

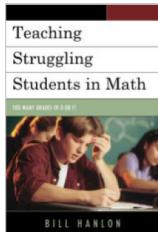
Nevada Public Education



Nevada Department of Education The “Why” Behind Poor Decision-making

Bill Hanlon

The Nevada Department of Education’s fundamental misunderstanding about how “their” misinterpretation of events results in bad decisions that negatively impact students, causes problems for and results in teachers not getting the services they need.



I was reminded by a recent tweet about just how superficial the knowledge and understanding of NV Department of Education’s political appointed leadership is about education. Why students’ classroom experiences learning to read, write, compute, learning math, science and social studies doesn’t resonate at the Nevada Department of Education. Dena Durish, Director of Licensing, did a “FACT Check” on a tweet that highlighted the shallowness of the NDOE’s understanding of educational issues.

NV’s Education Department, under the leadership of Governor Sandoval, board president Elaine Wynn, and state superintendent Canavero has a history of lying by omission that has resulted in policies and regulations that has placed our state dead last in education. Students in the south are continually getting the short end of the stick while non-profits are pulling in millions.

I have written and tweeted repeatedly about southern Nevada students not getting their fair share of the state’s education budget. In Sandoval’s first term, in his first budget, when the new math & science standards were being rolled out nationally, he and his buddy, former boyhood friend and state superintendent, Dale Erquiaga, diverted money from the professional development funding in the south and awarded those funds to a “friend”.

Elaine Wynn, listen closely, I know this causes you frustration, but the teachers in southern Nevada never got the training in math & ELA – so stop complaining – it's your fault at the state level teachers don't know the standards.

That's one of the reasons why teachers don't know the standards along with you constantly funding your friends at the expense of actual professional development in the content teachers teach. Some might remember, the Governor, after diverting this funding complained about student performance – wanted to hold people accountable. Invest in a mirror Governor.

In 2015, the Next Generation Science Standards were rolled out. Elaine's GTLF group did not fund professional development in the new science standards for the five southern school districts for the 2015-16 school year. All the funding went north and to their “taker” friends in non-profits raking in millions in tax dollars while paying their executives’ salaries of \$400,000.00 per year. You don’t have to believe me on these issues, just look at the budgets and follow the money.

And now comes Dena with her fact check, her Fact Check; \$432,170 (-9%) of 16-17 for Sci & only spent 39% of award. That is true, but she conveniently left out the complete truth, that no funding was provided in the first year 2015-16 which was alluded to in the tweet. Lying by omission is still lying. And by the way, a fact check normally addresses an inaccuracy.

My point was there was no funding in the initial year of the rollout; 15-16. That was and is still true and put southern NV students a full year behind the rest of the state. But then, the shallowness of understanding from the NDOE shines even brighter. She states that only 39% of the award was spent – that, I’m sure, is supposed to somehow defend the state’s poor judgement and performance and may impact future funding.

Here is where you see how the state’s complete lack of understanding is astounding and diminishes students’ opportunity to achieve. These awards are given “after” teachers have been hired and assigned to schools. So, Dena, the policy of people who truly care about students has been, even before the depth of our current teacher shortage, is not to hire staff/trainers from schools after they have been placed for the next year because principals might not be able to replace

them resulting in students not having a teacher. Now think, isn't students having a teacher a priority for students??? Too deep for you? That's why all the funding was not spent! And, with the teacher shortage there is also a substitute shortage, so money could not be spent on them so teachers could receive training. Got it?

But "your" interpretation is the funding was not spent, thereby suggesting the state not funding appropriately and in a timely manner means the professional development programs don't need to be fully funded. That fundamental misunderstanding and faulty interpretation results in poor recommendations that cause the state to be ranked dead last in education. Simply put, the state is causing the problem.

Let me continue, there's a third problem, the funding itself should be ongoing so hiring trainers is a possibility. Not many people want to give up their current positions for a one year stint because the NDOE places rewarding their friends over the needs of students.

And a fourth reason it should be on-going funding is that the schools hire over 1000 new teachers per year that need the training and since we have a teacher shortage, those long-term substitutes need help too. The GTLF is labeled as professional development funding – but looking at where the money goes, we know that's more about rewarding friends. The GTLF needs to go!

The shallowness of the NDOE's understanding of issues that affect students is mind boggling, when the new governor is elected, he/she will need to get rid of these political appointments including Elaine Wynn as president, current state superintendent Canavero and his deputy Barley so the state can concentrate on education issues that really matter – you know – like the classroom experiences our students receive when they have experienced qualified teachers, reasonable class sizes – not having 40 plus students in classes like algebra and geometry, and professional development, books and resources that support classroom instruction.

So, thanks for the phony fact check, it gave me the opportunity to tell the whole sordid story about the dismal impact the department has on students' education that has dropped our state's educational ranking to dead last in the nation under this administration and how the department regularly and intentionally misleads the public to make themselves look good.

The NDOE has to get it into their heads that all their manufactured, feel good, self-serving, resume building programs are only as good as the teachers using them. Teachers matter! Your misinterpretation of events and resulting actions have undermined the education of our students who only get one chance at receiving a good education.

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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