

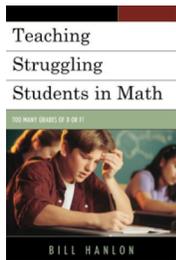
Nevada Public Education



Quality Counts ~ not in Nevada NV Maintains its Rank of Dead Last in Education

Bill Hanlon

Don't blame the teachers or local school districts for Nevada maintaining its rank of dead last. The real culprits are Governor Sandoval, State Board president Elaine Wynn and former State Superintendent Dale Erquiaga. In the Quality Counts Report released this month, Nevada, under the leadership of those three have focused on building their own resumes and rewarding their networking buddies at the expense of students on the taxpayers dime.



The Governor has been in office six years, has had four different state superintendents, who like himself, have no clue about classroom education. The “reform” minded Governor along with Wynn and recently departed Superintendent Erquiaga have not invested in education that that takes place in the classroom to ensure students have experienced classroom teachers with reasonable class sizes, who have the content knowledge, instructional and assessment strategies, resources and support to meet the needs of their students. Forty students in first year algebra is not an investment.

When parents and the community talk about education, they are talking about their students' experiences in the classroom, you know, learning to read and write, learning about math, science and social studies, etc. Not these three, they never discuss classroom education, nor do they fund professional growth for their teachers; they are building resumes to further their own careers, networking trying to expand their influence – and we can see in NV, that works for adults. It certainly has not helped the students.

We see these three helping their friends in the profiteering non-profit businesses subtracting educational resources by raking millions off the education budget. We also see how the former senate majority leader used his influence to hire a friend to oversee

an education project at a cost of over a million dollars, we see the same former senate majority leader getting his law firm a contract with the local school district for \$1.6 million to settle a \$1.1 million lawsuit. It's no wonder the Republicans wanted to take the teeth out of the ethics laws in NV. Money and networking matters in NV.

So, while your kids are sitting in classes without teachers, or with inexperienced teachers, or in classes like algebra with 40 students, your Governor, State Board President, former State Superintendent, and former Senate Majority Leader and their cronies are literally subtracting millions of dollars from the state's education budget all in the name of "reform".

This fact cannot be argued, if your students have been in education during the Gibbons-Sandoval administrations, they have been cheated out of an education that can never be made up.

Before the arrival former CCSD Superintendent Jones and his inexperienced deputy Pedro Martinez, NV was identified nationally as the fastest improving school district in the nation. Since their arrival, the culture change in this state based on cronyism has been astonishing and left students in the cold.

Former superintendents in CCSD focused on the classroom experiences of students. Brian Cram, when he saw scores dip, created a math audit team to ensure students were being taught what they were supposed to be taught. Carlos Garcia increased the number of students taking upper level classes, and Walt Rulffes required common semester exams in math to ensure students were ready to compete nationally. Teachers and administrators were also receiving training. That work was done quietly, without fanfare and resume building and without cronies subtracting funding and resulted in CCSD being identified as the fastest improving district in the nation.

What has happened since is easy to see, adults are reaping the benefits of funding meant to educate our youth, students are left sucking air. The Governor, Conflicted State Board President Wynn and former State Superintendent Erquiaga tout their educational reforms, confusing activity with achievement, they just fail to mention that under their leadership, Nevada has fallen to dead last in the nation and has been able to maintain that standing again this year. Data matters, these three are failures by anyone's standards with respect to education, but earn an A for taking care of themselves and friends on the taxpayers dime and at the expense of students.