

**NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING  
WORK SESSION  
MAY 21, 2021  
3:00 PM**

| <b>Office</b>           | <b>Address</b>       | <b>City</b> | <b>Meeting Room</b> |
|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| Department of Education | 2080 E. Flamingo Rd. | Las Vegas   | Room 114            |
| Department of Education | 700 E. Fifth St.     | Carson City | Board Room          |
| Department of Education | Virtual/Livestream   | n/a         | n/a                 |

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT**

**In Las Vegas**

Felicia Ortiz, President  
Mark Newburn, Vice President  
Dr. René Cantú  
Dr. Katie Dockweiler  
Tamara Hudson  
Tim Hughes

**Via Videoconference**

Katie Coombs  
Alex Gallegos  
Cathy McAdoo

**DEPARTMENT STAFF PRESENT**

**In Carson City**

Jhone M. Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**FACILITATOR**

**In Las Vegas**

Dr. Debb Oliver, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards

**Via Videoconference**

Dr. Summer Stephens, Superintendent, Churchill County School District

**LEGAL STAFF PRESENT**

**Via Videoconference**

Greg Ott, Chief Deputy Attorney General

**AUDIENCE IN ATTENDANCE**

Via Livestream

## **1: CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Meeting called to order at 3:10 P.M. by President Felicia Ortiz. Quorum was established. President Ortiz led the Pledge of Allegiance and provided a land acknowledgement.

## **2: PUBLIC COMMENT #1**

Yvette Williams, Clark County Black Caucus, submitted public comment regarding State Board Goals and Recommendations. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Educate Nevada Now submitted public comment regarding State Board Goals and Recommendations. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

Erik Harsh and Ysa Cruz, students of Douglas County School District, submitted public comment regarding LGBTQ+ curriculum. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

## **3: INFORMATION, DISCUSSION, AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING SETTING STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION GOALS(S) IN ACCORDANCE WITH SILVER STATE GOVERNANCE TRAINING**

Felicia Ortiz, President, State Board of Education; Jhone M. Ebert, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Nevada Department of Education; and Dr. Debb Oliver, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards, facilitated a discussion regarding the [Goals](#) of the Board in follow-up to their Silver State Governance Training.

The Board previously drafted the [vision statement](#) “All Nevada students are equipped and feel empowered to pursue the future of their choosing.” Continuing the discussion regarding the vision statement, President Ortiz reflected that “future of their choosing” may be unclear and attaining an individual level of prosperity or happiness may be better. Dr. Summer Stephens, Superintendent of Churchill County School District (CSD) and President of the Nevada Association of School Superintendents, attending on behalf of Member Wayne Workman, stated that the goal is prosperity, happiness, and successful living. Churchill CSD uses “future story” to communicate that the student needs to have the tools to move forward. Member Tim Hughes emphasized the importance of simplicity and stated that “own level of attainment” may lower expectations for some students. Member Alex Gallegos favored the inclusion of happiness as a constant. The Board continued to discuss the vision statement before deciding to pause the discussion and transition to goals. The revised vision statement was “All Nevada students are equipped and feel empowered to attain fulfillment.”

Dr. Oliver emphasized that a portrait of a graduate is developed locally, and the vision statement must direct their goals. Their goals must look at the students they are serving and reflect the shared values and visions of the community. Dr. Stephens presented the [Portrait of a Learner](#) used in Churchill CSD. Superintendent Ebert further explained that the Portrait of a Graduate work was occurring at the State level through a few mechanisms; the Board’s goal setting was one of them. The Blue Ribbon Commission for a Globally Prepared Nevada is another, examining systems and suggesting policies that would support flexibility in attaining student proficiency. Nevada Succeeds has also collaborated with the Department in developing a graduate profile. However, much of this work has been exploratory pending the goals and vision of the Board. Ultimately, the goal is to build a framework, in collaboration with the Department, the Board, the State Public Charter School Authority, and district Superintendents, that works for all involved.

Vice President Newburn expressed concern that this may become a tool to excuse or hide poor performance. Dr. Stephens responded that the Profile of a Learner in Churchill CSD has looked at more than just academics and performance and included a focus on learning skills and development of the whole person, allowing for greater measurement of academic growth and holistic development. Dr. Oliver returned to long-term and interim goals, emphasized the importance of student agency within those goals, and noted that goals needed to match the broader vision.

Member Tamara Hudson shared how this profile must ultimately be supported at the school and district level in order to be attainable and implementable for educators in the classroom, with clear plans of action and accountability. Member René Cantú expressed that constituents may want a clear focus on literacy, mathematics, or real life skills. President Ortiz stated that she wanted it to be clear and catchy so that it was easily repeatable by anyone and everyone. Vice President Newburn noted how a Portrait that defined the skills and knowledge all students should graduate with overlapped with academic standards, and that by developing this portrait they may reveal holes in current academic

content standards.

