

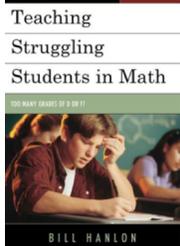
Nevada Public Education News



Achievement District – Another Scam

Bill Hanlon

Let's be clear, Sandoval's "Achievement District" proposal is one copied from other states. And, if we look at results from those states, we also see those states' achievement districts are not turning anything around – but they do spend money.



And again, we see these political payoffs in the Sandoval administration. Allison Serafin, Founder and CEO of Opportunity 180, the program responsible for bringing in charter schools, is the former vice president of one of the most conflicted boards in the state, the NV State Board of Education. She worked for a pawnshop while on the board and abruptly resigned from the board after she and the state board lobbied to establish the NV's Achievement District. She said she resigned so there would not be any conflict of interest.

Too late! Like many of the profiteering non-profits trying to increase a paycheck at taxpayers expense, she immediately founded Opportunity 180 to match the legislation she proposed – giving her a head start. Her program was the ONLY one that applied to the state to operate such a program – everyone knew the fix was in. The Las Vegas Review Journal reported the Governor gave her profiteering non-profit program \$10 million. \$10 million for a startup with no track record – only the right connections to steal more funding from the public schools – an **EdCheat**.

Now Sandoval says he favors "choice." That is, until the parents' "choices" don't match his. Parents have made it clear that their schools are improving under the school district's efforts. They don't want to change to charter schools, especially since one of the charter schools Serafin brought in is under investigation in California.

There's a couple of things I don't believe the public understands; 1) the school buildings are turned over to these private not for profit charter companies, those buildings are paid for by taxpayers, and 2) using the Smarter Balanced (SBAC) to make any determination on schools is more than just nuts –its fraudulent.

Out of the 45 states that signed up to be part of the consortium testing, there are less than 20 still giving these tests. And at the high school level, there are less than 10 nationally. So many states have figured out these tests are not appropriate measures of achievement – NV's State Board of Education does not have a clue.

And, this is real crazy. The state has decided that teachers should not have any information about what is on these tests. The tests are secure and teachers could lose their teacher licenses if they gained knowledge about the test. As a grandparent, I find it reprehensible to give students tests in which their teachers have no idea about what and how standards will be tested. Then, the state wants to use these results for placement and school accountability.

I would also strongly suggest to parents that no test should be administered to their children if they and their teachers cannot see it. The other testing consortium, PARCC, released their test items so teachers could use them in their planning, instruction and test prep. Why shouldn't our kids have the same advantage?

You might remember the fiasco with these tests two years ago. Teachers spent all kinds of instructional time trying to prepare their students for these unknown computerized tests. After numerous tries, the state failed to fix the problem – students ended up not being tested. This past year, students did take the tests; but, as usual the State Board screwed that up too. Rather than getting the results back at the end of last year, the results were not sent to the schools until October of this year. And still teachers cannot see what their students may have missed. And, the state called that a “success”???

And another tidbit, what was determined nationally was that students who took the tests online – like NV – scored significantly lower than students who took the tests with paper and pencil. And some clown wants to use these tests to determine school takeovers???

I guess the state board doesn't know much about reliability and validity in testing. But they do know about money. Elaine Wynn, who has been supported by Allison Serafin, continues to help her cronies at the expense of students and the taxpayers. You can bet the schools they give to these private, not for profit charters will have the most money attached to them.

If this charter takeover is allowed to continue, then as a parent, if you have a concern, there is no hierarchy to appeal to, no ass't superintendent, no superintendent, no local board with educational experience. Your only recourse is to go to a former pawn employee, NV's state superintendent who used to run the Charter School Authority or the new In Residence Achievement School District Superintendent Jana Wilcox-Lavin who has no educational experience. She was a marketer for charter schools in TN. What a joke!

And if we continue back to the beginning of the Sandoval administration, he's the one who set schools up for failure by not ensuring teachers received training in the new standards being measured on those tests. He traded those professional development funds on the new math and ELA standards to a senator's wife program – screwing public school kids again and again.

The reason is money. By undermining the local school districts, the Governor is trying to privatize public education. Under his administration, we still have a teacher shortage of 500 classroom teachers, we have way too many first and second year inexperienced teachers, teachers don't have textbooks, resources, and we have some of the largest class sizes in the country – 40 students in algebra! Teachers never really got the training on the new math and

ELA standards that they are using for testing and southern NV was left out of the initial professional development funding for the new science standards. Then he, like Allison and the rest of the conflicted NV State Board of Education, look you straight in the face and tell you they care. Baloney, actions speak louder than words. Just follow the money.

Here's what common sense suggests; don't use flawed test data to determine school accountability, don't turn over our taxpayer built schools to private charter school companies, and don't allow your sons and daughters to be used as pawns in this fiasco. Demand to see tests or refuse to have them tested. Don't let the state change your child's school and force you to bus your children to another school because they want to take over your neighborhood school building.

If your kids go to schools that receive extra funding from the state or are receiving additional federal funds, then there is a target on your school. The private companies are in it so someone is making money. They want to go where there's the most money.

Allison Serafin, founder and CEO of Opportunity 180 is sure to have given herself a hefty raise from working at the pawnshop and put herself above the needs of the students and the desires of parents – it's about the money and they don't give a damn about the students.