

Clark County Education Association (CCEA) Recommendations to the AB394 Technical Advisory Committee:

After hearing more than 100 hours of testimony in the legislative and technical advisory committees created by AB394, and after conducting extensive research on its own, CCEA is prepared to make the following recommendations around district reorganization, school empowerment, and parent engagement:

Core Recommendations

Based on Committee testimony and our own research, CCEA would like to formally make the following core recommendations:

1) School Based Autonomy: CCEA recommends that the Committee directs CCSD to give significantly more budgetary and instructional autonomy to local schools, and transition the district to a model that enables individual schools to control at least 85% of their budget at the local school level.

2) Equity in Funding Where Real Dollars Follow Students: CCEA recommends that the Nevada Legislature accelerates CCSD's transition to a weighted funding formula to ensure that local schools have the resources they need to adequately educate their student populations, and mandate that any new money added due to weights on the funding formula stay with individual students at schools.

3) Central Service Agency: CCEA recommends that the Committee direct CCSD to transition its central administrative system to a Central Services agency, charged with providing essential non-instructional services to schools, and create a Leadership Academy within CCSD to give school leaders the relevant skills they need to effectively and accountably manage an empowered local school.

4) Site Based Team Model: CCEA recommends that the Committee direct CCSD to stand up a system of board governance at local schools made up of a team of parents, teachers, and school leaders with shared decision making. Transition CCSD's current top-down administrative framework to an accreditation system.

5) Parental Engagement: CCEA recommends that the Committee direct CCSD to create a program of stipends for parents and family members of students who serve on local school site governance boards, and engage in new models of family engagement to boost parental involvement in local schools, especially in urban areas.

If implemented with fidelity, CCEA believes that these reforms have the potential to significantly improve education service delivery in Clark County. Greater detail on these proposals is continued on the next page.

I. Direct CCSD to Transition All Schools to an Autonomous Model

When the Committee began its work in 2015, it was looking at breaking the Clark County School District (CCSD) into smaller pieces, but it was not fundamentally looking at reforming the education delivery system. CCEA is pleased that, rather than simply redrawing lines on a map, the Committee chose to take a critical look at the education delivery system in Southern Nevada. The Committee has brought in experts from all over the country, including Dr. Michael Strembinsky, the pioneer in decentralized school systems, to help it craft recommendations for education service delivery reform. Today, Southern Nevada is on the cusp of a fundamental change for the better in our school system – one that will give parents, teachers, and school leaders a greater ability to tailor public education to the specific needs of the children in our communities. Based on research conducted by CCEA and testimony heard before the Committee, CCEA recommends:

1) The Committee direct CCSD to transition all schools to an autonomous model of governance.

2) The Committee direct CCSD to build a system in which at least 85% of funds are budgeted and spent by a governing board at the local school.

II. Accelerate CCSD's transition to a Weighted Funding Formula Based on the Actual Characteristics of Students in Schools so that Real Dollars Follow Students

In the 2014 Interim and the 2015 Legislative Session, the Nevada Legislature made significant strides in reforming the Nevada Plan for School Finance. This work culminated in the passage of SB508 in the 2015 session, which altered the way that funding is calculated for special education and directed NDE to develop a plan to determine weights that apply to special education, English Language Learners, at-risk populations, and gifted and talented populations.¹ This weighted funding plan must be submitted in the 2015-16 Interim and the weights must be in place before FY2021-22.

Decentralized education service delivery models with autonomous schools that control their own budgets require equitable distribution of resources and funding, and it is clear that the current top-down model for distributing resources to schools creates a vast amount of inequity. CCSD faces a significant teacher shortage, and this shortage is concentrated in Clark County's poorest schools. As the Committee heard in January, under the current model, when a school cannot find a teacher to hire for a school year, that resource is clawed back to the CCSD central office and redistributed for other purposes. If CCSD is to build a system where schools budget their own resources and allocate those resources to boost student achievement, this practice must stop. CCSD must build a model where money follows the student so that schools have the resources they need to educate the population that they serve.

As the Committee heard from Drs. Strembinsky, Ouchi, and Nadelstern, weighted funding and equitable resource distribution is necessary for the success of decentralized school models.

¹ http://www.doe.nv.gov/Boards_Commissions_Councils/State_Board_of_Education/MeetingMaterials/

CCEA recognizes that the Nevada Legislature and NDE have made significant progress toward the reform of the Nevada Plan. In this context, CCEA would like to make the following recommendations:

1) NDE will be submitting a report on a weighted funding formula plan on or before October 1, 2016 to the Governor and the Director of the LCB for transmittal to the 2017 Legislature. CCEA recommends that the 2017 legislature enact a weighted funding formula for the 2018/19 school year and beyond.

