

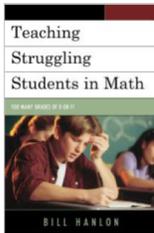
Nevada Public Education



Invest in students – not nonprofits Inexperienced Teachers

Bill Hanlon

My support for the multitude of educational nonprofits and foundations end when they subtract very scant resources from the state and local school districts. Some of these non-profits and foundations have the gall to pay their CEOs \$400,000.00 salaries while taking our tax dollars.



Communities in Schools (CIS), Teach for America (TFA), The New Teacher Project (TNP) all pay these outlandish salaries while subtracting resources from our schools by taking our taxes because they are “connected”.

These groups have two main characteristics, they tell you they support schools while they subtract resources from our classrooms and they have all taken arm stretching classes because they love to pat their own backs with their anecdotes

The Public Education Foundation (PEF) just had their awards dinner. Again, they are very proud of their work. What they fail to mention is they receive about \$1M annually from the locally strapped school district to pay employees. What caught my eye last week was they were going to cut one person from their staff that the district funds. They should not be taking any funds from the district. That money should be going to the schools. The goal was for them to raise funds – not subtract them. We have a teacher shortage, class sizes in algebra with over 40 students, no books, few supplies and the list goes on. But, they had a nice dinner.

Because of the funding crisis in Nevada and categorical funding of the Governor’s resume building programs that have resulted in NV being ranked dead last in the nation, we not only have a teacher shortage, but the state has too many inexperienced teachers. That affects student achievement.

A good number of these inexperienced are coming in through alternative route to teacher licensing programs. So, a teacher recruited by Teach for America (TFA) might have a degree in business is now teaching high school mathematics. To get a degree in business, some students might have to enroll in a pre-calculus class or “one” watered down calculus class in college to graduate. Really, that’s it. Another example, a TFA recruit gets a degree in English, what do think they might be teaching? Yep, math! It is truly about the money. And some wonder why are students are not getting a good education, why are math scores are low, why our ACT scores were last in the nation? Schools and programs are only as good as their teachers. What we accept as qualified teachers is a very poor joke on our students.

But, maybe you have heard that TFA provides their teachers on-going training for their two-year lack of commitment - talk about no return on investment. What you may not have heard is that half of TFA’s professional development is on community outreach. That’s right, how to get more funding for their organization.

Just this past month, TFA required their people to attend a 5-hour training on a Saturday. Sounds great, stretch that arm. But when asked, how much time did they spend discussing the content they are currently teaching in their math classes, the answer was NONE!

To say that’s terrible does not begin to describe the problem our students are facing. The Governor touts his Great Teachers Leader Fund that is supposed to be funding professional development controlled by Elaine Wynn’s State Board of Education. Elaine’s definition of professional development doesn’t match what most people might think about professional development. Her SBE gives TFA millions.

When I think of professional development of teachers, I would think the teachers are receiving training in the content they are teaching, strategies to teach and assess that content, as well as resources that support those strategies. That’s not how the Governor, former State Superintendent Erquiaga, or Elaine visualized or defined professional development.

We know when our new teachers come into the schools from the university, they have met the requirements in content and have been introduced to instructional and assessment strategies. Students of new teachers coming in from alternative routes, don’t have that advantage, which means students are being shortchanged.

For these TFA teachers to be required to attend a 5-hour training that was not focused on what they teach, how they teach it, resources to support their instruction,

and being introduced to assessment strategies is just BS. It certainly did not help the students in their classrooms.

Nevada, which barely supports public education, and because the Governor and Wynn's SBE have syphoned off money for categorical programs and funding for cronies, the state is ranked dead last in education. Nevada cannot continue to give our tax dollars to these entities.

CIS, TFA, TNTF, Opportunity 180 and PEF should be raising private funds to help public education – not raiding the state or district's coffers. Rather than stretching their arms to pat themselves on the back, they should be stretching their arms to pick up the phone to raise their own funds. The fact is, a lot of people will not support these groups because of their outrageous CEO salaries. Their programs should only be as big as the community will philanthropically support.

The state can't afford qualified, experienced teachers, books for the students, reasonable class sizes, professional development, or resources to support student achievement, but they can find funds for their friends in these non-profits. This tax give-away needs to stop!

Bill Hanlon, is a noted speaker, an author, educator, consultant and coach for schools, former Director of the Southern Nevada Regional Professional Development Program, and is a national presenter for organizations such as AASA, ASCD, ALAS, NMSA, NASSP, NSBA, and NCTM. He was the coordinator of Clark County School District's Math/Science Institute and was also responsible for K-12 math audits. He served as vice president of the Nevada State Board of Education, Regional Director of the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) and as a member of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) States Partnership Board. He also hosted a television series, "Algebra, *you can do it!*" on PBS Las Vegas.

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