

Nevada Public Education



NV Teachers Must Strike It's More Than Just About Money

Issue 1 of 6: School Safety, Taking Back Control of Our Schools



Parents agree, with over 50,000 students leaving the regular public school system in Nevada, parents have voted with their feet. They want their children to attend schools that are safe, secure, free of threats and in a warm, caring environment conducive to learning.

While some parents might argue their children are getting a better education at these charter or voucher schools, the data just doesn't support that as was again reiterated by another study out of Washington D.C. in a three year study by the U.S. Dept of Ed this week. However, while test scores did not increase, student attendance rates were up and student were feeling more safe and satisfied with their education. That's significant.

Over the last decade, a number of non-educators have been hired as state superintendents, consultants, etc. who have been implementing programs and making decisions from the state, university, or central office people who don't have to deal with the consequences caused by "their" actions that has resulted in regular public school students feeling their schools are not safe.

Teachers, students and parents know this. The newest fad crossing the country is called Restorative Discipline. Theoretically, I can understand it, but the "pushers" of such programs don't deal with any of the consequences that they are causing.

When there are a few thousand students in a school with the largest class sizes in the nation, there must be some common expectations. Those students who refuse to meet those expectations must be dealt with fairly, firmly and friendly. But they must be dealt with, there must be penalties for unacceptable behavior – not some conference.

I don't think anyone in our community would accept what some students are now regularly doing without a consequence. Here are a few examples

Example A, a math teacher asks a student to put his phone away because he's playing video games during instruction. The student tells the teacher to "f**k off".

Example B, one student is beating up a student in the hallway, five or six students surround the fight not letting school personnel in to break up the fight.

Example C, a student won't sit in his assigned seat after being repeatedly asked by the teacher. The student responds by telling the teacher the reason he has such a large forehead is because his ass is stuck so far up his ass.

Example D, a number of students are in a hallway creating a racket, a teacher asks them to go where they belong, when they won't comply, the teacher asks for their names. The students won't respond and hide their name tags and run.

What do these four examples have in common? One thing – nothing happens to these students. Some genius has decided that all that needs to happen with these situations is they need to “counseled” and sent right back to class. That's the best way I know to undermine school discipline, create havoc in a classroom and devalue educational achievement. We have seen first-hand, a lack of consequences has consequences.

Students and parents need to understand they have 5 basic educational choices;

1. Conform to the school's academic and behavioral expectations, or
2. Find a private school that accepts bad behavior, or
3. Find a charter school that accepts bad behavior, or
4. Enroll in an on-line school, or
5. Home school your student

Our parents and teachers must take back control of our schools so our students are in a safe secure environment conducive to learning. We need to listen to school staff – not central office, not the NV DOE, not the ivory tower people from the universities or the instant experts in the community who don't deal with the problems they cause.

To accomplish this, teachers, with parent support, must strike – not just about funding issues – about educational issues. Our students deserve no less.

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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