reviews, but the common critique was that the section and descriptions lacked cohesiveness, clarity and specificity, particularly regarding how the various systems will operate and interface with one another. The most critical comments highlighted that the data plan is basic and limited in scope.

Nevada's Promise – Deficiencies

- **Section D: Great Teachers and Leaders** was consistently penalized and critiqued for the following sections, and largely because the Race to the Top criterion specifically addresses the legal, statutory or regulatory provision currently in place:
- **Providing high-quality pathways for aspiring teachers and principals**
 - D(1)(i)-allowing alternative routes to certification.
 - D(1)(ii)-using alternative routes to certification.

Since Nevada only meets three of the five elements of the definition of alternate routes to certification under Race to the Top, and because only institutions of higher education can currently operate alternative routes to licensure, high points were not awarded. Reviewers cited that it is imperative that the legislature continue showing strong support for education reform by codifying the proposed new routes to licensure.

Improving teacher and principal effectiveness based on performance

- D(2)(iv)-using evaluations to inform key decision.

Once again, the proposed collaboration with the Teachers and Leaders Council signaled a punt, and thus a fairly ambiguous plan, lacking in specifics and compelling direction. Furthermore, the timelines for development and implementation of the new evaluation systems are reasonable but not aggressive enough or achievable during the life of the grant. Reviewers recommended that state laws be amended to allow tenure and removal decisions based on evaluations.

Ensuring equitable distribution of effective teachers and principals

- D(3)(i)-ensuring equitable distribution in high-poverty or high-minority schools.
- D(3)(ii)-ensuring equitable distribution in hard-to-staff subjects and specialty areas.

Comments cited that these sections represent a mediocre hodgepodge of activities not supported by measurable timelines. Nevada also consistently had points deducted for failing to address teaching in language instruction education programs, especially given Nevada's large English Language Learner population.

Improving the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs

- D(4)(i)-linking student data to credentialing programs and reporting publicly.
- D(4)(ii)-expanding effective programs.

Nevada provided an underdeveloped plan on how it intends to link student achievement and growth data to the students' teachers and principals, then link it back to the programs in which the educators were prepared.

Providing effective support to teachers and principals

- D(5)(ii)-continuously improving the effectiveness of the support.

Section F: General Selection Criteria received consistently low marks in the following sections because of statutory barriers regarding charter schools:

Ensuring successful condition for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools

- F(2)(ii)-authorizing and holding charters accountable for outcomes.
- F(2)(iv)-providing charter schools with equitable access to facilities.

While Nevada does have a charter school law that does not prohibit the number of charter schools that can operate, quality notwithstanding, it was equally clear to the reviewers that the state's prohibition on converting public schools, even failing ones, to charter schools is a barrier. Furthermore, the state provides no assistance for charter schools in terms of funding for facilities, facilities acquisition or the ability to share in bonds.

Competitive Preference Priority 2: Emphasis on STEM only received two scores of the full 15 points, whereas the other reviewers cited the lack of quality and coordinated plan as a reason for not receiving points. While several STEM-related activities are individually listed, they do not collectively reflect a broad comprehensive STEM agenda. In addition, reviewers cited the failure to define or elaborate on the underrepresented populations in STEM education and/or careers, such as women and girls, as another reason for not awarding points. Given that a majority of the five reviewers were not convinced about our emphasis on STEM, zero points were awarded. Had this portion been more compelling, Nevada's total score would have been 390.2 for a 21st-place finish.

Conclusion

Nevada's 24th-place finish does not tell the whole story. Once contextualized, Nevada performed extremely well against all odds, but more importantly, against states with the competitive advantage of applying for and receiving detailed feedback from Phase 1. While the scores of the top performers, and eventual winners, were significantly higher than Nevada's score, finalists were also afforded the opportunity during the oral presentations to enhance their original, Tier 1 scores.

After comparing Tier 1 scores only, Nevada's 381.2 was not as uncompetitive as 24th-place suggests. When matched against the Tier 1 scores from the 19 finalists, Nevada's final score of 381.2 was only 22.2 points behind New Jersey's Tier 1 score of 403.4, which was enough for New Jersey to qualify in 19th place and occupy the last finalist spot.

Nevada's deficiencies are largely attributable to the absence of certain historical components within the educational system that have long been the challenge. The silver lining is that the detailed critiques serve to strengthen *Nevada's Promise* for the 2011 Legislative Session as well as a possible reapplication for Phase 3 of the Race to the Top funding. The constructive and comprehensive feedback both validates the well-received and compelling proposals as well as substantiates the claims to rectify the deficiencies through legislative action.

While the comments highlight where Nevada could have gained additional points to enhance its competitiveness nationally, the real value of the reviewers' scores and comments underscores the significant role that addressing specific statutory language could play in elevating both educational reform and student outcome, particularly with regard to efforts related to Section D. Assemblywoman Smith said it best: "It appears that it's the road we've been on and not the road we're headed down that killed us. Our aspirations just couldn't overcome our lack of action in the past."

Phase Two: Nevada's Promise

Nevada's Promise

On May 21, 2010, the task force submitted the state's Race to the Top application, entitled *Nevada's Promise: Excellence, Rigor, and Equity* to Governor Gibbons.

Compelled by the seriousness of the challenge, a vast and diverse group of more than 200 stakeholders provided input and support to the state's efforts in the commission of the federal Race to The Top grant application and the launch of *Nevada's Promise*, including NDE and the State Board of Education; Boards of Trustees (of all 17 Nevada school districts); Nevada State Education Association; Nevada Parent Teacher Association; political, civic and business leaders; school principals, teachers and parents.

Although *Nevada's Promise* was not selected as a recipient in the federal Race to the Top competition for education funds, the grant program served as a catalyst for unprecedented statewide collaboration. *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. The primary directive of the task force was to advance the goals set forth in *Nevada's Promise* through five core reform areas:

- Adopting a common set of college and career-readiness standards and an assessment system to measure success in learning those standards;
- Establishing data systems that measure student growth and success, and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instruction;
- Recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining great teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most;
- Turning around the lowest-achieving schools; and
- Creating a high-quality plan that offers a rigorous course of study to prepare more students for advanced study and careers in STEM.

The task force completed the second phase of its charge with *Nevada's Promise*, which proposes revisions to state laws and administrative actions to usher in education reform. The next step is to lay the groundwork for the public support necessary for implementation of these reforms in our state.

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.

Nevada's Promise – Recommendation Process

The task force commenced phase two by continuing its work of reviewing Nevada's education infrastructure and recommending long-term K–12 and higher education reform designed to improve student achievement. The task force recommendations should be included in the governor's executive budget for fiscal years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, as charged by the governor's executive order. To achieve this, the task force organized into three working groups—governance, legislation and public will and communication—and established timelines and work plans to advance the goals set forth in *Nevada's Promise*. Due to the current electoral cycle, the task force elected not to address finance. The task force members were assigned to working groups, as follows:

Governance

- Punam Mathur, Working Group Leader
- Ray Bacon
- Dr. Jill Derby
- Joyce Haldeman
- Dr. Heath Morrison
- Gina Polovina
- John Soderman
- Gintas Vildzius

Legislation

- Senator Barbara Cegavske, Working Group Co-Leader
- Assemblywoman Debbie Smith, Working Group Co-Leader
- Pam Hicks
- Dr. Sonya Horsford
- Ron Montoya
- Karen Pedersen
- Dr. Keith Rheault
- Dr. Michele Robinson
- Lynn Warne

Public Will and Communication

- Dana Lee, Working Group Leader
- D.J. Allen
- Cherri Luna
- Allison Serafin
- Nancy Smith
- Diane Sumner
- Dr. Rob Roberts
- Alison Turner
- Chris Wallace

Governance

In 1956, during a special legislative session, Nevada consolidated its number of local school districts from 170 to one per county—resulting in the current 17 districts—and began its shift from a local control model of governance toward an increased statewide focus on education. The transition resulted in equalizing funding and, by many accounts, forged the path toward leveling the quality of K–12 public education opportunities for all students across the state. That same year, NDE was also created. Since this landmark era of statewide educational reforms, most governors, ranging from Sawyer to Gibbons, have pledged to make K–12 public education a key component of their gubernatorial campaigns, notwithstanding the stark reality that the governor of Nevada possesses limited powers with respect to influencing Nevada’s K–12 public education system.