*[Convenience Break]*

Dr. Oliver presented a brief audio recording of President John F. Kennedy to emphasize the importance of wording. She further noted that goals must be SMART – specific, measurable, achievable, results-based, and time-bound. Vice President Newburn asked Dr. Stephens about the work Churchill CSD has done regarding measurement in their Portrait of a Learner. Dr. Stephens responded that they were just beginning to measure progress; initially they accelerated and acknowledged when someone was exemplifying portrait attributes; however, focus shifted throughout the pandemic. As they regain equilibrium, they are using a learning guide that includes the academic learning goals and outcomes as well as the attributes of the profile, and are crafting rubrics for measurement. Member Hughes expressed a desire to set foundations in place and meet core goals prior to expanding infrastructure to include measurement, potentially focusing on different measurements over time.

Vice President Newburn suggested a composite academic goal and a composite goal regarding the portrait of a learner. Member Cantu suggested a goal of Nevada having the highest performing students in the nation. President Ortiz noted that programs reached out only to certain groups, and goals needed to focus on every child in a way that addresses all students. Dr. Oliver emphasized that interim goals would be developed to support goals, and guardrails would keep them on track; currently the Board was building their goals and which may not reflect their end result. Furthermore, the Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils (STIP) approved by the Board was grounded in values, which supported the goals. Vice President Newburn asked if it made sense to have a composite goal, or if they should set an end result and allow the Department to develop the necessary interim goals. Member Katherine Dockweiler stated that if they set an end goal, there should be interim goals that support all concerns, including an interim goal that develops a means of measurement. President Ortiz stated that the STIP would serve as the interim goals that led to the fully developed Board goals.

A suggested goal via twitter was “by 2025, 100% of Nevada high school students surveyed will produce multiple deliverables showing they are prepared to work, learn, and live in the second wave of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” Member Katie Coombs’ goal was “in the next five years, the State of Nevada will be ranked in the top 25 of the country”, and President Ortiz reflected on the college and career readiness (CCR) diploma goal of “increasing the number of students in CCR from x to y.” President Ortiz asked if those two goals addressed their vision. Vice President Newburn felt it needed to be one goal that had measurable data to support it, including state-to-state comparisons as needed.

President Ortiz expressed that the goal was to be in the top 25, with the interim goal of increased CCR enrollment and guardrails that ensured equity for all students. This became the draft goal “that Nevada students will rank in the top twenty across the nation on the Kids Counts Academic Measures by 2025.” The Board asked for data regarding the current ranking of Nevada and noted that they would develop further goals related to the portrait of a graduate at their next meeting, ultimately developing two goals.

Dr. Oliver confirmed that the draft goal was that “Nevada will move in state rankings from \_\_\_ on May 21, 2021 to the top twenty across the nation by July 2026 as measured by academic portions of Quality Counts K-12 achievement measure by July of 2026.” Superintendent Ebert expressed that there were many different components to Quality Counts and that this may need further refinement and clarity before moving forward. President Ortiz expressed a focus on the K-12 achievement measures of Quality Counts.

#### **4: FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no future agenda items.

#### **5: PUBLIC COMMENT #2**

No public comment.

#### **6: ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 5:57 P.M.

*Appendix A: Statements Given During Public Comment*

1. Yvette Williams, Clark County Black Caucus, submitted public comment regarding State Board Goals Recommendations. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A) Please note that the white paper referenced was not received.*
2. Educate Nevada Now provided public comment regarding SMART goals being developed by the State Board. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*
3. Erik Harsh and Ysa Cruz, students in Douglas County, provided public comment regarding LGBTQ+ curriculum. *(A complete copy of the statement is available in Appendix A)*

**Item A1, Yvette Williams**

Dear President Ortiz and Members of the Board,

As you prepare to discuss your Board goals, we hope you will consider the attached CCBC white paper, Addressing Education Justice in 2021 attached, and the data and analysis identified therein for African American students. This student group has the largest percentage of students that fall within the lowest quartile in proficiency of academic English, by race. With ESSA requirements of addressing proficiency gaps of student groups that demonstrate least proficiency, we are asking that these students receive the priority as mandated to master academic English.

National discussions around the African American English Vernacular should be considered in delivery of resources to these students as non-standard English learners. Data reflects that African American students receiving instruction/services of English Language Learners do very well in mastering academic English like other learners of second language. We welcome the opportunity to share information with the Board should you decide to move forward with this recommendation.

In addition, with the expansion of their scope of work in the English Mastery Council to include students in the lowest quartile, they have spent the past 2 years exploring opportunities to support these students including African American non-standard speakers. We would recommend further discussions with this group on their work. We understand they will be making an annual report and recommendations in coming months to this Board.

It is our opinion, that unless we respond to the needs of our non-standard English speaking African American students, we cannot provide them with an equitable education. It's long past time to deliver accessible education that is equal and equitable as promised in the Nevada constitution for all students. We hope we count on you to deliver on that promise.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yvette Williams  
Caucus Chair

**Item A2, Educate Nevada Now**

Chair Ortiz and members of the State Board of Education,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comment on the SMART goals being developed by the Board. Educate Nevada Now supports creating measurable objectives that center around student achievement and growth. This is especially important now, when students need strong support to help them succeed after an unorthodox and difficult year.

