

Nevada Public Education



Some Educational Improvements Don't Cost a Dime

Bill Hanlon

There is a great deal of attention in the community and Legislature to increase funding for public education. There is no doubt that to have our students competitive, learning conditions in public education must improve and that does cost a lot more money than we are currently allocating.



Having said that, we can't lose sight of what we can do now that doesn't have costs attached. Here are a few:

1. The public deserves to know how our children and schools are being tested and graded. There is no place for secrecy in public education, transparency leads to credibility, and credibility to trust. To increase trust in public education, make all required state testing open to public scrutiny; including SBAC and end-of-course exams, if they cannot withstand public scrutiny, get rid of them entirely.
2. Math teachers cannot teach their assigned curriculum without basic skills as our students progress through school. School districts, not the state, must institute computation tests at the end of 4th grade and at the beginning of 6th grade on addition, subtraction multiplication and division facts and procedures. In 9th grade, computation tests for whole numbers, fractions, decimals, ratio & proportion, exponentials and integers should be administered.
3. Ensure classes, especially in high school, meet the needs of their student populations. That is, don't deliberately misplace students when we know they don't have the backgrounds to be successful. As an example, don't require students to take first year algebra when you know they don't have the prerequisite skills which results in them failing, needing costly remediation, places their graduation in jeopardy and results in them hating math.
4. Teachers matter! Placing new teachers or principals in schools with students who need the most help is unconscionable. Those teachers do not have the content knowledge, do not have the instructional strategies, do not have the resources or assessment strategies and don't have the slightest idea where students will experience difficulty with material so they can adjust their instruction. Nor do they know the hardships endured by regular hardworking families to help their children –

something called empathy. Classroom experiences learning matters – so teachers matter!

5. Teacher relicensing suggests that teachers are upgrading their professional knowledge in the subject they are teaching. End relicensing requirements that require underqualified academic content teachers, such as math, to take classes out of their field of teaching. How does requiring ELL or Family Engagement for relicensure help our math students?
6. Re-allocate funding that the Legislature has identified for professional development and transfer that to the statewide regional professional development programs that emphasize professional development based on what teachers actually teach, how they teach it, how they assess that content and resources that support the content, strategies and assessments.
7. Neither the Nevada Educational Performance Framework (NEPF/teacher evaluation) nor the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF) are accurate measurements of teachers or schools. How does the NEPF improve instruction when no one on the “evaluation team” has the content knowledge that could be used to improve instruction in the content they are supposed to be evaluating? That is, how to introduce new material, examples to be used, linkages to prior knowledge, or how it is used in the workplace. Both of these frameworks are huge wastes of time and resources.
8. Stop diverting funds to your rich friends in educational non-profits. Not only are some of these non-profits getting funding from the Legislature, they are also getting funding from the school districts, and local governments and still charging schools \$70,000.00 per year for their services while paying their national CEOs over \$400,000.00 per year (TFA, TNTP, CIS), etc. If non-profits cannot raise funds from the community to survive, then it’s clear the community does not support them. If, as legislators, you say you don’t have funding for basic educational necessities, then stop using taxpayers’ money to support your own personal networking.

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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