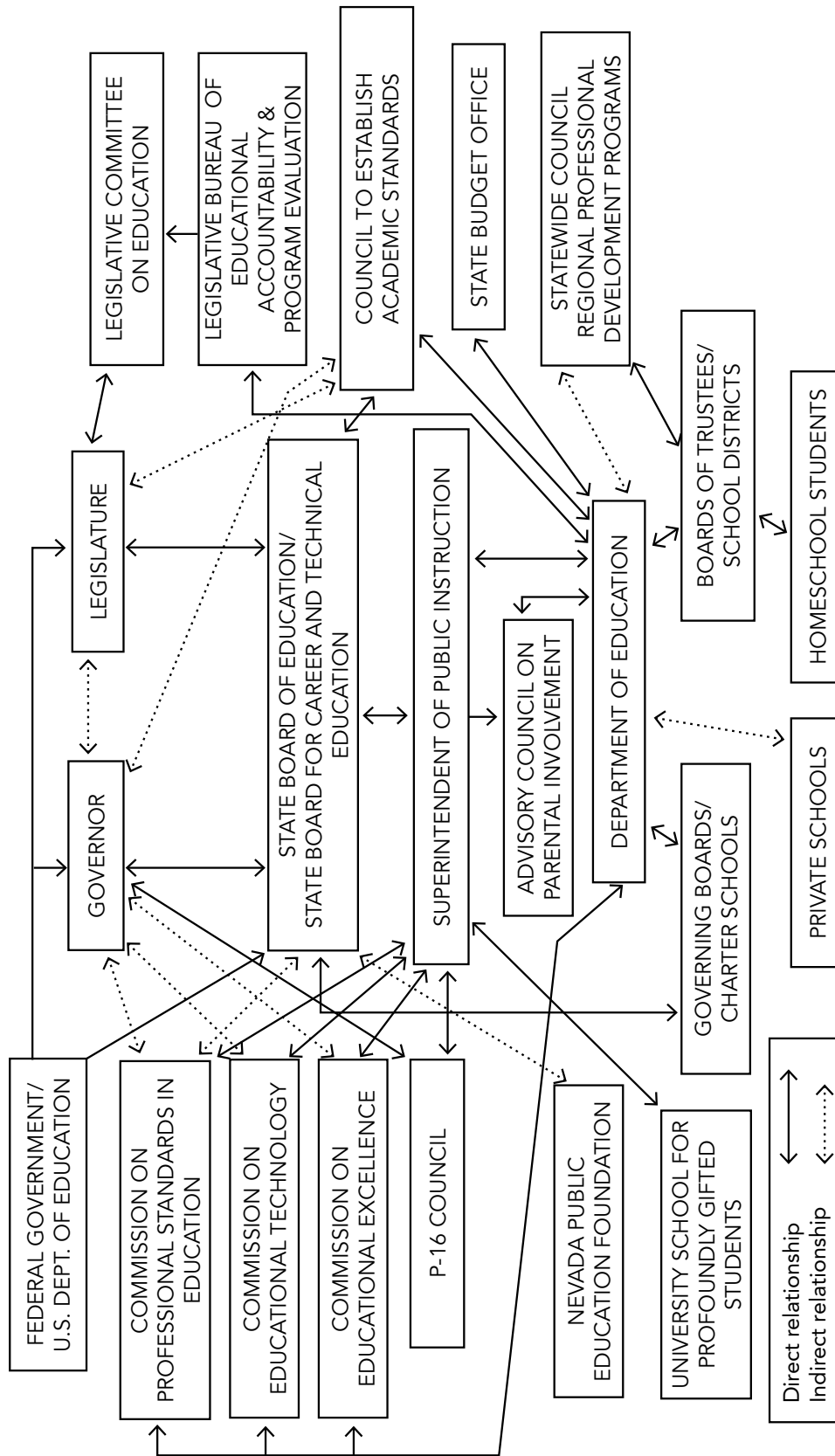
The Nevada legislature possesses the fiduciary and policy-setting capability to impact the K–12 public education system, yet as evidenced by the current organizational structure in [Figure 1](#), most operational and policy responsibilities have been delegated to an array of councils, commissions and committees often lacking the authority, resources, accountability and experience required to foster excellent educational opportunities and provide quality K–12 public education in all aspects of teaching and learning.

In order to realize a K–12 public education system wherein student achievement is paramount and the necessary reforms are readily enacted, the task force firmly believes that accountability must begin with Nevada’s governor. Furthermore, to facilitate this gubernatorial empowerment, the task force proposes a realigned governance structure in which responsibility for and vision of K–12 public education may be effectively carried out. As chief executive officer of the state, the governor will rely upon his/her appointed state superintendent of public instruction to execute his/her vision and an appointed state board of education to implement the policies that will enable the state superintendent of public instruction to carry out the governor’s objectives.

Nevada’s Promise anticipates that standards of excellence, rigor and equity can be obtained with minimal constraints to those who are tasked with achieving those goals within every local school district. Broad education policies and expectations will be determined at the state level, but the execution of those goals will be at the local school district level with minimal legislative oversight or direction from NDE so long as the performance objectives are achieved.

K-12 EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE IN NEVADA 2009

Figure 1:



Design Principles

In reviewing Nevada’s K–12 public education governance structure, it became apparent that the issue of educational governance entails two different discussions:

- A macro-level discussion about the essential criteria for success (i.e., what good governance looks like); and
- A micro-level discussion about how to construct the governance structure for Nevada’s K–12 public education system.

The task force determined that the essential criteria for successful governance of K–12 public education in Nevada should emulate the essential criteria for successful governance reflected in both the private, for-profit and non-profit sectors. Operating along these lines of reasoning, the task force developed four design principles considered essential for good governance:

- **Single point of responsibility:** It is imperative that there exist a single point of responsibility ultimately responsible for the management of the entire system. In the corporate context, this is the chief executive officer (CEO). In its absence, it is impossible to hold anyone accountable for the progress of the system, or lack thereof.
- **Functional alignment:** It is critical that the governance system be organized with a linear path of oversight and accountability that flows throughout the entire system, clearly demonstrating the lines of accountability as well as roles and responsibilities.
- **Simple, clear and transparent:** It is vital that the governance system be simple, clear and transparent, thus creating efficiencies in the system.
- **Use of academic standards and data as a guide for decision making:** It is crucial that proven academic standards and data provide the context whereby directives to drive academic excellence originate.

The task force determined that these four design principles form the foundation from which to construct Nevada’s K–12 public education governance system.

Comparative Research of Governance Models

Education governance structures vary across states and directly affect how education policy leaders interact. Understanding the differences between structures can help explain the education policy process in terms of how decisions are made and the how authority is delegated.

Increasing student achievement requires the use of research-based best practices. As a result, the task force, with resources provided by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) and the Education Commission of the States (ECS), conducted comparative research to gain a better understanding of alternative education governance paradigms as well as what models other states have adopted to govern their respective K–12 public education systems.

State education governance structures can be categorized into one of four prevailing models that describe the role of the governor, how state boards of education are constituted and whether the chief state school officer is appointed or elected. Forty of the 50 states fall into one of these four categories, while the other 10 states, plus the District of Columbia, have adopted governance structures that are modified versions of the four general models. The following four models are the most widely subscribed to:

- **Model I**
Under Model I, the governor appoints the state board of education, while the state board of education appoints and/or selects the chief state school officer. The following states subscribe to this governance framework: Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Rhode Island, Vermont and West Virginia.
- **Model II**
Under Model II, the public elects the state board of education, while the state board of education appoints the chief state school officer. The following states subscribe to this governance framework: Alabama, Colorado, Hawaii, Kansas, Michigan, Nebraska, Nevada, Utah, Northern Marianas and Guam.
- **Model III**
Under Model III, the governor appoints the state board of education, while the public independently elects the chief state school officer. The following states subscribe to this governance framework: Arizona, California, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon and Wyoming.
- **Model IV**
Under Model IV, the governor appoints the state board of education and the chief state school officer. The following states subscribe to this governance framework: Delaware, Iowa, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia and Puerto Rico.



State Education Governance Models (2010)

Figure 2:



Developed and distributed by the National Association of State Boards of Education/ www.nasbe.org.

Given the organizational chart displayed in [Figure 1](#) as well as the descriptions provided above, Nevada's public education system operates according to the guidelines outlined in Model II. According to NASBE, this model is characterized by a minimally influential governor, a state board of education represented by laypersons and a board-appointed chief state school officer. As a result, the state board of education, not the governor, is charged with holding the chief state school officer accountable, who, consequently, may lack the political backing necessary to enact reforms.

In addition to studying comparative governance constructs, the task force furthered its analysis to determine whether a particular governance model is more effective at yielding higher student achievement. Using multiple measures, and cognizant that the type of governance model alone does not singularly influence the level of teaching and learning performance, a comparison of the effectiveness of each model based on selected indicators was undertaken. [Figure 4](#) displays the performance measures associated with Model II, Nevada's current governance structure, whereas the comparative data shown in [Figure 6](#) paints a compelling picture correlating the Model IV governance structure and higher student achievement.