2) Where there are adjustments in per-pupil student expenditures for the target populations (special education, English Language Learners, students living in poverty, at-risk students, and gifted and talented students) due to the new weighted funding formula, 100% of the adjusted amount follows the student to the school site, and that adjusted amount must be budgeted and spent at the school site and be in compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations.

III. Direct CCSD to Construct a Central Service Model and Provide Guidance to the District on Central Services vs. School Based Services

Rhetoric about school choice often misses a key point: principals and teachers at public school sites often have no choice when it comes to their own curriculum, management, and budget. Schools are most often directed by central administration to implement the programs they are purveying. By adopting a decentralized empowerment model, Nevada is attempting to give CCSD schools more local authority over their educational program by giving them more direct power over their budget. CCEA is pleased that the Committee has elected to work with Dr. Michael Strembinsky, the pioneer in the development of the school-based budgeting and central *service* (in contrast to central administration) models at the Edmonton School District, and as such, he is an expert in how to construct decentralized school systems. In this context, CCEA makes the following recommendations:

1) In consultation with Dr. Strembinsky, CCEA recommends that the Committee provide guidance to the school district on what should be a centralized expense and what should be a school site expense.

2) Generally, CCEA operates from the principle that instructional decisions should be made as close to the student as possible. Thus, CCEA believes that services such as instruction, the appointment of educational personnel, the selection of instructional materials and technology, and the selection of curriculum and instructional methodologies should be handled at the school level. In addition, numerous recent studies have shown that educator professional development programs work best when they are job-embedded^{2 3}; thus, CCEA recommends that these professional development activities occur at the school level. Finally, CCEA recommends that funds for parent and family engagement be devolved to the school level so that engagement activities can be closer to the family populations that schools serve, whether urban or rural.

² <http://www.gtlcenter.org/sites/default/files/docs/JEPD%20Issue%20Brief.pdf>

³ http://guinncenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Reforming-Professional-Development-to-Improve-Literacy-Outcomes-in-Nevada_July-2014.pdf

<p>Central Services Department</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-instructional activities, including transportation, food services, utilities, security, building maintenance, data administration, grant administration, payroll & fiscal governance • Principal appointment • Evaluation and accreditation of local schools • Clark County Leadership Academy – a new organization within CCSD with two core missions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Principal/Administration training and development ○ Serve as a think tank for empowered education within CCSD • Student assignment and placement- zoning and magnet school placement
<p>School Site-Based Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instruction & appointment of educational personnel • Selection of instructional materials, methodology, and technology • Site-based professional development for educational personnel • Parental and family engagement • Local school governance

3) CCEA also operates from the recognition that some services are better delivered by a centralized model. These services are non-instructional in nature and include activities including transportation, food services, utilities, security, building maintenance, data administration, grant administration, payroll & fiscal governance. CCEA believes the CCSD’s central services department should make decisions around the appointment of principals at local schools in alignment with the site based teams input in the hiring of principals. CCSD’s central services department should also be responsible for evaluating and accrediting local schools, to ensure that they are meeting their mission and strategic goals.

4) CCEA believes that CCSD should endeavor to build its own pipeline of school leaders (administration and educators) specifically trained to take on the increased responsibilities of an empowered school. As such, CCEA recommends that CCSD take a page from the empowerment experience in New York Public Schools and develop their own Leadership Academy to give school leaders the skills they need to effectively and accountably manage an empowered local school. Such a program could be funded through existing mechanisms like the Nevada Great Teaching and Leading Fund and through philanthropy. Elements of the NYC Leadership Academy program include:

- i) An intensive 5-week summer program that simulates the actual challenges of a struggling New York City school
- ii) A school based internship under the guidance of a successful principal
- iii) In person coursework and field experience
- iv) A pass-fail evaluation system

5) CCEA recommends that 85% of every dollar saved by the reorientation of CCSD’s central administration to central services be re-allocated down to the local school level. The remaining 15% should go to build the Clark County Leadership Academy.

IV. Develop a Robust Governance System for Empowerment Schools and the CCSD Central Services Department

Current law (NRS 368.700-780) provides for the designation of empowerment schools within a framework of central school district control. This law has been in place since the mid-2000s, and enabled several schools within CCSD to demonstrate the success that could be had when key decisions were made at the local school level. The law even led the Obama Administration to highlight CCSD Empowerment Schools as models of success in public schooling.⁴

Unfortunately, due to several factors, including budget cuts stemming from the Great Recession, the Empowerment Program within CCSD has been scaled back significantly, and central control has largely been re-asserted over previously “empowered” schools. In lieu of “empowerment,” nearly all schools have been given flex budgeting authority, which allocates a limited amount of resources to local schools to budget, with rigorous oversight.⁵ While Nevada’s Empowerment Law fit the conditions of its time, the law, in its current state, will not adequately serve CCSD as it seeks to decentralize most budget and authority to the local school level. CCEA believes that a new model for governance is necessary, one that better involves teachers, families, and the school community in the governance process.