Though education and pedagogy experts may have a more learned perspective on specific goals and benchmarks, ENN would just like to offer our perspective on the implementation, oversight and top-down support of the SMART goals. We believe districts and schools will have a greater likelihood of helping their students achieve with strong support from the Nevada Department of Education. We also recognize that NDE is currently under-resourced, when compared to similar student population size states such as New Mexico or Mississippi. Nevada has the smallest staffed Department of Education by as much as 50 percent less.

We have heard from district leaders that the Department is overwhelmed. Federal requirements demand state education agencies spend a great deal of time on compliance, monitoring and reporting. Leaving less time to provide support, engage with districts and be part of improvement efforts.

Additional state level staffing will enable the Department to function more as a service to districts. It could develop additional capacity to better respond to district or school needs, and maintain staff with expertise on school operations.

From our research, we have seen proposals for sub-unit or multiple units within a state's Department of Education that could operate independently and with greater autonomy. These semi-autonomous units would be better able to respond to districts' and schools' needs effectively and quickly through targeted and coordinated support and technical assistance.

We have also seen an effort from NDE to better streamline assessments, reports and other tools to be timely, effective, and to better serve districts. Expanding on these efforts and giving NDE more resources to do this would benefit all parties so they can focus on support of school districts and ultimately support students.

We've also heard from principals, the need for a real-time system to track assessments down to the classroom level and be able to compare with other schools. If there is anything the pandemic has taught is, we need to invest in technology and infrastructures that serve our modern needs and requests.

As we settle on SMART goals we urge the Board to consider the workload that comes with these goals and ensure the Department, districts and schools have the resources to meet them.

With the availability of federal dollars and the enormous need during these unprecedented times, we believe NDE should be given the resources to build capacity to work more closely with districts and schools - playing a supportive role. This will create a more nimble system, able to adjust and readjust as districts navigate their use of resources and foster better two-way dialogue on what is needed to meet these SMART goals.

Thank you,  
Educate Nevada Now

### **Item A3, Erik Harsh and Ysa Cruz**

Dear Board of Education, thank you for being here,

I am here today to ask, why do schools gloss over LGBTQ+ topics? Why does this significant part of history get glossed over in our history and social studies classes? For my past 11 years of education, I can only remember ONE time we discussed LGBTQ+ people or topics, ONCE, in my history of human conflict class. ONE discussion in ONE history class. Can you even imagine how much we missed?

No, because you have never been taught the importance and crucial part of human existence that is a significant part of the future and governmental discussions that is LGBTQ+ history. This is no longer a “difficult” or even arguable topic, this is life, and it should be taught in every facility that claims they are setting us up for success in the real world.

LGBTQ+ students feel alienated and fearful of being in their schools. Based on a 2019 study of American schools, 59 percent of students feel unsafe based on their sexuality, 42 percent gender expression, and 37 percent based on their biological gender. Over 75 percent of students withdraw from extracurricular events because they feel unsafe and miserable. The heart of this problem is the misunderstanding of LGBTQ+ subjects and individuals.

One solution would be to educate every student about such topics. Without this understanding, they would come to a false judgment and a prejudiced point of view. In schools with an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum, there is shown to be over a 5 percent reduction in homophobic comments and gender expression comments. This indicates that more students would correct their peers’ comments and display inclusivity.

In U.S. history class, we covered the 1960s; We included some topics, excluding the most crucial point in LGBTQ+ history, the StoneWall riots. This event was the first time LGBTQ+ people came together to fight for their existence. We covered Vietnam Protests but omitted a vast community that has been the victim of hostility for decades.

According to a student, Student X, an LGBTQ+ junior at Douglas High School, has experienced more than enough of their fair share of discrimination and exclusivity from their peers solely because they proudly represent the LGBTQ+ community. Only days before I prepared this speech, they told me in confidence that fellow students called them a Homophobic slur on school grounds. To prevent this from happening again, I believe that the district’s curriculum should inform the students why these words are hurtful and can damage the lives of other students on the campus. I don’t believe that my school should tolerate such name-calling.

According to another student, Student Y, A transgender Junior, They always felt different and had to learn what LGBTQ+ was online, not from a school. They would feel accepted at school if they could learn about other historically accurate people and topics. How will we make our identity without knowing the information?

One Senior I talked to never heard about stonewall until I talked about it last week. How can this happen?

How can we prevent the recurrence of yesterday without teaching the problems of yesterday? How can you profess to educate? Meanwhile, you omit events that occurred within the past 50 years? Our curriculum is lacking; however, we can fix this. I believe our excellent school district will understand my appeal. This is a noble step towards sustaining LGBTQ+ students and puts you on the right side of history.

Thank you for your time.

By Erik Harsh And Ysa Cruz  
Edited by Levi Norried