Figure 3: Model I Performance Measures

State	Grade Number & Letter	4 th Grade Reading	8 th Grade Math	High School Graduation	Young-Adult Education	Race to the Top Status
		Percent of 4 th grade public school students "proficient" on NAEP	Percent of 8 th grade public school students "proficient" on NAEP	Percent of public high school students who graduate with a diploma	Percent of young adults (18-24) enrolled in post-secondary education or with a degree	
Alaska	74.9 (C)	28.7	33.5	65.9	35.6	
Arkansas	70.8 (C-)	28.6	27.0	71.9	41.6	
Connecticut	89.8 (A-)	41.2	39.8	78.9	66.8	
Florida	75.6 (C)	34.0	29.0	57.5	49.0	Phase 2 Recipient
Illinois	81.2 (B-)	32.2	33.1	74.1	58.6	Phase 1 Finalist
Kentucky	73.3 (C)	33.5	27.2	72.0	45.1	Phase 1 Finalist
Maryland	87.0 (B+)	35.9	40.1	73.5	54.5	Phase 2 Recipient
Massachusetts	93.3 (A)	49.2	51.7	75.9	66.8	Phase 2 Recipient
Missouri	78.1 (C+)	31.8	35.5	74.4	51.8	
Rhode Island	80.4 (B-)	30.8	27.8	72.8	67.9	Phase 2 Recipient
Vermont	86.9 (B+)	40.9	43.5	78.7	63.7	
West Virginia	70.6 (C-)	27.8	19.4	71.8	50.7	
Model I	80.1 (B-)	34.5	33.9	72.2	54.3	

*Education Week, Chance for Success (January 14, 2010) at www.edweek.org/go/qc10

Figure 4: Model II Performance Measures

State	Grade Number & Letter	4 th Grade Reading	8 th Grade Math	High School Graduation	Young-Adult Education	Race to the Top Status
		Percent of 4 th grade public school students "proficient" on NAEP	Percent of 8 th grade public school students "proficient" on NAEP	Percent of public high school students who graduate with a diploma	Percent of young adults (18-24) enrolled in post-secondary education or with a degree	
Alabama	72.3 (C-)	28.9	20.4	61.4	47.2	
Colorado	82.4 (B-)	36.2	39.7	72.7	52.7	Phase 1 & 2 Finalist
Hawaii	78.4 (C+)	25.7	25.3	63.9	42.7	Phase 2 Recipient
Kansas	82.4 (B-)	36.1	39.5	75.4	54.2	
Michigan	77.3 (C+)	32.4	30.5	69.6	57.5	
Nebraska	82.1 (B-)	34.6	34.6	78.7	63.9	
Nevada	67.0 (D+)	24.4	24.8	47.3	39.2	
Utah	80.9 (B-)	33.9	35.1	72.2	50.3	
Model II	77.8 (C+)	27.7	31.2	67.6	50.9	

*Education Week, Chance for Success (January 14, 2010) at www.edweek.org/go/qc10

Figure 5: Model III Performance Measures

State	Grade Number & Letter	4 th Grade Reading	8 th Grade Math	High School Graduation	Young-Adult Education	Race to the Top Status
		Percent of 4 th grade public school students "proficient" on NAEP	Percent of 8 th grade public school students "proficient" on NAEP	Percent of public high school students who graduate with a diploma	Percent of young adults (18-24) enrolled in post-secondary education or with a degree	
Arizona	70.9 (C-)	24.2	29.0	68.6	43.0	Phase 2 Finalist
California	72.9 (C)	22.9	23.4	67.5	53.2	Phase 2 Finalist
Georgia	74.3 (C)	28.3	26.8	55.9	45.4	Phase 2 Recipient
Idaho	76.4 (C)	35.1	38.4	76.8	46.2	
Indiana	77.6 (C+)	33.0	36.2	73.3	52.6	
Montana	79.9 (B-)	38.5	43.6	76.1	42.9	
North Carolina	76.4 (C)	29.1	35.6	63.3	49.7	Phase 2 Recipient
North Dakota	84.6 (B)	35.3	43.1	79.0	61.4	
Oklahoma	72.1 (C-)	26.8	23.8	70.6	45.0	
Oregon	75.7 (C)	28.3	36.6	74.9	45.8	
Wyoming	79.5 (C+)	36.4	34.7	73.2	40.8	
Model III	76.3 (C)	30.7	33.7	70.8	47.8	

*Education Week, Chance for Success (January 14, 2010) at www.edweek.org/go/qc10

Figure 6: Model IV Performance Measures

State	Grade Number & Letter	4 th Grade Reading	8 th Grade Math	High School Graduation	Young-Adult Education	Race to the Top Status
		Percent of 4 th grade public school students "proficient" on NAEP	Percent of 8 th grade public school students "proficient" on NAEP	Percent of public high school students who graduate with a diploma	Percent of young adults (18-24) enrolled in post-secondary education or with a degree	
Delaware	79.5 (C+)	33.8	31.7	66.0	55.4	Phase 1 Recipient
Iowa	83.1 (B)	36.1	33.9	80.7	60.5	
Maine	78.6 (C+)	35.8	35.3	76.3	53.1	
New Hampshire	89.9 (A-)	41.1	43.3	77.0	61.0	
New Jersey	90.6 (A-)	43.1	44.4	82.1	61.6	Phase 2 Finalist
Pennsylvania	83.5 (B)	40.2	39.8	77.6	61.3	Phase 1 & 2 Finalist
South Dakota	80.5 (B-)	33.7	41.5	77.1	51.6	
Tennessee	72.0 (C-)	26.9	25.2	69.5	47.3	Phase 1 Recipient
Virginia	83.9 (B)	37.6	35.6	69.2	53.5	
Model IV	82.4 (B-)	36.4	36.7	75.7	56.1	

*Education Week, Chance for Success (January 14, 2010) at www.edweek.org/go/qc10

Figure 7: Comparison of Model Performance Measures

Model	Grade Number & Letter	4 th Grade Reading	8 th Grade Math	High School Graduation	Young-Adult Education	Race to the Top Status
		Percent of 4 th grade public school students "proficient" on NAEP	Percent of 8 th grade public school students "proficient" on NAEP	Percent of public high school students who graduate with a diploma	Percent of young adults (18-24) enrolled in post-secondary education or with a degree	
Model I	80.1 (B-)	34.5	33.9	72.2	54.3	Recipients (4)
Model II	77.8 (C+)	27.7	31.2	67.6	50.9	Recipients (1)
Model III	76.3 (C)	30.7	33.7	70.8	47.8	Recipients (2)
Model IV	82.4 (B-)	36.4	36.7	75.7	56.1	Recipients (2)
Nevada	67.0 (D+)	24.4	24.8	47.3	39.2	
United States	78.0 (C+)	31.7	32.6	69.2	53.0	

*Education Week, Chance for Success (January 14, 2010) at www.edweek.org/go/qc10

Analysis

On average, as evidenced by the comparative analysis in [Figure 7](#), Model IV outperforms its peer governance models regarding Education Week’s “chance for success” indicators; however, Model I features a Race to the Top-recipient advantage.

The eight states that subscribe to Model II post performance measures below the national average. Of the Model II states, one was awarded Race to the Top Phase 2 funding (Hawaii), while one other was a two-time finalist (Colorado). However, according to the Honolulu Star-Advertiser (11/03/10), voters recently passed a constitutional amendment shifting their education governance structure from an elected to an appointed state board of education by a margin of 57% to 43%, thus transferring to the governor the appointment of the chief state school officer. The constitutional amendment provides that the governor shall nominate and appoint the members of the state board of education, with the advice and consent of the senate.

