

# Nevada Public Education News



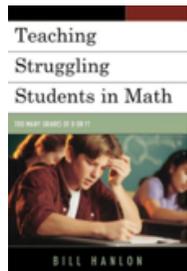
## Testing, Testing - Yup, still not working in Nevada

~ *Bill Hanlon*

Where does Nevada stand with respect to the other states testing?

This year has brought another big drop in the number of states who pledged to give the common core tests to measure student achievement by the two testing consortia (PARCC & SBAC).

Initially, 45 states made that commitment, last year that dropped to the mid-twenties, and this year its down to 20 states for grades K-8. In high school, the number of states participating is closer to 15.



That \$360 million investment made by the U.S. Department of Education to these two groups to develop tests to be able to compare students across the nation is now a fantasy. These groups won't go away anytime soon because of weak state leadership, networking and travel opportunities for adults, and there is still money be made by these groups.

Approximately a dozen states require students to pass an exam(s) to graduate high school. To graduate high school in Nevada, our students will soon have to pass end-of-course exams in algebra and geometry to earn a diploma. That's not a level playing field for our students and many won't be awarded a diploma that would have been earned by them if they lived elsewhere.

So, while our graduation exams are out of sync with the rest of the nation, so too are the exams themselves. If you have anything to do with math education, then you know geometry has been deemphasized on college entrance exams. If that's the case nationally, then why are Nevada students being obligated to take a new end-of-course test in geometry that will be required for graduation? And then, these same students are required by the state to take a college entrance exam where geometry is not emphasized.

The two new end-of-course exams in algebra and geometry were piloted in Nevada last year and it is my understanding that teachers never got the results back from the state to determine student strengths and weaknesses. You have to love Nevada! How do they expect instruction to improve or student achievement to increase without this information? These are the same people wondering why teachers leave the profession.

So, we can see that Nevada is one of the few states holding on to all these tests - you know - we want accountability. That comes from a state that does not ensure students have qualified teachers in the areas being tested. The state had well over 1000 teacher vacancies this year. The state also has a very high number of first and second year teachers who don't have the teaching and assessment strategies nor do they have the resources to help students learn. This is the state where the Governor cut professional development in math and ELA by 60% in his first budget. And it's the same Governor that provided no additional funding for the implementation of the new science standards for the five southern Nevada districts which serves over 80% of the student population in his current budget. But, he wants accountability, he wants to test students!

The facts are simple: Nevada is over testing students; the tests are not aligned with national tests; teachers and students are not receiving the assistance they need to prepare their students for these tests; when the new end-of-course exams are implemented, many students will not graduate because they are being forced into a college prep curriculum rather than having access to vocational courses and programs. And the taxpayers will be forced to pay for the extra remediation costs related to these exams as well as continuing to pay for the higher priced exams coming from these two consortiums.

Nevada's statewide testing policies are placing the future of our students at risk and clearly not preparing them for the workforce.