

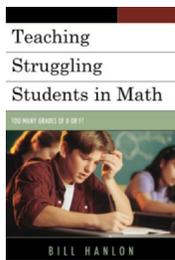
# Nevada Public Education



## *Nevada's Dead Last Ranking in Education Not in Jeopardy*

*Bill Hanlon*

Dear Legislator:



After this legislative session, Nevada will be able to maintain it's dead last ranking in education.

Building on a faulty foundation leads to collapse. That seems to be how we operate in Nevada with respect to education. This session will end with winners and losers in Carson City, but students will continue to lose statewide.

The last state superintendent, Dale Erquiaga, loved to say “technology” changes how students learn. His basic assumption is just so wrong that almost everything that follows from that just doesn't work out. Technology does not change “how” students learn, it changes how they “access” information. Students, no matter how they get their information, still have to read, think, reflect, visualize, organize, memorize, compare, contrast, synthesize, analyze and remember information.

This Governor and the Legislators who approve his “designer” programs *constantly confuse activity with achievement*. Nevada has all kinds of programs; charter schools, Zoom Schools, Victory Schools, Rising Stars, along with a new non-responsive governance structure. This session will continue to support another school district, the ASD and a voucher program (ESA) that was supposed to address the needs of the poorest in our communities. We see by the applications, the failure in that basic assumption. The governor's assumption is these programs will result in increased student achievement. The fact is this simple, all those programs are only as good as the teachers implementing them and none of his programs address that. Parents know the importance of teachers, when students get promoted from grade to grade, their first question – *Who is their child's teacher?*

The proportion of teachers in Nevada with less than five years' experience is too high. Experienced, qualified teachers know what we expect students to know, recognize, understand, communicate and be able to do. They know where students traditionally face difficulties and they have developed strategies and resources to address those difficulties so students learn the “first” time. A good teacher could teach math with a stick in the dirt. Inexperienced teachers are beginning their learning curve.

Therein lies Nevada's unaddressed problem. This governor has tried to play moneyball with education. His assumption is *new teachers are as good as experienced teachers*. Find me a 6<sup>th</sup> year teacher who says he is only as good as he was as a first or second year teacher, and I will show you a teacher that needs to be fired. That assumption about new teachers is wrong and Nevada's dead last ranking under his administration demonstrates that.

While many legislators are proud of all the designer programs they created, I would predict that not one legislator, or for that matter, any member of NV's Conflicted State Board of Education, know what the raw percent score (number correct divided by the total number of questions) is needed to pass the end-of-course-exams required for graduation. That is indicative of the shallowness of what is done in Nevada. Instead, the state will provide some dummed-up scaled score that cannot be interpreted by the public, then claim an increased graduation rate. A sham that cheats students and is clearly not consistent with the result of national tests.

While the governor and his appointed state superintendent continually confuse activity with achievement, they cannot escape Nevada's ranking of dead last in the nation under his administration.

This governor does not believe in improving the instruction your kids receive in the classroom. The funding for professional development of teachers, even in the core academic subjects where standards have changed, is about half what it was ten years ago. But he claims he has enough funds to support ESAs. How can a state continually underfund education, then find funds for ESAs?

*Since the governor and legislators fail to recognize a very basic assumption; the importance of classroom teachers*; by failing to fund education so there is not a teachers shortage, by failing to ensure that teachers have the professional development needed so they know their content, have instructional and assessment strategies and resources that support those strategies to help students learn the first time, by placing 40 students in an algebra class so it has become an accepted practice in Nevada, by not having up-to-date textbooks is "understood" as ok, by not providing instructional supplies that enhance instruction as an accepted practice, by adopting a one-size-fits-all curriculum model, and by not being transparent with respect to testing, *then all these designer programs mean nothing.*

To the best of my knowledge, the governor and this legislature have done nothing to improve the classroom experiences of our children learning about math, science, social studies, etc. By supporting these designer programs and not supporting teachers, the state will be celebrating our dead last ranking when they reconvene in two years.

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