



# WOULD NEVADA'S ECONOMY GET STRONGER IF NEVADA'S SCHOOLS GOT BETTER?

Clark County Education Association

**2023 Legislative Priorities**

**CCEA**

Clark County Education Association

the **union**  
of teaching  
professionals

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# Introduction

**The Clark County Education Association (CCEA)** represents over 18,000 educators and other licensed professionals in the Clark County School District. We are the largest independent educators union in the country. CCEA is a non-partisan organization advocating for strategic solutions for our public education system, with an emphasis on the Clark County School District. We are an evidence-based advocacy group that has been active in the last several legislative sessions joining with lawmakers and other stakeholders to successfully pass legislation and adequately fund our public schools. We pride ourselves as an organization that has been successful in advancing the needs of public education in Nevada. We refrain from political sloganeering—we leave that to others. We understand that in Nevada, politics often trumps policy.

After investing heavily in the 2022 election cycle to ensure the right people have been elected and that an optimal power balance in state government is in place to effectuate change, CCEA is once again poised to play a leading role in the 2023 Nevada Legislative Session.

## **Would Nevada’s economy get stronger if Nevada’s schools got better?**

We are approaching this Legislative Session by framing the discussion on education differently. The Covid experience, like the 2008 economic crash and the 911 tragedy before, has once again demonstrated that Nevada needs to diversify its economy—particularly in Southern Nevada. CCEA believes that education should be viewed in that context. In other words, the education delivery system is an integral part of the economy.

It is the education delivery system that produces the workforce and if we are to diversify the economy we must build a workforce to attract new emergent industry clusters. To that end, we need to look at education differently and invest appropriately. Accordingly, in advance of this Session, CCEA commissioned the University of Nevada, Reno and Columbia University to produce policy papers that assess Nevada’s current workforce and create a state model for how to produce the kind of workforce to attract those emergent industries. . These papers can be accessed at [ccea-nv.org](https://www.ccea-nv.org)

In this portfolio, we have outlined our key priorities for the 2023 Nevada Legislative Session, which address a range of issues, from closing our per pupil funding gap to using public education as a model and vehicle for much needed economic diversification and workforce development.

# Primary Legislative Priorities

**Education as Workforce Development.** Over the past several legislative sessions, CCEA has provided leadership and worked with lawmakers and state leaders in both parties to fund our schools and make the kind of progress we need to see in Nevada when it comes to public education. In the 2021 Legislative Session, CCEA worked with a bi-partisan effort, to pass a mining tax dedicated exclusively for public education as the first down payment to the new Pupil Centered Funding Plan.

In 2023, we have a responsibility to continue making those concrete gains for our educators and students. CCEA believes that, together with the leadership in Carson City, we also have an opportunity to start tackling the project of diversifying our economy in southern Nevada by approaching our work through the lens of education as workforce development.

As such, our legislative priorities for the 82nd Legislature have all been developed using this framework and can be conceived of in four primary buckets:

- 1. School Funding.** We need to continue investing in the revised Nevada funding formula in order to close per pupil gaps in our education delivery system in accordance with the recommendations made by the Commission on School Funding. To do this, we have to adopt stable and strategic revenue streams to fund our public education system to reach the national average.
- 2. Teacher Vacancies.** We need to prioritize recruitment and retention efforts by compensating educators as professionals in a highly competitive national market. High inflation has significantly eroded educators' pay and, as a result, recruitment and retention is at a crisis level. However, of strategic importance is the fact that Nevada needs to build a teacher pipeline to adequately meet our vacancy needs. CCEA is advocating that we create a Teacher Academy College Pathway by building a teacher pipeline to address the crisis we are currently facing and to serve as a model for creating career paths as part of workplace development that can be applied statewide and across target industries (e.g., healthcare).
- 3. Instructional Time.** We need to increase instructional time for students to address the loss of learning experienced during these past few years under Covid by: 1) reducing the administrative burdens currently put on educators, and 2) adding valuable instructional minutes to the school day dedicated exclusively to instruction.
- 4. School Safety.** We need to address school safety by empowering educators, putting more controls back in the classroom to deal with disruptive student behaviors, and implementing the behavioral, mental health, and counseling wraparound services necessary to ensure violent and disruptive students have the help they need.