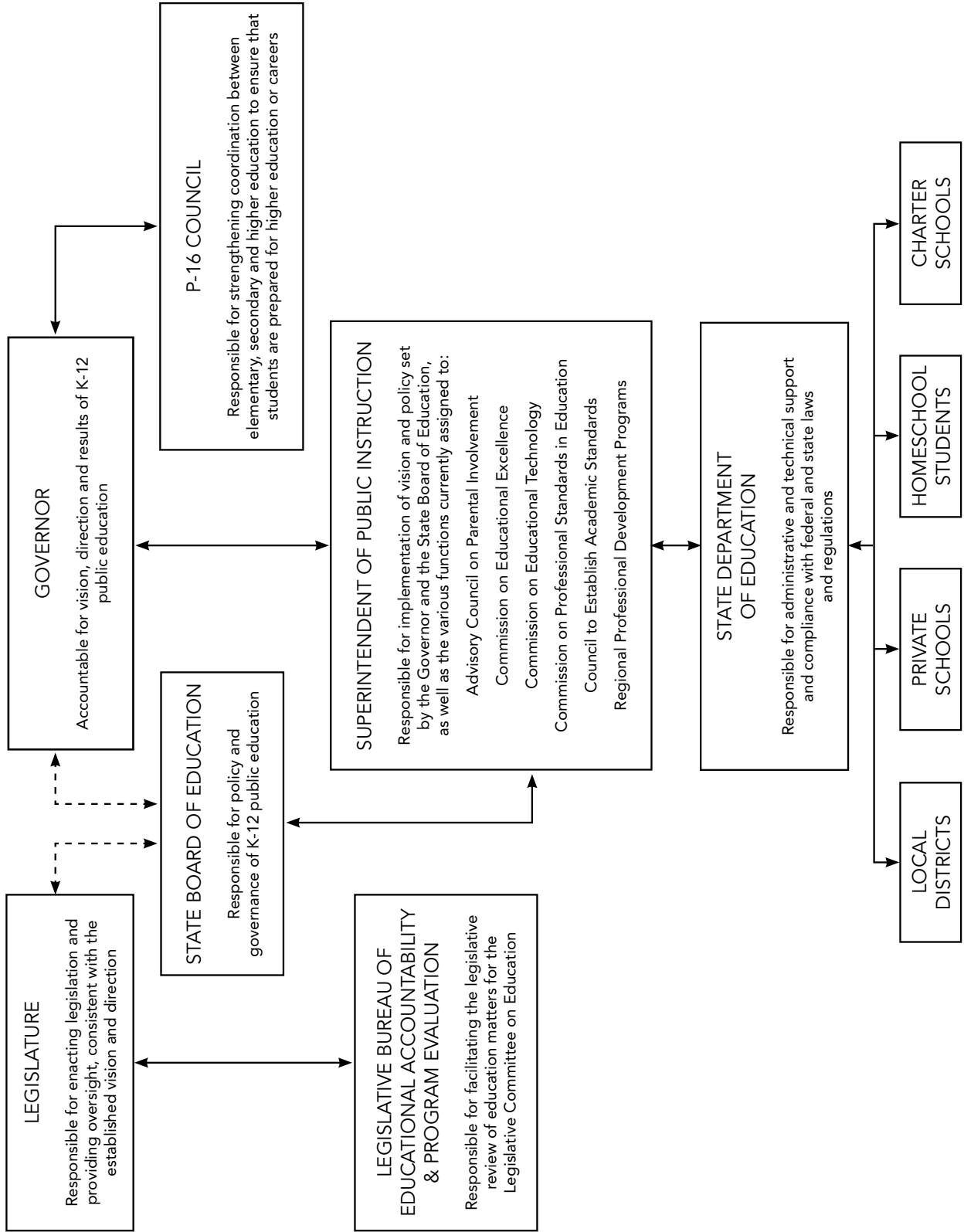
Comparatively, Model IV states yield student achievement performance measures that exceed the U.S. average and thus far exceed Nevada’s current performance measures. Furthermore, two of the nine Model IV states were awarded Race to the Top Phase I funding (Delaware and Tennessee), while two others were finalists (New Jersey and Pennsylvania).

Recommendations

Given the four design principles and comparative research presented above, the task force proposes the following revised K–12 educational governance structure in Nevada (see [Figure 8](#)).

Figure 8:

K-12 EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE IN NEVADA



Governor

Nevada needs a single point of responsibility for K–12 public education to ensure transparency and accountability for education. Consequently, the task force believes that the governor should possess the ultimate authority over education in Nevada. The proposed structure, operating in adherence with the four design principles, will allow registered voters to exercise their electoral privileges and hold the governor accountable for his/her actions regarding Nevada’s education performance measures, whether positive or otherwise. Such a governance model will empower the governor to actually improve the K–12 public education system and elevate the magnitude and import of statewide education issues beyond electoral campaign platitudes to authentic direct accountability and responsibility for every future governor. The governor’s actions and leadership in the area of K–12 public education have the ability of fostering a more cooperative relationship with and positively impacting other statewide departments, including, but not limited to, Nevada’s Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Public Safety and Department of Corrections.

State Superintendent of Public Instruction

The task force proposes that the legislature change existing statute to reconfigure the current governance structure and authorize the governor, not the state board of education, to select the state superintendent of public instruction from a list of three potential nominees furnished by the state board of education. This measure would align Nevada with 13 other states and the District of Columbia in how its chief state school officer is selected. As is the case with 25 other states and the District of Columbia, the task force recommends that the governor appoint the state superintendent of public instruction and include him/her as a member of the governor’s executive cabinet. That person would serve at the pleasure of the governor.

State Board of Education

The task force proposes that the state board of education consist of nine appointed members with no more than five members from the same political party. The Senate majority leader and the speaker of the Assembly will each annually compile a list of three nominees from which the governor will select one appointee from each list. In addition to the appointees from the slates of nominees offered by the Senate majority leader and the speaker of the Assembly, the governor will also select his own appointee each year. Appointees to the state board of education will serve staggered, three year terms. The state superintendent of public instruction shall serve as the secretary of the board and an ex-officio member. Other ex-officio members will include a student enrolled in the Nevada public education system and the designee from the Chancellor of the NSHE. The board shall select the chair and vice-chair of the body.

With respect to the members of the state board of education, consideration should be given to appointees representing a diversity of thought, perspective and background, including members from the private, for-profit sector who employ high school graduates and/or community members with children or grandchildren currently enrolled in public and/or public charter schools. All board members must have a high school diploma and be registered to vote in Nevada. No member of the state board of education shall serve more than 12 years on the

board. The state board of education members should complete a formal training as a board member within the first year of duty, unless the requirement has been fulfilled by prior service.

The board shall meet a minimum of six times per year, unless further meetings are needed or requested by the governor or state superintendent of public instruction. The board's meetings shall be subject to the Open Meeting Law. Notices of meetings will be electronically transmitted to press outlets, schools districts, education organizations, chambers of commerce and other individuals and educational organizations who request to be on the notification list.

Standing Commissions and Councils

The task force applauds the Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 2 – Committee on Education's (ACR 2) recommendations to repeal the provisions in statute governing the Council to Establish Academic Standards, Commission on Educational Excellence and the Commission on Educational Technology and transferring the duties to NDE as well as clarifying the duties and responsibilities of the state board of education and the state superintendent of public instruction.

The task force, however, diverges slightly from the ACR 2 recommendations, especially regarding the appointment of the state board of education and the state superintendent of public instruction, as outlined above. Although the task force believes in and is incredibly supportive of the concepts that each standing commission and council (created over the past three decades) embodies, it is the opinion of the task force that the current construct makes success impossible. Therefore, adhering to the aforementioned design principles and taking into consideration the comparative research conducted of other state models, the task force advocates a functional realignment of the existing governance structure to ensure the establishment of a simple, clear and transparent public education system with a single point of responsibility.

Accordingly, since the superintendent would operate as the chief operating officer of Nevada's K-12 public education system under the proposed structure, the task force recommends that the standing commissions and councils listed below are key policy levers that should be realigned and placed under the purview of the state superintendent of public instruction.

- **Advisory Council on Parental Involvement:** Established to review any effective practices of communication and outreach carried out in individual school districts to increase parental involvement and determine the feasibility of carrying out those practices on a statewide basis and identify the manner in which the level of parental involvement affects the performance, attendance and discipline of students.
- **Commission on Educational Excellence:** Established, under the authority of the Senate bill formerly known as SB404, to select the school district and school recipients of funding from the Account for Programs for Innovation and the Prevention of Remediation grant.
- **Commission on Education Technology:** Established to create a technology plan for Nevada, allocate money to the school districts from the trust fund for educational technology and develop minimum technical standards for delivering educational technology to Nevada classrooms.

- **Commission on Professional Standards:** Established to set licensure standards for and establish regulations governing examinations for the initial licensure of teachers and other educational personnel.
- **Council to Establish Academic Standards:** Established as a result of the major education reform initiatives passed during the 1997 and 1999 legislative sessions to create high, measurable standards to help improve the academic achievement of Nevada's students.
- **Regional Professional Development Program:** Established to provide teachers with professional development assistance on content, methodologies and strategies that will help teachers increase student achievement.

Not every commission and council, however, will be placed under the authority of the state superintendent of public instruction.

- The P-16 Advisory Council, which was established to strengthen coordination between elementary, secondary and higher education to ensure that students are prepared adequately to make the transition to higher education or to careers, will remain under the purview of the governor.
- The Legislative Bureau of Educational Accountability and Program Evaluation (Le Beape) was established, amongst other things, to facilitate the legislative review of educational matters for the Legislative Committee on Education, and collect and analyze data and issue reports related to the Nevada Education Reform Act's (NERA) reform provisions and statewide programs in accountability, testing, class-size reduction and special education.
- Le Beape will remain under the purview of the legislature, but the task force recommends that Le Beape be revisited at a later date and phased out if deemed no longer necessary.

Transition

The task force recommends that all necessary amendments to Nevada statute be completed during the 2011 Legislative Session; any delays will impede the ability to make reforms and, thus, improve student achievement in a timely manner.

If the proposed legislation is ratified, then the task force recommends that the aforementioned organizational restructuring take effect upon the conclusion of the contractual agreement with the present state superintendent of public instruction. As for the ten current state board of education members, they would serve the rest of their elected term and then be transitioned into the position on the proposed state board of education. Should any member resign from the board prior to the expiration of their term, the member would not be replaced, thus reducing the board representation to the recommended nine members.

As future vacancies arise, whether on account of term expiration or resignation, the governor, speaker of the Assembly and the Senate majority leader, in that particular order, will make appointments or recommendations. Consequently, each state board of education member's party registration should immediately be posted because the officers nominating and appointing board members would need to consider party registration to preserve the prescribed political alignment.

