

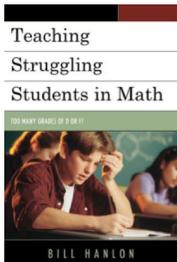
# Nevada Public Education



## *Good News Regarding Advanced Placement Scores*

*Bill Hanlon*

The headline of the front page of the Nevada section of the Review Journal; “*Nevadans strut stuff in taking AP exams*” is a result of a lot of hard work that began over ten years ago by the Regional Professional Development Program and the Clark County School District.



A decade ago, Nevada’s ranking with respect to Advanced Placement was dismal. Nevada didn’t have many qualified teachers to offer a lot of AP classes, that resulted in few students enrolling in AP classes. And, the students who enrolled in many of these classes did not perform well on the AP exams. A second problem, it cost students to take these tests. For low income families, the tests were just not affordable.

The only training that was available was out of state. That meant Nevada’s teachers had to leave Nevada, often times paying for their own travel, hotel, and AP registration fee to gain certification to teach AP classes. Registration alone cost teachers approximately \$500.00.

At that time, the Southern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program (RPDP), identified the issues causing the state to have poor participation and performance as teacher training, access and costs. In addition to those issues, states offering AP training were opposed to allowing Nevada to have its own program because they would lose money they made off Nevada’s teachers through their own registration fees.

Because the RPDP was not an identified school district under the AP rules, the RPDP partnered with the Clark County School District and presented our case to have our own AP program located in Nevada. The *Silver State Advanced Placement Summer Institute Program* was born.

The RPDP and CCSD worked together to ensure that Nevada’s program would be recognized nationally. In our first year, over 200 teachers from around the country came to NV for AP training, over 100 from all around the world. Today, there are 500-600 teachers receiving this training every year in Las Vegas.

The Southern Nevada RPDP program initially paid the registration fee for any teacher in Nevada seeking this training. The northern RPDPs were asked to cover travel costs of teachers living in their regions, thus making the training free for all Nevada's teachers. CCSD has worked in partnership with the RPDP in providing logistics, enthusiasm, as well as providing the facilities for these trainings. Because of budget cuts at the state level, NV teachers now have to pay a reduced registration fee.

As more of Nevada's teachers received training, the percentage of students enrolling in AP classes has increased over the years. Six years ago, Nevada's AP program met a milestone, the percentage of Nevada students enrolling in AP classes was at the national average and the scores were getting very close to or at the national average.

And, as the College Board just reported; “ *Nevada has improved the percentage of students passing the exams at a faster rate than the nationwide average in the past decade*”.

The second problem of affordability by families was addressed by Governor Sandoval and the Legislature last session when they set aside funds to pay the student costs to take these exams.

What we see is the importance of teacher training, access to teacher training, and allowing more student opportunity has made a big difference in students' advanced placement performance in Nevada.

Congratulations is in order for CCSD and the RPDPs who worked very hard to get our own state AP training program and to Governor Sandoval and the Legislature for picking up the tab for students to take the exams for families that could not afford those costs.

A special thanks and recognition should be given to David Thiel, a former RPDP regional trainer, Jennifer Peterson, former CCSD Math Coordinator, and Jane Kadoich, former CCSD Director of Guidance and Counseling, and her successor Kim Boyle who were the main players dealing with the College Board in bringing this opportunity to Nevada's teachers resulting in greater opportunities for Nevada's students.

And, to all the overworked and under appreciated school counselors who aggressively pursued and encouraged students to enroll in these more rigorous classes. These school counselors deserve a lot of credit for the success of the AP program, for the jobs they do to ensure students are taking the right classes and have the information they need to continue in their education – as well as all the other duties and responsibilities they have to address to serve the needs of their students.

Teachers matter, so do school counselors!