**The bottom line: better schools bring better business.**





*Senate Majority Leader Nicole Cannizzaro, Speaker of the Assembly Steve Yeager and other key lawmakers joined more than 500 educators at Sunrise Mountain HS for our education Town Hall on Saturday, January 21st.*

# Additional Priorities

As always, CCEA's efforts to advocate for our priorities and our members' interests will be far reaching. In addition to these four primary buckets, we also intend to address the following issues during the legislative session:

- **Working Conditions, Class Sizes, and Caseloads.** We need to remove unnecessary administrative burdens placed on front line educators in order to focus on instruction. Hire more licensed professionals in the classroom to reduce class sizes and end the Department of Education waiver system that grants class sizes to increase with no controls. Hire more other licensed professionals (e.g., social workers, counselors, school psychologists) to reduce caseloads to manageable levels; mandate school districts to not exceed caseload levels.
- **School Climate and Principal Accountability.** We need to restore legislation that removes ineffective administrators who contribute to toxic work environments, high staff turnover, and low student achievement. Autonomy comes with Accountability. We need a high standard of accountability for administrators to ensure our schools have great and effective leaders. Furthermore, if students are not learning and schools are not doing well, accountability has to be restored on principals.
- **School Organizational Teams.** We have had five years of the reorganization of CCSD. The reorganization was designed to give autonomy at the school level and empower educators, parents and administrators to produce better educational outcomes. . The experience has only given administrators autonomy but with no accountability. Administrators are sitting on over \$250 million in carryover dollars that grows each year and another \$90 million in school supplies. Principals have sole authority on the budget. The verdict is in. With autonomy must come accountability. CCEA is advocating that we empower more autonomy at school sites by giving authority to the SOTs to approve school budgets and more authority to SOTs on recommending principals to be hired when vacancies occur.
- **School Board Structure.** We need to change the school board governance structure to end the dysfunctional model that has not served our students and educators well by implementing a hybrid model wherein the majority of trustees remain elected by the community while some are appointed and bring to governance key skill sets and experience to help run large school districts.
- **Educator Rights and Protections.** We need to make changes to NRS 288 in order to provide more protections and rights to educators. Too often, things passed by the Nevada Legislature do not get down to school districts; if Legislators pass legislation for educators' conditions of employment and rights, salary and benefits then School Districts need to adhere to them.
- **Open Primaries.** We need to expand participation in the political process by opening up our primaries to ensure independent voters are no longer excluded from determining which candidates advance to and run in our general elections. The current two-party lock on our election process has not served Nevada voters well because it too often allows extremists from both ends of the political spectrum to come out of the primaries and run in the election.



# Primary Priority: School Funding



## Nevada receives an 'F' on funding education, report shows

reno gazette journal

## For Nevada's economic future, let's do something about education funding



News 88.9 KNPR

## Lombardo wants to be Nevada's 'education governor.' Here's what that could mean

### The Problem.

The K-12 education system in Nevada has historically been underfunded. This is evident in various national rankings of student achievement and comparisons to peer states in terms of resources dedicated to the K-12 education system. Nevada's state government supplies the lowest amount of educational financing per pupil, with \$1,507 supplied through federal funding and \$6,728 supplied through state/local funding. Historic underfunding of education results in fewer educational opportunities for students, hindering student success.

- Nevada's current annual spending per pupil \$9,548
- National average spending per pupil \$13,489
- Professional recommended spending per pupil \$14,337

The Nevada Legislature created the Commission on School Funding to recommend the level of funding that Nevada's schools need to reach the national average of per pupil funding levels. The Commission issued a report which concluded that funding falls significantly short of meeting those standards.

The Commission has defined and quantified what optimal funding for education in Nevada may be, which is intended to be the most desirable or satisfactory level of funding, or the most likely to bring success or advantage, in addition to how much money would simply bring Nevada to the national average. The Commission has recommended that Nevada invest over \$200 million each year over a ten year period to reach the national average of per pupil funding. CCEA supports this approach.