Unless mandated sooner by an executive order, the earliest date for the full implementation of the proposed structure would be January 1, 2015, which would be either the second term of our new governor or the first term of an incoming governor.

Legislation

Legislative Actions Required for Reform

The pledges contained in *Nevada's Promise* were thoroughly reviewed by the U.S. Department of Education and represent the task force's concerted effort to solve the education crisis in Nevada. The pledges below correspond to specific sections of *Nevada's Promise* and are identified as either legislative or administrative items for action. Based on the analysis conducted by the federal reviewers, it was clear that there were a set of legislative actions grounded in the application that should be recommended to the new governor and the incoming legislature. Other administrative actions are recommended to be undertaken by the state board, NDE and by the 17 school districts in the state, often through discussions with their respective teacher associations.

Each pledge below is also provided a context and action. The contextual notes—premised on either a specific reviewer's comments or the original *Nevada's Promise* proposal—expand upon the necessity and outline specific reasons for action. Each action represents the task force's recommended solution for fulfilling the pledges contained in *Nevada's Promise* and is based on the Race to the Top application and the task force's consideration of the comments from the federal reviewers.

Furthermore, in an effort to estimate the overall cost of implementing *Nevada's Promise*, the task force, in conjunction with NDE, modified the original Race to the Top budget to reflect projected costs over the 2011 and 2013 Legislative Sessions. Nevertheless, this modified budget still represents each of the major components of the plan to preserve a cohesive, integrated reform agenda. The task force has included a copy of the budget with this plan for the governor's consideration.

1. Revise and augment the current alternative paths to licensure for teachers and principals (D(1)(i), pages D-4 & D-5).

Context

Nevada provided a detailed plan and timeline for changing its alternative route regulations to incorporate all of the elements contained in the Race to the Top alternative route definition. However, the criterion specifically addresses the legal, statutory or regulatory provisions currently in place. Because only institutions of higher education can currently operate alternative routes, high points could not be awarded. However, mid-range points were awarded because Nevada's alternative route regulations contain three of the four remaining elements in line with the Race to the Top definition. There was no discussion on the criteria for alternative routes for principals; additional points were withheld (Reviewer #2).

2. Authorize the Accelerated Alternative Route to Licensure (A²RL) pathway to support the expansion of a teacher and principal pipeline that produces effective educators for high-poverty schools and high-need areas (D(1)(ii), page D-5).

Context

The state's plan for preparing teachers and leaders is hinged on the state passing its Accelerated Alternative Route to Licensure. It's important that the state is thinking about codifying its new route to licensure. Since this is the state's only strategy, however, it would have been helpful to understand the state's opinion on the likelihood of passage and its plan if passage does not happen within the proposed timeline (Reviewer #3).

Nevada will make a proposal to the Professional Standards Commission next school year (and seek statutory changes during the next legislative session if necessary) to authorize the new Accelerated Alternative Route to Licensure ... Though Nevada is moving strongly in a positive direction in this proposal, the fact that the application states statutory changes will be sought "if necessary" is concerning. This would be a rather significant part of the process, and though the Nevada Legislature has shown a strong support for educational reform, the timelines would be crucial to know going in to the process. The narrative does not explain why something so significant would not be known at this time (Reviewer #5).

Action (1 & 2)

Nevada's Promise identified the need to revise/augment the current alternative route to licensure (ARL) requirements to meet the Race to the Top exemplary ARL criteria as well as provide for an accelerated ARL pathway from the current three-year requirement. As a result, the task force recommends revising various statutes, including, but not limited to, NRS 391.019 to read:

Require the Commission on Professional Standards in Education to revise current alternative route to licensure regulations for both teachers and school administrators that must meet the following criteria:

- (a) Can be provided by various types of qualified providers, including both institutions of higher education and other providers operating independently from institutions of higher education;
- (b) Are selective in accepting candidates;
- (c) Provide supervised, school-based experiences and ongoing support such as effective mentoring and coaching;
- (d) Significantly limit the amount of coursework required or have options to test out of courses;
- (e) Upon completion, award the same level of licensure that traditional preparation programs award upon completion; and
- (f) Allow for the completion of the ARL program requirements to be completed in two years or less.

In addition, the task force requests that the Legislative Committee on Education, include the proposed revision to NRS 391.019 above as part of Bill Draft Request (BDR) 93 (revises provisions governing educational personnel) currently submitted on the BDR list for the 2011 Legislative Session.

3. Provide strong leadership and dedicated teams to implement Nevada’s Promise (A(2)(i)(a), page A-28).

Context

The state has demonstrated that it has the political capital to continue implementing Nevada’s Promise through the Blue Ribbon Task Force and Accountability Task Force. Throughout the application, the state describes how it will continue to “collaborate with stakeholders and legislators after the implementation of Nevada’s Promise” towards codifying laws and practices. This seems to reflect a serious attempt by the state to make reforms permanent (Reviewer #3).

It is difficult to know if these groups will help or hinder the implementation of Race to the Top. The roles of the five councils, as well as the accountability task force, are not clear in the application in terms of their authority and responsibility (Reviewer #4).

Action

Similar to the ACR 2 recommendations, the task force advocates streamlining Nevada’s K–12 public education governance structure and refrains from establishing new standing commissions and councils. However, given the critical importance of developing a rigorous and equitable teacher and principal evaluation rubric that will impact a multitude of performance-related items, namely student achievement, the task force recommends introducing statutory language to authorize NDE to manage and coordinate only the proposed Teachers and Leaders Council. As evidenced by the Race to the Top reviewer comments, Nevada underperformed considerably in Section D: Great Teachers and Leaders.

Therefore, the Teachers and Leaders Council, with oversight by NDE, will, amongst other things, develop and implement the proposed interim and formative assessment systems; develop and rollout the proposed teacher and principal evaluation system, as linked to student achievement and growth data; and develop guidelines for using data to drive professional development to enhance teacher and leader effectiveness.

The Teachers and Leaders Council will consist of representatives from, but not limited to, teachers and principals from the urban and rural districts, the Regional Professional Development Programs, higher education, parents, teacher and administrator associations, state charter schools and others as appropriate. The task force believes that the aforementioned representatives possess the experience and understanding of the plethora of challenges encountered by teachers and administrators, the factors associated with effective teaching and leading, and the criteria to judge those elements.

4. Design and implement a statewide system that differentiates teacher and principal effectiveness using multiple measures of student growth (D(2)(ii), page D-13).

Context

The state’s narrative describes a thoughtful approach and process for measuring student growth. The state’s decision to pilot the Nevada Growth Model of Achievement is a smart approach that allows the state to gather data from the field that will inform its full rollout. Another highlight of the state’s approach is NGMA’s ability to be integrated into the state’s longitudinal data system. The state’s use of Betebenner’s Student Growth Percentile is a rather thoughtful approach to student growth as it allows LEAs and schools to determine, not so much

how much a teacher contributed to the achievement of a students, but rather if and to what extent did the student demonstrate an increase in student achievement ... The state's plan for implementing differentiated effectiveness using multiple rating categories will not be fully implemented until the last year of the grant period and field tested in 2012-2013 (Reviewer #3).

Action

Through statutory amendments ratified during a special session of the legislature in February 2010, Nevada set a clear bar for student achievement to be part of the evaluation for teachers and principals. The interested parties have since agreed to student achievement accounting for 50% of teacher and principal evaluations. Although the task force has not yet determined the specifics of the "other data and information determined by each LEA," most of which will be developed by the proposed Teachers and Leaders Council, the task force recommends amending NRS 386.650 by revising the following language:

NRS 386.650 Adoption and maintenance of system; adoption of uniform program for school districts to collect, maintain and transfer data to system; duties of Superintendent of Public Instruction; access to data within system.

1. The Department shall establish and maintain an automated system of accountability information for Nevada. The system must:

_ The information maintained pursuant to paragraphs (c), (d) and (e) must be used for the purpose of improving the achievement of pupils and improving classroom instruction. The information must be considered **fifty percent of the evaluation** but must not be used as the sole criterion, in evaluating the performance of or taking disciplinary action against an individual teacher, paraprofessional or other employee **pursuant to NRS 391.3125 and 391.3127.**

5. Revise binary evaluation system for teachers (D(2)(ii), page D-16).

Context

The state is moving away from a binary rating of teacher effectiveness (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) to a system with multiple rating of highly effective, effective, minimally effective and ineffective educators. The planned framework for the evaluation includes multiple measures of effectiveness in addition to student growth including observations and previous evaluations. It is not clear from the narrative how the information will be used from previous evaluations (Reviewer #2).

Action

The task force recommends abolishing the existing binary evaluation system for teachers and amending NRS 391.312 and NRS 391.3125 statutory language to establish a common, statewide evaluation framework with a minimum of four levels of effectiveness and corresponding development criteria. The statute would empower NDE to develop the regulations, and in conjunction with the proposed Teachers and Leaders Council, provide further definition.

