

Nevada Public Education



State Superintendent Search

Bill Hanlon

Our new Governor Sisolak had the wherewithal to see what has happened to our system of public education and allowed the state superintendent to resign. He has seen firsthand how the policies of the last decade have changed Nevada's upward trajectory down and placed our students in jeopardy. It's time for policies that work for students, not programs to enrich friends.



The Superintendent of Public Instruction should be an advocate for public education who actually knows something about public education. Under former Governor Sandoval, that hasn't been the case. His first hire was a university professor/researcher, that was a disaster and the Governor replaced him a year later. To make matters worse, his second hire for state superintendent was Dale Erquiaga, his only qualification, he was a boyhood friend of the Governor and got along with people – he helped create the mess the state finds itself. His third pick was a charter school advocate. We don't need these special interest groups or underqualified candidates even applying for the position.

Sandoval and Erquiaga quickly started to divert money that the Legislature allocated to the classroom to their friends in the non-profit sector. Before Sandoval and Erquiaga, the Clark County School District was recognized nationally as the fastest improving district in the nation. Now, Nevada's claim to fame is we have the lowest ACT scores in the nation the last two years.

Erquiaga's reallocation of funds to non-profits from classrooms were seen as "educational reforms". Those "reforms" resulted in teachers not getting trained in the then new standards, a lack of supplies, an exacerbated teacher shortage and larger class sizes. Not so great for students, but those relationships he built paid off for him resulting in a \$400,000 plus job with, you guessed it, a non-profit, he left the state happy.

His successor, the Governor's third pick, Steve Canavero, a charter school advocate, kept the policies in place that emphasized programs over the students' experiences learning in the classrooms. He clearly has continued to undermine public education. Let's be clear, outside the parents, teachers are the "most" important factor in education. Not the

principal, not programs – teachers! We need a state superintendent who clearly understands that little nugget and is not part of a special interest group.

The NV State Board of Education, former superintendents Erquiaga and Canavero and Governor Sandoval have never understood that any program is only as good as the teachers using it. So, they chose not to invest in teachers.

Nevada maintains and supports a failed teacher and school evaluation system, a failed testing system, a failed recruitment system, a relicensing system that requires underqualified teachers to take classes in ELL or Family Engagement rather than in the subject(s) they are teaching.

If the last three superintendents want to be evaluated by the “results” they so often touted, then they are complete and utter failures. The data is clear, we went from the fastest improving to where we are today.

My guess is the NV State Board of Education will look for another shiny object to replace the glare they have become accustomed. I suggest that the state find a superintendent who knows and understands “real” public education by knowledge and experience. That the next state superintendent actually concentrate on what Nevadans think should be emphasized; that is students’ classroom experiences learning math, English, science, technology, social studies and have the experiences in the arts that further enhance student growth. We need a state superintendent that sets our students up to succeed – not fail.

In short, we need a state superintendent who really knows the needs in public schools and places the needs of students above their own personal ambitions. Not a boyhood friend, not a special interest group member, a work horse, not show horse, who places the emphasis on ensuring our sons and daughters have a top-notch education. That would be a welcome change.

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 on 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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