The quantification of the amount of additional funding needed is crucial as it will establish the target funding needed for the ensuing decade and will provide a measuring stick against which annual and biennial funding can be measured for compliance with the targets. Establishing these targets is critical to the process and care has been taken to avoid arguments regarding the scope and scale of the challenge so that focus can be placed on finding solutions.

## **The Solution.**

Over the past few legislative sessions, through CCEA's leadership and lobbying efforts, we've secured historic funding gains for public education and reformed Nevada's outdated funding formula. Now in 2023, we're confident that with continued leadership we are going to keep making strong investments in funding the new Nevada funding formula and close our per pupil funding gap over the next ten years. We plan to do this in line with the Commission's recommendations regarding new funding sources, educator compensation indexed to inflation, class size and other work conditions.

Per the Commission, the only way to achieve the desired annual funding increases in the long term is through reforming aspects of the property tax and expanding the sales tax by including a tax on services. While other forms of tax can be utilized to supplement the funding, it is not possible to reach the targeted levels of funding in the next decade without significant contributions from property and sales tax systems.

There are several critical areas where there are known deficiencies in funding, such as filling existing vacancies in the classroom, filling of instructional vacancies that would enable the State's class size objectives to be met, the addition of non-instructional staff to support the classroom activities, enhancement of funding for the weighted categories that would achieve the recommended targets, and the rightsizing of compensation that would allow for the vacancies to be more readily filled and compete against other degree bearing professions.

The Commission has made several additional recommendations to the Nevada Legislature and Governor to improve the K-12 education system that CCEA supports. Most importantly, it suggests that the legislature adopt the target values for both achievement of the national average per pupil spending and recommended level of per pupil spending as the standards that should be achieved by the 2032-33 biennium. Equally important to CCEA is that the Commission recommends that the Legislature study the imbalance between the number of professional educators matriculating from institutions of higher education in the State and the number of new units of professional educators demanded each year by school districts in the State.



# Primary Priority: Teacher Vacancies

abc NEWS

## Nevada official laments teacher, staff shortages ahead of back-to-school season

Thousands of teaching jobs are vacant across the state.

LAS VEGAS  
REVIEW-JOURNAL

Home >> Local >> Education

## CCSD working 'feverishly' to fill vacant teacher positions



Nevada  
Business  
The economic leader's insight

## Nevada Workforce Evolving with Economy, Crucial to Development

### **The Problem.**

The chronic teacher vacancies in Nevada represent a major crisis. Currently, CCSD has a significant number of vacancies, and it's projected that over the next ten years, Clark County alone will need 14,000 more teachers, with a total of 19,000 needed statewide. CCEA believes there are two main reasons for the vacancy crisis:

The first is a lack of real investment in developing the future workforce. Nevada has not invested enough in innovation and diversification, resulting in a high unemployment rate. Although Nevada's leadership has taken steps to modernize the economy and workforce development system, the Covid pandemic has highlighted the need for further work to be done. Nevada leaders are now looking to take on the challenges that continue to hinder the state's economic success by focusing on a more coordinated effort. Ultimately, it is our children who bear the weight of this because when we settle for lower standards, students simply don't learn.

The second is an issue of recruitment, and retention. Enrollment in teacher preparation programs has dropped 35% since 2010 and completion of these programs has dropped 28% in the same timeframe. This creates a leaky pipeline where teachers are attracted to the profession but leave before being recruited for a position. Currently, only 67% of CCSD hires come from Nevada's teacher pipeline, contributing significantly to the high vacancies. Additionally, Nevada faces an attrition problem where CCSD lost more teachers in the 2021-22 school year than ever before.

## **The Solution.**

Just as the problems driving this vacancy crisis are two-fold, so too are the solutions CCEA will be advocating for in the upcoming legislative session—and we believe the state has the responsibility of joining us in these efforts:

First, we need to build a Nevada teacher pipeline, starting in Clark County. CCEA, in collaboration with Columbia University and the Center for Public Research and Leadership, has developed, and is proposing, the creation of such a pipeline through a Teacher Academy College Pathway in Clark County. Not only would such teacher academies address our teacher vacancy crisis in CCSD, but they would also serve as a model for other school districts across the state to implement and a tool for workforce development across many of the industries that represent the future of our economy in southern Nevada.