6. Revise binary evaluation system for administrators (D(2)(ii), page D-16).

Context

The state expects to introduce legislation that establishes four differentiated designations in teacher and principal evaluation. The state, however, does not explain the ratings or its strategy for introducing legislation. Given the lack of detail on, for example, the state's definition of a minimally effective teacher, it is extremely difficult to have confidence that the legislation if introduced a) will be ambitious and b) be codified (Reviewer #3).

Action

The task force recommends abolishing the existing binary evaluation system for administrators and amending NRS 391.312 and NRS 391.3127 statutory language to establish a common, statewide evaluation framework with a minimum of four levels of effectiveness and corresponding development criteria. The statute would empower NDE to develop the regulations, and in conjunction with the proposed Teachers and Leaders Council, provide further definition.

7. Include teacher evaluations in determination of administrator effectiveness (D(2)(ii), page D-16).

Context

The planned framework for the evaluation includes multiple measures of effectiveness in addition to student growth, including observations and previous evaluations. It is not clear from the narrative how the information will be used from previous evaluations. There would be concern if a poor current evaluation could be discounted if the previous evaluations were more positive. In addition to the elements contained in the teacher evaluations, principal evaluations will include indicators related to working conditions, teacher retention and access to PD (Reviewer #2).

Action

The task force recommends amending NRS 391.3127 to read:

NRS 391.3127 Administrators: Policy for evaluations; annual evaluation; procedures for demotion and appeal to board.

1. Each board, following consultation with and involvement of elected representatives of administrative personnel or their designated representatives, shall develop an objective policy for the objective evaluation of administrators in narrative form. The policy must set forth a means according to which an administrator's overall performance may be determined to be satisfactory or unsatisfactory. The policy **shall** include an evaluation by the administrator, superintendent, **teachers**, pupils or other administrators or any combination thereof. A copy of the policy adopted by the board must be filed with the Department and made available to the Commission.

8. Develop a comprehensive evaluation rubric (D(2)(ii), page D-16).

Context

The state details the avenues of participation for educators in developing and designing the system; both teachers and principals will serve on the Teachers and Leaders Council which will collaborate with the NDE in creating the educator system (Reviewer #2).

The system will be developed with teacher and principal involvement as well as from assessment experts, parents and students. Given the starting point, the timeline provided is thorough and realistic, though, unfortunately, doesn't result in an operational system until 2013-2014 (Reviewer #5).

9. Determine career ladder opportunities for effective teachers to mentor and support teachers or relocate to serve in urban and rural high-needs schools (D(3)(ii), page D-29).

Context

The state did not address special education teachers or teaching in language instruction nor did it identify any additional areas of need. It is unclear if the state needs teachers in areas outside of STEM (Reviewer #3).

The state has a clear plan for increasing the number and percentage of effective teachers teaching in hard-to-staff subjects. The plan smartly attempts to increase the number of effective teachers in hard-to-subjects by 1) improving the quality of instructions (providing poor teachers with professional development) and 2) creating incentives for highly effective teachers. This should allow the state to build the capacity of its teaching corps, while it also examines expanding its credentialing programs. Curiously, the state's narrative does not discuss teaching in language instruction educational programs although it's included in its performance measures. This is a glaring omission in the narrative given the challenges the state faces, as mentioned in its narrative, with English language learners (Reviewer #4).

The state did not adequately address the nature of its equitable distribution of educators between high/low poverty schools or in hard-to-staff subjects (Reviewer #5).

Action (8 & 9)

Given the critical importance of developing a rigorous and equitable teacher and principal evaluation rubric that will impact a multitude of performance-related items, namely student achievement, the task force recommends introducing statutory language to authorize NDE to manage and coordinate only the proposed Teachers and Leaders Council. As evidenced by the Race to the Top reviewer comments, Nevada underperformed considerably in Section D: Great Teachers and Leaders.

Therefore, the Teachers and Leaders Council, with oversight by NDE, will, amongst other things, develop and implement the proposed interim and formative assessment systems; develop and rollout the proposed teacher and principal evaluation system, as linked to student achievement and growth data; and develop guidelines for using data to drive professional development to enhance teacher and leader effectiveness.

The Teachers and Leaders Council will consist of representatives from, but not limited to, teachers and principals from the urban and rural districts, the Regional Professional Development Programs, higher education, parents, teacher and administrator associations, state charter schools and others as appropriate. The task force believes that the aforementioned representatives possess the experience and understanding of the plethora of challenges encountered by teachers and administrators, the factors associated with effective teaching and leading and the criteria to judge those elements.

10. Use teacher and principal evaluations to inform key decisions (pay-for-performance – D(2)(iv)(b), page D-20).

Context

Nevada intends to create a system in consultation with teacher and principal professional associations that rewards performance through compensation reform rather than length of employment. The Teachers and Leaders Council will lead the effort to develop this new system. It is unclear in the application exactly how much authority the council has to develop a system or a set of recommendations. In addition, some of the language indicates that the state will engage in discussions rather than implementing policies (Reviewer #4).

The state lacks a high quality plan for addressing compensation, promotion and retention of teachers and principals as well as granting tenure. The state punts on this issue, resolving to allow the to-be-created Teachers and Leaders Council take it up (Reviewer #3).

Action

During the 2007 Legislative Session, a bill creating a pilot program for pay-for-performance in Clark and Washoe Counties was passed. The funding for this program was subsequently suspended.

Although pay-for-performance is contingent upon the development of a statewide evaluation rubric and differentiated system, the task force endorses the concept of and support for performance pay, and recommends proposing enabling statutory language, premised upon the 2007 Legislative Session bill that conceived of and appropriated funding for the pilot program. Despite the current fiscal situation, this proposed trigger mechanism will nevertheless serve as a placeholder to equitably base pay-for-performance, tenure or termination on the evaluation outcomes when funding becomes available from districts or other sources.

11. Use teacher and principal evaluations to inform key decisions (tenure – D(2)(iv)(c), page D-21).

Context

The state lacks a high quality plan for addressing compensation, promotion and retention of teachers and principals as well as granting tenure. The state punts on this issue, resolving to allow the to-be-created Teachers and Leaders Council take it up (Reviewer #3).

State laws will need to be changed to allow tenure and removal decisions based on the evaluations (Reviewer #2).

Action

With a specific BDR proposed by Washoe County School District and potentially many others regarding the current probationary and post-probationary structure, the task force must deliberate and reach consensus about either lending support to Washoe County School District's proposed language that mandates a three-year probationary period or drafting its own statutory language. In general, the task force supports the review and revision of the post-probationary structure for licensed personnel and agrees, conceptually, with the idea of a three-year non-renewable license, with the eligibility of a permanent license.

12. Use teacher and principal evaluations to inform key decisions (termination – D(2)(iv)(d), page D-21).

Context

State laws will need to be changed to allow tenure and removal decisions based on the evaluations (Reviewer #2).

Action

The task force believes that the manner in which the termination process is being applied is in need of reform, not the process itself. Consequently, the task force recommends amending NRS Chapter 391 language to merely expedite due process for termination.

13. Create the Nevada Charter School Institute (F(2)(i), page F-9).

Context

The application states that in 2011, a Senate Bill will be presented in the state legislature to establish a Nevada Charter School Institute, creating an 18th LEA to further expand charter schools. Once established, all charters sponsored by the state board will transfer to the sponsorship of the Institute. Charters sponsored by districts or higher education will have their choice (Reviewer #5).

Action

The task force recommends establishing the Nevada Charter School Institute, provided that the following amendments of AB 489, as drafted by the Assembly Committee on Education, from the 2009 Legislative Session, are reflected in the final bill.

- **Sections 2** (p. 2), **3** (p. 12), **35** (p. 17) and **41.5** (p. 55): For the accountability and attendance reports referenced in each of these sections, the task force recommends requiring school districts to include the charters that they have authorized in their reports, while requiring the Charter Institute to include in its reports the charters that it sponsors and the charters that colleges and universities sponsor, rather than mandating the Charter Institute to include all of the charter schools in the state in its report, as the bill currently requires.
- **Section 21(d)** (p. 38): The task force does not believe that the charter association should appoint a member of the Charter Institute's board. A charter association appointment would provide its opponents an opportunity to claim that such a member will be inclined to approve many charter schools regardless of their quality in order to boost member dues at the association. The task force recommends that the state superintendent of public instruction appoint this member.

- **Section 21(2)** (p. 39): The task force recommends adding (c) that reads as follows: “All members of the board should have demonstrated knowledge and understanding of and commitment to charter schooling as a strategy for strengthening public education.”
- **Section 35** (p. 50): The task force believes that it appears problematic to provide the State Board of Education the ability to veto any regulation adopted by the Charter Institute.
- **Section 50** (p. 69): The task force recommends that the Charter Institute board, not the governor, appoint the first director of the Charter Institute.
- **Section 51** (p. 69): The task force recommends deleting this section because it does not believe that the legislature should create the staffing plan for the Charter Institute.

14. Fund charter schools equitably (F(2)(iii), page F-11 and F(2)(iv), page F-12).

Context

The state does not provide funding for charter school facilities. While the narrative indicates that the legislature has the authority to help charter schools access funding for facilities, funds have never been appropriated for this effort (Reviewer #2).