1) Modeling off California School Site Councils,⁶ CCEA believes that CCSD should form elected “Empowerment Councils” at each school to represent parents, students, community members, and school staff in the school governance process. Empowerment Councils would have several responsibilities, including:

- A) Reviewing and analyzing student achievement data,
- B) Gathering community input,
- C) Developing the school’s strategic plan and the school site budget, and;
- D) Monitoring the implementation of the plan and budget.
- E) Compliance with all state and federal laws and regulations.

2) Modeling off California School Site Councils, CCEA believes that local school Empowerment Councils should be of the following composition:

- A) The school principal
- B) 3 representatives of teachers, selected by teachers at the school (one of these being a CCEA teacher representative).
- C) 2 other school support staff personnel, selected by peers at the school
- D) 5 parents of students attending the school, selected by such parents
- E) At the high school level, 2 students selected by students attending the school

3) Recognizing that many CCSD schools have existing formal and informal groups of parents, teachers, and administrators that help to develop school policies and implement special programs,⁷ CCEA recommends that CCSD should, to the extent possible and permissible under

⁴ <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/blueprint/fostering-innovation-excellence.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/interim/78th2015/Committee/Studies/CCSD/Other/8-January-2016/AB394FlexibleBudgetFinal010816.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.sfusd.edu/en/councils-committees/school-site-council.html>

⁷ For example: Schools designated as Victory Schools create Victory School Performance Plans. In the course of creating a performance plan, the school creates a council of staff members and parents to guide its efforts. http://www.doe.nv.gov/Legislative/Victory_Schools/Performance_Plans/

law and regulation, direct local schools to transition the responsibilities of these groups to local school Empowerment Councils.

4) Modeling off of successful models in Edmonton,⁸ CCSD should aim to have at least 85% of a school's operating budget run through the local school Empowerment Councils.

5) Generally, CCEA recommends that CCSD's central administration shift from an oversight role to a central services role. However, CCEA believes that the CCSD central office and elected officials should serve as a check on local schools. As such, CCEA believes that CCSD should "accredit" local schools based on certain standards. Current Empowerment Law (NRS 386.720) allows for the creation of Empowerment Design Teams to recommend policies and procedures related to empowerment schools and advise the CCSD Board of Trustees on issues related to empowerment schools. In consultation with Dr. Strembinsky, CCEA recommends that the committee direct CCSD to form an Empowerment Accreditation Team under the Office of the Superintendent. This team would be made up of individuals from both inside and outside of the district appointed by the Superintendent, and it would be charged with periodically evaluating the budgetary, instructional, and family engagement practices of local schools. The Accreditation Team would develop standards with which to evaluate school Empowerment Councils, and make recommendations to the CCSD Board of Trustees on the accreditation of local schools. If schools do not meet accreditation standards, the Accreditation Team with approval of the CCSD Superintendent would recommend an action plan with performance metrics and goals to meet accreditation.

V. Direct CCSD to Develop a Program that Allocates Stipends to Parents and Family Members on Empowerment Councils and Boosts Family Engagement in Urban Schools

Recognizing that parental and family engagement is associated with higher achievement outcomes and also recognizing that the new empowerment model requires the involvement of a large number of parents and family members in the school system, CCEA believes that bold efforts in parental and family engagement are necessary for success.

1) Direct the CCSD Family and Community Engagement Services department (FACES) to develop a program that provides at least \$200/month for the elected parent participants in the Empowerment Councils to help compensate parents for their time and to drive interest and involvement. CCEA believes that CCSD can either use existing monies that they allocate to programs like FACES, or they can partner with nonprofit organizations (like the Public Education Foundation) to raise the money to pay for stipends. Monies dedicated for parental engagement cannot be repurposed for other uses.

2) Modeling off of successful efforts in Chicago, CCEA believes that the CCSD FACES department should develop programs that better engage families of students in urban areas in Empowerment Council. The Chicago model has been studied for its ability to engage parents of racial minorities within the Chicago school system. In particular, a Harvard University study⁹ found that "governing arrangements and Latino political incorporation play a critical role" in boosting parent and family engagement among schools with large Latino student populations,

⁸ <http://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/10-questions-for-william-ouchi-149940>

⁹ <http://www.hfrp.org/evaluation/the-evaluation-exchange/issue-archive/building-the-future-of-family-involvement/local-school-councils-and-parent-involvement-in-chicago>

and that “LSCs [Local School Councils] with Latino representation and/or LSCs that actively contributed to parent involvement were better able to help school personnel break down cultural barriers, increase awareness of cultural and community issues, and facilitate school initiated outreach.