Second, when it comes to better recruiting and retaining educators, we have to make salaries and the conditions of employment appealing for existing employees to stay and also to better compete with other school districts to attract new teachers to the district. Nevada competes with other school districts in the Western United States for teachers. The starting rate of pay is no longer competitive with Southern California, Texas, Arizona, the state of Washington etc. Addressing this gap needs to be a high priority.

**1. Career Pathways and Teacher Pipeline.** We need to build a Nevada teacher pipeline while at the same time making state investments in developing our workforce for a diversified economy in Southern Nevada. We can achieve both those goals through the creation of a career pathways—a series of structured and connected work-related educational opportunities and activities for K-16 through employment, enabling individuals to prepare for and develop successfully in high-quality jobs that will sustain them and will contribute productively to the needs of the community and society—and the specific development of a teacher pipeline within that framework.

The Governor's Office of Economic Development (GOED) is well-suited to enhance the state's workforce development through various efforts. CCEA is proposing a GOED-led plan to link economic and workforce development data for planning purposes, establish measurable expectations for career pathways outcomes, hold educational institutions, industry and other stakeholders accountable for results, and adapt based on projected needs and demonstrated outcomes.

A GOED-led plan to achieve this should align career pathways with GOED's economic development planning, implement a career pathways demonstration project, and designate K-12 education as an economic development priority by implementing teacher academies in every high school in CCSD. This will allow students to acquire dual credit and automatic enrollment in an NSHE institution, with tuition abatement to incentivize them to go into the practice, as well as help in reaching the goal of a more developed and diversified economy.



**CCEA is proposing the development of Teacher Academy College Pathway, which aligns K-12 education with higher education and workforce development opportunities as a demonstration of the potential this framework has for workforce development.**

As designed, the program will be offered to students at all CCSD high schools beginning in their sophomore year. Students will have the opportunity to earn college credits (up to 12) that will be accepted at NSHE institutions, as well as participate in internships at CCSD schools. Upon successful completion of the Pathway, students will be admitted to an NSHE institution to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Education. NSHE students will also be offered employment as paraprofessionals in CCSD schools to alleviate financial barriers. Successful graduates of the Pathway will receive full tuition forgiveness if they agree to serve as educators in Title I public schools and will receive an early offer to teach in CCSD schools.

In short, Nevada is facing a crucial moment in regards to workforce development. The state can choose to continue with the current efforts and maintain the status quo, redirect workforce development resources elsewhere, or use the foundation already laid to create a vision, plan, and design for transformative workforce development practices that will better serve the people, particularly children, of Nevada. This could be achieved by aligning K-16 education, K-12 educators, and economic development to support the growth of the state.

- 2. Recruitment and Retention.** We need to address compensation by significantly increasing salaries for all educators—classroom teachers as well as other needed licensed professionals—making the profession more attractive. CCEA believes all starting salaries for educators in CCSD should be \$60,000 per year, and we are also advocating for an immediate salary adjustment of 10% for all veteran educators.

At the same time, we also need to address working conditions by reducing class sizes to more manageable levels for classroom teachers. Recruitment and class size reduction are inseparable; we simply cannot address working conditions by reducing class sizes if there are no teachers to hire. For example, if Nevada were to limit each of its existing district classrooms to their required target ratios, 16% of K-3 students across Nevada—19,188 students—would not have a classroom.

For other licensed professionals, we need to reign in caseloads. Mentally healthy children are more successful in school and life. The COVID pandemic highlighted the urgent need to address student mental health in our schools with 18 student suicides within 9 months (2020). Although state and local education agencies have publicly prioritized mental health supports, the caseloads experienced by mental health professionals (school counselors, psychologists, social workers) hinder the ability to intervene when students are in need of mental health support and wraparound services.

Finally, for all our educators, we need to relieve the administrative burdens that contribute to unnecessarily high workloads overall. To illustrate the point further, a recent study by Brookings estimates that the average student loses between 16% and 25% of their learning time due to interrupted instruction (administrative duties, outside interruptions), equating to a full fourth of their instructional time.