The state does not make any special provisions for charter schools to access public facilities or assist with leasing facilities. This has caused at least one charter school applicant to rescind its application and may have the affect of prohibiting potential applicants (Reviewer #3).

In sum, the state provides no assistance for charter schools in terms of funding for facilities, facilities acquisition or the ability to share in bonds (Reviewer #5).

Action

The task force recommends amending NRS 386.560 to propose enabling statutory language for funding parity, especially if the Nevada Charter Institute is established.

Given the current fiscal situation, this proposed trigger mechanism will nevertheless serve as a placeholder to treat charter schools equitably upon the recovery of the state’s economic health.

15. Establish provision for the conversion of long-term, under-performing traditional public schools to charter schools (F(2)(i), page F-9) and for the conversion of long-term, under-performing charter schools to traditional public schools.

Context

At first glance, the state does have a charter school law that does not prohibit the number of charter schools that can operate in the state, quality notwithstanding. After examining the state’s charter law, it is clear that the state’s prohibition on converting public schools—even failing ones—to charter schools is a barrier. NRS 386.505, NRS 386.506 (Reviewer #3).

Examining the state charter law provided, however, reveals a potentially significant barrier in that existing public schools cannot be converted to charter schools (Reviewer #5).

Action

Operating on the assumption that Nevada ensures successful conditions for high-performing charter schools and other innovative schools, *Nevada's Promise* declared that "Nevada has no cap on the number of charter schools in the state and no restriction on the number of students who may enroll in charter schools (NRS 386.500 – 386.610)."

NRS 386.506, however, prohibits an existing public school from converting to a charter school. Therefore, in order to authorize charter schools to serve student populations that are similar to local district student populations, the task force recommends repealing NRS 386.506 and introducing statutory language that would authorize converting failing traditional public schools not making annual yearly progress during their school improvement process (lowest 5% of the persistently lowest-achieving schools, as identified by NDE for the federal School Improvement Grant Program) to charter schools, especially with clear language about accountability structures.

Regarding the conversion item, the task force recommends simplifying the language by providing a potential definition for "conversion charter schools" from the model law as well as an explanation of the conversion process. Below is a potential definition for conversion charter schools:

A "conversion public charter school" means a charter school that existed as a non-charter public school before becoming a public charter school."

Below is model law language about school conversion:

In the case of an application to establish a public charter school by converting an existing non-charter public school to public charter school status, applicants must demonstrate support for the proposed public charter school conversion by a petition signed by a majority of teachers and a petition signed by a majority of parents of students in the existing non-charter public school.

This conversion language would also include provisions outlining the process for converting an under-performing charter school.

The task force believes that adding these accountability provisions serve as a companion piece to the establishment of the Charter School Institute and the funding parity issue, which would send a strong message about the state's support of charter schools.

Administration

Administrative Actions Required for Reform

1. Adopt the Common Core State Standards (B(1)(i), page B-5).

Context

The application provides a detailed timeline showing that the state is on track for adopting the standards by August 2, 2010, including Nevada State Board of Education approval (Reviewer #2).

The state's application and its actions demonstrate a commitment to adopting common standards in English Language Arts, math and science that aligns with Nevada's Promise (Reviewer #3).

Action

On September 21, 2010, the Council to Establish Academic Standards adopted the Common Core State Standards for official approval by the state board of education at its December 2010 meeting. In the interim, NDE has assembled a coordinating body that is collaborating with all participating entities to implement the roll out of the Common Core State Standards.

Although the adoption of the Common Core State Standards does not require legislative attention, the resultant impacts on professional development will warrant legislative action. The task force recommends encouraging the legislature to continue properly funding the Regional Professional Development Program because professional development is an integral component toward addressing the Common Core State Standards.

2. 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 (A(1)(i), page A-14).

Context

Nevada's discussion on how it will support educators for instructional improvement lacked cohesiveness and clarity (Reviewer #2).

Other than a brief description of each of the three databases, the application does not provide a thorough plan to ensure that the systems are accessible and used. While access is critical, the activities outlined here are the most basic steps and do not describe how the acquisition, adoption and use will be increased (Reviewer #4).

3. Comply with the twelfth, and remaining, element prescribed in the America COMPETES Act—student-level college readiness test scores (C(1), pages C-2 & C-3).

Context

The application describes that Nevada has 11 of the 12 required elements in place. They do not yet have the ability to track college readiness test scores in their statewide longitudinal data system (Reviewer #5).

Action (2 & 3)

Currently, NDE is working on creating a longitudinal database for collection and reporting of student, teacher and school information. At present, this system collects data from all schools in every district in the state, including state and school district-sponsored charter schools. The current database contains all student data ranging from K–12; some pre-K data relating to pre-school children identified as requiring an Individual Education Plan (IEP); and teacher information such as teaching credentials, licensure and courses taught or eligible to teach.

While the existing database does not contain any grade 13-20 education or employment data, an effort is underway between the NSHE and the Department of Employment, Rehabilitation and Training (DETR) to obtain grant funding to create a longitudinal database that will house 13-20 and beyond student/career information. NDE is working closely with the NSHE to ensure that NDE data will be included in the new system. Once the system is instituted, a data transfer will have to take place between NSHE, which will maintain the system, and NDE to merge the information and create a database that includes all data from pre-K–20.

Although NDE database contains all the K–12 student and teacher information necessary to satisfy the longitudinal student/teacher database requirements spelled out in the Race to the Top program, the application necessary to mine the data, compile the information and report on the results has not been developed. In addition, the lack of pre-K, NSHE and DETR data currently excludes the possibility of reporting on the entire pre-K–20 timeline. NDE competed for the ARRA statewide longitudinal data system grant to build an interface with NSHE and begin the exchange of data, but NDE was not awarded the grant. NDE then attempted to roll the NSHE requirement into the ARRA Race to the Top grant, but that grant was not awarded either.

The future is very promising as NSHE and DETR work on their data sharing model, NDE will partner with the two agencies to exchange data once they are able to collect it. This data can then be used to create the business intelligence necessary to report relevant performance indicators and satisfy the longitudinal student/teacher database requirements. NDE will be requesting funds and resources through federal grants and/or state funding to develop the application and write the interfaces necessary to exchange data with the NSHE and DETR.

Please note that no tentative dates for completion have been provided by NDE. The staff understands that the director overseeing the completion of the longitudinal database is new to NDE. Glenn Meyer, the newly-hired director, is currently reviewing the system to become familiar with the status of all of the components. Meyer notes that he will be prepared before the 2011 Legislative Session to provide a detailed report with tentative dates of completion.

Other than collaboration between the University of Nevada, Reno; Truckee Meadows Community College; and the Washoe County School District, Nevada lacks statewide coordination between the K–12 institution and higher education. Most states employ a student's social security number as the common identifier to ensure continuity between educational

systems. While NDE assures that the interface between K–12 and higher education exists, this item will require a commitment from the NSHE to acquiesce upon a unique, common identifier.

Given that the development of a statewide longitudinal data system is a major priority and a critical link to other elements contained in *Nevada's Promise*, the task force recommends sending a letter to the joint legislative budget committees to remain focused on this component because, most importantly, higher education and DETR will require funding. While the task force recommendation does not require legislation, this item will require a discussion during the budget hearings, with advocacy from the NSHE.

4. Establish a STEM coalition to effect long-term impacts in STEM, P–20 education and job training for Nevada (A(1)(i), page A-12).

Context

Nevada provides a list of STEM-related initiatives across the state and across agencies, but indicates that STEM activities have not been well coordinated. The narrative evaluated in the context of the application does not meet the standard of a high quality plan on how it intends to achieve this goal (Reviewer #2).

Evaluated individually, each activity listed is important, yet these initiatives do not collectively reflect a broad, comprehensive STEM agenda (Reviewer #3).

Action

Gathering Genius, Inc. (G² Inc.), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose mission is to promote and improve P–20 STEM education in Nevada, raised \$1.1 million and successfully hosted the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) in Reno in May 2009. Recognizing the momentum generated by and increased interest in STEM following the ISEF, the board is considering allocating the positive surplus of funds raised as a legacy fund to support future STEM education efforts in Nevada.

Acknowledging the prevalent role that STEM played in the Race to the Top application, the G² Inc. advisory board met with a group of 30 stakeholders in April 2010 to discuss the establishment of a Nevada STEM Coalition that will assemble STEM leaders, generate support and work to effect important and long-term improvements in STEM, P–20 education and job training for Nevada. Since then, the G² Inc. board invited Dr. James McMurtry, Director of the National Association of State Science & Math Coalitions (NASSMC) to Reno for a meeting in the spring, after which the NDE willingly accepted to partner with the developing organization.

Recently, the G² Inc. board voted to expand its membership to include a broader range of individuals and to increase membership from beyond northwestern Nevada. To date, the new board met on September 2, with a second board meeting tentatively planned for November 18; paid the membership fees to become a member of NASSMC and was represented by two members at the 2010 NASSMC Annual Coalition Directors Meeting National Conference in Washington D.C. on October 22, 2010; is exploring the development of a STEM-focused website designed to improve coordination of STEM activities in the state; and has begun planning a Nevada STEM Summit in the fall of 2011.

The task force recommends sending a letter to G² Inc. and Beth Wells, a key contact thus far, and request that the Education Reform Blue Ribbon Task Force be added to their mailing and e-mail distribution list for further information about future meetings and developments.

5. Improve the effectiveness of teacher and principal preparation programs (D(4)(i), Page D-35 and D(4)(ii), page D-37).

Context

The state's plan for expanding high quality paths to licensure is underdeveloped. The section does not put forth a clear vision for expanding credentialing options that are successful, possibly due to lack of quality data on the subject. In fact, it seems the state cannot identify which programs are effective and ineffective ... The state's vision for expanding preparation programs is equally vague. And, what information that state does provide (i.e., a desire to expand Teach For America Las Vegas Valley corps in high poverty school) seems in tension with its desire to reduce the number of teachers "with less than three years experience in high-poverty and/or high-minority schools" (Reviewer #3).

Nevada's system will include coding for the 60% of teachers prepared in out-of-state institutions as well as those prepared in state. Nevada will use the resulting data to hold these institutions accountable by publishing the data on overall trends related to teacher and principal strengths/areas of growth. Data will also be used to shape decisions on possible attendees, recruitment strategies and licensure/re-licensure systems. The plan for how this will be achieved is not delineated, nor is the critical link to student data emphasized (Reviewer #5).

Action

The task force recommends that NDE develop a plan with proposed costs and fiscal impact that will lead to the design and development of a statewide teacher preparation program database, as described in the *Nevada's Promise*, for presentation to the 2013 Legislative Session for approval. The task force recommends the 2013 date because this particular type of database cannot be established until the teacher and principal evaluations based on student achievement data are in place, which should be completed in two years.

6. Promote early childhood outcomes (A(1)(i), page A-15).

Context

During the 2001 Legislative Session, state funds were first committed to Early Learning Outcomes (ELO) to create a statewide early childhood education program. Since that time, Nevada has allocated approximately \$3 million to promote school readiness for Nevada's pre-K children through high-quality early education with a strong focus on parent involvement.

The data from Nevada pre-K programs are strong. In 2008-2009, participating preschool children made large cognitive gains, and evaluative results showed they were better prepared to enter kindergarten. In addition, children who participated in the programs during 2003-2004, and entered fourth grade in 2008-2009, scored higher than those who did not participate. The children scored statistically higher on the fourth grade Nevada CRT reading and math tests.

These programs focus on serving students with high-needs based on poverty and/or second language considerations, and serve to help close the gap. Early childhood standards will align with Common Core State Standards and early literacy assessments will be performed at grades K–2. The data will guide interventions when a need is determined. Part of these efforts will also include developing and conducting a needs assessment for kindergarten readiness upon entry to help establish baseline data on students.

Childhood educators will be included in professional development efforts, as well as the expansion of principal preparation and development programs, to ensure that leaders are equipped to support early learning opportunities and environments and provide developmentally appropriate early childhood programs (Priority 3-1 and 3-2).

Action

During the 2009 Legislative Session, legislation was introduced by the Senate Committee on Health and Education (SB 378) to address the issue of early childhood education. SB 378 was approved by the legislature, but ultimately vetoed by the governor, and the veto was sustained. Given that the veto was based in large part to the fiscal note attached, the current fiscal woes make funding appropriations for early childhood education unlikely. In addition, grant funding appears to be contingent upon the lack of pre-kindergarten standards and accountability.

Nevada has yet to institute a statewide full-day kindergarten program, an argument against developing early childhood programming. Nevertheless, the task force recommends requesting that the legislature first ensure the quality of pre-kindergarten program standards and outcomes expected during their budget review to serve as a foundation for promoting, and eventually funding, early childhood education programs.

The existence of statewide pre-kindergarten standards and outcomes will then facilitate a potential partnership with and possible funding from the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI) to build state capacity and foster professional development of the early care and education workforce that enhances knowledge and skills; supports the implementation and sustainability of evidence-based practices; and increases the size of the workforce skilled in supporting the social-emotional development of young children (birth to five years) in inclusive, natural environments.

7. Expand the Nevada Growth Model for Achievement to all students K–12 (B(3), Pages B-11 & B-12 and D(2)(i), page D-12).

Context

The state's application and its actions demonstrate a commitment to adopting common standards in English Language Arts, math and science that aligns with Nevada's Promise (Reviewer #3).

The state provided a detailed timeline and plan for transitioning both to enhanced standards and high-quality assessments ... The state is applauded for its plan to develop coursework for its teacher preparation programs around the standards and for aligning certification standards to the academic content standards (Reviewer #2).

Action

Nevada currently assesses students through the Nevada Proficiency Examination Program with Criterion Referenced Tests (CRT) at grades three through eight in reading and mathematics, CRTs at grades five and eight in science and writing, the High School Proficiency Exam in grades 10 and 11 and by participating in NAEP.

The adoption of the Common Core State Standards and the subsequent alignment efforts will directly impact the CRTs. The expansion of the Nevada Growth Model for Achievement for grades K–12 will usher in end-of-course examinations, and may, once fully phased in, replace the Nevada High School Proficiency Exam.

The task force recognizes that the Nevada Growth Model for Achievement is a critical piece to implementing and understanding the Common Core State Standards. Moreover, since the Nevada Growth Model for Achievement is directly linked to teacher and principal evaluations, the latter of which will be developed by the Teachers and Leaders Council and not phased in until 2014-2015, the task force recommends monitoring this item and awaiting further information because it will serve as a pathway to assess teacher and principal effectiveness, and thus broach pay-for-performance initiatives.

8. Improve student performance through collaboration with key stakeholders such as parents, teachers, principals, employee associations, district administrators, state officials, community leaders and legislators (A(1)(i), page A-9).

Context

A Parent Engagement Specialist will be on staff in the Nevada Education Reform Office, and will assist schools and districts in developing plans that fully incorporate the support, abilities, and resources that parents bring to the education of their children. This specialist will convene a yearly Parent Involvement Summit, assist schools in developing transition plans for children and families as they progress from pre-K to high school and post-secondary schooling, and provide training in best practices for family-friendly schools.

The Parent Engagement Specialist will build capacity through training for schools to develop a school team, including families, to analyze its policies, practices and culture for including families in the academic success of their children. These teams will partner with the Nevada State Parent Information Resource Center (PIRC) to identify relevant research-based programs such as Math and Parent Partnerships, Family Literacy Experience, the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project, and the Parent School Partnership program from Mexican-American Legal Defense Education Fund for ongoing support of families and outreach to hard-to-reach families (E(2)(i), page E-20).

Action

In the absence of establishing this position due to fiscal constraints, the task force nevertheless proposes promoting and expanding existing national, state and school district level parental engagement best practices to effectively partner families with schools in supporting instruction and achievement goals for all students pre-K–12.

Nevada's Promise contains elements that, if enacted, will provide the tools for parents to:

- Receive extensive professional development to help students master the standards and graduate.
- Access the data systems that will identify potential barriers, reveal inherent strengths and outline ways to improve student achievement to move the school forward. Nevada views the use of data as a collaborative and enriching activity for principals and teachers, as well as a means to hold all educators accountable for their students' achievement.
- Determine the criteria, additional assessments and comprehensive elements to measure teacher and principal effectiveness.
- Collaborate with districts in developing and using community resources at turnaround schools.

Conclusion

If today is a pivotal time in Nevada, then tomorrow is essential for our future prosperity. Transforming education means transforming Nevada. More than 145 letters of support and endorsements from all 17 school districts and 97% of the teachers in Nevada demonstrate the committed will and drive of business leaders, educators, elected officials, community members and parents to change the outcomes for our students.

Nevadans have united like never before to work on *Nevada's Promise: Excellence, Rigor, and Equity* because it presents an opportunity to spur the transformation of every sector of our education system. To change takes the drive and energy that has been harnessed by this process, but it also requires a promise: a promise to our students that they will graduate, a promise to our teachers and principals that they will excel and a promise to one another that the legacy we leave will live forever in our most precious renewable energy—our children.

-
- i. EPE Research Center, *Diplomas Count 2010: Graduation by the Numbers* (2010)
 - ii. *Ibid.*
 - iii. EPE Research Center, *Quality Counts 2010: Fresh Course, Swift Current* (2010)
 - iv. *Ibid.*
 - v. *Ibid.*
 - vi. *Ibid.*
 - vii. U.S. Census Bureau
 - viii. Alliance For Excellent Education (2010) at www.all4ed.org/files/Nevada.pdf
 - ix. Alliance For Excellent Education (2010) at www.all4ed.org/files/LasVegasNV_1eb.pdf
 - x. EPE Research Center, *Quality Counts 2010: Fresh Course, Swift Current* (2010)