# Primary Priority: Instructional Time



**More student achievement data confirm pandemic school closures caused test scores to plummet**



## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

◆ WSJ NEWS EXCLUSIVE | EDUCATION

### **Pandemic Learning Loss Could Cost Students \$70,000 in Lifetime Earnings**

Study by Stanford University economist projects the losses could total \$28 trillion over the rest of this century

## **The Problem.**

Educators are facing an increasing workload due to administrative responsibilities, which is taking away valuable instructional time for students. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in learning loss among students. This is evident in the fact that less than half of the students in CCSD schools are proficient in English Language Arts and only about a fifth of students are proficient in mathematics.

Furthermore, Nevada schools require less instructional time than the national average, with kindergarteners receiving 2 hours, first and second graders receiving 4 hours, third through sixth graders receiving 5 hours, and seventh through twelfth graders receiving 5.5 hours. This, combined with Brookings' estimate of 16 to 25% lost instructional time, means that students in Nevada are receiving minimal uninterrupted instructional time.



## **The Solution.**

We need to increase instructional time for students to recuperate learning loss. . CCEA intends to achieve this, again, with a two-fold approach in the upcoming legislative session.

The first way we plan to increase instructional time is by tackling the administrative burdens educators are dealing with. Front line educators are spending too much time on non-instructional duties, such as completing paperwork, at the expense of spending more time on instruction. For example, the number of hours spent testing students can either be eliminated or reduced. It is time for teachers to get to the business of teaching students.

The second way is by adding valuable instructional minutes to the school day. Studies show that increasing instructional hours for students by as little as 19 minutes per day can have a dramatic impact on student learning outcomes. Moreover, a survey of our members in Clark County, showed 58% support adding more instructional time to the school day. CCEA believes we have an opportunity to accelerate learning and address learning loss that the pandemic created in our student ranks.

# Primary Priority: School Safety

News 88.9 KNPR

**Teen in troubled CCSD accused of teacher murder attempt, sex assault**

LOCAL NEWS



**CCSD seizes knives, guns from students as teachers express safety concerns**



The **NEVADA** INDEPENDENT

**New trustees sworn in as Clark, Washoe schools face safety, staffing challenges**

## **The Problem.**

Every bus, every campus, and every classroom needs to be safe. While some improvements to school safety have been made, growing behavioral issues among students—in part, a result of the Covid experience—remain and must be addressed.

The scale and severity of this problem cannot be overstated. Shockingly, over 8,000 behavioral reports were recorded during the 2021-22 school year, of which 7158 were acts of violence, 424 were due to possession of a dangerous weapon, and 667 were due to battery to a school employee—but none of these acts resulted in a student being deemed a habitual disciplinary problem. The majority of those who were reported due to behavioral incidents were males, either Black or Hispanic, and were economically disadvantaged.

There's no way around it: this is still a broken system, and until we fix it, we are failing our educators and our students alike. Educators can no longer be handcuffed in dealing with violent behavior.



## **The Solution.**

We have to make modifications to the law to ensure conditions are safe. That begins with empowering educators by putting more controls back into the classroom as well as implementing the appropriate behavioral, mental health, and counseling wraparound services necessary to ensure violent and disruptive students have the help they need.

We can start by repealing the establishment and implementation of restorative justice at the state level and establish progressive discipline that combines prevention and intervention strategies with discipline and opportunities for students to continue their education. This will ensure that districts will be required to establish and implement wraparound services (e.g., social workers) to support progressive discipline programs.

We must also establish clear definitions of behavior aligned with progressive discipline. For example, activities leading to possible suspension include uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm on another person, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, swearing at a teacher or other person in a position of authority, committing an act of vandalism, bullying.

We should also then establish and/or expand programs for students who are on long-term suspension or who have been expelled and monitor, review, and evaluate the effectiveness of the progressive discipline program. Every student deserves an education and for those who put at risk other students and staff, CCEA supports an alternative setting for their education (i.e. restoring alternative schools).

Finally, we should maintain the current statewide system of accountability for public schools to monitor the dispersion across subgroups (gender, ethnicity, status) and alter the specificity of the reporting behaviors by progressive discipline. For example, the number of suspensions aligned with bullying, vandalism, possessing or being under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Accountability needs to be in place for students and school systems alike.

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